Parent Education Programmes for Early Childhood Development: Reflections of Practitioners

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Parent education programmes have been identified as intervention strategies which address numerous social problems in South Africa. This study aimed to highlight the importance of empowering parents through knowledge and skill development in order to positively invest in the future generations of South Africa.

Early childhood development is a field which has emerged on the agenda of the helping professions, such as social work, psychology and education. The development of parent education programmes is an example of advancement in this field. The topic of parent education is noteworthy in light of the growing need to empower parents to raise well-developed children.

The development of effective parent education programmes is beneficial to both the parents and practitioners. However, practitioners are seldom given the opportunity to reflect on their own professional experiences of delivering these programmes. Therefore, there is a need to investigate and analyse these experiences to potentially improve programme delivery. Consequently, the aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of practitioners' experiences of facilitating programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.

A combination of a quantitative and qualitative research approach was used in this study. Exploratory and descriptive research designs were implemented in order to describe the social phenomenon of parent education programmes for early childhood development. Practitioners delivering parent education programmes in the Cape Metropole in South Africa were selected to participate in the study. Data was collected during individually administered interviews by means of a semi-structured questionnaire. Practitioners were given the opportunity to share their reflections (which are qualitative in nature) on their experiences of facilitating programmes aimed at early child development.

The main findings of this study indicated that there is a need for practitioners to be adequately trained to deliver programmes which are engaging and relevant to the needs of parents. Group-based and community programmes were found to be effective platforms for this intervention. The nature and components of parent education programmes, as outlined in the literature, provide clear guidelines for organisations and practitioners wishing to deliver such programmes and it is recommended that they be incorporated into facilitators' training sessions.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are significant for practitioners facilitating parent education programmes as they confirmed that the effectiveness of the implementation of such programmes are linked to the delivery by and experiences of practitioners. An effort should therefore be made to enhance these experiences by endorsing the use of best practice methods for programme delivery.

South Africa has recently begun to explore the innovative avenue of parent education through group-based parenting programmes. The enhancement of parents' capabilities through these programmes are seen as an asset for promoting social development and advancing legislation on childhood development.

The conclusions drawn in this study indicate a need for further research into the topic of parent education programmes in South Africa. Consequently, recommendations are provided for further research that would complement this study and elaborate on its findings.

OPSOMMING

Oueropleidingsprogramme word beskou as 'n intervensiestrategie wat talryke maatskaplike probleme in Suid-Afrika aanspreek. Hierdie studie het dit ten doel gestel om te wys hoe belangrik dit is om ouers te bemagtig deur die ontwikkeling van hul kennis en vaardighede om so 'n positiewe bydrae tot die toekomstige generasies van Suid-Afrikaners te maak.

Vroeë kinderontwikkeling is 'n veld waaraan daar toenemend aandag geskenk word in die hulpverleningsprofessies, byvoorbeeld maatskaplike werk, die sielkunde en die onderwys. 'n Voorbeeld van vordering wat al op hierdie gebied gemaak is, is die ontwikkeling van oueropleidingsprogramme. Hierdie programme is van belang om die toenemende behoefte daaraan om ouers te bemagtig om goed ontwikkelde kinders groot te maak, aan te spreek.

Die ontwikkeling van effektiewe oueropleidingsprogramme is voordelig vir sowel ouers as praktisyns. Praktisyns word egter selde die geleentheid gegun om te reflekteer op hul eie professionele ervaring as fasiliteerders van sodanige programme. Daarom is daar 'n behoefte daaraan om hierdie ervarings te ondersoek en te analiseer om die lewering van hierdie programme moontlik te verbeter. Na aanleiding van hierdie behoefte, was die doel van hierdie studie om 'n beter begrip te vorm van die praktisyns se ervaring van die fasilitering van programme vir vroeë kinderontwikkeling deur van die sosiale leer- en kognitiewe gedragsbenaderings gebruik te maak.

'n Kombinasie van kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenaderings is in hierdie studie gevolg. 'n Verkennende en beskrywende navorsingsontwerp is toegepas om die sosiale fenomeen van oueropleidingsprogramme vir vroeë kinderontwikkeling te beskryf. Praktisyns van oueropleidingsprogramme wat in die Kaapse Metropool in Suid-Afrika aangebied word, is gekies om aan die studie deel te neem. Data is ingesamel tydens individuele onderhoude deur middel van semi gestruktureerde vraelyste. Praktisyns is die geleentheid gebied om te reflekteer ('n kwalitatiewe benadering) op hulle ervaring van die fasilitering van programme wat gerig is op vroeë kinderontwikkeling.

Die hoofbevindinge van hierdie studie dui op 'n behoefte vir praktisyns om doeltreffend opgelei te word om programme aan te bied wat aantreklik en relevant is vir ouers om hulle behoeftes aan te spreek. Daar is bevind dat groepsgebaseerde en gemeenskapsprogramme effektiewe platforms vir hierdie intervensie is. Die aard en komponente van oueropleidingsprogramme, soos uiteengesit in die literatuur, bied duidelike riglyne vir organisasies en praktisyns wat sodanige programme wil aanbied en daar word aanbeveel dat dit in opleidingsessies vir fasiliteerders inkorporeer word.

Die bevindinge van hierdie studie is verder van belang vir fasiliteerders van oueropleidingsprogramme aangesien dit bevestig dat die geslaagdheid van die programme gekoppel is aan praktisyns se lewering en ervaring daarvan. 'n Poging moet dus aangewend word om hierdie ervaring te verbeter deur praktisyns aan te moedig om die "beste praktyk"-metodes te gebruik wanneer hulle programme aanbied.

Suid-Afrika het onlangs 'n innoverende benadering tot oueropleiding begin volg, naamlik om sodanige programme in groepsverband aan te bied. Die verbetering van ouers se bekwaamheid deur middel van hierdie programme word beskou as 'n manier om vooruitgang in maatskaplike ontwikkeling te bewerkstellig en wetgewing oor kinderontwikkeling te bevorder.

Die gevolgtrekkings waartoe daar in hierdie studie gekom word, dui aan dat daar 'n behoefte vir verdere navorsing oor oueropleidingsprogramme in Suid-Afrika bestaan. Gevolglik word daar ter afsluiting aanbevelings gemaak ten opsigte van verdere navorsingsgeleenthede wat hierdie studie kan aanvul en op sy bevindinge kan uitbrei.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1   PRELIMINARY STUDY AND RATIONALE

Raising a child is a task which requires knowledge, skills and intuition. Parents have a responsibility to raise their children to be secure and self-efficient. The socialisation of the future generations is dependent on the family unit, which consequently places a much responsibility on parents and an emphasis on the value of effective parenting, especially in the formative years of a child's development (Bate, 2002:11; Kirst-Ashman, 2010:241; Potgieter, 1998:134) and literature suggests that parenting is a major component of child care (Woodcock, 2003:87). However, not all parents are able to provide effective guidance and social workers daily encounter families experiencing various child-rearing problems, who are consequently in need of intervention. In response to this need, social service organisations began to offer parent education programmes as an intervention strategy and various practitioners have been instrumental in implementing these services. Practitioners working with families, parents and children are role players in delivering such services. This highlights an area of importance in practice and research for practitioners in the field of family services, such as social workers, educators, nurses, psychologists in terms of understanding the programmes they provide their clients.

Discipline and socialisation practices are noted to play a central role in parenting during early childhood and need to be built upon and followed through into later childhood. These parenting practices have shown to be related to continued behavioural problems such as aggression-disruption (Smith, Sprengelmeyer & Moore; 2004:239). A study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) found that 60% of three year olds with conduct problems will still exhibit these problems at the age of eight and that these problems will continue into adolescence and adulthood if not addressed by parents (National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence, 2007b). White (2005:65) reviewed the Michigan Screening Profile of Parenting (MSPP) and identified that 65% of parents screened were at risk for general problems in parenting. The reason for this high statistic lies within the complexity of parenting and parent's inability to fulfil this complex role. Therefore, it is important that family-based interventions target parent populations. Jackson and Dickinson (2009:103) concur that children are mainly socialised by their parents and that this process can be guided to play a positive role in enhancing the well-being of children. Consequently, a process is needed that recognises the importance of parenting in terms of a child's development and growth specifically in the field of early childhood development in family

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services (Brody & Flor, 1997:1001). In accordance with this, the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Right of the Child states that children who experience behavioural problems due to lack of parenting skills have the right to be helped (UNCRC, 1989, in Axford, Lehtonen, Kaoukji, Tobin & Berry, *et al.*, 2012:2069).

Parenting practices are a key component in family life education because of the responsibility parents have towards raising their children. Kirst-Ashman (2010:199) emphasises the importance of family-centred interventions and suggests that professionals should "emphasise strategies that help develop the strengths of family members". Saleeby (2009:97) and Hoghughi, (2004:12), define strength as a capacity, resource and asset. This definition creates a concept whereby parents have the potential (capacity) to learn the necessary skills (resources) to improve their social functioning. An influential paper written by Woodcock (2003:12) endorses practitioners' strengths-based approach to service delivery which "actively" pursues enhancing parents' capacity. It has been found that in one year, parents have 200 000 more interactions and occasions to influence their child's development than teachers and therapists. Therefore, it could be concluded that parents play the most influential role in the early development of their children (Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:8). In accordance with this, Mahoney and Wiggers (2007:7) highlight the early childhood phase specifically as a critical opportunity to prevent or limit behavioural and developmental problems. This places parenting children of this age group at a central point for intervention.

There are many external factors which could have a negative impact on the family unit. Current literature on families which are "at-risk" of maladaptive functioning emphasise the importance of addressing poorly functioning care-giving environments (Repetti, Taylor & Seeman, 2002:330). Practitioners are in a unique position to be aware of the difficulties which exist within these environments because of the fieldwork delivered in helping professions. Furthering this concept, authors write that social contextual conditions (e.g., low socio-economic status [SES], lack of job opportunities and environmental stressors) often lead to maltreatment (of children) as a consequence of parental distress and poor parenting practices (Conger, Ge Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1994; McLoyd, 1998, in Johnson, Stone, Lou, Ling, Claassen & Austin, 2008:7-8). An Australian study on early childhood services endorses the need for a wide range of family services to address the "complexities of parenting" (Wong & Sumsion 2012:37). This is relevant in the South African context because the consequences of poverty and negative social environments affect the majority of the country's population.

Poor parenting practices continue to be a challenge in South Africa. Corporal punishment had been a parenting discipline technique for many years but was banned in South Africa in 1997 by the Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act 33 of 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1997) because of its violent nature and potential for abuse by the administration . An earlier study released by Statistics South Africa (2011:3) brought the topic of parental discipline under much scrutiny with regard to corporal punishment as the "most commonly experienced [method of discipline] in Eastern Cape (23,3%), North West (21,7%) and KwaZulu-Natal (21,1%)". These statistics and legislative decisions provide evidence endorsing the need to improve the capacity of parents through empowerment and enhancement of parenting skills. In support of these previous findings, a recent study conducted in South Africa provided statistics for the provincial rates of corporal punishment of children as the most commonly used method of punishment, which ranged between 22,4% and 73,7% across all nine provinces. The highest levels of corporal punishment were once again observed in KwaZulu-Natal at 73,7% (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). This could be attributed to the low social economic status of the province and points to the high prevalence of aggression and unemployment among parents (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1994; McLoyd, 1998 in Johnson *et al.*, 2008:7-8). A study with a particular focus on understanding parenting skills programmes and their contribution towards effective family functioning would provide relevant data to illustrate this need for parent empowerment in South Africa.

In South Africa, there is a heightened need for family-based intervention, specifically parent education. The concept of parent education falls within a family-related field described by scholars as "Family Life Education" (Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:12; Myers-Walls, Ballard, Darling & Myer-Bowman, 2011:358; National Council on Family Relations, 2013). Literature comments that there is a discrepancy between the intervention needed in practice and practitioners' understanding of parent education (Croake & Glover, 1977:153; Myers-Walls *et al*; 2011:358; Woodcock, 2003:98). Therefore it is significant that research be conducted in South Africa which investigates the experiences of practitioners providing parent education to ensure that they are fully equipped to address the needs of parents.

Parental support has been a noteworthy topic of discussion in national and international policy and scholarly research. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Country Report (2010:50) stress the importance of parenting programmes and recommends that parental/guardian support for child-rearing may prevent teenage pregnancies, risk-taking behaviour and abuse in South Africa. This can be reached through parent education programmes and community care networks. And, as mentioned before, early childhood education is considered the ideal platform where parent support and development can be

effectively implemented (Munford, Sanders, Maden & Maden, 2007:73). In 2007 the respected medical journal, *The Lancet*, also identified early childhood development as an international challenge of great importance (Lake, 2011:1277).

The United Nations (2009) advocate in support of family-centred and community-based intervention strategies such as parent education programmes, parent-led support groups, parent initiated community gardens and recycling projects. Internationally, Australia, the UK and Canada have been noted as leading countries in terms of early childhood education, family support and parent education services policy. Uganda, Malawi and Zambia are three countries who have successfully implemented this mandate at grassroots level in Africa (Patel, 2005:158). The South African government and relevant stakeholders are invested in providing family-related social services and endorse the need to monitor and understand development programmes. According to the White Paper (Republic of South Africa 1997) for Social Welfare, family related services should aim to improve parenting skills and family systems. In the past, the Department of Social Development had been the main role-player in the implementation of social policy to endorse such programmes as mandated in the following policy documents: (White Paper for Social Welfare, [Republic of South Africa, 1997]; Finance Policy, [Republic of South Africa, 1999]; Children's Act 38 of 2005 [Republic of South Africa, 2005]).

The newly ratified South African Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005), subsequently referred to as "the Children's Act", is a significant policy in terms of mandating support and education to parents with regard to early childhood development. Section 92 (2) Part II states that:

(a) Programmes must be <u>appropriate to the developmental stages</u> and evolving capacity of children.

(c) Programmes must provide <u>education and support to parents</u>, towards child-rearing and the holistic development of their children.

(h) Activities must promote a <u>positive relationship between the centre, families and the community.</u>

(l) <u>Parents</u>, care-givers and families of vulnerable children<u>,</u> children with disabilities and child-headed households must be provided with <u>information, knowledge and skills</u> to promote the development of their children.

(m) Programmes must be based on an <u>integrated approach</u>. (Emphasis added.)

Chapter 6 of the Children's Act makes specific mention of and provision for the expansion of early childhood development programmes in South Africa. This progress is recognised as positive by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2009:2) in a recent resource document. The 0 to four years old age group (children who are in the early childhood phase) is the largest child population group in South Africa (26%) noted by the UNICEF's resource document (UNICEF, 2009:2). These statistics place significant emphasis on the implementation of the discussed policy and legislation related to the early childhood phase. The importance of policy aimed at addressing the rights of children in the early childhood phase is relevant in South Africa because of the need to protect the right of children who are not in a position to advocate for these rights themselves. Practitioners facilitating parent education programmes rely on the mandate of policy to deliver the appropriate strategies to their clients.

Practitioners can be trained to utilise models to deliver interventions for clients. Classification of intervention strategies has proven to be helpful to practitioners working with families. The Centre for Effective Services in the United Kingdom released a reference paper which details the Hardiker Model (Figure 1.1) for categorising levels of intervention with children and families (Hardiker, Exton & Barker, 1991). This model, as detailed below, was developed from the ecological perspective and has been successfully used by governments in the UK and Ireland (Darling and Turkii, 2009:15, Nickols, 2003:17; Owens, 2010:17-18).

Level of Intervention

Level 4
Intensive and long-term support and protection for children and families

Level 3
Theraputic and support services for children and families with severere difficulties

Level 2
Supportive and theraputic Intervention for chidlren and children in need

Level 1
Universal prevention and social development services
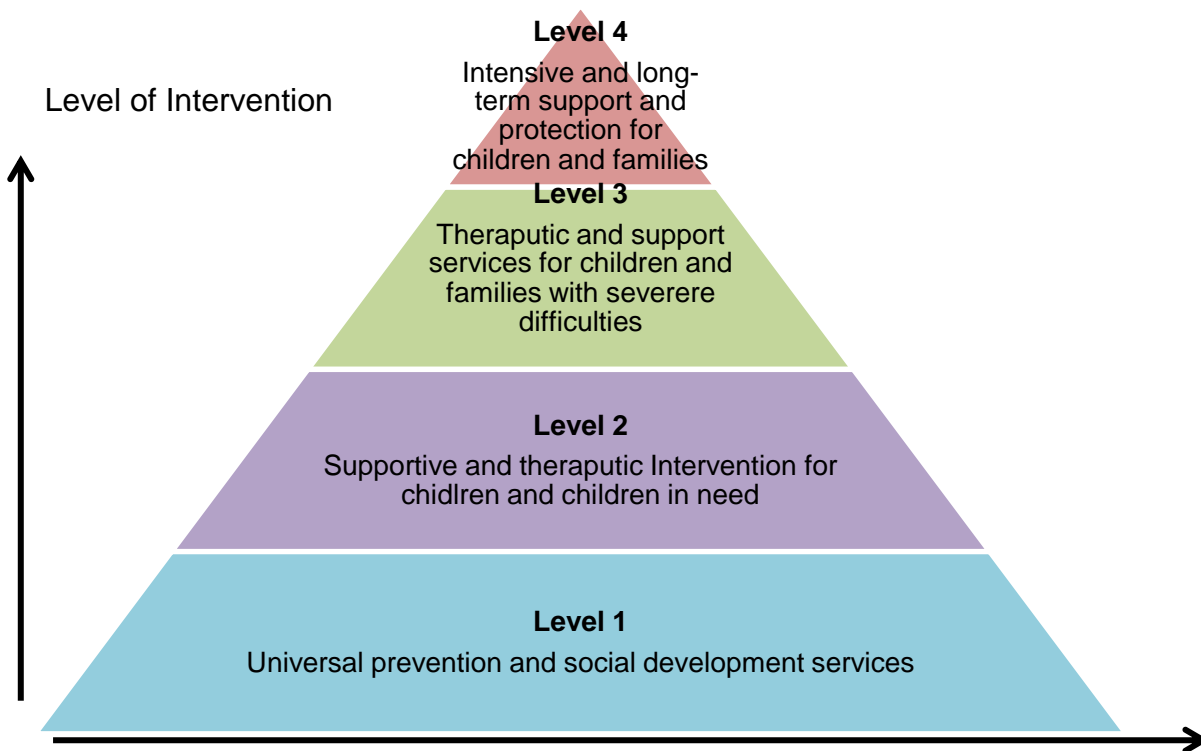
Figure 1.1 The Hardiker Model (Owens, 2010)

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This model (Figure 1.1) identifies the levels of intervention used by practitioners to assess the type of family service required by their client. The Hardiker Model complements South Africa's approach to social welfare as it is based on the strengths-based developmental concept of social development (Patel, 2005:160; Potgieter, 1998:114). The Hardiker model is functional for the assessment of families' needs. Wide spread education programmes such as media campaigns would be identified as level 1. Group programmes and group based programmes tend to fit into the Level 2 of the Hardiker model. Level 3 would be classified as either individually administered programmes or group based programmes. Level 4 related to clients in need of some sort of statutory care and support services such as individual therapy. The model is effective for determining the nature and components of the parent education programme such as the goal of the programme, the target population, the content and delivery method and frequency of sessions. These elements will be further discussed in chapter 3.

A recent review study conducted at the Child Health Research and Policy Unit in the UK gave researchers valuable insight into the research priorities of practitioners. They identified the following topical research focus areas: (1) family support, (2) parenting and (3) child protection. These endorse an inquiry into the South African context in terms of these topics (Stevens, Liabo & Roberts, 2007:295). The study highlighted a specific question related to parenting as a research topic, namely: "Are parenting programmes effective in improving parenting and children's behaviour?" (Stevens, Liabo & Roberts, 2007:299). A recent review of such programmes answers this question and states that services aimed at supporting parents and families are directly linked to reducing problems in early childhood behaviour (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:256). The implementation of parenting programmes as early interventions provides practitioners with a holistic strategy to address the need for skill acquisition and behaviour modification.

Significant studies in the field of parent education programmes provide insight into the knowledge base of family services. Relevant studies include Woodcock's (2003) explorative study, "The Social Work Assessment of Parenting", Darling and Turkki's (2009) "Ecosystemic Analysis of Global Family Concern and the Role of Family Life Education", the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) Guidelines (2007) and the Cochrane Review (Barlow, Smailagic, Ferriter, Bennett & Jones, 2012).

This study focuses on parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development. The findings of such a study are relevant to organisations who deliver parent

education programmes, practitioners who facilitate parent education programmes, policy-makers in the social development field as well as researchers in the parenting field.

Related master's research conducted in South Africa was identified using ProQuest, Nexus and the National Research Foundation's database through a keyword search. These studies provide context to the research question and research topic of this study. Available research on this topic tends to have a parent-centred focus. Studies conducted have a psychological theory base, concentrating on parents' past experiences of parenting programmes, their own self-concepts and attachment to their children (Barnard, 2005; Marais, 2012:256). Other studies took a behavioural approach and viewed programmes as opportunities for parents to acquire child-rearing and parenting skills (Lutya, 2012:86). These two perspectives can be seen as complementary to each other as they are products of the social learning and cognitive behavioural theories.

Studies have evaluated and explored specific programmes as part of policy-initiated or agency-endorsed research. A significant study by Martin (2007) assessed the implementation of the Hands Off our Children Guidance Programme in the Western Cape, South Africa. Although mention is made of the Western Cape, the goal this specific programme was aimed at preventing child abuse. The broad aims of parent education programmes require an investigation into the wider field of parent education and not only child protection. The experiences of practitioners provide a description of the programmes being delivered in the Cape Metropole. This study explored the role of the social worker in this particular programme. A different approach to the topic of parent education programme is is to investigate the parents who attend the programmes. Pires (2003) conducted a study utilising a filial therapeutic approach to parent education. Pires' study came to the conclusion that a parents' active participation in the therapeutic process is important. It is thus evident that studies tend to focus on parents, the programmes content or the practitioners themselves.

There are numerous opportunities for practitioners to become involved in parent education programmes to improve parenting practices (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:255). Gaining insight into this aspect of parenting programmes provides practitioners and researchers with evidence-based knowledge, specific recommendations and findings. Although the Western Cape region of South Africa features in previous studies, the Cape Metropole has not been a demarcated research area for practitioner-focussed research.

Although parent education programmes differ in contents and principles, essentially the services remain fairly similar (Daro & Harding, 1999:157). Extensive reviews (Bradley & Hayes, 2007; Bunting, 2004; Collins & Fetsch, 2012; Morawska & Sanders, 2006; Samuelson, 2009) of programmes showcase varying content and programme designs. Examples of top ranking programmes in the UK and the United states of America include: STAR Parenting, Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting and the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program (Collins & Fetch, 2012). These programmes all utilise elements of the social learning theory and behavioural theory to underpin their programme design. South Africa tends to utilise elements from various programmes. Culturally relevant programmes will be further discussed in chapter 3.

Upon review of literature on such parent education programmes, certain thematic trends have emerged. Current trends in parent education include: facilitation by a multi-disciplinary team, the inclusion of (para-)professionals, collaboration with family-centred approaches, new legislative support (e.g., in Singapore, Taiwan, Australia and Norway), global perspectives on culturally contextualised programmes and multi-media teaching aids (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:260; Darling & Turkki, 2009:15; Mahoney, Kaiser, Girolametto, MacDonald, Robinson, Safford & Spiker, 1999:25; Samuelson, 2009:5). The multi-disciplinary approach to family services is also emphasised by family education literature (Munford *et al.*, 2007:77; Wong & Sumsion, 2012:81). This means that a wide range of family practitioner expertise is influencing the field of parent education. The role of the practitioner as a facilitator in parent education will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

There has been a clear theme emerging in research to suggest that parents should teach their children skills they themselves have learnt as part of the socialisation process. Parenting skills have been found to be protective factors against child sexual abuse (Bandi, 2004). Lutya (2012:1) confirms this finding, stating that "in the absence of adequate parenting skills, efficacy and management parenting programmes could help parents learn a conforming manner of rearing their children". The social learning theory and cognitive behavioural theory have yet to be investigated comprehensively as a theoretical approach to parenting programmes.

Parenting problems can be classified into domains which could assist to address certain parenting challenges. Previous theoretical and empirical work denotes five core domains of parenting difficulties within "at-risk" families. These include skill deficiencies in (a) social cognitive processing, (b) impulse control, (c) parenting skills, (d) social skills and (e) stress

management (Azar *et al.*, 1998, in White, 2005:45). Commonly taught parenting skills to improve early childhood development and address these challenges include: (a) parental modelling, (b) positive reinforcement, (c) relationship enhancement, (d) active listening, (e) conflict resolution, (f) boundary setting, (g) mutual respect and (h) consistent discipline techniques (Hutchings & Webster-Stratton, 2004:340-341). These topics link to the needs of parents as well as the core parenting domains. Further detail of this is discussed in Chapter 3.

While programme evaluation has been a focal point of past research endeavours, the study presented in this thesis seeks to explore practitioners' reflections regarding their delivery of parent education and the contribution of which these programmes have made to empower parents in the Cape Metropole Area of the Western Cape. The need for such research has emerged from an in-depth review of previous studies and literature. This study could be a valuable contribution to the parenting knowledge base utilised by practitioners facilitating parent education programmes in South Africa. There is merit in a practitioner-focussed investigation into practitioner's reflections on their own interventions in the field of early childhood development and parent empowerment.

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Parents are often untapped resources in terms of the contribution they could make towards their children's rearing and development. Literature (Collins, Jordan & Coleman, 2013:383; Desai, 2012:330; Dwivedi, 1997:100; Sanders & Ralph, 2004:353; Utting & Pugh, 2004:22) stresses the importance of parent education as a social work intervention strategy, provided by family social service organisations, to improve parental capacity and family functioning through knowledge and skills development. This is confirmed in the literature by authors in the field of parent education (such as Barlow & Parsons., 2003; Barlow, Parsons and Stewart-Brown, 2005:33; Darling & Turkki, 2009:26; Daro & Harding, 1999:152; Mahoney *et al.*, 1999:131). Education and support provided to parents of young children have proven to be effective as an early intervention strategy (Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:10). Addressing problems before they reach a critical stage is the intention of early intervention services. Parent education can function as an early intervention which seeks to address issues before they arise in the parent- child relationship.

International and national legislatures provide instruction to practitioners on how to provide parent education as a resource for families. Significant legislation includes The South African Children's Act, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989)

and the White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Social workers are mandated to provide holistic intervention to service users and empower clients through programmes as a strategy of support and capacity building as part of the social-development approach to social services (Early & GlenMaye, 2000; Hardiker *et al.*, 1991; Kirst-Ashman, 2010; Patel, 2008; Potgieter, 1998; Weyers, 2001). Azzi-Lessing (2010:256) notes that although there are a wide range of practitioners of various professions within the field of parent education, social workers are not prominent. This is criticised by Mahoney and Wiggers (2007:12) as it is a field of family services where social workers could be of great value.

Furthermore, practitioners are seldom given the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences as professionals with regard to parenting programmes. The problem statement of this study related to the need to investigate the experiences of practitioners who facilitate parent education programmes towards early childhood development. Dwivendi (1997:100) comments on the need for research into views of practitioners' own interventions, stating that "[m]any practitioners working in primary care have few opportunities to learn about or reflect on the purpose of parent education, or indeed reflect on the methods of education". This showcases directly the need for research into the professional practice of parent education. Various authors recommend that parent education is a subject for further investigation and analysis (Bradley & Hayes, 2007; Darling & Turkki, 2009:24; Mahoney *et al.*, 1999:137; NICE, 2007a:31; Woodcock, 2003:87-88). The purpose of this study addressed this gap in the existing research base.

1.3   GOAL OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question resulting from the problem statement is as follows:

What are the experiences of practitioners in the Cape Metropole who facilitate parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches?

The research aim was:

To gain a better understanding of how practitioners in the Cape Metropole experience the facilitation of parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.

In order to achieve the research aim, the following were proposed as the objectives of the study:

1. To discuss the role and responsibility of parents towards the care and development of their pre-school children (during early childhood).
2. To describe the nature and components of parent education programmes for early childhood development rooted in social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.
3. To investigate how practitioners experience the facilitation of parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.
4. To present conclusions and recommendations regarding the nature of parenting programmes based on the reflections of practitioners.

1.4   CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be defined as they are significant to the research question: parent education, early childhood development, practitioner, reflection and social development.

1.4.1 Parent Education

'Parent education' forms part of a globally recognised field of family education (Darling & Turkki, 2009:15). It is defined by Mahoney *et al.* (1999:131) as a process of offering parents and primary caregivers the knowledge and skills specifically aimed at child-rearing. This definition is supported by other authors (Barlow, Pearson & Stuart-Brown; 2005:34; Bunting, 2004:328; Collins, Jordan & Coleman, 2013:391) who comment that it is a strategy of social work intervention as well as education. It usually involves planned activities or programmes facilitated by professionals. The Social Services Improvement Agency (2011:6) in Wales makes mention of programmes, formal or semi-formal, which provide parents with an environment to improve their parenting or address problems they are experiencing with their children. Programmes aimed at parents are usually "brief, manualised interventions aimed at improving the capacity of parents…" (DataPrev, 2011). These programmes are underpinned by numerous empirically supported theoretical approaches, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), social learning theory, relationship-based and multi-modal parenting. Behavioural-based programmes seem to be the ones most often implemented by

organisations working with parents. Some programmes are universally designed for any parent, while others target certain parents' needs (Samuelson, 2009:1).

1.4.2 Early Childhood Development (ECD)

'Early childhood' is known as the period of childhood in which a child is three to six years old. 'Early childhood development' (ECD) is a well-known term in social science fields. According to the White Paper on early childhood education (Republic of South Africa, 2001) this term incorporates a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. It describes the stages of growth in terms of distinct characteristics and skills which an individual should accomplish during each stage (Louw & Louw, 2007:6; Rock, Karabanow & Manion, 2012:345). Erik Erikson, a developmental theorist, notes that during this stage children face a psychosocial challenge to develop a willingness to try new tasks and to handle failure (Louw & Louw, 2007:20). Early Childhood Development seeks to promote the child's rights to develop and reach his/her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential.

1.4.3 Practitioner

Oxford Dictionaries (2013) define a 'practitioner' as a person actively engaged in an art, discipline, or profession. Educating parents regarding family interventions requires specific professional expertise (Azzi-lessing, 2010:257; Mahoney *et al*, 1999:135) and research provides sound arguments indicating that a practitioner in the field of parent education can facilitate parent education programmes with great success (Carter, 1996, in Samuelson, 2009:6). Examples of professionals who possess these capabilities include social workers, health care providers and psychologists/therapists. It also includes nurses, speech therapists and educators. Paraprofessionals, persons who are trained to achieve a particular aspect of a professional activity, such as auxiliary social workers, are also acknowledged in the field of parent education (Powell, 2005, in Samuelson, 2009:6; Ritchie & Woodward, 2009:524). Practitioners hold certain professional skills which endorse their ability to facilitate parenting programmes and family-based interventions. Examples of these skills include warmth, genuineness, flexibility, humour, empathy, communication skills and sensitivity to family and group processes (Brown, 2005; Hepworth, Rooney, Dewberry Rooney & Strom-Gottfried, 2013; Samuelson, 2009). For the purposes of this study, 'practitioner' is used as the professional term to refer to those practitioners who facilitate the parent education programmes.

1.4.4 Reflection

'Reflection' is explained as "…an important human activity in which people recapture their experience… and evaluate it" (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985:43). To provide further clarification of this concept, Tate and Sills (2004:126) note that critical reflection is necessary to gain insight into one's past experiences by examining personal and theoretical knowledge related to a particular experience or situation. According to the *Dictionary of Social Work*, 'reflective practice' is the capability to critically review one's own practice (Pierson & Thomas, 2010:433). Practitioners often associate reflection with professional development and evaluation of interventions. Reflection in this study refers to the recall and examination of past interventions delivered to clients.

1.4.5 Social Development

'Development' is defined by Midgley (1995:25) as a dynamic process which is designed to holistically improve the well-being of the population. Due to the interconnectedness of systems, all members of society and its sub-systems (such as families) are involved in and affected by development, thus deeming it important to view a society from a holistic perspective. 'Social development' is the improved social functioning of people. This term has been used synonymously with 'human development', yet its intention is to create an enabling environment for people (Darling & Turkki, 2009:15; Gray, 2002; Patel, 2005; Potgieter, 1998). Facilitated group programmes, such as educational programmes, provide an opportunity for practitioners and participants in these programmes to learn as well as pass on their own knowledge and skills in order to empower participants through practice (Rooth, in Gray, 1998). Parent education programmes are am example of programmes which contribute towards the social development of participants. This would ensure that the programmes are designed to address their specific problems in a practical way (Bernstein & Gray, 2008:29; Early & GlenMaye, 2000:199). Individuals and families are viewed holistically through the social development approach.

1.5   RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The following section describes the research approach and methodology for the study.

1.5.1 Literature Study

A successful literature review is defined by Webster and Watson (2002) as a review that "creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge". It enables theory development and to

identify where new areas of research are needed (Booth, Papaioannou & Sutton, 2012:11). As proposed by Grinnell (1988:220), literature should form the foundation of research projects. This strategy was adopted with respect to the methodology of this study. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:298) and Mouton (2001:87) emphasise the value of a literature review. Mouton (2001) expands that it assists researchers to see how other scholars have investigated the research problem and the resulting relevant theories.

This study utilised a systematic and deductive approach to the literature review in order to gain an understanding of the research problem (following De Vos *et al.*, 2011:123). The literature study focussed on literature, published research, legislative policies and developments incorporating the nature and elements of family theory and parent education programmes, respectively. The parenting role for early childhood development was reviewed as this contributed to the further understanding of the research question. Parenting programmes for early childhood development was explored to gain an understanding of the intervention strategy used for educating parents. Books, journals, articles, master's dissertations in the field of parent education and online and multi-media sources, such as CDs on parenting skills, were utilised to provide an overview of current literature related to the research topic and research question.

1.5.2 Research Approach

The research approach provided the researcher with procedures regarding how to approach the study. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research was used for the study (following Bergman, 2008:1; Creswell, 2003:12; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:66). A quantitative research approach is defined by Creswell (1994:1) as an investigation into a social problem by testing a theory with specific variables which are measured in numbers and interpreted as statistical data. A qualitative research approach is used to *answer questions* about the *detailed nature* of phenomena. The purpose of a qualitative study is to *gain an understanding* of phenomena from the *participant's point of view* (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:64).

A combination of approaches is used to provide a model for combining research methods across the "qualitative-quantitative divide" (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008:15; Flick, 2011:189). The differing of opinions regarding the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, has been referred to as the so-called "paradigm debate" assumes a pragmatic approach towards research (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:437; Grinnell, 1988:191; Teddlie & Tashakkorie, 2003:15). According to Creswell (2003:22), this approach is valuable as the best of qualitative and quantitative approaches are integrated into a study. This is useful for

generalising the findings to a particular sampled population and for developing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon which is studied.

The combination approach emphasises that the research question is of upmost importance to the study as it seeks to provide an in-depth solution to the question. By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, a rich description emerged from the research process (Creswell, 2003:21; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:436). A problem-centred approach was consequently used in this study as (according to Creswell [2003:21]) this approach will employ strategies to better understand the research problem. This is highly functional for a study of this nature and ensured that the researcher was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the research question.

De Vos *et al.* (2011:435) expand further on the scientific value of this combination approach for descriptive research questions. In seeking to add to the scope of research and findings of previous studies, this approach is creditable for the purpose of a descriptive study. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research creates a comprehensive description which is rich in meaning from the data collected. Although a quantitative approach was used, the majority of the data collected utilised a qualitative approach due to the reflective nature of the participant's responses. Grinnell (1988:189) distinguishes qualitative research as a strategy for gaining reflective narratives and descriptive data to describe the research topic.

The combined research approach guided the researcher to gather and analyse a combination of numeric and textual evidence. This approach required the researcher to employ certain characteristics to approach the study (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:435). Flexibility and creativity are characteristics defined by Teddlie and Tashakkorie (2003:164) which were necessary to apply in developing an approach utilising quantitative and qualitative approaches.

1.5.3 Research Design

The plan to collect and analyse evidence is known as a research design. It allows the researcher to investigate the research question in order to explore possible answers (Ragin, 1994:191, in Flick, 2011:65).

The aim of the study encompassed this focus which aimed to explore and describe the social phenomenon of parenting programmes for early childhood development. An exploratory study aims to develop an understanding of a phenomenon (De Vos et al.,

2011:96). The exploratory research design complements the purpose of descriptive research. A descriptive research aims to create a picture of the phenomenon based on meaningful data collected (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:96). The descriptive approach seeks to focus deeply and examine thoroughly a particular situation or topic through gaining meaning and reflection from the research participants. This enables them to provide a meaningful description of the phenomenon (De Vos et al., 2011:96; Flick, 2011:65; Rubin & Babbie, 2005:125, in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:95). The aim of this study was to describe practitioners' experiences of facilitating parent education programmes for early childhood development. In order to do this, the study utilised an exploratory and descriptive research design to gain relevant insight into and provide a comprehensive description of these experiences. The design was appropriate as the research intended to investigate deeper meanings, leading to a richer description of practitioners' reflections on the programmes they facilitated.

Grinnell (1988:220) writes that the researcher typically aims to build "…on the results of previous research". This deductive design requires a substantial amount of literature and research findings to be in place (Babbie, 1986, in Grinnell, 1988; 220). At times, the descriptive design of a qualitative approach is criticised for being a 'soft science' because it relies on intuition and imagination that the philosophical tradition of enquiry permits (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:95). Exploratory and descriptive research has been described at a credible method for gaining understanding and meaning surrounding a certain topic (De Vos *et al.,* 2011:95; Flick, 2011:65). In light of this critique, after examination of the literature, it was confirmed that the utilisation of the exploratory and descriptive research designs would be appropriate for this study because it would enable the researcher to successfully achieve the research objectives and reach the aim of the study, namely to gain a *better understanding* of how practitioners in the Cape Metropole *experience* the facilitation of parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.

1.5.4 Population and Sampling

A 'population' is the demarcation of units which is investigated in a study and it refers to individuals in the universe who have particular characteristics (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:198). Multiple social service organisations were identified via key informants in the field of parent education in the Western Cape in order to gain entry into the research field and access to the population. The aim of this study was to gain practitioners' reflections regarding the contribution of a parenting education programme towards improved child development.

Therefore, the population was a select portion of the universe of all practitioners who facilitate parent education programmes aimed at early childhood development.

The term 'research sample' is defined by De Vos *et al.* (2011:223) as "representing… the population considered for actual inclusion in the study". The sampling procedure most applicable for this study was non-probability sampling. De Vos *et al.* (2011:328) point out that the researcher seeks out individuals, groups and settings where the specific processes being studied are most likely to occur. This study consequently adopted the purposive sampling method (Monette, Sullivan & DeJong, 2002:151; Oliver, 2010:78) to gather data based on "generalised" experiences (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:392; Grinnell, 1988; 252). There was an element of judgemental sampling in this method, as the participants were selected based on certain characteristics which correspond to the criterion technique.

The sample size comprised of participants who worked at social service organisations and who possessed the most characteristic representation of the population (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:392; Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 2002:151). The potential subjective voids in data which are attributed to judgemental sampling can be addressed through approaching key informants to participate in the qualitative data collection (Babbie, 2011:181; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:234; Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 2002:236). Key informants relevant to this study included directors of social services organisations and current researchers in the field of parent education.

The sample was based on the following inclusion criteria:

- Practitioners (professional or paraprofessional). This includes social worker, nurses, educators, psychologists and speech therapists;
- Practitioners who work for an accredited and registered social service organisation;
- Practitioners who currently facilitate a parent education programme for early childhood development or have facilitated such a programme within the last two years;
- Practitioners who provide services in the Cape Metropole area; and
- Practitioners who are proficient in English.

For this study, 25 participants who met the above criteria were included as a representation of the population. The age group targeted by the parent education programme was not a criterion for exclusion, as literature notes that although programmes differ, their principles

and aims remain fairly similar (Daro & Harding, 1999:157). The gender of the practitioner was also not a criterion for exclusion.

1.5.5 Method of Data Collection

The process whereby information is obtained from the sample population is known as 'data collection'. The combined method of the study suggested that the procedure best suited to gather data from practitioners in the population would be to utilise an individually administered collection tool. A semi-structured questionnaire was consequently used during individual interviews with the practitioners to gather qualitative and quantitative (following De Vos et al., 2011:347). Considering that practitioners, such as nurses and social workers in particular, are encouraged to be critical and reflect on their own practice and interventions (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985:43; Pease, 2006:15), the use of reflective individually administered questionnaires complemented the in-depth nature of the study's data collection approach.

Similarly, in an exploratory study on the assessment of parenting, Woodcock (2003) utilised individual questionnaires and in-depth interviews as the method of data collection. This type of data collection tool is recommended to assist the researcher to gain a better understanding of the participants' expertise, as well as observe the social dynamics which are present when interviewing fellow professionals (Woodcock, 2003:93).

The semi-structured nature of the questionnaire was purposeful for avoiding unnecessary repetition in the data collection, which could occur when using unstructured questionnaires (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:353). The interviews were conducted with practitioners who were at that time, or previously, facilitating a parenting programme at a family-service organisation.

The information which was investigated in the semi-structured questionnaire (Addendum A) related to the nature and characteristics of the parent education programmes (e.g., the number of sessions in the programme, duration of programme, language of programme, profession of practitioner and the number of participants), details of the practitioners' training as well as their reflections on their role as facilitator. The questionnaire was composed in a deductive-emergent manner, based on the emergent themes from the literature review.

The interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding and explanation of the phenomena in pursuit of an answer to the research question. The participants were therefore presented with the opportunity to *reflect* on their facilitation

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experiences while leading parent education programmes toward early childhood development. Reflection is a key approach to gaining data through exploratory and descriptive research designs. Priority was placed on gaining qualitative data in the interviews, due to the emphasised qualitative research approach.

The data collection was conducted in accordance with ethical considerations (discussed further in Section 1.6) and the practitioners were presented with an opportunity to participate in the interviews. Written consent (Addendum B) was required from all participants.

The interviews were administered through ethical procedures and motivated the reflections of practitioners as the researcher utilised a person-centred approach. This approach was effective for questioning and obtaining reflective thoughts from the participants in a non-harmful way. Individually administered interviews allowed participants an opportunity to share more openly and with greater confidentiality than in a focus group or group-administered questionnaire (De Vos *et al*., 2011:352). The interviews were recorded with a tape recorder in order to ensure reliability of the data collected. Permission to record the interview was addressed in the informed consent letter (Addendum B).

1.5.6 Pilot Study

A 'pilot study' is a small-scale trial of the interview schedule for a proposed study. Monette, Sullivan and Dejong (2002:236) and De Vos *et al.* (2011:237) endorse this definition. A pilot study was conducted in order to establish validity and reliability of the data collection instrument (semi-structured questionnaire). The questionnaire (Add allowed the researcher to plan the interview questions while still allowing for flexibility to adjust the wording according to the interview setting (Rubin & Babbie, 2012:124). Monette, Sullivan and Dejong's definition (2002:236) can be linked to this study as a pilot study was conducted to ensure that the individual interviews gathered data in a manner that effectively responded to the research question. The pilot study confirmed to the researcher the research methodology and design were both collecting the appropriate data needed for the goal of the study. As part of the combined approach, there was a need to ensure that the data collection tools successfully gathered the necessary data related to the themes of the empirical study. The research process observed the same ethical principles and procedures in the pilot study and the data collection phase.

1.5.7 Method of Data Analysis

The process of interpreting both the qualitative and quantitative data gathered from the participants is termed 'data analysis'. This is the procedure of turning interview data into evidence-based explanations (Rubin & Rubin 2005:201). De Vos *et al.* (2005:403) confirm this definition and suggest that data analysis involves decreasing the amount of new data, establishing themes and developing a framework for integrating literature with the new data. This process seeks to interpret and find meaning within the collected data. Combined approaches involve a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis strategies and are endorsed by several authors such as Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:22) and Teddlie and Tashakkorie (2003:3). These authors endorse a procedure using seven stages of analysis:

1. Data reduction: reducing qualitative texts into themes and quantitative data via descriptive statistics;
2. Data display: describing pictorially the qualitative data (charts and graphs) and quantitative data (tables and graphs);
3. Data transformation: converting narrative data and static data;
4. Data correlation: linking the qualitative and quantitative data;
5. Data consolidation: combining data to create a new variable or new data;
6. Data comparison: comparing qualitative and quantitative data sources; and
7. Data integration: combining fully the findings of the quantitative and qualitative datasets.

<div align="center">(De Vos et al., 2011:447; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:22-23)</div>

This study presents the analysed quantitative data in the format of tables and figures in Chapter 4. The qualitative data was analysed through themes, categories and narratives of the study participants in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the interpretation and conclusions which were made as a result of this research procedure after the extensive data analysis process.

1.5.8 Data Verification

Guba's model (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:419) is one of the models adopted by social science researchers to ensure rigor and trustworthiness in their research designs. Guba's framework to ensure rigor seeks to satisfy four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability

and conformability and was implemented in this research in an effort to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

Lincoln and Guba (1999, in De Vos *et al.* 2011:419-420) state that *credibility* seeks to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is presented. *Transferability* "seeks to ask whether the findings of the research can be transferred from a specific situation or case to another". The study was completed with transferability as it was accurately recorded and presented as a research document. Guba (1981, in Krefting 1991:214-222) proposed that the *dependability* criterion relates to the consistency of findings. Dependability was enhanced by making use of colleagues, supervision and methodological experts (peer examination) to check the research plan and implementation. Authors (Krefting, 1991; De Vos *et al.*, 2011) further emphasise the importance of questioning whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another researcher. To ensure *conformability* of the study, the researcher adopted the auditing trail strategy described by De Vos *et al.* (2011:422). This strategy systematically maintained the documentation process of the researcher's continuous analysis of all decisions and actions taken during the research process. With reference to this study, the researcher's supervisor fulfilled the role of research auditor who participated in monitoring the trustworthiness of the research process and documentation of research activities.

1.5.9 Limitations

Several limitations to this study have been identified.

This study is limited to an exploratory and descriptive research design. The study is not an evaluation of parent education programmes' outcomes. Rather, the purpose was to answer the research question, which aimed to explore and describe the experiences of practitioners who facilitate parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive-behavioural approaches.

The researcher utilised a non-probability sampling method, based on inclusion criteria from a sample population of 25 practitioners of parent education programmes in the Cape Metropole area. Therefore, the study was limited to a small sample population (n=25) and restricted to one geographical area. The findings should be interpreted in the context of this specific sampled population.

Although the small number of participants is endorsed by the literature, it may limit the study's descriptive findings. Furthermore, the very restricted geographical distribution of the sampled population is limiting as parent education programmes are delivered by practitioners of the wider population and throughout South Africa. Another limitation to the sample is the unequal distribution of females within the sampled population. Although this is representative of the female dominated helping professions in the field. Furthermore, the number of practitioners interviewed at each organisation was not evenly distributed which means that the perspectives gained in the data collection may be gender biased.

The descriptive narrative obtained from participants to answer the research question provided comprehensive insights into the organisational nature and components of parent education programmes. Limited depth was found regarding the phenomenon of practitioners' intervention experiences, which could be explained by the pragmatic nature of programme delivery. The depth of participants' descriptions was further observed to be limited by the practitioners' willingness to reflect on their own interventions. Despite these limitations, the study was completed and the research aims and objectives were reached.

1.6   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As mentioned in previous section, ethical aspects were considered in this study. From a social work ethical perspective, the *Dictionary of Social Work* (Pierson & Thomas, 2011:210) defines ethical codes as "guiding principles for good practice". From a research ethics perspective, Babbie (2011:477) endorses this definition of ethical considerations as a research or professional practice which is advised by the standards of professional conduct.

To ensure rigor and ethical practice, the research proposal was submitted to the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) of the Department of Social Work, Stellenbosch University, for approval. The study was seen as low-risk research with the only foreseeable risk being that of inconvenience in terms of finding a suitable time for conducting the interviews. Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee on 27 June 2013 (Addendum C).

The Ethical Code of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP, 2012) can be seen as a guiding policy for social work research. This code prescribes the manner and professional conduct which a researcher should assume when conducting research in the field of social work.

The following ethical considerations, adapted from De Vos *et al.* (2011:115-125), were used in this study:

1. *Informed consent:* This refers to the functional strategy implemented to ensure voluntary participation and avoidance of harm to participants in a formalised manner (Babbie, 2007:64). No participant was coerced into partaking in the study (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:117; Sarantakos, 2005:20). A copy of the consent documents provided the participants with an opportunity to gain adequate information to endorse their decision and commitment to participate in the study (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:118). Participants were required to sign two informed consent forms (original and duplicate). Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study, as detailed above. Permission was granted by the organisations involved in order to ensure ethical entry into the research field.

2. *Confidentiality:* De Vos *et al.*, (2011:119) comment that every participant has the right to privacy and that it is his/her choice to decide when, where, to whom and to what degree his/her experiences, beliefs and behaviours are revealed. This principle was upheld throughout the study as the right to privacy was emphasised throughout the data collection process. Confidentiality was maintained by the researcher as discussed below. All documentation containing personal data was secured in a research file.

3. *Avoidance of harm:* As clarified by De Vos *et al.* (2011:115), researchers should seek to avoid that participants are harmed either physically or emotionally. This study could be classified as a low-risk study. The participants were informed prior to the study regarding the nature of the research and the impact of the investigation.

4. *Actions and competence of the researcher:* The researcher was obligated to ensure that she was knowledgeable and adequately skilled to undertake the study (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:123). This was validated through the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), who endorsed the researcher's professional status as a registered social worker.

5. *Debriefing of participants:* Judd *et al.* (in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:122) report that in order to avoid any emotional harm, the respondents are to be given a chance to express how they experienced the research process. None of the participants express the need for further debriefing or counselling services after the interviews were completed.

6. *Non-discrimination:* The researcher maintained professional ethics with regard to the participants' worth and dignity. Culture and race were not criteria for exclusion and all races were welcome to participate in this study. Language and geographical restrictions were addressed as inclusion criteria (see Section 1.5.4).

1.7   CHAPTER LAYOUT

The study will be compiled in a report framework. An introduction and outline to the study has been provided in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 presents a discussion on the role and responsibility of parents towards the care and development of their pre-school children. Chapter 3 presents a discussion on the nature and components of parent education programmes for early childhood development. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the empirical investigation into practitioners' experiences of parent education programmes for early childhood development. In the last chapter, Chapter 5, the analysed data is interpreted in order to present conclusions and recommendations regarding the nature, components and facilitation of parent education programmes based on the reflections of participants.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS TOWARDS THE CARE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a process of interaction between a child and a care-giving adult. During this process, parents play a significant role in the rearing and development of their children. The importance of this role is not always acknowledged by the parents themselves, especially during the early years of development. Numerous studies have shown that the experiences and relationships a child has in the first five years of life, play a major role in the child's survival, academic performance, social abilities and capacity for development in the years to come (Aboud, 2007:3; Azzi-Lessing, 2010:255; Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:7; NICE, 2007b). Challenges experienced by parents often relate to the lack of skills or knowledge of parents during the early child-rearing years, which creates a direct need for social service intervention such as a parent education programme.

The importance of parenting and child development is of worth to parents themselves, as well as practitioners such as social workers, psychologists, nurses, educators and researchers. Practitioners are urged by Azzi-Lessing (2010:262) to have "up-to-date knowledge" in the field of early childhood development and family education. This could lead to an integration of knowledge bases from multiple professions and disciplines.

This chapter seeks to address the first objective of the study, which is to discuss the role and responsibility of parents towards the care and development of their pre-school children. This will be achieved through a review and criticism of the current literature related to parenting children in the early childhood phase. The review aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the parenting tasks which should be performed by a parent or caregiver of a pre-school child (aged three to five) through age-appropriate methods and skills. Parents in this phase are the ideal target group for parent education programmes in ECD practice and policy, which will be detailed further in Chapter 3.

As in Woodcock's (2003:88) qualitative study, "The Social Work Assessment of Parenting: An Exploration", emphasis will be placed on emerging themes in literature from the psychological parenting studies as well as other disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. Noteworthy parenting challenges and early intervention possibilities for parents experiencing difficulties will be outlined in this chapter.

2.2   DESCRIPTION OF PARENTING

Traditionally, one would become and be defined as a parent through one of three possibilities: giving birth, being married to the mother or father of a child as well as adopting a child (Elrod, 2011:246). The fundamental principle of parenting, especially early parenting, was termed as "attachment" by Bowlby (1969). This continues to be the theory from which many Western parenthood practices for child-rearing are developed. It has been commented that attachment bonds are the "reciprocal, emotional, and physical affiliation between a child and a caregiver" (Elrod, 2008:249). Attachment has become an important parenting skill as well as an assessment principle for social work practice with children and families (Rock, Karabanow & Manion, 2012:346). From an ecological perspective, parents utilise their resources and support as well as skills and competencies in a reciprocal manner between themselves and their children (Scott, Arney & Vimparni, 2010:14; Quinton, 2004:27). Through reciprocal and attachment practices, children have the capacity to develop strong attachment bonds to parental figures.

The traditional definition of parenting is the care of biological child by an adult. Parenting traditionally was seen as a role carried by adults who were married. Modern-day families tend to conflict with the traditional definition of parent-child relationships, as there has been an increasing number of extramarital births in both developed and developing countries (United Nations, 2009:19). The National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2011: 334) provides the statistic that only 32% of children in South Africa live with both their biological parents and a quarter does not live with either of their biological parents. The disorganisation of the family system was also illustrated in the World Fertility Report of 2009 (United Nations, 2009), which included 101 countries that had data on married women. Parenting has begun to take various forms which differ from the traditional image of a parenting structure. The change in family systems has prompted a change in the way society perceives families.

Lately, a modernised view of parenting tends to be adopted by society instead of the traditional perception. For example, marriage is becoming less of a requirement for childbearing (Desai, 2012:338). Non-traditional families such as children conceived by medically assisted reproductive technologies, divorced parents, cohabiting partners, blended families, same-sex couples and international adoptions have also influenced the conventional family structures (Elrod, 2011: 263; Zaviršek & Kawrence, 2012:444). The newly defined structure of family structures will continue to change as technologies become

more advanced and society becomes more accepting of the self-defined concept of parenthood (Quinton, 2004:26; Zaviršek & Kawrence, 2012:445).

Following Belsky, Putnam and Crnic (1996:45), this study adopts the differentiation between parenting (the individual interaction of an adult with his/her child) and co-parenting (mutual parental support and involvement with their child). These oversimplified terms for parenting behaviour, however, does not address the significance of the role which an adult plays in the life of their child.

Parenting means actively making a series of decisions about the socialisation of one's children (Berns, 2013:139). Thus, it can be agreed that parental status is based on behaviour, circumstantial evidence of parenting such as attachment, as well as genetics and contractual obligations. Oswalt (2004:142) confirms this definition stating that being a parent is both a biological and a social status. Consequently, this study defines parenting as both a social and a biological status and as well as an activity.

In the South African context, the modernised view of parenting is more widely accepted as many children are parented by adults other than their biological parents. This has brought about a need for new legislation on parenting issues to be relevant to children and families today. The requirement to explain the concept of a parent or caregiver poses a dilemma for policy making and legislation. The Children's Act (2005) attempts to address this problem by outlining parental responsibility and rights. Section 18 of the Children's Act declares that parents have the responsibility and the right to:

    (a) care for the child;
    (b) maintain contact with the child;
    (c) act as guardian of the child; and
    (d) contribute to the maintenance of the child.

<div align="right">(Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005)</div>

Practitioners are posed with the challenge of applying legislative constructs such as stated above to their clients. These constructs often relate to the roles and responsibilities parents should play in the lives of their children. Practitioners who work with parents have certain expectations towards the manner in which parents fulfil these responsibilities. In Woodcocks' (2003) study, practitioners provide a detailed concept of parenting based on behaviours exhibited by the adult. Their findings revealed the following expectations of parents regarding their duties:

- To prevent harm;
- To know and be able to meet appropriate developmental needs;
- To provide routine and consistent physical care; and
- To be emotionally available and sensitive.

(Woodcock, 2003:94-96)

Parenting education programmes are developed in order to address the expectations and complexities of parenting. Therefore, this conceptualisation is useful when viewing parenting and the complexities surrounding the relatively new scientific field of parenting research (Pugh, De'Ath & Smith, 1994; Smith, 2010:689).

2.3   HISTORY OF PARENTING AS A RESEARCHED DISCIPLINE

Although the concept of parenting is hardly new to society, the actual formation of parenting as a *researched discipline* has only emerged in the last 30 years. Prior to this surge of public awareness, academic research and scholarly attention, there were several significant milestones which can be noted in the evolution of parenting research.

There has been much conversation amongst authors regarding the *nature* versus *nurture* debate, which has its origins in early human development thinking (Collins, 2000:218). There is a contrast between the opinions of early childhood researchers (Gesell, 1928), who view nature as a significant influence towards development (Keenan & Evans, 2009:15-16; Bornstein, 2012:214; Pollak, 2012:233) and parenting researchers (Jenkins, 2012:254), who tend to view nurture and the culture of one's child as being the predominant influence on development. Research has shown that 90% of practitioners and parents working with pre-school children accept that both nature and nurture are equally important when attempting to understand children's behaviour and cognitions (Anger, 2012:395; Keenan & Evans, 2009:17; Perry, 2002:81; Plomin & Walker, 2003:6; Rock, Karabanow & Manion, 2012:346).

This debate and the acknowledgement of the influence of nature and nurture on child development is relevant to parenting research, including this study, as it urges practitioners to view child development and parenting as interactional relationships and activities contributing to their upbringing. Nurturing and interaction are viewed at an equal level of importance to the family or home environment as influential factors in the family system. In this regard, Bronfenbrenner (1979) notes the ecological influence that the family system has

on a child's development while Belsky (1981) makes specific reference to the parenting activity towards child development. Literature reviews of research conducted in the field of early childhood development acknowledge parenting as an important influence on children's development (Brody & Flor, 1997:1000; Morris, 2010 in Rock, Karabanow & Manion, 2012:346; Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:7). The concept of combining both biological (nature) and social (nurture) factors is complementary to the reviews of Bronte-Tinkew and Calkins (2001:8) and Darling and Turkki (2009:14-15) who both suggest that parents are in a position where they are able to adopt responsibility for their child and the child's home environment. Other studies (Belsky, Crnic & Woodworth, 1995; De Haan, Prinzie, & Deković, 2009) examined the linkages between parenting and children's developmental outcomes, which the authors note have been vastly researched. These linkages include linguistic development, cognitive processing and improved self-concept. The two predominant theories in this discussion (ecological and developmental approaches, respectively) provide a foundation for understanding the family system and the parental unit which exists within this system.

Another important development to note in the formation of parenting theory, was when Benjamin Spock published a book in 1946 which changed the previously highly theoretical views on parenting to a less rigid theoretical perspective on child-rearing. Spock aimed to encourage parents to find enjoyment in their parenting and to be more flexible in directing their children's development. His book, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* contains elements of social learning (Dewey, 1902) and psychological development (Freud, 1923), both of which are now the foundations of modern-day parenting practices and parenting education programmes. Trends in parenting practices such as discipline practices, importance of parent-child attachment and educational approaches seemed to be less of a focal point for scholars until the 1980s, when the concept of parenting as a science emerged in the literature (Smith, 2010:689; Woodcock, 2003:88). The latest movement in parenting studies is a focus on culture and inclusivity. The significance of this focus is relevant to modern society because cultural differences in parenting practices are often misunderstood. Contemporary parenting studies are at a critical point where the need has emerged to ensure that parenting studies are culturally relative and inclusive and not dominated by Western ideology as they have been in the past (Woodcock, 2003:691; Borstein, 2012:216).

Topics which have been the focus of parenting research over the years have been detailed by Lewis (2005:340-342). He comments on the diversity of the topics as they range from early studies which include child development, parental difficulties, pathological parenting practices, social learning and cross-cultural comparisons of childhood. He grouped

contemporary trends of parenting research into four main themes (Lewis, 2005:340), namely parenting styles (Baumrind, 1971), social learning theory (Bandura, 1989; Bell & Harper, 1977), attachment theory and behaviour genetics. Lewis (2005:342) concludes his review of parenting practices by commenting that the research field of parenting is "lively" with potential for growth and understanding of the complexity of parenting. In terms of child-rearing literature, a content analysis was performed on parenting manuals published in the 20th century by professionals and child experts. It was found that there was a shift in the former "preoccupation" with nutrition and toilet training towards a focus on childhood development (Alwin, 2004:143). Over and above these regular parenting topics, parenting knowledge has taken a holistic approach to topics related to raising self-assured children who can regulate their emotions, cope with environmental stressors and make informed decisions about their own behaviour.

2.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE OF A PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

Pre-primary schools are ideal settings for learning new skills and discovering a child's initiative in relatively new environments. Early childhood is characteristically the appropriate age for a child to attend pre-primary school. The new surroundings of the pre-primary school and the potential relationships that can be formed there have a great influence on a child's social growth.

The age group of children attending pre-primary schools generally ranges between three to six years old (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:255). The children in this phase are discovering their own abilities separate from their caregivers. According to the developmental theorist, Eric Erikson (1959), this is a natural progression from infancy towards adulthood. Oswalt (2004) writes that "when children develop initiative, they continue to develop their self-concept and gain a desire to try new things... while being responsible for their actions to some extent". This means that children of this age group should be exposed to a variety of new activities and situations in order to overcome this crisis of developing initiative.

According to Erikson's developmental theory, a child's personality development is based on genetic factors, social influences and environmental factors (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2008:194). He proposes an eight-stage psychodynamic theory, which entails a model for human personality development according to age appropriate challenges which he terms as developmental crises. Louw and Louw (2007) state that this psychodynamic theory relies on the individual's resolution of each phase's epigenetic crisis. Each crisis results in an "ego-

strength" or "developmental gain" (Keenan & Evans, 2009:28; Louw & Louw, 2007:20; 174; Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2008:196). During early childhood, the child experiences the developmental crises of 'Autonomy vs. Shame' and 'Initiative vs. Guilt' (Keenan & Evans, 2009:26-27; Louw & Louw, 2007:20; Snowman, McCown & Biehler, 2012:31). These two crises are associated with the two child development stages which are relevant to this study: *toddlerhood* and *pre-school age*. Both these stages fall into the age group category of early childhood and are discussed below with reference to Erikson's theory.

Toddlerhood (18 months to three years old), is the second stage noted in Erikson's theory. The developmental crisis associated with this phase is 'Autonomy vs. Shame'. The theory assumes that a child will either gain confidence in their own autonomy or self-shame due to the fact that they were unable to be autonomous in their actions. If resolved adequately, the child acquires *self-control*, *courage* and *self‑will* as developmental strengths.

During this stage, children learn to master skills and make decisions for themselves. A common phrase used for children in this stage is the 'Terrible Twos', as children begin to exercise their own free will during this phase. Children of this age often use the word "No!", usually to refuse or rebel from parental instructions. This act, often seen by parents as disobedience, is linked to the child's self-determination, which is gained from their ability to use their developmental gain of autonomy and will. The toddler can gain autonomy when given reasonable choices and proper guidance from the caregiver to perform daily tasks such as choosing which toys to play with. Parents can lead their children to make healthy and wise choices to assist them to succeed at this stage. Self-control and courage are additional strengths which can be promoted during this stage as the child is in a position to experience life separate from the parent (Cawood, 2007:35-107).

Pre-School Age (three to five years old), is the third stage noted in Erikson's theory. The developmental crisis associated with this phase is 'Initiative vs. Guilt'. If resolved adequately, the child acquires *purpose* as a developmental strength.

At this stage, the child desires to begin and complete his/her own actions for a purpose. This stage is important because the child starts to initiate goal-focussed actions according to his/her newly established will (Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009:13; Smith, 2004:36). Guilt is a new emotion for the child to experience and may be confusing to him/her. For example, a child may feel guilty over things which are not logically guilt-producing and he/she will feel guilty when his/her initiatives do not produce the desired results. Rituals such as bedtime and bath time should become easier during this phase because the child knows the routine and is

able to understand that there are rules and limits which will be enforced by means of choices and consequences during these activities (Cawood, 2007:98). The ability to initiate new tasks creates a sense of personal purpose and worth within the child's self-concept. This puts the child in an advantaged position to move into the next stage of development.

This theory for childhood development is not without critique from researchers. In favour of Erikson's theory, current researchers in the field of developmental psychology, Dunkel and Sefcek (2009:20) praise Erikson's developmental tasks as they "transcend time and culture; [and]… are a part of human nature". This view is significant to motivate that this theory can be applied to children and adults of diverse cultures. Negative criticism on Erikson's theory by Snowman and McCown (2012:34-35) highlight the subjectivity of Erikson's interpretations in his research as well as a theoretical tendency to depict male development more accurately than female development at any given stage. Miller (2002, in Keenan and Evans, 2009:27) agrees with this and notes that Erikson's' theory is empirically weak and that it is systematically difficult to interpret some of the key terms such as 'autonomy' or 'shame', as such terms are vaguely described and may be misinterpreted.

2.5 AGE-APPROPRIATE PARENTING SKILLS

Child-rearing skills should be age appropriate and individualised to ensure that the child develops optimally within his/her specific developmental stage (Marion, 2003:11). Each developmental stage is categorised by behaviours and tasks which are considered "normal for that stage", such as disciplinary techniques and boundary setting (Cawood, 2007:34). Consequently, it is necessary, for both parents and practitioners working with pre-school children, to identify whether children's behaviour is positive or negative and respond accordingly. Papatheodorou, (2005:41) illustrates this concept in a diagrammatic representation of a continuum of behaviour in the early years (three to six years old) (Figure 2.1).
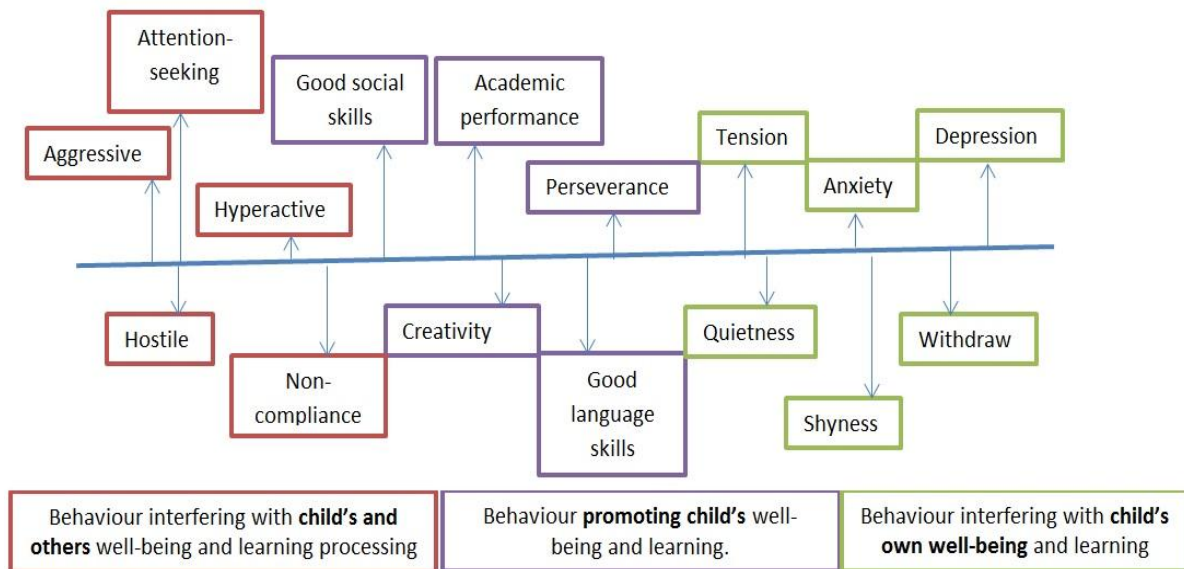
Figure 2.1 The continuum of behaviour for pre-school children (3-6 years old) (Papatheodorou, 2005:41)

This continuum suggests a fluctuating movement, between children's strengths and adverse behaviours. According to Papatheodorou, (2005:41), parents play an influential role as the primary socialisation agents of their children's behaviour as they can be aware of the impact such behaviour would have on a child's well-being and learning.

There are suggested parenting skills and measures that are considered effective for each developmental stage. Parental tolerance is recommended by practitioners for dealing with toddlerhood (Papatheodorou, 2005:23). The parent should be present during any disciplinary activity to supervise the child and ensure that the undesirable behaviour does not reoccur. This also reassures the child that the parent is no rejecting or withdrawing care (Nieman & Shea, 2004:37). The absence of this parental supervision could result in harm or abuse. However, a disciplinary challenge posed to parents is that giving verbal directions or instructions is often not effective during this stage due to the child's level of cognitive development. Parents are advised by experts to avoid overly high expectations of their child, inconsistent or overly harsh discipline, failure to acknowledge their child's feelings and the removal of security objects, such as a teddy bear (Cawood, 2007:98). Despite maintaining a level of parental tolerance during this stage, certain challenges are still faced by parents who may require intervention or assistance, as discussed in Section 2.12.

Historically, parenting education programmes tended to focus more on younger children. Early research expanded on the idea that parent education programmes should not need to be age-group specific seeing that although programmes would differ in focus, their principles and aims remain fairly similar (Daro & Harding, 1999:157). This narrow focus is no longer

evident as various reviews showcase the broad scope of modern parenting programmes which target a specific age population (*Cochrane review* by Barlow, Smailagic, Ferriter, Bennett & Jones, 2012). Parenting practices addressed in these programmes are not only specific to the age of the child anymore, but also take into account the culture and ethnicity of the family unit.

2.6   INFLUENCE OF CULTURE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES ON PARENTING PRACTICES

In the South African context, which is of relevance to this study, a unique range of cultures and ethnicities are represented within one population. Consequently, South African families are in need of individualised, culturally relevant parenting services and support due to their cultural diversity. This requires practitioners working with families and parents in South Africa to pay attention to the various and diverse culture-specific aspects of families. These culturally relevant parent education programmes are essential for effectively meeting the needs of parents in countries such as South Africa, as will be described further in Chapter 3.

Current literature has provided increasing support for culturally relative parenting practices to become the optimum paradigm when practitioners relate to parents (Borstein, 2012:216; Borstein, 2010:36; Kumpfer, Magalhaes & Xie, 2012:110). According to Borstein (2012:216) there are similarities and differences in parenting approaches which are directly linked to the cultural socialisation of children. For example, language acquisition is a common element of most cultures irrespective of the origin. Therefore, parenting practices can simultaneously be universal and culturally specific. However, individualistic and collectivistic cultures differ in terms of socialisation values and goals (Sorkhabi, 2012:855) and therefore Darling and Turkki (2009:24) emphasise that researchers' and professionals' insights regarding families should be conducted from within the cultural context of the country.

Developed countries such as the United States of America (USA) and Japan are noted to be child-centred, individualist modern societies. South Africa, as a developing country, would be classified as a collectivistic society because it values the strength of living as a united community. The term 'ubuntu' is used to describe the African mentality of shared caring and within this philosophy emphasis is placed on the family unit as a well-structured system for raising a child (Broodryk, 2001:366). For example, the idea of sharing responsibility for the raising of a child is part of this African philosophy (Broodryk, 2001:369).

South Africa has a unique socio-historical narrative which has impacted many families and poverty has been the underlying cause of many social issues in South Africa (Hoghughi, 2004:12; Newman, Leventhal & Gennetian, 2010:1134; Mwansa & Kreiter, 2012:393). According to the Department of Education (Republic of South Africa, 2001) 40% of young children in South Africa grow up in conditions of severe poverty and neglect as a direct consequence of the old apartheid system. Caring structures are often disrupted due to circumstances such as migrant labour, maternal morality and disorganised family systems, which often result in children moving between carers or guardians (Penn, 2010:151). Furthermore, poor parenting practices and lack of parenting knowledge has been associated with low SES, lack of access to resources and deprived childhood experiences, which will be detailed further in Section 2.10.4.

The Department of Social Development in South Africa has been instrumental in advancing early childhood development and improving parenting skills for the early childhood age group (United Nations Children's Fund, 2009:2). Recent research has confirmed that 26% of South African children live with caregivers and not their biological parents. Of this group 80% of the caregivers were grandparents or relatives (South African Human Rights Commission and UNICEF, 2011:51). As part of the government's strategy, policy documents such as the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005) and the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2011) mandate budgetary allocations and training for early childhood practitioners and centres for all caregivers. The aim is to positively promote the quality of parenting practices in South Africa.

2.7   PARENTING ROLES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

2.7.1 Family Structures and Gender Roles

Family structures have evolved over the years in response to changes in society. Parental roles have adapted to these changes to ensure that the family is provided for by its members. A significant change in family structures has taken place in terms of gender role allocation. Traditionally, power was given to the highest income earner, while the stereotypical "breadwinner" and "homemaker" roles rarely exist in modern society as most households require the income of two full-time wage earners to maintain the heightened expectation of lifestyle in the 21st century. This development in family structure also influences the allocation and perception of parental roles.

Literature which examines parent-child relationships suggests that parental gender greatly impacts the nature of interactions and the types of influences that parents have on children. Arias, Brody, Brown and Harper (2006: 85-90) conducted a study which focused on the effects of gender in parental disciplinary roles and child adjustment. They noted that while fathers tend to play a more prominent role in disciplinary interactions, mothers play a larger role in providing affection and supervision. Fathers also tend to be less involved in their children's lives and show less affection and nurturance compared to mothers (Arias *et al.*, 2006:198). The study further showed that motherly support of the father towards discipline weakened the potential negative effects of father punishment on child depression. It is interesting to note that poor child adjustment has been found to be an effect of confused parental roles (Betawi, Jabbar, Al Jabery, Zaza & Al-Shboul, 2014:1; Penn, 2010:151). These findings suggest a difference between the role and tasks of a mother and a father, which could have implications for parenting in the modern era.

2.7.2 Parental Role

The role of a parent and activities of a parent are closely linked as the term 'parent' suggests a connection between what a parent is and what a parent does. This link between being a parent and parenting is significant to define because of the need for positive parent practices when raising a child. Observable, daily tasks of a parent engaging with his/her child are defined as "parenting practices" by Borstein, Hahn and Hayes (2011:659). Recently, according to Borstein *et al.* (2011:659) and De Haan *et al.* (2009:1695) a correlation has been made between parenting practices and personality. The widely acknowledged Five-Factor Model of Personality as proposed by Costa and McCrae (1992) has been suggested to be the leading assessment framework for practitioners to map personality traits in humans (Borstein *et al.*, 2011:659). This model outlines *openness, neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and contentiousness* as personality traits of effective parents. Table 2.1 shows the correlation between the Five-Factor Model's personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1992:5-6) and associated parenting practices as observed by Borstein *et al.* (2011:660).

Table 2.1 Personality traits and parenting practices

Personality Trait Costa & McCrae (1992)	**Parenting Practice** Borstein, Hahn and Hayes (2011:659) and De Haan, Prinzie, & Deković (2009:1695)
Openness (also called intellect)	Nurturance, support, warmth, positive parenting practices exhibited
Neuroticism (emotionally unstable)	Intrusiveness, irritability, criticism, negative discipline, hostility, power assertion and sensitive parenting
Extraversion	Social dominance, sensitivity, cognitively stimulating parent practice and maternal power assertion
Agreeableness (trustworthiness)	Compassion, responsiveness, sensitivity, warmth and nurturing parenting
Conscientiousness	Supportiveness, responsiveness, sensitivity, being observant, setting appropriate boundaries, High expectations of young children.

Source: Adapted from Borstein, Hahn and Hayes (2011)

Criticism against this model could be that it can be seen as stereotypical. Costa and McCrae (1992:11,669) justify their model's generalising nature by noting that practitioners should always consider the individual's age, gender, education and cultural background when applying this assessment framework to an individual or client to ensure a person-centred approach. According to Borstein *et al*. (2011:672), parenting personality practices may be biologically inherent, yet should not be seen as only biological, but as part of a wider base of parenting knowledge which is accessible to parents. Furthermore, it should also be taken into account that a parent's individual personality is a dynamic, decontextualized trait, which fluctuates along a continuum of intensity, which impacts the likelihood of deviating from the norm of parenting practice.

Borstein *et al*.'s (2011) model is relevant because it showcases the parents' biological traits, and the expected patenting practice which relates to or emerges from each trait. Practitioners may find this a useful tool for understanding their clients' individual behaviour.

The comparison of parenting traits with parenting practices could also be beneficial to parents who wish to improve their natural parenting practices. The model (Table 2.1) provides indictors for certain practices associated with any of the five traits which may be helpful to parents who are struggling to relate to their child. The benefit of such a model is that there is an opportunity to identify desirable practices and learn these practices based on external parenting knowledge (Belsky, 1984:7). For instance, positive disciplinary practices may be inherent for some parents, but can also be gained through parenting knowledge.

Based on gender, Belsky *et al.* (1995) identified that *extraversion* as a personality trait is strongly related to fathers' parenting and that *agreeableness* is strongly linked to mothers' parenting. De Haan *et al.* (2009:1700) conclude that although gender roles do differ in personality, their parenting practices seem to remain fairly similar according to their character traits as depicted in the Five-Factor Model (Borstein *et al.*, 2011).

2.7.3 Gender-specific Parenting Roles

Although each parent (in the traditional family unit) usually occupies an individual, gender-specific role, there is an element of parenting which is a joint task between two parents, known as co-parenting (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011:107). Co-parenting is the supportive function which two parents provide to each other, which could offer value to their marital relationship, family unit and children. In the past, research typically focused on maternal influences and responsibilities (Adamsons & Buehler, 2007:271; Belsky, 1981:4; Van Bakel & Riksen-Walraven, 2002:258), while current research conducted in the field of parenting now includes a focus on both maternal and paternal roles. Because a large extent of a pre-schoolers' learning and growth is susceptible to parental influence of both parents (Connell & Goodman, 2002:749), there exists an important need to emphasise both the maternal and paternal roles, played by the mother and father respectively, in the family system. The assumption is often that the maternal role is more prominent or influential in children's development. However, this has been disproven by numerous studies (Adamsons & Buehler, 2007:276; Connell & Goodman, 2002:746; Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011:107; Scott, Arney & Vimparni, 2010:136). Therefore, Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf and Sokolowski (2008:397) encourage practitioners who work with parents to explore both separate and joint role expectations of mothers and fathers regarding the daily care of the child. The maternal and paternal roles will be discussed below to provide a clear understanding of the gender specific roles in a family unit.

2.7.3.1 Maternal Role

The maternal role, generally referred to as 'the mother', is the role played by the female figurehead in the family (Connell & Goodman, 2002:746). To perform the complex and dynamic maternal role in the family, mothers have to develop and adjust both cognitively and socially (Liu, Chen, Yeh & Hsieh, 2011:909). Nelson (2003:471) sees the transition to motherhood as a growth and development process which requires engagement by the

mother. This endorses the active role that mothers play in the family system to ensure development of both themselves and their children.

Mothers have been observed in studies to typically actively involve themselves in tasks associated with caregiving, household chores and school activities (Parke, Dennis, Flyr, Morris, Leidy & Schofield, 2005:105). The traditional characteristics associated with the maternal role, such as attentiveness, warmth, stimulating approach, responsiveness and non-restrictive nurture (Belsky, 1981:7; Borstein *et al.*, 2011:660; Liu *et al.*, 2011:910; Roman, 2011:582) remain relevant themes in modern parenting research. These characteristics are similar to the parenting practices associated with the personality traits *openness* and *contentiousness,* which were detailed in Section 2.7.2. It is possible to also observe these characteristics in the attachment which occurs between a mother and a child. The attachment theory will be elaborated upon in Section 2.11.2.

A mother's interaction with her children has been found to be a key variable in children's rate of development (Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:10). This poses a potential threat to future trends in parenting as mothers enter the workforce and take on a dual responsibility of child carer and provider (Parke *et al.,* 2005:109; Coleman & Karraker, 1998:63). Single parenting has also placed working mothers in a vulnerable position, as they lack the social support of a co-parent (Roman, 2011:578).

Within the South African context, a study conducted in 2011 showed that a majority of children perceived mothers to play a more supportive and involved role, rather than a controlling role (Roman, 2011). This suggests that mothers must have exhibited characteristics and behaviour such as warmth, structure and acknowledgment of feelings and thoughts, and must have created opportunities to participate in family decision making to fulfil this supportive role (Roman, 2011:582). These are positive parenting practices of an open and conscientious parent.

In South Africa, common maternal issues include single parenthood, alcohol abuse, low levels of education, extreme poverty, parenting stress, maternal morality and HIV/Aids (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012:364; Department of Education, 2001; Katwan, Adnams & London, 2011:724; Penn, 2010:151; Roman, 2011:577).

2.7.3.2 Paternal Role

The paternal role, generally referred to as 'the father', is the function played by the male figurehead in the family. The father is still seen as the head of the household as well as the breadwinner or provider by society, despite the changing definition of parental roles in the 21st century (Betawi *et al.*, 2014:1; Chambers, 2001:64; van den Berg *et al.,* 2013:111). The paternal role is often described in terms of active involvement in play activities when referring to the early childhood phase, as fathers tend to take on a playmate role when building attachment to their children (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, (2011:107). According to Louw and Louw (2007:249) and Jia and Schoppe-Sullivan (2011:117) this provides positive advances in the child's motor, cognitive and socio-emotional development. Fathers are uniquely able to instil confidence in their children through positive reinforcement during play activities especially during the early years.

Several lines of evidence suggest that the amount of a father's involvement changes throughout the child's development. Bailey (1994) found that a father's involvement in care-giving activities (nurture and affection) between the ages of infancy and five years old was less active than the mothers' involvement at this stage. However from the age of five years old the fathers became more involved in child-rearing. Similarly, other studies have found comparable patterns of increased paternal involvement with older children (Betawi *et al*, 2014:1; Connell & Goodman, 2002:762; Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011:107). Jia and Schoppe-Sullivan (2011:107) note that once children reach pre-school age the paternal figure engages more in play activities. Parent interventions and services have in the past tended to be focused on mothers (Richter, Chikovore, & Makusha, 2011:364:367). This perpetuates the issue of poor support for fathers who require of professional intervention. Despite the evidence that fathers become increasingly involved with their children, fathers tend not to seek professional help if there is a need for family services of some kind. When 1000 expecting fathers were interviewed in Australia about their parenting needs, the majority (30%) of the respondents stated that either they did "[not] know" or that "nothing [was] needed" (Russell, 1999). Practitioners therefore face a challenge because of the barriers which exist between fathers in need of assistance and their openness to request services

In South Africa, the heightened domestic violence rates and HIV/AIDS epidemic place added importance on the empowerment and support role of men in their role as active fathers (Richter, Chikovore, & Makusha, 2011:364). Due to the historical narrative of family life in South Africa, fathers often lack the positive role modelling and the leadership qualities

necessary for active fatherhood, since many of them were children in absent, abusive, or emotionally strained households (van den Berg, Hendricks , Hatcher, Peacock ,Godana & Dworkin, 2013:122) Fathers are therefore seen to be a potential target population for parent intervention in order to encourage fathers to take an active role in raising their children.

2.7.4 Single Parenting

Based on the Finer report of 1969, a widely accepted definition of the one-parent or single-parent home is a mother or father who parents without their spouse (Fundudis, 1997:2).

Cawood (2007:11) notes a remarkably high deterioration of marital relationships in society today. These escalating divorce rates are affecting the family structure in the 21st century and lead to increased custody arrangements and blended family structures worldwide. In South Africa (according to census results), seven million children (39% of all children) live with their mothers but not their fathers. 4% of children live in households where their fathers are present and their mothers absent (Meintjes & Hall, 2013:87)

Increased divorce rates have had a contributing impact on the heightened number of single parents since 2009 (Holborn & Eddy, 2011:3). These South African trends are consistent with international divorce trends indicated by Roman (2011:577).

It is perceived that children are negatively affected by the disruption of the family structure and adjustment of interpersonal roles. Children are often living between two houses, which can cause tension and family disorganisation. These children lack a strong support structure (family unit) to mould and model their behaviour. Mothers, the ones typically retaining custody of their children in the case of divorce or separation (Seltzer, 1991:80), have been recorded to experience higher stress and anxiety levels when raising children on their own, which could have a negative impact on their dependent children (Connell & Goodman, 2002:749).

As single parents experience a variety of additional pressures, such as stress, anxiety and depression (Fundudis, 1997:8-9), single parenting has become a concern to practitioners as it places more pressure on parents because they are placed in a position where they are required to play both the maternal and paternal roles and solely fulfil all parental responsibilities due to the absence of their parenting counter-part. Studies (Massey, Merriwether, & Garcia, 2013:129; Tasker,2010:35) highlight the experiences of same-sex

couples fulfilling these roles and responsibilities as a matter of debate in terms of effective single parenting and is an area for further investigation amongst researchers and practitioners alike.

2.8   CHALLENGES FACED BY PARENTS WITH PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Studies have found a vast range of challenges experienced by parents with pre-school children (Bloomfield *et al.,* 2005:53; Upshur, Wenz-Gross & Reed, 2009:34). These challenges include expectations of others, time management, being ill, being prepared for motherhood, inconsistent parenting and cultural expectations. Bloomfield *et al.* (2005:51) expand on the difficulties of parenting such as behavioural issues, conflict management and insufficient knowledge of child development. Organisations tend to utilise their own interchangeable terms to describe these parental problems, e.g., violent behaviour and aggression

An increasing concern for parents and practitioners is that of 'child aggression'. Papatheodorou (2005:15) expands on this concern by explaining that pre-schoolers often direct aggression towards their peers. Papatheodorou (2005:15) comments that boisterous children do not seem to be as popular amongst their peer group and that most fights tend to be a result of possession of property (such as a toy).Temper tantrums are common in this phase as they tend to become a coping mechanism for the child when adapting to his/her new situation. Gender has also been reported to relate to behavioural problems in children as studies have found that boys tend to act out at a higher prevalence than girls during the pre-school years (Papatheodorou, 2005:16).

The pre-school phase of child-rearing requires parents to showcase self-efficacy and heightened parental knowledge about the developmental challenges experienced by their children. Bloomfield *et al.* (2005:47), along with other researchers, confirm that parents' beliefs about their competence in the parental role may assist professionals' intervention methods to address such challenges. Many of the underlying issues of the problems related to child care and development can be addressed through improved parenting capacity and skills (Brody & Flor, 1997:1001; Kirst-Ashman, 2010:199; Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:7; UNCRC, 1989, in Axford., 2012:2069; Woodcock, 2003:87). Consequently, the challenges experienced by parents become the rationale for parenting programme's goals and topics.

2.9   PARENTING STYLES

Besides that fact that parents have different roles to play in the family, they can also exhibit different styles of parenting. Baumrind (1971:1-103) was the first to define the three styles of parenting, 'autocratic', 'democratic' and 'permissive'. While a variety of literature sources use interchangeable terms for these styles they are in essence defined by their approach to caregiving and discipline (Alwin, 2004:150; Kay, 2006:47-50; Marion, 2003:12; Sorkhabi, 2012:855). Table 2.2 outlines the approaches to child-rearing that are adopted by each of the three parenting styles (adapted from Cawood, 2007:61). These parenting styles are discussed below.

Table 2.2 A comparison of parenting styles

	AUTOCRATIC	**DEMOCRATIC**	**PERMISSIVE**
Power dynamic in relationship	Parent has all the power	Parent and children share the power age-appropriately	Children have all the power
Boundary setting	Boundaries are too rigid and inflexible	Boundaries are clear, fair and firm	Boundaries are vague and inconsistent
Child outcome	Unhappy, repressed, rebellious children	Secure, contained, happy children	Confused, insecure, unhappy children

Source: Baumrind (1971)

2.9.1 Autocratic Style

An Autocratic parent is a parent who tends to take rigid and controlled approach towards all parenting responsibilities. Autocratic parenting is common among parents who have high demands of their children and exercise a large amount of psychological control (Aunola & Nurmi,, 2005:1145; Marion, 2003:15; Sorkhabi, 2012:855; Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2008:492). This style has been reported to foster negative effects in child development such as poor self-esteem, poor self-control, aggression, recurring unacceptable behaviour, reinforcement of harsh disciple and modelling of violence (Marion, 2003:16-19; Sorkhabi, 2012:870), although children exposed to this style may respond well to an authority figure.

An autocratic style could be assessed in both *authoritarian* and *authoritative* parents. However, the concepts of authoritarian and authoritative are often confused by practitioners and parents. Authoritarian parents tend to mistake punishment for discipline and are "highly directive, demanding and obedience seeking" (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2008:492). Masson (2010) lists a few of the disciplinary techniques evident in this style, namely "spanking, hitting, yelling, laying blame, using guilt, humiliating, criticizing".

In contrast, authoritative parents approach parenting through "standard setting, monitoring behaviour, being assertive but not instructive… and encouraging children" (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2008:492). Sorkhabi (2012:870) confirms this assertive nature of an individualistic parent as a crucial characteristic of an authoritative parent. Children raised with authoritative parents tend to respond obediently to authority figures which could be seen as positive, although they may possess a poor sense of inner self-discipline (Mbaka, 2007).

2.9.2 Democratic Style

The democratic style of parenting is based on "positive parenting" techniques (Morawska, Winter & Sanders, 2009:218). Masson (2010) outlines this style as a mutually beneficial approach based on mutual trust and respect by both the parent and child. The child becomes an integrated part of the parenting process and rules and structures are present without the presence of fearful controlling tactics from the parent's side. Practitioners and experts in the field of parenting encourage their clients to utilise this approach to child-rearing despite its challenges (Oryan & Gastil, 2013:116). This general approach towards child-rearing requires practitioners to ask parents to constantly meet the needs of their children while providing an enabling environment for their children to grow to their full potential (Oryan & Gastil, 2013:118). In addition, parents are asked to discipline their children in an ''indirect way''. The indirect nature of this approach assumes that parents allow the child to behave in permitting environments with clear age-appropriate limitations.

2.9.3 Permissive Style

This style reveals certain behaviours whereby parents lack control and thus rear their children through methods of coaxing, bribing and pleading the child and negotiating with the child (Masson, 2010). Parents adopting this style of parenting are less likely to set consistent boundaries or expectations regarding behaviour. The child may become self-doubting and unhappy as a result of the vague limitations to behaviour (Kay, 2006:47).

Furthermore, the permissive parent exhibits low control mechanisms over their children. This requires the children to regulate their own behaviour and make decisions based on their own discretion, which is not always appropriate for children during their pre-school years. The avoidance of control or restrictions results in an accepting attitude towards children's both positive and negative behaviour, which tends to lead to low impulse control, poor self-esteem and under-developed social competence in children (Marion, 2003:19-20).

2.9.4 Trends in Parenting Styles

Research into parenting trends has shown that at any stage of a child's development a parent can use one or a number of parenting styles. Baumrind (1971:1-103) refers to the tendency of parents to be situation specific when utilising one of the parenting styles. Personality, temperament, self-efficacy, locus of control and culture are also often associated with the preferred parenting style (Coleman & Karraker, 1998:61; Marion, 2003:12; Sorkhabi, 2012:855). For example, parents who have poor confidence in their parenting capacity tend to engage and exhibit the permissive style (Coleman & Karraker, 1998:71).

South Africa has yet to be identified by practitioners as a context for extensive research into cultural parenting practices (Bradford, Barber, Olsen, Maughan, Erickson, Ward, & Stolz, 2003:133; Sorkhabi, 2012:855). Therefore, this is a field of research which has yet to be explored in the South African context and will be investigated in this study in terms of the target population for parent education.

2.10   RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PARENT

The implementation of the Children's Act in South Africa provided parents with clearly defined "parental rights and responsibilities" (Section 18). Strode and Slack (2011:70) outline that full parental responsibilities include an obligation to *care* for the child, to *maintain contact* with the child, to act as *guardian* and, lastly, *to contribute to the maintenance* of the child (Section 18 [2]). Using this as a framework, the following responsibilities of parents are discussed below: nurture and care, socialisation, protection and provision. The role of the practitioner is emphasised in Chapter 3, as it is specifically a social workers mandated role to intervene should this role not be adequately fulfilled by the caregiver. Furthermore, the responsibilities of a parent are associated to topics covered in parenting programmes.

2.10.1 Nurture and Care

The term 'care' is used by parents and practitioners to describe all activities which are associated with meeting the survival needs of children (Hoghughi, 2004:7). These activities are said to enhance the child's ability to grow and promote positive development. Hoghughi (2004:7) identifies three different types of care, namely physical, emotional and social care. Physical care is detailed in Section 2.10.4 as it is related closely to parental responsibility of provision for the child.

Emotional and social care is the ability of a parent to spend quality time with their children. This meets the children's needs to spend quality time with their family (Snyder, 2007:320; Long & Hoghughi, 2004:384), which, in turn, fosters the children's security and affiliation with the family unit. Nurturing parents who maintain secure standards for their children provide clear boundaries and examples of care and nurture. This provides an environment conducive to the promotion of confidence and self-controlled behaviour in children (Berk 2009:572). There should be consistency between the nurturing love and structured care provided by parents to rear well-balanced and secure children. As mentioned in Section 2.6.1, there is a link between parenting trends and the increasing social pressure of the 21st century. Long and Hoghughi (2004:384) mention that modern day social pressures place increased importance on care and nurturing within parent-child relationships.

2.10.2 Socialisation

The family unit has been identified as the most important agent of socialisation (Belsky, 1984:83; Popenoe, Cunningham & Boult, 1998:92). Baker (2014:92) defines socialisation as parental efforts to transfer information, values and perspectives about ethnicity, race and culture to their young children and states that it is an important process in a child's life.

Children are taught and socialised to observe certain norms, values, social controls and roles. This process of socialisation is effective because of the face-to-face communication and relating that is possible in a small group environment such as a family (Popenoe, Cunningham & Boult, 1998:271). Ambert (2001:74) states that "... in some families, conduct disorders emerge because of parents' problems, lack of skills, or even child-rearing philosophies [which] prevent them from adopting suitable socialization practices". Studies have linked the socialisation processes in early parenting to children's social-emotional development in pre-school (Baker, 2014:93; Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012:364; Kochanska *et al.*, 2004: 744), showing that parents notably become crucial agents as role-models for these

children. This theory is not without critique as Keenan and Evans (2009:270) stress the influence of external systems on the child's environment such the child's peer group and siblings. External stressors from the immediate environment are significant to children's socialisation due to the high levels of influence of these stressors especially once the child attends school. Parents are thus responsible for preparing their child to regulate the influences of their external environment with autonomy and confidence.

Bush and Codrington (2008:303) propose that a family could make use of 'family branding' to socialise children and build a culture of loyalty and compliance within the family unit. Family branding involves providing children with a clear sense of belonging to the family unit by means of a significant family name or brand. The values of a family, such as quality time, diversity, understanding, safety and shared personal experiences can have positive effects on the "branding" of a child (Bush & Codrington, 2008:303). This nurturing mentality is a skill which can be promoted and adapted throughout the child's lifespan through socialisation.

In line with the nature versus nurture debate, Morris *et al.* (2002) argues that children are shaped by both biology and socialisation. Bowlby (1969) highlights the attachment theory as the model for socialisation by which infants and toddlers learn from their significant caregivers (Rock, Karabanow & Manion, 2012:346). Culture is said to play a crucial role in the socialisation process and through enculturation, the process whereby humans learn culture, children are taught language, traditions, customs, values and behaviour patterns (Bate, 2002:11; Keenan & Evans, 2009:270). The family is seen as the core contributor to this process. According to Alwin (2004:154), differences in parenting practices and child-rearing approaches are key factors towards the understanding of culture, social structure and social change and practitioners should be aware of this complexity in order to individualise their interventions for the most effective outcome.

2.10.3 Protection

The role of a parent is further linked to a biologically-endorsed concept of being the protector of their children against harm. Woodcock (2003:94) mentions that the social worker's judgement of parenting is directly linked to a parent's capacity to prevent harm from occurring to his/her child, such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse. This could be attributed to what Azzi-Lessing (2010:256) highlights as the social workers' predominant role of providing case management for children affected by abuse and neglect. The expanding need for family systems in the 21st century has caused a change in services which practitioners provide to their clients, such as parenting education programmes (Frankel,

1997:176; Azzi-Lessing, 2010:256). Although this may be true for practitioners, Rock, Karabanow & Manion (2012:347) make mention of legislation which further endorses the role of protection, welfare and rights of children. The Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989), based on The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is the most influential international convention as it lays down the rights which are afforded to all children, namely: the guiding principles of non-discrimination (Article 2), the best interest of the child (Article 3), the right to maximum survival and development (Article 6) and participation of children (Article 12) (Munro, Pinkerton, Mendes, Hyde-Dryden, Herczog & Benbenishty, 2011:2418; Rock, Karabanow & Manion 2012:347; UNCRC, 1989). According to the UNCRC (1989), Articles 37 and 40 hold the principles that guide the "protection" of children against corporal punishment and harmful disciplinary measures.

Interpretations and critiques (Marno, 2011; Kendall, 2010; Roose & De Bie, 2008) have allowed the UNCRC to become a workable document used by practitioners, educators, policy makers and key role players working in the field of child care and protection. Kendall (2010) raised the concern that children require protection and welfare services which must be driven by a human rights agenda that encourages empowerment. Cheney (2010) placed the term 'protection' under scrutiny, by stating that is deprives children of competency which they may already possess. Opposing Cheney's concerns, Roose and De Bie (2008:42) refer to the UNCRC as a discussion document for the promotion of principles which support children and families. Currently, there are many organisations, including the government, which provide a range of protective services to families and children, ranging from prevention through to foster care arrangements and a continuum of care (Rock, Karabanow & Manion 2012:349). In South Africa, the UNCRC has been ratified and adopted as the guiding document for all policies related to child care and protection.

2.10.4 Provision

Hoghughi (2004:9) categorises provision of physical health and well-being as a functional area of parenting. This function is flexible in terms of its capacity to extend across the child's lifespan, from infancy to adulthood. Provision of physical health involves caregivers ensuring that the child's basic needs for development are met. Research studies have found that parents play a significant role in the development of children to meet their basic needs (Luster & Okagaki, 2008:378).

A child's basic needs for life tend to vary by SES (Newman *et al.*, 2010:1134). Generally, children from low SES families are less advantaged than children from higher status families,

which places children impacted by poverty in a vulnerable position (Casale, Desmond & Richter, 2014:1; Newman *et al.*, 2010:1134), as deprivation can have a negative impact on the social and physical well-being and development of the child (O'Connor, Rutter, Beckett, Keaveney, Kreppner & The English and Romanian Adoptees Study Team, 2000:376; Perry, 2003:94). Poverty maintains a strong presence in the lives of families in developing countries such as South Africa. Policy documents such as the White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997b) and the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Development Programme, 2010) strongly emphasise and confirm the prevalence of poverty in South Africa (Gray, 2002; Statistics South Africa, 2011).

Neglected children have been found to build resilience to deprivation of basic needs such as food and water, however this is dependent on the duration of time that the child is deprived (Luster & Okagaki, 2008:389). Material resources such as money, goods and services are considered necessary for raising children, as the impact of deprivation is noted to negatively impact the outcomes of child-rearing (Hoghughi, 2004:13). Hoghughi (2004:10) confirms that although economic resources are a necessity for effective parenting, it is insufficient as the sole determinant of a good parent. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective endorses this line of thinking and sees provision as merely a single influential factor in children's lives (Newman *et al.*, 2010:1134). Parents are in a unique position to undertake the role of provider as the child's primary caregiver.

2.11 PARENTING SKILLS

Parenting skills and competencies have been identified through emerging themes and findings in numerous studies (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012; Morawska *et al.*, 2009) in the field of parenting education programmes. Below, communication, attachment, self-efficacy, discipline and boundary setting are discussed as the predominant skills noted in theory as the operational prerequisites for a "good-enough" parent (Bowlby, 1969; Hoghughi, 2004:4; Taylor, Lauder, Moy & Corlett, 2009).

2.11.1 Communication

Kaplan and Owens (2012:80) agree with the assertion made by Hepworth *et al.* (2013:271) that parenting (and by implication parenting skills) is a role that is both learned and unconsciously acquired. These authors identify communication as a skill which can be practiced to ensure positive communication patterns which are helpful for articulating clear messages to children. For example, congruence and clarity of communication is influential in

ensuring that parents' messages are clearly understood by their children (Hepworth *et al.,* 2013: 273). Bornstein (2012:219) notes that communication appears to be a universal aspect of parenting and child development and according to authors (Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010: 242; Woodcock, 2003:90) communication is directly linked to the desirable skills of an effective parent. Therefore, parenting programmes such as the American based, Triple P – Positive Parenting Program incorporate the enhancement of communication skills, such as spending quality time with the child, talking to the child, giving clear instructions, giving and receiving constructive feedback and showing verbal affection (Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010: 242). (Parenting programmes will be explored in Chapter 3.)

Communication as a skill can be gained through the understanding of the components of communication and the impact of communication barriers such as noise, language and cultural barriers (Hepworth *et al.,* 2013:274). Verbal and non-verbal communication styles should be taught to children to ensure that effective communication occurs between family members.

Smiling, crying, facial expressions, vocalisations, gestures and eye contact are all used by parents to relate to their children (Newman, 2000:356). An important function of communication in the early phases of childhood development is that it serves as a responsiveness and interacting platform for the child to experience family relationships and establish a sense of belonging (Newman, 2000:356). This transaction of messages between family members encourages trust, which the pre-schooler can utilise to seek help or assistance in problem solving (Newman, 2000:357).

Communication is also a functional tool for teaching children language (Keenan & Evans, 2009:204), which, in turn, they can use to communicate. Beyond two years old the significant milestones of children's language development include constructing combined sentences and questions, utilising the correct speech registers, understanding speech within a social context and being sensitive to conversational conduct (Keenan & Evans, 2009: 215).

Modern communication styles are evolving at a rapid pace and this has an effect on the transmission of intra-familial messages. Technology has impacted the channels through which communication is transferred and has infiltrated the family system. Wartella and Jennings (2000:34) illustrate this by discussing that modern children are exposed to media from a very young age. Surveys have found that children between the ages two and five are using the computer for an average of 27 minutes per day (Woodard & Gridina, 2000). Although toddlers are too young to engage with technology, the long term impact of

technology is a potential threat to parental and sibling interaction with the child. Further research could be conducted to explore the potential advantages of technology in family communication processes.

2.11.2 Attachment

Parental nurture and care provide a child with the opportunity to build a secure attachment to their primary caregivers (Bornstein, 2010:39). The importance of being able to acquire attachments is a vital skill to build and maintain healthy child-parent relationships. This transaction is seen as a skill because attachment can be seen as a task which is intentional and can be practiced. Although this process is universal, there are cultural variations to the level and degree of attachment (Bornstein, 2010:39; Smith, 2004:31; Sorkhabi, 2012:859). Certain cultures tend to emphasise attachment such as physical contact, where as other cultures may place value on emotional or family bonds as an indicator of attachment.

Attachment security has been found to remain relatively stable, if effectively developed between the ages of one to six years (Miller & Jenkins, 2004: 298; Vondra, Sysko & Belsky, 2005:58). Disruption of parent-child attachment is noted to be caused by a disruption in the relationship by, for example, severe illness, parental death, divorce or neglect. Consequently, this may lead the child to conclude that close relationships are less reliable and not to be trusted (Vondra *et al.*, 2005:58). One year of parent-child intervention, such as psychotherapy or psycho-educational theory, has been found by Toth, Maughan, Manly, Spagnola and Cicchetti (2002) to be effective for restoring the attachment of parents and their pre-school children. The American, skills-based, Incredible Years Programme is cited by numerous authors (Bunting, 2004:331; Utting & Pugh, 2004:26) as being a highly effective behaviour parenting programme based on social learning for the improvement of attachment-building skills.

As previously discussed in section 2.2, the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) is the major contributing theory which provides guidelines towards discourse regarding the topic of attachment. Nurture and care as the role of a parent is discussed in Section 2.10.1 and complements the competency of attachment because of the trust build between parent and child.

2.11.3 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is concerned with a person's belief in their own ability to successfully achieve a certain task. Bandura's (1989) self-efficacy theory states that a person's knowledge about a task and his/her level of confidence influence his/her ability to complete that particular task (Keenan & Evans, 2009:31; Kendall & Bloomfield, 2005:174). With reference to parenting, parental self-efficacy would be a parent's knowledge as well as self-belief to achieve "good enough" parenting practices (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012:365; Morawska, Winter & Sanders, 2009:218). Due to the learnt nature of this task, it is possible for self-efficacy to be a learnt skill.

Parenting knowledge has been noted by Morawska *et al.* (2009:218) to be associated with higher SES and education levels. Furthermore, Bloomfield and Kendall (2012:364). expand on parental functioning as an interconnected relationship between the characteristics of the child, the parents' personal resources, the context-specific stressors and support structures The concept of parental functioning is supported by Belsky (1984), who was a significant contributor to the field of parenting using the ecological perspective. This suggests to practitioners to utilise a holistic approach when viewing parenting.

Morawska *et al.* (2009:217) proved in their study that parents with lower levels of parenting knowledge and confidence may be at greater risk of dysfunctional parenting. The study was conducted with parents of pre-school children (two to five years old) in Brisbane, Australia. There has been little evidence to support the link between self-efficacy of parents and child development; yet it has been found that children's disruptive behaviour increased when parents exhibited low self-efficacy (Morawska *et al.*, 2009:224). Morawska *et al.*, (2009:225) also found that confidence plays an integral role in parents' ability to practice effective child-rearing functions and that parents who exert poor influence over their children's behaviour may feel a sense of hopelessness. This is a negative outcome of poor self-efficacy and could result in insecure child attachment and behavioural problems (De Haan *et al.*, 2009:1696).

Interventions such as parenting education programmes have been highlighted as beneficial for improving self-efficacy (Morawska *et al.*, 2009:217). Several recent studies (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012:365; Kendall & Bloomfield, 2005:475; Morawska *et al.*, 2009:218) used an ecological perspective for peer learning in a group context and have demonstrated the use of social cognitive theory to develop parental knowledge and self-confidence (Bloomfield &

Kendall, 2012:365). This suggests that parenting self-efficacy could be a measurable outcome for parenting education programmes (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012:371).

One of the few studies to use an assessment tool to measure self-efficacy, specifically in the USA, was conducted by Kendall (1991). They made use of the Tool to measure Parenting Self-Efficacy (TOPSE), which is purposefully designed to measure a parent's belief in their own ability to confidently complete parenting tasks such as building attachment, play, empathy and understanding, discipline and boundary setting, coping with pressures of parenting, self-acceptance as well as educational learning. Parents use a series of scaled questions from 0-10 to rate statements related to these tasks. Bloomfield and Kendall (2012:176) evaluate these types of tools stating that although these instruments are based on universal parenting domains, there is a need for culturally relative tools to ensure applicability of the findings to researchers, practitioners and parents. The study found TOPSE to be an accessible and effective tool for measuring self-efficacy. Other tools which have the potential to provide significant data related to self-efficacy, which are noted by Bloomfield and Kendall (2012:366), include the Parenting Stress Index (PSI; Abidin, 1981 in Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012:176), the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997 1981 in Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012:176) and the Parental Knowledge Scale (PKS; Morawska,et al., 2005). Developed countries such as the UK and the USA have been a focus for the empirical testing of these tools; however developing countries, such as South Africa, have yet to be a focal point for researchers (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012:366).

2.11.4 Discipline

Discipline is the process to guide children's learning of appropriate behaviours (Hoghughi, 2004:8; Smith, 2004:29) and it is believed that disciplinary practices can be learnt as a skill. There are many perspectives surrounding the meaning of discipline (Arias *et al.*, 2006:85-90; Cawood, 2007:22; Telep, 2009:2). The commonly associated definition of discipline provided by the *Oxford Dictionary Online* (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012) is, "the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behaviour, using punishment to correct disobedience". Cohen (2005a) mentions that the majority of dictionaries define discipline as "to train" or "to guide". The concept of punishment is included in many definitions of discipline, such as the definition in the *Oxford Dictionary Online* quoted above. Although punishment is part of many parents' disciplinary approaches, the two words should be clearly differentiated due to the difference in their intent and impact. The nature of punishment is essentially to be punitive and is often associated with violent measures of expression, while discipline teaches children to learn from their mistakes rather than making them suffer for these mistakes.

Consequently, punishment does not have to be implemented harshly in disciplinary measures.

Corporal punishment is a form of discipline that is an accepted norm in certain cultures and not in others. For example, traditional European families ascribe to corporal punishment while African-American families do not (Baker, 2014:93; Smith, 2004:30; Sorkhabi, 2012:855). The use of corporal punishment was prohibited in South Africa by the Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act No. 33 of 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1997a). Sorkhabi (2012:869) recognises that difficulties result when cultural parenting practices differ from legislative requirements. According to Hemstreet and Vermeulen (2007:88), government and responsible stakeholders should be encouraged to reflect on children's rights, positive discipline and the abolition of corporal punishment. Notably, in a study conducted by Nixon and Halpenny (2010:78) the majority of child participants disagreed that physical punishment should be legally prohibited. Children made reference to the right of parents to use physical punishment with their children specifically above pre-school age (Nixon & Halpenny, 2010:78). The unexpected theme which emerged in this study was concerned with the complexity of implementing physical punishment in the home. Smith (2004:29) reports that professionals and members of the public have been unable to reach a consensus on this culturally sensitive issue. Consequently, this tension between legislation and culture has caused poor parenting practices, such as abuse or harmful punishment, to be a contentious issue when practitioners are dealing with children.

According to Telep (2009:2), discipline is operationalized successfully when a child is able to control his/her behaviour based on their conceptualisation of what is acceptable and unacceptable, rather than obeying because they fear being punished.

Telep (2009:3), and Smith (2004:35) identify the following components of effective discipline:

- Helping the child learn self-control;
- Building the child's self-esteem;
- Setting a good example of effective ways to solve problems;
- Encouraging development;
- Providing clear boundaries and demands;
- Setting consistent consequences; and
- Utilising appropriate context and structure for discipline.

In contrast to the above components, punishment has the following principles:

- Focuses on negative rather than positive behaviour;
- Consists of penalties or restrictions which often are unrelated to the misbehaviour;
- Places responsibility for enforcement on the parent instead of encouraging the child to become responsible for their own actions; and
- Purposes the child to pay for their misbehaviour.

<div align="right">(Arias, Brody, Brown & Harper, 2006: 85-90; Cawood, 2007)</div>

In her audio series, *Raising Children Effectively* Cohen (2005), an educational psychologist, comments that "[d]iscipline and punishment are worlds apart; the goal of discipline is to teach and learn compared to the harsh corrective measures used to punish and scold" (Cohen, 2005a). Addressing practitioners and parents who struggle with discipline as a skill, she mentions that parents need many options of alternative parenting measures in order to be effective (Cohen, 2005b). This suggests that parenting skills such as discipline can be learnt (Smith, 2004:30), as mentioned previously.

Levy (2002:158) suggests that alternative parenting measures should be adopted to positively respond to children's behaviour. The utilisation of encouragement by the parent plays a role in the child's development of moral values such as, care, loyalty, respect, responsibility and trustworthiness (Levy, 2002:158). Levy (2002:158) further expands that these are fundamental attributes to ensure belonging and secure personality development in the toddler stage. Other effective measures include positive reinforcement such as star charts, time-out and inductive discipline.

Star charts which are graphic tables used to record and encourage children's' positive behaviour and achievements by means of stickers as positive reinforcement. Star charts have been noted by experts in the field of parenting to be highly effective tools (Levy, 2002:161; Smith, Sprengelmeyer & Moore, 2012:240).

Time-out is also a researched method that has been proven to be an effective parenting measure for pre-school children. This method places children in a restricted area for a pre-determined time and allows them to reflect on their actions and behaviour in a constructive setting. A certain amount of criticism is given to the time-out method for the following reasons:

- The child may enjoy being sent to his/her room;

- The emotional distance could be hurtful to the child;

- The child may associate his/her room as a place of punishment;

- The child may disobey instructions and continue to leave the restricted area; and

- The time-limited boundary is not always possible.

(Levy, 2002: 169,179)

Parents are encouraged to consider Levy's (2002:169) critique when selecting time-out as a discipline strategy. Disciplinary actions such as withdrawal of affection or exerting power over the child have been negatively associated with developing children's pro-social behaviour (Krevans & Gibbs, 1996:3263).

The third method, inductive discipline, which is based on Hoffman's (1975) disciplinary strategy, combines disciplinary action with rational explanation. This approach is used to punish the child in order to ensure effective results with minimal force (Keenan & Evans, 2009:299).

Marion (2003:11) emphasises that although generalised disciplinary techniques can be helpful, parents should have an awareness of their child's temperament and personality and adjust these techniques accordingly. Individualised disciplinary strategies have been found to be the most effective for disciplining pre-school children. Marion (2003:11) elaborates on this point by stating that adults' chosen method of discipline should differ according to the child's age, individual personality and appropriate cultural norms.

2.11.5 Boundary Setting

Boundary setting is a technique which is characterised as a control and disciplinary role of a parent, as discussed in Section 2.11.4. Bluestein (1993:15) states that, "…it quickly becomes very obvious for practitioners that all families need boundaries in order to operate." Baumrind (1996), a major contributor to the field of parenting, expands on this argument by suggesting that parents should explain the objectives of discipline to their children, thereby allowing parents to control the limitations of behaviour. Tassoni (2007:137) alludes to the fact that "[b]oundaries are limits on behaviour which are usually simple norms of the family related to the expected behaviour of the child [and] which should be adhered to by the children".

Children require limitations in order to feel protected and secure, and are able to grow and learn by testing these limits (Smith, 2004: 35; Tassoni, 2007:137). Consequently, it can be asserted that pre-school children in the stage of discovering their own self-will would attempt to break certain rules which limit their behaviour and freedom to initiate their own activities (Bluestein, 1993:15). If these limits are overly violated, parents should engage with consistent and regulated boundaries. Supplementary skills such as communication and discipline could assist with boundary setting.

2.12 COMMON INTERVENTIONS FOR PARENTS RAISING CHILDREN IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PHASE

Parent education has been known to emerge in different settings. Three of these settings are discussed below, namely early intervention, group-based programmes and online support.

2.12.1 Early Intervention

Early childhood education is known as the ideal platform where parental support and development can be implemented effectively (Munford, Sanders, Maden & Maden, 2007:73). Lutya (2012:1) confirms this finding by stating that addressing the lack of effective parenting skills and management of parenting programmes could improve child-rearing practices in South Africa. Quinton (2004:23-24) explores the types of intervention methods utilised by parents in his research series titled *Supporting Parents: Messages from Research*. According to him, interventions take the format of formal, semi-formal and informal support structures. Examples of these structures range from individual consultations to community-based campaigns. This study takes particular interest in formal support provided by organisations, specifically group-based programmes, as described in the next section.

2.12.2 Group-based Support Programmes

Barlow (1999) systematically reviewed formal parenting programmes that produce positive results. The review concluded that group-based parenting programmes are more successful in the long-term in improving the behaviour of children compared with methods that involved working individually with parents. Community-based programmes have also been found to be more cost-effective, costing up to six times less than individual, clinic-based programmes (Bunting, 2004:336). Although education programmes differ in contents, the principles and essentially the services remain fairly similar (Daro & Harding, 1999:157). Extensive reviews by researchers recommend that parent education is a subject for further investigation and

analysis (Darling & Turkki, 2009:24; National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence [NICE], 2007b:31; Woodcock, 2003:87-88; Mahoney *et al.*, 1999:137) and in Chapter 3 the nature and components of parenting education programmes will be discussed for early childhood development rooted in social learning and cognitive behavioural therapy.

2.12.3 Technology used for Parent Support

A common trend for skills-based programmes is to utilise technology such as video-based modelling and online coaching (Smith, 2010:691; Wade, 2011:487). These techniques have been found to be more effective in changing parenting behaviour than programmes that are solely educational based (Smith, 2010:691).

Technological advances have provided practitioners and organisations with an opportunity to provide clients with remote access to services such as technology-based programmes. Increased availability of Internet access around the world offers parents "easy to access" interventions. Unlike in the past, hard-to-reach populations could benefit from such services with the use of technology (Mejia, Calam & Sanders, 2012:171). Wade (2011:490) conducted a study which focused on coaching parents online over the Internet. This study found that 85% of the participants rated the video conferences equally as helpful as telephone calls (77%) or face-to-face visits (69%). Further research into online parenting support is warranted.

2.13 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the function and tasks of parents towards the care and development of their pre-school children was discussed in order to understand the complexity of parenting children at this phase of development. Early childhood has been found to be a critical phase of development in which parents are actively involved in rearing secure and well-developed children. Furthermore, it could be suggested that parenting is a complex task which requires knowledge and skill in order to meet the roles and responsibilities assigned to a parent. The roles and responsibilities of parents in the South African context were detailed throughout to recognise the importance of parenting knowledge and skills within a culturally specific environment. Poor parenting practices have been highlighted as a concern for practitioners and researchers.

The next chapter will discuss the nature and components of parenting education programmes for early childhood development rooted in social learning and cognitive behavioural therapy.

CHAPTER 3
BEST PRACTICE METHODS FOR PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a notably complex task, which impacts all aspects of a child's development (Bloomfield *et al*, 2005:47; Miller & Sambell, 2003:32). Parents have the potential to acquire skills and knowledge related to their parental role, which should be recognised, but they may also require support to address the challenges which arise, especially during the early years of child-rearing. Parent education programmes have been identified as an effective way to address this need in terms of both policy and practice (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2005:46; Deković,Stoltz, Schuiringa, Manders & Asscher, 2012:72; Hanna, Edgecombe, Jackson & Newman , 2002:209). The significance of parenting programmes has grown in recognition and importance for practitioners due to the increased emphasis placed on family and childcare in the social service sector (Miller & Sambell, 2003:33). Organisations delivering services in the parenting fields include governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), of which the latter have been the predominant provider of parenting programmes in many countries, including South Africa (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2005:47; Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006:4; Kirst-Ashman, 2010:199; Sanders, 1999; Woodcock, 2003:98). Worldwide, major contributing organisations include the World Health Organisation (WHO), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Government Social Services of Britain and the USA. The NGOs mentioned in this thesis have a specific family and childcare focus.

This chapter aims to discuss the nature and components of parenting education programmes for early childhood development rooted in social learning and cognitive behavioural therapy as depicted in objective one and two of the study. Focus will be placed on the provisions of policy and theory relating to the implementation of parenting programmes, specifically for parents with pre-school aged children. The perspective and role of the practitioner will be highlighted in correlation with objective two of the study. This chapter will review the practical implications and core components of parenting programmes based on "best practice methods" (Bunting, 2004:327; Fixsen, Blase, Naoom & Wallace, 2009:531; Wessels, 2012:10). Literature regarding the challenges of delivering parent education programmes as an intervention will be examined and reviewed

3.2   DESCRIPTION OF PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Parenting programmes are short-term interventions purposed to assist parents with rearing their children. Cowley, Kemp, Day and Appleton (2012:110) identify the "term 'programme' [as] synonymous with an agenda, plan or schedule" and say that it "is particularly associated with the evidence-based practice movement". Common interchangeable terms include 'parent-education programmes', 'parenting training', 'parent programmes' and 'parent skills training'. The terms 'parent education programme' and 'parenting programmes' have been used for the purpose and topic of this thesis. The common factor between parent education programmes is that they all address the needs of parents by allowing participants to apply parental knowledge and skills directly (Bronte-Tinkew, Horowitz & Metz, 2008, Deković *et al.*, 2012:67; Eames, Daley, Hutchings, Whitaker, Bywater, Jones & Hughes, 2010:1222; Gould, Gould & Brewin, 2004:197). Furthermore, these programmes tend to be group based and are often provided by a community centre or NGO. The support empowers parents to deal effectively with relationships, address behavioural and emotional problems and learn relevant parenting skills (Barlow, Parsons & Stewart-Brown, 2005:34; Mytton, Ingram, Manns & Thomas, 2013:1; Sanders, 1999). These are noteworthy needs of parents with children in the early childhood phase of development, as covered in Section 2.8.

Group programmes play an educational and supportive role for parents and some parents who have participated in such programmes have reported that it is helpful to share stories and learn from other parents (Barlow *et al.*, 2005:120; Miller & Sambell, 2003:37). Parent education programmes further provide a platform for parents to gain relevant knowledge through hands-on experiential learning opportunities. However, this intervention does not necessarily involve direct contact with the child (Gould, Gould & Brewin, 2004:197). As it is standard practice for a trained practitioner to facilitate a programme of this nature (Axford *et al*, 2012:2069; Bunting, 2004:329) practitioners gain valuable opportunities to learn about the needs of families from parents. Research studies suggest that interventions which create and encourage safe, stable and nurturing relationships between parents and children in their early childhood phase have a number of positive effects, such as prevention of child maltreatment and childhood aggression (Wessels, Milton, Ward, Kilbane, Alves, Campello, Dubowitz, Hutchings, Jones, Lynch & Madrid, 2013; Lundahl, Nimer & Parsons, 2006).

3.3   HISTORY OF PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The National Council on Family Relations in the USA has taken an active role in preserving the records of early research related to parenting and families. Europe and North America

were the first continents to implement parenting support, originally called "maternal associations", early in 1815. The emphasis of these programmes was on religious and moral improvement of parenting. Governmental services on these two continents began to be established after 1920 and played an integral role in formalising social support (Croake & Glover, 1977:152). Social support can be fulfilled by various stakeholders such as organisations, community projects and governmental structures. These stakeholders create a platform for multi-disciplinary collaboration (Cowley *et al.*, 2012:112) In the past, parent education programmes were facilitated by paraprofessionals (Croake & Glover, 1977:152). These programmes were less theoretical and focused on basic child rearing skills such as child safety. Utting and Pugh (2004:28) criticise Britain's implementation of parent education in the 1980s as being restrictive and targeted at only the "educated and middle class elite" compared to elsewhere, such as New Zealand and Japan.

Counselling, psychotherapy and education were instrumental in developing the method for these interventions. In 1932, the following methods were being used in most organisations in Britain and the USA, despite the fact that no universally agreed upon method had been adopted. Group-based programmes, individualised interviews/sessions, directed observation and nursery school parent participation were the commonly used methods of delivery (Croake & Glover, 1977:153). Brim (1965) (in Croake & Glover, 1977:153) also highlights mass media, individual counselling and group discussions as being the basic mediums for parent education programmes. In the 1960s, popular practice for parenting programmes included the use of Patterson's (1982) model of coercive parent-child interaction (Cotter, Bacallao, Smokowski & Robertson, 2013:1; Hoghughi, 2004:5). This model continues to influence modern-day programmes with a relational emphasis. From 1977, it had been noted that "parent education and group methods in parent education are synonymous" (Croake & Glover, 1977:153). Subsequently, parents were screened to ensure that the most effective method was utilised to address their particular needs or problems. Utting and Pugh (2004:29), once again, criticise Britain's approach, this time for the lack of evidence-based programmes and parental support for over 30 years due to their social service sector being predominantly a volunteer service based on charity and philanthropy.

Cotter *et al.* (2013:2) notes that three early studies, conducted by Ownings (1931), Schaus (1932) and Dedrick (1934) were significant in forming the foundation of parenting knowledge. Although these studies focused on the attitudes of parents, they lead to further investigation regarding parental behaviours and child behaviour as determining outcomes. The two methodological approaches which were emphasised in the development of parent education programmes are behaviour modification and relationship enhancement (Cotter *et al.,*

2013:2). Curriculum-specific research only emerged in the 1970s and the combination of these studies forms the current model for parent education programmes globally (Croake & Glover, 1977:153).

Professionals such as social workers, nurses and educators were instrumental in delivering these parent education services (Croake & Glover, 1977:152). The introduction of medical professions to the delivery of parent education resulted in antenatal classes and parent transition classes run by Britain's National Health Service. A recent example of this type of model programme, Sure Start, is heavily endorsed by the British government (Clarke, 2006). In 1996, Smith conducted an extensive review of group-based parenting programmes in Britain, which concluded that programmes are generally divided into two broad groups, namely, behavioural programmes and interpersonal programmes (Utting & Pugh, 2004:31). The combination of these two groups is purposeful for practitioners who work with parents as they are able to adopt a holistic programme goal which is both behavioural and relational.

Limited research is available on parenting programmes within low and middle-income countries, such as South Africa (Mahoney *et al.,* 1999:131). There is, however, as discussed, literature on these programmes in high-income countries, such as Australia, the USA and Britain (Wessels, 2012:9). Africa is rarely mentioned in any of these studies, thus emphasising the need for the objectives of this study to be applied to a(n) (South) African context. Wessels (2012:9) expands on this gap in research stating that "[d]espite the identified need for parenting programmes in South Africa, there appears to be no data on the range of existing programmes in the country as well as on the quality of services they provide". This highlights the need for researchers and practitioners to become actively involved in addressing this need.

3.4   GOVERNMENTAL INFLUENCE ON PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

A surge of policy documents world-wide has identified parenting programmes as a priority topic for dialogue and implementation as a means to reduce risk factors in children's development (Morawska, Nitschke & Burrows., 2011:86; Munford, Sanders, Maden & Maden, 2007:73; United Nations Department of Economic Affairs, 2011; World Health Organization, 2004) and to address major global issues such as substance abuse, youth misbehaviour and poor academic achievement (Parenting in Africa Network, 2013:43; UNCRC, 1989, in Axford *et al.,* 2012:2069). Two countries whose policies made a significant contribution towards addressing these global issues in terms of parent education

programmes are the USA and Britain. These are briefly discussed below, after which a discussion of South African policy on these issues will follow.

3.4.1 United States of America and Britain

Government departments have taken an active stance in support of parenting programmes, specifically in the USA (Bloomfield *et al*, 2005:46) and Britain (Utting & Pugh, 2004:19; Quinton, 2004:43). An example of this is Every Child Matters (2003), a policy document released in Britain. This policy is a noteworthy example of the proactive approach which the government is taking in parent support and education, as noted by Bloomfield *et al.* (2005:47). Examples of Britain's family support approach includes, among others, a specific programme called Sure Start, mentioned earlier, which is aimed at children in pre-school and their parents. In a recent report by Barnett and Haskins (2010:2), it was stated that the current agenda of the American heads of cabinet is to significantly invest a large portion of the budgetary allocations toward early childhood development programmes, including parenting programmes.

Britain's policy on family social services places the responsibility on the government to provide a range of family services such as family education and child empowerment programmes (Utting & Pugh, 2004:22). Previously the focus in policy had been on the needs and support of children and young people, while recent policies have shifted the focus to include the well-being and support of parents (Utting & Pugh, 2004:22). This shift is being transferred into developing countries such as South Africa and Uganda.

3.4.2 South Africa

South African policy has begun to reflect the need for parenting programmes. Parent education programmes have been recognised by the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005), which mandates that the Provincial Department of Social Development must provide and fund prevention and early intervention services (Budlender, Proudlock, & Giese, 2011). Paragraph 144 (1) (b) of Chapter 8 of the Act recognises programmes which target parenting skills specifically as critical for ensuring children's safety and well-being. Parenting programmes should also be seen as fundamental in creating a non-violent society through the prevention and awareness of positive child-rearing practices (Parenting in Africa Network, 2013:48; Wessels, 2012:9). Such interventions are significant in South Africa because of the high rates of child maltreatment, abuse and violence in the country (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009).

The field of parenting should be promoted in South Africa and should be prioritised by practitioners, policy makers, researchers and government agencies alike, suggests Wessels (2012:96). Farr, Dawes and Parkers (2003) state that early views on parenting programmes are complementary to this multi-stakeholder platform on which all role players can collaborate. An example of such a platform is the Parenting in Africa Network (PAN) which is an African-based organisation focusing on the promotion of positive parenting in Africa. This progression in policy links to Africa's need for culturally relative services and practice methods. These will be further discussed in Section 3.9.1.2.

The Millennium Development Goals Country Report for South Africa (United Nations Development Programme, 2010) is another policy document emphasising parenting programmes. This country-specific report recommends that "[p]arents/guardians should be supported in raising the children in their care to prevent teenage pregnancies, risk-taking behaviour and abuse by their elders" (United Nations Development Programme, 2010:50). It was suggested that this recommendation could be "achieved through parent education programmes and community care networks" (United Nations Development Programme, 2010:50). The influence of government and policy impacts the service delivery of welfare services. Government policies such the National Integrated plan for ECD (NIP); National Guidelines For Early Childhood Development Services (July 2007), National Strategies Framework for Children Infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), Children's Act of 2005, Section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ECD guidelines (Western Cape Provincial Government) have begun to reflect the importance of promoting early childhood development. It has become apparent that early childhood development is an emerging field in South Africa which is of significance for practitioners, policy makers and researchers alike (Department of Education, 2001; Lake, 2011:1277; Munford *et al.*, 2007:73).

3.5   AIMS OF PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The overall aim of a parent education programme is linked to the intended outcome. The aim guides practitioners and participants towards a clear purpose for the programme. Deković et al. (2012:65) comment that the overall aim of parenting programmes is to impact child development. This child-focussed aim addresses the child's functioning as a result of parenting factors and characteristics, such as personality or disciplinary measures. Furthermore, Wessels (2012) notes that parenting styles and parent-child relationships influence children's interpersonal actions and relationships and should be a priority for

parenting programmes. The Lancet Series (Engle, Fernald, Alderman, Behrman, O'Garca, Yousafzai, De Mello, Hidrobo, Ulkuer, Ertem & Iltus 2011:1340) on early child development reports the overall aims of parenting intervention, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, as: (a) promoting parent-child interactions to improve responsiveness in feeding infants and young children, (b) increasing attachment, (c) promoting parental self-efficacy, (d) encouraging positive discipline, (e) encouraging learning, book reading and play activities, (f) enhancing problem-solving related to children's development, care, and feeding, (g) gaining knowledge related to child development, care and feeding and (9) providing social support for parents.
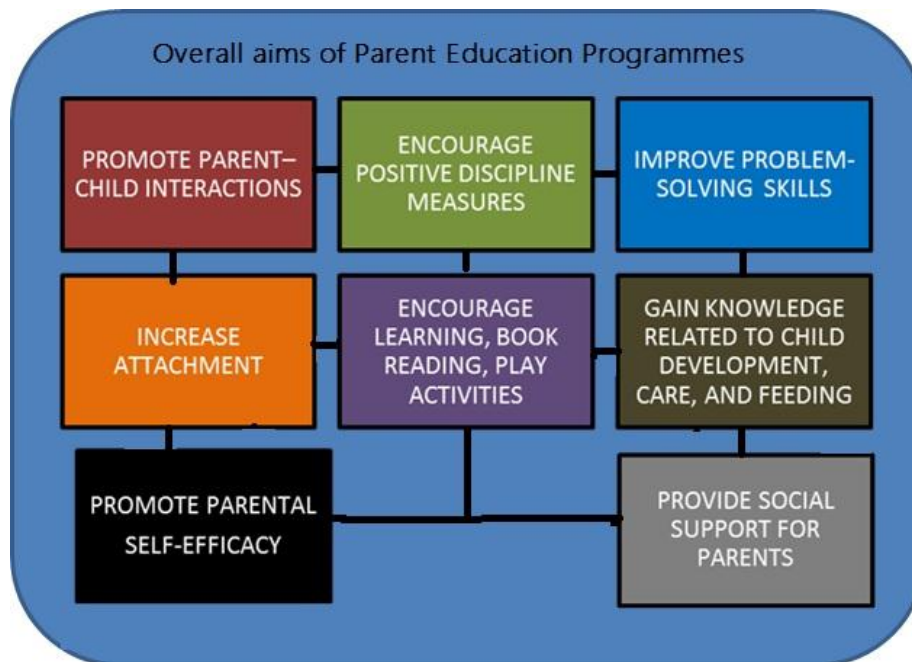
Figure 3.1 Aims of parent education programmes (Engle *et al.,* 2011:1340)

This overview provides practitioners with a graphic depiction of the interconnectedness of the programme's goals. Although the goals differ in specific outcomes, their overall aim is to empower and support parents in their role. These goals are based on the skills and needs of parents (such as age-appropriate play activities, communication and disciplinary skills) as described in Chapter 2. Parenting programmes can be developed to include numerous goals and thus it is purposeful to link all activities and methods of delivery closely to these goals.

3.6   METHODS OF DELIVERY FOR PARENTING PROGRAMMES

Various methods of programme delivery for parenting programmes have been evaluated. These include individually administered face-to-face programmes, group programmes, telephone-assisted programmes and online self-directed programmes (Sanders, Cann &

Markie-Dadds, 2003:145; Morwaska & Sanders, 2006:35). Widely reviewed parenting programmes (the Triple P, Parent Wisely and Incredible Years Programmes) utilise a group format (Cotter *et al.*, 2013:1). In order to meet the goals of parent education programmes, certain methods of delivery are used to reach goals such as skill acquisition and social support. Strydom and Wessels (2006:5) concur with the group method of programme delivery in an NGO context, stating that it is financially viable and effective for parental social support.

3.6.1 Individually Administered Programmes

Previously, studies in parenting intervention suggested the individualised method of parent training (Barlow *et al.*, 2010; Koerting *et al.*, 2013; Nock & Kazdin, 2004). Furthermore, a South African study showed that parent education for economically disadvantaged parents was more effectively delivered in an individual setting, such as a home setting or consultation room than during a purely group-based intervention (Lundal *et al.*, 2006). Organisations have found individual administered programmes to be labour intensive and costly and thus they were seeking ulterior means for delivering intervention services.

3.6.2 Group-based Programmes

Group programmes tend to incorporate structured, goal-orientated activities and support the practice of new skills (Cotter *et al.*, 2013:1). Toseland and Rivas (2009:17) comment that mutual aid, normalisation, practicing of new behaviours, reality testing, role modelling, social support and vicarious learning are advantages of group programmes. These group interventions do not necessarily have to take place in person, as group interventions administered online have proven. Although, the integration of technology into service delivery of parent education programmes is a newly discovered method of programme delivery. Wade (2011:492) highlights that the use of technology such as web-based programmes requires further investigation to test the efficacy of this method relative to that of traditional face-to-face programmes. Group-delivered programmes are able to achieve the goals of parenting programmes such as creating an environment for social support and a group context to practice skills such as active listening. Cotter *et al.* (2013:1) provide evidence which suggests that the traditional group format is more effective than any online delivery method.

3.6.3 Community-based Programmes

Stevens, Liabo and Roberts (2007:302) link the importance of parenting and childcare support to research in community development. This is a relatively new association for both practitioners and researchers. Facilitated group programmes, such as parent education programmes, provide an opportunity for practitioners and participants (parents) to learn from each other, which builds parental capacity in the community (Rooth, in Gray, 1998). This would ensure that the programmes are designed to address particular community-specific problems in a practical way (Bernstein & Gray, 2008:29; Early & GlenMaye, 2000:199). Community programmes are able to achieve the goals of parenting education programmes because of the trustworthy culture a community group can provide for parents to learn and practice new parenting practices, such as positive discipline strategies. Parent education and support can be delivered in a community context through home visits, community groups, clinic campaigns, community media campaigns or a combination of these methods.

Garbarino, Bradshaw and Kostelny (2005:314) present a valid argument with regard to delivery of community based interventions by proposing that parental empowerment is promoted through community-based programmes in high-risk communities. They promote this argument by predicting that the provision of macro-level interventions could alleviate the demand for meso-level group work in family-focussed organisations. McGilloway, Mhaille, Bywater, Furlong, Leckey, Kelly & Donnelly (2012:117) confirm the success of community based group programmes, especially for early childhood development, Specifically in a South African context, the need arises for community development programmes to address the country's issues and challenges such as AIDS awareness and parenting. Prilleltensky, Laurendeau, Chamberland and Peirson (2001:143) state that strong community structures for children and families should be a priority for family wellness.

It can be concluded that parent education programmes are context specific and should be delivered in a format which best suits the selected target population (Engle *et al.*, 2011:1340), as context is a vital factor to consider when selecting a method of delivery. Finally, it is important to emphasise that interventions which work in partnership with parents, families and children are considered best practice in the field of family intervention (Barth, 2009:160). This provides a realistic vision for the future of parenting programmes and social service organisations.

3.7   TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS USED IN PARENTING PROGRAMMES

In either group or community programmes the method of conveying the educational content to the parents is an important factor determining the success of the program. There are a number of unique teaching methods or strategies to facilitate learning amongst participants in a parenting programme. Activities and materials are two functional methods which provide parents with an opportunity to actively relate the programme material to their own child (McFarland-Piazza & Saunders, 2012:66; Nation, Crusto, Wandersman, Kumpfer, Seybolt, Morrissey-Kane & Davino, 2003:451; Samuelson, 2009:5; Taylor, Asgary-Eden, Lee & LaRoche, 2013:5). Strydom and Wessels (2006:19) identified the following methods as effective for teaching in a parenting programme:

- *Using visual and learning aids*: Posters, pictures, videos, artwork and videotaped topic introductions are suggested to model skills and encourage group discussion (Barth, 2009:107; Brown 2005). Practical learning aids like fact sheets, flash cards, wall charts, drawings and diagrams can communicate information in a clear manner (Strydom & Wessels, 2006:19). Visual aids are beneficial if adequately explained and correctly interpreted by the target audience.

- *Group discussion*: a purposeful platform for relating members' own understanding of a topic in order to teach and enhance group members' understanding of a topic through verbal communication (Nation *et al.*, 2003: 452; O'Connor, Matias, Futh, Tantam & Scott, 2013:362). These discussions are effective for engaging participation amongst participants. Group discussions tend to have an educational agenda and a supportive agenda which are both beneficial for group programmes and engaging participants (Saunders, McFarland-Piazza, Jacobvitz, Hazen-Swann & Burton, 2013:323). However, language barriers may prevent members from benefitting fully from a group discussion.

- *Role-playing:* Reality is simulated to enable group members to practice and model a skill, situation or behaviour (Kaminski, Valle, Filene & Boyle, 2008:569; Saunders *et al.*, 2013:324; Taylor *et al.*, 2013:5). This activity is beneficial as it encourages active participation of group members and reinforces acquired skills Role-playing should be followed by a group discussion to ensure that the role-play is processed and meaningful to the group members. .

- *Story telling*: Shared experiences allow group members to relate to one other and process past experiences. Additionally, fictional stories can be used for sharing information in a non-threating manner (Strydom & Wessels, 2006:19). Story telling is

similar to group discussions as it too involves verbal communication between members.

- *Games and play*: Play activities, board games, crafts and puppets can be used to illustrate concepts (Strydom & Wessels, 2006:19). Games provide a relaxed platform for exploration and building of trust between group members.

- *Movement exercises*: Active exercises utilising body movement and space can be used to energise the group. This is usually a practitioner-led activity (Strydom & Wessels, 2006:19).

- *Written exercises*: Using materials (pen and paper) allows members to reflect, apply and practice concepts learnt in the group (Nation *et al.*, 2013: 451). Written tasks are helpful for processing thoughts and recalling prior knowledge.

- *Homework:* Tasks to complete at home encourages continuity and provides members with an opportunity to translate their learning into different situations (Taylor *et al.*, 2013:4). Homework should be designed collaboratively with the group members and completed individually. Kaminski *et al.* (2008:569) discuss the importance of homework assignments as an active learning approach. The downside of this method, however, is that additional work outside of the group session is not always completed by all group members.

- *Internet and technology*: Online and self-directed platforms such a social media websites or organisational websites can be useful for increasing interaction with other members using technology. This method requires technological materials such as computers, digital projectors, cellular devices or internet access, which are not always viable for organisations.

Each method has strengths and limitations, as explained above. The benefits of incorporating multiple teaching methods is to accommodate different learning styles which may exist amongst group members as well as to maintain an innovative approach to programme delivery, as discussed in the previous section. These methods should be flexible according to the specific target population and environmental context, such as culture demographics, level of education and access to resources (e.g., an internet connection). There are limitations to these methods which the practitioner should be sensitive to and flexible towards, to ensure that the most effective method is used in a programme. Such characteristics will be discussed later in this chapter.

Teaching methods are functional tools which can be used to meet the aims of parenting programmes as described in Figure 3.1. The methods chosen to achieve these aims can be

adapted to the specific topic of the parenting programme, such as disciplinary strategies or communication styles. Topics of the programme's sessions are determined by the programme's goals.

3.8   COMMON TOPICS COVERED IN PARENTING PROGRAMMES

Parent education programmes may differ in content; however, their overall principles and aims remain fairly similar (Daro & Harding, 1999:157). Common topics emerging in parenting programme content include parenting styles, family dynamics, loss and grief, communication, conflict resolution, networking and resource utilisation, stress management, and relaxation skills. Other topics include the use of positive affirmation, boundary setting and discipline measures. Within these topics, the skills which are desired by parents are conveyed. Major contributors (Barlow, Parsons & Stewart-Brown, 2005; White, 2005) in the field of parenting link programme topics to the key parenting domains (White, 2005:45), which are: (a) social cognitive processing, (b) impulse control, (c) parenting skills, (d) social skills and (e) stress management. Samuelson (2009:11) suggests utilising a list of topic indicators which relate specifically to these parenting domains. An example of this is the highly recommended Minnesota Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework and Indicators (MN PECCFI) presented in Table 3.1. The framework can be used to assist programme developers and practitioners to design a programme which is comprehensive whilst achieving measureable aims (MN Early Childhood Family Education, 2008). Table 3.1 displays the scope of topics which can be included in a parent education programme.

Table 3.1 Framework of programme topics related to parent education domains (MN Early Childhood Family Education, 2008).

Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework				
Parent development	**Parent-Child Relationship**	**Early Childhood Development**	**Family Development**	**Culture & Community**
Micro-Level	**Micro-Level**	**Micro-Level**	**Meso-Level**	**Macro-Level**
Role of Parent 1. Transition to Role 2. Multiple Parental Roles 3. Parenting Philosophy **Changing Parent Role** 1. Stages of Parenting 2. Family-of-Origin 3. Balancing Parent-child relationship needs	**Importance of Parent-child Relationship** 1. Nature & Quality 2. Intentionality **Attachment/Autonomy** 1. Trust 2. Brain Development **Relationship Skills** 1. Observation Skills 2. Sensitivity & 3. Responsiveness 4. Reciprocity 5. Pace 6. Temperament **Nurturing** 1. Physical Care 2. Affirmation & Affection 3. Empathy & Respect **Guidance** 1. Modelling 2. Monitoring & Management 3. Structure	**General Child Development** 1. Process of Development & Expectations **Social & Emotional Development** 1. Emotional Development 2. Self-Awareness & Self-Regulation 3. Social Competence & Relationships **Approaches To Learning** 1. Curiosity 2. Risk-Taking 3. Imagination & Invention 4. Persistence 5. Reflection & Interpretation **Language & Literacy Development** 1. Listening & Understanding 2. Speaking 3. Emergent Reading 4. Emergent Writing **Creativity & The Arts** 1. Creating 2. Responding 3. Evaluating **Cognitive Development** 1. Mathematical & Logical Thinking 2. Scientific Thinking & Problem Solving 3. Social Systems Understanding **Physical & Motor** 1. Development 2. Fine and Gross Motor Development 3. Physical health & Well-being	**Family Traditions & Values** 1. Daily Family Time 2. Rituals & Celebrations 3. Family Responsibilities 4. Values **Family Relationships & Dynamics** 1. Relationships 2. Communication 3. Resource Management 4. Work & Family	**Family Support & Community Involvement** 1. Support Networks 2. Community Involvement & Social Change **Societal & Global Forces** 1. Media 2. Violence & Safety 3. Wellness 4. Environment **School & Community** 1. Parent Involvement 2. School Success **Diversity - Ethnic, Economic, Ability, Other** 1. Community Populations 2. Cultural Identity, Acceptance, & Advocacy **Community Resources** 1. Resource Identification 2. Assessment & Use 3. Quality Early Care and Education

A framework such as the MN PECCFI (Table 3.2) is a practical tool which can be used by practitioners when designing a parenting programme for a specific target group, either in an urban or rural community. It comprehensively covers all the goals of a parenting programme whilst continuing to engage parents' unique parenting roles and responsibilities. Practitioners are in a unique position where they are able to assess and explore the needs of parents in their particular communities, related to White's (2005:45) key parenting domains and other recommended skills, such as communication, relationship skills and an understanding of child development (Samuelson, 2009:11). The topics provide a platform for group discussion and allow parents to learn new skills. Mytton *et al.* (2013:4) found that the skills desired by parents attending parenting programmes include improving self-confidence and parenting practices, goal setting and problem solving. These topics and skills are directly linked to both social learning and cognitive behavioural theories (Mytton *et al.*, 2013:1). It is suggested that these theories should be used to facilitate parenting programmes.

Although the use of programme theory and tested frameworks may be costly and time consuming, they yield the optimum results (McGilloway *et al.*, 2013:122; Nation et al., 2003: 455). Unfortunately evidence-based programmes are largely found only in high-income countries (e.g., the USA and the UK) as noted by Wessels *et al.* (2013). In accordance with this statement, a recent study conducted for the Department of Social Development in the Western Cape, South Africa (Wills & Mitchell, 2013) confirmed that while organisations could articulate their programmes' topics, they lacked theoretical knowledge on which to base these topics. Thus, there is a need to explore the theoretical knowledge of practitioners delivering parenting programmes.

The geographic distribution of parents impacts not only the delivery method of the programme, but also the programme's content (collection of topics). For example, a parenting programme for rural mothers in Bangladesh covered the following topics: common diseases and oral rehydration solutions, hygiene, sanitation, breastfeeding, weaning foods, micronutrient deficiencies, stages of cognitive and language development, child education, language development, positive discipline, gender equality and child rights (Aboud, 2007:4). In an urban setting, topics such as rehydration and disease may be less relevant and these topics could be exchanged for topics related to cyberbullying or stress management, for example.

Similarly, it was found that in rural areas of South Africa, parenting programmes commonly had an ECD focus. Such programmes took a holistic approach and covered topics such as nutrition, safety as well as early literacy and numeracy, with positive parenting usually being

a small programme component (Wessels, 2012:33). The reason for this topic selection could be that in rural areas in South Africa, basic needs and sanitation are a priority concern for parents. This correlates with the needs of parents to fulfil the tasks of making provision for their children, as well as the protection, socialisation, nurture and care of their children, as discussed in Chapter 2.

3.9   BEST PRACTICE COMPONENTS FOR PARENTING PROGRAMMES

Certain components in parenting programmes form the foundational base for effective parenting interventions, based on what has been researched to be a best practice method. Best practice components have been developed for the purpose of proving a sound theoretical base for implementing parenting programmes in any organisation. These evidence-based components have been successfully implemented in practice (Bunting, 2004:338; Kaminski *et al.*, 2008:567; Samuelson, 2009:2). Piacentini (2008) validates the benefits of these principles by confirming that utilising effective components of parenting programmes offers considerable benefits to both practitioners and participants. According to Kaminski *et al.* (2008:567), until 2008, components of parenting programmes have had limited examination. After 2008, there was an increase in studies conducted of research into parent education programmes. A major contributor to this area of study was the systematic review of Group-based parent-training programmes conducted by Barlow, Smailagic, Ferriter, Bennett and Jones (2012). This review highlights in significant of evidence-based programme content and components.

Relevant best practice components (Wessels, 2012:10-24) for parenting programmes to be effective include the following core components: target population, recruitment, culturally relevant programmes, programme theory, frequency of programme, programme facilitators, and training, characteristics of the practitioners, monitoring and evaluation as well as programme scalability and implementation. Each of these components is discussed below.

3.9.1 Target Population

To ensure that programmes are designed to adequately address the needs of parents, the programmes should have a clearly defined target population (Wessels, 2012:36; Wessels *et al.,* 2013:12). To meet the needs of the target group, The Institute of Medicine in the United States of America (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994) identified three categories of prevention interventions of different levels of risk factors that a group can experience. These internationally recognised categories of prevention intervention are universal, selective and

indicated (Nation *et al*, 2003:450; World Health Organization, 2004). Each category has been defined:

- *Universal prevention interventions* are targeted at the general public or to a whole population group regardless of whether they had been identified as facing increased risk (Cowley *et al.*, 2012:112; Krist-Ashman, 2010; Sanders *et al.*, 2013:145). For instance, all parents in a particular area may be recruited to participant in a parent education programme irrespective of the heterogeneous group dynamics. Krist-Ashman (2010:195) states that the liberal perspective of universality seeks to provide equal services to all, irrespective of their needs or social class.

- In contrast to the universal intervention, *selective intervention* targets individuals or subgroups of the population who are significantly higher at risk of maladaptive family problems (e.g., child abuse or aggression) than the average family, based on evidence such as biological, psychological or social risk factors. For example, stressed parents (Bandi, 2004; McLoyd, 1998; World Health Organization, 2004). The advantage of this intervention is the cost-effective nature of providing a service to selected participants only (Kirst-Ashman, 2010:195).

- *Indicated prevention intervention* targets high-risk parents who are identified as exhibiting a moderate level of "at-risk" signs or symptoms, such as a court-ordered intervention or a pattern of ineffective parenting strategies. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems perspective provides valuable insight for practitioners, programme developers and family service organisations providing prevention services such as parenting programmes at a community level (Heath, 2004:319; McGilloway et al., 2012:117; World Health Organization, 2004) as it helps to identify the population group which programmes could potentially target.

Programmes could potentially address only part of a larger community if delivered to the correct target group (Sanders *et al.*, 2003:146). Wessels (2013:4) and colleagues note the importance of community-based parenting programmes in addressing participants' needs according to their children's specific developmental age. The acknowledgement of developmental theories is important when dealing with children, thus, it becomes relevant to integrate Erikson's developmental theory with Mrazek and Haggerty's (1994) classification of parent education programmes. Parents who attend group programmes often require assistance with challenges related to their child's development. Strategic timing of programme engagement with a specific population of parents and developmental age of a child is crucial in order to adequately meet the needs of parents (Nation *et al.,* 2003). For

instance, parents of pre-school children are in a particularly significant phase, such as early childhood, when behaviour intervention could assist in avoiding potential child problem behaviours and create a stable foundation for positive parent-child relationships in the future (Brown, 2005). Richardson and Joughlin (2002, in Gould *et al.*, 2004:198) suggest that most social support and services offered to parents by organisations is aimed at early childhood development.

Therefore, it is important to consider the developmental stage of the child when including a parent in the target population of a parent education programme. Kumpfer (1999) suggests that parenting programmes should be customised to be appropriate for the child's developmental stage and offer parenting information which is age-appropriate. He expands on this point by stating that "[current] reviews suggest there is no one single best family intervention program; providers in the field must carefully select the best program for their target population" (Kumpfer, 1999:34). Based on the findings of Sanders *et al.* (2003:151), it can be argued that a population-based approach is recommended for parenting and family intervention strategies such as parenting programmes. However, the challenge often experienced with wide-scale programmes is the unbalanced relationship between costs and benefits often experienced by social service organisations offering parenting programmes. The reality of limited resources poses a potential threat to the furthering of programme delivery by organisations.

Olds (2010:70) points out that the aim of an evidence-based target group is to ensure that that organisations could develop a "system of effective, complementary services grounded in scientific evidence" to ensure effective service delivery. The target population will determine the manner in which organisations recruit parents to participate in parent education programmes. Recruitment of parents is discussed in the next section.

3.9.1.1 Recruitment of Parents

The success of a group programme is largely dependent on the engagement and commitment of the participants. Parents are a unique population group with a wide variety of pressures and time-consuming responsibilities. This is a challenge for practitioners recruiting parents to participate in parenting programmes (Mytton *et al.*, 2013:2). Out of 60% of British families interested in participating in parenting programmes,only 4%-18% are estimated to enrol (Bunting, 2004:336; Nock & Kazdin, 2005:872). Furthermore, in order to maximise benefits, parents should be present for the full duration of the programme (Morwaska & Sanders, 2006:30). However, practitioners often face challenges maintaining parents'

engagement in programmes. Hard-to-reach groups of parents (such as low-income earners, marginalised groups or resistant groups) tend to pose a greater recruitment challenge to practitioners (Axford *et al.*, 2012:2063; Hutchings & Webster-Stratton, 2004: 341; Koerting, Smith, Knowles, Latter, Elsey, McCann, Thompson & Sonuga-Barke, 2013:2; Ortiz & Del Vecchio, 2013:444). It is crucial to address these barriers that exist for parents to access and participate in programmes (Mytton *et al.*, 2013:7; Wessels, 2012:12).

Barriers to the recruitment of parents

Barriers to service access include practical constraints such as inconvenient time/venue, financial cost, transport difficulties and lack of available childcare (Koerting *et al.*, 2013:9; Mytton *et al.*, 2013:9; Wessels, 2012:12). Psychological barriers which exist include fears or worries (low self-confidence or fear of judgement), the stigma related to being labelled as a "poor parent", concerns about cultural acceptability, negative expectancies about programmes and distrust of the group's confidentiality (Koerting *et al.*, 2013:9; Ortiz & Del Vecchio, 2013:444; Wessels, 2012:12). Other barriers involve the lack of information or misconceptions about the programmes, poor availability of services and ineffective channels of agency referrals (Koerting *et al.*, 2013:9).

In order to eliminate some of these barriers to recruitment and engagement, authors have made a few practical recommendations. It may be worthwhile for organisations to deliver parenting programmes at convenient times and at easily accessible venues (Koerting *et al.*, 2013:16; Morwaska & Sanders, 2006:32; Mytton *et al.*, 2013:9). The use of technology could also increase the accessibility of hard-to-reach populations (Hutchings & Webster-Stratton, 2004:341; Sanders et al., 2003:151; Samuelson, 2009:8), such as developing communities lacking family welfare service organisations. Quality child-care should also be provided for the duration of the programme (Samuelson, 2010). Furthermore, parents' perception of the programme and the practitioner could play an influential role in enrolment and continued commitment to the group (Mytton et al., 2013:2). Therefore, practitioners should take a leadership role in the group and display characteristics which encourage participations, and engagement. These characteristics will be further discussed in section 3.9.6. Other recommendations include ensuring awareness of programmes, tailoring recruitment methods, matching practitioners' skills to specific groups' needs and creating individualised group versions of the programme (Koerting *et al.*, 2013:17). By normalising and destigmatising parenting programmes, engagement with resistant parents may become less challenging (Sanders, Cann & Markie-Dadds, 2003:151). In addition, parents' motivation to participate in, attend and commit to the programme will be enhanced.

3.9.1.2 Culturally Relevant Parenting Programmes

Engagement of parents' commitment is not the only challenge for practitioners; cultivating a culturally inclusive programme for parents is also necessary. Parenting is part of a socio-cultural role, which means that practitioners should incorporate cultural relevancy when planning and facilitating a parenting programme. Parent-focussed interventions which are tailored to address the needs of the community usually tend to consider differences in age, condition and geography (Cowley *et al.*, 2012: 110; McFarland-Piazza & Saunders, 2012:65). Such considerations should include culture. Programme content and delivery should therefore be accessible, relevant and respectful of cultural values, beliefs, aspirations, traditions and identified needs of the target population (Aisenberg, Briggs & McBeath, 2010:354; Nation *et al.*, 2003:453; Sanders *et al.*, 2003:151). Adaption between parenting differences in the urban culture versus the rural culture is an example of this type of adaption. Cultural adaptations to a programme's content have been noted to increase the possibility of best practice delivery (Barth, 2009:108).

Significant factors such as family structure, roles and responsibilities, predominant cultural beliefs and values, child-rearing practices, developmental issues, sexuality and gender roles may be culturally sensitive issues and should be carefully considered by the practitioner facilitating the group (Mytton *et al.*, 20313:9; Ortiz & Del Vecchio, 2013:448; Sanders *et al.*, 2003:151). This is to ensure that the content covered in the programme is meeting the needs of the members. A significant contribution by Ortiz and Del Vecchio (2013:453-454) highlights that "unadapted" parent training interventions may too possess the flexibility necessary to be "culturally competent", thus meeting the cultural differences which exist amongst parents. Castro, Barrera and Martinez, (2004:41) echo this by stating that there is a need to develop culturally relevant and adaptable programmes which are evidence based whilst also addressing the problems experienced by the local community.

Ensuring a culturally accepting environment is an ethical principle which should be upheld by the practitioner as well as the group members (Chavis, 2011:480; Ortiz & Del Vecchio, 2013:449). Programmes should be implemented by practitioners with a non-judgemental attitude and they should not deny parents the space to determine for themselves their own values and cultural beliefs (Aisenberg *et al.*, 2010: 351; Koerting *et al.*, 2013:16; Sanders *et al.*, 2003:151). This requirement places a responsibility on the practitioners to uphold their professional ethics relating to cultural diversity. For example, Policy guidelines for course of conduct, code of ethics and the rules for social workers (SACSSP, 2005:6) notes that in response to the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights (1996) , social workers

should seek to promote cultural sensitivity and diversity. Wessel (2012:10) provides a context for South Africa whereby parent education programmes should be facilitated with cultural consideration. Ortiz and Del Vecchio (2013:453) support this point by suggesting that programmes should be conducted in the target population's primary language. In South Africa, parents and caregivers are experiencing extreme conditions such as poverty, exposure to violence, poor health conditions (HIV/AID, tuberculosis), domestic violence and single parenthood (Ward & Wessels, 2013:62) are all factors that may increase the pressures of parenting, and make poor outcomes for children. Different cultures tend to address these issues is different ways.

Aisenberg *et al.* (2010:354-355) propose a multidisciplinary approach to programme development which may assist practitioners to develop culturally appropriate interventions across diverse populations. An example of this could be the collaboration with a community member with the group practitioner to ensure that a programme incorporates culturally relevant information including values and traditions such as HIV/AIDS and sex education. Culturally relevant programmes could advance the relevance of parent education across a variety of different communities.

3.9.2 Programme Theory

Another component of parent education programmes is programme theory. Programme theory is the baseline of evidence-based content which acts as a blueprint for practitioners and organisations (Fixen, Blasé, Naoom & Wallace, 2009:531; Small, Cooney & O'Connor, 2009; Taylor *et al.*, 2013:86; Wessels *et al.,* 2013:3) to help them to design and deliver a program in such a way that it achieves its aims and objectives (Wessels *et al.,* 2013:3). The description 'theory-driven' has been given to programmes which are logically structured and include goal-orientated activities which reflect a specific theoretical perspective (Small *et al.*, 2009:4), thus requiring practitioners to ensure that theory is integrated into each aspect of the programme's implementation (Fixsen *et al.,* 2009: 531; Furlong, McGilloway, Bywater, Hutchings, Smith & Donnelly, 2012:14). This approach stems from the concern that there is a "hodgepodge" of programme contents, which is intended to achieve the programme's goal, but are haphazardly implemented without an intentional purpose. This criticism has emerged in studies conducted in the field of parenting (Nation *et al.,* 2003; Small *et al.*, 2009:4). Wessels *et al.* (2013:3) suggest that practitioners and programme developers use a theory model diagram to plan the intended theoretical framework. An example of such a diagram is shown in Figure 3.2.
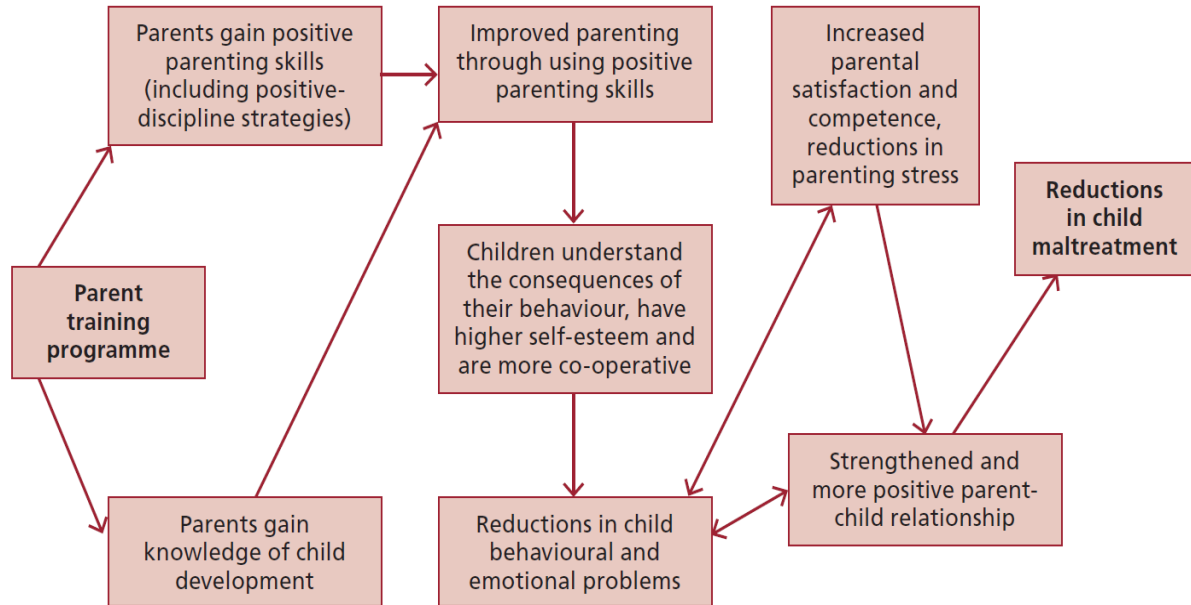
Figure 3.2 The WHO's example of a parent education programme theory diagram (Wessels *et al.*, 2013:26)

Figure 3.2 shows the follow-on effects of a well-executed parenting programme. It depicts the link between the programme goals and the predicted impacts of the programme. For example, if a parent is in need of assistance with disciplinary strategies, according to the flowchart the parent could gain knowledge and skills relating to this need, which, in turn, positively impacts both the parent's self-efficacy and the child's behavioural problems. Programme content can seek to address many of the parental needs and child-rearing problems as discussed in Chapter 2.

Programme developers can use different theoretical models to implement the programme contents. However, Medway (1989:251) cautions that one cannot compare one type of parent education model to another as they usually differ in programme aim and outcome, group facilitator characteristics, delivery method and theoretical perspective. For the purposes of this study, two predominant theoretical frameworks are discussed below and applied to parent education programmes, namely social learning theory and cognitive behavioural theory.

3.9.2.1 Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory is a significant theoretical base on which parent education programmes are designed. An overview of the social learning theory is discussed below and then applied to parent education programmes.

a.) Theoretical overview

Social learning theory has been described as an approach to human problems, such as behavioural problems and relational problems (Chavis, 2011:471). The underlying assumption of this theory is that learned behaviours occur within a social context and thus new behaviour can be successfully learned through human interactions. Parents, as described in this study, have numerous roles and responsibilities which can be learnt in addition to a parents' natural ability (Chavis, 2011:475; Miller & Sambell, 2003:32). Many authors consequently support social learning theory as an approach for parenting intervention.

Hoghughi (2004:5) praises Patterson's (1975) utilisation of social learning theory for "good-quality" interventions due to the theory being based on "relevant, real-life, theoretically rigorous but practically useful research" for parent education. Hutchings and Webster-Stratton (2004:341) elaborate upon the usefulness of social learning theory by noting the effectiveness of pro-social, co-operative behaviour which is reinforced during parenting programmes. Sanders *et al.* (2003:145) link behavioural family interventions to social learning principles as an evaluated intervention theory and Morawska *et al.* (2011:85) and Saunders *et al.* (2013:324) praise the effectiveness of social learning as a theory of choice when addressing conduct problems in younger children.

Previous research identified five core domains of parenting difficulty within "at-risk" families. These include skill deficiencies in (a) social cognitive processing, (b) impulse control, (c) parenting skills, (d) social skills and (e) stress management (Azar *et al.*, 1998, in White 2005:45). These domains can be strengthened by acquiring positive parenting techniques and skills (Earnes *et al.,* 2010:1222). Relevant skills which parents can learn in such a social learning programme include communication, active listening as well as disciplinary, stress management and problem solving techniques. Such programme content linked to skill attainment is based on Patterson's (1975) book, *Families: Applications of Social Learning to Family Life*. The domains mentioned relate to the goals of parenting programmes. For example, social skills relate to promoting parent-child interactions and increased attachment. Parenting skills is a broad domain and encompasses many of the goals for parenting education programmes. Thus, parenting education programmes provide a platform for learning, using a variety of activities and teaching methods.

b.) Application of social learning theory to parent education programmes

Earnes *et al*, (2010:1221) suggest the idea that many parenting programmes are developed based on social learning theory (Bandura,1989) and utilise components from well-known programmes such as the Positive Parenting Programme (Triple-P) (Sanders, 1999) and the Incredible Years (Webster-Stratton & Ried, 2003). Similarly, it has been noted that there is a substantial number of evaluated programmes which are underpinned by social learning theory, addressing the relationship between early parenting practices and child functioning (Barlow *et al*., 2012:2).

Active engagement has been associated with social learning methods (Small *et al*., 2009:5) to ensure that participants are gaining an opportunity to practice new social skills (Taylor *et al*., 2012:5). Such methods include observational learning, role modelling and experiential learning activities (Sanders *et al*, 2013:324). These are methods which promote and foster skill performance of the parents, which is one of the goals of parenting education programmes. Consequently, various practitioners apply social learning theory to address behavioural concerns in a variety of disciplines, such as nursing and social work (Chavis, 2011:471). Parents tend to gain increased confidence and self-efficacy in their parenting skills as a result of this process. Therefore, social learning principles have been incorporated into a number of behaviour-focussed parenting programmes. Core parenting principles based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) are presented by Lachman, Cluver, Ward, Hutchings and Gardner (2013) as:

- A collaborative approach to problem-solving;
- Developmentally appropriate activities;
- Culturally sensitive forms of positive parenting skills;
- Effective supervision and parent-child communication;
- Nonviolent disciplinary strategies; and
- Parental self-management, care and stress relief.

These topics correlate with the goals mentioned in Figure 3.1 and address the responsibilities of parents as described in Chapter 2.

3.9.2.2 Cognitive Behavioural Theory (CBT)

Cognitive behavioural theory (CBT) is another significant theoretical base on which parent education programmes can be designed. An overview of CBT is provided below and applied to parent education programmes.

a.) Theoretical overview

CBT finds a foundational base in the behavioural principles of B.F. Skinner who theorises the interaction between people's thoughts, emotions and behaviour (Scott, 2011). Behavioural principles such as identifying, processing, and responding to dysfunctional thoughts and beliefs are significant for delivering parent intervention which intends to modify behaviour and address behavioural problems. The distinguishing principle of CBT, compared to other theoretical approaches, is that it has an educational emphasis, which lends itself to application in a group format such as a parenting programme (Scott, 2011:1). CBT programmes combine the basic behavioural type strategies with cognitive strategies aimed at helping parents to restructure their thinking about themselves and their children (Barlow, Coren & Stewart-Brown, 2003:6).

b.) Application of cognitive behavioural theory to parent education programmes

Similarly to social learning theory, CBT is associated with behaviour modification to address behavioural and relational problems. CBT addresses challenges in (a) social cognitive processing, (b) impulse control, (c) parenting skills, (d) social skills and (e) stress management which are similar to the five core domains of parenting difficulties within "at-risk" families, (Azar *et al.*, 1998, in White 2005:45). These domains can be strengthened through the acquirement of positive parenting techniques and skills (Earnes *et al.*, 2010:1222).

CBT interventions are aimed at addressing specific parenting skills by providing practical "take-home tips" on parenting behaviours (Barth, 2009:106). This popular therapeutic approach is interested in measurable outcomes (DVD for Theory & practice of group counselling, 2011) and, typically, skills taught include behaviour modification, principles of positive reinforcement, recognising acceptable behaviour and ignoring unwanted behaviour. The outcomes of such programmes involve improving the psychosocial functioning of parents, including depression, anxiety, stress, irritability, marital adjustment and parental efficacy (Barlow *et al.*, 2010:8).

Stern and Azar (1998) suggest that cognitive behavioural skills training can be effective for building a positive parental self-efficacy with emotional regulation and anger management. Similarly, Sanders *et al.* (2003:147) emphasise the potential which lies in family interventions through the utilisation of cognitive behavioural strategies focussed on changing parental responses. The use of effective child-rearing practices may result in parents' ability to better cope with the demands of the parental role. Acquiring self-efficacy has been identified as a product of parenting programmes with CBT as the baseline (Barlow & Stewart-Brown., 2009:3; Gould, 2010:119).

3.9.3 Frequency of Programme

The next component of best practice is the dosage of programmes, which refers to the need for participants to be exposed to the programme for certain duration of time to ensure it has an effect on them. Frequency of programme, programme dosage, or program intensity, could be measured in the quantity of contact hours and the quality of the contact sessions, such as session length, total number of sessions, spacing between sessions and the duration of the overall programme (Nation *et al.*, 2003:452; Small *et al.*, 2009:4-5).

As an effective component of a group programme, the duration of the sessions should be considered carefully by practitioners. Session time should allow the group members to develop trust, determine group needs and practice new skills acquired in the session (Huser, Small & Eastman, 2008:1, Kumpfer, 1999:35; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2009). Kumpfer (1999:35) cautions practitioners to ensure that during the programme, adequate time is allocated to such tasks, as trends in programme duration tend to neglect the inclusion group process tasks in their sessions. These tasks require a skilled practitioner to enhance member's experience of the group programme and create an opportunity for investment into the group's development.

Barlow *et al.* (2010:3) observed that programmes are most commonly offered to parents over the course of eight to 12 weeks, for one to two hours a week. The format can be either group-based or individualised in various settings, from clinics and schools to churches and social service organisations. This links to the varying professional backgrounds of practitioners delivering parenting programmes, as identified in Chapter 1.

Programmes tend to differ in duration depending on the participants' needs and/or the purpose of the programme. Triple-P (Collins & Fetsch, 2012) is a well-known parent education programme which has been critiqued and evaluated extensively by researchers

globally. The Triple-P programme format takes a "small dosage" approach and includes three 90-minute seminars, with each seminar delivered as a stand-alone intervention. A stand-alone intervention provides flexibility and is appealing to potential participants due to the low commitment expectation (Kumpfer, 1999:35; Sanders, Prior & Ralph, 2009; Wessels *et al.,* 2013:13). Such shorter sessions are also noted as cost effective for the funders and service providers. However, shorter sessions could result in significant information being neglected and could limit relationship-building opportunities between parents (Wessels, 2012:47).

Programmes with an increased duration have been noted to be more effective in tackling severe problems and high-risk groups (Wessels *et al.,* 2013:13). It is for this reason that the target population is clearly defined by the organisation providing the programme. In terms of programme duration, Barth (2009) suggests 12 sessions, with the group meeting at least once weekly. In addition, a recent finding emerged in research highlighting the effectiveness of a 14-session programme (McGilloway *et al.*, 2012:117; Small *et al.*, 2009:4). Hurlburt *et al.* (in Barth, 2009:107) view sessions as being less relevant and suggests that programmes should last at least 25 hours in total. Nation *et al.* (2003:452) contributed a valuable suggestion that follow-up or booster sessions should be implemented to support outcome sustainability and continuation of the programme's impact.

3.9.4 Programme Facilitators

Another component for the implementation of best practice methods is the inclusion of programme facilitators. Parent education programmes are usually facilitated by a practitioner in the field of family and childcare. A practitioner is someone who is actively engaged in a discipline or profession (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013).

There is a rising need for practitioners to become involved in parenting programmes to improve parenting practices (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:255). Fixsen *et al.* (2009:532) boldly propose that in social service organisations, the practitioner *is*, in fact, the intervention. This places a great responsibility on the practitioner to implement the intervention effectively.

Research provides sound evidence that a practitioner in the field of parent education can facilitate group or community-based programmes with great success (Carter, 1996, in Samuelson, 2009:6). Educating parents regarding family interventions requires specific professional expertise (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:257; Mahoney *et al.*, 1999:135). This expertise crosses a broad range of disciplines and this multi-disciplinary approach to family services is

also emphasised by family education literature (Munford *et al.*, 2007:77; Salem, Sandler, & Wolchik, 2013:135; Wong & Sumsion, 2012:81).Therefore, professionals from various disciplines may work collaboratively in parent education with great success (Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010:424; Samuelson, 2009:6). Examples of professionals who possess expertise to facilitate parent education programmes include social workers, psychologists/therapists, nurses, speech therapists and educators.

Paraprofessionals are acknowledged in the field of parent education as well (Powell, 2005, in Samuelson, 2009:6; Ritchie & Woodward, 2009:524). These practitioners are partially or untrained individuals whose role is to master an aspect of a professional activity, such as facilitation (Papatheodorou, 2005:147). Paraprofessional facilitators hold certain professional skills which endorse their credibility to facilitate parenting programmes and family-based interventions. Any person interested or involved in parent education can become a paraprofessional facilitator with the appropriate skills (Papatheodorou, 2005:148). Mytton *et al.* (2013:9) further emphasise that facilitators should be competent and flexible in order to adapt the pre-planned content to meet the needs of the group. Western, Novotny and Thompson-Brenner (2004:658) criticise the inclusion of partially skilled paraprofessionals facilitating evidence-based programmes and state that "clinically competent decision makers rather than paraprofessionals trained to stay faithful to a validated manual…" should be delivering parenting programmes as they have the professional competency to effectively interpret the programme manual. Although paraprofessional may lack the theoretical knowledge regarding parent education, they are able to easily empathize with the difficulties and experiences of parents. Organisations should respond to paraprofessionals' limited theoretical knowledge regarding parent education and group facilitation skills. Thus, there is a need for paraprofessional's facilitator training and monitoring of parent education programmes facilitated by paraprofessionals.

3.9.5 Facilitators Training

Successful parent education programmes need to have well-trained facilitators as poorly trained facilitators could have a negative impact on the aims and outcomes of a parenting programme (Mytton *et al.*, 2013:4; Wessels, 2012:19). Practitioners may receive training in facilitation. Lack of training could result in the following challenges: poor implementation of theory-driven programmes due to limited time frames, theory-driven interventions not being mandated by organisations, lack of consensus from differing practitioner disciplines and low incentive for practitioners to change their practice models (Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010:238). These challenges could be addressed through adequate training and an

appreciation of the diversity of educational background of professionals in a multi-disciplinary approach.

Diversity of practitioners' training impacts their professional knowledge related to parent education. Authors such as Mahoney and Wiggers (2007:11) and Mazzucchelli and Sanders (2010:249) noted the gap in training in certain fields, such as teaching and occupational therapy, in which professionals may have limited insight into the role of a parent, but valuable insight into the development of a child. Professionals working with parents of children in the early childhood phase raised the concern that their university training had not specifically prepared them for directly working with parents (McFarland-Piazza & Saunders, 2012:71). In order to address such gaps, training programmes have been implemented, for example The Care for Development Module developed by the WHO and UNICEF. This module trains health workers and practitioners to provide specific behavioural recommendations to parents about play, communication and responsive feeding (Engle *et al.,* 2011:1341). In agreement with practitioner training, Mazzucchelli and Sanders (2010:424) present the idea of in-service experiential and educational workshops run by organisations for practitioners working with parents. These workshops have been evaluated as being more effective than purely manualised programmes (Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010:424; Samuelson, 2009:6). Similarly, Woodcock's (2003:102) findings raised the concern that social workers who are currently working in the field of parenting may require further skills and training. This was because the data collected during his research reflected that practitioners found working with parents a challenging task.

Disciplines which commonly facilitate parenting programmes include psychology, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, policing and social work (Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010:238). Wong, Sumsion and Press (2012:82) term this collaboration of disciplines as "inter-professional work". An example of a programme using such a collective approach is the UK-based parenting programme, Sure Start, which follows a multi-disciplinary team approach. Azzi-Lessing (2010) supports this inter-professional perspective, but raises the significant concern that amongst these workers in the field of parenting, social workers are less prominently represented. Reasons for this could be related to the poor compensation and lack of resources in the sector, limited awareness of the need for parent education and the restricted nature of social work job descriptions. In South Africa, there is a shortcoming in the practical implementation of parent education programmes in family-focussed organisations. A key conclusion in Wessels' (2012:92) recent study is that although there appears to be a shortage of parenting programmes all over South Africa, there is a particularly low number in rural areas. This poor provision of

services is in direct contradiction with South African policy documents (the White Paper for Social Welfare [Republic of South Africa, 1997b]; the Finance Policy of 1999 [Republic of South Africa, 1999] and the Child Care Act No. 38 of 2005 [Republic of South Africa, 2005]), which mandate parenting programmes as an essential family support service.

3.9.6 Characteristics of and Skills used by Practitioners in Parent Education Programmes

Certain characteristics are associated with the facilitation of parent education programmes. A non-judgemental attitude and showing empathy towards participants are characteristics of an effective parenting programme facilitator (Mytton *et al.*, 2013:4). Other skills which are related to effective facilitation of a parenting programme can be seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Characteristics associated with effective parenting programmes practitioners

Practitioners Characteristic	References
Warmth	McFarland-Piazza & Saunders, 2012:66; Samuelson, 2009:7; Hanna, Edgecombe, Jackson & Newman, 2002:212
Genuineness	Samuelson, 2009:7
Flexibility	Fixen *et al.*,2009:534; Hanna *et al.*, 2002:212; Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010:249; Mytton *et al.* 2013: 1; Samuelson, 2009:7; Taylor *et al.*, 2013:5
Humour	Hanna *et al*, 2002:212; Kazantzis & Shinkfield, 2007:319; Samuelson, 2009:7
Empathy	Fixen *et al.* 2009:533; Hanna *et al.*, 2002:212; Samuelson, 2009:7;
Communication skills	Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010:249;Samuelson, 2009:7
Knowledge of group work processes and dynamics	Earnes *et al.*, 2010:1222; Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010:243; Mytton *et al.*, 2013:4; Powell, 2005; Samuelson, 2009:7;Strydom & Wessels, 2006:8 Taylor *et al*,.2013:5
Engagement with parents	Fixen *et al.* 2009:5340; Morawska & Sanders, 2006:30; Mytton *et al.* 2013:4; Taylor *et al*,.2013:5

Kazantzis and Shinkfield (2007:319) note that the characteristics described in Table 3.2 are skills and principles which are often occupationally expected of professionals working in the human services sector.

Samuelson (2009:7) comments that practitioners who appear credible to parents are better able to establish rapport and deliver a more impactful programme presentation. Furthermore, Earnes *et al.* (2010:1223) link successful interventions to positive group leader behaviours. Other skills noted include role-modelling, the ability to provide clear explanations, positive affirmation, reflective behaviour and coaching (Earnes *et al.*, 2010:1224; Fixen *et al.*, 2009:534; McFarland-Piazza & Saunders, 2012:68). Modelling and reflective behaviour have been noted to be closely linked to social learning theory methodology due to the insightful observational learning that occurs during these interventions. Confidence and self-regulation of behaviours and feelings have been noted to be other important skills that a practitioner has to master as well (Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010:249; Taylor *et al.*, 2013:5).

Group programmes should be implemented effectively to ensure than the group develops to its full potential according to the group work process (Strydom & Wessels, 2006:8). For that reason, Fixen *et al.* (2009:531) emphasise the importance of practitioners being active in the process of implementing parent education and social programmes rather than following a lackadaisical "let it happen" approach, which is commonly associated with contemporary practitioner practice. It is possible to address many of the group process challenges such as "poor engagement or group cohesion" (Hanna *et al*, 2002:212) by implementing the skills discussed in Table 3.2.

3.9.7 Enhancing Commitment of Parents

Additionally, the commitment of parents towards the programme is an active component of an effective service. The on-going nature of a group programme requires a certain level of engagement and commitment from the parent. Therefore, sustaining engagement from participants is a challenge for practitioners. For example, it was found that 50% or more of parents attend only half or fewer sessions (Morawska & Sanders, 2006:30). To address this problem, Nock and Kazdin (2005) developed an innovative model to encourage continued participation, called the Participant Enhancement Intervention (PEI) (Barth, 2009:104; Kazdin, Holland & Crowley 1997; Nock & Kazdin, 2004:873). During the first, fifth, and seventh sessions, about five to 15 minutes are allocated to discussing the group member's motivation to attend the group and any barriers to participation that they are experiencing at that time (Barth, 2009:104). The reason for the three short sessions is the limited time frames (Nock & Kazdin, 2005:873) that these programmes are faced with. This provides parents with an opportunity to acknowledge their challenges and offer support to one other.

Individual members' behavioural change can potentially increase as a result of enhanced cohesion in a group (Toseland & Rivas, 2009:76).

The model of PEI includes:

1. Providing parents with information about the importance of attendance and adherence;
2. Eliciting motivational statements about attending and adhering to the programme; and
3. Helping parents to identify and develop plans for overcoming engagement challenges.

Short, impactful activities, such as PEI, are recommended for maintaining sustained programme engagement from parents. Although the emphasis is often placed on practitioners to create an enabling environment for recruitment and engagement, this should be supported and endorsed by the organisation offering the programme.

3.9.8 Programme Monitoring and Evaluation

The aim of programme evaluation is to assess whether or not the programme has achieved its aims and to measure the changes which have occurred as a result of the programme (Deković *et al.*, 2012:62; Samuelson, 2009:10; Wessels, 2013:6). The use of evaluation procedures, such as formative and summative evaluations as a best practice method, is a positive indicator of effective parenting programmes (Kaminski *et al.*, 2008:583) and according to Deković *et al.* (2012:70) evaluation procedures should increase the credibility and integrity of a programme. These aims can be achieved by gathering evaluative information verbally or in writing from participants. The evaluation seeks to assess which topics and learning activities worked well, which ones did not work so well and what suggestions could be made for future programmes (MN ECFE, 2008:5). However, Nation *et al.* (2003:454) caution that evaluation should not be anecdotal but empirically measured, using evidence-based evaluation tools.

3.9.8.1 Formative and Summative Evaluation

There are two main elements which programme evaluation seeks to assess, namely the process (formative evaluation) and the outcome (summative evaluation) of the programme (Wessels, 2013:4). Both these elements may significantly influence decisions affecting the future of the programme (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004). These future decisions relate to

the continuation of the programme, resource allocation and whether the programme should be restructured or not (Wessels, 2012:20). Kaminski *et al.* (2008:583) provide practitioners and evaluators with the following guidelines regarding information needed to successfully conduct a parenting programme evaluation:

- Basic demographic information of participants, such as age, gender, ethnicity and any assessment problems or issues);
- Details of recruitment and assignment to the intervention;
- Details of the intervention, including content covered, delivery method(s) used, intervention setting and duration of contact time;
- Details of program/intervention practitioners' professional and program-specific training;
- Details and results of treatment trustworthiness assessments;
- Outcome measure information (links to measurable programme goals); and
- Engagement information, including the number of participants who dropped out of each session.

Programme evaluation distinguishes a tested programme from an untested programme and seeks to achieve a high level of service delivery and best practice method for the benefit of both the parent and the organisation. A randomised controlled trial has been noted to be the evaluation strategy of choice for parenting programmes. This strategy compares groups which have experienced the intervention with a group and those who have not (Wessels, 2013:6). It is recommended that organisations use qualified evaluators to conduct programme evaluation and serve the role as a consultant to the organisation. If the evaluation procedure reflects positive results, continuous implementation and scalability could be feasible. Evaluation and monitoring is purposed to measure and ensure that the programme is making an impact whilst achieving its original aim.

3.9.8.2 Impact of a Parenting Programme

Parent education programmes have a number of positive effects on participating parents, their children, families and extended community systems.) Studies have concluded that parents participating in programmes which are focussed on parent-child attachment gave positive testimonials regarding the impact of group parenting support (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2005:47; Mytton *et al.*, 2013:2). The parents commented that these groups provided them with a safe space to share experiences, to learn coping skills and to review past relationships which could influence their parenting (Attachment Theory Across the

Generations, 2007). Parenting interventions have been found to impact key parenting domains by, for example, parents highlighted the improvement of their self-efficacy beliefs about their parenting role (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2005:47).

On an individual level, parenting programmes generally intend to improve parenting practices, goals and style. Without intervention, behavioural problems will persist in about 50% of children (Joughin, 2002). However, parents are in an influential position once they are equipped with the necessary skills to address these conduct problems. Jackson and Dickinson (2009:1030-1031) propose the use of Darling and Steinberg's (1993) integrative model of parenting based on Baumrind's (1971) parenting styles theory to illustrate the flow of impact of parenting variables. This model is presented in Figure 3.3.
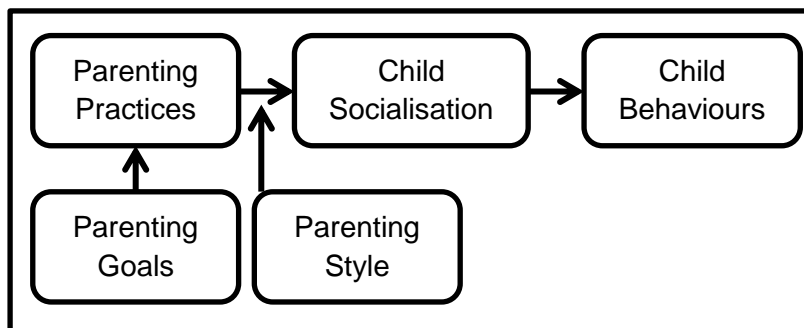
Figure 3.3 Model of parenting variables adapted from Darling and Steinberg's integrative model (Jackson & Dickinson, 2009:1030-1031)

Parenting programmes have been found to have a positive impact on communities, specifically those in which organisations are working with families. Effective parenting programs incorporate an ecological approach to program content, which acknowledges the influence of neighbourhoods, schools and employment on parenting (Colosi & Dunifon, 2003:2; Kumpfer, 1999: 34). Parent education programmes are also cost-effective to the public. The National Health Service in Britain commented that parenting programmes also have long-term benefits to the social welfare and criminal justice system (Bonin, Stevens, Beecham, Byford & Parsonagem, 2011:7). This means that community development and social welfare are potentially positive results of an effective parent education programme. The delivery method and aims of a programme will determine the specific impact on the parents, their families and the community.

3.9.9 Programme Scalability

The promotion and expansion of a programme beyond the immediate target population is known as scalability. The Society for Prevention Research (2004) in the United States of

America realised the significance of programme scalability and noted that a programme can be considered appropriate for replication should there be sufficient standards of outcome efficacy and programme effectiveness. The expansion of a programme could mean reaching more parents (Salem *et al.*, 2013:131), consequently making a larger impact in the field of parenting and early childhood development. When increasing the scale of the programme, it is important to distinguish between a large-scale community programme and a group programme. A group delivery method affords parents the opportunity to meaningfully bond with other parents who have had similar experiences or problems (see Section 3.6). However, Toseland and Rivas (2009:22) comment that "as the size of a group increases, the opportunity for [active] participation decreases". This means that scalability should be conducted with sound evidence and strategic planning.

Therefore, Wessels (2013:24) emphasises that in order to implement programmes successfully, especially on a larger scale, careful planning and consideration is required. Scalability standards which should be upheld include the provision of materials and services that facilitate increasing the programmes scale (i.e., manuals, training and technical support), clear overall cost information, as well as monitoring and evaluation tools to evaluate the intervention (Wessels, 2012:22).

A common strategy for scalability is the distribution of a programme's content for duplication purposes through manualisation. Practitioners sometimes use the term 'manualised programme' to refer to the prior planning, prescription of activities and established course of training. Synonymously, the term 'curriculum' is also used to describe a series of programme content, particularly in education-focussed programmes (Cowley *et al.*, 2012:110; Kaminski *et al.*, 2008:575). The details of this curriculum may include specific, detailed and systemised intervention methods and group activities. The practitioner can utilise these methods to address the needs of the specific target population when implementing the programme (Cowley *et al.*, 2012: 110). Such programmes would have to be subjected to rigorous testing through evaluation and research trials. However, Western *et al.* (2004:658) and Kaminski *et al.* (2008:581) recognise that a manualised programme does not ensure that the programme will be effective.

In summary, manuals can be a valuable asset for practitioners if utilised with criticality and skill. Therefore, practitioners should be sensitive to the needs of the group based on their professional judgement and adjust any prescribed activity accordingly (Western *et al.*, 2004:639). Despite prescriptions and curricula being useful, having flexibility is important to participants as well and adds to the overall value of their group experience (Mytton *et al.*,

2013:4). However, Mazzucchelli and Sanders, (2010:239) note that the following aspects of concern inhibit practitioners' flexibility:

- Manualised interventions could restrict practitioners' personal creativity;
- Manualised programmes limit the individualised attention which is often needed to develop a positive therapeutic relationship; and
- Interventions are often not suitably designed for complex client situations (such as in the case of educated or employed parents).

Manuals and resources provide practitioners with functional tools to deliver parent education programmes with repetition and efficacy. Planned programmes ensure that practitioners can assess the group and flexibly adjust the manualised plan accordingly. Practitioners may find it helpful to be guided by a manualised programme when expanding or upscaling the programme.

3.10 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS FOR PARENTING PROGRAMMES

Whilst parent education is a fairly recent field for practitioners in early childhood development, several developments are noteworthy in terms of effective programme delivery. A recent progression noted in the field of parenting programmes is the inclusion of parents as group programme facilitators. Day *et al.* (2012:53) suggest that

> peer led parenting interventions may offer a viable means of increasing [community-based] provision in ways that local parents find acceptable and relevant to their needs, while also providing a mechanism for building social capital.

Another emerging development is the suggestion to combine parent and child-focused programmes. A suggested trial would be to pair a children's group with the parents' group to test whether the programmes act effectively when run concurrently (Barth, 2009:107). Furthermore, proving a safe and empowering environment for children is suggested as an incentive for parents to attend and engage with the parenting programme. Advances in programme development reveal the link between parental cognitions (knowledge, self-efficacy and personality traits) and parenting skills attainment (Deković *et al.*, 2012:69). Further developments include technological advances such as internet-based interventions (Borstein, Cote, Hayes, Hahn & Park, 2010:1686), videotaped feedback on parents' behaviour (Hiscock et al., 2008:336) and culturally adapted programmes (Barth, 2009:108).

These developments suggest that the future of parenting intervention has significant potential for advance and growth.

3.11   CONCLUSION

Parenting education programmes are platforms for family intervention, which fulfil both an educational and supportive role for participating parents. This chapter provided a comprehensive discussion detailing the nature and components of parent education programmes. It was illustrated that the goal-directed programmes offer patterns the opportunity to learn skills necessary for raising a child. The inclusion of relevant topics, such as communication, attachment and discipline, have been proven to be closely related to the over-all goal of improving parents' parenting skills and self-efficacy in their roles as parents. It was further shown that variations in teaching methods should be linked directly to the topics and needs of the parents and theory-driven programmes should be implemented as they have been proven to be more effective to achieve the desired goals. Trained practitioners should facilitate these programmes and evaluation measures are encouraged to ensure programmes are meeting their intended purpose.

It can be concluded that the implementation of best practice methods can facilitate a significant, positive impact in the homes of many parents and consequently influence their children positively. Practitioners and organisations are in the unique position to offer services such as parenting programmes and should thus equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver these programmes with the best possible methods to promote better parenting practice.

CHAPTER 4
**THE EXPERIENCES OF PRACTITIONERS FACILITATING PARENT
EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 2 and 3, a literature review was presented to provide a foundation for the
empirical study, which is described and discussed in this chapter. The purpose of this
chapter is to describe and present the investigation of practitioners' experiences with regard
to the facilitation of parent education programmes for early childhood development.

This chapter aims to fulfil objective 3 of the research study which was to investigate how
practitioners experience the facilitation of parent education programmes aimed towards early
childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches. A
combined exploratory and descriptive approach has been used to gain an understanding of
practitioners' reflections on their own experience of facilitating parent education programmes
in the Cape Metropole area. Interviews with participants were conducted to gather data to
achieve the objectives of the study. The empirical findings of this study are presented with
the functional use of tables, graphs and direct narrative quotes from the interviews. Firstly,
the biographical details of the participants and the profile of the organisations where they
work will be discussed. Subsequently, the findings of the empirical investigation are divided
into nine sections. Each of the sections are presented and analysed to describe and explore
the experiences of participants. Each section emerged from the literature reviews presented
in Chapters 2 and 3. The research findings will be compared to and controlled with the
literature throughout.

4.2   RESEARCH DESIGN

Stevens, Liabo and Roberts (2007:295) and Wessels (2012) suggest that parent education
is an intervention in need of investigation. The selected research design provided the
researcher with a guide for this empirical investigation. Social research aims to explore and
explain social phenomena (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:94) and several authors claim that using a
combination of qualitative and qualitative approaches could enhance the depth of the
description of such a phenomenon (Bergman, 2008:1; Creswell, 2009:18-22; De Vos *et al.*,
2011:66; Olsen, 2012:35). The researcher selected an explorative-descriptive research
design for the purposes of achieving the research objectives, utilising both qualitative and
quantitative questioning techniques. The design is deemed appropriate, as the topic of

parent education programmes is dynamic and complex. The research design is suitable because it seeks to gain understanding of the complex topic by utilising both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. For this study, experiences of practitioners facilitating these programmes were obtained, which offered valuable insight and understanding into the phenomenon. The descriptive research design made this possible by obtaining information of first-hand experiences regarding parent education programmes from participants through the questionnaire.

4.3   THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

As proposed by De Vos *et al.* (2005:205), an interview schedule was developed with relevant questions based on the literature review conducted in Chapters 2 and 3. The research design made it possible to obtain the reflections of practitioners who facilitate parent education programmes by means of a semi-structured questionnaire that was used during an interview (Addendum A). The questionnaire was planned and structured to ensure ease of administration and successful data collection. Combinations of open and closed-ended questions were incorporated into the questionnaire. Closed-ended questions had a quantitative nature and aimed to seek explicit information from the participants who participated in the interview. These questions were accompanied by open-ended questions to allow for explanation and description by the participants. Consequently, the open-ended questions allowed a narrative to develop throughout the interview, resulting in responses containing better descriptions, which created better understanding. The process of questioning and format of the interview schedule used in this study is recommended by De Vos *et al.* (2011:349).

4.4   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Emphasis must be placed on the importance of obtaining informed consent when conducting social research, as highlighted by De Vos *et al.* (2011:117) and Babbie (2011:477). The researcher observed the ethical considerations as detailed in Chapter 1 and this study received ethical clearance from the University of Stellenbosch. The researcher approached the NGOs where the empirical study was to be conducted in order to gain access to the participants through the correct protocol. The researcher explained the objectives of the research to all the practitioners who participated in the investigation by means of an informed consent form (Addendum B) and each practitioner who agreed to participate in the study signed one of these forms to formalise their willingness to participate.

In terms of ethical procedures, the researcher should choose the most suitable approach to the interview within the research field. Bell and Nutt (2012:77) suggest a self-regulating approach to determine whether the "practitioner-researcher" should emphasise his/her role as a practitioner when conducting interviews. This adaptable approach was followed in the study because the researcher's professional background was relevant to certain participants who shared a similar professional status, such as the participants who were social workers. Furthermore, the researcher made use of ethical decision making throughout the interview process (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:129) and ensured that the participants were comfortable and approached in a non-threating, non-judgemental way, as directed by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) (2012) to ensure a high standard of research ethics. Other ethical considerations included:

- Seeking voluntary consent from all participants;
- Ensuring anonymity of all participants;
- Negotiating clear entry into the participating agencies through the respective gatekeepers; and
- Ensuring confidentiality with regard to the recording of the interviews.

(Bell & Nutt, 2012:87).

4.5   PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was firstly undertaken, as recommended by De Vos *et al.* (2011:240), to see whether the questionnaire was designed appropriately. This was operationalized by means of a small-scale trial of the interview schedule (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:237; Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 2002:236). The interview schedule was conducted with three different participants at NGOs in the Cape Metropole area who met the criteria for inclusion. The researcher administered the interviews with the participants to ensure that the questionnaire was effective in obtaining the necessary information to meet the study objectives. The participants were asked about their experience of the interview and questionnaire in order to ensure that the questionnaire was suitably constructed. All three of the participants commented that the interview provided them with a valuable opportunity for reflection and that they were able to answer all the questions with ease. De Vos *et al.*, (2011:342) confirms this as positive outcome for an interview; the answers to the interview questions should be more than a participant's description of an experience and should rather be a participant's reflection on his/her description. Additionally, the pilot study revealed the need to reorder the questions slightly to ensure a logical flow. The wording of the questions did not need to be altered. The pilot study ensured that the research methodology and design were feasible

and that the data gathered met the objectives of the study. The pilot study proved to be a valuable component in the research process and contributed toward a more meaningful inquiry (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:242). After conducting the pilot study, the researcher was able to continue with the questionnaire, as planned, with the sample population.

4.6   SAMPLE

The study adopted the purposive sampling method (Monette, Sullivan & DeJong, 2002:151; Oliver, 2010:78) as detailed in Chapter 1. The sample size comprised of participants who worked at NGOs in the Cape Metropole area and were the most characteristic representation of the population. The technique of purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method. This type of sampling is based entirely on the judgment of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:59,202). The participants were selected to meet the criteria for inclusion as detailed in Section 1.4, and hence could fulfil the purpose of the study. The criteria for inclusion were developed to ensure that participants were able to provide in-depth meaning and reflection to the research question (Creswell, 2009:178). De Vos *et al.* (2011:225) find the sample size of 20-30 participants to be the adequate size for a study of this nature. This study chose a sample size of 25 participants due to the accessibility of participants and to tie in with the purposive sampling technique. Saturation was researched, which provided the researcher with confirmation that the sample size was adequately demarcated.

4.7   THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

The investigation can be classified as a combination of both the exploratory and descriptive designs, as described by De Vos *et al.* (2005:106) and Mouton and Babbie (2001:53). As detailed in Chapter,1 a combination of the qualitative and quantitative approaches were also adopted, with greater emphasis on the qualitative to meet the objectives of the research. For the purpose of the study, the qualitative approach focused on collecting information regarding the participants' experiences of facilitating parent education programmes for parents with children in the phase of early childhood. This was done in order to obtain information from the participants who possess the information relevant to the research question. The interviews were conducted by the researcher with each participant individually and this ensured that the researcher was able to fulfil the role of interviewer and data collector. Consequently, the researcher was submerged in the responses to the interview questions. This process provided the researcher with a clear idea of the intended meaning of

the participants' reflections. These reflections were analysed considering the participants intended meaning.

What followed, was the process of data analysis. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005:20), "[d]ata analysis is the process of moving from raw interviews to evidence-based interpretations that are foundation for published reports". Tesch (1990:142-145, in Creswell 2009) provides an eight-step process for systematic thematic data analysis. The analysis process included the following steps:

- The researcher read through all the transcriptions, making notes of ideas and interpretations which came to mind.
- Each interview was read with the intention of gaining meaning behind the data collected. Notes were written down regarding the researchers understanding of the participants meaning from the data collected.
- After going through each interview the researcher arranged similar topics into groups and the data was labelled into major topics and outlying topics.
- Topics were coded, and similar codes are grouped together to reduce the data
- The most descriptive terms were used for topics which related to reach other and these terms were converted into similar categories.
- The codes were alphabetised and labelled on the transcriptions
- The data was then coded completely linking the relevant data into the appropriate category
- If necessary the data is recoded.

This process was followed by the researcher to obtain the themes, categories and narratives from the study participants associated with the qualitative questions of the questionnaire. The qualitative data collected during the interview were captured, transcribed by the researcher, put through a process of coding for data analysis and then represented by means of tables, graphs and figures. This allowed the researcher to identify consistent and relevant patterns within the data. A descriptive method of analysis was then used to interpret the quantitative data (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:251). Interpretation and conclusions could be made as a result of this research procedure, due to the extensive data analysis process. These results are discussed below and are verified against the literature throughout, which endorses the validity and applicability of the data collected.

4.8   RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The results for the study will be presented in two sections. Section A provides an overview of the sampled practitioners who participated in the study and provides a profile of the organisations where the participants work. Section B describes the empirical study in which the thematic results of the study are discussed. A literature control is given in conjunction with the findings of the study.

4.8.1 Section A: Overview of Participants and Organisations

4.8.1.1 Identifying Details

The participants were asked to provide information about their gender, age, current occupation, highest qualification and number of years facilitating parenting programmes. These details, together with the criteria of inclusion, created a profile of the participants. Each feature will be discussed below.

4.8.1.2 Gender of Participants

The first question related to the participants' gender. Figure 4.1 depicts the gender ratio of the 25 participants who were interviewed for this study.
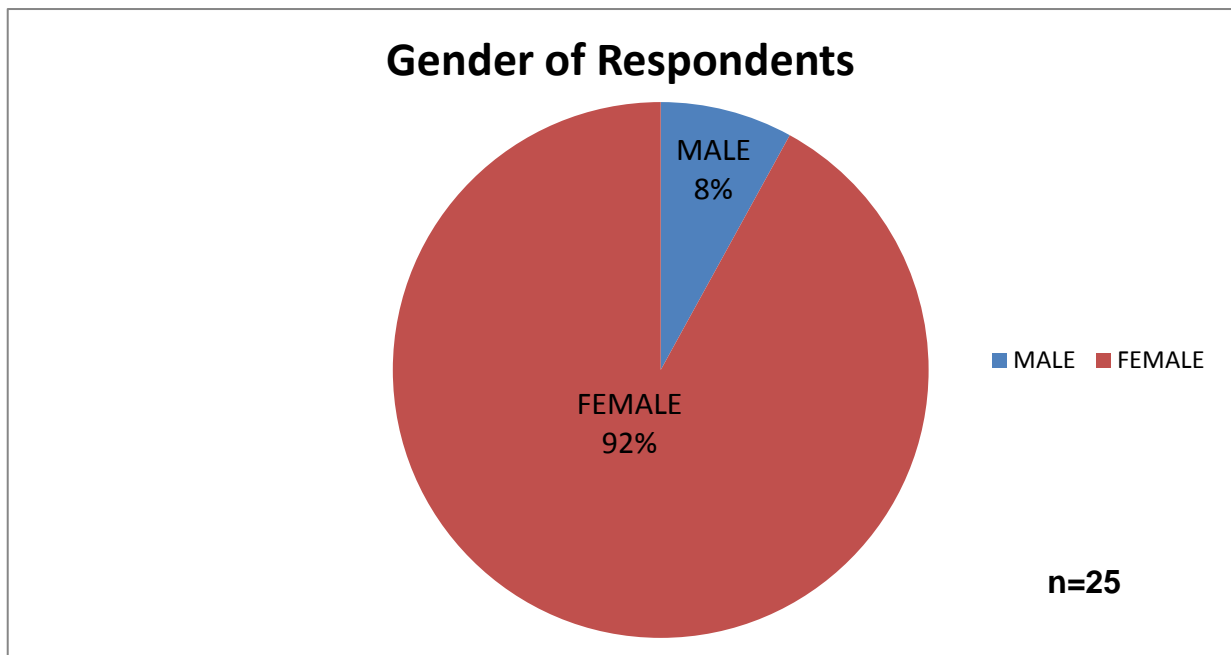
Figure 4.1 Gender of participants

Twenty-three (92%) of the participants were female and two (8%) were male. Therefore, there was a predominantly female presence in the sampled population (n=25). No gender-specific criteria were incorporated into choosing the sample group and thus it can be observed that, of the sampled population, practitioners in the field of parenting programmes tend to be predominantly female. It is apparent that there are significantly more females facilitating groups in the field of parenting programmes. There is evidence that suggests such a pattern world-wide amongst professionals, such as social workers and educators involved with family interventions. The sample population reflects this occurrence of female gender prevalence in the social service profession.

The Center for Health Workforce Studies and NASW Center for Workforce Studies (2006) proposes that should this pattern continue the gender profile of these practitioners might become increasingly female dominated as older men age, leave the workforce and are not replaced with other male practitioners. It could be noted that parenting is perceived as a female role and this creates a job description for practitioners working in the field of parenting that is implicitly gender biased towards females. This has a negative impact on helping professions such as social work or psychology because it reinforces the tendency for family intervention to be delivered by a female practitioner. Also noteworthy to this finding is that male practitioners may continue to lack involvement in parenting intervention and facilitation of parent education programmes due to this professional norm which has emerged. The contribution of males to the field of parent education is significant because of the role men fulfil as fathers and leaders in a household.

4.8.1.3 Age of Participants

The next question aimed to determine the age category of the participants. Figure 4.2 provides a graphic depiction of the age intervals of the participants (n=25).
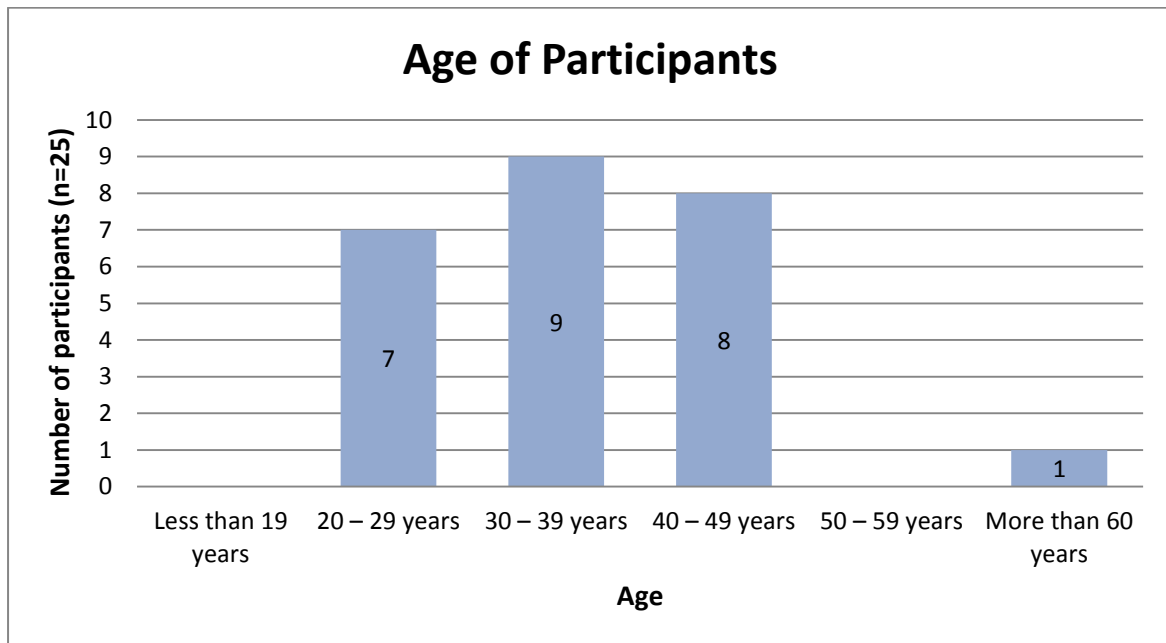
Figure 4.2 Age of participants

The empirical study found of the sample (n=25) there were no participants (0%) who were under the age of 19 years. The ages were distributed predominantly between 20 and 49 years old. Seven (28%) participants were in the 20-29 years age group, nine (36%) in the 30-39 years group, which is the mean for this sample population, eight (32%) in the 40-49 year age group and only one (4%) in the age group of above 60 years old. With regard to the age of health workers, the Centre for Health Workforce Studies (2006) presents the mean age of social workers to be 34.3 years old and that this age has decreased over the years. This suggests that practitioners in the field of family intervention may not be remaining in the profession as long as they used to.

The significantly lower number of older practitioners (1 or 4%) above the age of 50 years suggests that older practitioners do not typically involve themselves in the field of parenting. After the legislative provision for parent education and intervention made in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005), the inclusion of parent education programmes became a focal priority for NGOs in South Africa. However, this inclusion of parent education programmes to family services is a fairly recent development and thus older practitioners may not be familiar with the delivery techniques of such services. This could explain the tendency to have younger practitioners facilitating these programmes.

4.8.1.4 Occupation and Qualification

Participants were asked about their current occupation and related qualifications. The sample of participants came from a variety of professions that facilitate parent education programmes. This diverse distribution is depicted in Figure 4.3.
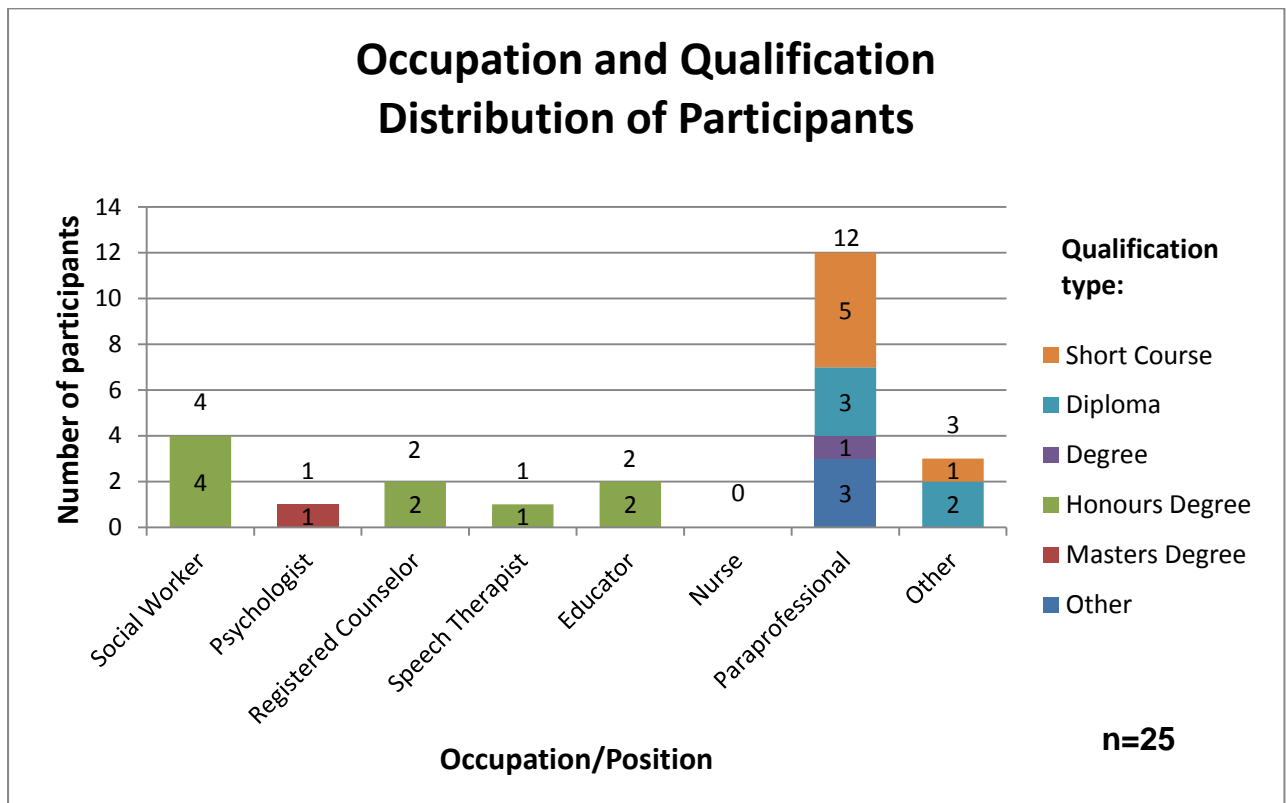
Figure 4.3 Occupation and qualification distribution of participants

Figure 4.3 (above) categorises the various occupations and within each occupation depicts the educational training or qualification which participants held. There is a diverse range of professionals who become involved in the field of parent education. Four (16%) of the participants were social workers, while one (4%) was a psychologist, two (8%) were registered counsellors, one (4%) a speech therapist and two (8%) educators. None (0%) of the participants fit into the occupation of a nurse. A further three (12%) participants indicated that they functioned in the "other" category in a formal capacity as directors or programme co-ordinators. The most significant result is that of the practitioners with a paraprofessional status. Of these 11 participants, nine paraprofessionals had specific facilitator training in order to deliver the programmes. Paraprofessionals referred to themselves as "community workers", "facilitators" or "trainers". Training for facilitators will be discussed further in Section 4.8.6.

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Darling and Turkki (2009:15) confirm the diverse distribution of occupations in the field of parent education and suggest that these professions all follow a preventative and educational approach to dealing with family intervention. Bunting (2004:329) and Wong and Sumsion (2012:82) further substantiate the result that parent education programmes are delivered and facilitated by a variety of professional groups with differing skills and expertise due to their educational training experiences in family orientated fields.

The educational background of these professions is relevant to describe the population sampled in this study. Mahoney and Wiggers (2007:8) note that social workers and educators are ideal occupations for promoting parent involvement because they are able to educate and support the entire family system. For example, a social worker is able to utilise skills such as case management, group work and family support (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:225; Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:8). Azzi-Lessing, (2010:226), however, notes that social workers lack representation in the parenting field despite their legal obligation to intervene. Other occupations such as educators and speech therapists seem to be more prominent in the field (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:257). Bunting's (2004:329) study found that one third of parent education programmes in the United Kingdom were facilitated by nurses, one third by psychologists and one third by social workers. Similarly the sample population reflects the combination of professions as well as the inclusion of paraprofessionals as a new addition to the field since 2010.

A certain knowledge base, professional competencies and qualities are evident in the helping professions depicted in Figure 4.3. The colour coding within each occupation category pertains to the highest qualification which the participant acquired which relates to their occupation. This shows that within each occupation there are different training and educational knowledge bases which are relevant. Participants who were registered as helping professionals, such as social workers, registered councillors, educators and speech therapists, all (9 or 36%) held the same level of qualification (Honours degrees), as determined by their professional body. One participant (4%) held a master's degree, while the paraprofessionals (12 or 48%) held a variety of qualifications. Almost half of the paraprofessionals (5 or 42%) held short course certificates, most of which related to facilitation skills or training. In a similar study, McFarland-Piazza and Sanders (2012:71) discussed the results of professionals' reflections on their qualifications as not preparing them sufficiently to work with parents. Thus, there is value for practitioners to pursue further education opportunities such as Honours and Masters degrees to further equip themselves for the field of parenting.

From the above graph (Figure 4.3), it is clear that more participants are paraprofessionals (12 or 48%) and that they are more involved in the delivery of parent education programmes than professionals. The participants who identified with the "others" category (3 or 12%) are not defined as professional as their educational background is not of a professional status, for example, a person with a short course in facilitation would not be considered as a professional. Paraprofessional practitioners hold certain professional skills which endorse their credibility to facilitate parenting programmes and family-based interventions. Any person interested or involved in parent education can become a paraprofessional practitioner if he/she has the appropriate skills (Papatheodorou, 2005:148). Mahoney and Wiggers (2007:11) criticise the inclusion of professionals with weak theoretical training as it may lead to further challenges such as the use of ineffective facilitation methods. Fixsen *et al.* (2009:533) define the criteria for including paraprofessionals and suggest that "qualified" does not only refer to academic qualifications, but also to practitioner characteristics which are not necessarily taught in an theoretical context but also require practical experience. The data collected from interviews which focused on the requirements to be a practitioner of a parent education programme will be presented in Section 4.8.6.1.

4.8.1.5 Number of Years Facilitating Programmes

Participants were asked about the number of years which they have been practitioners of parent education programmes. The findings of this question are reflected in Figure 4.4.

Years of Experience Facilitating Parent Education Programmes
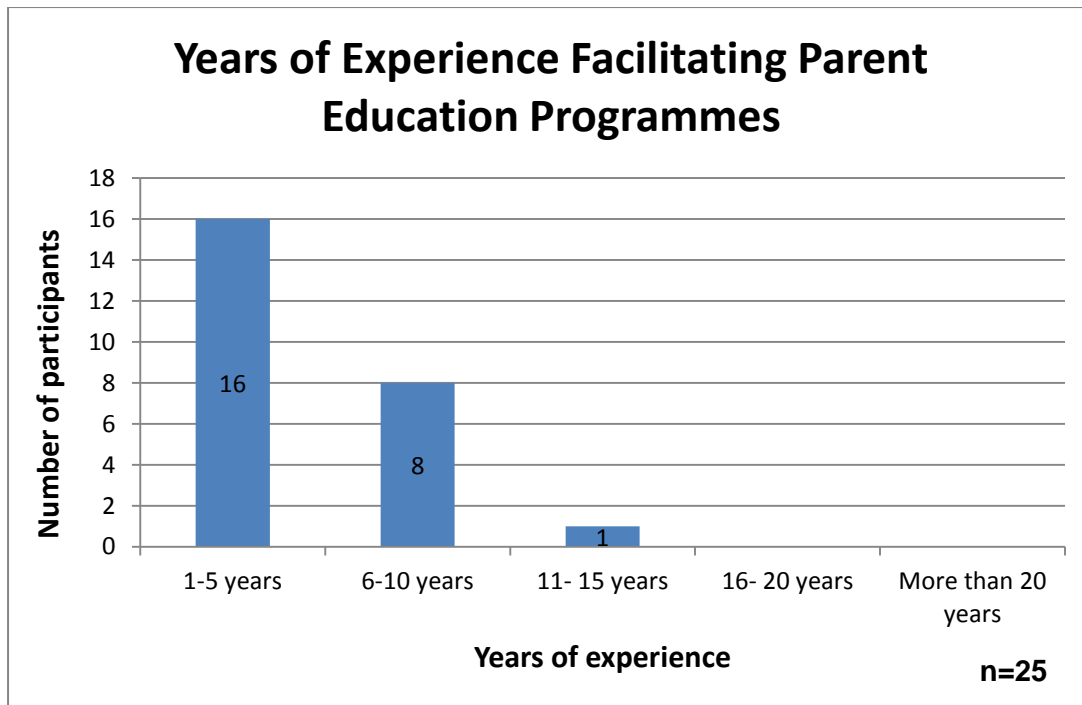
Figure 4.4 Years of experience as a practitioner of parent education programmes

More than half (16 or 64%) of the participants had between one and five years' work experience as a practitioner of a parent education programme. Eight (32%) had between six and ten years' experience, one between 11 and 15 years' experience and none (0%) had experience of 16 or more years. These results correlate with the age categories of the participants as the results reflected that younger professionals with fewer years of experience were facilitating the parent education programmes in their organisations. As described in Chapter 3, the early 20th century has been noted as the period when parent education became an active contributor to the field of parenting (Hutchings & Webster-Stratton, 2004:334; Croake & Glover, 1977:153) and, therefore, this is still a relatively new field.

4.8.1.6 Profile of Organisations

The participants were asked questions related to the organisation where they were working at that time. The category of organisation and the main focus of the service delivery were investigated. This provided situational context for the parent education programmes which they were delivering as facilitators. For ethical reasons, the names of the organisations remain confidential. However, the focus of each organisation is depicted for the purposes of the investigation. All organisations which participated operate in the Cape Metropole area, as depicted in the inclusion criteria (detailed in Chapter 1).

4.8.1.7 *Category Description of Organisations*

Participants were asked which organisational category their organisation belonged to. The findings of this question are reflected in Figure 4.5.
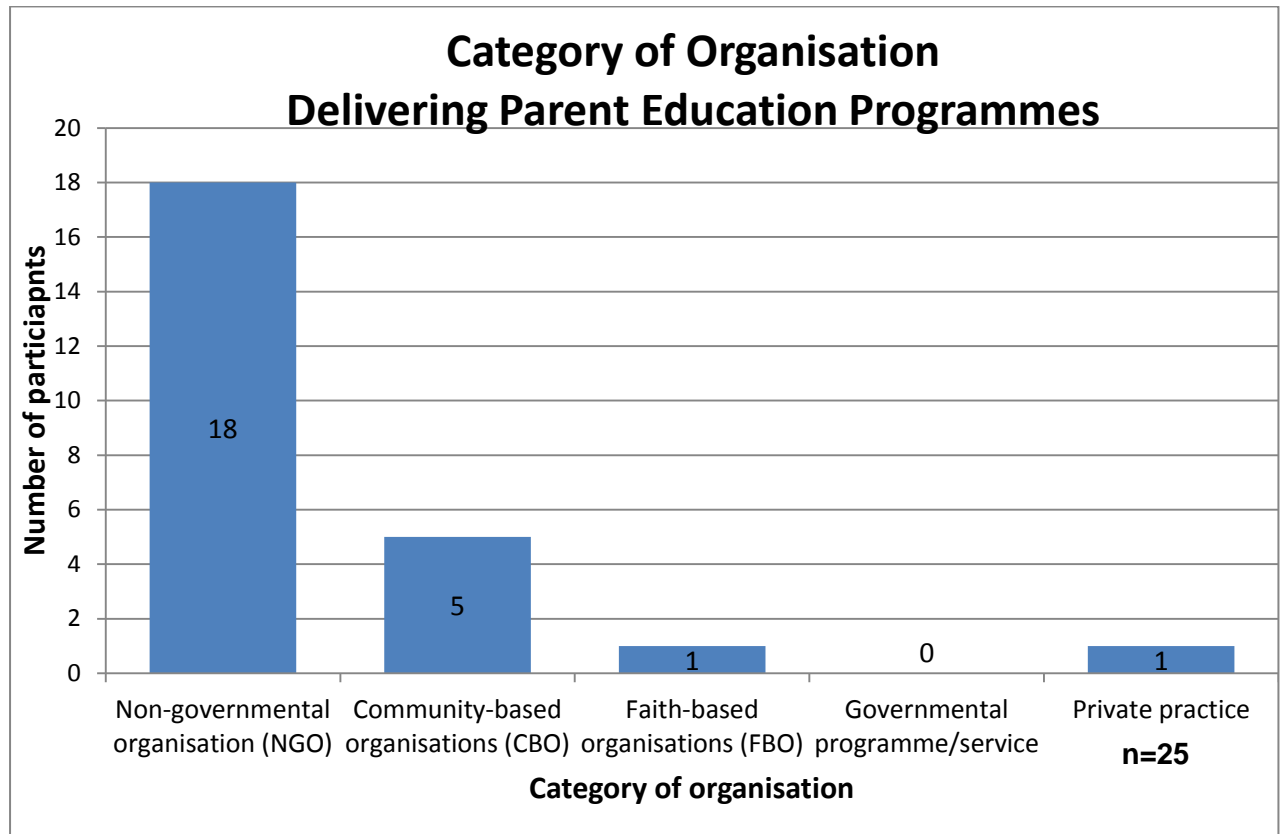
Figure 4.5 Category description of organisations

NGOs have been the predominant provider of parenting programmes in many countries, including South Africa (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2005:47; Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006:4; Kirst-Ashman, 2010:199; Sanders, 1999; Woodcock, 2003:98) and more than half of the participants (18 or 72%) in this study worked at organisations that are categorised as NGOs. Five (20%) of the participants worked for community-based organisations, one (4%) was running her own private practice and one (4%) was working at a faith-based organisation. None (0%) of the participants worked for the state in a governmental capacity. NGOs are defined by the Non-profit Organisations Act 71 of 1997 as an establishment that works towards the betterment of the social fabric of society (Department of Social Development, 2012:3). Community-based organisations (CBOs) are characteristically associated with voluntary participation and are largely lead by community members themselves whereas NGOs generally have employed members of staff not necessarily from the same community. It was reported by the

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Department of Social Development (2012:9) that 55% percent of NGOs in South Africa were registered in the social services category of the Western Cape specifically. These organisations focus on delivering family and childcare services. This endorses the significantly high number of NGOs in the sample population as depicted in Figure 4.5. Furthermore, it was identified that services to families included family life/parent education and services focussing on single parents. This is evident in the majority of organisations that participated in the study. It is significant to highlight that although participants mentioned that the Department of Social Development is funding several NGOs to deliver parenting programmes, none (0%) of the sampled participants were employees of the government.

4.8.2 Section B: Empirical Results Emerging from the Interviews

Below is a description of the themes which emerged during the interviews, fulfilling objective 3 of this study. Each theme is presented and discussed with narrative excerpts from the interviews. All findings are subsequently compared and controlled with current literature. The participants were asked to describe their experience of the parent education programme which they were involved with as practitioners.

4.8.2.1 Main Focus of Organisations

The next question explored organisations' main focus of service delivery. The responses to this question are reflected in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Main focus of organisations

Theme: MAIN FOCUS OF ORGANISATION			
Subtheme	**Category**	**Narrative**	**f (%) (n=25)**
Empowerment terminology	Development focus	*"We try to improve and **empower** the lives of the child and parent as well."* *"To **help** the parents to handle and **cope** with the challenging behaviours."* *"We **assist** with the process of **transformation** in communities."*	6 (24%)
	Supportive focus	*"**Supporting** parents through the various programmes on parenting, positive parenting, skills training, **counselling** parents, **supporting** teen parents, running **support** groups."* *"We **support** the parents and ECD centres in the local community by **equipping** them"*	7 (28%)
	Educational Focus	*"It is **education** of parents in order to improve the lives of children."* *"As practitioners we **teach**…"* *"We **taught** parents of two to seven year olds this year."*	9 (36%)
	Protection focus	*"Our core business is **protecting** the wellbeing of children."* *"We are an **advocacy** organisation focused on child **protection** and **children's rights**."*	3 (12%)
Total			**25**
Target population	Children	*"The main focus is **children** and this affects the parents as well."* *"It focuses on **helping children** in Model C schools."*	8 (32%)
	Parents	*"It is education of **parents** in order to improve the lives of children."* *"Focus on good relationships as the pivotal area for good **parenting**."* *"So all our work is supporting **parents** with information, through skills training, counselling."*	13 (52%)
	Families	*"We aim to improve the lives of the **families** in the communities around us."* *"The trained facilitator hopes to reach **families** and communities in a shorter space of time."*	4 (16%)
Total			**25**

The results in Table 4.1 provide a description of the focus areas of the participating organisations' services in the Cape Metropole area. Eight (28%) stated that they focused on "children", 13 (58%) on "parents" and four (16%) on "families". Several current policy documents support these focus area themes. The City of Cape Town's Development Strategy 2012 (CDS), the Social Development Strategy (SDS) and the OneCape 2040 vision policy (2013) are identified by Dawes (2013:8) as key policy documents which direct the focus of organisations in the Cape Metropole area to target families, parents and children for social development in the city. These three target groups are also highlighted in Section 92(2) in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005), as priority groups for intervention.

The intention of parent education is to provide individuals and families with skills and knowledge to improve the well-being of the family unit. The findings describe a field which is family focused. David (1978) discusses "healthy family functioning" in terms of a family unit as "effectively coping with cultural, environmental, psychosocial, and socioeconomic stresses throughout the family life cycle". This shows the relationship between the target populations of these organisations (*"We aim to improve the lives of the families in the communities around us"*). There should be a consistent provision of services to meet a family's needs throughout their lifespan. Mahoney and Wiggers (2007:10) further endorse these findings by stating that successful interventions seem to focus on empowering parents to improve their interaction with their children. Empowering human beings within an enabling environment is referred to as social development (Bunting, 2004:328; Darling & Turkki, 2009:15).

The findings emphasise an educational (9 or 36%), supportive (7 or 28%) and developmental approach (6 or 24%) towards parent education programmes. Furthermore, several laws and policies (United Nations Development Programme, 2010:50; White Paper for Social Welfare, [Republic of South Africa, 1997]; Finance Policy, 1999; Children's Act No. 38 of 2005) mandate a developmental focus of service delivery in South Africa which highlights the need for education, protection and support of these target populations. These elements can be seen in the narratives of the participants (*"We try to improve and empower the lives of the child and parent as well"*). Azzi-Lessing (2010:260) writes that developmental family-centred services should prioritise the provisions made in policy.

There is an optimistic and *strength-based* vocabulary (MacLeod & Nelson, 2000) used by participants which indicate the developmental approach of these organisations (e.g., *"Focus on good relationships as the pivotal area for good parenting"*). Expanding on this idea, strength-based programmes tend to be focused on development and to address specific needs of the target population (Bernstein & Gray, 2008:29). The significance of parenting programmes had grown in recognition and importance for practitioners due to the increased emphasis placed on family and childcare in the social service sector (Miller & Sambell, 2003:33).

4.8.2.2 Goal of the Parent Education Programme

The goal of a parent education programme is the main purpose of the intervention. All participants were able to articulate their programmes' goals. This provided a descriptive narrative which complements objective 1 and 2 of this study. Three subthemes emerged from this theme, namely the content aim, practitioner focus and desired outcome of the programme. Table 4.2 showcases the categories with emerged within each subtheme.

Table 4.2 Goal of the parent education programme

Theme: GOAL OF PROGRAMME			
Subtheme	**Category**	**Narrative**	**f (%)**
Content aim	Skills focus	*"It is **skills**-based training."* *"To enable parents with new **positive parenting skills…"*** *"Impart **necessary skills** to reach their child."*	5 (20%)
	Educational focus	*"To **educate** and **train** parents…"* *"To **teach** responsible parenting…"* *"To **disseminate information** related to parenting…"* *"To have more **educated** parents…"*	7 (28%)
	Relational focus	*"To **build a relationship** between the parent and their child."* *"To **build healthy relationships** between parents and children."*	6 (24%)
Facilitator Focus	Practical approach	*"It's a **practical goal** and an opportunity to practice new skills."*	1 (4%)
	Supportive approach	*"There is a **supportive focus** as they rely on each other."* *"Parental **support group…"*** *"We offer **support** and **guidance** for parents…"*	8 (32%)
Desired outcome of programme	Community change	*"We want the **community to change**… our goal is the **whole community…"*** *"To make a **difference** in the **community**."* *"Our programme focusses on the **whole system**"* *"Creating a **safe environment** for children to grow up in."* *"Our main goal is to create the responsible citizen and a **responsible parent** in a **responsible community**."*	9 (36%)
	Improved role as a parent	*"**Parenting** is the most important **leadership role**."* *"…realising that **parenting** is such an **important role** they play… they are good enough parents."*	14 (56%)
	Child development	*"To allow **children** to flourish."* *"A platform for parents to see the **child's development stage**."* *"To **build** the **child's confidence** and **self-esteem** as well."*	10 (40%)

n=25

a.) Content aim

Table 4.2 illustrates that a significant point of departure for many participants (18 or 72%) was to explain the content used in the parent education programmes facilitated by them. Five (20%) participants mentioned a skills-based focus ("*To enable parents with new positive parenting skills*"). Seven (28%) of the participants reported that their content had an

educational focus ("*To educate and train parents"*) with an emphasis on topics related to parenting ("*To teach responsible parenting*"). Six (24%) distinguished a relational focus as being a significant element of their programmes' content (*"To build healthy relationships between parents and children*"). The data collected correlate closely with the literature (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:259; Zepeda, Varela, Morales, 2004:10) that acknowledge the delivery of knowledge and child-rearing skills specifically related to parents with the goal of improving a child's health and development. Other authors (Bunting, 2004:328; Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:12) agree with these findings and specifically state that education and training is intended to enhance parenting skills.

b.) Facilitator focus

As can be seen in Table 4.2, the participants mentioned the facilitators' objective as significant to the programme's goal. This relates to the study by Fixsen *et al.* (2009:532) that proposes that the practitioner is primary delivery agent of the intervention just as much as the product is the intervention. This position places significance on his/her role as facilitator. One (4%) participant mentioned a practical approach to the programme *("It's a practical goal and an opportunity to practice new skills*") and eight (32%) mentioned a supportive approach ("*We offer support and guidance for parents*"). In support of these findings it is found that non-directive approaches, such as support and facilitating practical learning experiences, were found to be the most effective in engaging behaviours for practitioners of parenting programmes (Hutchings & Webster- Stratton, 2004:341; Zepeda *et al.*, 2004:10).

c.) Desired outcome of programme

As can be seen in Table 4.2, participants presented the goal of the programme in terms of the programme's intended outcome. Community change was discussed by nine (36%) of the participants *("Our programme focusses on the whole system… creating a safe environment for children to grow up"*) and over half of the participants (14 or 56%) identified the improved role as a parent as a significant outcome. Child development was further mentioned by 10 (40%) of participants. These categories are also reflected in the literature (Deković *et al.*, 2012:67; Engle *et al.*, 2011:1340) as common outcomes for parenting education programmes. Reviews of such programmes endorse these descriptions, stating that services aimed at supporting parents and families are directly linked to reducing problems in early childhood behaviour (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:256; Bunting, 2004; Zepeda *et al.*, 2004).

4.8.2.3 *Responsibilities of Parents towards Raising their Pre-school Children from a Practitioner's Perspective*

Participants were asked what they view as significant responsibilities to raise pre-school children. Table 4.3 outlines the six themes which emerged from the participants' responses. Parents, as caregivers, have an important responsibility towards raising their children and therefore parenting practices are a key component in family life education. These responsibilities are discussed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Responsibilities of parents towards early childhood development

Subtheme	Category	Narrative	f (%)
Theme: RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT			
Nurture and care of children	Relationship building	*"To be **emotionally available** to their child."* *"It is the responsibility of the parent to **build trust**."…"**Special time** is needed with the child."* *"Parents need to **show their children love**."*	12 (48%)
	Playing with children	*"Parents need to **play** with the kids." "Spend time with your pre-schooler, **enjoying** (sic.) **interacting** with their child as much as possible."*	3 (12%)
Socialisation	Cultural modelling	*"**Teaching appropriate behaviour**, teaching **values**, teaching the child **right from wrong**."* *"Children **see**, children **do**.."* *"In the **socialisation process**, the child is **adapting**. The parent should be there.* *"Providing good communication, love, discipline, good behaviour and **values** to your children."*	3 (12%)
	Providing structure	*"Children need **routine**…"* *"Parents should be open to learning about **structure**."* *"Making children part of your **daily routine**."*	5 (20%)
	Providing consistent discipline	*"The children need a **consistent discipline structure**."* *"Many parents are **reluctant and passive** when it comes to **discipline**".* *"Teaching children to have **boundaries**."*	9 (36%)
Provision	Maintaining healthy eating habits	*"Children need **healthy nutrition**."* *"Balance in the different food groups as **kids eat too many sweets** and should eat food that gives them **nutrients**."*	5 (20%)
	Meeting basic needs	*"To attend to the child's **physical needs**."* *"To make sure the child's basic needs are covered."*	2 (8%)
Protection	Dealing with aggressive behaviour	*"Parents must have **self-control** and face their own **anger** or else they land up **raging** at their kids."*	1 (4%)
	Protecting against child abuse	*"To keep the **child safe** – toddler proof your house."* *"**Safe spaces** should be made for children to play. The issue of **safety** is not an easy thing for parents."*	3 (12%)
Education	Assisting in education	*"Parents must be **actively involved** in the **child's academics**."* *"I think children need stimulation, language development and **assistance in their schoolwork**."*	7 (28%)
Role of Parents	Taking on multiple roles	*"Parents must fulfil **multiple roles**."* *"Parents should know who they are as parents – what their **roles and responsibilities** are."* *"Parents are not aware of their **role**, they simply ignore their **responsibilities**."*	9 (36%)
	Being actively engaged	*"In an ideal world, both parents need to be **present** as often as possible."* *"**Engaging** with children to raise responsive children… **actively involved parents**..."*	3 (12%)
	Prioritising the child	*"**The mother doesn't have time** after she comes home from work, she must cook and clean but a pre-school **child's needs their mother's time**."*	2 (8%)

n=25 (Some participants identified more than one responsibility)

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a.) Nurture and Care

It is evident in Table 4.3 that nurture and care were the responsibilities mentioned mostly by participants. Twelve (48%) participants mentioned relationship building *("It is the responsibility of the parent to build trust")* and three (12%) emphasised playing with children *("Spend time with your pre-schooler, enjoying* (sic.) *interacting with their child as much as possible").* These findings are appropriate to the pre-school child's developmental age as relationships and play activities become a means for the child's physical and emotional development (Louw & Louw, 2007:249; Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011:117). Further endorsement for these findings are provided by Long and Hoghughi (2004:384), who argue that modern-day social pressures place increased importance on care and nurturing within parent-child relationships.

b.) Socialisation

The literature (Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:8; Rock, Karabanow & Manion, 2012:346; Smith, 2010:690) confirms that parents are the most important influence on the early development of a child. Their role is being actively involved in their child's learning behaviour throughout their child's development. Therefore, parents could be seen as the primary agents of socialisation and child-rearing. In Table 4.3 socialisation is also indicated as a responsibility parents have towards raising a pre-school child. Three (12%) participants recognised cultural modelling as an element of socialisation ("*Teaching appropriate behaviour, teaching values, teaching the child right from wrong*"). According to the literature, culture has a central impact on parenting (Bornstein, 2012:213; Jenkins, 2012:254). Other responsibilities mentioned include providing structure (5 or 20%) ("Children need routine") and consistent discipline (9 or 36%) (*"The children need a consistent discipline structure"*). Baker (2014:92) agrees that parent are agents of socialization and define the socialisation process as parental efforts to transfer information, values and perspectives about ethnicity, race and culture to their young children.

c.) Provision

Table 4.3 shows that provision is a subtheme that participants' view as significant. Five (20%) participants noted maintaining healthy eating habits as a responsibility of a parent (*"Balance in the different food groups as kids eat too many sweets and should eat food that gives them nutrients"*). Basic needs were also mentioned by two (8%) participants (*"…to attend to the child's physical needs"*). Provision of physical health involves caregivers ensuring that the child's basic needs for development are met. Research studies confirm that parents play a significant part in the development of their children to meet their basic needs (Hoghughi, 2004:9; Luster & Okagaki, 2006:378).

d.) Protection

Only one (4%) participant mentioned dealing with aggressive behaviour (*"Parents must have self-control and face their own anger or else they land up raging at their kids"*) and three participants (12%) said protection against child abuse (*"The issue of safety is not an easy thing for parents"*). Rock *et al.* (2012:347) mention legislation such as the UNCRC (1989), which further endorses the role of protection, welfare and rights of children, as discussed in Chapter 2.

e.) Education

In Table 4.3, education emerged as a significant responsibility of parents towards the raising of pre-school children. Seven (28%) participants indicated that parents should provide assistance in the education of their children (*"Parents must be actively involved in the child's academics"*). Further, a participant highlighted the importance of education towards early childhood development (*"I think children need stimulation, language development and assistance in their schoolwork"*). Authors (Baker, 2014:93; Kaplan & Owens, 2004:76) make the connection between educational achievement and early parenting and the quality of home-learning environments. Based on the findings of a South African study by Casale, Desmond and Richter (2014:9), it is important for South Africa to address poor cognitive development in early childhood to prevent poor school performance.

f.) Role of parents

When describing the responsibilities of parents, participants tended to refer to the role parents play in their children's lives. Elements of this role include multiple roles (9 or 36%) (*"Parents should know who they are as parents – what their roles and responsibilities are"*), being actively engaged with their child (3 or 12%) (*"…actively involved parents..."*) and prioritising the child (2 or 8%) (*"The mother doesn't have time after she comes home from work, she must cook and clean but a pre-school child's needs their mother's time"*). As described in Chapter 2, the role and title of a parent are closely linked to the complex interaction between who a parent is and what he/she does. Authors (Borstein *et al.*, 2011:659; De Haan *et al.*, 2009:1695) characterise the complex role of parenting with both positive and negative practices, which include positive actions such as responsiveness and nurturance and negative practices such as hostility and irritability which may be exhibited when fulfilling the role as parent.

4.8.2.4 Parental Needs for Raising Children in the Early Childhood Phase of Development from a Practitioner's Perspective

Parents face various challenges when raising their children. These challenges are often the reason for parents attending parent education programmes. Therefore, practitioners of parent education programmes often work with clients facing such challenges. This gave the participants in this study a unique perspective on the challenges and needs of parents (as depicted in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.6 in the sections below).

4.8.2.5 Main Challenges Experienced by Parents

Participants were asked about the challenges they perceive parents encounter when raising a pre-school child. These challenges can be grouped into the following subthemes: parent-related challenges, child-related challenges and community-related challenges. These responses are summarised in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Main challenges experienced by parents

Theme: MAIN CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY PARENTS			
Subtheme	**Category**	**Narrative**	**f (%)**
Parent-related challenges	Lack of knowledge	*"Parents **don't know how** to identify their child's problems."* *"**Lack of information** about parenting, child-rearing and child development, even at that young age."* *"Parents are **not educated** with* (sic.) *the specific needs of the child."* *"They [parents] **don't know what to do**, they don't have skills, they **don't know where to start**… it's quite daunting for them."*	4 (16%)
	Lack of understanding	*"I think parents **don't understand** the child's behaviour."* *"The parents **don't see** their child as an individual."*	4 (16%)
	Poor motivation	*"**Motivation** is definitely a challenge for parents."* *"It is challenging for **parents to give attention** to their child. They do not have much patience."* *"I see parents who **lack responsibility** and **don't take ownership**."*	3 (12%)
	Poor relationships	*"Parents **do not know how to play** with their children."* *"Parents **aren't really establishing a relationship** with their kids, they are micro-managing them. **The relationship part is missing**."* *"The **parent-child relationship** is **broken**"* *"An **inability** to have **deep, open and loving relationship**."*	5 (20%)
	Lack of fulfilling basic needs	*"Often the **childs basic needs are not being met** by the parents."* *"**Financial stress** is a challenge."* *"Unemployment, **lack of money** to run a household and **meet the needs**."*	6 (24%)
	Lack of time	*"They [parents] **don't really have time**, so this ends up being a frustration, which is the biggest problem."* *"Parents **rely on aftercare**…"*	3 (12%)
Child-related challenges	School/ homework challenges	*"Children struggle with the **adjustment to formal schooling** from pre-primary school." "Parents don't know how to do the **homework**… The biggest challenge is **children resisting formal learning**."* *"Parents struggle with **teaching their children** the alphabet."*	4 (16%)
	Poor discipline	*"The main problem is **discipline**. Parents weren't disciplined properly so they don't know how to discipline their kids."* *"**Discipline** is a major issue."*	6 (24%)
	Poor listening (children)	*"Children, they don't want to **listen**."* *"Parents always say, 'my child is not **listening**….'"*	3 (12%)
	Child misbehaviour	*"The children don't **behave** and **fight** with each other."* *"The parents end up **bribing the children to go to bed**."*	5 (20%)
Community-related challenges	Bullying	*"If the child is a **bully** or being **bullied** it is a challenge to parents."*	1 (4%)
	Drugs and alcohol abuse	*"**Addiction** of other family members."* *"**Drugs** and **drug-related problems**. The parents drug addiction is a huge problem."*	2 (8%)

n=25 (some participants identified more than one challenge)

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a.) Parent-related challenges

Table 4.4 highlights common challenges experienced by parents in the groups the participants facilitate. The challenges listed are a lack of knowledge (4 or 16%), a lack of understanding (4 or 16%), poor motivation (3 or 12%), poor relationships (5 or 20%), a lack of fulfilling basic needs (6 or 24%) and a lack of time (3 or 12%). These findings are consistent with those of Bloomfield *et al.* (2005:51) and Barlow and Stewart-Brown (2001). These studies focussed specifically on challenges and difficulties experienced by parents. Challenges experienced by parents often relate to their lack of skills or knowledge of parents during the early child-rearing years, which is in a direct need for social service intervention such as a parent education programme.

b.) Child-related challenges

Four participants (16%) explained that their group members experienced challenges regarding their children's school/homework, while six (24%) participants mentioned poor discipline. A further three (12%) participants raised children's poor listening skills as a challenge and five (20%) noted child misbehaviour as a problem. Bloomfield *et al.* (2005:51) expand on the child-related difficulties of parenting such as behavioural issues, conflict management and insufficient knowledge of child development. Many of the underlying issues of the problems related to childcare and development can be addressed through improved parenting capacity and skills (Brody & Flor, 1997:1001; Kirst-Ashman, 2010:199). Upshur, Wenz-Gross & Reed (2009:31) goes on to state parents who experience problems with their children tend to seek interventions such as family therapy and parent education.

c.) Community-related challenges

One participant (4%) raised the issue of bullying (*"If the child is a bully or being bullied it is a challenge to parents"*) and two participants (8%) mentioned parents' drug and alcohol abuse (*"Drugs and drug-related problems. The parents drug addiction is a huge problem"*). According to Herland, Hauge and Helgeland (2014:15), social issues such as anti-social behaviour and substance abuse impact children's ability to develop as functioning individuals in communities. Therefore, Prilleltensky, Laurendeau, Chamberland and Peirson (2001:143) state that strong community structures for children and families should be a priority for family wellness.

4.8.2.6 *Relevant Parenting Skills for early Childhood Development*

Child-rearing skills should be age appropriate and individualised to ensure that the child develops optimally within its specific developmental stage (Marion, 2003:11). Parenting skills and competencies have been identified through emerging themes and findings in numerous studies (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012; Morawska, Winter & Sanders, 2009) in the field of parenting education programmes.

Participants were asked to rank the parenting skills in order of priority when raising a pre-school child. This question required them to rank these skills, although all they were all deemed significant by all the participants. Figure 4.6 graphically depicts the outcome of this survey.

Building attachent 16 (64%)

Communication 15 (60%)

Parental self-efficacy 10 (40%)

Positive discipline 13 (52%)

Basic educational knowldge 15 (68%)

Boundary setting 16 (64%)

n=25
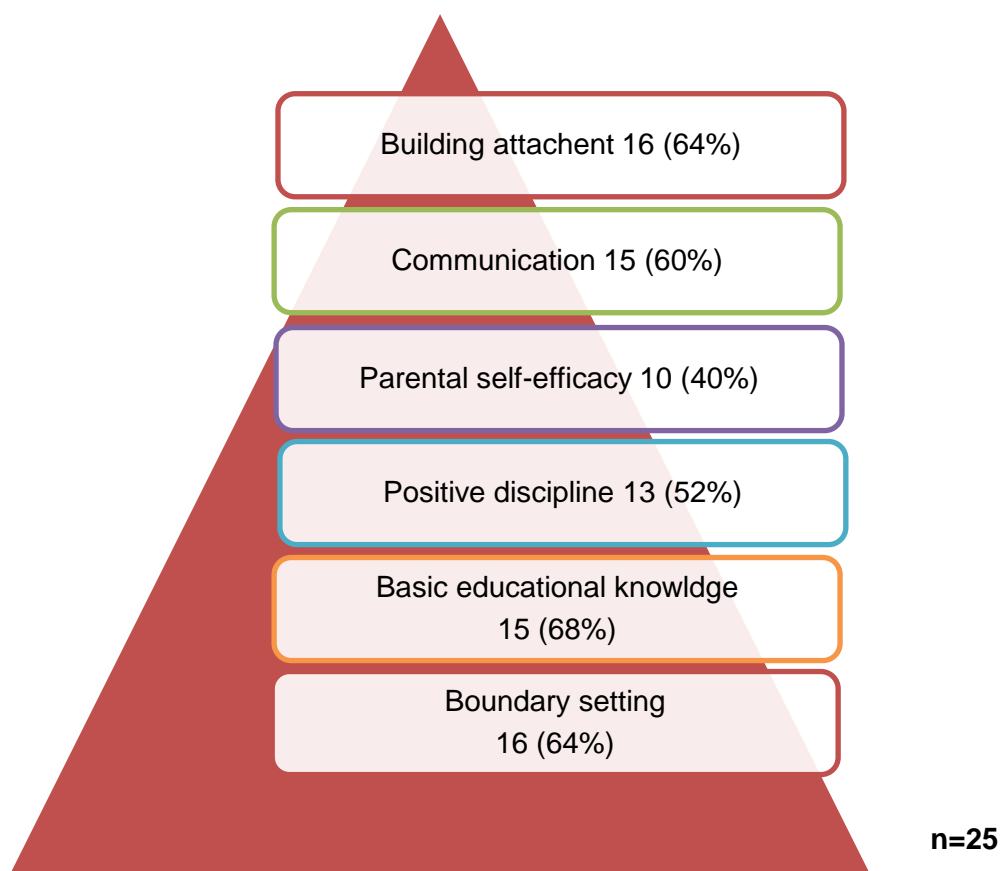
Figure 4.6 Priority hierarchy of parenting skills for early childhood development

The statistics reflect the number of participants who ranked the various skills in the positions indicated in Figure 4.6. Sixteen (24%) participants selected building attachment to be the first priority. This was followed by 15 (60%) participants who chose communication to be the second priority, followed by 10 (40%) who placed parental self-efficacy in the third position. Positive discipline was selected as the forth priority by 13 (52%) of the participants. The low-ranking skills included basic educational knowledge (17 or 68%) at the fifth position and

16 (64%) participants thought that boundary setting should take the lowest priority. These parenting skills are evaluated in theory as the operational prerequisites for a 'good-enough' parent (Hoghughi, 2004:4; Taylor, Lauder, Moy & Corlett, 2009). Parent education programmes could include these skills as focus areas for skill attainment. This hierarchy presents the need for practitioners to prioritise interpersonal and relational skill attainment such as building attachment and communication with children, when planning and delivering parent education programmes.

4.8.3 Components of Parenting Education Programmes aimed at Early Childhood Development

There are several components which were detailed by practitioners. These components contribute towards the intervention method and the experiences of the practitioners. The following themes are presented in this section; target population, recruitment, delivery methods, frequency of programme, theoretical framework, common topics of programme and teaching methods.

4.8.3.1 Target Population

When asked about their target population, participants provided descriptions of three main groupings related to gender, socio-economic status and age. Table 4.5 provides an overview of the responses within these subthemes.

Table 4.5 Target population of parent education programmes

Subtheme	Category	Narrative	f (%)
Theme: TARGET POPULATION OF PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES			
Gender Roles	Mothers	*"**Mainly mothers** attend as South Africa is an extremely patriarchal society so they would send the mother."* *"We have **more woman than men**."* *"It is **mostly females** who come more than males."*	15 (60%)
	Fathers	*"**Fathers** are starting to come too."* *"We do have **fathers**, single **fathers**. It's amazing."* *"We do have a **special fatherhood project** at the moment; with that we obviously have seen an **increase in fathers coming**."*	6 (24%)
	Both parents	*"We do have **couples**."* *"We have a lovely mix of **couples** coming from various communities."* *"**Moms and dads**…"*	6 (24%)
	Single/divorced	*It is the **single mothers** who don't look after their children."* *"…**not many were in a stable** marriage or partnership"* *"**Single parents** are a typical norm for the context where we work."*	5 (20%)
Socio-economic status	Working parent	*"Mainly **working class** parents…"* *"Majority of the parents are **working**."* *"Educated, **upper income level**, these days mostly **working** moms."*	5 (20%)
	Unemployed/ financially poor parents	*"Obviously the group members are **financially having difficulty**, living in extreme circumstances."* *"**Needy parents** come to our support groups."* *"**Needy financially** where they need the most support to help them to cope."* *"Most of our parents come from **poor backgrounds.**"* *"It would be parents who are **unemployed**, so there may be some form of poverty."* *"**Poor families**… none of them are working."*	10 (40%)
Age-group	Young parents (Under 30 years old)	*"Mostly **young** mothers…"* *"Within an **age range of 17 to 18** in my group… we are working with **teen parents** who already have two children."* *"We have many **young parents** around 23 years old."*	5 (20%)
	Older parents (Over 30 years old)	*"Their ages are between **35 to 50 years old**."* *"We work with **Gogos, grannies** who had to step in and take grandchildren as their own children."* *"An increase in **grandparents**…"*	4 (6%)
	Mixed age group	*"**Their age can vary;** the youngest was 17 years old to 64 years old. So there is a **vast range**."* *"Mainly between the **ages of 25 to 65**."* *"A **mixed** group…"* *"A **variety**…"*	9 (36%)

n=25 (Some participants identified more than one theme in their response)

a.) Gender roles

As mentioned earlier in section 4.8.2.3, parenting roles can be associated with gender roles and personality characteristic (Arias, Brody, Brown & Harper, 2006:198). Gender is a concept which strongly emerged during the interviews. Fifteen (60%) participants mentioned that mothers were the main members in their group (*"Mainly mothers attend as South Africa is an extremely patriarchal society so they would send the mother"*). Six (24%) participants spoke about the increase in father involvement (*"Fathers are starting to come too"*). A further six (24%) participants reflected that both parents attend the parenting programmes. Five (20%) participants noted that their target population is single or divorced parents, which may not be a gender-specific description, but this group is influenced by the gender roles single parents (have to) adopt within these families.

Cultural expectations exist regarding the role of mother and her involvement in parenting. Fathers have been criticised as being less involved in their children's lives and showing less affection and nurturance compared to mothers (Arias *et al.*, 2006:198; Jia and Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011:107). In earlier studies, the occurrence of absent fathers in South African families was reported to be on the rise and reached 48% in 2009 (Holborn & Eddy, 2011:4). Authors, (Herland *et al.*, 2014:2; Betawi *et al.*, 2014:1) dispute this traditional trend of fatherhood and provide a modern perspective of the active and engaged father. This is significant and relates to the findings of this study that suggest a potential shift in the involvement of fathers in family interventions such as parent education programmes. Jia and Schoppe-Sullivan (2011:114) recognise this involvement to have a positive contribution towards a pre-school child's development. Sanders and Ralph (2004:363) recognise the potential for family interventions, such as parent education programmes, to promote gender equality and role definition.

In a South African context, single-parent or divorced households have become the norm for family structures (Holborn & Eddy, 2011:6; Roman, 2011:577). This is revealed in the findings of the interviews as illustrated by one of the participants' narratives, "*Single parents are a typical norm for the context where we work*".

b.) Socio-economic status

The socio-economic status of parents emerged as a subtheme (Table 4.5). Five (20%) of the participants indicated that their parent education programmes targeted mostly working parents ("*Mainly working class parents*"). Ten (40%) participants indicated that, generally, unemployed or financially poor parents were the target population of their groups ("*Obviously*

the group members are financially having difficulty, living in extreme circumstances"). Historically, in the 1980s parent programmes targeted only the "educated and middle class elite" (Utting & Pugh, 2004:28). This is no longer the case as parent education is now offered to parents from all classes and backgrounds as is reflected in the findings. Furthermore, the findings reflect a specific target population in South Africa for parent empowerment amongst financially poor parents which is congruent with the social problems experienced by disadvantaged parents such as lack of provision and inconsistent parenting practices.

South Africa is a developing country with a population of both economically advantaged and disadvantaged people. Community-based parenting programmes have been noted to target the economically disadvantaged population groups, world-wide in both developed and developing countries (Bernstein & Gray, 2008:29; Early & GlenMaye, 2000:199; Lake, 2011). These assertions correlate with the findings of the interviews, as can be seen in Table 4.5. Income and social class are associated with parental needs, which become relevant for practitioners delivering services to parents from differing socio-economic situations. In response to the differing needs of clients, Krist-Ashman (2010:195) states that intervention should seek to universally provide equal services to all, irrespective of need or social class. Quality service delivery of programmes is thus an expected from practitioners and practitioners irrespective of the target population of the programme.

c.) Age group

Five (20%) participants highlighted their target group as being young parents (*"We have many young parents around 23 years old"*), namely parents under the age of 30. Four (6%) participants said they dealt with older parents, namely parents above 30 years old (*"Their ages are between 35 to 50 years old"*) and nine (36%) commented that their group consisted of a mixed age group. Parent education programmes are delivered to a wide variety of parents from different age groups. The age of parents could further impact the faciliators choice of teaching methods or facilitation style. Koerting *et al.*, (2013:10-11) recommend homogenous groups (group members of similar backgrounds, gender or age) as beneficial for encouraging parent involvement. Parents of similar ages may feel more comfortable to share their challenges with other parents who are similar in age.

4.8.3.2 Recruitment of Parents

Recruitment is said to be a challenge for practitioners who facilitate parenting programmes (Mytton *et al.*, 2013:2). Participants were questioned about the methods which they use to recruit parents into their programmes. Table 4.6 reveals the responses to this question.

Table 4.6 Recruitment of parents

Subtheme	Category	Narrative	f (%)
Internal recruitment methods	Compulsory recruitment	*"Our sessions are **compulsory** for parents of the school children."*	1 (4%)
	Client database	*"I recruit from my **existing clients**."* *"We have an online **client database** of parents and who we advertise to."* *"Our **clients** are children and through this (sic.) we select the parents."*	3 (12%)
	Advertising and marketing	*We send out **letters**. One of our biggest **marketing** tools is that we organise babysitters for the kids."* *"We **advertise** on our website and on Facebook… we have an email newsletter so social workers know about us."* *"We **advertise** on our website."* *"We **advertise** in the local newspaper."* *"We send them **invitational letters**."* *"We put **posters** up at the libraries and **announce** it in forums."*	13 (52%)
	Community **r**ecruiters	*"We have **researchers** go into the **communities** to explain the programme."* *"We access the parents through **word of mouth**, through the teachers and community members."* *"Sometimes the people that we recruit are from the **community support groups**."* *"We use **word of mouth**…"* *"ECD programme which has **volunteers** in the **community** who are our eyes who allocate people they know who would require the programme."*	8 (32%)
External recruitment methods	Referral from other organisation	*"We have a **list from Child Welfare and Social Development**."* *"The department of social development and their regional offices; they **send us their clients**."* *"We also **collaborate** very, very nicely with **organisations** and **CBOs**. Accessing them through a **network**."* *"We get **requests from organisations** to run a parenting skills course."* *"We go to **Educare centres, other NGOs** and inform them that we were running groups."*	11 (44%)
	Recruitment through schools	*"The **school** gives **referrals** too."* *"**Through the** schools… this is a system that works well for me. I have formed a relationship with the schools and offer my services."* *"**Teachers** sometimes organise the workshops."* *"**Some schools get far better attendance** than others."*	10 (40%)
	Walk-ins	*"**People apply** and we screen the incoming applications."* *"**Some people contact us."***	2 (8%)

n=25 (Some participants identified more than one recruitment method)

a.) Internal recruitment methods

Participants mentioned the internal methods of recruitment within an organisation. As depicted in Table 4.6, compulsory recruitment was mentioned by only one (4%) participant. Three (12%) participants revealed that their client databases were used to recruit parents into their groups. More than half (13 or 52%) of the participants answered this question by referring to advertising and marketing by the organisation. Additionally, eight (32%) participants provided insight into the use of community recruiters associated with the organisation. Koerting *et al.*, (2013:10-11) endorse the use of effective advertising and marketing of services. More than half of the participants (13 or 52%) described using such services to recruit members for their parent education programmes. Practitioners spoke positively of the intervention method)The recommended channels for advertising programmes in the literature include letters, emails, phone calls, text messages, testimonials and visual materials such as posters or videos (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2005:54; Koerting *et al.*, 2013:12-13; Morawska & Sanders, 2006:35; Morawska *et al*, 2011:96). Further, it was found that personalised recruitment through recruiters further encourages the process of successful recruitment since it is individualised and personal in nature (Koerting *et al.*, 2013:15)

b.) External recruitment methods

As can be seen in Table 4.6, three categories regarding external recruitment methods emerged from the interviews. Eleven (44%) participants reflected on the external referrals from other organisations, ten (40%) noted that recruitment through schools was their chosen method of recruitment and only two (8%) mentioned walk-in clients requesting to be part of a parent education. Koerting *et al.*, (2013:10-11) found that a lack of information about services and poor interagency collaboration were barriers to engagement of parents. Axford *et al.* (2012:2067) state that if this is the case, agencies may be hesitant to refer their clients to programmes outside of their organisation. Although eleven (40%) participants mentioned that they receive referrals, none of the participants (0%) made referrals to other organisations. This showcases the poor collaboration between organisations delivering similar programmes.

4.8.3.3 Delivery Method of the Programme

The participants were asked to indicate their chosen method of delivery of the parent education programme which they facilitate. Figure 4.7 (below) illustrates the methods chosen by participants.

Methods of Programme Delivery
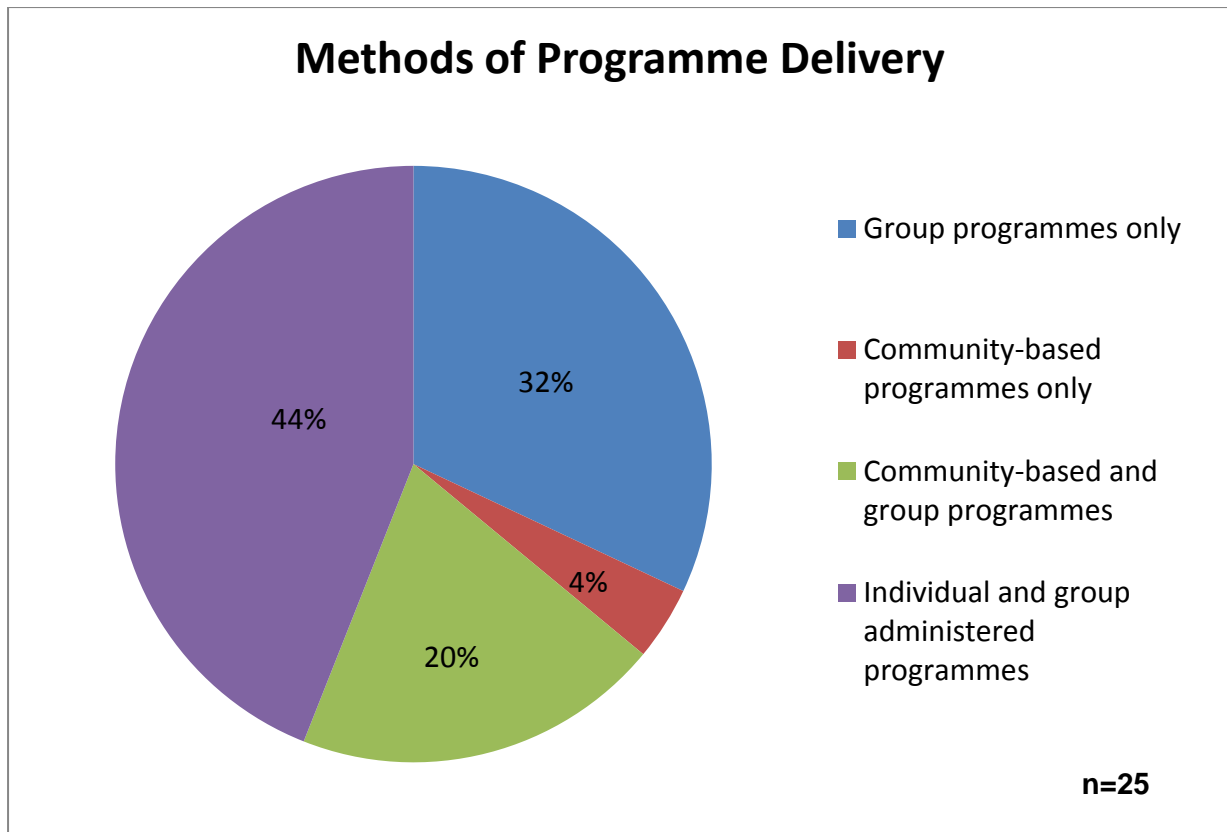
Figure 4.7 The methods of delivery for parent education programmes

Figure 4.7 provides an illustration of the methods chosen by participants, and the combinations of setups to which they deliver their parent programmes. Eight (32%) of the participants (n=25) deliver group programmes only, one (4%) delivers a community-based programme, five (20%) combine community-based programmes and group programmes and eleven (44%) of the participants indicated that they deliver a combination of individually and group administered programmes. The combination of these methods is significant to this study as it contributes towards the description of the practitioner's experience of the programme delivery. Individually administered programmes have been found to require flexibility from the practitioner in order to meet parent's needs. This which could be labour intensive and require clear assessment of the parents challenges. Individual needs highlighted by Koerting *et al.*, (2013:13) include; flexible locations and timing of programme, the accommodation of different learning styles and special inter-organisational referrals. Participant motivations for the above findings (Figure 4.7) are given below in increasing order of use: individually administered programmes, group programmes and, lastly, community-based programmes.

a.) Individually administered programmes

Participants had mixed opinions about the use of individually administered programmes in a parent education programme. Lundahl, Nimer and Parsons (2006) endorse the use of individual parent education, especially with disadvantaged parents who need intensive intervention.

Participants who motivated in favour of using individualised programmes commented:

*"**Individual programmes** are aimed at a child and parent with **specific needs** such as autism. We help with **specific resources**."*

*"The individually administered programmes are aimed at **emotional support**. To intervene in **specific individualised focus**"*

*"I prefer individual programmes. I feel we make a **connection with them face to face**. I know exactly what they want although individual programmes take a **long time to deliver**."*

Participants who motivated against using individualised programmes commented:

*"I have done some one on one but I do find it **becomes generic** and all about their past parenting issues and you don't look at the bigger picture or you get hooked into domestic issues and then **it becomes a marriage thing, rather than a parenting thing**."*

*"If it is done one on one, there might be an element of **being attacked and being defensive**."*

*"**Therapy is very expensive** and therapists, there are not many around. I believe there are so many people who need therapy and we would not be able to do individual on all of them, so the next best is group therapy."*

*"If you are doing a one on one, **you are only passing on information**. I think they don't learn as much as from a group; there is a much bigger learning that takes places in a group than in one on one"*

It can be concluded from the above narratives that individually administered programmes have several advantages and disadvantages. Practitioners should be aware of these when choosing a method of delivery.

b.) Group Programmes

The findings provide evidence to suggest that group programmes are seen as the delivery method of choice by participants. Subsequently, excerpts are provided that were attained from interviews where participants motivate their choice of a group delivery method:

*"The parent can see that they are not the only one who has a certain problem so they **support** each other and **see that others have the same problems**"*

*"Generally, they **all have the same problem and struggle with the same thing.** It makes the parent realise that they are not the only one struggling"*

*"What is shared by one participant in the group; **others can learn from** it. Parents share their **knowledge, skills and** experiences in the group and this is beneficial."*

*"We can **reach the most people in the shortest amount of time** through group sessions"*

*"The **group atmosphere**, from a psychological point of view, sets up a safe container that **stimulates change, motivates change**. It does not help change; it literally motivates change. **It is easier for the practitioner**."*

Studies have found that group programmes offer support which empowers parents to deal effectively with relationships address behavioural and emotional problems and learn relevant parenting skills in a safe and supportive environment (Barlow, Parsons & Stewart-Brown, 2005:34; Mytton, Ingram, Manns & Thomas, 2013:1; Sanders, 1999). The findings of this question correlate with these research studies.

c.) Community-based programmes

Strange, Fisher, Howat and Wood (2014:2) endorse the use of a group programme to promote community development and parental support. This has been evaluated as effective by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems perspective which proposed that community support is beneficial to the family system. This system provides valuable insight for practitioners, programme developers and family service organisations providing prevention services such as parenting programmes at a community level (Heath, 2004:319; McGilloway *et al.*, 2012:117; World Health Organisation, 2004). Below are narratives from participants who validate the use of community-based programmes:

*"The **community support** (sic.) each other. There is **value** and a **sense of community** as suddenly there are **people in the same boat** as yourself."*

*"When we do **community parenting programmes**, we meet outside of the organisation. We get parents involved… for example, the Rotary Club ask our parents to assist to be marshals for the running races in the community."*

*"…parenting is not necessarily just a biological thing, it is supposed to include a **whole community**"*

The combination of methods is directly linked to the purpose of this study, which is to *explore the experiences of practitioners delivering parent education programmes*. The delivery method is a key element of this description.

4.8.3.4 Frequency of the Programme

The frequency of the programme refers to the duration of each session and the number of weeks which the group runs for. It presents a useful concept for practitioners as the combination of these elements are the practical implications, which impact the way the members will experience the intervention. Literature (Nation *et al.*, 2003:425, Small, Cooney & O'Connor, 2009:4-5; Wessels, 2012:13) support this description of programme dosage. When the participants described these elements, some neglected to provide all three elements of the dosage in their responses.

Table 4.7 summarises the participants' responses in terms of the *frequency* of their programmes.

Table 4.7 Frequency of Programmes

Frequency	(f)
Daily	1
One/ year	3
2-4 times /year	9
Monthly	5

n= 25 (Some participants did not include this information in their response)

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Most participants (9 or 36%) said they held parenting programmes between two and four times per year (*"It is funder dependant. I would say on average I run two parenting programmes a year"*). Three (12%) participants mentioned that they only held one programme each year. Five (20%) held group sessions each month and only one (4%) noted that they run groups daily (*"We run groups every day; it's not just here in the Western Cape"*). *Another participant noted that, "we have found there is more demand than last year".*)

Table 4.8 summarises the participants' responses in terms of the *length* of their programmes.

Table 4.8 Length of programmes

Length of Programme	Number of Responses
1 Week	3
2 Weeks	0
3 Weeks	4
4 Weeks	0
5 Weeks	2
6 Weeks	1
7 Weeks	1
8 Weeks	0
9 Weeks	2
10 Weeks	3
11 Weeks	0
12 Weeks	2

 n=25 (Some participants did not include this information in their response)

Nation *et al.* (2003:452) suggest that the intensity of a programme should be based on the specific needs of the group members. Groups tended to fluctuate in length. One member mentioned the advantage of having a group longer than five weeks: (*"The group gets into a habit of coming after five weeks"*). Powell (2005) and Nation *et al.* (2003:452) evaluate that continuing intervention over a longer period of time is advised for effective prevention programmes.

Eight to 12 week programmes have been suggested as a reasonable length for most groups (Barlow *et al.*, 2012:3; Samuelson, 2009:6), while Barth (2009) suggests 12 sessions, with participants meeting at least once weekly. In addition, a recent finding emerged in research highlighting the effectiveness of a 14-session programme (McGilloway, 2012:117; Small *et al.*, 2009:4).

Table 4.9 shows the variation in session duration indicated by the participants in this study.

Table 4.9 Duration of each session

Duration of Session	Number of Responses
1 Hour	0
2 Hours	5
3 Hours	11
4 Hours	1
5 Hours	3

 n= 25 (Some participants did not include this information in their response)

None (0%) of the participants held one-hour sessions, five (20%) held two-hour group sessions, 11 (44%) held three-hour sessions, one (4%) facilitated four-hour sessions and three (12%) held sessions which lasted five hours. Participants emphasised the flexibility required in terms of duration: *"The sessions are sometimes extended and we end up taking three and a half hours".*

4.8.3.5 Theoretical framework for Parent Education Programmes

The next question asked participants to select which theory underpins the parent education programmes which they facilitate. The results are given in Table 4.10, in descending order of frequency.

Table 4.10 Theories used by practitioners of parent education programmes

Theoretical Approach	f (%) (descending order)
Experiential learning theory	17 (68%)
Attachment theory	14 (56%)
Cognitive behavioural theory	13 (52%)
Systems theory	7 (28%)
Social learning theory	5 (20%)
None	3 (12%)
Other	3 (12%)

 n=25 (More than one option could be selected by participants)

According to Table 4.10, over half (17 or 68%) of the participants make use of experiential learning theory. Fourteen (56%) utilise attachment theory, thirteen (52%) utilise cognitive behavioural theory, seven (28%) use systems theory and five (20%) mentioned using social learning theory. Three (12%) noted they did not use any theory. A further three (12%)

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participants mentioned the use of other theories such as the psychologically based, mindfulness and developmental theories. Literature makes mention of highly evaluated programmes, such as Triple-P and Caring Families, which utilise a variety of theoretical approaches for delivering parent education. These approaches include social learning, family behavioural therapy, developmental therapy, psychopathology, social processing, family intervention methods and ecological theories on family development (Bunting, 2004:338; Chavis, 2012:472; Dekovic *et al.*, 2012:64; Sanders *et al.*, 2003). Programmes which utilise an evidence-based theoretical framework are more likely to be successful noted Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, (2004). The findings revealed that practitioners are fairly unaware of the theoretical frameworks which guide the programmes they deliver. Corresponding with these findings,, a recent study conducted for the Department of Social Development in the Western Cape (Wills & Mitchell, 2013) confirmed that while organisations could articulate their programmes' topics, they lacked theory on which to base these topics.

4.8.3.6 Common Topics

The next question related to the common topics which practitioners use as content in their programmes. Figure 4.8 illustrates the findings of this question. As depicted in the legend, each topic can be arranged into one of the following groups: child development (purple segments), parental roles and responsibilities (green segments), parenting styles (red segment) and parenting skills (orange segments).

Common Topics in Parent Education Programmes
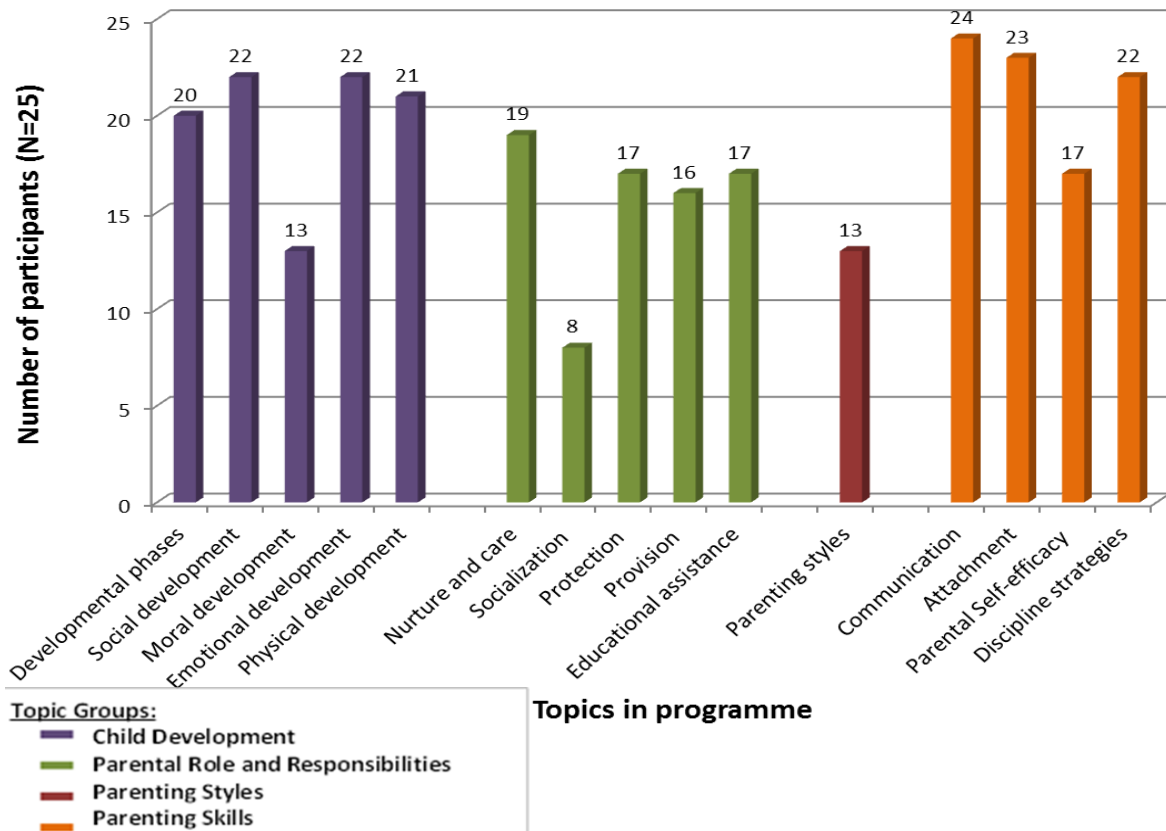
Figure 4.8 The common topics in parent education programmes

The most significant topics which appeared most in programmes facilitated by the participants included social development (22 or 88%), emotional development (22 or 88%), communication skills (24 or 96%). attachment building (23 or 92%) and discipline strategies (22 or 88%). Thus, it can be seen that child development and parenting skills are highly emphasised topics to be included in parent education programmes. Lesser-mentioned topics include moral development (13 or 52%), socialisation (8 or 32%) and parenting styles (13 or 52%). Additional skills mentioned by participants include emotional regulation and self-awareness, the value of play, personal development of a parent, anger management and spirituality. Parent education programmes may differ in content; however, their overall principles and aims remain fairly similar (Daro & Harding, 1999:157). This is evident in the findings as the tendency was for respondents to include most of the topics in the questionnaire. Major contributors (Barlow, 1999; White, 2005:45) in the field of parenting link programme topics to the key parenting areas. Mytton *et al.* (2013:4) found that the skills desired by parents attending parenting programmes include improving parental self-confidence and parenting practices, goal setting and problem solving. These topics and

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skills are directly linked to both social learning and cognitive behavioural theories (Mytton *et al.*, 2013:1).

4.8.3.7 Teaching Methods

Participants were asked about the teaching methods which they utilise in their parent education programmes. The participants chose the teaching method which they found to be the most effective in their experience of facilitation. The results of this question can be found in Figure 4.9.
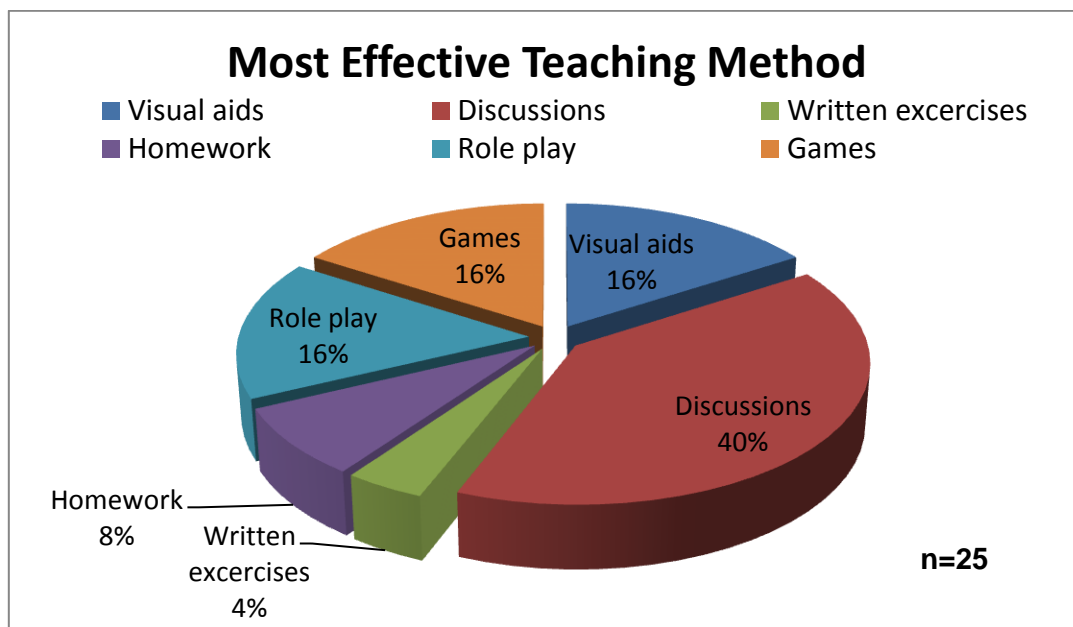
Figure 4.9 Teaching methods which participants find to be most effective

In Figure 4.9, six methods are shown which were identified by participants as being the most effective teaching methods for parent education programmes. Some participants qualified their choice of teaching methods. Four (16%) participants pointed out that visual and learning aids are the most effective. Group discussions were highlighted by ten (40%) of the participants because, as one participant stated, *"[g]roup discussions amongst parents are also effective for sharing stories and relate to other parents"*. Role play was noted by four (16%) participants (*"We do a skit. It used to be the facilitators doing that but now we have the parents participating. 90% will relate to the skit scenario"*). One (4%) participant mentioned written exercises, games and play were noted by four (16%) participants and, finally, homework was raised by two (8%) of the participants (*"They practice at home and the following week before we start the next session we share how was it the week before"*). Some participants acknowledged that a combination of these methods made for an effective

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teaching experience: *"You can combine all of them; it depends on what programme you are running"*.

All of the above-mentioned methods in Figure 4.9 are identified by Strydom and Wessels (2006:19) as well. Teaching methods are functional tools which can be used to meet the goals of parenting programmes as previously described in Table 4.2. Activities should provide parents with an opportunity to actively relate the programme material to their own parenting practices (McFarland-Piazza & Saunders, 2012:66; Nation *et al.*, 2013:451; Samuelson, 2009:5; Taylor *et al.*, 2013:5).

4.8.4 Facilitators of Parent Education Programmes

4.8.4.1 Requirements to be a Facilitator

Practitioners are required to possess certain skills and knowledge in order to facilitate groups aimed at parent education (Samuelson, 2009:7). The participants provided their opinion on the requirements to be a facilitator of such a programme. The responses to this question are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 Requirements to be a facilitator of parent education programmes

Subtheme	Category	Narrative	f (%)
Theme: REQUIREMENTS TO BE A FACILITATOR			
Parenting knowledge	Knowledge of programme content	*"In-depth **knowledge** of the subject of parenting."* *"We want a dietician to be **specialised** in child nutrition."*	8 (32%)
Experience in parenting	Parental experience	*"They **should be parents** themselves so they can relate. Personal experience."* *"They **need to be a mother or father** as we have both here."* *"With a **history of an involvement in the field of parenting, rather** than a specific qualification."*	6 (24%)
Training	Formal qualification	*"We chose **professionals** with either **degrees** or **formal training** to facilitate their programmes. They must have had time to practice their degree in the field."* *"Must be **qualified** social workers…"*	3 (12%)
	Training of paraprofessionals	*"**Paraprofessionals** need to do **more training course**s to get a really broad picture of parenting skills."* *"They have to have done the parenting initiative **training** and, once completed, there is a **whole training process**."*	14 (56%)
Personal characteristics of facilitator	Passion	*"They would need a **passion** for parenting."* *"The first requirement is that they absolutely **value the role of parents** in society and community. Being **passionate** and an utter belief in the role of a parent."*	9 (36%)
No requirements	No formal requirements	*"They must be in the programme first but **nothing formal**."*	1 (4%)

n= 25 (Some participants mentioned more than one requirement)

a.) Parenting knowledge

According to Table 4.11, adequate knowledge of programme content was mentioned as a requirement to facilitate a parent education programme by eight (32%) of the participants (*"In-depth knowledge of the subject of parenting")*. Cotter *et al.* (2013:2) also emphasise the significance of knowledge related to behaviour modification and relationship enhancement for parents and children.

b.) Experience in parenting

Six (24%) participants shared their opinion that facilitators should be parents themselves. One participant noted, *"They should be parents themselves so they can relate. Personal experience"*.

c.) Training

Three (12%) participants spoke about facilitator training as being a prerequisite to lead a group. There was a tendency to refer to formal educational training such as a tertiary qualification related to family education or child development. *("We chose professionals with either degrees or formal training to facilitate their programmes. They must have had time to practice their degree in the field").* Azzi-Lessing (2010:262) presents a theoretical argument for the inclusion of parenting into bachelors and masters degrees for social work students working in parent education. Mahoney and Wiggers (2007:12) provide evidence to show that further clinical training in parenting can only benefit practitioners.

Another category which emerged was the training of paraprofessionals to fulfil the role of practitioners. Over half (14 or 56%) of the participants mentioned that they were in favour of this requirement (*"Paraprofessionals need to do more training courses to get a really broad picture of parenting skills"*).

Cook (2006: 790) refers to six professional skills and abilities which parent educators should possess in order to meet the needs of parents in their programmes. These needs refer directly to skills and knowledge acquired through training, such as knowing theoretical frameworks on parenting practices or using delivery methods appropriately. Facilitator training will be further discussed below in section 4.12

d.) Personal characteristics of the facilitator

Personal characteristics are seen to have a significant influence on facilitators' delivery of parent education. Table 4.11 indicates that passion was described by nine (36%) participants ("*The first requirement is that they absolutely value the role of parents in society and community. Being passionate and an utter belief in the role of a parent*) as a characteristic parent education programme practitioners should ideally possess. The practical implication of these findings is that effective practitioners should possess passion and a commitment to empowering parents. Practitioners should be able to communicate their genuine belief in the role of parents (Kazantzis & Shinkfield, 2007:319)

e.) No formal requirements

One (4%) participant mentioned that no formal requirement was necessary to facilitate a programme of this nature ("*They must be in the programme first but nothing formal*"). The implication of having no requirements for practitioners is that the role of a facilitator is not given the appropriate status within the organisation and insufficient training is provided to him/her. This lack of status could negatively affect the leadership of a group, as the practitioners may not identify themselves as leaders. Another factor to consider is that participants may not be aware of the organisational requirements to be a facilitator. The consequence of such findings is that practitioners may be uninformed regarding their own role and function within their organisation. The formalisation of the position of facilitator is important because it creates a secure and goal-orientated staff structure.

4.8.4.2 Facilitator Training for Practitioners

All participants answered the question regarding the frequency of facilitator training held at their organisation. Table 4.12 provides a breakdown of the training occurring at the organisations where the participants conduct programmes.

Table 4.12 Frequency of facilitator training

Frequency of training received by participants	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Once off	6	(24%)
Once per term	8	(32%)
Once per month	0	(0%)
Once per week	4	(6%)
Once per year	3	(12%)
Not at all	4	(16%)
Total	**25**	**100%**

n=25

Six (24%) of the participants underwent once-off training. Eight (32%) had training once per term. None (0%) of the participants had training once per month. Four (16%) mentioned that they had weekly training, which resembled weekly supervision. Three (12%) participants participated in annual training and four (16%) said they had no training programme. Recent literature released by the Department of Social Development (2013) justifies the investment into facilitator training, especially for community-based projects. Adequately trained staff, as outlined by Nation *et al*. (2003:454), is a foundation for an effective programme and overall job satisfaction of the practitioner. The findings summarised in Table 4.12 are validated by

the literature cited above. Training provides a platform for development as a leader and practitioner and is therefore a necessary component of parent education programmes.

4.8.4.3 Resources Provided to Facilitators

Participants were asked about the resources which the organisation provided to them to run their parent education programmes. These resources are summarised in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Practitioner resources provided by organisation

Theme: RESOURCES PROVIDED TO PRACTITIONERS		
Category	**Narrative**	**f (%)**
Manuals	*"They get a **full manual** with updated information."* *"We are given a **manual** and a **workbook**."* *"We have a **manual** for the parent skills programme as it has different topics."*	17 (68%)
Visual Aids	*"We are given **visual aids and posters**."*	2 (8%)
Books	*"We have a very **extensive library**."* *"Every **parenting book** known to man. I do a lot of work from books."* *"For early literacy we have a lot of **books**."*	4 (6%)
Toys	*"**Toys and practical games** for the parents to play at home."* *"**Educational games** and it is laminated and coloured in and rules of the game are provided."*	3 (12%)
Digital resources	*"We have a very extensive **digital** file of workshops and programmes. I need to email my notes through. These are kept in a file for other facilitators to refer to."* *"I created a **website as a resource**. We are also on **Facebook** and there are facilitators from different countries on the online network."* *"We get (sic.) given **videos and DVDs**."*	5 (20%)
Self-made resources	*"I personally do **my own thing**. I will not necessarily go to a manual. I prefer an unstructured workshop."* *"I create **my own resources**."*	2 (8%)

n=25 (Some participants mentioned more than one resource)

According to Table 4.13, 17 (68%) participants mentioned the provision of manuals, visual aids were provided to two participants (8%), four (16%) participants were supported with books as resources, three (12%) were given toys, digital resources such as video clips were provided to five (20%) of the participants to utilise in their groups, while two (8%) participants made mention of self-made resources (*"I create my own resources"*).

The prevailing resource evident in the findings was the use of a manual, which makes sense within the context of the participant's because as practitioners, they facilitate programmes which are generally manualised. The manual functions as a guide to provide structure for the session. Mazzucchelli and Sanders (2010:245) endorse this trend towards the use of training

manuals with comprehensive information about how to implement the intervention programme. Widely researched parenting programmes such as Triple-P promote the use of manualisation for both fidelity purposes and upscaling of their programme (Mazzucchelli & Sanders, 2010:245; Wessels, 2012:22). Wessels (2013:51) found that many programmes evaluated in her study incorporated a practitioner manual. Other resources which are supported by the literature include the use of visual aids, literary material as well as multimedia (Wessels, 2012:70). There were a high number of respondents who mentioned technology as a resource *("I created a website as a resource. We are also on Facebook and there are facilitators from different countries on the online network"*). The 21st century has brought about technological advancements in all fields of work which means that the inclusion of technology will play an increasingly important role in the delivery of human services including parent education programmes.

4.8.4.4 *Characteristics of a Facilitator*

Participants were asked, in their experience, which of the characteristics below (Table 4.14) are necessary for facilitating a parent education programme. Table 4.14 depicts the percentage of participants who selected the corresponding characteristics.

Table 4.14 The characteristics of a facilitator

Facilitator Characteristic	Number of Participants	Percentage
Warmth	20	80%
Genuineness	19	76%
Flexibility	22	88%
Humour	18	72%
Empathy	21	84%
Communication skills	21	84%
Knowledge of group work process and dynamics	20	80%
Engagement with parents	22	88%

n=25

Most of the participants indicated that all of the above qualities are necessary. However, there were certain variations in terms of ranking these qualities. Flexibility (22 or 88%) and engagement with parents (22 or 88%) were most highly recommended. Empathy (21 or 84%), communication skills (21 or 84%), warmth and group work knowledge were chosen by 20 (80%) of the participants. Genuineness (19 or 76%) and humour (18 or 72%) were rated as less important characteristics. Eames *et al.* (2010:1222) distinguish the facilitator as a

leader who possesses certain skills and traits which assist him/her in the delivery of parent interventions. The findings above correlate with the findings of the study by Eames *et al.* (2010), that determined that positive leader behaviour such an engagement and warmth contributed towards an effective change and a collaborative relationship between practitioners and parents.

Other skills were added by the participants to the list above. Of the participants 17 (68%) suggested other characteristics or qualities which they perceived as important for facilitating a parent education programme. These include being practical and realistic (3 or 12%), encouraging and generous with praise (3 or 12%), understanding and empathetic (4 or 16%), being good at organisation and time management (2 or 8%), having patience (3 or 12%), being good at conflict management (1 or 4%) and possessing intuition and confidence (1 or 4%). The additional skills can be closely linked with positive leadership behaviour described in literature (Eames *et al.*, 2010:1224; McFarland-Piazza & Saunders, 2012:68-70).

4.8.5 Practitioners' experience of facilitating Early Childhood Development Parent Education Programmes

The next series of questions required participants to reflect on their experience as a facilitator of a parent education programme. This was directly in line with the outcome of the study, which is to describe the practitioners' experiences of parent education programmes. The challenges will be described subsequently, followed by the outcomes and contribution, maintenance of skills and lastly the future of parent education programmes from the perspective of the participants.

4.8.5.1 *Challenges Experienced by Practitioners*

Participants were asked about the challenges they experience when facilitating parent education programmes for parents of pre-school children. The responses to this question have been detailed in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Main challenges experienced by practitioners

Theme: MAIN CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY PRACTITIONERS			
Subtheme	**Categories**	**Narrative**	**f (%)**
Challenges related to Facilitation	Organising the group	*"The **whole organising thing** that goes on beyond the programme and finding the speakers."* *"Finding the **venue** will be a problem in the community."*	2 (8%)
	Emotionally challenging environment	*"People who are very needy because there is too much going on for them personally, so they can be challenging within a group. Our role is to be **empathic without being drawn into it personally,** as sometimes I come home and I am just shattered, I have to sleep. But it is a real challenge to **maintain that separateness** from whatever is happening in the group."* *"**I didn't have the emotional capacity** for the amount of ladies that were in my care and so their stories, **their hardships, their hurts, their pain was just so big**."* *"They share their stories and **sometimes it is very sad**."*	3 (12%)
	Cultural challenges	*"Sometimes it is difficult for me to be **white** coming into a [township] community. I am **prejudged** and that makes such a difference."* *"**Culturally**, it is challenging whether I am black or whether I am white, whether I am a woman or whether I am a man; **gender** and **cultural,** you have to be tip top of your game. You have to know how to overcome their fear about who you are."* *"Then having to deal with someone who is totally **illiterate** in **English** and after a workshop I have to repeat in **isiXhosa**."*	2 (8%)
	Being overwhelmed by parents' problems	*"When they come, there are **lots of challenges**, frustration, so we try and calm them down, this is challenging."* *"Hear the parents' problems and you **don't know what to do."***	2 (8%)
Parent-related challenges (group member)	Unsupportive family members	*"**Family is unsupportive**… other family members are not encouraging of the participant"* *"Very often the men or **husbands don't come** and this is a big problem."*	2 (8%)
	Dominant group members	*"It is a big challenge when there is a **dominant talkative parent**, there will be times when we need to stop them from talking."* *"A participant who is **dominating the group** and not giving other members a chance to speak"* *"The participants who shares (sic.) something that is **not relevant** to the topic."* *"**Strong opinions**, rigid parenting beliefs and religion could impact the group."*	6 (24%)
	Unmotivated/ resistant group member(s)	*"**Commitment** is a challenge."* *"Not every parent wants to be there and those characters can be **difficult to motivate**."* *"I have had a group that were very **resistant**."*	9 (36%)

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	Fall-out rate/ attendance	*"When you get the **attendance register**, you have a list of 20 parents but when you do the workshop you find only two parents attending. Or the parents come in very late."* *"In order for us to be effective, we need to work with the same group of parents for at least a term. Of about 1000 parents we have worked with, only 60 continued and I **am sure a whole lot gave up**."* *"**Commitment is a challenge**; start with 10 and end up with four."*	8 (32%)

n=25 (Some participants mentioned more than one challenge)

a.) Challenges related to Facilitation

A number of facilitator-related challenges emerged within this theme. Participants described in varying levels of detail the challenges they experienced, some mentioning more than one challenge. Organising the group was raised as a challenge by two (8%) participants and the emotionally challenging environment for practitioners was addressed by three (12%) participants. Cultural challenges proved to be a challenge for two (8%) participants while two (8%) participants mentioned that they were overwhelmed by parents' problems. The logistical organisation of parent education groups is noted by Wright (2014:145) to be an area which tends to be a challenge for staff. Mahoney and Wiggers (2007:11) confirm that intervening with parent education programmes can be overwhelming for practitioners. Woodcock (2003:98) makes specific mention of social workers, who may "lack a psychologically informed strategy" for dealing with parental challenges. Participants shared the emotional toll facilitating had on their emotional wellbeing: *"I didn't have the emotional capacity for the amount of ladies that were in my care and so their stories, their hardships, their hurts, their pain was just so big".*

b.) Parent-related challenges (Group member challenges)

Parent-related problems raised by participants include unsupportive family members (2 or 8%), dominant group members (6 or 24%), unmotivated and resistant group members (9 or 36%), as well as high fall-out rates and poor attendance (8 or 32%). Dominant members and poor attendance seemed to be a recurring challenge for many participants. These challenges are characteristic of group work intervention. The ongoing nature of a group programme requires a level of engagement and commitment from the parents, but sustainable engagement from participants is a challenge for practitioners. For example, Morawska and Sanders (2006:30) found that 50% or more parents attend only half or fewer sessions in parent education programmes. This is evidently also a challenge for the participants of this study. Lastly, resistant group members tend to pose a great recruitment

challenge to practitioners (Axford *et al*., 2012:2063). Participants reflected on the frustration they experienced with poor attendance and high dropout rates: "*When you get the attendance register, you have a list of 20 parents but when you do the workshop you find only two parents attending. Or the parents come in very late*".

4.8.6 Contribution of Parent Education Programmes towards Early childhood Development in the Cape Metropole

4.8.6.1 Maintenance of Skills Gained in the Programme

Below (in Table 4.16) the results for the question which related to the maintenance of skills are presented. Participants (n=25) were asked about how they empower parents to maintain the knowledge and skills gained during the parent education programme.

Table 4.16 Maintenance of skills gained in programmes

Theme: MAINTENANCE OF SKILLS GAINED IN PROGRAMME			
Subtheme	**Categories**	**Narrative**	**f (%)**
Follow-up by organisation	Individual follow-up sessions	"*I am available for **private consultations**.*" "*We do **individual follow up** so we get feedback and are in touch with our parents.*" "*We do **individual sessions** where they can come for a sessions with me or I go on a **home** or school visit.*"	5 (20%)
	Support groups offered	""*I began offering **follow-up groups**, it's a networking idea.*" "***Community members** become the **support group** leader.*" "*The **support groups** are now more formal.*" "*We motivate them to start their **own support group**.*"	14 (56%)
Communication with parents using technology	Call centre/ phone lines	"*They are **free to call the office** if they have something they are stuck with.*" "*This year **we plan to call them** to follow up with them.*"	4 (16%)
	Email/ online platforms	"*I **share everybody's emails** and I encourage mums to remain in contact.*" "*If the parents **go to our website** and ask questions.*" "*If they have access to community **internet**, the parents can fetch an **electronic tool kit** once a month.*"	4 (16%)
Referrals	Community referrals to other organisations	"*I always **refer** mums to a lot of **resources in the community,** e.g. Famsa, Childline.*"	2 (8%)
No contact	No follow-up	"*With our group programme **we don't have a clear follow up** with parents.*" "***We are not there yet** in terms of follow up.*"	5 (20%)

n=25 (Some participants mentioned more than one method of skill maintenance)

Twenty (80%) of the participants described a number of maintenance strategies which they utilise to ensure that a sustainable impact is made through the parent intervention. Some participants (5 or 20%) mentioned that there was no strategy in place. The subthemes are discussed below.

a.) Follow-up by organisation

It was significant to five (20%) participants that individual follow-up sessions were incorporated into their parenting programmes to ensure sustained maintenance of the intervention (*"We do individual follow up so we get feedback and are in touch with our parents"*). In addition, 14 (56%) mentioned the use of support groups offered by the organisation (*"I began offering follow-up groups, it's a networking idea"*). Nation *et al.* (2003:452) endorse the use of booster or follow-up sessions which focus on activating prior skills learnt in the programme. Cotter *et al.*, (2013:20) utilised the referral method of follow up after six months of the interactive 'Parenting Wisely' programme. Relationships built between parents in support groups are termed as social support which promotes strong relationships and an element of community engagement between parents (Bronte-Tinkew & Calkins, 2001:18). The findings emphasised the value of follow-up groups for marinating relationships and linking parents to on-going social support within their own communities,

b.) Communication with parents using technology

Participants mentioned the use of technology and communication channels to maintain connection with the parents who attend their groups. Four (16%) said they used a call centre and a further four (16%) used email or online platforms to maintain contact. The use of technology could increase the accessibility of hard-to-reach populations, as mentioned by several authors (Hutchings & Webster-Stratton, 2004:341; Sanders *et al.*, 2003:151; Samuelson, 2009:8).

c.) Referrals

According to Table 4.16, two (8%) participants stated that their follow-up method was their use of referrals to other organisations. One participant spoke highly of the use of community resources: *"I always refer mums to a lot of resources in the community, e.g. Famsa, Childline".* Wong and Sumsion, (2012:81) conducted a study which reported on the experiences of inter-professional work of early childhood professionals. The study emphasises the importance of the integration of services from multiple disciplines to offer the best possible intervention to clients. Woodcock (2003:98) similarly stated that either social work intervention or referral to more specialised therapy may be used as a resource to assist parents.

d.) No contact

Five participants (20%) mentioned that they do not follow up with parents after the programme is completed (*"With our group programme we don't have a clear follow up with parents"*). Several (3 or 12%) of the participants (n=25) did not elaborate on their reason for not following up, however two (8%) participants mentioned that their programmes are once off and are not designed for any follow up to occur. It is evident from the findings that no contact after a programme is occurring in organisations despite the importance of maintenance and on-going support.

4.8.6.2 Contribution to Early Childhood Development

Participants were asked about the contribution which they felt parent education programmes make towards the development of children in the early childhood phase. Table 4.17 presents the responses to this question.

Table 4.17 Contribution of parent education programmes towards early childhood development

Theme: CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT			
Subtheme	**Category**	**Narrative**	**f (%)**
Positive attitude about the impact towards early childhood development	Importance of early childhood development	*"We say that this is a **crucial** and **critical age of development**."* *"If we can at an **early age** help the parent to set a positive example, I think we are going to change the world."* *"These programmes **make a big difference to the children**. Quite **significantly**, actually."* *"**Huge improvement** on children **development** through play."*	13 (52%)
	Emphasis on the positive contribution towards ECD	*"I see there is a **huge difference**."* *"It **helps a lot**…"* *"A lot a lot a lot… it helps **immensely**."*	12 (48%)
Parental empowerment	Able to identify behavioural problems	*"It deepens a parent's **understanding of what the child is going through** and they can **understand** where the **behaviour** is coming from."* *"If you **understand your child**, it can only benefit the child so much more. Their **behaviour** is most probably much **easier to manage**."* *"**The parents learn to understand the stages to development of their child** and understand that child is not being naughty; they need to be active but they are inquisitive, they do need attention."*	9 (36%)
	Parenting skills and knowledge acquisition	*"**To give skills and empower parents** on certain, age-level skills."* *"We give **parents skills** on how to educate the children, such as **listening, talking about their feelings, problem solving, choices, boosting child's self-esteem**."*	11 (44%)
	Improved relationship with child	*"Most important is the **relationship** between the **parent** and the **child** because from that, everything else will develop and grow."* *"The programme **connects** a **mother** to a **child**."*	9 (36%)
	Taking responsibility for their role as a parent	*"Parents take **responsibility** for their **role** as **primary caregiver**."* *"We believe that the parent is the **biggest role model i**n a child's life."* *"Their **self-esteem** has improved to give them an opportunity to not look at themselves so negatively."*	9 (36%)
Child development	Improved values	*"Parents' **influence on child's values**; they **shape their children** big time so these parenting programmes influence that."*	3 (12%)
	Improved community skills in children	*"The child is free to say their own opinions… **their words should be heard**."* *"**The child will start to listen** to the teacher as they will have learnt to listen."*	4 (6%)

n=25 (Some participants mentioned more than one contribution to ECD)

a.) Positive attitude towards impact towards early childhood development

All participants (25 or 100%) had a positive attitude about the impact of parent education programmes towards early childhood development. This question links to the goal of the research study, and fulfils objective 3. Thirteen (52%) participants gave positive descriptions of the importance of early childhood development. Emphasis on the positive contribution it makes towards early childhood development was mentioned by 12 (48%) participants.

To support the reflections by the participants, Mahoney and Wiggers (2007:7) justify that the first five years of life are crucial for a person's development. Furthermore, Brody and Flor (1997:1001) contend that the role of parenting is crucial in terms of a child's development and growth. Parent education programmes have been highlighted as making a significant contribution towards child development (Desai, 2012:330; Utting & Pugh, 2004:22) and it has become apparent that early childhood development is an emerging field of significance for practitioners, policy makers and researchers alike (Department of Education, 2001; Lake, 2011:1277; Munford *et al.*, 2007:73).

b.) Parental empowerment

Parental empowerment is seen as a direct contribution of parent education programmes. Nine (36%) participants reflected on the fact that parents are able to identify behavioural problems more easily after attending a parent education programme. Eleven (44%) participants noted parenting skills and knowledge acquisition as an outcome which contributes positively towards early childhood development. Nine (36%) participants mentioned an improved relationship between the parent and the child, while a further nine (36%) participants reported that parents take more responsibility for their role as a parents. Research studies (Wessels, Milton, Ward, Kilbane, Alves, Campello, Dubowitz, Hutchings, Jones, Lynch & Madrid, 2013; Lundahl, *et al.*, 2006) suggest that interventions which encourage safe, stable and nurturing relationships between parents and children in their early childhood have a number of positive effects, such as prevention of child maltreatment and childhood aggression. Bloomfield and Kendall (2012:364) refer to the parents' self-efficacy as a potential outcome of a parent education programme. The findings summarised in Table 4.17 correlate with the findings of these studies. The role of a parent is a defining feature of family functioning and makes a positive contribution towards parent upliftment (Peterson & Green, 2010).

c.) Child development

In response to the question regarding child development, three (12%) participants said that as a result of the parent education programme, children's values improved and four (16%) participants mentioned that it improved children's communication skills.

4.8.6.3 Future Developments

The participants were asked what they see as the future of parent education programmes in South Africa. The responses to this question are summarised in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18 Future of parent education programmes: Contribution towards early childhood development

Subtheme	Category	Narrative	f (%)
Theme: FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA			
Attitude towards the future of parenting education programmes	Hopeful/wishful attitude	*"To me, parenting programmes would make the **biggest difference**."* *"There is **enormous potential** to change statistics in a number of ways"* *"**I like the idea** of local parenting programmes."* *"**I have a dream** that programmes create a synergy in the parenting journey."*	22 (88%)
	Pessimistic attitude	*"I would say more involved parents. But how are we going to get there… **I don't know**"*	3 (12%)
	Total		**25**
Child protection and development	Emphasis on protecting children	*"A programme that focuses on the basics on learning basics, **child support, children rights, development and identifying abuse**."* *"Changing statistics of **child abuse, and disrespect and rape and murder and fatherless children**. It has that possibility."*	6 (24%)
School involvement	Partnership with schools	*"I would wish that the **school system**, especially in the **first three years in high school and primary school would start parenting programmes**."* *"It should be **embedded in the school system**."* *"I think it should become a **curriculum at school**. We should utilise **our schools as the community central point**."*	10 (40%)
Government involvement	Funding assistance	*"Every single **funder donor** needs to mandate that organisations should run parenting programmes."*	2 (8%)
	Government implementation	*"Communication in the **government**. I would love to do a **family preservation programme** which includes the kids and everyone."* *"It would be so great if somehow the **government** would build in a programme where all parents are offered positive parenting skills training."*	3 (12%)

Upscale programme	Upscale standard programme	*"If I can have a **standard programme** that works for our parents then that would be great."* *"Parenting skills need to be **marketed on a national platform,** like on television."* *"**A national campaign focusing on the moms** that go to the grant payout points or clinics, they do have the time to attend."*	4 (16%)
	Expand programme to different areas/ communities	*"It would be wonderful if a parenting workshop were* (sic.) ***available to every pregnant woman**."* *"…making it so **widely and accessible and available** that it becomes normal for parents to attend."* *"If these programmes **reach as many parents as possible**, it would be like a dream come true."*	7 (28%)
Evaluation	Research	*"More **research**; although we do not have the money but we would like to have access to the universities to help us."*	1 (4%)
	Monitoring and evaluation	*"**Monitoring** and **evaluation** needs* (sic.) *to happen. We do **need assessments** with each parent before they come and six months later again."* *"The **content** can somehow be **monitored**..."*	2 (8%)
Future trends of programmes	Practical and skills based	*"I like **practical stuff**. So anything like a workshop that is **practical** that teaches parents **how to do things**. My ideal parenting programme would be **teaching skills**."* *"It's like **practical parenting 101**…"*	5 (20%)
	Inclusion of technology in programmes	*"Parents should understand the **world of technology** and maybe we can use this to **improve their access to parenting skills.**"* *"We must **utilise online tools and the media** properly."*	3 (12%)
	Empowerment/ support focused	*"So if the **parents are equipped**, they will mirror positive behaviour to their children."* *"…that programmes somehow **support and connect that community of parents**."*	7 (28%)
	Programmes should deal with parents' aggression	*"Parenting in SA is not easy because **there is a huge aggressive social dynamic which makes parenting hard**."* *"I think the entire shift for me has got to **move away from anger and violence** and has to turn to peace, nurture, love, gentle… then a generation of children will grow up with **less violence and less anger and less lashing out**."*	2 (8%)

n= 25 (Some participants mentioned more than one future development)

a.) Attitude towards the future of parenting education programmes

Table 4.18 shows that the participants' responses to the question tended to generate either a hopeful or a pessimistic attitude about the future of parent education programmes. Twenty-two (88%) participants had a hopeful attitude, using optimistic vocabulary *("To me parenting programmes would make the biggest difference")*. Three (12%) participants had a pessimistic attitude. Reflection on the intervention method of parenting programmes stirred strong emotions for participants, which can be seen by these attitudes.

b.) Child protection and development

Six (24%) participants explained that in the future, parent education programmes will continue to place value and emphasis on child protection (*"A programme that focuses on the basics on learning basics, child support, children rights, development, and identifying abuse"*). International policy documents (United Nations: 2011; World Health Organization, 2004) have identified parenting programmes as a priority topic for dialogue and implementation as a means to reduce risk factors such as child abuse. Addressing poor parenting practices through parent education programmes could reduce the violence in society (Parenting in Africa Network, 2013:48; Wessels, 2012:9).

c.) School involvement

According to Table 4.13, ten (40%) participants included the involvement of schools in future parent education programmes *("It should be embedded in the school system")*. The OneCape2040 vision, a policy drafted by the City of Cape Town, emphasises that the primary change agent for the Cape Metropole area is collaboration between parents and teachers in order to enhance development of children (Dawes, 2013:8). Effective parenting programs incorporate an ecological approach to program content, which acknowledges the relationship between schools and parents (Colosi & Dunifon, 2003:2).

d.) Government involvement

Another subtheme which was apparent in the participants' responses was hopes of governmental funding assistance (2 or 8%) and government implementation of parent education programmes (3 or 12%). One participant shared her hope of government involvement: *"It would be so great if somehow the government would build in a programme where all parents are offered positive parenting skills training"*. Previously, NGOs have been the predominant provider of parenting programmes in many countries, including South Africa (Azzi-Lessing, 2010:256; Bloomfield *et al.*, 2005:47; Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006:4; Woodcock, 2003:98). However, participants' responses highlight a need for further governmental improvement in the field of parenting.

e.) Upscaling programmes

Upscaling the standard parent education programme was identified by four (16%) participants as their hope for future interventions with parents (*"If I can have a standard programme that works for our parents then that would be great"*). A further seven (28%) participants similarly highlighted that they hope parent education will be able to expand programmes to new, unreached areas or communities (*"If these programmes reach as many parents as possible, it would be like a dream come tru*e*"*). The expansion of a programme could mean reaching more parents (Salem *et al.*, 2013:131) and, consequently, making a larger impact in the field of parenting and early childhood development.

f.) Evaluation

Limited research is available on parenting programmes within low and middle-income countries, such as South Africa (Mahoney *et al.*, 1999:131). Wessels (2012:9) expands on this gap in the research stating that, "Despite the identified need for parenting programmes in South Africa, there appears to be no data on the range of existing programmes in the country as well as on the quality of services they provide". In line with these authors' statements, one (4%) participant raised the issue of continued research into parent education programmes, as seen in Table 4.18

Furthermore, evaluation as a best practice method is seen as a positive indicator of effective parenting programmes (Kaminski *et al.*, 2008:583). Monitoring and evaluation were mentioned by two (8%) participants ("*Monitoring and evaluation needs* (sic.) *to happen. We do need assessments with each parent before they come and six months later again*").

g.) Future trends of programmes

Table 4.18 raises the subtheme of future trends for parent education programmes. Participants mentioned four directions they can see this intervention taking in the future. Five (20%) participants stated that programmes will be practical and skills based (*"I like practical stuff. So anything like a workshop that is practical that teaches parents how to do things. My ideal parenting programme would be teaching skills"*). Three (12%) participants felt that the inclusion of technology in programmes would be a potential development for programmes (*"We must utilise online tools and the media properly*"). Seven (28%) participants mentioned that programmes should continue to be empowerment and support focused. Additionally, two (8%) participants highlighted that they would like programme content to address parents' aggression towards their children (*"I think the entire shift for me has got to move away from anger and violence and has to turn to peace, nurture, love, gentle… then a generation of children will grow up with less violence and less anger and less lashing out"*). A common

trend for skills-based programmes is to utilise technology such as video-based modelling and online coaching (Smith, 2010:691; Wade *et al.*, 2011:487). Online techniques have been found to be more effective at changing parenting behaviour than programmes that are solely educational based (Smith, 2010:691). Wade (2011:490) conducted a study which focused on coaching parents online over the Internet. This study found that 85% of the participants rated the video conferences equally as helpful as telephone calls (77%) or face-to-face visits (69%). The findings of Wade's (2011) study correlate with the reflections from participants in this study.

4.9   CONCLUSION

The empirical investigation conducted in this chapter provides evidence of how practitioners experience facilitating parent education programmes for early childhood development. Twenty-five practitioners from 12 NGOs were purposefully selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. The data from the interviews were selected, analysed and interpreted and presented in the form of graphs, figures, tables and a narrative frequency distribution. Utilising the literature review, a theoretical framework was provided for each question to ensure validly of the responses. Literature from Chapters 2 and 3 was included in the literature control. The findings were presented throughout this chapter. In Chapter 5, the analysed data is interpreted in order to present conclusions and recommendations regarding the nature and facilitation of parent education programmes, based on the reflections of participants presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of practitioners' experiences of facilitating parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development. In this chapter, conclusions and recommendations are presented based on the findings of the empirical investigation presented in Chapter 4. This fulfils Objective 4 of the study, which was to present conclusions and recommendations regarding the nature of parenting programmes, based on the reflections of practitioners. The conclusions are context specific and are based on the empirical evidence and the literature review control as recommended by De Vos *et al.*, (2011:400). The conclusions and recommendations are presented according to their relation to the first three research objectives. Firstly, the conclusions for each objective are presented and then the recommendations based on these conclusions follow.

Objectives 1-3 were the following:

1. To discuss the role and responsibility of parents towards the care and development of their pre-school children (during early childhood).
2. To describe the nature and components of parent education programmes for early childhood development rooted in social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.
3. To investigate how practitioners experience the facilitation of parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.

This chapter offers recommendations for practitioners such as practising social workers, psychologists, nurses, educators and community workers, as well as organisations implementing parent education programmes, policy makers and potential future researchers.

5.2 THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS TOWARDS THE CARE AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN (OBJECTIVE 1)

5.2.1 Parental Responsibilities

Parents have a multifaceted and complex role to play in their children's lives. This places great emphasis on the responsibilities parents have towards raising their children, specifically in the phase of early childhood. The study revealed that the most significant responsibilities of parents are nurture and care (15 or 60%) as well as the socialisation (17 or 68%) of their children. Twelve (48%) participants mentioned that it is the role of a parent to encourage relationship building and three (12%) participants emphasised playing with children as an important activity of nurture and care. In terms of socialisation, parents are responsible for cultural modelling (3 or 12%), providing structure (5 or 20%) and providing consistent discipline (9 or 36%).

It can be concluded that these parental responsibilities form the foundational levels of trust and respect, which are important dynamics of a parent-child relationship. Intervention is often necessary when parents experience problems with fulfilling these responsibilities. It can further be concluded that problems with these parental responsibilities are quite often addressed in parent education programmes where parents acquire further parenting knowledge and skills.

5.2.2 Parental Needs

Parents are confronted with a variety of challenges and they need certain skills and knowledge in order to address them. Parents often find themselves in a position of not knowing what to do with their child in these challenging situations, which impact on their confidence in their roles as parents. All (25 or 100%) participants mentioned that parent-related challenges are a priority for practitioners. Child-related challenges (18 or 72%) and community-related challenges (3 or 12%) were also emphasised by the participants in the empirical study. It can be concluded that parents face a wide variety of challenges, either personally, relationally or within their community. It can be further concluded that the challenges faced by parents, such as communication and disciplinary problems, are linked to the goals and topics covered by parent education programmes.

The challenges that parents face could be addressed with relevant parental skills and knowledge. Specifically, it can be concluded that relationship-building skills are a vital component of a parent education programme. In the empirical study, the practitioners ranked

building attachment (16 or 64%) and communication (15 or 60%) as the two most needed skills for parents to raise children in the phase of early childhood. Parental self-efficacy was mentioned by ten (40%) of the participants. Therefore, it can be concluded that self-efficacy is foundational to the promotion of parental self-esteem and competency within their role. Parental self-efficacy and positive discipline strategies were highlighted as skills which can be learnt by parents through social learning theory.

5.2.3 Recommendations for Practice (Objective 1)

Practitioners are in a position to educate and empower parents to fulfil their role as parents and help them to identify their responsibilities towards raising their pre-school children. It is recommended that practitioners working with parents should assess and explore their understanding of their role and responsibilities as parents. A focus should be placed on relationship-building skills and discipline strategies and these responsibilities should be used as topics for programme sessions.

Furthermore, it is recommended that parents who attended a parent education programme gain specific skills to better fulfil their responsibilities as parents. The needs of parents and the challenges they face should be a priority for practitioners delivering parent education as they influence their understanding of their role and responsibilities and their confidence in being able to successfully fulfil their role as parents Therefore, practitioners should develop programme content which addresses these needs and challenges and parenting skills and knowledge should be conveyed to equip parents adequately and, consequently, provide them with improved parental self-esteem..

It is further recommended that practitioners encourage parents to play an active role in their children's lives. The active role of a parent includes care and nurture, making provision for their children, as well as being responsible for the socialisation, discipline, protection and education of their children. With that in mind, programme content should be developed in order to address the specific responsibilities of individual parents. Parent education programmes should aim at empowering parents to meet the abovementioned child-rearing needs.

It is recommended that practitioners should provide a practical platform for parents to practice and develop the skills necessary to build attachment and trust with their children. Communication skills are one of these skill sets that deserves attention. Parents need to feel confident to utilise the skills learnt in the programme. With this confidence, comes parental

self-efficacy, which is a significant contributor to effective parenting and is a recommended outcome for parent education programmes.

5.3   THE NATURE AND COMPONENTS OF PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (OBJECTIVE 2)

Objective 2 revealed three separate themes of significance to the problem statement. Firstly, the profile of organisations that deliver parent education, secondly, the nature of these programmes and lastly, the various components practitioners consider to be "best practice" for empowering parents. The findings related to these themes are detailed below and recommendations have been made based on these conclusions.

5.3.1   Profiles of Organisations Delivering Parent Education

Most of the organisations that participated in the empirical study were categorised as NGOs. However, community-based organisations, faith-based organisations and private practices also featured in the profile of organisations. From this sample, it can be concluded that NGOs are the prevalent service provider of parent education programmes. It was found that although the government played a role in funding certain organisations, none of the participants were employed by the government to implement such programmes.

It can also be concluded that organisations which provide parent education programmes are development focused and prioritise education, support and development for their clients. The findings emphasise an educational (9 or 36%), supportive (7 or 28%) and developmental approach (6 or 24%) towards parent education programmes. Consequently, empowered parents are cultivated, which is seen as a potential strength for especially South Africa's development. This is because the empowerment of parents contributes towards the much-needed social development within the communities of South Africa.

The empirical findings showed that the sampled organisations target mostly parents, but also children. It can be concluded that although parent education programmes indirectly impact children, the primary target is to empower parents. Over half of the participants (14 or 56%) identified the improved role as a parent as a significant programme outcome while child development was mentioned by 10 (40%) participants. The link between parent empowerment and child development is evident in the findings of the empirical study. Organisations should orientate their service delivery model towards targeting both parents

and children. It is significant that a shift has taken place from the historically child-focused models of service delivery to a more holistic, family-focused model of service delivery in the NGO sector.

5.3.2 Nature of Parent Education Programmes

The nature of parent education programmes is generally determined by the delivery method and target group of parents. Although these may differ from group to group, the overall intention of parent education programmes stay fairly similar.

5.3.2.1 Programme Delivery Methods

In terms of programme delivery, all participants highlighted the importance of the correct choice of method of programme delivery. From the findings of the empirical study, it can be concluded that group intervention is an effective platform for parent education programmes because it creates an enabling environment that is conducive to sharing and support (8 or 32%). It is also seen as a cost-effective method to reach more people. The combination of individual and group administered programmes was used by (11 or 44%) participants despite the mixed opinions expressed in their reflections. The combination of group programmes and community programmes mentioned by five (20%) participants was a common delivery method for organisations working with parents with a lower income. While only one (4%) participant used purely a community based delivery method, other participants (6 or 24%) strongly motivated the use of this delivery method. Community-based programmes were favoured by the participants. This reflection implies that a community-based programme is an effective method of delivery for parent education. The inclusion of parent education programmes in community projects further endorses the social development priorities evident in policy. This is directly linked to the problem statement which questioned the delivery of parent interventions in the Cape Metropole area. Practitioners are directly responsible for the implementation of the programmes delivery method.

5.3.2.2 Target Group and Recruitment of Parents

Practitioners (15 or 60%) reflected that, in their experience, mothers were most likely to be the target population for parent education programmes. Fathers were only mentioned by six (24%) of the participants. It was found that the majority of programmes are mostly attended by woman, although a recent shift in attendance is occurring as fathers become more

engaged in the parenting process. It was also determined that the target population of parent education groups is varied in gender, age and socio-economic class.

The target population also functions as a focus for recruitment strategies. Organisations and practitioners take on different approaches to the recruitment of parents for the programmes which they run. Recruitment strategies to involve parents in these programmes could utilise both internal and external channels, but external channels proved to be the most commonly used. The most effective methods have been identified as marketing strategies (13 or 52%) and the use of schools (10 or 40%).

5.3.2.3 Recommendations for Practice (Objective 2)

It is recommended that organisations continue prioritising parental empowerment as this could have a positive impact on parents, families and children. It is recommended that child-focused organisations should consider including parent education as a holistic intervention strategy. It is further recommended that social workers, teachers and psychologists, due to their professional training and knowledge base, facilitate such interventions. Paraprofessionals in the field should receive adequate training to ensure that the intervention is delivered effectively.

It is recommended that the South African government invest in further implementation of parent education programmes towards early childhood development. It is also recommended that NGOs in South Africa, continue to prioritise parent education programmes as a service to their clients.

A rich description of the nature of parent education programmes was provided in the findings. Based on this, it is recommended that practitioners move away from individualised programmes towards group and community-based programmes to provide sustainable intervention for parents. Practitioners should also be equipped and given the opportunity to engage in combination programmes, such as individualised home visits and group work.

It is recommended that practitioners should take a flexible approach towards their groups and remain relevant to the target population in the implementation and delivery of the programme content. Furthermore, it is recommended to adapt the programme content and delivery for groups of single and divorced parents, to meet their specialised needs. It is also recommended that father-focused groups and programmes become a priority for NGOs working with parents to foster gender equality and engage parents in dialogue relating to

co-parenting and the shared role of parents. To support the variety of target populations that attend these programmes, it is recommended that culturally relative programmes be developed, especially in diverse populations as found in South Africa.

A recommendation towards the recruitment of parents is to encourage organisations to target parents by using technology and online platforms. New methods of recruitment can be seen as a community resource which may yield higher recruitment totals if used successfully.

5.3.2.4 Recommendations for Policy (Objective 2)

Policy-makers should continue to raise the issue of parent empowerment and policy writers should place a focus on this issue when writing legislation for child protection, early child development and social development in South Africa. More specifically, policies should include parents as a target population for family intervention in South Africa and should highlight parent education and early childhood development as areas of significance for organisations in the social service sector that deliver services to families. Examples of policies already in support of early childhood development include the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005), the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2011), the White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997b) and the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Development Programme, 2010). Local policy relevant to the Cape Metropole, such as The City of Cape Town's Development Strategy 2012, The Social Development Strategy (SDS) and the OneCape 2040 vision policy (2013) are significant policy documents which include focus areas for parent empowerment and early childhood development services (Dawes, 2013:8). It is recommended that these policies make budgetary allocations to support and develop parent education programmes in the Cape Metropole Area.

5.3.2.5 Recommendations for Research (Objective 2)

It is recommended that pilot programmes utilising a combination of delivery methods be implemented by practitioners and organisations in the future. Research into the delivery methods of programmes in South Africa is also recommended. Participatory action research is suggested as an effective bridge between research and fieldwork in the area of parent education, which could be conducted by both researchers and practitioners in the field.

5.3.3 Components of Parent Education Programmes

Certain components in parenting programmes that have been proven to be "best practice" for such programmes form a foundational base for effective parenting interventions. The conclusions below, regarding the components of parent education programmes, have been divided into separate categories and recommendations have been made based on each of these conclusions. Although a parent education programme is a single intervention, there are multiple components which form part of the intervention, as discussed below.

5.3.4 Goal of Parent Education Programmes

It is evident from the findings that the content of parent education programmes has a focus on three programme goals, namely skills, educational outcomes and relational outcomes. Participants spoke highly of utilising a supportive approach (8 or 32%) to programme goal attainment. The most significant outcome desired by practitioners is improving the role of a parent (14 or 56%). Other desired outcomes for programmes included community change (9 or 36%) and child development (10 or 36%).

It can be concluded that the goal of parent education programmes is to educate parents through a skills-based and relational programme. The empowerment of a parent is central to the programme's purpose. The goal and definition of a parent education programme can thus be linked because the participants continuously integrated their definitions of parent education programmes with their desired goals.

5.3.5 Frequency and Duration of Programme

It can be concluded that programmes tend to differ in frequency and duration. Most commonly, the participants' programmes tended to run over a course of three weeks, four (16%) of participants used this frequency structure) and the rest of the programmes ranged between one and 12 weeks. Organisations tended to dictate the frequency and duration of the programmes. Only seven (28%) of the programmes delivered by participants complied with the recommended length for parenting programmes according to the literature (8 – 12 weeks). From the findings, it can be concluded that programmes are stunted in terms of their dosage (frequency and duration) and that the tension of setting the appropriate dosage may be linked to the challenges of poor attendance and high dropout rates by parents who are not invested in the programme. It is recommended that practitioners should be encouraged to increase the number of sessions within the programme to ensure that programme goals are fully met.

Session duration fluctuated and just less than half (11 or 44%) of the participants commented that their sessions lasted three hours. Five (20%) held two hour group sessions, one (4%) facilitated four hour sessions and three (12%) held sessions which lasted five hours Practitioners highlighted the need for certain characteristics such as flexibility when it comes to the duration of the programmes. Therefore, session duration should be structured but not restrictive to the group's development. Practitioners are responsibilities to that ensure enough time is allocated to the content and processing of group session.

5.3.6 Programme Theory

The use of theoretical frameworks within parent education programmes emerged as a concern for practitioners. Despite the fact that all participants' programmes included some level of social learning theory or skills-based learning, only five (20%) verbally acknowledged this fact. Experiential learning theory was seen as the most used theoretical approach to parent education; however, practitioners spoke with hesitancy about their understanding of this theory. Only thirteen (52%) participants mentioned cognitive behavioural theory as their approach to their programmes, despite the inclusion of behaviour modification techniques utilised in all participants' programmes. In order to sum up the nature of parent education programmes, it is significant to mention that knowledge of theoretical approaches were lacking in the findings. It is noteworthy when considering these findings to mention that the qualification of most participants is related to a paraprofessional level of education. This means that these practitioners did not have academic training but rather skills-based/practical training. It is possible that paraprofessionals could be unaware of the programme theory, or the utilisation of such theory, and would therefore not utilise or mention it as a basis of their intervention.

5.3.7 Topics Included in Parent Education Programmes

The overall trend is that parent education programmes are divided into relevant topics and themes for each session. The most significant topics which appeared most in programmes facilitated by the participants included social development (22 or 88%), emotional development (22 or 88%), communication skills (24 or 96%). attachment building (23 or 92%) and discipline strategies (22 or 88%). Thus, it can be concluded that child development and parenting skills are significant topics to be included in parent education programmes. Lesser mentioned topics include moral development (13 or 52%), socialisation (8 or 32%) and parenting styles (13 or 52%). These topics and skills are directly linked to both social

learning and cognitive behavioural theories (Mytton *et al*., 2013:1). The findings revealed that all programmes included topics related to child development, parental roles and responsibilities and skill attainment. Practitioners spoke with confidence regarding these topics and generally noted the importance of each topic in the programmes which they facilitated. It can be concluded that there is a link between the responsibilities of parents and the common topics of parent education programmes. Furthermore, social learning and cognitive behavioural theories are the theoretical frameworks which endorse the inclusion of these topics for parent education.

5.3.8 Teaching methods Used by Practitioners

Six methods were identified by the participants in this study as being the most effective teaching methods for parent education programmes. Four (16%) participants pointed out visual and learning aids as being the most effective for teaching programme content, group discussions were highlighted by ten (40%) of the participants and role-play by four (16%). One (4%) participant mentioned written exercises, games and play were noted by four (16%) participants and, finally, homework was raised by two (8%) of the participants. Learning aids, group discussions and role-plays were the preferred teaching methods for engaging group members with programme content. It can be concluded that these teaching methods provide an interactive platform for improved parent understanding of programme content, exposure to experiential learning of parenting skills and effective group cohesion. Teaching methods should be incorporated into facilitator training to ensure that effective interventions are delivered.

5.3.9 Parent Empowerment and Maintenance of Skills

Many organisations continue offering support groups after the programme is completed. It was significant to five (20%) participants that individual follow-up sessions were incorporated into their parenting programmes to ensure sustained maintenance of the intervention, while 14 (56%) mentioned the use of support groups offered by the organisation. These follow-up group sessions provide a platform for community and trust to be fostered between parents. It can be concluded that practitioners of parent education programmes utilise different maintenance strategies to encourage sustained behavioural change and skill acquisition. Support groups were found to be a successful method of maintenance.

5.3.10 Contribution of Parent Education Programmes towards Early Childhood Development

The effectiveness of the intervention is of significance to practitioners and organisations delivering parent education programmes. All practitioners (25 or 100%) believed that parent education programmes make a significant contribution towards the development of children in the phase of early childhood. Thirteen (52%) participants used positive descriptions when talking about the importance of early childhood development. Twelve (48%) of the participants placed emphasis on the positive contribution these programmes made towards early childhood development. It can be concluded that parents empowered with knowledge, skills and self-belief are in a better position to raise self-assured, well-developed children who thrive and are able to cope with everyday life challenges. Practitioners feel optimistic about their contribution and are invested in the intervention because of this positive attitude.

It can be concluded from the findings that parent education programmes contribute towards parent empowerment. Developing the role of a parent directly impacts the development of their children. Parent empowerment is multi-faceted and requires adequate knowledge related to address early childhood development, parenting skills, relationship skills and the responsibility of their role as a parent. Furthermore, it can be concluded that empowered parents are able to better cope with their children's behavioural problems and thus issues of disobedience and behavioural difficulties (common in pre-school children) become less stressful for parents who have relevant knowledge of the topic and possess the necessary skills to address these issues. The contribution of parent education is thus significant in the field of early childhood development.

5.3.11 Recommendations for Practice (Objective 2)

The emphasis on early childhood development has been found to be of importance to organisations and practitioners working in the field of parenting education. The inclusion of early childhood development into the focus of parent education is a relatively new avenue for practitioners. Objective two aimed to describe the nature and components of parent education programmes for early childhood development rooted in social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches. Knowledge of the components of parent education programmes is useful for programme developers, practitioners and NGOs delivering services to parents. The nature and components of parent education programmes contribute towards how practitioners experience the programmes as they, as practitioners, play a significant role in the delivery of parent education programmes.

It is recommended that practitioners in parent education should be aware of the programme's goal and be trained to deliver content which meets this goal. All activities and sessions should endorse the overall goal of the programme and programmes should be relationship and skills-based to ensure that the complexity of the parenting role is addressed. Practitioners are in a unique position to carry the focus of the organisation and the goal of the programme into their interventions and it is thus recommended that organisational training should be offered to staff and practitioners to ensure that the programme's goals are understood and promoted.

Based on the findings in terms of frequency and duration, it can be recommended that parent education programmes should:

- be held two to four times per year at the organisation;
- range between one and 12 weeks; and
- last, on average, for three hours per session.

It is further recommended that practitioners are taught and trained with adequate theoretical background and knowledge to ensure that intervention methods are consciously driven by research and sound theory. Social learning theory and cognitive behavioural theory are highlighted as the recommended approaches for parent education programmes. Experiential learning is further endorsed as the practical means to achieve the desired outcomes of these theories through active participation in experiential learning situations.

Child development and skills-based topics are important to practitioners and programme developers. When creating a programme it is recommended that the following topics be prioritised in a programme:

- Communication;
- Building attachment with the child;
- Developmental phases of a child; and
- Disciplinary strategies.

Additional topics which are recommended include:

- Personal development of the parent;

- Understanding the value of play; and

- Anger management.

These topics complement the goals of parent education programmes and tie in with the theoretical approaches of social learning and cognitive behavioural theory. Practitioners of parent education programmes are encouraged to familiarise themselves with such theories in order to deliver the most effective intervention with their groups. It is further recommended that practitioners should be open to adjusting their programme topics to meet the cultural needs of parents

It can further be recommended to practitioners to incorporate the following teaching methods into their parent education programmes:

- Group discussions;

- Visual aids; and

- Games.

As sustainability of programmes is often a problem, it is recommended that parent education programmes be designed with strategic maintenance strategies to improve their sustainability. Recommended strategies include:

- Individual follow-up sessions;

- Community-based support groups;

- Continuous communication with parents via technology; and

- Referrals to additional helping services (such as counselling or family therapy).

It is recommended that innovative models and activities be integrated into the programmes to encourage continued participation. An example of such a model is the Participant Enhancement Intervention (Barth, 2009:104; Kazdin, Holland & Crowley 1997; Nock & Kazdin, 2004:873). The intention of this model is to encourage commitment and foster responsibility. The initial motivation originates from the group's cohesion in the first few sessions and then, from the sixth session, a shift occurs towards individualised motivation. This shift is activated through activities and exercises to ensure that individuals take ownership of their role in the group and as a parent. An example of such a process is depicted below:

Sessions 1-5	Sessions 6 - 10	Session 11-12
Group/team building excercises	Individual motivational excercises	Group termination and maintainence strategy

Figure 5.1 Example of a holistic maintenance strategy

It is thus recommended that practitioners take a strategic approach to maintenance, which can be planned prior to the commencement of the programme.

The conclusions in Section 5.3.9 motivate the importance of empowering parents with children in the phase of early childhood. A further recommendation is that organisations should implement parent education programmes to target the age group of early childhood development. These programmes should be marketed to parents with children who are in pre-school. Consequently, more resources and funding should be allocated towards parent empowerment and early childhood development, also in the Cape Metropole area. This recommendation is in support of the Children's Act 32 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005), the City of Cape Town's Development Strategy 2012, the Social Development Strategy and the OneCape 2040 vision policy (2013) which were identified by Dawes (2013:8) as significant policies in support of early childhood development. These recommendations link to the problem statement found in Chapter 1, which highlighted the need for practice and policy to reflect the importance of parenting in the development of pre-school children.

It is recommended that organisations delivering parent education programmes collaborate with schools to gain access to parent populations. Furthermore, parent education should be endorsed by government departments, namely the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education in South Africa. Further expansion and upscaling of programmes into areas not receiving services is also recommended.

5.4   PRACTITIONERS' EXPERIENCE OF DELIVERING PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES (OBJECTIVE 3)

To reach the third objective of the study, the experiences of practitioners regarding the delivery of parent education programmes were investigated. The profile of practitioners, their

experience and the training opportunities available to them are important themes for this objective. Recommendations are based on the conclusions related to these themes.

5.4.1 Profile of Practitioners

5.4.1.1   *Gender and Age*

The practitioners of parent education programmes varied in gender, although there is a tendency for female practitioners to become involved in parenting programmes more than males. Participants also varied in age groups and were all between 20 and 60 years old. Of the sample, practitioners were predominantly between 20 and 49 years old. Seven (28%) participants were in the 20-29 years age group, nine (36%) were in the 30-39 years age group, which is the most common age for practitioners of parent education programmes (Centre for Health Workforce Studies, 2006), eight (32%) were in the 40-49 years age group and only one (4%) was over 60 years old.

5.4.1.2   *Years of Experience*

All participants were practitioners who facilitate or have facilitated a parent education programme for early childhood development within the last two years for accredited and registered family-service organisations in the Cape Metropole area. The findings show that the number of years practitioners had been practitioners of programmes mostly tended to be fewer than 10 years. The conclusion can be drawn that the practitioners are generally new to the field of parenting education and/or that there is a high turnover rate of staff within NGOs or parent education programmes, which contributes to practitioners' limited years of experience in delivering such programmes. The importance of training, once again, emerges for new practitioners, whether they are professionals or paraprofessionals, to help them gain the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver such interventions with efficacy and success.

5.4.1.3 Qualifications

Participants who were practitioners (professional or paraprofessional) had varying levels of educational training and qualifications. It was determined that they gained the necessary qualifications from numerous sources. Further, it is evident that a common trend is to include group facilitation training with practitioners holding any qualification.

5.4.2 Training and Experience

Adequate training was often emphasised by the participants. While six (24%) of the participants mentioned that their organisations offered training as a once-off requirement, 15 (60%) were engaged in on-going training and the remaining four (16%) did not receive any training from their organisations. This raises the issue of support and professional development for practitioners as well as efficacy of the practitioner to deliver an effective intervention.

From these results, it can be noted that facilitator training has been neglected by organisations and, as a result, practitioners rely on personal experience more than training or expertise when providing parent education. Increased facilitator training is recommended to address this concern. This would address the lack of inclusion of theoretical frameworks into parent education programmes and increase the practitioners' ease of programme delivery.

From the findings, it can be concluded that parent education programmes require trained practitioners who have adequate knowledge about parenting (8 or 32%), although this alone is not enough, as evidence shows that personal characteristics play a significant role in the experience of practitioners as well. These characteristics are both learnt and intrinsically held by the practitioners. Characteristics such as flexibility and communication skills can be fostered and developed through facilitator training sessions. In these sessions, practitioners can receive feedback from colleagues regarding their facilitation manner and delivery of programme. Therefore, it is recommended that facilitator training includes both facilitation skills and characteristics development.

5.4.3 Facilitator Training Materials

Of all the resources mentioned by practitioners, manuals proved to be the most widely used resource (17 or 68%). The use of manuals emerged as an effective resource for practitioners as they are practical and provide a concrete outline of the programme curriculum. Practitioners indicated that they were confident in the resources they were provided with as part of their training. Facilitations felt that the resources assisted them in fulfilling their role as group facilitator ("*Yes, we get given manuals, flip charts and pens. Everything we need to facilitate well*"). Other resources were also noted, such as toys, digital resources and visual aids. It can be concluded that resources assist practitioners to confidently facilitate parent education programmes. This is because they feel equipped and supported as practitioners.

5.4.4 Challenges Faced by Practitioners

All participants mentioned that they experienced challenges when facilitating parent education programmes. These challenges were either practitioner related or parent related. Significant parent-related challenges impacting practitioners included problems such as unsupportive family members (2 or 8%), dominant group members (6 or 24%), unmotivated and resistant group members (9 or 36%), as well as high fall-out rates and poor attendance (8 or 32%). Dominant members and poor attendance seemed to be a recurring challenge for many participants. They reflected on the frustration they had with poor attendance and high dropout rates. These challenges are characteristic of group work intervention (Axford *et al.*, 2012:2063; Toseland & Rivas, 2009:76).

As most of the challenges practitioners highlighted were parent related, it could be concluded that the challenges experienced by practitioners could be related to the complexity of parenting and the challenges faced by parents. Dealing with the challenges related to parents could become an overwhelming task for practitioners.

Additionally, there is a link in the findings between the challenges experienced by practitioners and the practitioner's ability to facilitate a group effectively. Group member challenges raised by participants included unsupportive family members (2 or 8%), dominant group members (6 or 24%), unmotivated and resistant group members (9 or 36%), as well as high fall out rates and poor attendance (8 or 32%). Problems related to attendance were highlighted by most of the practitioners. From this, it can be concluded that maintaining group investment and motivation to attend is a priority for practitioners. Groups of parents require continuous group energy and consistency of group cohesion, which should be a skilfully planned component of any programme.

5.4.5 Practitioners' Expectations of the Future for Parent Education

All participants described their vision for the future of parent education programmes in South Africa. Most (22 or 88%) of the participants were optimistic and hopeful about the future of parent education programmes. Three (12%) participants had a pessimistic attitude and expressed their lack of hope regarding the effectiveness of parenting intervention. It can be concluded that although there is critique regarding the future of these programmes, most practitioners see the intervention as being positive and impactful for future generations.

Practitioners shared their belief that increased involvement with schools is the next development for parent education programmes. Ten (40%) participants expressed the need for the schools involvement in future parent education programmes. Considering the suggestions to incorporate parent education into school environments, it can be concluded that schools are potentially a future area for programme delivery.

Furthermore, practitioners' expectations for future developments in the field of parent education included the following: Five (20%) participants stated that programmes will be practical and skills based. Three (12%) participants felt that the inclusion of technology in programmes would be a potential development for programmes. Seven (28%) participants mentioned that the programmes should continue to be empowerment and support focused. It can be concluded that potential future trends will include innovative use of technology and a focus on empowerment as opposed to a focus on purely educational discussions.

5.4.6 Recommendations for Practice (Objective 3)

It is recommended that practitioners of parent education programmes hold a qualification which provides them with relevant parenting knowledge as well as practitioner skills to lead a group. Paraprofessionals should be equipped with a similar knowledge base through training and sufficient supervision. It is recommended that training material be developed by the organisation offering parent education to further qualify and equip their staff with this required parenting knowledge. In addition to this, in order to support practitioners' initiatives to lead parent education programmes, facilitation training at NGOs is recommended. These training sessions should include the provision of information, skills-based practice and observation of the "end result" of a programme. This would ensure that practitioners, either professional or paraprofessional are, delivering standardised programmes that are based on the organisations' visions and programme goals. Organisations should take responsibility for offering these training opportunities to their staff and practitioners.

The role of a facilitator may be only one aspect of a more demanding job description for many practitioners in the helping professions. Staff support and development is therefore recommended to ensure that practitioners experience job satisfaction and competency within their role in the organisation. It is recommended that practitioners receive continuous supervision to ensure that any challenges they experience are monitored and addressed.

In terms of characteristics, the following are recommended for practitioners and should be prioritised and fostered by them:

- Flexibility;
- The ability to engage with parents efficiently;
- Strong communication skills; and
- Empathy.

Engagement with parents is a new approach for enhancing group cohesion. Especially at the beginning of a programme the group facilitator plays a vital role in encouraging and motivating parents. To support this, it is recommended that organisations provide resources to practitioners that will ensure that programmes are dynamic and engaging for parents. With this in mind, it is recommended that practitioners be trained in motivational group techniques to encourage commitment from parents. This links closely to the maintenance strategy utilised by parents, as discussed previously. It is further recommended that facilitator manuals and parent manuals be developed and offered by the organisations to facilitate improved programme delivery. The facilitator manuals should include the programme content as well as group processing questions and group activities.

The roles of parents have been detailed in the South African context to recognise the importance of parenting knowledge and skills within a specific cultural environment. Future research and programme development is recommended towards the implementation of culturally relevant parent education programmes and curriculums. Additionally, practitioners should be supported with resources which are culturally relevant and user-friendly.

An innovative approach to parent education is the inclusion of technology in programme delivery. It is recommended that technology, such as web-based resources, multimedia, visual aids and mobile applications be incorporated into parent education programmes. The increased inclusion of technology into programme delivery, such as online programmes or videotaped sessions, is a future development of parent education programmes in South Africa. Technology could also be used as an effective platform for delivering facilitator training remotely to staff and practitioners through cellular technology and the Internet. The government should provide funding opportunities to improve the capacity of organisations to implement technology into their programmes.

5.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research is necessary into the field of parent education programmes. The lack of research about the facilitation of parent education programmes is a newly found gap in the fields of helping professions such as social work, psychology and nursing. The topic of parenting is an area that could be further researched in these fields, specifically in terms of parent education programmes. Future research into facilitator development is also endorsed by this study. Training material for facilitators would be beneficial to the field of parent education and should be investigated to ensure evidence-based practice is reflected in the material.

In terms of further research, the researcher recommends that the following topics are explored:

- Participatory research into community development projects which include parent education;
- The experiences of parents in parent education programmes;
- Parent education programmes which are facilitated by parents themselves;
- Parent education in South Africa, its method of delivery and its components;
- The programme content and training strategies for paraprofessionals in parent education;
- Monitoring and evaluation of parent education programmes in order to measure the efficacy and impact of existing programmes;
- Upscaling experiences and outcomes of organisations delivering parent education in South Africa;
- Culturally relevant parent education content for programmes in South Africa; and
- The use of technology to deliver parent education programmes in hard-to-reach areas.

5.6 SUMMARY

This study provides empirical evidence to describe the experiences of practitioners delivering parent education programmes. In Chapter 1 the concepts of parent education programmes and their role in early childhood development were explored within the South African context. Chapter 2 described the roles and responsibilities of parenting a child in the phase of early childhood. After that, parent education programmes were outlined and discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presented the empirical study and findings of the data collection and Chapter 5 presented conclusions and recommendations based on the empirical findings. The recommendations which resulted from this study can be used by organisations (specifically NGOs), practitioners, facilitators, programme developers and policy makers involved in parent education.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the experience of practitioners who deliver parent education programmes to parents of pre-school children in the Cape Metropole. This purpose has been reached and the study provides enhanced understanding of these experiences. This could assist organisations in planning and developing effective programmes based on the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore, as parent education is a field of relevance to practitioners of various helping professions, these findings are significant for those practitioners facilitating parent education programmes.

The main findings of this study related to the best practice methods for parent education and the need for practitioners to be adequately trained to deliver programmes which are engaging and relevant to the needs of parents.

The roles of parents have been detailed in the South African context to recognise the importance of parenting knowledge and skills within this specific cultural environment. It was observed that parent education programmes in South Africa function as an educational and supportive intervention strategy for the empowerment of parents. Such programmes provide a platform for parents to gain relevant knowledge through hands-on experiential learning opportunities. These opportunities for growth are highly beneficial to parents as well as their children.

In conclusion, parent education programmes have been identified as a significant contributor towards the social development of parents and, as such, our society in general. This

development serves as an asset towards the nation's growth and an investment into future generations of South Africa's children.

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ADDENDUM A

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Parent education programmes for early childhood development:
Practitioners' Reflections

To gain a better understanding of how practitioners in the Cape Metropole experience the facilitation of parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.

All the information recorded in this questionnaire will be regarded as confidential.

For the purposes of this study, the term "group" refers to a parent education programme delivered in a group context.

Interviewer: Jessica Baker
Date of interview: ....   Respondent Number: ....

Section A: Identifying details of respondent

1. Indicate your gender:

MALE	FEMALE

2. Indicate your age:

Less than 19 years	20 – 29 years	30 – 39 years	40 – 49 years	50 – 59 years	More than 60 years

3. What is your current occupation/position?

Occupation/Position	Mark with an X
Social Worker	
Psychologist	
Registered Counselor	
Speech Therapist	
Educator	
Nurse	
Paraprofessional; Trained facilitator	
Other:	

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4. Highest qualification related to occupation:

Short Course	
Diploma	
Degree	
Honours degree	
Masters degree	
Doctor's degree	
Other:	

Section B: Organisational profile

1. What is the main focus of your organization for service delivery to children and families?

    _____
    _____
    _____

2. Which of the following best describe your organisation:

Non-government organisation (NGO)	
Community based organisations (CBO)	
Faith based organisations (FBO)	
Governmental programme/service	
Private practice	

Section C: Involvement in Parent Education Programmes

1. How many years have you been facilitating parent education programmes?

	1-5 years	6-10 years	11- 15 years	16- 20 years	More than 20 years
Years of experience facilitating Parent education programmes					

2. What is the goal of your parent education programme?

    _____
    _____
    _____

3. How often do parent programmes take place at your organization?

    _____
    _____

4. What is the duration of each programme?

    _____

Section D: Target Population

1. Describe the profile of parents who participate in parent education programmes in your organisation?

_____
_____
_____

2. How do you recruit the parents to participate in the programme?

_____
_____
_____

3. What are the main challenges faced by parents with pre-school children?

_____
_____
_____

Section E: Parenting Skills for raising a pre-school child (4-6 years)

1. In your opinion, what responsibilities should parents fulfill in order to care for a pre-school?

_____
_____
_____

2. Which of the following skills do parents need to raise children in pre-school? (prioritize from 1-6)

Parenting Skills	Rating 1-6
Communication	
Building attachment with children	
Parental Self-efficacy (improving self-esteem)	
Positive discipline strategies	
Basics education knowledge	
Boundary setting	

3. Are there any other relevant skills which are not in the table above?

_____
_____

Section F: Delivery of Parenting Programmes

1. Which of the following methods of delivery do you use for parent education programmes at your organization? Mark with an "x"

Individually administered programmes	
Group programmes	
Community-based programmes	
Online- programmes (internet/cellphone)	
Other:	

2. Motivate the choice of your method:

_____
_____

Section G: Topics covered in a Programme

1. The following list contains topics that you are possibly including in the parenting programme that you provide to the parents.

(i) Please indicate which of these topics you cover when training these clients/parents.

(ii) If you include topics in your training that is not mentioned here, please list them underneath the table.

Mark with an "x"	Common topics for Parent Education Programmes	Reasons for inclusion in programme
	Child Development	
	Developmental phases of children (Erikson)	
	Social development	
	Moral development	
	Emotional development	
	Physical development	
	Role and Responsibilities of the Parent	
	Nurture and care	
	Socialization (cultural)	
	Protection (Safety and security)	
	Provision (i.e. basic needs)	
	Educational assistance	
	Parenting Styles	
	Parenting styles (Autocratic, democratic and authorative parenting)	
	Parenting Skills	
	Communication	
	Attachment	
	Parental Self-efficacy (improving self-esteem)	
	Discipline strategies	

Other topics:

_____

_____

Section H: Teaching Methods
1. Which of the following teaching methods do you use when facilitating parenting programmes? (More than one answer may be provided)

Teaching Method and description	Mark with An "x"
Visual and learning Aids: Posters, pictures, videos, art work,	
Group discussion: verbal communication amongst members	
Role-play: reality is simulated to enable group members to practice and model a skill,	
Story-telling: Shared experiences allow group members to relate to each other and process past experiences.	
Games and play: play activities, board games, crafts and puppets	
Movement exercises: Active exercises utilizing body movement and space	
Written exercises: using materials (pen and paper)	
Homework: Tasks to complete at home	
Internet and technology: Multi-media, projectors, online and self-directed platforms such websites	
Other:	

2. Which of the methods mentioned above do you find to be most effective?
_____
_____

Section I: Theory used in Programme

1. Which of the following theories are applicable for parenting education programmes? (More than one answer may be provided)

Social Learning Theory	
Cognitive Behavioural Theory	
Systems Theory	
Attachment Theory	
Experiential Learning Theory	
Other:	
None	

Section J: Practitioners of Parenting Education Programmes

1. What are the requirements for practitioners to facilitate a parent education programme at your organisation?
_____
_____

2. How often does facilitator training takes place for practitioners?
_____
_____

3. What resources (if any) do you use for facilitating groups?

_____

_____

4. Please indicate with an (X) which characteristics you think a facilitator (s) should have.
You may give more than one answer.

Facilitator Characteristic	
Warmth	
Genuineness	
Flexibility	
Humour	
Empathy	
Communication skills	
Knowledge of group work process and dynamics	
Engagement with parents	

5. Which other qualities can you think of?

_____

_____

6. What are the main challenges to facilitating parent education programmes?

_____

_____

Section K: Outcomes of Parenting Education Programmes

1. In what ways do you empower parents to maintain their skills and knowledge after the programmes have been completed? Please explain.

_____

_____

2. How do parent education programmes contribute towards the development of children in the phase of early childhood (4-6 years old)?

_____

_____

3. What do you see as the future of parent education programmes in South Africa?

_____

_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and interview. Your contribution is appreciated and will make a valuable contribution toward this study, as well as future parent education programmes delivered to parents.
Ms. J. Baker

ADDENDUM B

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Parent education programmes for early childhood development:
Practitioners' Reflections

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jessica Baker (BSW, NMMU) from the Department of Social Work at Stellenbosch University. The results of the research will contribute to the fulfillment of a Masters Research Thesis.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you possess the following criteria for inclusion;

- A practitioner [professional or paraprofessional; social worker, nurse, educator, psychologist or speech therapist];
- a practitioner who works for a family-service organisation (registered NPO);
- a practitioner who currently facilitates or have facilitated a parent education programme for early childhood development within the last 2 years;
- a practitioner who provides services in the Cape Metropole area;
- a practitioner who is proficient in English.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of how practitioners in the Cape Metropole experience the facilitation of parent education programmes aimed towards early childhood development by utilising social learning and cognitive behavioural approaches.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

To participate in an individual interview with the investigator at the organization (NPO) at which you as the participant is employed. The interview guide containing the interview questions will be made available to the participant. The duration of the interview will be 1 hour.

Due to the requirements of the study this interview will be recorded with a voice recorder.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is no physical threat by volunteering to participate in this study. The participants will be responding to the interview questions in a professional capacity, therefore here is limited risk for highly emotional memories or harmful emotional discomfort. All experiences shared during the interview will be gathered with respect for the participants worth and dignity. The researcher will strive to remain as subjective as possible during the data collection.

4.   POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The participant could gain professional insight and reflection into the contribution of parent education programmes towards their client base during the interview. Findings and feedback can be made available to the participants and associated organizations upon request should they require this information.

The study is significant to society as it aims to contribute towards social research in the field of parenting and family social work. The findings and recommendation made as a result from this study is significant to parents and families in South Africa because it details the contribution of early intervention for parents of children in an important developmental phase of childhood.

5.   PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The involvement in this study comes without remuneration as the participant will not receive any payment.

6.   CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of removal of identifying details for disclosure purposes. The data collected during the interview will be safeguarded in a research file. The data will remain in a secure file and will only be used by the investigator and research supervisor.

The interview recording and identifying details will not appear anywhere in the research report. The participant has the right to request to view the recordings. Permission to provide access to anyone besides the investigator and research supervisor will be obtained from the participants should the education purpose arise.

7.   PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8.   IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact;
    Principal Investigator: Jessica Baker   (0741188554)
                                               jessicabaker3@gmail.com
    Research Supervisor: Professor S. Green (021 808-2070)
                                               sgreen@sun.ac.za

9.   RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Jessica Baker in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Participant

_____

Name of Organisation

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of the participant]. He/ She was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

ADDENDUM C

APPROVAL LETTERS FROM RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE: HUMAN RESEARCH (HUMANITIES)

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot · your knowledge partner

Approval Notice
New Application

27-Jun-2013
Baker, Jessica J

Proposal #: DESC_Baker 2013
Title: **Practitioner's reflections on the contribution of parent education programmes to early childhood development**

Dear Ms Jessica Baker,

Your DESC approved **New Application** received on **27-Jun-2013**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **27-Jun-2013** and was approved.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **27-Jun-2013 -26-Jun-2014**

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (**DESC_Baker 2013**) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218839027.

Sincerely,

Susara Oberholzer
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

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