

# **Preschool teachers' perspectives of the teacher-child relationship within the context of a diverse classroom**

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## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

Research has shown that a positive teacher-child relationship in early childhood have an influence on future academic performance (Madil, Gest, & Rodkin, 2014), success (Pianta & Struhman, 2004) as well as behavioural development in later life (Runions, et al., 2014). Teachers are responsible for the holistic development of the children in their classroom, including not only cognitive development but also social and emotional development. Bronfenbrenner model for human development explains that children live in a holistic system and development does not take place in isolation (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). Different systems have an influence on the child and development. For development to take place there needs to be person-environment interactions. These interactions are described as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The teacher-child relationship is seen as a proximal process.

A positive teacher-child relationship provides emotional security to a child (Howes & Hamilton, 1993) and teachers need to ensure that their classrooms are emotionally supportive. Preschool children spend at least five hours a day interacting with their teachers. These interactions are important for the children's holistic development. Although teachers are aware of the impact they have on academic development they are often not aware of the importance of a positive teacher-child relationship.

The quality and consistency of early relationships and interactions are essential for early attachment and emotional well-being (Whitebread, 2012). Children learn to be independent and strong through building positive relationships (UK Department for Education, 2017). The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004) was developed to observe the quality of the interactions between the teacher and children in the classroom. This system was used during this research to observe the interactions between the teacher and children in the classroom.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom is one of diversity and in South Africa this reflects the multi-cultural nature of the country. Teachers need to be able to support all the diverse needs of the children in their class. Diverse learning needs are prevalent in all classrooms all over the world. Diversity in a classroom includes language, culture, race, religion as well as diverse learning needs. It is important that teachers are able to support the diverse learning needs children experience to ensure effective learning and development. The question then arise whether the teacher-child relationship changes when children experience diverse learning needs.

This study aimed to understand preschool teachers experiences of the teacher-child relationship in diverse classroom setting. The study was based on qualitative research methodology and an instrumental case study design was chosen in order to give the researcher insights into the teacher-child relationship in diverse classrooms. An interpretive paradigm was chosen to ensure that the researcher could interpret and explore the different perspectives of the participants. This research study showed that these preschool teachers where very aware of the importance of building a relationship with all the children in the classroom and embracing their diversities. Although teachers made a big effort to form relationships with all the children it became clear that where children had behavioural and emotional needs, teacher struggled to form positive relationships.

## OPSOMMING

Navorsing toon daarop dat 'n positiewe onderwyser-kind verhouding in die vroeë ontwikkelingsjare 'n groot invloed het op kinders se akademiese prestasie (Madil, Gest, & Rodkin, 2014), skolastiese sukses (Pianta & Struhlman, 2004) en gedragsontwikkeling in die toekoms (Runions, et al., 2014). Onderwysers is verantwoordelik vir die holistiese ontwikkeling van al die kinders in hulle klaskamer. Dit sluit in kognitiewe ontwikkeling sowel as emosionele- en sosiale ontwikkeling. Bronfenbrenner se model vir menslike ontwikkeling verduidelik dat kinders deel vorm van holistiese sisteme en dat ontwikkeling nie afsonderlik plaasvind nie (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). Verskillende sisteme het 'n invloed op die kind se ontwikkeling. Vir ontwikkeling om effektief plaas te vind moet daar persoon-omgewing interaksie plaasvind. Hierdie soort interaksies word beskryf as proksimale prosesse (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

'n Positiewe onderwyser-kind verhouding bied emosionele sekuriteit vir die kind (Howes & Hamilton, 1993) en onderwysers moet verseker dat klaskamesr emosioneel ondersteunend is. Onderwysers is gewoonlik bewus van die impak wat hulle op kinders se akademiese ontwikkeling het, maar is ongelukkig nie altyd bewus van die belangrikheid van 'n positiewe onderwyser-kind verhouding nie.

Die kwaliteit en konsekwentheid van vroeë verhoudings en interaksies is belangrik vir vroeë emosionele welstand (Whitebread, 2012). Kinders leer om onafhanklik te wees deur sterk, positiewe verhoudings te vorm (UK Department for Education, 2017). Die "Classroom Assessment Scoring System" (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004) is ontwikkel om die kwaliteit van onderwyser-kind interaksie te observeer en is in hierdie studie gebruik om interaksies tussen die onderwyser en kind waar te neem.

Die 21ste eeu klaskamer is een wat die diversiteit van die land weerspieël. Onderwysers moet oor die vermoë beskik om alle diverse behoeftes in hulle klaskamers te ondersteun, sodat effektiewe leer kan plaasvind. Diverse leerbehoefte kom in alle

klaskamers reg oor die wêreld voor. Diversiteit in klaskamers kan insluit; taal-, kultuur-, ras- en geloofsverskille sowel as verskillende leerbehoefte. Die vraag ontstaan dan of die onderwyser-kind verhouding verander, of anders lyk, as leerders diverse leerbehoefte het.

Hierdie navorsingstudie het beoog om voorskoolse onderwysers se ervaringe van die onderwyser-kind verhouding in 'n diverse klaskamer te verstaan. Alhoewel die onderwysers in hierdie studie baie bewus was van individuele leerders se behoeftes en baie klem geplaas het op die uniekheid van kinders, het dit duidelik geword dat die onderwyser-kind verhouding met kinders wat gedragsprobleme het 'n groot uitdaging is vir onderwysers.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study .....	1
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Background to the study .....	2
1.3 Problem statement .....	5
1.4 Aim and purpose .....	6
1.5 Research questions .....	7
1.6 Research paradigm.....	7
1.7 Research methodology .....	8
1.7.1 Research design .....	8
1.7.2 Population and sampling.....	9
1.7.3 Data collection .....	9
1.7.4 Data analysis .....	10
1.8 Ethical considerations .....	10
1.9 Definition of key terms.....	11
1.9.1 Teacher-child relationship .....	11
1.9.2 Diverse learning needs.....	12
1.9.3 Inclusive education .....	12
1.9.4 Barriers to learning .....	12
1.9.5 Preschool teachers.....	12
1.10 Outline of the study .....	12
Chapter 2: Literature review and conceptual framework .....	14
2.1 Introduction .....	14
2.2 Inclusive education.....	14
2.2.1 International trends in inclusive education .....	14
2.2.2 What does inclusive education mean in South Africa? .....	17
2.2.3 Inclusive education in early childhood classrooms.....	19
2.3 Diverse learning needs .....	19
What is diversity and a diverse classroom setting? .....	19
Possible diverse learning needs .....	20
Embracing diverse learning needs .....	22
2.4 Barriers to learning.....	23



2.5	Understanding barriers to learning, diverse learning needs and the teacher-child relationship by looking at a human development model .....	24
2.6	Early Childhood Development and intervention .....	27
	Social and emotional development of the four- to five-year-old .....	30
	Social and emotional development of the six-year-old (Grade R).....	32
2.7	The teacher-child relationship .....	34
	Defining the teacher-child relationship .....	34
	A positive teacher-child relationship.....	36
	Assessing the teacher-child relationship .....	36
2.8	Factors influencing the teacher-child-relationship based on the conceptual framework of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System.....	38
	Emotional support.....	39
	Classroom organisation .....	40
	Instructional support .....	41
	Teacher characteristics.....	42
2.9	Conceptual framework .....	43
2.10	Conclusion .....	45
	Chapter 3: Research design and methodology .....	47
3.1	Introduction .....	47
3.2	Research paradigm.....	47
3.3	Research design .....	49
3.4	Research methodology .....	51
	Context of the research.....	53
3.5	Research methods .....	53
3.5.1	Selection of participants.....	54
3.5.2	Methods of collection and analysis .....	56
	Procedures.....	56
	Data collection.....	57
	Data analysis.....	59
	Data verification .....	62
3.6	Ethical considerations .....	64

Permission and participant consent .....	65
Anonymity and confidentiality .....	65
Trust and respect .....	66
3.7 Conclusion .....	66
Chapter 4: Research findings and integrated discussion .....	67
4.1 Introduction .....	67
4.2 Findings .....	67
4.3 Discussion of findings .....	68
4.3.1 Personal attributes .....	68
Personal influences, experiences, compassion, altruism, creativity and innovation	69
Teaching qualities .....	73
4.3.2 Roles and responsibilities .....	74
Observing and supporting learners .....	74
Social and emotional development .....	75
4.3.3 Classroom management.....	76
Classroom atmosphere .....	77
Planning, structure and adaptations according to individual needs.....	79
Time management .....	80
4.3.4 Interaction and communication .....	81
Techniques used in the diverse classroom setting.....	81
Challenges and strategies.....	84
4.3.5 Knowing the child as an individual .....	86
Acknowledging differences .....	87
Adapting instructional formats .....	88
Information needed to support learners experiencing diverse learning needs .....	89
Differentiation and adaptations to support all learners .....	91
4.3.6 Relationships.....	93
Relationship with role-players .....	93
Relationship with the children in the classroom .....	94
4.4 Strengths of the research.....	98

4.5 Possible limitations of the study .....	99
4.6 Recommendations and further research possibilities .....	99
4.7 Conclusion .....	100
References .....	102
Addenda A: Ethical approval.....	110
Addenda B: Participant information sheet and consent form .....	113
Addendum C: Interview and observation guides.....	121
Addendum D: Examples of coded transcriptions .....	125

## **LIST OF ADDENDA**

**Addenda A:** Ethical approval

**Addenda B:** Participant information sheet and consent form

**Addenda C:** Interview and observation guide

**Addenda D:** Example of coded transcriptions

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Outline of study .....	13
Table 2.1: Development according to 3 prime areas of development.....	29
Table 2.2 Conceptual framework derived from the CLASS.....	45
Table 3.1: Participant information .....	55
Table 4.1: Summary of themes and sub-themes .....	67

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

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## 1.1 Introduction

The impact of teacher-child relationships on child development has been widely researched. Although research has focused on a variety of skills and perceptions such as readiness skills in preschool children (Hatfield, Burchinal, Pianta, & Sideris, 2016), students' perceptions of relatedness (Madil, Gest, & Rodkin, 2014) and behaviour problems (Zhang & Sun, 2011), less research has been done on the teacher-child relationship when working with children who experience diverse learning needs.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century all classrooms are diverse (Green & Moodley, 2018) and diverse learning needs are prevalent in all classrooms (Huss-Keeler & Brown, 2007). Children are different in a variety of ways. These can be differences with regard to race, religion, culture and beliefs (Liu & Ball, 2019), but they are also diverse with regard to their personalities, likes, dislike, strengths and abilities (Teaching for All, 2019); (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Children act differently to learning processes and support (Banks, Sapp, & Obiakor, 2014) because they are all different. The Department of Basic Education (2011) states that these diversities make the child who he is.

Teachers must not only be aware of these differences but embrace them in planning and presenting of lessons. Children's uniqueness must be celebrated instead of being seen as a challenge or an obstacle that must be overcome.

Recently, more focus has been placed on early child development, as there seem to be a growing number of children who do not cope in primary schools. The teacher plays an important role to ensure that, from a young age, children develop holistically, i.e. emotionally, socially, cognitively and physically (De Witt, 2009).

A positive teacher-child relationship plays an important role in teaching, providing emotional security (Howes & Hamilton, 1993) and building relationships. Since the 1990s, research has shown that the teacher-child relationship plays an important contributing role to school adaptation and success (Pianta & Struhlman, 2004). There are also certain domains specified in the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, developed by Pianta, (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004) that teachers can keep in mind to ensure that an emotionally supportive class environment is set (Hatfield, Burchinal, Pianta, & Sideris, 2016).

The proposed study will focus on the preschool teacher in order to explore the teacher-child relationship when working with learners who experience diverse learning needs. The CLASS, along with the bio ecological model for development will be used as a framework for this research.

The proposed study can potentially shed light on factors that contribute to a positive teacher-child relationship, as well as some of the challenges that teachers face with regard to a poor teacher-child relationship. The study could provide insight into what it takes to build a positive teacher-child relationship when working with children who experience diverse learning needs. All classrooms in South Africa are diverse because all children are diverse. It is important to accept these differences and build relationships with all children in the classroom. Understanding the teacher-child relationship within diverse classrooms might support teachers wanting to build positive relationships but struggle because of the diverse nature of classrooms.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

Teaching has long since been seen as an interactive and interpersonal process (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). It can therefore be said that the interactions between teacher and child form the most basic steppingstones and affect children's development. Preschool teachers play an important role in children's development. They share many of the

same functions with primary caregivers. Early educational experiences have a lasting effect on children's behavioural development, social development and academic performance (Zhang & Sun, 2011).

Research done within early childhood education found that in classrooms with high quality teacher-child relationships (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004), children tend to show a higher rate of school readiness when tested. Teachers who are in high-quality relationships with the children in the classroom tend to support learning better because they assess each child's instructional needs and they offer individualised support at each child's level (Gallagher & Mayer, 2008).

In South Africa, focus has often been placed on early childhood education and intervention, with the Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996) stating that the child's best interest should always be the top priority. This includes each child's right to basic education (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The South African government has put a strategic plan in place along with reports, policies, laws and programmes to assure that early childhood development gets enough recognition (Harty & Alant, 2016). These policies include the White Paper on Disability which was adopted in 1997. This policy states that from a very young age, children might need support and that it is the duty of teachers (and other caretakers) to make sure that each child receives the support they need.

The importance to identify and intervene early behavioural and learning problems has been researched greatly (Leug, Leung, Leung, & Karnilowicz, 2019). Early intervention is needed to ensure that children receive the education they deserve. To intervene means that teacher address both developmental risks and minimise the impact that an impairment might have on a child (Harty & Alant, 2016). Many teachers know that they play an important role



in children's development, but according to Gallagher and Mayer (2008) they underestimate the value of their own relationship with the child towards development and learning.

Preschool children in South Africa spend at least five hours a day with one teacher and the teacher not only teaches, but also provides emotional and developmental support, nurtures and interacts with each child. Consequently, most children form strong attachments with their preschool teachers (Howes & Hamilton, 1993). According to Zhang and Sun (2011) the teacher-child relationship can be influenced by both the teacher or the child's character and the quality of the relationship can be linked to the emotional connection between the teacher and the child.

The teacher-child relationship is described by Pianta (1999) in (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004) as being a "regulatory system that contributes to children's social and academic competencies in school". According to Madil *et al.* (2014), there is compelling evidence regarding the importance of a warm teacher-child relationship. Children's perceptions of their classroom relationship seem to have an effect on their academic performance (Madil, Gest, & Rodkin, 2014), as well as behavioural development in later life (Runions, et al., 2014).

The teacher-child relationship does not develop in isolation (Gallagher & Mayer, 2008). Bronfenbrenner's ecological model for development can be used to explain the various inputs that have an influence on the development of the teacher-child relationship. Bronfenbrenner developed a multidimensional and contextual model for human development. According to this model, proximal processes are certain types of interactions that take place between the different environments and individuals (Swart & Pettipher, 2019).

The teacher-child relationship can be quantitatively measured by using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) developed by Pianta, La Paro and Hamre in 2008 (Ying Hu, Fan, LoCasale-Crouch, & Yang, 2016). The CLASS is a framework for observations

that is used when observing teacher-child relationships (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). The CLASS is divided into three domains: emotional support, classroom organisation and instructional support (Hatfield, Burchinal, Pianta, & Sideris, 2016).

As the proposed study will analyse teachers' perspectives on teacher-child relationships when learners experience diverse learning needs, some of the guidelines from the CLASS will be used to conduct interviews with teachers.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

Children who experience diverse learning needs, such as diverse languages, tend to struggle to communicate. According to Gallagher and Mayer (2008), they struggle to build a strong teacher-child relationship. This is partly why it is important to evaluate how early education can be enhanced to support each child to achieve their full potential (Harty & Alant, 2016).

Teachers need to know how to promote positive teacher-child relationships. Teachers also need to be experts in their field and be self-reflective (Howes & Hamilton, 1993). This means that they should be aware of the impact they have on children and know how they can accommodate and embrace the individuality of children to support their diverse needs.

Teachers need to be aware of the important role they play and how their actions both inside the classroom, as well as outside on the playground, can affect the child's emotional development, future academic performance and behaviour. More research is needed to gain further insight into teachers' perspectives on the teacher-child relationship when learners experience barriers to learning.

The proposed study will explore the perspectives of teachers regarding the teacher-child relationship within a diverse classroom setting.

Previous research has often analysed children's experiences of the teacher-child relationship. In contrast, the proposed study will focus on the teacher's perspective as they talk about their experiences of the teacher-child relationship when working with learners experiencing a variety of diverse learning needs.

## 1.4 Aim and purpose

The aim of the proposed study is to analyse the teacher-child relationship in the early educational years when learners experience diverse learning needs.

The purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of teachers regarding the teacher-child relationship, especially with regard to the learners with diverse learning needs. This will allow us to see how relationships differ from classroom to classroom, as well as which factors may influence teacher-child relationships.

The proposed study could provide information for teacher training and development, to assist teachers working with children experiencing diverse learning needs and to gain a better understanding of the relationship between teachers and children in diverse classroom settings.

The unit of analysis in this study will be the relationship between the teacher and child, with the focus being on the teacher. How the teacher responds, communicates and interacts with children will be observed.

The **objectives** of the proposed study are:

- To describe teachers' perspectives of the teacher-child relationship when young learners experience diverse learning needs in depth;
- To gain a better understanding about how the teacher-child relationship unfolds in the preschool classroom; and
- To understand teachers' experiences of the teacher-child relationship.

## 1.5 Research questions

The main research question of the proposed study is:

- What are teachers' perspectives of the teacher-child relationship when learners experience diverse learning needs?

Sub-questions are:

- How would teachers describe the teacher-child relationship they experience with the children in their class?
- To what extent, if any, do diverse learning needs play a role in the relationship teachers have with children?
- What are the challenges teachers experience when building a relationship with learners who experience diverse learning needs?
- Which factors enhance teacher-child relationships with children who experience diverse learning needs?

## 1.6 Research paradigm

According to Terre Blanche and Durheim (2002), qualitative research involves an in-depth inquiry about a specific phenomenon. The qualitative researcher offers the reader a rich description of a specific phenomenon and answers questions such as “What?”, “How?” and “Why?” within the context of the individual’s everyday life and their unique interpretations (Draper, 2004). According to Engelbrecht (2016), reality is socially constructed and contextualised, which means that realities differ from person to person and that context plays a big part in how we perceive those realities. It is important to be aware of these different contexts and realities so that different perspectives and convictions of individuals are considered.

Realities stem from individuals' personal experiences and how they perceive the outside world. Thus, observations and interviews will rely on descriptions of the inner experiences of individuals to explain the reasons for actions.

This research will be conducted using an inductive research strategy (Merriam, 1998), which means that no theory will be tested. Instead, the researcher will use the data gathered to explain phenomena.

## **1.7 Research methodology**

### **1.7.1 Research design**

The researcher has chosen a qualitative instrumental case study design. The case study design will be used to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of teachers with regard to the teacher-child relationship. By using a case study design, a rich descriptive study can be conducted. Case study design is suited for this research goal, as it is used to gain in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon, in this case different teachers' perspectives on the teacher-child relationship when learners experience diverse learning needs. Typical to case study research, the emphasis will be on discovery, the process and context (Merriam, 1998).

Hancock and Algozzine (2006) state that instrumental case study research design is used when the researcher wants to have a better understanding of a particular issue. The primary goal is usually to broaden our understanding of the processes and circumstances surrounding the specific phenomenon (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

According to Yin (1984), a case study is an inquiry that seeks to understand the phenomenon in its real-life context, therefore the study will be conducted in the phenomenon's natural surroundings. Different data sources will be used (Swanborn, 1990) to ensure that all relevant information is gathered.

### 1.7.2 Population and sampling

The proposed study will focus on the perspectives of preschool teachers (teaching children aged four to seven). Five participants will be invited to participate in this study. These five participants will be purposefully selected as information-rich cases to ensure an in-depth study. The sample size is relatively small, but given the limited scope of the study, the researcher has chosen to make use of the teachers at the school where she teaches.

There are 9 teachers at the school and only those teaching the 4 to 5 year and 5 to 6-year group was selected. The researcher is a Grade R teacher at the school with no authoritative power over the other teachers, she is merely a colleague. Three of the five participant were new teachers at this specific school.

As the study aims to explore the teacher-child relationship with regards to the child experiencing diverse learning needs, the participants should currently be teaching in a diverse classroom setting. As stated previously all classroom are diverse and all children at some point in time experience diverse learning needs. Participants should teach children aged four to six in a preschool setting. Participants will also be selected based on their location to simplify the process of gathering data.

### 1.7.3 Data collection

Data for this study will be collected by means of **semi-structured interviews** and **observations**. The interviews will take place in the second term of the 2019 school year. By this time, most teacher-child relationships would have started to form. Therefore, teachers participating will be able to give a clear view of their perceptions of their relationships with learners who experience diverse learning needs. All interviews will be conducted in Afrikaans and transcribed by the researcher.

Participants will be observed for a single session of one hour, which will allow the researcher to gain a better understanding of each case. The researcher proposes to use an observation sheet during observations.

#### 1.7.4 Data analysis

Data will be reduced by coding all interview transcriptions and observation field notes. Research will be conducted as a reflective and ongoing process; the coding process will take place over the course of the research.

All interviews will be transcribed verbatim with the necessary permission by participants. Field notes will be taken during observations. The researcher then analysed data into themes in order to see clear patterns.

For the research to be dependable, the research presentation will contain a certain amount of transcribed raw data. All findings will be checked by the participants, ethical dilemmas will be described and data will be collected until it has reached a saturation point.

All interview transcriptions and observational field notes will be kept as password protected files on the researcher's personal laptop. The participant and all informants will be provided with pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy.

## 1.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are most often associated with the relationship of the researcher to the participants in the study (Preissle, 2012), but ethics in research should play an integrated part in all decision-making processes throughout the research process (Edwards & Mauthner, 2011).

Conducting research in an ethical manner means that the researcher must concern herself with the moral deliberation, choices and accountability throughout the research process (Edwards & Mauthner, 2011). When conducting the proposed research, the

researcher will take a personal stance, meaning that she will take responsibility for decisions made and minimising harm (Josselson, 2007). The researcher will act in an honest and open manner (Preissle, 2012) and will clearly set out the limitations of the study.

Participants are autonomous decision makers and their refusal to participate will be respected. Participants will be informed of the expectations of the study and the researcher's role.

The researcher has personal relationships with most of the participants. Therefore, care must be taken to ensure that the research is reflective and remains cognisant of how the relationship will influence the research. Having already built a relationship with the teachers can also be seen as an advantage as it allows for more honest and open interviews and observations.

Although the researcher does not expect that the interviews will elicit negative emotions, if there is an unexpected response, she will consult with the supervisor and a school psychologist.

## **1.9 Definition of key terms**

### **1.9.1 Teacher-child relationship**

The teacher-child relationship (TCR) has been widely researched and is seen as an important part of academic success (Thijs, Koomen, & van der Leij, 2008). Researchers define and conceptualise the concept differently (Giles, 2008). According to Thijs and Koomen (2009), the TCR can be viewed as a micro system with a unique and important impact on children's' development. Camp (2009, p. 1) defines the TCR as a "formalised interpersonal association between an authority figure and a subordinate who interacts on a daily basis".



A variety of intertwined aspects have an impact on the development of children and make part of the TCR. Both the teacher and child's communication and interaction strategies come into play (Thijs & Koomen, 2009).

#### 1.9.2 Diverse learning needs

Diverse learning needs encompasses all things that make children unique. All children experience diverse learning needs and these can be because of race, religion, culture, personality, abilities (Department of Basic Education, 2011) and more. Children's diverse learning needs might have an influence on their ability to understand and learn in the classroom (Teaching for All, 2019). All classrooms are diverse, and all children at one point in their life have specific diverse learning needs (Teaching for All, 2019).

#### 1.9.3 Inclusive education

Inclusive education is described as educational system that identifies, embraces and accommodates the diverse learning needs that children have.

#### 1.9.4 Barriers to learning

The term "barriers to learning" can be defined as any factor that prevents adequate learning for a child. Barriers to learning may arise from complex factors. These factors cover a variety of areas, including an inflexible curriculum, socioeconomic factors, barriers stemming from impairments, the language of teaching, or lack of parental involvement (Swart & Pettipher, 2016).

#### 1.9.5 Preschool teachers

In the context of this research, preschool teachers work with either the four- to five-year-old group (Grade 0) or the five- to seven-year-old group (Grade R).

### **1.10 Outline of the study**

The layout of this study is outlined in Table 1 (Maree, 2007).

**Table 1.1 Outline of study**

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	Overview of the study; research problem; research questions; purpose; concept definitions
<b>Chapter 2: Literature review and conceptual framework</b>	Exploration of the literature on the research topic; conceptual framework for the study
<b>Chapter 3: Research methodology</b>	The research process followed, including details on the research design and methodology
<b>Chapter 4: Research results and integrated findings</b>	Presentation of data; analysis and discussion on the results and the findings; discussion of research findings in relation to relevant literature

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## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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### 2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study on pre-school teachers' perspectives of the teacher-child relationship (TCR) when learners experience diverse learning needs. As the literature review forms an essential component of this study (Mouton, 2001), this literature review aims to explore previous and current literature about the teacher-child relationship with preschool children who experience barriers to learning. This will show the reader where the current study is in the context of what has been done before (Wellington, 2015).

To do this, the concepts of inclusive education, and to some extent barriers to learning, diverse learning needs and teacher-child relationship will be defined. The researcher will further describe the use of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model for human development to show the link between proximal processes and the teacher-child relationship. Developmental stages of children aged four to six will be explained to understand the child in this age group. Factors influencing teacher-child relationships will be analysed based on the conceptual framework of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008).

### 2.2 Inclusive education

#### 2.2.1 International trends in inclusive education

The world around us is ever-changing and the education system is not untouched by those changes. Schools are not isolated structures (Swart & Pettipher, 2019) and they form part of the society. When changes in societal or political discourses are prevalent, educational systems are affected. Teachers, parents and children form part of the structure of the community. They believe in certain aspects and their values and norms determine the choices they make.

The needs of societies all over the world has changed drastically with communities becoming more diverse. These changes are also noticeable in classrooms, as classrooms all over the world are becoming more diverse (Liasidou, 2012). The 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom is characterised by diversity (Teaching for All, 2019). Schools were confronted with the fact that traditional and conventional classrooms (Swart & Pettipher, 2019) are no longer providing education that addresses the diverse learners. Schools had to start supporting equal learning opportunities for all children by being grounded in “democratic principles” (Swart & Pettipher, 2019, p. 4).

Before the 1970s, educational systems followed the medical model (Liasidou, 2012) and this model was used to diagnose and treat children with special needs (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). This meant that barriers to learning were seen as something within the child, something that needed to be fixed (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Diagnoses were also used to label children into different groups and using these labels to place (Selmi, Gallagher, & Mora-Flores, 2015) the children in completely different classrooms or schools (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Learners were taught by specialists and the ultimate aim was to remove the “inadequacies from within the child” (Swart & Pettipher, 2019, p. 6).

In the late 1990s a more constructivist philosophy impacted educational models; at this time the medical model came under scrutiny. A change called for more social and ecological theories (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). The aim of the social model of disabilities was to “disable the social barrier” (Liasidou, 2012, p. 5). This shift meant not seeking out the special learners and trying to make provisions for their needs, but rather embracing diversity (Nel, 2013) and eliminating those aspects within society that hinder the participation of all learners (Swart & Pettipher, 2019).

Within this movement, terms like mainstreaming and integration were used (Liasidou, 2012). **Mainstreaming** meant bringing all the children back into the mainstream classroom from where they were previously segregated (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). One of the critiques

against mainstreaming was that, although it seemed that all children were welcome, they needed to prove that they were ready to fit into the school system. This meant that a lot of children experiencing barriers to learning still enrolled at specialised schools and only visited mainstream schools (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). It became clear that mainstreaming was perhaps still part of the medical model, as the child's barrier was still seen as within the child and the system did not attempt to change to accommodate the child's needs.

While mainstreaming was still used in the medical model, **integration** followed a more social and political route (Liasidou, 2012). Integration stood for giving all learners equal opportunities and membership in their communities (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). It was a step-up from mainstreaming, but it was still expected of learners to fit into certain boxes with little to no change in the educational system (Liasidou, 2012).

The educational ideal is to accommodate diversity to the fullest (Nel, 2013) and **inclusion** is a big part of this ideal (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). According to Liasidou (2012) integration and inclusion may, at times, be used side by side, yet they are two completely different concepts. Inclusive education has over the past decade been used in nearly all educational policies and documents. Definitions of the term, as well as the construct of concepts within inclusive education, have come to mean different things to different people (Swart & Pettipher, 2016).

Swart and Pettipher (2019, p.9) describe inclusion as a “reconceptualization of values and beliefs that welcomes and celebrates diversity and not only a set of practises”. This means that inclusivity comes from the heart and not just by following a set of guidelines from policy documents. The Teaching For All series states that teachers need to believe that all children can learn, are worth educating and that they have the capacity to make a difference (Teaching for All, 2019). It is important that not only does the education system need to change, but people need to re-evaluate the status quo (Liasidou, 2012). All community members should be respected, accommodated and valued for the uniqueness they bring to

the community (Nel, 2013). These differences should be celebrated (Swart & Pettipher, 2019).

In inclusive educational settings, words such as normal, normalisation (Liasidou, 2012), special needs and disabilities (Swart & Pettipher, 2019) are not used. The focus is on supporting and embracing individual differences (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Nel (2013, p.5) states that “inclusive education systems should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions”.

At the world conference on special needs education in Salamanca, Spain, inclusive education was one of the key talking points. It was important to review the policy changes that would support inclusive educational settings (UNESCO, 1994). In the Salamanca statement it is made clear that all children have the right to education and they need to have the opportunity to achieve learning. They also noted that all children have unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs and that the education system should be developed and implemented in such a manner that the diversity of all learners are taken into account (UNESCO, 1994). Within an inclusive educational setting, it is not the child’s responsibility to fit into the school, but rather the school’s responsibility to accommodate, accept and support the diverse learning needs children have (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). The value of all children should be a priority (Liasidou, 2012).

### 2.2.2 What does inclusive education mean in South Africa?

South Africa followed the trends of international educational systems, but the country’s political and philosophical history was a distinguishing factor in the way that specialised education was structured (Swart & Pettipher, 2016) .

When the country moved away from segregation to a democracy, a lot of transformation took place. The White paper on Education and Training (1995) created a framework for education. Documents such as Quality Education for All (1997) and White Paper 6 (2001) soon followed, giving more structure to how the ideals of inclusive education

can be reached. White paper 6 (2001) marked a new movement towards inclusive education and stipulated South Africa's plan to ensure that all children receive quality education. The main objective of any educational system should be to provide quality education to all learners, to allow them to learn and to reach their full potential. Therefore, inclusive educational policies make up a big part of the curriculum. Inclusive education in South Africa should promote participation and active learning, allow all children to develop social relationships (Selmi, Gallagher, & Mora-Flores, 2015), build a more democratic society, and be an equitable and quality educational system where all role-players believe that they need to accommodate the diverse learning needs of all children (Swart & Pettipher, 2019).

White Paper 6 (2001, p.5) defined inclusive educational and training systems and how the Department of Basic Education intended to build these systems. Several strategies for achieving this goal included: the improvement of special schools, rethinking the process of identifying, assessing and enrolling learners in special schools, and targeting early identification of diverse learning needs within the Foundation phase (Department of Education, 2001). One of the Department of Education's key strategies for implementing White paper 6 was the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS); (Department of Basic Education, 2014) (Department of Basic Education, 2015). The aim of the SIAS document was to "improve access to quality education for vulnerable learners and those who experience barriers to learning" (Department of Basic Education, 2014, p. 10). The document was structured in such a way that all role-players understood that all learners need support and it provided a framework on how all learners could be included. Fundamentally, this document wanted to ensure quality basic education and support to all learners in their local community (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Since 2008, the Department of Basic Education and provincial Departments of Education have been working on preparing the system for the implementation of the SIAS document (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

### 2.2.3 Inclusive education in early childhood classrooms

As in other educational settings, inclusive education programmes have increased in early educational programs (Selmi, Gallagher, & Mora-Flores, 2015). Inclusive practices have positive impacts on all children in the classroom. Selmi, Gallagher and Mora-Flores (2015) stipulated that these positive impacts include children being more aware of the uniqueness of humans and that they start to feel more comfortable with differences. When children feel more comfortable with differences (Selmi, Gallagher, & Mora-Flores, 2015), they are able to look past them and see the similarities they have with friends despite looking or sounding different. During the early educational years, children start to develop moral and ethical principles (Dowling, 2014) and being part of a diverse classroom could positively develop these principles. Selmi, Gallagher and Mora-Flores (2015) state that one of the main goals of early educational settings is to teach children how to live together, to work with each other and to share and support each other.

## **2.3 Diverse learning needs**

*What is diversity and a diverse classroom setting?*

Classrooms in South Africa represent the country's multi-cultural nature and are multidimensional with children from different races, cultures, international backgrounds, identities and different ethnic groups (Swart & Pettipher, 2019). Classrooms are also characterised by children who have diverse learning needs. According to White Paper 6 (2015, p.7), these learning needs might develop because of factors such as an inflexible curriculum, negativity and stereotyping, inappropriate communication, and language use. In a classroom these diversities might become a challenge if it is not accepted and embraced that all children are different.

Teachers tend to struggle to address the various learning needs that children experience (Teaching for All, 2019). Teachers have the responsibility to challenge the assumptions they have of the children in their classrooms. This will allow them to create a



safe, positive and nurturing environment where diversity is appreciated, understood and where children feel that they add value to the classroom. Classrooms are diverse, and all learners experience diverse learning needs and may at some point in their school careers need support (Green & Moodley, 2018).

### *Possible diverse learning needs*

It is important that teachers know about the differences that might be prevalent in the classroom. The Teaching for All project (Teaching for All, 2019, p. 12) structured these differences broadly into five areas, namely: cognitive, communication and interaction, psychosocial, sensory and physical and societal factors. Children can also be challenged to think differently about diversity by looking at language, cultural, gender, religious and economic differences (Selmi, Gallagher, & Mora-Flores, 2015).

With regard to the context of this particular research study, certain aspects will be discussed that were identified as diverse learning needs in the classrooms.

### **Making meaning from learning**

Children's interests, likes and dislikes and personalities influence the way that they learn and form meanings. Children's likes could be used to encourage learning, e.g. when a child enjoys playing with Lego blocks, these could be incorporated when teaching addition and subtraction. The child will be more interested in the work and enjoy it more. In doing so, a teacher focuses on the child's strengths, rather than their weaknesses. This allows for an asset-based approach to learning.

### **Behaviour**

In the classroom children communicate, interact, participate and concentrate in different ways. It is important to take these differences into account. Shy children might not want to complete certain tasks because they do not like the attention and not because they

are unable to do so. Adapting the way activities should be completed might make a big difference to those children (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

### **Psychosocial wellbeing**

The term psychosocial wellbeing is used to describe mental, emotional and social health. Psychosocial wellbeing encompasses a variety of factors that influence diversity in the classroom. Children show different behaviours and react differently to things happening in the class and ultimately to the knowledge the teacher is trying to convey. These behaviours can be caused by a variety of factors. When children have negative feelings towards themselves or learning, they might not want to partake in activities. Family circumstances and friendships can also greatly impact a child's behaviour in the classroom. When there are sudden changes at home, the child is bullied or does not have any friends, they might react differently from what a teacher is used to (Teaching for All, 2019). Teachers should therefore be aware of these influences and build learners' self-esteem (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

### **Disability**

A disability can be defined as any combination of impairments with barriers that hinders the child to fully participate on an equal basis. Disability could be physical, psychosocial, cognitive, related to communication and interaction, or sensory (Teaching for All, 2019, p. 26). In the context of this study, most teachers were confronted with:

- psychosocial disabilities such as social and emotional states (Department of Basic Education, 2011), behaviour and moods of the child,
- cognitive disabilities such as fine and gross motor skills that hinder the completion of activities, organisational skills and problem solving,
- communication and interaction where some children might find it difficult to express themselves or interact with their friends, and

- the language of learning and teaching might not always be the home language.

### *Embracing diverse learning needs*

It is important to distinguish between accepting and embracing diversity and simply tolerating it. Children all have differences and these differences can be used to support them and to understand them better. Tolerance means that children are still defined by “normal” or “abnormal” human characteristics (Teaching for All, 2019, p. 8). This means that diversity is seen in relation to what “average” supposedly encompasses.

Diversity should be seen as an asset and a resource and not something that should be avoided or as an obstacle (Teaching for All, 2019). Research has found that the “physical structure of the brain determines how we learn” (Teaching for All, 2019, p. 9). This means that children all learn differently and that there is relationship between development and learning. By acknowledging this, it is clear that a child’s ability and intelligence are not stagnant. The question then is why teaching techniques and strategies should be fixed. True diversity encompasses the teacher changing, adapting and developing learning material that suits individual children, rather than thinking of teaching for the “norm”. These strategies should be suited to the way the child learns. Strategies such as promoting active learning and promoting participation to ensure effective learning should be used to ensure children’s diverse learning needs are met (Teaching for All, 2019).

It is subsequently important that teachers make use of an asset-based approach to learning where children are supported in classrooms and teachers and role players identify their strengths and assets (Bouwer, 2016), rather than what they cannot do. Using the asset-based approach means teachers have to see the child within their individual context and determine their strengths. For young children it is difficult to use these strengths, as they do not always know what they are. Teachers should support the children in determining their strengths and using them in a positive way.

Learning diversity should be respected and valued in the classroom to ensure that all children can participate in educational experiences. Teachers in diverse classrooms need to think about where they fit into the learning process as someone who leads learning for the children. Individual learners should be treated and respected for who they are. Teachers should consider individuals needs when they plan and present lessons (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

## 2.4 Barriers to learning

UNESCO states that barriers to learning vary from child to child (Haddad, 2009). All learners may at some time in their life experience barriers to learning and whether it is temporary or permanent, these learners need support and their needs must be addressed correctly if they want to learn, develop effectively and reach their full potential (Haddad, 2009). Barriers to learning and development include socio-economic aspects, attitudes, inflexible curricula, language and communication, unsafe environments and disability (Department of Basic Education, 2014). According to Nel (2013), barriers can be rooted in organic or medical issues. Barriers to learning could be classified as intrinsic or extrinsic barriers (Swart & Pettipher, 2016) and it is important to understand that although intrinsic and extrinsic barriers will be discussed separately, they interact with each other.

**Intrinsic barriers** are barriers related to physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psychosocial disturbances, intellectual differences, life experiences and socio-economic deprivation (Nel, 2013). Swart and Pettipher (2016) state that intrinsic barriers at times refer to personal characteristics. These characteristics are discussed in detail in Section 3 of this chapter. Barriers to learning and development can occur within any system (Department of Education, 1997).

**Extrinsic barriers** to learning include factors within the environment (Swart & Pettipher, 2016) like negative attitudes and stereotyping of differences between people,

inflexible curricula, inappropriate language or communication, inaccessible or unsafe environments, inappropriate support services, inadequate policies or legislation, parental involvement, inadequately trained education managers and teachers (Nel, 2013).

The school where the researcher conducted her research had more intrinsic barriers, but as the children were still very young, none of them had definitive diagnoses for the barriers they experience. Therefore, it was important not to focus on barriers to learning in the classroom, but more on the natural diversity in developing children. The next section will discuss how diverse learning needs manifest in a classroom.

## **2.5 Understanding barriers to learning, diverse learning needs and the teacher-child relationship by looking at a human development model**

For the researcher to understand the influences, interactions and interpersonal relationships (Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2015) that might have an impact on the relationship between the teacher and the child, the researcher made use of a bioecological model for human development.

Urie Bronfenbrenner developed the Bioecological model for development (Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, & García Coll, 2017). It is described by Swart and Pettipher (2016, p. 11) as an “example of a multidimensional, contextualist model of human development.”

This model allows the researcher not only to understand the holistic system each child lives in, it is also used as a framework to understand barriers to learning. To identify and support barriers to learning, it is important to understand the intricacy of the influences, interactions and interrelationships in play between individuals, as well as the other connected systems (Swart & Pettipher, 2016, p. 10).

Swart and Pettipher (2016) note that Bronfenbrenner’s model can be used as a conceptual tool to understand aspects like classrooms, teachers’ practices and the teacher-

child relationship. Teachers can therefore be informed about how individual and social contexts might influence development (Swart & Pettipher, 2016).

The bioecological model proposes that development is influenced by the interaction between person characteristics, proximal processes, contexts and time (Madill, Gest, & Rodkin, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's theory states that for development to take place, there needs to be person-environment interactions. Types of effective patterns of interactions (Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2015) between individuals and the environment are described as ***proximal processes*** (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These interactions take place over time and are posed as human development's primary mechanism. For interactions to be effective, they need to take place on a regular basis and be between active individuals and their direct environment. Relationships can only be built when both individuals spend time on building these relationships. Swart and Pettipher (2016) state that proximal processes can lead to certain developmental outcomes and have the power to realise genetic potential for effective functioning. The teacher-child relationship is an example of a proximal process.

Children are active participants in their own lives, which is why each child's person characteristics have influence over their proximal processes (Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2015). It is stated that proximal processes cannot produce effective developmental functioning on their own. ***Person characteristics*** of individuals such as teachers, children, parents and friends influence proximal processes and developmental outcomes. Demand characteristics, resource characteristics and force characteristics are all types of person characteristics that contribute to shape development by influencing the direction and power of proximal processes (Swart & Pettipher, 2016).

Demand characteristics can be described as the direct influences or similarities that a person has towards someone else. According to Tudge et al. (2016), these characteristics

include age, gender, or physical appearance. Characteristics may have an immediate influence on interactions, because people tend to form expectations immediately (Swart & Pettipher, 2016).

Biopsychological strengths and weaknesses can influence a person's ability to engage in proximal processes. These are called resource characteristics. Developmental resources can be abilities, knowledge and skills. Social and material resources like food, health and family can also have an impact on the way proximal processes function (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). When a child is sick, hungry, or has strained relationships at home, s/he might struggle to form a bond with a teacher or develop age-appropriately.

Certain dispositions can support proximal processes. These are called force characteristics and include temperament, motivation, curiosity, impulsiveness, violence and aggression that can hinder proximal processes (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). Some children are more curious and inquisitive. They are more likely to voluntarily talk to the teacher and take part in activities. Consequently, the teacher will most probably spend time talking to them without having to impose a relationship. Shy and isolated children might not talk to teachers spontaneously and the relationship between them might take longer to form.

The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem are part of the **content** that is described in the ecological system. According to Bronfenbrenner, it is important to take an individuals' environment into account. All four contexts interact with the chronosystem.

It is of utmost importance that classrooms, schools and communities are inclusive, learning-friendly and barrier-free communities (Haddad, 2009). Proximal processes have the potential to further development and person characteristics can contribute to positive developmental outcomes. These will be the distinct characteristics when exploring the teacher-child relationship.

Teaching is a profession that allows individuals to make a difference in the daily lives of children. It is therefore important that teachers are aware that their actions have a great impact on children's holistic development. Teachers need to be aware that all learners are different, that these differences need to be respected, and that they should strive to provide the best possible learning environment for all children (Nel, 2013).

As this study focusses on understanding the TCR with preschool learners in diverse classrooms, it is important to know who the four- to six-year-old child is. The next section will discuss the development of early childhood by using the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage (UK Department for Education, 2017) with specific attention paid to social and emotional development.

## **2.6 Early Childhood Development and intervention**

Early childhood is a very important time of human growth and development (Willow, 2014). The quality of the care, relationships, stimulation and opportunities offered in this time to young children is crucial not only to their present happiness, but also to their happiness and well-being as adults (Willow, 2014).

One of the biggest challenges is understanding the complexity of the interactions and inputs that forms a child's needs. There are a variety of factors that play a role in the development of a child. Children's early educational experiences have a lasting impact on the child's academic achievement, social development and behavioural competencies (La Paro, Pianta, Stuhlman, 2017). During this time, the brain forms key pathways that are essential for skills development, life-long learning and long-term capabilities (Kotze, n.d.). The experiences children have during their early childhood are very important for their brain development (Hall, et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, early childhood education has been neglected in South Africa (Department of Education, 1997), yet it is of utmost importance that the Government



promotes a multisector approach towards child development (Harty & Alant, 2016). A child should be seen as part of their whole environment and thus development should be focussed on a bioecological model. Documents such as the National Integrated early childhood development policy of 2015 work toward transforming early childhood development in South Africa (Department of Social Development, Republic of South Africa, 2015).

Early identification of learners' individual needs is critical for optimal and effective learning and development. Early identification and intervention programmes have lasting effects on skills and learning (Selmi, Gallagher, & Mora-Flores, 2015). Over and above the identification of individual needs, early childhood intervention is also a complex scenario (Harty & Alant, 2016) and a very important part of the development.

Early childhood interventions deal with the prevention of barriers and reduce the impact that barriers have once they are identified. It is important to understand that a variety of factors have an impact on a child's development. Facilitators and the environment also impact development, similar to the impairments that learners have (Harty & Alant, 2016). Addressing early interventions from a bioecological perspective implies that we not only focus on the child and the barrier, but also facilitate an environment that will have a positive effect on the child (Harty & Alant, 2016). Making use of an ecological approach to early childhood development places the emphasis on the actions and people in the child's environment. The individuals in the child's environment have a profound influence on the development of the child. These individuals may have direct or indirect contact.

The quality and consistency of early relationships and interactions are essential for early attachment and emotional well-being (Whitebread, 2012). In the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage (United Kingdom), it clearly states that children learn to be independent and strong through positive relationships (UK Department for Education, 2017).

It is essential that teachers know exactly what the child's development should entail at a particular stage in their life. This will allow the teacher to identify where the child is on their developmental path. Knowing this, the teacher will then select activities and experiences that will promote and support this development (Mukherji, 2014). Early childhood education plays a paramount role in a child's development. According to Mukherji (2014), there are prime areas of learning that underpin young children's capacity to learn. These areas are important if children are going to thrive, foster positive relationships and engage with learning (UK Department for Education, 2017). These areas include communication and language, physical development as well as personal, social and emotional development (Mukherji, 2014).

The prime areas of development and definitions are explained in Table 2 (UK Department for Education, 2017) (Mukherji, How children develop, 2014).

**Table 2.1: Development according to 3 prime areas of development**

<b>Development according to the 3 prime areas of development according to the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage (United Kingdom)</b>	
<b>Communication and language</b>	
Listening and attention	Children have to listen attentively in a variety of situations such as storytelling and conversations. They have to respond appropriately while they are engaged in a different activity.
Understanding	Children are able to follow simple instructions and answer "how" and "why" questions.
Speaking	Children should be able to express themselves effectively. They should be able to explain their thought processes and develop narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.
<b>Physical development</b>	

Moving and handling	Children handle tools like their stationary effectively. They are able to move confidently in various ways and safely negotiate the space. They have good control over fine and gross motor skills.
Health and self-care	Children are aware of what good and healthy habits are and they can discuss it. They can manage their personal hygiene and dress themselves.
<b>Personal, social and emotional development</b>	
Self-confidence and self-awareness	Children want to try new things and they act confidently during the activities they enjoy. They are confident to share ideas and talk in groups that are familiar to them. They can tell a teacher if and when they need help.
Managing feelings and behaviour	Children are aware of what good and acceptable behaviour is and they talk about feelings. They work in groups and start to understand and follow rules.
Making relationships	They start to show sensitivity to others' feelings and play co-operatively, taking turns. They talk about how they are going to organise a game or activity.

Emotional abilities have not always received the attention they deserve and a lot of people underestimate the effect they have on success and lifelong learning (Dowling, 2014). Emotional development has been identified as one of the building blocks essential for future success (Department for children, schools and families, 2008). As the current study concerns teacher-child relationships, the focus of this discussion will be on the social and emotional developmental stage.

### **Social and emotional development of the four- to five-year-old**

Firstly, **social interaction** will be discussed. Children at this developmental stage will be able to demonstrate basic manners, verbalise their needs, interact with their peers, (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015), take turns, begin to share and demonstrate an understanding of group rules and roles (UK Department for Education, 2017).

With regard to **relationships**, children start to become more independent (Blatchford, Pellegrini, & Baines, 2016) and they can be away from their parents for longer periods of time. They start to form small friendships in accordance with their own interests. They bond with their primary teacher, but will ask assistance from others as well.

**Self-regulation** (Mukherji, 2014) is the third aspect. Children are able to be separated from their parents without anxiety or stress. They start to demonstrate more self-control over their feelings and impulses. They start to recognise feelings and emotions (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015) and are sensitive to others' feelings (UK Department for Education, 2017).

**Empathy and caring** involve children progressing towards expressing their own feelings without harming themselves or others. They become more aware of the needs of younger children and siblings and show interest in other people. Children treat living things, property and the environment with more respect (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015).

When looking at the **self**, children start to demonstrate independence when choosing activities, are responsible, respectful, confident (De Witt, 2009) and aware of gender differences (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015). The children start to develop a sense of self-worth and feel success when they start to master skills (De Witt, 2009).

The sixth aspect is **work ethic**. At this stage children can focus with the necessary concentration, work independently (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015) or as part of a group (UK Department for Education, 2017). They participate in activities, are able to complete tasks and persevere when tasks are challenging (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015). They are also very proud of their work and the things that they can do and will occasionally boast about their achievements (De Witt, 2009).

The child explores the environment, attempts new activities and is prepared to try difficult activities again (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015). These skills all form part of **resilience**.

The last aspect of social and emotional development is **social awareness**. Children will demonstrate awareness of religious, social and cultural differences and they will demonstrate tolerance. They are also aware of human and constitutional rights (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015).

### **Social and emotional development of the six-year-old (Grade R)**

The six-year-old shows the same developmental skills as the five-year-old, but builds forth on the skills. Only the new skills within each aspect will be discussed.

With regard to the **social interaction** aspect, the six-year-old shows grace and courtesy towards adults and peers, they verbalise their needs, understand and identify basic rights, participate and work cooperatively in a group. They start to develop leadership skills, and show problem-solving skills and conflict resolution skills during play (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools

Association, 2015). They are however prone to experience quick changes in moods, especially between love and hate (De Witt, 2009).

They show independence and can be away from primary caregivers for longer. The friendships they form are exclusive and enduring and they become less dependent on their caregivers. Six-year-olds will ask fewer familiar adults to help them. These skills form part of the **relationship** aspect (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015). The five- to six-year-old child loves to play with friends and enjoys group and competitive games (Davin & Van Staden, 2005).

**Self-regulation** involves the child's ability to control outbursts (Dowling, 2014) and the child's will to find solutions. The child will also choose new or familiar activities on his/her own (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015).

All development within aspects of **empathy and caring** develop to a more respectful and caring nature. They can at times become self-centred and rebellious (De Witt, 2009).

When it comes to the six-year-olds' **work ethic**, they can focus with good concentration and complete tasks within a given time-frame (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015). They start to notice success and will be very proud of their work (Davin & Van Staden, 2005).

It is important to note that social and emotional development are linked to the well-being of children and their future success and lifelong learning. Dowling (2014) identified three factors that influence emotional outcomes. These include: the environment of the child, the quality of relationships and the child's communication and language skills (Dowling, 2014, p. 93).

## 2.7 The teacher-child relationship

### *Defining the teacher-child relationship*

The teacher-child relationship (TCR) is a complex concept with a variety of theories and research impacting the definition. According to Thijs and Koomen (2009), the TCR is seen as micro-systems that have implications for the child's development. These micro-systems have various components that are interrelated and involve characteristics of the teacher and child, as well as the communication and interaction between them (Thijs & Koomen, 2009). La Paro, Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) describe the teacher-child relationship as a regulatory system that contributes to the child's social and academic competencies. Conversely, Mejia and Hogland (2016, p. 15) state that the significance of children's relationships with their teachers has been conceptualised from an attachment perspective and that children are proposed to use their teachers as a secure base in order for them to function effectively in school. According to Zhang and Sun (2011), the attachment perspective refers to way that children's relationships with teachers reflects on the quality of their emotional connections.

The researcher sees the teacher-child relationship as a mixture of these perspectives. Children form strong attachments with their parents and these relationships set the tone when relationships outside of the household begin to form (Dowling, 2014). The researcher believes that the teacher-child relationship can greatly impact the child's social and academic competencies.

In a young child's life, the preschool teacher plays one of the most important roles outside of the child's immediate family (Ahnert, Milatz, Kappler, Schneiderwind, & Fischer, 2013). South African children in Grade R spends a minimum of four hours and 36 minutes a day with their teacher. It should come as no surprise then that these teachers fulfil important roles in the child's development processes.

Early childhood development plays an integral part in the development of prosocial behaviour. According to Pennings, Brekelmans, Sadler, Claessens, Van der Want and Van Tartwijk (2017), daily personal interactions with children are the basic building blocks of the TCR. Teaching practices, good or bad, have a lasting impact on the child's holistic development (Zhang & Sun, 2011), including children's motivation, academic outcomes, social-emotional behaviour (Pakarinen et al., 2010) and development. Teachers are seen as agents of socialisation and they influence not only academic performance, but also the children's social-emotional development (Mejia & Hoglund, 2016).

It is said that children learn about relationships from their early experiences with their parents and use these experiences to build their future relationships, although other researchers believe that children learn behaviour from their teachers and that they model them. It is most likely that it is a combination of the two strategies (Gallagher & Mayer, 2008).

According to McGuey and Moore (2016), it is important to see the child as a whole and to place building relationships before the curriculum, as the quality of a teacher-child-relationship is the foundation of a deeper learning experience. There should be a balance between building a relationship and working on the curriculum. Teachers who feel that it is their only job to deliver the curriculum can have an imbalance that may cause behavioural challenges, unmotivated students, low student achievement, dysfunctional relationships, defensive posturing, poor collaboration and guarded communication (McGuey & Moore, 2016). This can cause teachers to become stressed and burnt out.

Teachers know about the importance of guiding children to learn early academic and social skills, but undervalue the importance of true personal relationships with the child (Gallagher & Mayer, 2008). Most teachers are taught how to teach, how to plan lessons and develop and educate according to a certain pedagogy (McGuey & Moore, 2016). Although these aspects are important, they are not the only things that teachers need to be taught. A lot of teachers enter the classroom not prepared to create high-trust relationships (McGuey



& Moore, 2016). A good high-trust relationship can support effective learning and development. McGuey and Moore (2016, p.6) state that “the most important factor in determining students’ success in the classroom is the degree to which teachers value them.”

### *A positive teacher-child relationship*

It is important to try to understand what a positive teacher-child relationship looks like, which aspects contribute to a positive relationship and what one should try to eliminate. A positive teacher-child relationship is especially important in early education, because according to Mejia and Hoglund (2016), it sets the stage for the way that children perceive relationships with their current teacher, but also future teachers as sources of support. The TCR also has a profound impact on cognitive learning outcomes, teacher well-being, as well as student motivation (Pennings, et al., 2018). Furthermore, it predicts a variety of aspects of both social and academic school functioning (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, Thijs, & Oort, 2013).

A positive teacher-child relationship contributes to successful schooling outcomes, skills development, and has an effect on academic performance as the children get older (Pakarinen et al., 2010). Children who have a better relationship with their teacher are usually emotionally more secure than their classmates (Howes & Hamilton, 1993).

Good teaching practices, just like a positive teacher-child relationship, have an impact on children in a variety of ways. It not only motivates children, but also impacts their academic performance and social-emotional behaviour (Pakarinen et al., 2010). It is important to be aware that a child’s schooling success is multi-dimensional and that teacher practices have the potential to make a positive contribution to a child’s development (Mantzicopoulos et al., 2018).

### *Assessing the teacher-child relationship*

Typically, the teacher-child-relationship quality has been assessed as three distinct dimensions, namely: closeness, conflict and dependency (Mejia & Hoglund, 2016).

**Closeness** can be described as the openness, warmth and security in the relationship between the teacher and the child. **Conflict** is the degree to which the teacher perceives the teacher-child interactions as negative, discordant, unpredictable and unpleasant. Lastly, **dependency** is the degree to which the child is possessive of or over-reliant on the teacher (Koomen, Verschueren, Schooten, Jak, & Pianta, 2012).

According to Buyse, Verschueren, Doumen, Van Damme and Maes (2007), a close relationship with a teacher will provide a protective factor (Pianta, 1999); (Pakarinen et al., 2010) to children who are identified as at-risk because of their maladjusted behaviour (Buyse, Verschueren, Doumen, Van Damme, & Maes, 2008). Children's behaviour in classrooms are said to be closely linked to the relationship they have with their teacher. Zhang and Sun (2011) state that behavioural problems can be strongly connected to the relationship the children have with their teacher.

A variety of reasons could be given for the above-mentioned statement; students may want to avoid instructions or tasks (Zhang & Sun, 2011) and in order for them to escape, they show disruptive behaviour. It is unfortunate that not only does the relationship the teacher have with the children affect behaviour, but the children's behaviour also affect the relationship with the teacher (Birch & Ladd, 1998). Teachers are more willing to spend time with children who behave appropriately and they are more willing to work on those relationships.

Classrooms with emotional support, characterised by sensitive and caregiving caretakers, child-led activities, responsiveness, warmth and supportive relationships show higher levels of social skills and less externalising behaviour (Hatfield, Burchinal, Pianta, & Sideris, 2016). Research done by Ying Hu, Fan, LoCasale-Crousch, Chen and Yang (2016) showed that there were overall more positives in the classrooms with high levels of emotional support, classroom organisation and instructional support. Children who feel connected to teachers and classmates have better intrinsic motivation (Madill et al., 2014).

Dr John Hattie identified what he said is the holy grail of teaching; the quality of interaction between the teacher and the student (McGuey & Moore, 2016). This should then be the one thing that all teachers strive for: building a high trust relationship with all students. For the purposes of this study, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004) was used as a conceptual framework to assess preschool teachers' relationships with children in their class who experience diverse learning needs. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System will be discussed in the next section.

## **2.8 Factors influencing the teacher-child-relationship based on the conceptual framework of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System**

All over the world school districts are implementing assessment frameworks to document teacher effectiveness and to meet accountability mandates (Mantzicopoulos et al., 2018). Mostly these assessments are done to ensure that teachers are using good practices in the classroom, to hold them accountable for the teaching in the classroom and to document teacher effectiveness (Mantzicopoulos et al., 2018). Internationally, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is used as an instrument to assess aspects of teaching (Bihler, Agache, Kohl, Willard, & Leyendecker, 2018) such as the teacher-child relationship. It is suggested that the CLASS can assess the quality of the teacher-child interactions in classrooms with children who experience diverse learning needs such as language diversity and other individual needs (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009).

According to Bihler et al., (2018) this observational instrument builds on the theoretical framework of teaching through interaction that is based on Bronfenbrenner's model for human development. The CLASS focusses mainly on three domains of classroom interactions, namely: emotional support, classroom organisation and instructional support (Pakarinen et al., 2010). These domains will now be discussed as they formed the cornerstones of developing the interview and observational sheets.

## **Emotional support**

Emotional support is broadly based on attachment, self-determination and motivation theories. It states that when children are comfortable in a classroom and they are understood and supported, they tend to develop more positive socio-emotional skills (Bihler et al., 2018). Teachers should provide comfort and assistance in order for children to feel a sense of security. A teacher who is threatening and makes use of aggressiveness will have the exact opposite effect on children (Bihler et al., 2018). Making eye contact and having open communication between the teacher and child is important (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014).

This domain includes dimensions that measure a positive or negative climate, teacher sensitivity and the teacher's regard for the children's perspectives (Pakarinen et al., 2010). Bihler et al. (2018, 2) state that when children feel that they are competent and that they can do things on their own, they feel free to explore more and they are motivated to learn. To support children to feel autonomous should therefore constitute a big part of teaching.

The **positive climate** dimension seeks to reflect on the emotional tone of the class, as well as the teacher-child connection (Pakarinen et al., 2010). Using a child's name and praising children could assure a positive climate (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014).

A **negative climate** according to Pakarinen et al. (2010, p. 98) is the overall negativity in the classroom. Teachers who have a negative interaction style are reactive (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014), not responsive and at times disrespectful. It is also categorised by hostility, anger and at times aggression in the classroom (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). Most teachers are luckily aware of the effects of negativity in the classroom (Bihler et al., 2018) and will try to avoid it.

The third dimension in the emotional support domain is **teacher sensitivity** (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009). Teacher sensitivity is described as teachers who are responsive

to the holistic needs of the children in their class. Their social, emotional, developmental and academic needs are met (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014). This means that teachers are aware of the children's individual needs, for example knowing the students' level of academic functioning (Pakarinen et al., 2010). In the classroom, teachers with high levels of teacher sensitivity will walk around to make sure that all the children are feeling competent in the work they are supposed to do. They will also anticipate problem situations and offer support sooner rather than later (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014) and in this way create a safe environment for the child to explore.

***Regard for learners and their perspectives*** are described by Hamre et al. (2012) as the degree to which the teacher's interactions with the classroom and children are based on their interests and motivation. Teachers should notice the children's needs, interests, and points of view (Pakarinen et al., 2010) and encourage them to do things on their own, move around and talk about what is happening while working in groups, and allow them to make choices (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014). Teachers and children should share ideas and work together, because when this happens teachers are more aware of what the children like and what they need to learn to the best of their abilities.

### **Classroom organisation**

Classroom organisation concerns how teachers provide routine and management in their classrooms (Pakarinen et al., 2010). Teachers should manage their time and activities (Pakarinen et al., 2010) in such a way that the children in their class are actively involved in productive learning. Children's behaviour should also be dealt with in a timely manner (Bihler et al., 2018) by acting responsively rather than reactively. Research has shown that when a classroom is managed well, children know what to expect and what is expected of them (Pakarinen et al., 2010), which allow them to feel comfortable and safe in their classroom environment. Children will then take more chances and are not afraid to try new things. It is said that effective classroom management is associated with high achievement, better

student engagement, less behavioural problems and greater social competence (Pakarinen et al., 2010).

**Behavioural management** is the first dimension and encompasses the teacher's ability to notice negative behaviour and direct it (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009). This is achieved by setting clear expectations (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014) for children's behaviour. The teacher should monitor children's behaviour; this will ensure that the teacher will exhibit low reactivity (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014).

Teachers should display **productivity**; this means that children should receive optimal opportunities to learn. To ensure this, teachers should manage their instruction (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009). Children should be actively involved in learning and the teacher should encourage children's engagement by using various materials and interesting activities (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014). When children are more involved in the learning process, there is usually little to no misbehaviour (Pakarinen et al., 2010).

The manner in which the teacher introduces work and instructs children is also of great importance. Teachers should facilitate learning experiences that interest the learners and ensure participation (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014). **Instructional learning formats** (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009) are therefore a big part of classroom management. Teachers should, for example, set clear objectives.

### **Instructional support**

Teachers' instruction and feedback are also key elements in promoting children's learning. Instructional support places emphasis on the various ways that teachers use instruction to encourage participation and to ensure that children's cognitive and developmental skills are challenged (Pakarinen et al., 2010).

Instructional activities should promote higher order thinking skills (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009). **Concept development** is the first in the instructional development domain

dimension (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014). The teacher should link new concepts with prior knowledge

The **quality of feedback** (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009); given to children is important, as it supports further learning and understanding (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014). This is where scaffolding (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014) comes into play. Teachers should work from what the child already knows and build on that, rather than to assume what the child knows. Children should explain their answers and thinking processes.

Teachers should set a good example when talking to individuals, small groups and the whole class during activities. They should use open-ended questions (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009) and advanced vocabulary (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014) to ensure more positive interactions, academic outcomes and classroom engagement (Pakarinen et al., 2010). **Language modelling** (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014) is therefore an important part of instructional support.

### **Teacher characteristics**

In addition to the CLASS, it is wise to also look at teacher characteristics (Pakarinen et al., 2010), as all teachers are different and have different instructional practices and interactions.

Research has shown that teacher efficacy plays a big part in teacher practices (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2019). Teachers need to have a clear idea of what they are working towards and what they want to achieve; this will support them to facilitate learning that will benefit the child's needs. A high-sense of self-efficacy is said to be associated with high-quality literacy instruction, a better relationship with students and more positive reactions towards students (Pakarinen et al., 2010). It is clear that teachers need to believe in themselves and that they are capable of doing their absolute best.

Interaction styles within the classroom could according to Pakarinen et al. (2010) contribute greatly to classroom quality, as well as teacher well-being. If a teacher is sick, burnt out, or exhausted it is very possible that they will not be able to give their 100% every day, meaning that their job performance will be derailed (Pakarinen et al., 2010). A teacher with symptoms of burn-out or exhaustion will, most likely, have a shortened tolerance when they are dealing with children with special needs.

## **2.9 Conceptual framework**

In this section, I will outline the emerging conceptual framework for the research. As previously stated, the conceptual framework is largely based on the bioecological model and research questions and observations where guided by the CLASS as developed by Pianta and his colleagues (Pianta & Struhlman, 2004).

There has been a lot of research on using the CLASS to evaluate teacher-child interactions in preschool, e.g., Ferreira et al. (2016), Thijs and Koomen (2009) and Pianta and Struhlman (2004), as well as validation studies on whether the CLASS can be used in different countries in different settings and circumstances (Pakarinen et al., 2010). This system has also been proven to be very useful in classrooms where learners experience diverse learning needs (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009). It is clear that this framework works well for looking at teaching quality and interaction by focussing on the TCR.

It is of utmost importance that in South Africa we look at ways to support our teachers to improve the quality of teaching. In South Africa, research has shown that about 60% of Grade 1s leave school before completing Grade 12. Furthermore, it is said that only 52% of age-appropriate learners stay enrolled (Weybright, Caldwell, Xie, Wegner, & Smith, 2017). There are various reasons for this low enrolment rate and socio-economic challenges are a key role player, but it is important to look at preschool educators and how they can help



prevent this. As stated in the first section of Chapter 2, early childhood is a very important part of a child's education. It sets the tone for ongoing learning and a good experience in early educational years can motivate children to work hard.

For young children to enjoy school, it needs to be fun, relevant, and they need to be engaged in learning. The teacher plays a crucial role in the experience the child has in early education. It is therefore extremely important that the teacher builds a positive relationship with the children in the class.

Although many teachers are aware of the role they play in preparing children for formal schooling, they do not always place enough emphasis on building significant relationships with the children in their classes. Workload, full classrooms and inadequate training could possibly be reasons for this.

Using the CLASS will allow the researcher to identify whether teachers are aware of the importance of a good teacher-child relationship, but more importantly to observe if the relationship between the teacher and child changes when the child needs additional support because of diverse learning needs. It could also shed some light on teaching practices and how they affect the teacher-child relationship.

Throughout the research, the bioecological model will be used as a framework to ensure that the situations are seen in a holistic environment and not as segregated aspects. When working with young children, teachers need to interact, be relevant, be part of the learners' experiences, allow them to ask questions, and actively take part in the learning process.

Table 2.2 outlines the framework I used to develop my interview and observational schedule.

**Table 2.2: Conceptual framework derived from the CLASS**

<b>Domains and dimensions</b>	<b>Examples of application</b>
1. Emotional support a) Positive and negative classroom climate b) Teacher sensitivity c) Regard for students	How do teachers respond to children with diverse learning needs? How do they handle the diverse needs of the children in their class? What is their way of supporting children emotionally? Do they see learners as merely an audience, or as participants in their learning?
2. Classroom organisation a) Behavioural management b) Productivity / effectiveness / time management c) Facilitating	How organised is the teacher not only in planning and preparing for lessons, but also while teaching? How does this have an impact on the way the teacher responds and interacts with the child with diverse learning needs?
3. Instructional support a) Concept development b) Quality of feedback	Exploring the way the teacher presents concepts, using questions and engaging learners in the learning process.
4. Teacher characteristics a) Self-efficacy b) Teacher well-being	What does the teacher think about her own personal teaching style, achievements and well-being?

## 2.10 Conclusion

It is very clear that the teacher-child relationship plays an important role in children's future academic, social and emotional development. The questions arise whether this relationship changes when children experience diverse learning needs and how teachers adapt to support these children and work on the relationship. In this chapter, I positioned the current study within existing research and I described the conceptual framework.

Using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System as a conceptual framework for defining and assessing the teacher-child relationship in preschool classrooms is a suitable framework to assess whether teacher-child relationships change when working with children who experience diverse learning needs. As inclusive education is a big part of South African education, all teacher should know how to best support all children in their classrooms. This

study will help to clarify the potential pitfalls, as well as how teachers see their relationship with all the children in their classrooms.

In the next chapter I will discuss the methodology and research design chosen to explore the research question.

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## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, previous literature related to the study was explored and a conceptual framework was presented to place this study in context.

As was discussed in Chapter 1, this research study aims to understand the teacher-child relationship in the early educational years with learners who experience diverse learning needs. In this chapter, the researcher describes the research paradigm for the study, as well as the design, research methodology and the process of inquiry, including populations and sampling, data collection and data analysis. Ethical procedures are intertwined in all aspects discussed, but will also be explained in detail.

### 3.2 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is seen as a theoretical framework (Mukherji & Albon, 2015), a world view, a way of thinking (Patton, 2015), and a way of viewing research material (De Vos, 2005). Sarah Tracy (2013) states that paradigms are preferred ways of understanding reality, building knowledge and gathering information about the world which ultimately forms the researcher's world view (Nieuwenhuis, 2009). To the researcher, paradigms inform the basic belief system and guides the researcher on how to undertake research (Maree, 2007) and to choose methods for data collection, observation and interpretation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

Paradigms are guided and can differ (Tracy, 2013) by ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions (Creswell, 2007). Ontology stipulates the nature of the researcher's reality, whereas epistemology specifies the relationship between the researcher and what can be known (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Lastly,

methodology identifies how the researcher goes about conducting the research based on what she believes (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

These dimensions will be discussed further and placed within the context of the research. The dimensions are not fixed, but are interrelated (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999) and shape the research.

Considering ontology, the question is asked, “What is the nature of reality?”. Within qualitative research, the social world is seen as holistic and complex (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and reality is socially constructed (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002) through subjective experiences (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi, & Wright, 2010). If reality is socially constructed, Merriam (1998) is of opinion that there cannot be a single reality. Rather, different people bring different meanings to different actions or phenomena (Mukherji & Albon, 2015). Reality is thus subjective as seen by the participants in the study (Creswell, 2007).

Epistemology is defined by Nieuwenhuis (2009) as the process in which reality becomes known. Creswell (2007) states that there is a relationship between the researcher and what is researched. This usually means that research takes place in the natural world (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and that the researcher attempts to get close to what is being researched (Creswell, 2007). The researcher will interact with the participants, asking questions about their lived experiences (Tracy, 2013) and their realities (Henning, van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004).

Methodologies used in qualitative research draws on “multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 2). The researcher is seen as the primary instrument for data collection (Merriam, 1998). Interviews and observations are done and certain themes or patterns are identified. The focus within qualitative methods is mainly on the context and the humanity of the

participants are respected (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative methods rely on human participation and understanding (Stake, 2010).

The researcher chose an interpretive paradigm, as it allows the researcher to define and redefine (Stake, 2010) what is seen and heard. It allows for interpretation and exploration (Wellington, 2015) of various perspectives and understanding each individual perspective.

The researcher chose the interpretive paradigm as it offers perspectives of the situation and allows for understanding and insights into the specific situation. It also helped the researcher to understand how this group of participants see the TCR with regard to children in diverse classroom settings (Nieuwenhuis, 2009).

In essence, all research includes interpretations, but interpretivism is defined by Gerring (2007, p.214) as a “study of human meaning and intention”. By adopting an interpretive paradigm, this researcher could gain detailed insights (Mukherji & Albon, 2015) into a specific situation. It allows the researcher to explore the perspectives (Wellington, 2015) of the various participants. The researcher believes that realities and knowledge are socially constructed (Tracy, 2013) and that this knowledge can change as individuals live and gain experiences.

The researcher was aware that she was personally involved in the research. The aim was to explore the perspectives and shared meanings so that insights into the situations could be developed (Wellington, 2015).

### **3.3 Research design**

In order to select a research design, the researcher asked herself the question, “What type of study will best answer the question formulated?” (Mouton, 2001). Mouton states (2001) that a research design is a plan of how the researcher intends to conduct the research. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) see it as a strategic framework that aids

the researcher in bridging the gap between the research question and the research implementation. It assists the researcher in moving from the research questions to the implementation of the research, explained by Mukherji and Albon (2015, p.233), as the “process in which the topic is turned into a researchable project”.

The researcher chose to make use of **case study design**. Case studies are usually marked by the focus on “context and dynamic interactions” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 19). This means that the data gathered will always be seen in the specific context and this is essential as individual contexts differ profoundly.

Case study design can also be described as an investigation (Mukherji & Albon, 2015) of, in this case, individuals in their naturalistic setting. According to Gerring (2007) a case can be seen as a phenomenon being observed at a single point in time. In the case of this research, the cases consist of individual teachers’ experiences and perspectives.

The aim of case study research is to provide as much in-depth descriptions (Mouton, 2001), understandings and detailed information (Mukherji & Albon, 2015) as possible. The researcher is drawn to the case study as it allows for more flexibility to incorporate a variety of perspectives and interpretation strategies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This allows for descriptive data (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

Using case study design allowed the researcher to focus on specifics that are essential to understanding the teacher-child relationship better. The researcher was aware that there are a variety of research designs within the qualitative research paradigm, but to best answer my research question I chose an instrumental case study design.

The instrumental case study design is seen to provide insights into a certain issue (Wellington, 2015). It is used when the researcher wants a better understanding (Grandy, 2010); there is always the opportunity to learn something new. Within instrumental case

studies, generalisation is not permitted (Grandy, 2010), but the research is rather used to highlight certain themes or patterns.

My aim was to have a deeper and better understanding (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) of the perspectives and experiences preschool teachers have with regard to the teacher-child relationship, specifically in diverse classroom settings where children experience diverse learning needs.

### **3.4 Research methodology**

Research methodology is described as ideas on how to go about research based on an underlying paradigm (Mukherji & Albon, 2015). Research methodology can either be quantitative or qualitative. The research methodology, according to Clough and Nutbrown (2002), provides reasons for using a specific research recipe. When the researcher chooses certain methods, the methodology gives reasons for reflecting on and evaluating these choices.

This research was based on a qualitative research methodology, as it was best suited to accomplish the research goals. Qualitative research allows the researcher to understand certain phenomena within their natural settings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and gain detailed information about small groups (Mukherji & Albon, 2015). It allows for rich and descriptive data, rather than structured data (Wellington, 2015). As the researcher was interested in the lived experiences (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013) and opinions of individuals, this allowed the researcher to view each participant as an individual.

As a qualitative researcher, the researcher knows that all social views are holistic and complex (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and therefore socially constructed. Each participant will bring her own viewpoint, because they all have different realities (Wellington, 2015). Individuals construct their own realities and meanings from the world that they live in (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013).



The researcher was part of the research as an instrument (Stake, 2010), as she conducted interviews and observed the participants, therefore she played a subjective role in the research. The researcher made interpretations and used her own experiences (Stake, 2010) to do so. The researcher immersed herself in the study through interacting with the participants to gain deeper insight and pay attention to the perspectives of the participants. Participants were observed closely to capture their attitudes and inner meanings that they give to their experiences (Creswell, 2007). The researcher was interested in the uniqueness (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013) of each participant's perspective.

The focus of qualitative research is to provide an understanding by using observation, interviews and artefacts to derive meanings, interpret participants' viewpoints and show how different interpretations are possible (Tracy, 2013). By doing this, the researcher will be able to explain viewpoints by focussing on each individual context (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The researcher was aware that there are limitations to using a qualitative research methodology. The researcher acknowledge that she was part of the research and that it could make an impact on the research (Mukherji & Albon, 2015). She was aware that it might be seen as subjective, but this research does not propose to make generalisations about the bigger population as qualitative research is meant to be explanatory (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and descriptive (Wellington, 2015).

Qualitative research is also very subjective and personal (Stake, 2010), but the researcher did not see this as something that needs to be eliminated. According to Stake (2010, p.29) subjectivity is seen "as an essential element of understanding human activity" and the researcher agree with this statement. Subjectivity allows the researcher to be invested in the research and in this case, she wanted the participants to feel comfortable enough to talk about anything.

### **Context of the research**

As stated in the previous section, research is socially constructed within a natural setting. This research was focussed on a specific phenomenon and therefore the research study is contextual, with specific attention given to the experiences of preschool teacher relationships with learners with diverse needs.

The context of this research is a semi-private preschool in the City of Cape Town. The school consists of nine classrooms ranging in ages from three- to four-year-olds, four- to five-year-olds and five- to six-year-olds. The language of teaching is Afrikaans and school fees are approximately R30 000 per year. There are nine educators on the premises and five of them were invited to participate. These five teachers teach ages four to five and five to six.

In the next section, the various research methods used in this research study will be discussed.

### **3.5 Research methods**

The research methods in this research were chosen based on the qualitative research methodology. This section stipulates and motivates choices made with regard to the selection of participants, data collection, data documentation, data analysis and interpretation.

A single study will never be able to study everything and that is why it is important to select a site and participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). There should be a plan for the selection of participants.

### 3.5.1 Selection of participants

No matter what type of case study design is used, it is important to make a choice about which case is being explored (Wellington, 2015). Tracy (2013) states that all researchers should strive toward purposeful sampling.

Sampling is explained by Wellington as a small part of something that represents something bigger (2015) and it play an important part in choosing participants (Tracy, 2013). Simply put, it is the process in which participants are selected. In qualitative research non-probability sampling is used (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013).

Purposive sampling can be described as selecting a group or individual with a specific purpose in mind. The researcher chooses participants that she feels will help her to form a better understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Participants will be selected according to certain characteristics that the researcher set before selection.

The researcher was interested in understanding a specific phenomenon and the perspectives of participants thereof. The sample size of this study is small to allow for more in-depth data collection. The researcher was aware of the fact that knowledge is dynamic and it relies heavily on the specific context and for those reasons the data gathered cannot be generalised to a larger population. Rather, the researcher aspired to a better understanding (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013).

The criteria for the selection of participants were that they had to be teaching preschool children aged four to six. These teachers also had to have children in their class who experience diverse learning needs. This meant that any additional support a child needs constituted a diverse need. Most of these children have not been diagnosed by a professional, but as stated in the Teaching For All document (2019, p.42), “you can be sure, wherever you teach, that your diverse classroom will include learners with a range of

intersecting differences”. These diverse learning needs included language diversity, social and emotional development, and perceptual and motor-developmental delays.

The participants all received an information sheet explaining what the research entailed and how they could participate.

Table 3.1: Participant information

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Position in school</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>Qualification</b>
1	Female	33	Grade R teacher	1 year as assistant 1 <sup>st</sup> year as teacher	Master’s in English and PGCE
2	Female	23	Grade R teacher	1 <sup>st</sup> year as teacher	BEd Foundation Phase
3	Female	56	Grade 0 teacher	22 years	Pre-primary / HOD in Junior Primary, main subject being remedial education
4	Female	40	Grade 0 teacher	4 years as assistant 1 <sup>st</sup> year as teacher	BEd Foundation Phase
5	Female	35	Grade 0 teacher	13 years	BEd Foundation Phase

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Number of children in the class</b>	<b>Language of teaching</b>	<b>Assistant</b>
1	23	Afrikaans	Yes
2	23	Afrikaans	Yes
3	20	Afrikaans	Yes
4	21	Afrikaans	Yes
5	21	Afrikaans	Yes

### 3.5.2 Methods of collection and analysis

In Chapter 1, the researcher set out the different data collection methods. Primarily the researcher made use of individual interviews and observations to gain in-depth understanding of how teachers experience the TCR with children who experience diverse needs. In the following section, the researcher describes how the participants were accessed, as well as the specific methods.

#### *Procedures*

The researcher requested permission from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to conduct research at the selected school and it was granted by the directorate. In addition, the researcher also applied for ethical clearance by the Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University. Ethical clearance was granted early in 2019 (project number 7426) (Addenda A). The researcher gave the principal of the school a letter describing the research. After she gave permission, the researcher spoke to possible participants. They all received information letters which stipulated what the research was about and what their part would be if they were willing to participate. All five participants gave their verbal consent and was willing to take part in the study. They also completed a written consent form before interviews and observations took place (Addenda B).

## *Data collection*

In Chapter 1, the researcher mentioned that she made use of observations and semi-structured interviews to gather the research data. Notes were taken during observations according to an observation sheet and all interviews were transcribed verbatim. This will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

### - SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interviews were the researcher's primary source of data collection. Conducting interviews was an excellent way to evoke participants' views and perceptions (Wellington, 2015) on a certain phenomenon. An interview is seen as a "conversation with a purpose" (Wellington, 2015, p. 138). Interviews allow for immediate follow-up questions and clarification (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and the researcher could probe and ask further questions right away to check the intended meaning. Although there are a variety of types of interviews, the researcher selected to make use of semi-structured interviews.

Making use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore individual views and individual cases (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013) not to compare but to strengthen the fact that there are different realities (Wellington, 2015). This type of interview allows for a more flexible (Tracy, 2013) and natural conversation. In more spontaneous conversations, the participants might feel more comfortable and talk more freely (Tracy, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews, sometimes referred to as structured conversations (Mukherji & Albon, 2015), contain open- and close-ended questions which allowed the researcher to probe (Mukherji & Albon, 2015) for more detail to strengthen understanding. This type of interview also allowed the interviewees to describe and explain things from their own perspective (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

Before conducting the interviews, the researcher set up an interview guide (Addenda B). The interview guide was developed using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System as a guideline (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008). Although semi-structured interviews were conducted, certain fundamental questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) were selected to be able to gather data on the phenomenon. This initial interview schedule was presented to the researcher's supervisor for refinement. The researcher also piloted the interview on a teacher to ensure that what being asked allowed for conversation to flow and that the fundamental aspects were talked about. After the pilot interview, the researcher made final adaptations before conducting interviews with the participants. Once a time and location were selected for each interview, the researcher conducted the interviews. Participants selected times and locations where they felt most comfortable.

The researcher recorded all interviews with permission of the participants and transcribed all interviews verbatim (Addendum D). During the interview, the researcher made a few notes on reactions and emotions, but this was kept to a minimum as she wanted to make the interviewee comfortable.

- REFLECTIVE NOTES

During the interviews, the researcher took simple notes on the expressions and emotions of the participants to remember the non-verbal cues during the interview. After the interview, personal notes were made on what happened during the interview. This allowed the researcher to immediately reflect on the interview.

- OBSERVATIONS

Observations were another means of data collection. For the researcher it was important to observe the teachers in their classrooms for a short period of time to see how they interact with the children while they are participating in individual as well as group activities.

The aim of observation in qualitative research is to “supply data related to the overall aim of the study” (Mukherji & Albon, 2015, p. 131). The researcher used the CLASS (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008) as a guide to set up an observation schedule to ensure that she was focussed on the actions of the teachers during interactions with all children. All participants consented to being observed and gave their verbal and written consent. The researcher and teachers together decided on an appropriate time of the day for the observations to take place. The observations took place at a time of the day where the researcher could observe group and individual interactions between the teacher and child. Observations were one session of one hour in each class and the teachers selected a day that best suited their class. The researcher recorded her findings during the observations as reflective field notes.

- REFLECTIVE FIELD NOTES

Field notes are devoted to the self-reflections of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Field notes allowed the researcher to record the thoughts she had on the aspects of the research. The researcher could reflect on interviews and observations to ensure that she was not biased in what was being said, seen or recorded.

### *Data analysis*

Data analysis within qualitative research has certain aims stipulated in Bless et al. (2013). Data gathered is supposed to:

- describe and understand participants’ lived experience;
- look at the way participants construct personal meanings in their lives;
- describe the range and diversity of participants’ experiences;
- give a voice to participants; and
- study people in their natural setting (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013, p. 340).



These aims guided the research throughout the research process, constantly reminding the researcher to ask whether she was achieving the aims. Qualitative research is, in essence, interpretive in nature (Stake, 2010) meaning that information is analysed (Stake, 2010), summarised and interpreted (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) to understand the phenomenon being researched.

Data analysis is described in Hancock and Algozzine (2006, p. 56) as making sense of different sources. It is important to remember that this process is recursive. The researcher interacted with the data throughout the research process (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006), meaning that analysis started during the interview and observation periods in the research. To ensure that the researcher did not become overwhelmed (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) with all this information, the research questions and aims were kept in mind.

Researchers need to analyse data into themes in order to understand the different elements in the data (Mouton, 2001). This analysis is done in order to identify certain patterns or trends (Mouton, 2001). Qualitative research makes use of words (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013), more so than numbers, meaning that the researcher will most likely end up with a lot of data (Wellington, 2015) to work through.

Words form a very important part of the qualitative researcher, as it gives her a look into each participant's world. It shows how people think, experience their world and relate to others (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). Therefore, a system is needed to ensure that all data is correctly and effectively interpreted and presented. Jerry Wellington (Wellington, 2015, p. 260) suggests using these five stages to do so:

- 1) Immersion: According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013, p. 342) this is the "fundamental step in qualitative data analysis". The researcher will start making sense of the data (Wellington, 2015). The transcriptions, field and reflexive notes were read repeatedly (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013) to ensure that the researcher knew

what the data was saying and to conceptualise a bigger picture (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013) of the data. The researcher highlighted sections and took notes (Wellington, 2015) and when no new information was added, she knew that the research reached saturation (Wellington, 2015).

- 2) Reflecting: This is the part where the researcher stood back and looked at the data that was recorded.
- 3) Taking apart / analysing: At this stage, the researcher started to take apart the data. This meant that coding started to take place. Coding is a core component of data analysis (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). Text were broken into manageable fragments (Wellington, 2015). These fragments shared certain characteristics; thus categories or themes started to take shape (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). These themes assisted the researcher to make sense of the data. The researcher made use of colour and text to identify themes. Text was underlined in different colours to search for recurring themes. The researcher made use of “coding definitions” (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013, p. 344). The code definitions included a title or a description of the code or theme.
- 4) Recombining / synthesising data: While analysis means taking apart, synthesis means putting back together the data in such a manner that it allows for interpretation. The themes were refined (Wellington, 2015) and new information was added where needed. The researcher started to interpret the results (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). The researcher explained the different responses under the various codes, which allowed for descriptive findings (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013).
- 5) Relating and locating research: It was important that once the data were interpreted, the researcher contextualised her data within existing previous research. This allowed the researcher to reflect about the place of the research within the bigger picture.

### *Data verification*

In this section, data verification strategies employed by the researcher will be defined and discussed. Historically data verification was judged by reliability, validity, objectivity and generalisability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), but these traditional concepts of reliability do not apply to more modern qualitative research (Tracy, 2013).

A qualitative researcher as a “critical, thoughtful, curious and trustworthy” individual (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013, p. 236) is seen as an instrument (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) in the research and therefore stating that you are trustworthy is not enough to ensure the research is done ethically. The researcher should identify the aspects that make her credible and ensure that data interpretations are trustworthy (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). That is why an alternative construct for data verification was identified. The terms validity and reliability were replaced with the word **trustworthiness** (Kingwell, 2016). This construct focussed on credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013).

Trustworthiness is defined as a way the researcher can ensure the reader that the findings of the research is of high quality (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013) and that it is worthy of their attention. According to Nieuwenhuis (in Ed. Maree, 2007), using a variety of data collection methods could support the trustworthiness of the study.

- 1) **Credibility:** Research done credibly is marked by thick descriptions, details, and triangulation strategies. In this study, the researcher identified the “internal logic of the study” (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013, p. 236), which means that since the start of the study the researcher stipulated the research question, methodology, design, data collection and methods of data analysis. These choices were made to ensure that the research question suited the methods chosen.

- 2) **Dependability:** The researcher followed a clear and thoughtful research strategy (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). Rich and descriptive data were given, as all interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher used fieldnotes and reflections. Evidence of interview transcriptions was placed as addenda.
- 3) **Confirmability:** Confirmability requires that other researchers asking the same questions could find similar findings. When other researchers read the specific reasoning, questions asked, context and why research was done, they should be able to replicate the research in a different context (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). The researcher made sure to give clear descriptions of the research questions and aims, as well as descriptions of the context and why this research was important.
- 4) **Transferability:** Very similar to confirmability, transferability asks the question to what extent the research results can be applied to other situations (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). To ensure this, the researcher stated the exact context, reasoning and personal relationships with the participants.

The researcher also made use of the following strategies to ensure trustworthiness:

- The researcher **adequately described the context** (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013) by giving a detailed description of the specific context in which the research took place, as well as the relationship the researcher has with the participants.
- The researcher also **adequately described the sample and sampling procedures** (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013) by explaining that purposeful sampling was used and describing the participants in Table 4.
- The researcher **collected and analysed data concurrently** (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013), ensuring that the data collection process could be refined.

- The researcher transcribed interviews verbatim and kept detailed fieldnotes to give feedback to the participants and to get **respondent validation** by asking the participants' opinions of the research findings.
- During the interpretation and synthesis of the data, many **verbatim quotations** were used to ensure that the readers know exactly what the participants said.
- **Methodological triangulation** entailed using interviews as the primary data collection source, by observing the participants, keeping a reflective journal and making use of fieldnotes.

### 3.6 Ethical considerations

The previous section described the data verification methods used in the research. It is important to note that ethics and trustworthiness is completely intertwined (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) in research and that it was planned for at the start of the research. Therefore, the data verification strategies used play a big role in the ethical considerations of the research.

All research should be done with the necessary regard for ethical guidelines. Ethics in educational research is described in Mukherji and Albon (2015, p. 41) as "the moral philosophy underpinning a project". This means that to conduct research ethically concerns not only strategies, but also the researcher's moral principles.

Ethical considerations are not restricted to a particular part of the research, but rather it should form a basis throughout the research process (Mukherji & Albon, 2015). Research can be unethical in the design, methods, analysis, presentation and findings (Wellington, 2015). The term ethics means moral principle (Wellington, 2015) and the word is derived from the Greek word ethos which means a person's character (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). Morals and ethics are often used together, but they are not synonymous (Wellington, 2015). Moral issues are usually concerned with what is right and wrong,

whereas ethical issues are about “whether the behaviour conforms to a set of principles” (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013, p. 28).

### *Permission and participant consent*

As previously mentioned, the researcher received permission from the WCED (reference number: 20180523-2432), the Stellenbosch University Ethics Committee (project number: 7426), the school’s principal, as well as all participants before conducting any interviews or observations.

The participants gave their written consent after they were informed in detail what the research would entail and what their part would be. All participants were notified that taking part in the research is completely voluntary and that they were allowed to withdraw if they chose to do so.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and the participants could read the transcriptions. The interviews were conducted at a location and time of the participants’ choosing to ensure that they were relaxed and not under pressure. Detailed field notes were taken during the observations, which also took place when it was most convenient for each participant.

### *Anonymity and confidentiality*

The participants as well as the school were ensured of their anonymity and pseudonyms were used to ensure this. Transcriptions, field notes, the researcher’s reflective journal and all data and information of this research are kept on a password-protected computer.

Although different participants were interviewed, the objective was never to compare or judge the participants, but rather to learn more about each individual’s perspective and what they feel about the specific phenomenon.

### *Trust and respect*

Trust and respect were two very important parts of the ethical considerations for the researcher. Throughout the research, the researcher reminded herself of her role in the research, as well as her relationship with the participants. Although she immersed herself in each participant's views, experiences and opinions, they knew that their trust would not be broken. All information was kept confidential and will not be used for personal gain.

To the researcher, the ethical considerations were not just the strategies used, but also the way interviews and observations were conducted, the way the researcher spoke to the participants and the way that the data was analysed and interpreted.

## **3.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed in detail the research paradigm explaining the use of the interpretive paradigm throughout the research. The research methodology including the context of the study was discussed, as well as using case study research in the qualitative research design. The research methods were discussed and the researcher stipulated the selection of participants, methods of data collection and analysis, and data verification strategies. Lastly, this chapter looked at the ethical considerations the researcher employed during the research process.

The next chapter presents the results of the study. Data is presented as themes and discussed in depth as they emerged in the data analysis process.

# CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTEGRATED DISCUSSION

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the research. The data gathered will be discussed according to specific themes and sub-themes. The data will be discussed in relation to the literature review in Chapter 2. Previous research along with the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2 will guide the researcher's interpretation of the data collected to attempt to answer the research question posed. Table 6 shows the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the qualitative thematic analysis of the data gathered.

## 4.2 Findings

**Table 4.1: Summary of themes and sub-themes**

Themes	Sub-themes
1. <b><u>Personal attributes</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers' experience, personal influences, compassion, altruism, creativity and innovation</li> <li>- Teaching qualities</li> </ul>
2. <b><u>Roles and responsibilities</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observation and support</li> <li>- Social and emotional development</li> </ul>
3. <b><u>Classroom management</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom atmosphere</li> <li>- Planning, structure and adaptations according to individual needs</li> <li>- Time management</li> </ul>
4. <b><u>Interaction and communication</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Techniques used in the diverse classroom setting</li> <li>- Challenges and strategies</li> </ul>
5. <b><u>Knowing the child as an individual</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acknowledging differences</li> <li>- Adapting instructional formats</li> <li>- Information needed to support learners experiencing diverse learning needs</li> <li>- Differentiation and adaptations to support all learners</li> </ul>
6. <b><u>Relationships</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relationship with role-players</li> <li>- Relationship with children in the classroom</li> </ul>



### **4.3 Discussion of findings**

This study is based on the theoretical framework of the CLASS, as well as a bioecological model for human development. Therefore, research interpretations and findings will be discussed with these perspectives in mind and be placed within the context of prior research. The CLASS framework provided a structure to observe teachers, focussing on the interactions taking place. It allowed the researcher to understand teachers' perspectives of the teacher-child relationship when young learners have diverse learning needs. The researcher gained a better understanding of how the teacher-child relationship unfolds in the preschool classroom. The bioecological model for development shows that each individual is subjected to various inputs and that each child is connected not only to their parents, but also to all aspects around them. All support needed for individual children need to come from all role-players working together.

The research findings will be discussed in accordance with the themes presented in Table 6. The data in the findings were collected through individual interviews and classroom observations. The researcher also made use of her reflective notes to interpret the findings and guide the discussions.

#### **4.3.1 Personal attributes**

Each teacher has her own way of doing things in the classroom. Personality traits and personal influences greatly impact the way they teach and who they are in the classroom. It is important to try and understand what teacher characteristics and traits make them the teachers that they are. According Kose and Uzun (2018), teachers need to possess certain traits that will support them in educating children more effectively. This led the researcher to understand how the teachers perceive the TCR and showed insights into their individual perspectives.

*Personal influences, experiences, compassion, altruism, creativity and innovation*

As soon as the researcher started talking to these five teachers, it was clear that they all had a great passion for working with young children. They all have different reasons for choosing a career as a teacher and took different paths to where they are today. All the aspects discussed below had a great influence on how these teachers see the learners in their classes, as well as how they experience teacher-child relationships. They clearly treat their children with great altruism and this might affect their perspectives of the TCR when learners experience diverse learning needs. If a teacher truly cares about a child's welfare and happiness, their classroom atmosphere will most likely be a positive one (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009).

Participant 1 initially studied Languages and worked as a publisher before choosing a different career path. She went on to state that she enjoyed working with the younger children, as they are able to express their needs. The five to six-year-old is able to express herself and verbalise her needs (UK Department for Education, 2017). For her, teaching meant forming relationships:

“Teaching is about people, to me it feels as if it is about learning and relationships and about...truly making a difference.” [Participant 1, lines 105,106]

This is a very important part of her reality, as it shapes who she is as a teacher. She wants to build relationships with the children in her class and make a difference in their lives. This teacher's perspective of the teacher-child relationship is clearly positive.

Participant 2 stated that she became a teacher because of the good teachers she had in her life. She struggled at school and certain teachers gave her the opportunities to develop at her own pace in accordance with her individual needs:

“...with ADHD and using concerta during my school years, I think it was one of the things that motivated my career choice.” [Participant 2, lines 12,13]

Because she struggled at school, she saw what a difference it makes when teacher see the individual needs of children. During her interview she talked frequently about good teachers allowing her to do things differently, to do things so that she could learn. She stated that these teachers made small adjustments so that she could be herself in the class. She emphasised that they understood her and that they accepted her for who she was. She stated, “...my thing is, what interested me was athletics and sport, because it was a release of the energy I had” [Participant 2, lines 27,28] and that “they (good teachers) just understood me better” [Participant 2, line 31]. Her perspective of the TCR is shaped by her own experience with diverse learning needs and since certain teachers inspired her, and she herself struggles with a barrier to learning, she is an open-minded teacher who searches for the uniqueness of children:

“...they still think outside the box, they have not yet been placed in boxes.” [Participant 2, line 59].

She felt very strongly about building relationships with all children and that teachers really need to spend quality time with children. Her outlook on the teacher-child relationship was shaped by feeling that her teachers did not always understand her. This had a negative impact on the rest of her schooling experience. This correlates with research done that showed that the quality of the teacher-child relationship in the foundation years has a great impact on further academic achievement, emotional and social development (Lippard, La Paro, Rouse, & Crosby, 2018).

Participant 3 is an older teacher with extensive experience in different age groups. She is very invested in the creative and innovative side of teaching. She loves teaching the younger children, and although she has taught older children, she enjoys the fact that she

is allowed to be creative and that there is not a very strict curriculum for the four- to five-year-olds.

“I can’t think that I will ever go back to school (primary school teaching), I feel that it will suffocate me....it is just so structured.” [Participant 3, lines 83, 85-86]

Research has shown that when teachers are stressed, they are more likely to mismanage the classroom (Kokkinos, Panayiotou, & Davazoglou, 2005) and stressed teachers are likely to become burnt out. When teachers are burnt out, their job performance will be derailed and they might have less tolerance to work with learners who experience diverse learning needs (Pakarinen et al., 2010). For participant 3, the preschool environment is perfect as it does not smother her. It allows for her creative and innovative thinking.

She has experience working with children with diverse learning needs, as she was a facilitator when she was younger and she was a substitute teacher at what was known at the time as a “special class”. She talks with absolute love and care about the children in her class. Her experience has a big influence on the perspective and outlook she has on the TCR with learners who experience diverse learning needs. She uses what she has learned in previous situations to adapt to new challenges.

Participant 4 started her career as a babysitter. She decided to study and enrolled at Unisa, because she wanted to know more about how she can support children and understand them better. She has a desire to know more about how she can support the children, which gives the researcher an understanding of how she experiences the TCR:

“If I can understand the young child better and start to uhm make sense of how the small child does certain things and why they do it...” [Participant 4, lines 55,56]

Participant 5 has a lot of experience with children aged three- to five-years-old. She understands their needs and what can be expected of them. She was also educator in a different country where she had a classroom made up of 95% of the children having a different ethnicity and religion than herself. She loves being a teacher and states that seeing them learn and develop makes her feel fantastic:

“Fantastic. I love the, I love every day of my job.” [Participant 5, line:56]

It is clear that she has great job satisfaction. She describes teaching as “my happy place” [Participant 5, line 59]. Job satisfaction could also give insights into her perspective of the teacher-child relationship. When teachers enjoy their jobs and do not feel stressed about only teaching the curriculum, they tend to have better relationships with children (McGuey & Moore, 2016).

One aspect that has a big influence on the type of teacher she is, is her three-year-old daughter. She states that before she was a mother, she thought differently about teaching. Now, she thinks about her child and about what she would want her daughter’s teacher to do. For her the most important thing is that her daughter is seen and not forgotten in the classroom, so she tries her best to notice all the children in her class and give them all equal amounts of her attention. Her relationship with learners who experience diverse learning needs is one of understanding and inclusion.

These teachers’ experience, personal influences, compassion, altruism, creativity and innovation greatly impact their perspectives of the TCR in classrooms where learners experience diverse learning needs. If teachers feel that they can make a difference and are invested in giving all children a chance, they perceive all children in the same way. If they have been negatively impacted by teachers when they were younger, they strive not to be that teacher. When they are given the freedom to be innovative and creative, they use it in

such a manner that they lead all children to optimal development, forging meaningful relationships with children because they see them as individuals.

It was clear that teachers' personal and professional experiences greatly impacted their perspectives on the teacher-child relationship when learners experience diverse learning needs. What also stood out when answering this question is that most of the teachers stated that all relationships are different, not just the one they have with children who experience different learning needs. One of the teachers stated that all relationships take hard work; working hard on a relationship with a child is thus not dependent on whether they have diverse learning needs.

### *Teaching qualities*

Research has shown that the success of a system, in this case the school and the teacher-child relationship, is linked to the nature of the people who work in the system (Kose & Uzun, 2018). This means that in order for the classroom to function effectively, the teacher needs to be qualified, to have effective teaching qualities (Kose & Uzun, 2018) and to have certain personality traits.

Most of the teachers were in agreement that to be a good preschool teacher, you need to have a passion for teaching and a love for children. Participant 1 even stated that if you do not truly love educating young children, you will run out of patience, stating:

“You must care a lot about the children and you must like them, otherwise your patience will run out.” [Participant 1, line 151]

Teachers need to be caring, loving and have a passion for teaching. Teachers also need to create a safe space for children where they feel supported. Participant 4 specified that the teacher needs to have a passion to connect with the children in her class:

“You must definitively have a passion to connect with that child, to want to see the progress that child makes.” [Participant 4, lines 117,118].

This is an important remark to answer the posed research question. If teachers state that one of the key characteristics of being a teacher is supporting and connecting with all children, it can be presumed that the way they treat their children will be fair and that children will feel safe. When children feel safe, they are more likely to form a relationship with the teacher (Pakarinen et al., 2010).

It is clear that although these teachers are very different and have different influences and backgrounds the one aspect they have in common is the child. All of them want to support and communicate with the children in their classrooms. This means that they try to always place the child first. They do not necessarily see their relationship with children who experience diverse needs as anything else other than individual relationships that take time and work.

#### 4.3.2 Roles and responsibilities

##### *Observing and supporting learners*

Teachers are all different and it is important that these differences are embraced, as it assists the teacher in connecting with and building relationships with children. Teachers have different strengths and weaknesses and they should be able to use their strengths in their classroom (Kose & Uzun, 2018).

When I spoke about the teacher’s role in the classroom, it was clear that the teachers all thought they have an active, participating role in the classroom. They stated that it is their job to observe the children and to support and participate in the learning experience:

“I observe and I help and I do things with them...you don’t just stand at the wall and look at them.” [Participant 3, line 337]

While the children are completing activities, the teacher stated that she uses this time to support them, "...then I am on the carpet, in between the activities, the activities that they are doing" [Participant 5, line 444]. During observations it was clear that these teachers all have a different way of observing and supporting children. This support is essential, as the children who need support the most are not always willing to ask for it:

"(The) child will never ask me to come and do something with him or her."  
[Participant 5, line 797]

By observing and supporting these children with a loving and caring nature, teachers are more likely to build a strong relationship with the learners as they feel noticed and safe (Pianta R. , 1999).

### *Social and emotional development*

Participant 1 and 3 stated that they feel their role is to mediate and facilitate not only academic learning, but also social development. Participant 1 stated that when children argue, it is her job to listen to what they are saying and then lead them to come up with a solution:

"I want the child to start thinking that other children have feelings too and that someone else can also get hurt." [Participant 1, lines 390, 391]

This means that the teacher took responsibility for the social and emotional development of the children in her class. If teachers focus on developing the awareness of relationships, it is a positive aspect, as research has shown that most teachers are not aware of the importance of personal relationships with the child (Gallagher & Mayer, 2008). It might be easier for them to build relationships, as the children have a good role-model (Gallagher



& Mayer, 2008) to show them not only what a good relationship looks like, but also what it takes to build a positive relationship with our friends. This positive relationship is a factor that will enhance the TCR with learners who experience diverse learning needs.

Social and emotional development (UK Department for Education, 2017) are extremely important in these age groups and what they learn here can either support them or hold them back during their schooling years (Willow, 2014). Not only do learners need to build positive relationships with their peers, but they also need to build positive relationships with their teachers, as this sets the tone for the rest of their schooling years (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004); (UK Department for Education, 2017). When teachers then state that social and emotional development are some of the key skills they focus on, it is clear that the teachers see the importance that this play in the child's development and the importance of building relationships (Mukherji, 2014).

#### 4.3.3 Classroom management

Classroom management plays an integral part in building TCR. La Para, Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) state that teachers should plan activities so that children are at all times involved, as young learners learn best when they are actively involved (Davin & Van Staden, 2005). Teachers preoccupied with administration during contact time with the children might miss the opportunity to build relationships, support learners experiencing diverse learning needs and be proactive with regards to behaviour. It is important that there is a structure in place and that teachers are prepared for the day, as there is always something going on in the preschool classroom. The children are still young and need constant supervision and attention (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015). It was clear during observations that a lot goes on in these classrooms; keeping a group of (on average) 20 five-year-olds happy is not an easy task. To truly know the children in the classroom, to build a relationship and to support them

adequately, the teacher needs to be present 100% of the time. Understanding the teachers' classroom management skills supported the researcher to understand how the TCR unfolds in the classroom as it can either enhance the TCR, or negatively impact it.

### *Classroom atmosphere*

Research clearly states that children thrive in classrooms where they feel safe, welcome and have emotional support (Hatfield, Burchinal, Pianta, & Sideris, 2016). Where these conditions are present, it is more likely that children will feel free to explore, take chances and make mistakes. They will communicate with the teacher and the teacher will be able to support all the children's individual needs.

During observations, it was clear that there is always a lot going on in these classrooms. The children are chatting with friends, singing songs, playing games and busy with all types of activities. The teachers made it clear that they wanted their classrooms to be the child's home away from home. Describing their classroom atmosphere, they used vocabulary like homey, relaxed, loud, a learning environment, full of love and caring:

"relaxed and loud." [Participant 1, line 178]

"colourful at times messy...a learning environment" [Participant 2, line 109,117]

"I am like a mother for them at school." [Participant 5, line 109]

This comment says a great deal about the type of relationship the teacher wants with the child and this corresponds with what research listed as one of the perspectives of the teacher-child relationship (Zhang & Sun, 2011); (Mejia & Hoglund, 2016). The teachers want the children to feel relaxed and comfortable in their class. They wanted to give a good routine and structure, but also made it clear that children should be allowed to move around freely and just be children.

“...create an atmosphere that gives the child a sense of freedom and freedom to move, freedom to communicate and the freedom to socialise” [Participant 4, line 175].

This links directly to what Mejia and Hoglund (2016) state about closeness with the teacher. Children form stronger bonds with teachers who show warmth and security in the relationship.

Great emphasis was placed on the happiness of the children, as shown in this quote: “Their happiness comes first,” [Participant 2, line 128]. This shows that the teacher really cares about how the child perceives school and the teacher. When this teacher was asked whether the children enjoyed being in her class, she said without hesitation that they do and that this is one of the main things that she wants for the children in her class.

“At one point I was unhappy to go to school and that makes everything a challenge, I don’t want them to ever feel like that.” [Participant 2, line 125]

During observations, I saw teachers making real efforts to keep children happy, entertained and actively busy. They made use of songs, rhymes, stories and puppets. I could see that the children belonged in the classroom, that is was their classrooms and this makes a big difference in the happiness of children. The children’s photos, names and artwork were displayed in the class. All of this creates a welcoming classroom atmosphere. When these teachers go out of their way to create a loving and caring classroom atmosphere, it shows that they are attentive to the needs of children in their class. To the researcher this shows that they value the learners in their class and they want to create an environment where everyone feels welcome. This is a factor that will enhance the TCR for all learners in the classroom.

### *Planning, structure and adaptations according to individual needs*

A preschool classroom is very unpredictable; anything can happen at any time. That is why good planning and structure is very important. Children need to know that they have your attention and that when they need you, you will be able to support them. When this happens, children feel comfortable (Pakarinen et al., 2010) and safe in the classroom. This is what is needed for the teacher to build a relationship with children.

Teachers need to be responsive rather than reactive (Pakarinen et al., 2010), which means that teachers should be observant and see when a child is about to do something that is against the rules (Bihler et al., 2018). This will allow the teacher to support before something bad happens, which means that she will not have to raise her voice or be angry with the child. In turn, the child will feel supported and cared for, which means that children know exactly what is expected of them and what is allowed and not allowed.

The teachers of each age group do their yearly and weekly planning together and although they do the same activities, each of them makes small adjustments that suits the children in their class, as well as their own personalities. Participant 3 stated that planning and structure is very important, but because each day is different, you need to be able to adjust the programme to accommodate the children:

“Those things change daily, depending on how the children come in and how they are.” [Participant 3, line 313]

“If you are a teacher, you have to be adaptable.” [Participant 4, line 503]

Teachers who are able to adapt and change their planning on the spot allow for more variety in their classroom; when teachers are flexible, they are more likely to see individual needs and really pay attention to children. This shows that the teachers try to incorporate all children and place value on each individual child's needs. The researcher found that the

more teachers place value on all the learners in the class, the easier it is for them to build positive relationships with learners who experience diverse needs, because they see all children for who they are and not for their different needs.

### *Time management*

Time management and planning has a direct impact on the building of relationships. If a teacher spends more time on administrative tasks and preparing for the next lesson, she will not be spending time with the children. While the children are working, the teacher should be actively involved in their activities. I saw this in the classrooms, participant 3 moved through the classroom and made sure that she checked each child's activities. This shows her attentiveness to support all the learners in her class. After she moved about for a while, she went to sit on the carpet with the children who were busy with puzzles. She talked to the group of children and supported them with the building of their puzzles. When a teacher spends quality time with children, it shows that she wants to build relationships with the learners. Good time management skills allowed her to spend time with the children.

Participant 4 did the same, but she chose to play a mathematics game with a few children on the carpet. She talked to them about what they were doing and in a playful manner assessed mathematical concepts like counting, more and less. The children enjoyed this kind of attention so much that they all wanted to take part in the game.

Participant 2 stated that while the children are busy with the activities, she feels that there is always something to do. Other than observing the children, she said that most of the time she will be busy getting ready for a next lesson or to help to clean the class, since "there is always something happening" [Participant 2, line 438]. These aspects boil down to less than ideal time and classroom management. The same teacher later stated that she struggles with time management and spends time on weekends to organise her classroom and activities. This is definitely a factor that challenges the teacher's relationship with

learners who experience diverse learning needs. During observations she supported individual children, but she was also busy with administrative tasks and cleaning, which meant that some of the children's behaviour went unnoticed. This might lower her awareness and responsiveness (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008), which negatively influences the TCR. Although the teacher throughout the interview stated the importance of the TCR with learners with diverse needs, when it came to time management, she did not have the appropriate knowledge to link the two concepts. She was however aware that this could negatively impact the relationship she has with the children in her class. She stated that she feels there is not enough time in the day to do everything and that unfortunately her relationship with the children comes second when days are very busy.

On the other hand, where there are good planning and time management, teachers noted that they have more time to spend with the children and thus more time to build relationships. This is a factor that enhances the teacher-child relationship. Participant 3 said that she always prepares her classroom at the end of the day. She sets her activities on the tables and gets everything ready that she might need the next day. This allows her to be calmer when the new day starts; she knows everything is ready. It reminded me of the saying, "Failing to plan is planning to fail".

"You can use your time better, it's calmer, you are not looking for things, when someone has a bumped toe...then my things are there." [Participant 3, line 439]

#### 4.3.4 Interaction and communication

##### *Techniques used in the diverse classroom setting*

Interaction and communication play an integral part in building relationships with children. The manner in which the teacher communicates with a child sets an example for how they should interact with their friends. Hamre et al. (2014) state that language modelling is an important part of instructional support (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). If the

teacher wants to convey a certain message or explain an activity, research states that she should strive to promote higher-order thinking skills (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009).

While talking to the teachers, it was clear that there are certain techniques they use to ensure good communication with their children. When these teachers notice the importance of good communication skills, it shows their commitment to the child's social and language development. If these teachers promote these skills, it shows the researcher how the teacher-child relationship unfolds in the classroom. Teachers who make an effort to have effective communication with children are more likely to have good relationships with the children in their class. In diverse classroom settings it is important to try to adapt the communication techniques used to ensure maximum participation and learning.

The teachers stated that it is important to make eye contact and be on the child's eye level. This correlates with the CLASS structure, as it supports the notion of a positive climate where children feel safe (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). Participant 5 mentioned that it has become second nature for her to have a small chair near her so that when a child comes to her to talk, she can sit on it. This allows her to be the same height as the child. To her this shows that she is fully present and listening to the child. Being present makes the child feel important and this gives the researcher a better understanding of the teacher's perspective, as she shows she really cares about all the children in her classroom.

Participant 1 mentioned that when she talks to individual children in her class, she tends to speak softer and let them sit on her lap or stand next to her. This gives the children more confidence to speak openly and to her it means that she is really invested and listening to what they have to say. According to research done by Pakarinen et al. (2010), when teachers notice children's interest, they provide the child with emotional support needed for learning to take place and relationships to form. Noticing children's interests place emphasis on the teacher wanting to support children with diverse needs. When she knows more about the children in her class, she will be able to support them more effectively.

“...to show that I am really interested, and that my attention is on them.” [Participant 1, line 445]

This shows what another teacher confirmed: to build a relationship with a preschool child, you need to build their confidence (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014) and they must feel safe enough to come and talk to you about anything.

“They should not be afraid to ask.” [Participant 3, line 600]

“(I) want children to say how they feel.” [Participant 5, line 111]

Participant 4 is very sensitive and aware of the individual child’s needs. She noted that because these children are so young, you need to handle them with care and be soft-spoken. Teacher sensitivity (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009) has an impact on the emotional support the teacher shows in her classroom. Being sensitive to the child’s needs creates a safe environment for them to explore.

“So you can build or break a child at that age.” [Participant 4, line 293]

By allowing the children in her class to explore and be themselves and accepting their natural personality differences, this teacher builds her relationship with all the children in her class. Her perspective is that noticing the child with diverse needs and ensuring that the child feels comfortable in the class will support not only their relationship, but also the child’s individual needs.



## *Challenges and strategies*

Teachers experienced challenges when it came to building meaningful relationships with children experiencing diverse learning needs, specifically behavioural and emotionally distant children. One teacher stated that she does not feel a connection with one of the boys in her class, because to him interaction does not matter. At this point in his life he cannot communicate effectively and when she speaks to him, he does not listen.

In all of these classes it was clear that the children love to talk and tell stories. During interviews, I was interested to learn how the teachers make time for all these stories. Most of them found that this was challenging, as they want to give children enough time to express themselves, but the other children cannot sit still long enough to listen to everyone's stories. Managing the time was thus another challenge and how to balance the individual children's needs to tell their story despite the group's attention span. Participant 5 stated that when she sees the other children are losing interest and becoming fidgety, she tells the children that they can come and tell her their stories at a later time.

Participant 1 talked about fidget toys; she started handing them out only to children who truly needed them during circle time. The other children almost became jealous and wanted to use them as well:

“At one stage I told everyone to put everything away, because at that point almost all of them had something because they think it is a big treat...and then it turns into a fight thing between them which defeats the whole purpose.” [Participant 1, line 241]

Another challenge these teachers experienced was how to involve the shy child and the child with diverse learning needs. Participation is crucial when teaching children (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009) and these teachers want all the children to actively take part in communication, but do not want to put a spotlight on a child who does not like it.

“No one wants to talk when they are in the spotlight, I mean if you don’t like it you will not say anything.” [Participant 4, line 279]

During observations, I could see the effort that went into involving these children and trying to incorporate all the personalities in the classroom. Force characteristics can either hinder or support the TCR (Swart & Pettipher, 2016) and aspects like shyness could negatively impact the TCR, whereas when children are more curious and talkative, they might spend more time with the teacher.

Although the classes I observed were small, most of the teachers said that one of the biggest challenges for them is giving all the children the same amount of time and support. A child experiencing diverse learning needs usually demands more time and attention. Participant 3 stated that she feels that no amount of time spent with a child experiencing diverse learning needs in her class is enough and that she cannot give him all the support would like to give:

“It is just that I can’t always give him the attention he needs...because it is like the attention of 30 children.” [Participant 3, line 778]

Almost all of the teachers felt that when you spend a lot of time with one child your relationship with the others will not be as strong and because certain learners receive special attention, other children feel left out. This became clear in participant 3’s classroom as well, as one of the children was moving around the whole time, not for one moment participating in circle time and although she knew he needed to move about, the other children did not understand this and were so preoccupied with his movements that they also stopped participating.

Participant 1 found her relationship with children who are disruptive to be confusing. She felt that she is at times stricter and not always as nice as she wants to be, but she stated, “Some love me, and I don’t always understand why.” (Participant 1, line 82).

It became clear that although the teachers want to include learners with diverse learning needs, this seems to be a big challenge when children do not participate, are inattentive or show behavioural problems. It could be that these teachers do not have the necessary knowledge on how to include certain children and despite their best efforts these children are not effectively included in the learning process.

#### 4.3.5 Knowing the child as an individual

When you walk into a typical South African classroom, you are going to find a variety of children with a variety of needs. South Africa started embracing inclusive classrooms and documents such as Quality Education for All 9 (Department of Education, 1997) and White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) giving structure to how classrooms could become more inclusive.

All children are different and as such have different learning needs. That is why teachers should embrace differences and support each individual child. Barriers to learning are faced by all children at some point in their life (Swart & Pettipher, 2016) and teachers must try to support learners as soon as these diverse learning needs arise. When diverse learning needs are adequately supported, children are able to achieve and learn to the best of their abilities. It is important to see children as a whole (McGuey & Moore, 2016).

As stated in Chapters 2 and 3, the CLASS was used as a conceptual framework (Howes & Hamilton, 1993) that allowed the researcher to look at the interaction between the child and the teacher, as well as how teachers use their environment, tools and the context (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009). The context (Swart & Pettipher, 2016) plays a very important role when one looks at the individual children in one’s class. Each child has a

different background and come from different homes and experiences. All of these experiences have an impact on how they respond to the teacher in the classroom.

This part of the findings will be discussed by incorporating and linking all the sub-themes stipulated in Table 6. These sub-themes are divided in two parts. Firstly, “What do I need to know about the child and why?”. Secondly, “What kinds of differentiation and adaptations do teachers make in the classrooms to support learners?”

It seemed that all teachers thought that a big positive influence is the fact that they need to know the child. They need to be aware of who the child is, as well as the background of the child. Participant 5 stated that to build a good relationship with the child, she looks out for things that the child likes and talks to the child about these topics.

“...then it makes more sense why the child acts certain ways.” [Participant 5, line 290]

This makes sense and while observing the classrooms, I could see that teachers who understood the children in their class had less problems with discipline and getting children to take part in activities. Understanding the child means that the teacher will know, for example, that the child will not enjoy painting with his fingers and pre-empt an issue by supporting the child during painting. The amount of time and love the child receives from the teacher also has an influence:

“It definitely has an impact, the love and attention that you give to that child.” [Participant 4, line 849]

### *Acknowledging differences*

To create an emotionally supportive atmosphere (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009), teachers need to be aware of children’s individual needs (Pakarinen et al., 2010).

When talking and observing the participants, it was clear that one of the things that they enjoyed and cared about was the uniqueness and diverse needs of the children:

“Each child is different and there are a lot of different personalities and different ways they are and how they do things.” [Participant 2, line 74]

This was participant 2’s answers when she was asked what she enjoyed most about teaching young children. It is important to understand the children you work with; if you do not understand their needs, development and who they are, it will be difficult to build a relationship with them. Being aware of this shows a lot about how the teacher perceives the relationships she has with children experiencing diverse needs in her class. She emphasises the importance of being aware of the children’s individual needs and personalities. In her classroom, it was clear that it is not only something she says, but she makes it part of her teaching.

Participant 3 made it very clear that she does not want all of the children in her classroom to be the same and their work should not look the same either. She stated that when all their work looks the same and they all do the same things, they will not learn.

“They get exposed to 20 (children) and not just one (child), so it’s, it’s a swop and interaction the whole time, because I think on this stage (age) it is especially needed for emotional and social development.” [Participant 3, line 595]

### *Adapting instructional formats*

As a teacher you need to adapt your instructional formats (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). All the teachers, when explaining work, make use of more than one way of explaining activities. Most of them start with explaining what they want the children to do and while doing this, some of them will show the children what to do. Others will show after they have explained. During interviews, Participants 2 and 4 stated that this is important as

all children learn in different ways. Participant 4 stated that some of the verbal explanations are lost on some of the children in her class and that demonstrations work better.

Each teacher has their own way of teaching and their own personality, but when it comes to interacting and teaching children, you need to give them what they need instead of what is easiest for you. As stated by Harty and Alant (2016), you need to build a positive environment for children that will have a positive effect on them.

### *Information needed to support learners experiencing diverse learning needs*

When working with young children there are certain things you need to know about them in order to support their individual needs and build strong relationships. All the participants stated that knowing the children on an individual level was of the utmost importance when supporting children and building relationships with them.

“You can’t really help them if you don’t know them.” [Participant 3, line 196]

Participant 2 echoed this when she stated that “the more you know, the better”. She continued to state that she needs to know what the children think and what goes on in their minds. In order to do this, she needs to know what they like and dislike, what happens in their family life, how they communicate and what they are like. She stated that you need to know everything about the child. She also said that she knows some of the children better because of their personalities. This could be because the teacher has certain demand characteristics (Swart & Pettipher, 2016) that directly correlates with that of the child.

Why is it important for teachers to know the children’s individual needs? Participant 4 stated that if she does not see the child for who he or she is, how would she be able to help them? This seemed to be an important aspect: the teachers used their knowledge of the children’s personalities, likes, dislikes and so on to support them during their learning processes. Participant 5 stated that one of her children has separation anxiety and when

she started to build a relationship and talk to this child, she found out that she loves birds. She used this knowledge to make the separation a bit easier for the child. She made sure that there was a bird-themed activity ready each morning and as soon as the child said goodbye to her parents, the teacher joined her at the bird activity.

Participant 2 stated that she used the things that make the children happy in the activities she prepared for them. If she knew one of the girls liked unicorns, there would be a unicorn puzzle. When I asked her how she knows all of this, she stated that children love to talk and when they talk, they tell you the stories that are important to them. She finds that it is very important to really listen to them. She can thus use this knowledge to involve learners with diverse needs.

“Just to walk the extra mile a bit, to find out who they really are... [Participant 2, line 139]”

“Be observant to what their interests and needs are and try to remember it.” [Participant 5, line 113]

“If you do not connect with the child...as a person I can reach them better when I want to teach them something or if I want their participation, so there has to be a relationship for me to get them to participate.” [Participant 1, line 315]

It is very important to know what social and emotional skills the children in your class have. Participant 4 stated that she knows the four- to five-year-olds are at times scared to try something new. So, she makes sure that when she packs out a new activity that she is there to support them at that specific table and that the activity is there for more than one day. Participant 3 said exactly the same and that the children who are afraid to do the task the first day will try it the second day and love it on the third day. When you truly know a child, it is easier for you to know why they react certain ways (Participants 4 and 5). This

supports the child with diverse learning needs, as some children might need more support with new activities.

### *Differentiation and adaptations to support all learners*

When reading the SIAS document (Department of Basic Education, 2014) it is clear that teacher should not only be aware of the differences that children have but also have strategies to support the learners. Supporting learners is also important when building a relationship with children, because it shows a child that the teacher cares and that she cares enough about him or her.

The preschool classroom allows itself for a lot of differentiation and adjustments as it is a play-based curriculum (Independent Schools Association of South Africa, Southern African Heads of Independent Schools Association, 2015). For teachers to differentiate and support children experiencing diverse learning needs they need to observe the children in their class very carefully. This was a big talking point during interviews and something that I saw in all the classrooms during observations. While the children work the teachers spend time with a lot of individuals and support them where they need support. Some of the teachers also made notes every now and then. During interviews I noticed that some teachers found differentiation as second nature.

“I think it happens naturally.” [Participant 1, line 719]

Participant 2 said that you make adaptations as you go along; you look at what the child needs and then make sure you support them. It was important for the teachers that when a child receives additional support, they are not seen as someone who needs help, but that all children need help with some of the work.

“They are not singled out.” [Participant 2, line 650]



Participant 3 stated that she differentiates a lot, but that it is not so obvious to the children. She packs out a variety of activities with variations that practise the same skill, but on different levels of competencies. On her tables she had clay, a drawing activity, symmetry activities and shape matching. Many of these activities will practise the child's fine motor skills, but they can choose where they want to start.

Teachers had different strategies to support the diverse needs in their class. Most of them stated that they made use of a lot of individual attention and that this usually gives the child the motivation s/he needs to do the activity.

Participant 5 stated that she knows certain children in her class do not want to talk in front of the whole class, so she does not force them to do so, instead she lets them speak in smaller groups or individually. During observations it was clear that some children spoke the whole time and it was impossible not to notice them, while other children never spoke. This encompasses the different personalities in the classroom. This can have a big influence on the relationship the teacher builds with the child. In this instance, it is very important to understand their personalities. Participant 2 said that knowing whether a child is shy or outspoken is one of the first things you pick up and need to know. Knowing this will allow the teacher to know not to put a spotlight on the shy child. At times the child might not answer you in a big group, not because s/he does not know the answer, but because s/he is shy. This has to do with the force characteristics (Swart & Pettipher, 2016) of the child and when children are shy and the teacher is not, it can hinder the teacher-child relationship.

Some adaptations happen easily and some children only need a small amount of support. Participant 2 stated that sometimes just giving the children more time allows them to complete a task without needing additional support and for children who struggle to finish activities because they have weak fine motor skills, she makes small adjustments to the activities. She said that she decides what is the most important part of the activity, i.e. what

is the goal, and then the child can leave out certain parts. For example, when they are practising sequencing it is not that important to colour all the pictures, but placing them in the correct order is more important.

Participant 5 stated that she always tries to see where the children are developmentally and then support them from there. She makes use of the concept of scaffolding (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014) to support the children in her classroom.

“I try to take each child from their level to the next level” [Participant 5, line 313]

Supporting children is a continuous process and the most important thing is to be adaptable and truly know what the individual child needs. Participant 1 said that she makes different plans to accommodate the different learning needs of the children and that these plans change as the children develop, because they develop so fast.

#### 4.3.6 Relationships

##### *Relationship with role-players*

When working with children it is important to understand that the child is part of a system (Swart & Pettipher, 2016), which means that the child is part of a community and that there are role-players that have influence their lives. It is important for teachers to build relationships with these people, especially when the child experiences diverse learning needs.

One of the prominent role-players in the young child's life is his parents, and all the teachers mentioned in their interviews that communication with the parents plays an integral part when working with the children, especially those who need extra support. Participant 1 stated that contacting the parents is always the first thing she does when she notices that a child is struggling. The parents can play a big role to support the child. When they are at

school, the teacher has to work with a class full of children and they do not always come around to supporting everyone each day to the extent that they would want to. When the parents are on board, they can support the child with certain activities at home.

“Parents play a big role, there are things that we don’t get to in class, so...if a parent is involved, it makes a huge difference.” [Participant 1, line 863]

“...then we work together as a team.” [Participant 4, line 122]

Participant 3 stated that she wants the parents to know that their children are safe in her hands and that she is a “placeholder” for them at school. This comment links closely to the attachment theory discussed in Chapter 2. Teachers fulfil the role of a caregiver and when children feel safe and secure, this helps them to build better relationships. So, when parents work with teachers and communicate with teachers, the children see this and they see that the parents and teachers are a team.

“Parents need to know that you are in their place (at school) but in a different role.” [Participant 3, line 126]

When the teachers explained the relationship they have with parents, it was clear that they saw this as an important part of the relationship they have with learners experiencing diverse learning needs. It showed the researcher that when these teachers work with the parents, they see the individuality of the diverse learning needs in their class. When asking parents to support the learning process, it showed that they cared for the individual needs of the children.

### *Relationship with the children in the classroom*

The main research question of this study were to find out what the teachers’ perspectives of the teacher-child relationship was with learners experiencing diverse

learning needs. After the interviews it was clear that teachers have very different experiences of the teacher-child relationship. Partly this was because they had different children with various learning needs in their class, and partly because of their personal experiences.

The researcher feels that the environment these teachers teach in allows them to focus on the relationships they have with the children. The teachers do not only focus on the emotional skills, but they do see that if a child is not self-assured or positive regarding his/her abilities, s/he will not be able to cope academically. It was clear that building relationships with children experiencing diverse learning needs were a challenge, but it became clear that to most of the teachers, the diverse needs of the learners in their class do not impact their relationships. Participant 1 stated that all relationships were hard work, not only the ones they have with learners who experience diverse learning needs.

“You have to work hard on your relationship with the children.” [Participant 1, line 267]

This seemed to be a challenge to some teachers; these teachers tried to build positive relationships with the children, but it was not always possible.

“I wish I could say all (relationships) are the same, but they are not all the same.” [Participant 1, line 322]

What became clear during the interviews and observations is that although these teachers tried to build positive relationships with all children, for some of them it was a challenge to balance the amount of time they spent with individual children. Participants 2 and 3 stated that they feel they cannot always spend enough time with the child experiencing diverse learning needs. They also reported that they feel they neglect the other children.

This was possibly the big difference: when children do not really care for social interaction and are happy to be on their own and in their own space, the teachers found it difficult to build relationships. They described these relationships as forced and not completely natural. Participant 5 felt that she had to initiate all communication and that she has to make a big effort to spend time with this child. Where other children will come and tell stories, show off their work and just chat with her, she had to remind herself every day to make special time for this child.

This shows that teachers need reciprocity when they are building relationships with the children, but when children do not react to what the teacher does, it bothers the teacher and complicates the relationship. Another teacher found that to build a positive relationship with the child, she needed to bend over backwards and put in a lot more effort and even then, it did not seem to make a difference.

Participant 2 stated that the relationship she has with one of the children who experience diverse learning needs in her class is not what she wants it to be. She stated that this specific relationship took very long to develop and that even at a later point in the year, it still feels “delayed and distant” to her. She said that it feels like the child does not want to have a relationship with her and that he does not respond to eye contact.

“...he is happier alone” [Participant 2, line 638]

The child withdraws and to the teachers, this puts a lot of strain on the relationship. This seems to be something that upset the teacher. She states that the relationship that they have is not an emotional one and she describes it as “superficial”. Participant 5 stated the same; that there are some relationships that do not form naturally and that she has to force the relationship. What is clear is that neither of these teachers gave up on the relationship and that they keep working on it every day. She thinks of new opportunities to spend time

with him and talk to him, because he does not do this spontaneously as some of the other children do. When she has a child that she struggles to form a bond with, she works harder because she knows that in order to support him, she needs to understand him.

“So, our relationship has to be a bit stronger so that he will allow me to help him.”  
[Participant 5, line 820]

Participant 4 said that she feels that when a child needs support, it actually makes their relationship stronger and that she needs to remind herself that the other children in the class also need support. This is why observations are so important.

“Try as much as possible to get to all of the children...give them all a fair chance to connect.” [Participant 4, line 833]

Participant 1 and 3 found that it is easier to build a positive relationship with learners who need a lot of support, as they must support them and they need to give them more attention in order for them to develop. Both these teachers were more worried about their relationship with the middle child. To them it was easier to “forget” about the child that does not need your help, but is a bit shy so the communication must be initiated by the teacher.

Two of the teachers stated that seeing the children develop enhances the relationship they have with the child. One teacher stated that with a specific child she put a lot of effort into the relationship, as this child was distant and did not participate at all. At the end of the term she was pleased to see the big difference in the child’s emotional state and this gave her the proof she needed to keep working hard with this child.

“The child is too afraid to do it, and then how the child in one term develops so that she can do it.” [Participant 1, line 118]

When building relationships with children, it is clear that you need to spend quality time with the children. After the observations and the interviews, it was clear to me that these teachers teach in an environment that supports this. A preschool allows teachers to spend a lot of time with individual learners because, although there is a curriculum, it is not yet as strict and it is play-based. All the teachers have additional support in their classrooms which also allows them to be more flexible in the classroom, because there is always someone else to help them. The researcher did however notice that this additional support in the form of a classroom assistant did not always mean that the teacher better supported learners who experience diverse learning needs. Teachers still struggled to include learners who show behavioural challenges.

#### **4.4 Strengths of the research**

Thanks to the nature of the study, the researcher could gain an in-depth understanding of the teachers' perspectives with regard to the teacher-child relationship when learners experience diverse learning needs. She also knew the participants to a certain extent, as she is a teacher at the school where the research was conducted. This possibly ensured that the participants were comfortable talking to her. This was useful especially because she wanted teacher to talk about personal experiences.

The study had the specific objectives to describe teacher-child relationships, understand how the teacher-child relationship unfolds in the preschool and to understand the teachers' experiences of the teacher-child relationship. The findings of this study support previous studies of the teacher-child relationship, especially with regard to the factors that build a positive TCR and the impact of disruptive behaviour on the teacher-child relationship.

## **4.5 Possible limitations of the study**

The limited scope of the study could be a limitation, as the researcher only used data collected from five participants. This means that although it was not the objective of the study, the data cannot be generalised.

The specific barriers to learning that were encountered in this school were mostly intrinsic barriers like fine motor skills, gross motor skills, perceptual skills, social and emotional development. Although there were no diagnoses of children with neurological barriers to learning, two of the teachers mentioned that they wanted children to see a developmental psychologist. This might limit the impact of the barriers to learning on the TCR.

## **4.6 Recommendations and further research possibilities**

The researcher feels that this particular context is very supportive of teachers and that it should be kept in mind when reading the findings. There is an opportunity to do the same research in a setting where teachers do not have the support, or where learners have more specific learning needs.

It was interesting that although the teachers all have teaching assistants in their classrooms, they still found it difficult to balance time management and support diverse individual needs. More research could be done on how teachers can successfully make use of support in the classroom to support diverse learning needs. Teacher and teacher assistant training could also have a positive impact on the perspectives the teachers have of the TCR with learners who experience diverse learning needs.

The particular factors that enhance the teacher-child relationship and teacher characteristics could be used to make other teachers not only aware of the importance of the teacher-child relationship for the development of all children, but it could also be used as a guide to support teachers who struggle to form a good teacher-child relationship. During



the research it was clear that teachers are aware of the diverse needs of the children in their classrooms, but as soon as they encountered disruptive behaviour, inattentiveness and children who do not want to participate, they did not know how to form positive relationships. The information collected can be used for pre-service teacher programmes. It could support teachers on being aware of how certain things impact the TCR and that they should be aware that thinking you have an inclusive environment does not necessarily mean you are including all children with diverse needs.

## **4.7 Conclusion**

In the final chapter of this study, the researcher discussed findings and integrated previous research, as well as discussions. The strengths, limitations and opportunities for further research were noted.

It seems that the teachers in this particular preschool setting place high value on relationships and the holistic development of all the children. This means that they think about the fact that they need to have a good relationship with children in order to support them. They acknowledged that all children need support and that all children are different, so all relationships are different.

Although they did not think that there is a difference between the relationships they have with learners with barriers to learning and other learners in the class, they did state that some relationships take more work. Mostly the researcher found that teachers struggled the most to form relationships with children who show behavioural problems and children who are socially distant.

It is clear that when teachers realise the importance of holistic development and teacher-child relationships, they will support all learners to develop and grow to their

potential. The teachers in this study did not see children with barriers to learning as different, because they see all children as different and unique.

The researcher reflected on her own teacher-child relationship with learners who experience barriers to learning and feels that if an educator truly cares about the development of the child, building a teacher-child relationship will always come first.

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## Addenda A: Ethical approval



### NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC Humanities New Application Form

6 February 2019

Project number: 7426

Project Title: Pre-school teachers' perspectives of the teacher-child relationship when learners experience barriers to learning.

Dear Miss Jo-Mari De Boer

Your REC Humanities New Application Form submitted on 28 November 2018 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities.

Please note the following for your approved submission:

**Ethics approval period:**

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
6 February 2019	5 February 2020

#### GENERAL COMMENTS:

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

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (7426) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

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.

#### **FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD**

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

#### **Included Documents:**

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Data collection tool	Observation sheet (CLASS in rhyme)	02/06/2018	
Proof of permission	Research approval letter	02/06/2018	
Proof of permission	School letterwriting	04/06/2018	
Data collection tool	Semi-structured interview schedule Jule	05/07/2018	2
Default	REC modifications letter	22/11/2018	1
Information sheet	Information sheet	25/11/2018	
Research Protocol/Proposal	Pre-school teachers' perspectives of the teacher-child relationship when learners experience barriers to learning 25 November	25/11/2018	
Parental consent form	Consent form	25/11/2018	
Informed Consent	Consent form	26/11/2018	



Directorate: Research

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**REFERENCE:** 20180523–2432

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Jo-Mari De Beer  
3 Nerina Street  
Wellington  
7655

**Dear Ms Jo-Mari De Beer**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: PRE-SCHOOLS TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE TEACHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP WHEN LEARNERS EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

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

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **04 June 2018 till 27 September 2019**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

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

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.  
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard  
**Directorate: Research**  
**DATE: 20 May 2019**



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Geagte [REDACTED]

Ek is tans besig met 'n Meesters Graad in Ondersteunende Opvoedkunde en om my graad te voltooi moet ek 'n tesis inhandig. Ek sal graag my navorsing wil voltooi by [REDACTED] spesifiek Graad 0 en Graad R. Hier volg 'n kort uiteensetting van die navorsing wat ek beplan om te doen.

My geregistreerde titel by die Universiteit van Stellenbosch is:

Pre-school teachers' perspectives of the teacher-child relationship when learners experience barriers to learning.

In hierdie studie beoog ek om onderwysers se perspektiewe rakende hulle verhouding met leerders wat hindernisse tot leer ervaar, te ondersoek. Die fokus gaan net op die onderwyser wees, ek wil hulle ervaringe en belewenisse vasstel en verstaan. Sodoende kan ek 'n gedetailleerde begrip vorm van hulle ervaringe en perspektiewe.

Ek beplan om met 5 onderwysers onderhoude te voer en dan vir 'n kort tydjie elkeen waar te neem in hulle klaskamers. Alle inligting sal so hanteer word dat die individue en skool se ware identiteite nie gebruik word nie.

Ek sal dit waardeer as ek die kans gegun word om my navorsing by Huppelland te kan doen. Vir verdere inligting sien gerus my navorsingsvoorstel. U is ook welkom om my of my studieleier (Lynette Collair 021 8082304) te kontak.

Groete

Jo-Mari de Beer [REDACTED]

## Addenda B: Participant information sheet and consent form

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### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (INFORMATION SHEET)**

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#### **Exploring teacher's perspectives of teacher-child relationship when learners experience barriers to learning.**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jo-Mari de Beer (Bed Foundation Phase, Bed HONS Educational Support) from the Educational Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. Results from this research will contribute to the completion of my Thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a pre-school teacher who work with children who experience barriers to learning. Participant are selected based on the information they can contribute to this study.

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study is aimed to interpret and understand the teacher-child relationship in the early educational years so to form a better description of what teacher-child relationships encompasses when learners have barriers to learning.

The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of teachers on the teacher-child relationship, especially with regards to the learner with barriers to learning. This will allow us to see how relationships differ from classroom to classroom as well as show variables that may have an impact on teacher-child relationships.

Through this research the researcher aims to use the information gathered to understand teacher's perspectives of teacher-child relationships when learners experience barriers to learning better so to help educate all teachers of the importance of a positive teacher-child relationship.

#### **2. PROCEDURES**

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

The first step of this research project is to obtain the necessary information. This information sheet explains the interview process. Participants will need to think of relevant cases (children with barriers to learning).

One on one interviews will be held with all participants in this study (the teachers). During this interview a variety of questions will be asked based on personal information about each participant as well as teacher-child relationships.

These interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed word-for-word and coded so that the researcher can specify themes within interviews. Interviews will take place at school in the teacher's classrooms on a day and at a time that suits them individually.

The participants will be observed for a short amount of time, where the researcher will come to the classroom to observe the variety of interactions. It is proposed that a single, 60 minutes observation will be held per teacher. This will take place at the end of the first term.

Participants will receive the transcribed interviews and fieldnotes and are allowed to question these notes.

### **3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The only foreseeable risk or discomfort that I anticipate may be that participants will be reluctant to speak to the researcher as she is a colleague. This will, as far as possible, be subsided by providing privacy and pseudonyms for all participants. It is important that participants know that the focus will not be on grading or testing their teaching skills, this research will focus on perceptions of teacher!

If at any time during the research the participants have a negative response to the interviews or observations the researcher will contact her supervisor as well as give the participant the contact information of a school psychologist.

### **4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

I believe that findings from this research will support teachers in seeing the important role they play in young children's lives. The information could be used to teach other teachers about the importance of teacher-child relationships, specifically with children who experience barriers to learning.

The study could provide information that may be used for teacher-training and development, to assist teachers when working with learners with barriers to learning and give a better understanding as to the relationship between teachers and children who experience barriers to learning.

## **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

Participants will not receive payment for their participation in this study.

## **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 the following ethical considerations.

All interviews will be conducted face-to-face. All interviews will be transcribed word for word with the participant's permission. The interviews will be transcribed verbatim with the necessary permission and accent by informants and participants. As the participants are minors they will give consent and their parent will sign a consent form.

Field notes will be taken during observations and the researcher will distance herself from that being observed.

All interview transcriptions and observational field notes will be kept as password protected files on the researcher's personal laptop. The participants and all informants will be provided with pseudonym in order to protect their privacy. Even though participants receive pseudonyms, the researcher will be careful in the manner which participants are portrayed so to ensure that they can't be identified by the way that they are described. Participation remains voluntary and participants need to know that they have the right to opt-out of the study and how to do so.

Participant will have the opportunity to review all transcriptions of interviews and field notes taken from observations.

## **7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

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:

Investigator: Jo-Mari de Beer



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Supervisor: Me. Lynette Collair

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## 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 [REDACTED] at the Division for Research Development.

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to \_\_\_\_\_. She was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in Afrikaans and no translator was used.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

---

**Exploring teacher's perspectives of teacher-child relationship when learners experience barriers to learning.**

You were asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jo-Mari de Beer from the Educational Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. Results from this research will contribute to the completion of my thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a kindergarten teacher who works with children who experience barriers to learning. Participants are selected based on the information they can contribute to this study.

**10. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of teachers on the teacher-child relationship, especially with regards to the learner with barriers to learning. This will allow us to see how relationships differ from classroom to classroom as well as show variables that may have an impact on teacher-child relationships.

Through this research the researcher aims to use the information gathered to understand teacher's perspectives of teacher-child relationships when learners experience barriers to learning better so to help educate all teachers of the importance of the role of the teacher-child relationship and to provide support to teachers who may experience challenges with their learners.

**11. PROCEDURES**

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

The first step of this research project is to obtain the necessary information. In order to do so, all participants will receive an information sheet that explains the interview proses. Participants will need to think of five relevant cases (children with barriers to learning).

One on one interviews will be held with all participants in this study (the teachers). During this interview a variety of questions will be asked about each participant as well as the teacher-child relationship.

These interviews will be digitally recorder, transcribed word-for-word and analysed. Interviews will take place at school in the teacher's classrooms on a day and at a time that suits them individually.

The participants will be video recorded so as to unobtrusively observe the classroom interactions if participants are willing. The researcher will place a video recorder in the classroom to observe the regular classroom interactions. It is proposed that three sessions of 20 minutes will be recorded. This will take place in the third term in a one-month time-frame.

Participants will receive the transcribed interviews and fieldnotes and are allowed to question these notes.

## **12. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The only foreseeable risk or discomfort that I anticipate may be that participants will be reluctant to speak to the researcher as she is a colleague. This will, as far as possible, be mitigated by providing by ensuring colleagues that all data will be treated confidentially and that participants identity. The school's identity will also not be revealed. It is important that participants know that the focus will be on their perceptions of their relationship with their learners and not on their teaching.

It must be noted that the participants are colleagues and they do not report to the researcher in any capacity whatsoever.

## **13. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

I believe that finding from this research will support teachers in seeing the important role they play in young children's lives. The information could be used to teach other teacher about the importance of teacher-child relationship, specifically with children who experience barriers to learning.

The study could provide information that may be used for teacher-training and development, to assist teachers when working with learners with barriers to learning and to give a better understanding as to the relationship between teachers and children who experience barriers to learning.

## **14. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

Participants will not receive payment for their participation in this study.

## **15. 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 the following ethical considerations.

All interviews will be conducted face-to-face. All interviews will be transcribed word for word with the participant's permission. Field notes will be taken from the observations made when viewing the video recordings and the researcher will distance herself from that being observed.

All interview transcriptions and observational field notes will be kept in password protected files on the researcher's personal laptop. The participants and all informants will be provided with pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy. Even though participants receive pseudonyms, the researcher will be careful in the manner which participants are portrayed so to ensure that they can't be identified by the way that they are described. Participation remains voluntary and participants need to know that they have the right to opt-out of the study and how to do so.

Participant will have the opportunity to review all transcriptions of interviews and field notes taken from observations.

## **16. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

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.

## **17. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Investigator: Jo-Mari de Beer

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Supervisor: Ms. Lynette Collair

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## **18. 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 [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] at the Division for Research Development.

#### DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

As the participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained.

By signing below, I \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of participant*) agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Jo-Mari de Beer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

#### DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the **principal investigator**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
	The conversation with the participant was conducted with the assistance of a translator (who has signed a non-disclosure agreement), and this "Consent Form" is available to the participant in a language in which the participant is fluent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Principal Investigator**

## **Addendum C: Interview and observation guides**

### **Interview schedule for semi-structured interview with Preschool teachers**

#### Personal information of participant

- age, family life
- education
- years teaching
- specify grades taught
- amount of time at specific school / grade

#### Experience teaching

- years teaching Pre-school children
- most rewarding
- challenges experienced

#### Emotional support

##### a) Classroom climate

- Describe your classroom atmosphere
- Explain the methods used to create this atmosphere
- Participation

##### b) Teacher sensitivity / cue detection / scaffolding

- Feelings about knowing individual children
- Describe educational needs
- Individual needs
- communication

##### c) Regard for student / child perspectives

- motivational strategies
- participation in learning
- daily planning / changes in day

#### Classroom organization

- Opinion on organization
- Describe the role of the daily planner in your classroom

##### a) Behaviour management

- Describe the behaviour of the children in your class.
- Explain techniques used to manage behavioural challenges

##### b) Productivity

- Additional support in the classroom

c) Instructional learning formats / facilitation of learning and development

- describe activities done
- content delivery methods
- learners with individual needs
- facilitation of learning methods

Teaching techniques styles

- Describe teaching style
- incorporating all children during learning activities

Responsiveness

- describe how assessment is done

Children in the classroom

- age of children
- gender
- amount of children
- class assistant / intern
- abilities of the children

Children with Barriers to learning

- describe the children with diverse need
- How do they present in class?
- Strategies

DESCRIBE A specific child

- age, gender
- family life / role of parents / family dynamics
- describe the relationship with the child
- strengths and weaknesses
- discipline
- challenges
- support

## **Observation sheet with Pre-school teachers**

### Emotional support

- a) Classroom climate
  - What is the classroom atmosphere like?
- b) Teacher sensitivity / cue detection / scaffolding
  - Response to questions and actions
  - level of interaction
  - teacher friendliness
- c) Regard for student / child perspectives
  - motivation strategies
  - needs of the children

### Classroom organization

- daily routine
  - organizational strategies
- a) Behaviour management
    - Strategies for misbehaving children
  - b) Productivity
    - daily planning
    - preparation during day / what is done before school
    - additional assistance
  - c) instructional learning formats / facilitation of learning and development
    - variety of activities planned
    - enjoyment of activities for the children
    - explanation of work
    - participation in work
    - support during work/activities

### Teaching techniques styles

- teaching style
- incorporating learners

### Responsiveness and interpersonal dynamics

- teacher activities during learning activities
- motivation
- connecting
- respect
- awareness



## Children with Barriers to learning / diverse learning needs

- interaction
- support given
- individual attention
- time allocated to the child
- awareness of individual
- motivation

## Addendum D: Examples of coded transcriptions

220 p1: ek weet nie wat mens dit noem nie

221 JM: ja ek dink

222 p1: nou die een is eintlik 'n harde spons, dis eintlik die beste een

223 JM: mm

224 p1: nou dit is 'n kind wat dit gebring het wat ek [redacted]  
 225 [redacted]

226 JM: ja

227 p1: so dit is sy kussing, dan het en dan het ek nou twee van die ander wat eintlik  
 228 meer gemaak is om op 'n stoel te sit het ek agterna agter gekom, maar in  
 229 ieder geval. Nou daai kussinos is nou soos 'n [redacted] seat

230 (beide lag)

231 p1: [redacted] want ek ek het dit nie gemaak nie

232 JM: ...ek kan dink

233 p1: want dan is hulle... almal wil daarop sit maar so ek sal kies, die kind wat ek  
 234 weet nie kan stil sit nie sit op daai een

235 JM: Ja,

236 p1: een van hulle ten minste

237 JM: goed

238 p1: en ek sa vir [redacted] sit  
 239 [redacted]

240 JM: Wat dit nodig het...

241 p1: Ja, en dan raak dit soos vandag, op 'n stadium gaan sê ek net almal gaan  
 242 bere alles want toe het omtrent elke kind iets want hulle dink dis nou 'n groot  
 243 treat

244 JM: ja,

245 p1: om iets te kan vashou

246 JM: ja

247 p1: om mee te fidoet

248 JM: Om iouseif te

249 p1: en dan raak dit ook soos 'n baklei ding tussen hulle wat totaal die hele doel...  
 250 defeat, so

251 JM: Ek verstaan wat jy sê ja. Mmm watse tipe metodes of watse tipe goed doen jy  
 252 om jou kinders as hulle nou in die klas in kom in die oggende of gedurende

Commented [J7]: planne, aanpassings deel van INDIVIDUELE BEHOEFES

Commented [J8]: ook deel van klaskameratmoosfeer, dissipline en klaskamerbeheer

253 die dag, wat doen iv [redacted] om hulle iv weet dis my klas  
 254 hierdie, ek is deel van hierdie klas, daai klas van goed

255 p1: so, daar is goeters wat [redacted]  
 256 [redacted] SO dis een ding wat konstant is. AS hulle  
 257 inkom sal e hulle [redacted] en ek sal seker maak ek kyk vir hulle in die [redacted]  
 258 [redacted] n drukkie die wat wil drukkie nie, die wat nie wil drukkie hê nie  
 259 hoef nie vir my te gee nie, mmm, want ek weet party hou nie daarvan nie, en  
 260 maar is ook vir my baie lekker om te sien dat party wat aanvanklik tot nou glad  
 261 nie wil nie wil nou

Commented [J9]: kommunikasievaardigheid

262 JM: wil nou ewe skielik

263 p1: So dis vir my lekker om te sien hulle voel gemakliker en ek kan dit ook sien  
 264 met kinders wat mmm, soesiefieke kinders wat in die begin [redacted]  
 265 [redacted] wat my te wilhou, wat my al hou nou, en hou, en die vir my baie lekker,

266 JM: Wat dink iv het gemaak dat daardie vertroue meer geword het?

267 p1: Ek dink ek [redacted] spesifiek mmm omdat ek gewet het ook  
 268 die ouers het gevoel die vorige onderwyseres het nie genoeg mmm aandag  
 269 aan hierdie kind gegee nie, so ek het [redacted] aan my verhouding met die ouer  
 270 [redacted] met die kind, mmm, met die kind, deur die [redacted] as  
 271 hy goed doen wat goed is en [redacted] kind wat die baie [redacted] het of so nie,  
 272 maar hy en wat in die begin of wat [redacted] om, om [redacted] in volhou  
 273 maar hy [redacted] so ek kan al klaar 'n groot verskil sien so, en ek het gesit  
 274 met hom en gesê [redacted] en ek het gesit met sy  
 275 ma en 'n plan gemaak. So ek en sy ma is ook 'n span... wat of senoumaar  
 276 met groot motories, ons weet altwee hv moet hierdie goed by die huis oefen,  
 277 Fynmotories en grootmotories, mmm en dan is hv natuurlik baie strek in  
 278 sekere goed, so dan sal ek hom ook baie prys en dan is ek baie trots op hom

Commented [J10]: ken individuele leerders  
 Persoonlike invloede op onderwysstyl.

Commented [J11]: VERHOUDINGS

Commented [J12]: samewerking met ouers

279 JM: Ja, so jy het nou gesê jy het 23 kinders in jou klas

280 p1: ja

281 JM: Voel iv dat iv meer tyd aan sekere kinders soandeer

282 p1: Ja,

283 JM: Watse kinders verg meer tyd?

284 p1: Kinders wat,

285 JM: as iv die kind kan beskrif

286 p1: ja, so daar is kinders wat, sukkel om aandag te gee op die mat so ek moet  
 287 meer aandag, EK, moet meer aandag aan hulle gee omdat, om die  
 288 klaskamer bestuur net onder beheer te hou,

289 JM: Ja,

- 68 p2: maar akademies streng akademies gewys daai groei en [redacted]  
 69 [redacted] ja, maar ek sal se moeders die gelukkigheid hulle het ek en oorgesondenheid vir skool  
 70 ja vir my
- 71 JM: is dit vir jou'n belangrike ding?
- 72 p2: [redacted] dis dit soos ek as ek nie hier is nie dan hoor ek ek word gemis, jy weet
- 73 JM: ja
- 74 p2: soos, en jy weet dis altyd iets anders, ek dink ook dis wat my laat terugkom. [redacted] Elke kind verskil  
 75 en daar is soveel [redacted] verskillende persoonlikhede en manier hoe hulle is en wat hulle goed doen,  
 76 dis altyd iets nuut, dis nooit repetative nie
- 77 JM: ja, ok. Nou jy is nou in jou eerste jaar, wat vind jy is vir jou die grootste uitdaging?
- 78 p2: ...uhm...def vir my is dit soos admin
- 79 JM: hm
- 80 p2: klein goedjies en so beplanning, vooruit beplanning. Dis goed waarmee ek al lankal sukkel,  
 81 omdat, ek sukkel al my skoolloopbaan met dit,
- 82 JM: ja
- 83 p2: Goed soos assesserings en net om te beplan om daai goed konkreet, want ek sal soos in die  
 84 een boek hierdie punte skryf, dan skryf ek weer hier so eks all over the place
- 85 JM: ok
- 86 p2: en ek weet jy weet admin is not good, so ek dink daar papierwerk papertrails daai klas van  
 87 goed
- 88 JM: oke daai soort goed
- 89 p2: en dan ook net soos onbekende situasies met kinders wat jy nog nooit deur gegaan het,  
 90 sulke goedjies
- 91 JM: mmm oke. Uhm wat sou jy sê is die belangrikste ding, jy het netnou gesê jou kinders moet  
 92 gelukkig wees, wat sou jy sê, wat is nog vir jou baie belangrik om vir hulle te verskaf, hoe  
 93 moet, wat wil jy vir hulle leer?
- 94 p2: uhmmm, ek dink vir my is dit belangrik as, as ons nou kyk na [redacted] maniere en daai, sal ek se  
 95 [redacted]
- 96 JM: oke
- 97 p2: want op die ou einde van die dag is jou [redacted] waardes belangrik, wie is, in my opinie.
- 98 JM: uh hu ja
- 99 p2: So ek voel 'n kind met waardes gaan [redacted] goeie maniere hê hulle gaan ook, as jy waardes het daai  
 100 [redacted] dis 'n belang in jou toekomst dink ek dan gaan hulle ook in hulle akademie belangstel dink  
 101 ek, als bou op mekaar...so waardes maniere, uhm en net soos 'n verstaan van die lewe ek  
 102 weet nie dis maar die belangrikste, as hulle die regte waardes en uitkyk op die lewe het dan  
 103 weet hulle wat in plek moet val soos hulle weet hulle moet skooltoe kom want ons prepare  
 104 vir die future en, ja ek weet nie maak dit uit

103 p3: dis vir my lekker om te sien hoe hulle, **hoe dit vir hulle lekker is om goed uit te vind om goed**  
 104 **te wees en met hulle moeders reg te kom en hoe hulle vaardighede en sosiale vaardighede dit**  
 105 **groei**

106 JM: ja

107 p3: dis vir my lekker. Dis vir my **lekker om daai terugkom te sien**

108 JM: ja

109 p3: en dis **saai, daai is altyd liewe, so dis net 'n tagantjie, netsoos wat behoorlike daai**  
 110 **saai is nie.**

111 JM: Ja. oke, uhm, Wat vind jy is vir jou die lekkerste van wat jy hier doen?

112 p3: ek dink om **met kinders te wees**, om om **te hupoor te sien**, om met hulle **te kan praat en om**  
 113 **te sien hoe dit gelukkig is vir hulle lekker om hier te wees**

114 JM: ja, en die **grootste uitdaging?**

115 p3: **om by almal uit te kom is vir my altyd 'n uitdaging**

116 JM: ok

117 p3: en met **party kinders omdat hulle goed vermy wat nie vir hulle lekker is nie of waarvan hulle**  
 118 **nie hou nie is dit, dis nie, dis partykeer vat dit 'n jaar om 'n kind ingetrek te kry op daai**  
 119 **plekkie waar hy eintlik moet wees wat hy moet doen**

120 JM: ja

121 p3: en ek **kan nou as hulle so sê nee maar hulle wil nie daai doen nie of hulle gaan nie, en jy**  
 122 **weet hulle dis eintlik net hulle is net bang daarvoor, hulle moet net genoeg en genoeg en**  
 123 **genoeg geleentheid kry en dan gaan hulle dit doen**

124 JM: Uhm wat beteken dit vir jou om 'n juffrou te wees?

125 p3: Sjoue ek dink dis, ek dink dis 'n **groot belangrike werk**, ek weet nie **by die kleintjies voel dit**  
 126 **veral vir my jy werk baie nou met die huis saam, dis vir my baie belangrik dat dat ouers**  
 127 **beseft jy is in hulle plek daar al het jy 'n ander rol. SO dis, dis vir my baie belangrik kan**  
 128 **kinders beseft dit is 'n plek waar hulle kan leer, maar dit is ook 'n plek waar daar persek is en**  
 129 **dat hulle, dit dit dit 'n verlamming van hulle lewe dit 'n uitdaging van hulle lewe.**

130 JM: ja?

131 p3: Dis nie, **dit kan nie wees ook by die huis nie**, want daar het jy baie meer vryheid en keuses,  
 132 **maar jy het dit hier ook maar dat jy kan jou plekke in die wêreld vind**

133 JM: ok, dit maak sin ja. Wat is vir jou in hierdie spesifieke graadgroep waarmee jy nou besig is die  
 134 belangrikste vaardighede wat jy vir die kinders kan leer. Wat sou jy sê vir jou staan uit?

135 p3: ek dink hierdie ouderdomsgroep veral, hoe om sosiale inter, **aanvaarbare sosiale interaksie**  
 136 **te hê. Dat hulle kan leer om dit wat hulle voel in woorde te kan omsit. Dat hulle hulle**  
 137 **gevoelens kan beskryf en dat hulle dat hulle kan praat, en dit is ook iets wat vinnig gebeur,**  
 138 **dis vir my amper meer opvallend in die Graad R groep. Want hulle kom met meer**

- 336 p4: ek dink om net, net **daai selfvertroue op te bou te help met die selfvertroue**, en  
 337 net dat **die kind weet daar is ondersteuning dat hy nie of sy nie hoef te voel ek**  
 338 **weet nou van totaal niks af**, ek weet nie hoe om dit te doen en ek het geen  
 339 help en en **dit gaan daai kind nog verder laat voel asof die kind niks kan noen**  
 340 **nie en ja ek dink daai ondersteuning is belangrik**.
- 341 JM: dink jy dis dan 'n goeie ding dat ondersteuning al reeds van so vroeg af kom,  
 342 jy het gepraat van 'n AT, sien jy dit as belangrik om so vroeg as moontlik  
 343 ondersteuning te bied vir kinders?
- 344 p4: **ek dink dis def nb om so vroeg as moontlik te begin, want volgens wat ek, wat**  
 345 **my siening is jy kan so vroeg moontlik jy kan beginne bou daarop, so so beter**  
 346 **is dit vir hulle voorentoe**
- 347 JM: ja
- 348 p4: as jy nou al **begin versterk aan daai klein goedjies**
- 349 JM: ja natuurlik. **Het jy enigsins gesprekke gehad met die kinders se vorige**  
 350 **juffrouens voordat hulle by jou gekom het**
- 351 p4: ja ek het al 'n **gesprek gehad met uhm met 'n paar van hulle ja**
- 352 JM: vind jy dat dit jou enigsins help om die kinders beter te verstaan om die  
 353 kinders...
- 354 p4: def! dit help **my def om hulle beter te verstaan want jy sien dinge uit 'n ander**  
 355 **oogpunt uit**
- 356 JM ok
- 357 p4: en ja,
- 358 JM: oke, uhm hou die kinders in jou klas daarvan om stories te vertel?
- 359 p4: verskriklik baie
- 360 (beide lag)
- 361 p4: verskriklik ja
- 362 JM: en waaroor praat hulle met jou as hulle nou met stories kom
- 363 p4: **sjoh, hulle praat oor alles boeties en sussie en wat hulle gedoen het by die**  
 364 **huis en wat hulle geeet het en reg, eintlik oor alles, ja**
- 365 JM: ja, nou hoe inkorporeer jy dan nou al hierdie stories en almal wat ietsie wil se  
 366 in jou dag jy het net 'n sekere hoeveelheid ure, hoehoe wat doen jy?
- 367 p4: **gewoontlik uhm is hierdie stories so vertel word is dit gewoonlik tydens**  
 368 **mattyd**

Commented [J3]:

Commented [J4R3]: verstaan die kinders op individuele vlak

- 214 p5: met die stil, jy weet met die wat skaam en stil is
- 215 JM: ja, ja. Uhm dink jy dis belangrik om elke kind in jou klas op 'n persoonlike vlak te ken?
- 216 p5: Ja, def
- 217 JM: Hoekom
- 218 p5: Dis, dis, dis moeilik
- 219 JM: hm,
- 220 p5: dis nie altyd maklik nie
- 221 JM: Hoekom sê jy dis moeilik
- 222 p5: Want daar is 20 van hulle en jys dit is dis intens en elke kind het 'n geskiedenis en baie keer,  
223 nie altyd nie, is daar kinders wat probleme agtergronde het wat jy ook moet van weet
- 224 JM: ja
- 225 p5: So om elke kind se, uh persoonlik te ken is challenging vir jou maar dit is dis def moontlik
- 226 JM: ja
- 227 p5: maar ek dink jy sal nooit neng daai verhouding wat jy as onderwyser na streef met 'n kind  
228 kan hê as jy nie die kind persoonlik ken nie
- 229 JM: Ja, wat is daai verhouding vir jou waarna jy streef met die kind?
- 230 p5: soos, soos
- 231 JM: nee jy sê nou jy sal nooit daai verhouding kan hê nie, so wat sien jy dan as die ideale  
232 verhouding?
- 233 p5: So die ideale verb vir my sal wees 'n kind wat jou vertrou en vrymoedig is om na jou toe te  
234 kom met probleme, of as iets hema pla en dit hoef nie groot te wees nie, dit kan iets kleins ook  
235 wees. Baie keer is daar kinders wat nie na jou toe sal kom as 'n maatjie hom seer maak nie  
236 of watokal, baie keer is dit 'n groter probleem. Maak nie saak nie jy wil hê 'n kind moet na  
237 jou toe kan kom en vir jou kan kom se as iets nie lekker is vir hom nie
- 238 JM: ja
- 239 p5: of lekker is, maar jy weet
- 240 JM: net met jou deel
- 241 p5: ja, met jou deel
- 242 JM: Wat doen jy dan nou om te verseker dat jy daai verhouding het dat jy daai kind het wat na  
243 jou toe kom en met jou praat?
- 244 p5: jee, persoonlike aandag en daai uhm – ja persoonlike aandag en persoonlike belang, BEGRIJ  
245 belangstelling in die kind, jy weet doen moeite om te gaan sit en alleen met hom of haar  
246 ietsie te doen
- 247 JM: ja

Commented [J1]: Moet elke kin individueel ken  
Beklemtoon die individu

248 p5: **daai 1 to 1 is nogans nie** Uhm en dit is waar dit moeilik is ook, want die dag is net so kort,  
 249 jy weet jy voel partykeer 'n week gaan verby en jy het nog nie 1 moment, 'n spesiale oomblik  
 250 gehad met 'n kind 'n sekere kind nie en dan dink jy jy weet so dis baie moeilik en en  
 251 **timemanagement en al die dinge wat assessering en die hele dag se**

252 JM: alles net

253 p5: **besig, dis moeilik om alles te bestuur**. Jy moet eintlik as onderwyser vir jousef sê vandag  
 254 gaan ek op Gina konsentreer of ietsie saam met Gina doen net incheck met haar want ek  
 255 **voel ook, ek wonder of dit nie nou bietjie van die topic af is nie, maar**

256 JM: maak glad nie saak nie

257 p5: **mens vergeet altyd, daai ding wat ek in die begin ook gesê het van** vergeet

258 JM: ja

259 p5: of nie raaksien nie is die ek wil **amper sê die middel kind**

260 JM: hm

261 p5: die **sterk kinders** is daar en die ekstroverte is daar **wat jou die heetyd half na jou toe kom**  
 262 met hulle goed, en jy kan amper nie help om aan hulle aandag te gee nie want hulle kom na  
 263 jou toe

264 JM: ja

265 p5: en dan is daar die wat die **kinders wat bietjie ekstra probleme het waarna** jy toe die heetyd  
 266 na gaan **want jys bekommerd oor hulle of dat hulle sekere**

267 JM: ja

268 p5: en dan is daar die ok kind wat jy **dink hys ok en wat aangaan en homself kan vermaak**

269 JM: ja

270 p5: en dis juis daardie kinders wat ek baie keer voel ek kom ni, ek kom nie genoeg by hulle uit  
 271 nie

272 JM: So, so sal jy sê jou verhouding met daai kinders is slegte af as wat dit met die kinders wat  
 273 ondersteuning nodig het

274 p5: partykeer en dit en dit is nie hoe ek dit wil hê nie, maar partykeer is dit

275 JM: is dit so

276 p5: dit gebeur vanself

277 JM: uhm, **wat sou jy sê is belangrik om te weet van elke kind?** Jy het nou gesê hulle, dit waarvan  
 278 hulle hou,

279 p5: **het dit waarvan hulle hou**

280 JM: Goed waarby hulle aanklank vind, is daar nog goed wat vir jou nb is om te weet van die  
 281 kinders?

282 p5: en hulle hulle uhm uhm as **daar miskien probleme is, jy weet agtergrond huidige probleme**

Commented [J2]: struktuur en tydsbeplanning sowel as uitdaging

Commented [J3]: individue... almal het iets nodig, soms vergeet mens vn die wat nie ooglopend ondersteuning nodig het nie