

**AN ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that "AN ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA" is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

RR Bridgemoohan

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96-11-17

DATE

DEDICATED TO MY PARENTS

MRS SOOKRANI DEVI BRIDGEMOHAN

AND

THE LATE MR BRIDGEMOHAN

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ABSTRACT

This study constitutes an attempt to describe and analyse the quality of selected early childhood development programmes in South Africa, and provide criteria by which the quality of programmes could be assessed. The need for, and importance of, providing quality early childhood development programmes is highlighted. The influence of educational philosophies on programmes is recognised, hence the total development of the child and educational philosophies related thereto are discussed. Factors and components within programmes that contribute to high quality are explored. Moreover, criteria by means of which quality early childhood development programmes may be assessed, are provided. In this regard criteria for the formulation of aims, selection and the organisation of content, assessment, role of the teacher and parent involvement in programmes are suggested. It is against these criteria that selected early childhood development programmes in South Africa are described and analysed. Recommendations for high quality programmes conclude the study.

KEY TERMS:

Quality early childhood development programmes; school readiness; aims; parent involvement; teacher; content; assessment; Montessori; High Scope; Traditional; Open Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Today there are about seven million children below the age of six in our country (Short 1992:31). The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (A.N.C 1994:62) states that provision of early childhood education for young children is an important step towards lifelong learning and the emancipation of women. Consequently the Government White Paper on the Provision of Education in South Africa (1995:75) states that the first year of what becomes a reception year (Grade 0) for five year old's. The reception year is suggested to be the introductory year of an integrated four-year lower primary programme.

The provision and recognition of the importance of early childhood education is a major milestone in education in South Africa. Investing in our children's early education will benefit the country at large. However this would only be possible if we provide quality education programmes that will prepare children for lifelong learning. Local and international evidence indicates that individual children, families and the society in general can benefit greatly from quality early childhood education (Berrueta - Clement (USA) (in Catron 1993:258); Edwards and Knight (UK) 1994:48; Schweinhart and Weikart (a) (USA) 1986:63; Short and Biersteker (SA) 1984:23).

In South Africa there is widespread concern about the quality of early childhood education (Calitz 1995:19; NEPI 1992:20; World Bank 1994:28). If early childhood education is to make a significant contribution to the country at large then quality is essential. In this regard the World Bank Report (1994:28) asserts that efforts aimed at increasing early childhood development programmes before endeavouring to improve quality, misses the essential point; that without quality, cost will be incurred later on, in schooling and by society.

In accord with the evidence provided and a look at the education scene today, it is necessary to analyse the quality of some early childhood development programmes in South Africa.

1.2 DEFINING EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early childhood in the U.S.A refers to the period from birth to age eight (Bredekamp 1987:1). In South Africa early childhood refers to the child from birth to age nine (NEPI 1992:7). The Government White paper on Education and Training (1995:33) makes reference to Early Childhood Development (ECD). Early Childhood Development is an umbrella term which applies to the processes by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, morally, and socially. Traditionally there was a differentiation between welfare and education in terms of the types of services offered, based on the perception of their purpose, with day care being seen as custodial and nursery school as educational. The researcher believes that it is necessary to see the entire phase (0-9 years) as a phase in the educational cycle. Therefore in this study the researcher uses the term early childhood education and early childhood development interchangeably.

1.2.1 Early childhood education

Bredekamp (1987:1) defines early childhood education in U.S.A. as any part-day or full day programme in a centre, school or other facility that serves children from birth through to age eight. In England Edwards and Knight (1994:3) indicate that the Early Years can be seen as education of three - to eight - year - olds.

In South Africa early childhood educare refers to programmes for the care and education of children from birth until entry to school. For convenience this is usually referred to as the 0-6 age group. Increasingly, early childhood development programmes are including children in the lower grades in primary school, thereby extending the early childhood education range from 0-9 years (ANC 1994:91).

The Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (1996:33) explains that within South Africa today the term Early Childhood Development (ECD) is now being used to refer to programmes for children from birth to age nine. The term conveys the importance of a holistic approach to child development and signifies an appreciation of the importance of considering a child's health, nutrition, education, psycho-social and additional environmental factors within the context of the family and the community.

Of particular relevance to the above definition is Piaget's theory (Piaget 1971:57) on early learning. Central to Piaget's theory is the idea that a child's intelligence develops in sequential stages, each marked by characteristics and identifiable ways of thinking. He has demonstrated that children's thinking, the way they learn between infancy and age eight (the pre-operational stage) dictates similarity of practices in working with children in

the early years. For these reasons as agreed upon by Seefeldt & Barbour (1986:vii) early childhood education presents the continuity of education from birth through to age eight.

The NEPI Report (1992:5) supports the premise that early childhood education presents the continuity of education from birth to age eight. The report, in referring to the situation in South Africa, states as follows:

“It is increasingly recognised that the learning styles of children up to the age of eight or nine differs fundamentally from those of older children. The early childhood phase of education should therefore extend through the junior primary phase”.

From the above arises a fundamental point, that early childhood care and education should not be considered as if it is a thing apart or a phenomenon in its own right. Rather it should be seen as one period between the ages of 0-9; part of the education structure in South Africa that is based on an informal didactic approach.

1.2.2 Early childhood development programmes

As stated in paragraph 1.2.1 early childhood education generally refers to programmes appropriate for children from birth to eight years. Early childhood development programmes exist in every community and is seen as some sort of schooling for young children. Early childhood development programmes provide a wide range of services for children from infancy through to nine years of age. Programmes generally reflect the needs of a society as a whole (Gordon and Browne 1989:32). Furthermore, the education programme itself reflects the age group it serves, the size of the group, the length of the daily programme, the activities offered during the daily programme, the educational

goals and practices, the method of instruction, the philosophy and even the atmosphere it creates (par.3.2).

In addition programmes for young children operate under different auspices (private or public). Feeny ; Christensen and Moravcik (1987:29) classify early childhood education programmes according to their purpose, which may be:

- * To enhance the development of and provide education for young children.**
- * To provide child care for working parents.**
- * To provide education for parents.**

Some programmes in South Africa and the USA combine two or even all three of these functions. They also encompass a wide range of educational philosophies and curricula (from much free choice for children to limited opportunities for making decisions, from child centred to adult centred activities and routines). In spite of the differences in early childhood development programmes, one can assume that most programmes have a commitment to the well being of children. This means that they share many common practices and concerns. This view is well articulated by Kostelnik's (1993:14):

"... regardless of their unique mission, all early childhood programmes share an ethical responsibility for enhancing the quality of life of children and families".

The most commonly used programmes in South Africa serve children directly, either in the conventional school-type model which offers centre-based care and education for children in

groups, or in home-based child minding arrangements (NEPI 1992:11). Home based programmes include play groups and day mothers.

Furthermore, the vast majority of programmes in South Africa are the initiatives which have emerged from within the communities. The variations in programmes serving young children have evolved from distinct needs and traditions. Many programmes have been motivated and influenced by special problems and the needs of the children who come from poor backgrounds.

Regarding early childhood development programmes in South Africa the NEPI report (1992:7) indicates that most child-care centres in black communities offer full-day programmes, but many do not meet even the most basic standards of child-care. Poor quality full-day care centres place the development of young children at risk. There are not only health and safety risks, but real possibilities of child abuse, and a severe curtailment of learning opportunities. Thus disadvantaged children are likely to be further disadvantaged by spending most of their waking hours five days a week in poor quality environments.

In light of the information in the preceding paragraphs, it is clear that if we are to provide quality early childhood education there is a need to analyse early childhood development programmes in South Africa.

1.3 IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

EDUCATION

The value of early childhood education was realised even in ancient times. Plato stated that everything experienced by children in their childhood would be meaningful in their adulthood (Verster 1989:41). Historically, Plato is the first known writer to acknowledge the critical period of infancy.

In the "Dialogues" he quotes Socrates as saying:

"The beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of the young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken... . Anything that he receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable" (Weiser 1991:5).

Over a century ago Lord Henry Brougham, in a widely circulated manifesto of 1823, wrote that:

"...the truth is that he (the child) can and does learn a great deal more before that age (six years) than all he ever learns or can learn in all his after life" (Le Roux 1993:118).

Hildebrand (1993:2) refers to early childhood education as an investment. Skills, talents, knowledge and abilities are a person's human capital. When enrolling a child in a child development centre, parents have an objective of enhancing the child's human capital and expect this investment to pay off later, a pay off in terms of better performance through school and better job performance beyond school. This view is supported by Barker (in Le Roux 1993:27) who argues that the rate of return on education and care of pre-school children is higher than at any other level of education.

It is acknowledged that early childhood education guides the development of the young child as he/she moves from his/her home out into the large life-space centred in an educational group. Thus early childhood education is concerned with the young child from the time that his informal learning at home is augmented by group experience with his peers under adult guidance, until he or she is well started in traditional schooling and has completed his or her junior primary phase.

Researchers in the field of paediatrics, psychology, psychiatry and nutrition, continue to document the critical importance of the child's early life. Santrock (1995:226) credits the work of Clarke-Steward and Fein (1983) in confirming that children who attended pre-school interact more with peers; are more socially competent and mature in that they are more confident, extroverted, assertive, self-sufficient, independent, verbally expressive, knowledgeable about the social world and better adjusted when they go to school.

Quality early childhood education has an important role to play in community development and in improving the quality of life for young disadvantaged children in South Africa. Furthermore, a greater number of children are being caught up in the maelstrom of political violence, increased poverty and rapid social change and it is early childhood care and education that becomes an essential means of improving the quality of life and learning opportunities for the several million children who are at risk (NEPI 1992:5-6).

Additionally, almost everyday in the newspaper and on television there are accounts of children mistreated, locked in closets, mutilated and sometimes even beaten to death in South Africa. These forms of child abuse often occur because parents find it difficult to cope with the demands of life. In a school setting, children have space and facilities and contact with a responsible

adult who supports his/her development and guides his/her education. Even if children have well equipped playrooms and outdoor space at home, they may not have contact with others.

Quality early childhood development programmes today can serve the needs of the community by providing a safe and stimulating environment, and the importance of these programmes cannot be over emphasised. It can be concluded that early childhood education is significant and can help to compensate for deprivation. In addition well planned programmes could produce long term benefits in South Africa.

1.4 THE LONG TERM EFFECTS OF QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

1.4.1 Effects on school achievement

For many years people have been concerned about meeting the needs of children. Today their concern is based on knowledge. Several Research Studies have reported the positive effects of pre-school programme provision. Hendrick (1991:8-9) credits the research of Lazar, Darlington, Murray, Royce and Snipper (1982). The results of this research clearly indicates that quality pre-school education produce long term lasting benefits for children who attend such programmes. Some important long term benefits are that children in pre-school programmes were only half as likely as children in control groups to be assigned to special education classes, and fewer of them were required to repeat a grade in school. Only 13.8% of the pre-school children

were assigned to special education classes as compared to 28.8% of the control group children. Only 25% of the pre-school children had to repeat a grade as compared to 36.6% of the control group.

The Consortium Study mentioned in the previous paragraph, was the first longitudinal study to provide solid, well researched evidence that early education actually does produce tangible, positive, long term results.

This study was followed by that of Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein & Weikart (1984) (in Catron 1993:258) who examined long term, socially relevant outcomes of early childhood programmes. It was found that children from low socio-economic backgrounds with pre-school education, compared to children with similar backgrounds but with no pre-school education, were less likely to be retained in a grade or to require special education placement.

The NEPI report (1992:4) quotes a review by Myers (1992) of evaluation studies conducted in less developed countries in South America :

"Early intervention programmes, more often than not have a positive effect on school progress (as represented by repetition and drop out rates, and by grades) and on achievement in the early years of primary school".

The most significant longitudinal study conducted in South Africa was carried out by Short and Biersteker (1984). The study focused on the scholastic progress of so-called coloured children who attended the Athlone Early Learning Centre (ELC) between January 1972 and December 1974. The study was done in three phases namely the data were collected in phase one (pre-school); phase two (grade one); and phase three (high school).

The results are as follows:

Phase one: The ELC programme helped to overcome the effects of disadvantaged socio-economic background..., ensuring a basic level of school readiness.

Phase two: The ELC children did better than children who had not attended pre-school, and those who attended the ELC longest had the best score.

Phase three: The drop-out rates were reduced. All the ex ELC children remained at school to age 12, by age 15, 95.2% were still in school and by age 17, 68.2% were still in school. Thus those who attended pre-school were more likely to remain for a longer period of time than their peers who did not have pre-school experience (World Bank Report 1994:14-15).

The research of Short and Biersteker (1984:23) provides evidence within South Africa to suggest a positive impact of pre-primary experience on repeater and drop-out rates in primary school. It can be concluded that quality early childhood development programmes have a positive effect on school competence (as represented by repetition and drop-out rates).

1.4.2 Effects on intellectual performance

The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation Perry Pre-school Project by Schweinhart & Weikart in the United States revealed that young children who had attended good pre-school programmes at the ages of three and four outperformed similar children who had not done so, on intelligence and school

achievement tests, primary school success, commitment to schooling and high school success (Le Roux 1993:120).

In addition, Schweinhart and Weikart (1986:63) compared the consequences over a twelve year period of three different pre-school programmes (High/Scope model; Distar model; and a model in the Nursery School tradition). When the mean I.Q's of the three pre-school curriculum groups were compared in the later years all were greatly improved. During the first year of the pre-school programmes, mean I.Q's rose between 23 and 29 points moving all the children out of the "at-risk category".

Ornstein and Levine (1993:413) refer to Francis Palmer's longitudinal study of inner-city students in a special pre-school programme in New York. The results showed that participating children scored no higher than control group children in the first grade. When retested in the fifth grade, however, they scored nine points higher on I.Q. tests and somewhat higher in reading than did the control group.

In sum, quality early childhood development programmes generally have a positive effect on children's intellectual performance.

1.4.3 Effects on other social variables

Ebbeck (1983:9) writes that children who attended a good pre-school programme were less likely to become juvenile delinquents, there were fewer teenage pregnancies, most of the children attended universities, and they found better employment than children who did not attend these programmes.

The best known compensatory pre-school programmes in the United States is Project Head Start. According to Papalia and Olds (1993:322) it was found that Head Start children have shown that in many cases the positive effects have gone beyond the children themselves. Families reported educational and financial gains and an increased sense of satisfaction with the control over their lives.

They go on to state that children who had pre-school education were more likely at the age 19 to have finished high school, to have enrolled in college or vocational training and to have jobs. They did better on test competence and were less likely to have been arrested and the women were less likely to have become pregnant.

Ornstein and Levine (1993:413) contend that:

"Positive long range achievement results also have been reported for disadvantaged students who attended outstanding pre-school programs in Ypsilanti, Michigan, Syracuse, New York and other locations. Analysis of these programs indicate that they are cost effective. Participating students are less likely than non participants to be placed later in special education or to repeat grades (both of which are very expensive) and are more likely to graduate from high school and to acquire skills and motivation needed for rewarding employment".

It is thus clear that quality early childhood development programmes have positive long term effects on children, since they are more likely to complete high school and are in a position to carry out greater social responsibilities such as holding down a job and contributing to the welfare of society.

1.5 PROVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa today, as in many other countries, there are several different forms of pre-school provision and new programmes are continually being developed. These reflect different needs and fundamental differences in ways of educating and caring for young children (par.1.2.2).

1.5.1 The role of the state, non governmental organisations and the community in the provision of education for the young child

As was the case in industrialised countries of Europe and England, the idea of, and first attempts at, establishing pre-school education in South Africa arose from socio-economic needs. Verster (1989:274-372) outlines the pre-school education movement in South Africa.

1925 The Lady Buxton Mothercraft Training Centre in Cape Town was established. Infants were cared for and courses on the care of pre-school children were also presented.

1930 The Department of Health of Johannesburg City Council, founded two Nursery Health Classes for needy children in Vrededorp and Fordsburg. By 1936 the council was assisting six Nursery Health Classes.

- 1931/32** **The City of Pretoria established the first true nursery school. In 1937 a second nursery school was established for the Eastern suburbs of Pretoria.**
- 1932** **A small private school named "Tree Tops", was established in Durban by parents of the neighbourhood.**
- 1934** **Two conferences in Cape Town and Johannesburg held by the New Education Fellowship (NEF) were of decisive importance for the founding of pre-school education in South Africa.**
- 1934** **There was greater support for the establishment of nursery schools. In Kimberly during October 1934 a resolution was taken to implement a system of pre-school education to provide for children living in the city slums.**
- 1935** **A memorandum for the establishment, and subsidising of nursery schools was submitted to the Transvaal Education Department (T.E.D). Although it was not accepted in its entirety, the recognition for nursery schools was a very definite step forward. By the end of 1936 seven nursery schools were already receiving financial aid from the Administrations. Nursery schools were, however, not yet recognised as an integral part of the educational system.**

- 1937** Recommendations made by Commissions for education of pre-school children, influenced the policies on infant education, and contributed to a wider acceptance of the nursery school idea.
- 1939** There were already at least fourteen bonafide nursery schools in the country (three in Pretoria, eight in Johannesburg, and one each in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Cape town).
- 1939** The Nursery School Association of South Africa was founded at the Pretoria Conference. This Association became the most vital and influential association concerned with young children in South Africa. The name of the association was changed in 1974 to The South African Association for Early Childhood Education. The association laid down norms which had to be met by nursery schools if they wished to be considered for subsidies.
- 1940** The need for Afrikaans orientated nursery schools was emphasised from which followed:
- 1942** The Onderwysersvereniging (Transvaal Teacher's Association), three Afrikaans Churches, the Suid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (South African Womens Federation) and the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies) founded an Afrikaans nursery school association known as the Transvaalse Vereniging vir Kleuteropvoeding (Transvaal Association for Nursery School Education).

- 1944/45** The Transvaalse Vereniging vir Kleuteropvoeding gained recognition from the Transvaalse Onderwysersvereniging.
- 1942-1976** The South African Association for Pre-school Education submitted approximately 25 memoranda and reports to interested parties. In these they petitioned very convincingly for the recognition of the nursery schools as educative institutions in its own rights, its acceptance as part of the system of education of the country, increased subsidies and the enhancement of the status of nursery school teachers.
- 1969** Up to 1967 the establishment and control of pre-school centres were the responsibility of private organisations. In 1969, based on the National Education Policy Act of 1967, Provincial Education Departments took over pre-primary education and set up training courses.
- 1969-1980** This period has been characterised by the promulgation of five important acts (1967, 1969, 1973, 1974, and 1975) whereby the provincial administrations, gained control over the funding, registration and management of nursery schools and training facilities.
- 1981** The De Lange Commission (HSRC, 1981) highlighted the importance of pre-school education for disadvantaged children, but at the same time drew attention to the high cost of providing a three-year programme. It recommended a one or two year

bridging programme to prepare children for school. The government's response was that the state could not finance comprehensive pre-primary provision, and the initiative should remain in the community and private welfare sector.

- 1983** The Government White Paper on Provision of Education in South Africa (RSA, 1983) accepted the idea of a one to two years bridging programme to facilitate school readiness. However the government did advocate that consideration be given to financing school readiness/bridging programmes for the neediest children, but each education department was supposed to work out the most feasible way of doing this (NEPI 1992:14). Education authorities thus provided some assistance in the form of subsidies and inspections.
- 1992** The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) made recommendations on early childhood provision and early childhood education was placed firmly on the education and political agenda for the first time.
- 1992** The World Bank Report made recommendations for action in support of young children.
- 1995** The Government White Paper on education and training (1995:33) made provision for early childhood education (see 1.2). The document recommends the reception class as the first year of the lower primary phase (see 1.1).

The developments which are discussed in the preceding paragraphs indicate that there was a lack of desired state involvement. As a result of inadequate state involvement the community and a variety of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) e.g. Grassroots Educare Trust, Entokozweni Early Learning and Community Services, Alexandra Childminding Project etc. have had to shoulder much of the burden of providing educare services. The role of NGO's in this respect is significant.

Since it is not in the scope of this study to go into details of the role of all non-government organisations the researcher refers, among others to the efforts of the role of one NGO namely The Association for Training and Resources in Early Education (TREE).

According to TREE as quoted in a newspaper report (Saturday Reporter 1994 :4), child care and pre-school education have turned in a new direction to include more than four million African children. Only 2% of the more than 4 million African children under the age of six have experienced pre-school education previously.

The formation of TREE in the year 1985 has since been responsible in establishing centres throughout Natal and for the training of more than 2000 people in childcare. This association reaches out to an estimated 30000 children every year.

In most communities, parents and community organisations, particularly churches, have contributed to pre-school education by financing the running costs of services through the payment of fees. The community took responsibility for the programmes. There are also private pre-primary programmes that are provided

by employers. These programmes are run and supported by private owners (e.g. business firms) and do not receive any government support.

However, there is criticism levelled against this situation. In this regard it has been reported by (NEPI 1992:38) that education provision is predominantly in the hands of the community and that there is little co-ordination between the "two-systems" i.e. formal primary schools and community based programmes.

1.6 THE NEED FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

There is a shortage of early childhood education facilities in South Africa. In order to understand the crucial nature of the problem of insufficient early childhood education facilities, one needs to look at the population figures.

1.6.1 Population Development

The population of South Africa is approximately 35 million. Of this total, some 6,4 million (18% of the total population) are children of pre-school age. The following tables indicate the extent of the pre-school (birth - 6 years of age) population in South Africa using the old population classification categories:

TABLE ONE
EXTENT OF PRE-SCHOOL POPULATION IN
SOUTH AFRICA

RACE GROUP	0-5 YEARS	5-6 YEARS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
AFRICANS	4513900	790500	5304400	83%
COLOUREDS	396000	73800	469800	7%
INDIANS	105400	20700	126100	2%
WHITES	412600	78600	491200	8%
TOTAL	5427900	963600	6391500	100%

Source - Short 1992 : 31

In 1990 there were an estimated 6.4 million children aged six or younger in South Africa. Of these over a million were aged five, and about half were below the age of three. The majority (5.3 million) were African, and at least 3.5 million were living below the Minimum Living Level, which means that they were severely disadvantaged. Further, they did not have access to early childhood education. Children from the different racial groups do not have equal access to early childhood provision as is evident in the following table.

TABLE TWO
CHILDREN AGED 0-6 YEARS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
FACILITIES ACCORDING TO RACE GROUP

RACE GROUPS	SUBSIDISED	OTHER	TOTAL	(%0-6 YEARS)
AFRICAN	108062	226688	334750	6
COLOURED	25519	28481	54000	11
INDIAN	15239	1761	17000	13
WHITE	49409	110519	160000	33
TOTAL	198229	367521	565750	9

Source: Lategan in (Nepi 1992:5).

Table two shows that a greater proportion of White and Indian children aged three to six years attend pre-primary schools and classes which receive some state subsidisation, than is the case for coloured and black children. This also indicates that the government has played a very limited role in the provision of facilities (par.1.5.1). In fact the majority of children (65%) attend centres with no support from educational departments.

Only 9% of all the children from birth to six years have access to public or private educare facilities. Furthermore, the World Bank Report (1994:6) states that within this low provision there are severe disparities relating to age, race, class, location and special needs. These statistics indicate that existing early childhood education facilities falls far short in terms of the needs of children birth to six years.

Dr. Jane Kvalsvig, heading the HSRC's Child Development Programme (CDP), concluded that:

"Natal and Kwazulu have for many years, been neglected in regard to state funding for basic health and education infrastructure. As a result, there is widespread poverty and diseases in the region. The children are always the first to suffer" (Green 1994:14).

In addition access rates are lower in rural areas. In the World Bank Report (1994:8) it is stated as follows:

"..., children in South Africa have not had equal access to early childhood programmes. Government expenditure has favoured early childhood provision for White families, mainly in high cost, high quality pre-schools. Further, more services are available in the urban areas than in the more populated rural areas. Access rates are lowest in the more heavily populated rural areas, with children living on farms being worst off. There is an almost total lack of provision of pre-school opportunities for black African children with disabilities".

In order to gain greater clarity with regard to the need for early childhood education it is necessary to be aware of the present need in relation to the birth rate. The Birth Rate as at 1993 calculated as per thousand of the different population classification categories follows:

TABLE THREE
BIRTH RATE FOR DIFFERENT POPULATION
GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA

RACE GROUP	BIRTH RATE
AFRICAN	34.0
COLOURED	22.3
INDIAN	20.0
WHITE	13.6

Source - Extract from R.S.A Statistic in Brief 1993.

With regard to the statistics in table three the NEPI document (1992:1) states:

"Not only are more children living but the rapid pace of social change creates conditions which require new ways of thinking about child care and development. These trends are likely to continue and to demand action and there is increasing evidence that early investment in the development of 'the whole child' can bring improvements in the life of the child and benefits to the larger society".

Furthermore, the social changes today has an impact on the child's life. Early childhood education is primarily the responsibility of the family, but many families require a range of support services. There is a need to support the family in its child rearing function, to enable it to fully meet the needs of young children, and to ensure that their full potential is developed. Families, where the mother is also working, face the day care dilemma. The socio-economic changes further emphasise the need for early childhood education in South Africa.

1.6.2 Socio-economic changes

We are witnessing an acceleration of women entering the labour force. Statistics of women in the Labour Force according to the R.S.A. Statistical News Release (P-0302) mid year estimate (1970-1993) of active female workers population are as follows:

TABLE FOUR
ACTIVE FEMALE WORKERS POPULATION

AFRICAN	3264000
COLOURED	625000
ASIAN	133000
WHITE	1009000
TOTAL	5031000

Source - R.S.A Statistical News Release : 1993:5.

We have only to review these statistics to realise that the need to provide care for very young children is increasing. The increasing number of women entering the work force, emphasises the need for quality early childhood programmes. If women contribute to the economic activity of the country, then adequate child care provision must be made available. Lack of proper child care facilities as well as poor quality programmes will affect children's development adversely, thereby increasing their disadvantage and reducing their chances of succeeding at school.

1.6.3 The school readiness issue in South Africa

According to the NEPI report (1992:3) between 25% and 35% of coloured and African children repeat or drop-out of grade one. An estimated 25% of children per year are likely to leave school illiterate (without passing standard three). This means that at least one quarter of the African population does not remain in school long enough to achieve basic literacy.

Confronted with the high rates of repetition and drop-out rates in education for the disadvantaged, the new government wants to ensure that all children can benefit from basic education. It is

widely agreed that the cause of repetition is, inadequate preparation of children at school entry. Furthermore, it is believed that quality pre-school programmes could address the issue of preparing children for later academic success (NEPI 1992:3). This being the situation one can no longer unnecessarily argue or contemplate the need to provide adequate quality early childhood development programmes in South Africa.

1.7 MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH

The impetus to research the influence of early childhood development programmes is derived from the researcher's experiences over a period of sixteen years as a pre-primary and junior primary teacher and observations in the junior primary classroom.

1.7.1 The need for continuity between the pre-primary and the junior primary phase.

It has been stated previously (par.1.2.1) that children's learning is continuous. Barbour and Seefeldt (1993:11-13) emphasise that children's development and learning are continuous. The authors state further that because children's growth is continuous from pre-school through the primary grades, they require educational experiences that are equally continuous. This implies that the curriculum from the pre-school across the primary grades should be co-ordinated and continuous.

The concept of learning continuity is endorsed in the Government White Paper on Provision of Education in South Africa (1995:34). It is stated as follows:

"There is virtually unanimous agreement in the early childhood sector that the developmental needs of the young child are continuous from birth onwards, and require appropriate, developmentally-based educational responses, with as much continuity as possible between the home, the educare and pre-school phases, and the early years of schooling".

It was observed that the transition from pre-school to primary grades is sometimes stressful to children. The children coming to grade one were different in respect of pre-school experience, some having at least one year pre-school experience whereas others had no pre-school experience.

Children who attended pre-school programmes were more ready to adapt to the new environment namely - the classroom. There were few problems with regard to separating from the parents, they did not have difficulty in communicating with peers and teachers and they were less anxious. However it was not always possible for the researcher to commence with the work of grade one with these children who had attended pre-school programmes. The researcher is of the opinion that the inflexible curricula of grade one, with clearly stated behavioural objectives and performance standards does not accommodate the need to build on children's prior knowledge and therefore learning continuity is lacking.

Furthermore, most of the children were in low cost programmes that were run by communities and were staffed by unqualified teachers who were not aware of the requirements and the curriculum of the junior primary phase. It must be noted that although a variety of low cost programmes have been shown to

be effective, incorrect practices can be detrimental. As stated in the NEPI document (1992:4) poor quality early childhood development programmes may even have negative effects on children's development.

Therefore, it is concluded that learning difficulties can, to a significant extent, be attributed to the fact that learning continuity is not upheld at this crucial stage between the pre-primary and junior primary phases. The learning readiness required for formal work in grade one is not achieved.

The pedagogic and didactic implication of this is enlightened by Hurlock (1978:29) who states:

"If children are not ready to learn, teaching may be a waste of time and effort. It may lead to resistant behaviour which militates against successful learning, such as learning of bad habits or not wanting to learn".

The lack of learning continuity between the pre-primary and junior primary phase could also be attributed to the fact that the lower primary schools may not be ready for children. Traditionally, emphasis was placed on the child being made ready for school. At a seminar in Cape Town (Sept. 1994) Myers correctly commented:

"The idea that children should be ready for school is more common than the equally important idea that schools should be ready for children".

Fortunately this view is changing and the idea of the school being made ready for children is gaining recognition. The concept of getting the school ready for children is supported by Katz (1992:106) who argues that the most important strategy for addressing the school readiness goal is to prepare the school to

be responsive to the wide range of experiences, backgrounds, and the needs of the children expected to come to school.

If there is greater learning continuity between the pre-primary and junior primary phase, the transition for children will be a smooth and comfortable one.

1.7.2 The need for learning continuity between the home and school

The researcher further observed that much of the differences in children at the beginning of first grade can be attributed to variations in the home environment. While hereditary influence undoubtedly is significant in determining individual variation, aspects of the home environment affect the level of measured intelligence of the child as well as his or her school learning. According to the HSRC report (1981:92) the single most important reason for poor utilisation of the expensive formal education is found in the inadequate preparatory learning experience before school is entered and inadequate home support during the years of schooling. Fontana (1984:281) supports this contention in suggesting that a lack of understanding between home and school lies at the root of children's poor school adjustment and performance.

Bloom (1981:72) agrees that educational growth is clearly not limited to what takes place in the school in grades one to twelve. The school builds on a foundation which has been largely developed in the home and pre-school in the early years of life. In an article Eller and Maxwell (1994:59) confirms that pre-schoolers whose parents frequently initiate opportunities for

them to interact with other children are more socially competent in the first grade.

The researcher is of the opinion that another reason for lack of continuity between home and school is that parents shift the responsibility of education to the pre-school and teachers. Their role especially in the first six years of the child's life is a crucial and vital one. Taylor (1995:19) comments that to promote continuity teachers can assist parents with regard to the development of young children and their role in the home. Barbour and Seefeldt (1993:39) suggest that teachers, parents and administrators can co-operate in a number of ways to structure smooth transitions for children from their pre-school experiences to kindergarten and primary grades. These involve:

- * communicating with parents and other teachers
- * preparing children for the transition
- * developing compatible administration practices.

1.7.3 The need for teacher training in early childhood development programmes

A major problem to providing quality early childhood development programmes is the lack of professionally trained teachers (Barbour and Seefeldt 1993:23).

Betty Caldwell (in Gordon and Browne 1989:436) argues:

"But we still seem to labor under the false idea that just anybody can take care of young children and that, only minimal of quality need to be guaranteed for child care programs for very young children. Some people will maintain that no particular level of training is necessary for those who will be care givers and the teachers of very young children. After all, they assert, people have been taking care of young children for centuries without any specific training! Now of course, during those same centuries, we have had countless children victimised by abuse and neglect and by having to grow up in environments in which childhood was not valued".

There is a shortage of professionally trained teachers in South Africa. The table that follows provides statistics on the estimated numbers of teaching staff in educare centres for black children in 1991, according to type of training received:

TABLE FIVE
ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF TEACHING STAFF

TYPE OF TRAINING	NUMBER OF STAFF	PERCENTAGE
FORMAL PRE-PRIMARY TRAINING	589	4%
FORMAL PRIMARY TRAINING	1333	8%
NON-FORMAL EDUCARE TRAINING	2882	17%
UNTRAINED	11926	71%
TOTAL	16730	100%

Source - NEPI (1992:20)

Considering the above figures (71% untrained teachers) it is clear that the provision for trained teachers is inadequate. The NEPI report (1992:21) states as follows:

"Pre-primary classes and schools serving mainly white children that have been supported by the provincial education departments are staffed largely by tertiary trained pre-primary teachers, but this is not always the case in private schools and full day care centres. The majority of teaching staff, however, probably have some form of postschool education."

The shortage of tertiary trained teachers is a major problem in the black communities. Because of the lack of formal training opportunities and the poor quality of most training programmes, a network of NGO's provide non-formal training for early childhood development programmes. Most of these operate on a non-racial basis but serve mainly the black communities where the needs are greatest.

The non-formal training method has proved a cost effective means of meeting the demands for training among the large numbers of untrained workers. This is because most courses are run on an inservice basis (NEPI 1992:30-32). It must however, be noted that these NGO's depend almost entirely on funds from sponsors. Although this form of training is contributing to a better quality programmes, this is not sufficient.

1.8 ADULT-CHILD RATIOS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The problem of providing quality education and care is further complicated by adult-child ratios. According to the NEPI Report (1992:21) pre-primary schools controlled by the provincial education departments have been staffed at ratios ranging from 1:13 to 1:23. In contrast, in the pre-primary schools that serve mainly the black children the ratios range from 1:27 to 1:39.

In this regard Bredekamp (1987:14) correctly states that even the most well qualified teacher cannot individualise instruction and adequately supervise too large a group of young children. The NAEYC maintains that adult child ratio is the most important factor for quality care. An acceptable adult child ratio recommended for 4

and 5 year olds is two adults with no more than twenty children. Group size and thus ratios of children to adults, should increase gradually through the primary grades.

1.9 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.9.1 Preamble to stating the problem

It should be clear from the previous paragraphs that to provide quality early childhood development programmes is of utmost importance because of :

- * the importance of early childhood education (paragraph 1.3) ;
- * the long term effects of early childhood development programmes on school achievement, intellectual performance and social variables (paragraph 1.4) ;
- * the need in South Africa for such programmes (paragraph 1.5 and 1.6) .

There are a variety of early childhood development programmes currently in use in South Africa. It concerns the researcher that **there is a lack of consensus on which criteria could be used to assess whether they could be regarded as programmes of high quality, the value of which has been pointed out in this chapter.**

1.9.2 Statement of the problem

The problem on which the focus will rest in this study is the lack of consensus of the early childhood profession in South Africa regarding a definition for a quality early childhood development programme.

A further problem stemming out of the previous problem is the lack of agreed upon criteria by means of which quality early childhood development programmes may be assessed.

1.10 PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION

The purpose of this study is to analyse selected early childhood development programmes in South Africa in order to identify components within each programme, to meet the identified criteria for quality programmes. In this study the term quality is used to refer to early childhood programmes that are of a high standard, a standard worth striving for. In that, a quality programme means a programme that satisfies the criteria laid out in this study.

A second purpose is to identify criteria by means of which these programmes may be analysed.

1.11 RESEARCH METHOD

To be able to conduct research with regard to the quality of a few early childhood development programmes it will be necessary:

- to do a descriptive analyses of the components of these programmes;

- to do a literature study concerning early childhood development programmes, as well as finding out what is regarded as criteria of quality for assessment of such programmes;
- to do the literature study which will be used in this dissertation, use will be made of relevant source materials comprising published books, research reports, theses, lectures, and articles from newspapers, magazines and scientific periodicals.

Evaluation research is therefore being undertaken in the sense, that to answer the question whether the programme is a quality early childhood development programme the:

“Systematic process of collecting and analysing data in order to make decisions” (Gay 1981:9) is followed:

- answers to such a question require the collection (literature study) and analysis and interpretation of data with respect to finding criteria against which programmes may be assessed;
- when one analyses one finds or shows the essence or structure of something (Fowler and Fowler 1978:34), as will be done with the programmes to be assessed.

1.12 PROGRAMME OF INVESTIGATION

Chapter one

Introductory Orientation

Chapter two

The influence of educational philosophies on early childhood development programmes is discussed.

Chapter three

Factors contributing to quality programmes in early childhood development programmes is discussed and criteria for the selection of aims is provided.

Chapter four

The criteria for selecting and organising content and assessment in early childhood development programmes is identified.

Chapter five

A description and analysis of selected early childhood education programmes in South Africa.

Chapter six

Conclusion and Recommendations.

1.13 EXPLANATION OF TERMINOLOGY

Early Childhood

Early childhood refers to the child from birth to age eight, which is a standard definition that is accepted and used by the NAEYC. The term frequently refers to children who have not yet reached school age, and the public often uses it to refer to children in any type of pre-school (Morrison 1995:15). In South Africa early childhood refers to the period from birth to age nine (NEPI 1992:7)(see par.1.2).

Early Childhood Development

Early childhood development (ECD) is an umbrella term which applies to the processes by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially (Government White Paper on education and training (1995:33) (see par.1.2).

Within South Africa today the term now being used to refer to programmes for children in the birth to nine age range is Early Childhood Development (ECD). The term conveys the importance of an holistic approach to child development and signifies an appreciation of the importance of considering a child's health, nutrition, education, psycho-social and additional environmental factors within the context of the family and the community (Interim Policy Document on ECD 1996:33).

Educare

The term educare refers to the provision of education and care of children from birth until entry to school. For convenience this is usually referred to as the 0-6 years group (A.N.C 1994:91) (see

par.1.2.1) . This term is now superseded by the term Early Childhood Development (ECD) (Interim Policy Document 1996:1).

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is defined as any part of the day or full day programme in a centre or school or other facility that serves children from birth to age nine (Bredenkamp 1987:1). Early childhood education consists of the services provided in early childhood settings (Morrison 1995:15). In South Africa early childhood education which was previously seen as education for the 0-6 years age group are including children in the lower grades in primary school, thereby extending the early childhood education range from 0-9 years (see par.1.2.1).

Early childhood development programmes

The programme is a description of the type of service provided for children from birth to age nine (Gordon and Browne 1993:37). According to Morrison (1995:15) early childhood programmes provide "services for children from birth through age eight in part-day and full-day group programmes in centres, homes, and institutions; kindergartens and primary schools; and recreational programmes".

Early childhood development programmes in South Africa include a variety of strategies and a wide range of services directed at helping families and communities to meet the needs of children in the 0-6 years age range.

Nursery school / Pre-primary / Pre-school

Nursery school is a programme for the education of two-, three-, and four-year old children. Many nursery schools are half-day

programmes. The nursery school provides for active learning in a play setting (Morrison 1995:19).

Pre-school generally means any educational programme for children prior to their entrance to grade one. The pre-school programme caters for children age three to five or six. Pre-primary refers to programmes prior to entering first grade. In this study the terms pre-primary and pre-school are used interchangeably and refer to early childhood development programmes prior to grade one.

Junior Primary Phase

The first three years of primary school curriculum make up the junior primary phase in terms of a broadly acceptable descriptive phrase in South Africa. It includes the following grades or classes: Grade One, Grade Two and Grade Three. The reception year (Grade 0) is suggested to be the introductory year of an integrated four-year lower primary programme (White Paper on education and training 1995:75). Thus the junior primary phase in South Africa now includes the reception year (Grade 0). This phase is also referred to as the foundation phase.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Much of what we know about children today comes from child development and child psychology research. Since the field of child development is broad, encompassing a wide variety of opinions and facts, not all experts agree, or even think alike. Indeed there are differences among them about how children grow, think, learn and what motivates them. Four perspectives namely behaviourism, psychoanalysis, maturationism and interactionism have dominated the field of early childhood education. Each is based on a different theory of child development. Hence the following discussion.

2.2 THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

2.2.1 Behaviourism

Behavioural theories focus on objective, observable principles that influence human behaviour. The behaviourist approach holds that the child is a purely reactive organism and reacts or

responds rather than initiates, thus his or her behaviour can be predicted from past experiences. All responses (learning) can be shaped or modified by rewarding only predetermined desired responses (Leeper et.al. 1987:28).

Behaviourists do not deal with concepts like thought or emotion because they are not observable (Feeny et.al. 1987:91). They regard learning as a continuous process governed by principles that never change (Spodek et.al. 1991:82). Behaviourists regard the drive to satisfy physical needs as the fundamental force underlying human behaviour. Skinner's theory is explained as an example of behaviourism.

B.F.SKINNER

Skinner's theory is referred to as operant conditioning or instrumental learning because it requires a particular response from the learner. This theory is an explanation of behaviour that allows for many actions and behaviours being performed spontaneously, not always in response to something else. In Skinner's theory it is not the prior stimulus, but the consequences of the behaviour, that is important. Skinner described these consequences as rewards, or reinforces and punishment.

Learning is viewed as a process whereby a child is conditioned to display expected behaviour and knowledge through the use of consequences, or reinforcement and punishment. Skinner described an ideal child-rearing environment and asserted that both human and physical factors in the environment should be "engineered" to produce certain predictable results (Catron 1993:7).

*** Influence on programmes**

As for the influence of behaviourism in early childhood pedagogy is concerned, the common view is that the child's own interest and inclinations are not as important in constructing a programme as the adult conceptions of what the child can become, given appropriately structured and managed experiences. There is a focus on very specific objectives. Disciplines are viewed as sources of knowledge that must be simplified and carefully graded for transmission to children. The teacher very actively directs children's activities (Dopyera and Dopyera 1990:168).

Behaviourist theories make a strong case for how the environment influences behaviour. Behavioural models are based on behavioural and social learning theories, and usually have a very structured environment in which activities are teacher - initiated and objectives include academic and preacademic skills. The use of punishment and reward are used to guide appropriate behaviour (Catron 1993:9).

2.2.2 Psychoanalysis

This theory concerns itself with personality development and emotional problems. It is Erikson's ideas which have most affected early childhood education.

ERIK ERIKSON

Erikson believes that man has the potential to grow in a healthy emotional direction. He states:

"There is little that cannot be remedied later, there is much that can be prevented from happening at all" (Erikson 1963:247-274).

Erikson has described a series of stages of social and emotional development that expands on Freud's original psychosexual stages to include social influences (Feeny et.al. 1987:87). His eight psychosocial stages specify an identity crisis or task that each person must resolve at each stage (Catron 1993:7). According to Weiser (1991:31) in each stage there is a central problem that has to be solved at least temporarily, if the child is to proceed positively to the next stage.

The first four of the eight stages are completed by the end of elementary school. Therefore the first four stages as delineated by Erikson (1963: 247-260) will be discussed.

Stage one (Age 0-12 months) Trust vs. Mistrust : It is the mother's responsibility to provide the infant with sufficient sensitive care so that the infant feels secure in trusting her.

Stage two (Age 3-5 years) Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt : As the child becomes autonomous, he/she needs both assurance and guidance to "protect him/her against meaningless and arbitrary experiences of shame and of early doubt" (Erikson 1963:252).

Stage three (Age 3-5 years) Initiative vs. Guilt : The child has much energy and easily forgets failures. Tasks are taken on "for the sake of being active" (Erikson 1963:255). The child may feel guilty about some of the tasks he has in mind, particularly the desire to take the place of the same-sex parent.

Stage Four (Age 6-12 years) Industry vs. Inferiority : Children become industrious as they increase their skills, learn diligence, and apply themselves to the tasks. With failure, a sense of inadequacy and inferiority may emerge.

The first three stages are also important for the emergence of a sense of identity. The various identities relevant to each person (family, ethnic, religious, economic, physical and intellectual) are quite firmly established by the age of six (Weiser 1991:33). Thus the child's ego and personality are established by six years of age.

*** Influence on programmes**

The models are concerned with the emotional environment as a supportive climate for children's development and learning. Socio-emotional enhancement, such as increasing the children's self esteem and motivation for learning, is the primary focus of this programme.

In this model the teacher is viewed as a therapeutic guide and accepts the child as an individual person. Because the crucial aspect of the child's development occurs in the first five years when there is a great dependency on adults, the relationship between the children and teacher is seen as crucial (Feeny et.al. 1987:90).

2.2.3 Maturationism

A maturational orientation to children's development is associated with Arnold Gesell.

ARNOLD GESELL

Gesell believed that the child's genetic endowment determined development and behaviour and that internal maturational factors guided children's growth and development. Children develop, mature and learn according to their own internal maturational schedule (Catron 1993:6).

Weiser (1991:33) explains Gesell's theory as follows:

"The various aspects of human growth and development i.e. physical, intellectual, social and emotional are divergent in terms of rate and harmony, and are periodically convergent into nodal stages when the different aspects are in harmony".

In spite of the criticism of over emphasising the role of "maturation" in growth and development, this theory does make a valuable contribution to programmes. The developmental charts provide guidelines which will help adults understand that it is wrong to expect children to master certain skills or concepts for which their level of development has not yet prepared them.

*** Influence on programmes**

Unlike the programme development from the behaviourist perspective maturationist programmes lack specificity. To the maturationist teaching and child rearing involve the provision of an accepting and comfortable setting within which children can follow their own interests and needs within socially accepted frames of references. Children are not pressured or enticed to perform beyond their current level (Dopyera and Dopyera 1990:171).

Maturationist models are based on understanding typical child maturation and development. Activities that are planned support the attainment of developmental milestones. Teachers provide educational activities and encourage children's social learning but take a less active role in teaching.

2.2.4 Interactionism

Several curriculum models that have the cognitive development theory as their foundation are referred to as interactional, transactional or constructivist models (Catron 1993:9). This study deals with four cognitive theories which have influenced early childhood programmes greatly.

A. JEAN PIAGET

Although Piaget did not specify educational practice in his theory, many childhood programmes are based on Piaget's theory. The Piagetian view has presented the child as actively

constructing his or her own thinking by acting upon the physical and social environment. All children were seen to develop through a series of clearly defined stages towards logical thinking.

The stages of development, as delineated by Piaget, have become virtually legendary in educational literature. Although Piaget's work has identified four major stages, three are especially important in early childhood education i.e. the sensori-motor, the pre-operational and the concrete operational stages. Piaget believed that intellectual growth proceeds through an invariant sequence of stages that can be summarised as follows:

- * The Sensori - motor stage (0 to approximately 2 years): Motor activities and the physical senses provide the primary means of learning and building the intellect in the first years. Over the first two years infants come to know and understand objects and events by acting on them. The sensori-motor schemes that a child creates to adapt to his or her surroundings are internalised to form mental symbols that enable the child to understand the permanence of objects, imitate the actions of absent models and solve problems at a mental level without resorting to trial and error. It is noted that although Piaget's general sequence of sensori-motor development have been confirmed, recent evidence indicates that infants achieve such milestones as deferred imitation and object permanence earlier than Piaget had thought (Shaffer 1996:280).**

- * The Pre-operational stage (approximately 2 to 6 years) : As children enter pre-school they also enter the pre-operational period. Symbolic reasoning becomes increasingly apparent**

during the pre-operational period as children begin to use words and images in inventive ways in their play activities. Piaget claimed that pre-school children cannot think logically and will fail to solve problems that require them to consider the implications of several pieces of information or to assume another person's point of view. However recent research has challenged Piaget's characterisation by illustrating that pre-school children are much more logical and less egocentric when thinking about familiar issues. So children possess an early capacity for logical reasoning that Piaget overlooked (Shaffer 1996:281; Cole and Cole 1993:325).

- * The Concrete operational stage (approximately 6 to approximately 12 years) : As children move out of the pre-primary years into elementary school they become adept at performing intellectual skills that were previously beyond their reach. During this period, children can think logically and systematically about concrete objects, events, and experiences. As they enter middle childhood, children become capable of mental operations, internalised actions that fit into a logical system. However concrete operations can only apply their logic to real or tangible aspects of experience and cannot reason abstractly (Cole and Cole 1993:325; Krog 1990:29-30; Shaffer 1996:280-281).

Piaget's chief concern was with the development of thought processes. In Piagetian theory, the processes of assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium are basic to how all people organise their thoughts and, therefore, to all cognitive development. Assimilation is the process that enables children to incorporate new information or experiences into existing mental structures. Accommodation refers to the altering of existing structures. By assimilating new information and

accommodating existing intellectual structures, children activate the third process namely equilibrium. Equilibration is a mental process to achieve a mental balance, whereby a person takes new information and continually attempts to make sense of the experiences and perceptions (Gordon and Browne 1993:122).

Piaget maintained that young children can only have contact with the world in terms of their existing schemes in one of two ways, either through assimilation or through accommodation. In his view the child is constantly striving to maintain a balance between assimilation and accommodation (equilibrium). This means that he/ she seeks to establish a balance between his/her understanding of new elements in their environment in terms of his/her existing knowledge, and the corresponding modification of behaviour (Study Guide EMPSOS-E:25).

*** Relationship between Piaget's theory and practice**

Since there have been many Piagetian curricula applied particularly to junior education and since Piagetian ideas have permeated much of nursery and infant education this study attempts to translate his theory into practice.

*** Piaget's view of the child**

Piaget saw children motivated by their own curiosity and desire to find out and intellectual development appeared to occur spontaneously. Children's experiences with physical objects are further influenced by their interactions with people. Knowledge comes about not simply from the passive act of observing but from a more complex mental activity of interpreting and drawing conclusions. Such conclusions

either add to children's existing ideas (assimilation) or cause children to reformulate their thinking (accommodation) (Kostelnik, Soderman and Whiren (1993 :46)).

Piaget emphasises activity in intellectual development and states that the children must act on things to understand them. Children discover for themselves the world about them, and this process of active exploration continues through the rest of intellectual development. Moreover the young child is prelogical and therefore develops different schema's from that of the older child and avails himself or herself of different materials and activities. The way they perceive and understand, depending on the stage they have reached, so however often something is explained or demonstrated, they can only assimilate it according to their own level of understanding and their own picture of the world. This view is endorsed in Shaffer(1996:266) who asserts:

" In a Piagetian based curriculum, individual differences are accepted by teachers, who plan activities for individual children or for small groups rather than a whole class".

*** Piaget's view of the teacher's role**

An educator must know that discovery learning as propagated by Piaget is really opposed to the idea of teaching, if by teaching is meant the traditional process of imparting of information. Shaffer (1996:266) argues that Piaget criticised traditional education programmes for relying too heavily on passive, verbal forms of instruction that emphasise rote learning. Piaget maintained that young children are naturally inquisitive souls who will learn best when they act on their own environments, probing objects

and participating in situations that will allow them to construct new knowledge for themselves.

In order to encourage thinking and learning, teachers should refrain from telling children how to solve a problem. Rather the teacher should ask questions that encourage children to observe and pay attention to their own ideas.

Lunt and Sylva (1982:186) advocate that the teacher according to Piaget is important in two major respects. Firstly he/she must know what stage the child has reached, which activities he or she has mastered and where he or she lacks competence. Knowing this, the teacher can provide them with materials, events and activities which will offer them the opportunity to practise those skills and to exercise their intellect on tasks relevant to life in his/her society.

Secondly he/she can help in the process of "stage shift", that is the child's development from one stage to the next. The teacher can do this by providing and showing the child obvious conflicts and discrepancies, so that he or she modifies existing schema's and ways of understanding new ones. A teacher's role is a demanding, sensitive and a busy one.

* **Piaget's view of the classroom**

The Piagetian teacher aims to bring the activities of the classroom and the school into harmony with the process of development. The lessons and materials given to children should be determined by knowledge of stages of development. This is known as a "readiness" approach and assumes that intellectual growth takes its own time and

should not be accelerated. In this regard Schaffer (1996:266) writes that Piaget suggested that education should be tailored to children's readiness to learn. Appropriate learning experiences build on existing schemas. If the experiences are too complex, children will be unable to assimilate (much less accommodate to) them, and no new learning will occur.

Furthermore Gordon and Browne (1993:125) argue that children need lots of time to explore their own reality, especially through the use of play. A Piagetian classroom would have large periods of time to "act out" their own ideas. They go on to state that children need many objects to explore, so that they can later incorporate these into their symbolic thinking. Such materials need to be balanced among open-ended ones (sand and water activities, construction etc.); guided ones (cooking with recipes, classification etc.) and self correcting ones (puzzles, matching games etc.).

B. LEV VYGOTSKY

In order to view Piaget's work from a new vantage point, a perspective on cognitive development that has aroused a great deal of interest recently - the socio-cultural viewpoint of Lev Vygotsky is considered.

Vygotsky agreed with Piaget that young children are curious explorers who are actively involved in learning and discovering new principles. However he placed much less emphasis than Piaget did on self-initiated discovery, choosing instead to emphasise the importance of social contributions to cognitive growth. Furthermore Vygotsky agreed with Piaget that the

child's earliest thinking is prelinguistic and that language often reflects what the child already knows. However, he argued that thought and language eventually merge, and that many of the non-social utterances that Piaget called "egocentric" actually illustrate the transition from prelinguistic to verbal reasoning (Shaffer 1996:276).

In order to understand Vygotsky's theory of learning it is necessary to mention his important concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Santrock (1995:220) comments that the zone of proximal development is Vygotsky's term for tasks too difficult for children to master alone, but that can be mastered with the guidance and assistance of adults. Thus the lower limit of the ZPD is the level of problem solving reached by the child working independently. The upper limit is the level of additional responsibility the child can accept with the assistance of an able instructor. Edwards and Knight (1994:32) claim that children's ability in Vygotskian terms, is measured by the speed at which they can move through the ZPD.

Having discussed the ZPD concept, Vygotsky's ideas on language and thought, and culture and society is explained. In Vygotsky's view the child's mental structures are made of relations between mental functions. The relations between language and thought is believed to be especially important in this regard. He maintains that language and thought initially develop independently of each other but eventually merge. Two principles govern the merging of thought and language. First, all mental functions have an external origin - children must use language and communicate with others before they focus

inwards to their own mental processes. Secondly children must communicate externally and use language for a long period of time before the transition from external to internal speech takes place (Santrock 1995:221-222). Vygotsky (1978) in Abbott and Rodger (1994:29) argued:

"Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in co-operation with his peers".

Vygotsky's theory further offers a portrayal of human development as being inseparable from social and cultural activities. According to Vygotsky (1962), skills in mental functioning develop through immediate social interactions. Information about cognitive tools, skills, and interpersonal relations are transmitted through direct interaction with people. Through the organisation of these social interactional experiences embedded in a cultural backdrop, children's mental development matures (Santrock 1995:222).

C. JEROME BRUNER

Like Piaget, Bruner theorises a progression of development through a fixed sequence of stages. Bruner identifies three learning modes which are involved in discovery learning, viz. enactive mode, iconic mode and the symbolic mode. Bruner is of the opinion that the only type of learning that is meaningful is the learning which is gained by discovery (Grobler 1990:21).

In the enactive mode the child enacts something to give it existence and to represent it in actions. In the iconic mode the child is able to represent the world to himself/herself through an image or spatial schema that is relatively independent of action. In the symbolic mode the symbolic activity becomes

specialised into different systems, one of which is language: the idea that there is a name that goes with things and the name is arbitrary and is generally taken as the essence of symbolism (Marshall 1984:45).

According to Morrison (1989:82) Bruner says that "learning is involuntary". The child learns because he/she is a thinking being. What he/she learns depends greatly on the people in his environment, what they say and do and how they react to him/her. In addition, available materials and experiences also determine the quality of learning.

His theory, is similar to that as put forth by Piaget, where the development of cognition is analogous to a laying or building block process. In this process, interaction with the environmental provides critical nourishment for the child's intellectual development (Gordon & Browne 1989 : 67).

D. MARIA MONTESSORI

Montessori believed that intelligence was not fixed and could be stimulated or stifled by the child's experiences. She believed that children learned best through their own direct sensory experiences of the world (Morrison 1989:16).

Montessori (1959:14) suggests that there are different and distinct developmental periods in the course of the child's life, corresponding curiously to different phases in the development of his physical body. The first period goes from birth to six years. This period is further subdivided into two sections, namely, from 0 - 3 years, which displays a mentality that is unapproachable by the adult who, according to Montessori, can exercise no (little) influence over it. From 3 - 6 years of age, the

psychic entity becomes approachable and great psychological and physical transformations take place in the individual, which allows him/her to be school ready at the end of his/her period.

Morrison (1989:81) explains the above period as follows:

“There are unconscious and conscious stages in the development of the absorbent mind. From birth to three years the unconscious absorbent mind develops the senses used for seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching. From three to six years the conscious absorbent mind selects sensory impressions from the environment and further develops the senses. In this phase the child is selective in that he refines what he knows.”

Apart from developmental periods, Montessori often refers to sensitive periods. Sensitive periods are described by Montessori (1959:14-15) as periods corresponding to special sensibilities found in “creatures” (children) in the process of their development. Such periods are characterised by an impulse or an attraction in the environment which later disappears and is replaced by a different impulse.

Morrison (1989:81) further explains Montessori’s sensitive periods suggesting that she predated the modern critical or sensitive periods concept, which hypothesises that there is a time when certain developmental events take place. Sensitive periods for much learning occur early in life during the period of intellectual growth. While all children experience the same sensitive periods, the time at which they occur is different. Furthermore, the environmental impact at that time is effective.

The cornerstone on which all Montessori principles rest, is respect for the child. Because each child is unique, education

should be individualised for each child. Montessori found that children are capable of sustained concentration and work (Ornstein and Levine 1993:141).

*** Influence on programmes**

Interactionist programmes have a strong emphasis on children's activities. Interactionists pay particular attention to those portions of the child's behaviour that indicate the extent of his or her involvement and the nature of his or her conceptualisation. The ultimate source of the curriculum for the interactionist teacher is the active child engaged with aspects of the environment that appear to intrigue him or her (Dopyera and Dopyera 1990:177).

Therefore in the interactional model, teachers assess children's level of development and provide developmentally appropriate materials and experiences. Children are given opportunities to explore and discover the physical environment. Children are viewed as active learners. There is a balance between the child and teacher initiated activities.

Much of the work in early childhood education today concerning readiness is contained in Montessori's views of sensitive periods. Such concepts as critical periods and teachable moments refer to the child's level of development where he/she is ready to learn.

2.3 DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

In addition to the different philosophies underlying early childhood development programmes, it is imperative for all persons in any responsible relationship with young children to know how and why children develop the way they do.

Development is defined as:

"...a general term used to denote changes which result from the influence of growth and learning" (Shepherd and Ragan 1982:182).

Although most researchers find it convenient to divide the developmental process into separate stages for infants, toddlers and the pre-school child, there are no definite breaks separating these stages.

*** Infants (0-12 months)**

Morrison (1995:21) writes that children from birth to the beginning of independent walking (about 12 months of age) are referred to as infants. During infancy the child experiences one of his or her fastest periods of growth. The infant makes great gains in weight and height. Socially the infant establishes some attachment to his or her mother or caretaker. As he or she grows older he or she develops stranger anxiety, and feels uncomfortable in the presence of unfamiliar faces. Emotionally, the infant cries in response to pain, hunger or whatever else may cause him or her discomfort. Fear is another emotion shown by infants. They are afraid of loud noises and sudden loss of support. The infant explores with hands and fingers (Mwamwenda 1990:24-25; Gordon and Browne 1993: 86).

*** Toddlers (1 year-3 years)**

Children from the beginning of independent walking to about age three are referred to as toddlers. Morrison (1995:21) explains that the term toddler is derived from the lunging, tottering, precarious balanced movement of children as they learn to walk. Toddlers are egocentric. Socially and emotionally the toddler begins to share, is exuberant and talkative, has imaginary companions, plays consciously and is highly imitative of adults. They respond to verbal requests. Toddlers are known to have nightmares and animal phobias. Physically the toddler gains mastery of activities such as sitting, standing, walking, grasping and running. He or she shows predominant use of either left or right hand. Intellectually toddlers are curious, enjoy guessing games, have a lively imagination, have a short attention span and understand size/shape comparisons (Gordon and Browne 1993:87; Mwamwenda 1990:25).

*** Pre-schooler (3-5 years)**

Children between toddler age and age of entrance into first grade are referred to as pre-schoolers (Morrison 1995:21). Significantly parents and society view this period as the time when children get ready for entering formal schooling. The pre-school years are critical; many professionals view the events of these years as the cornerstone of later learning (Morrison 1988:218-223).

During this period growth slows down, the body becomes less chubby and more differentiated. The child grows large muscles in his arms and legs. The pre-schooler has adultlike

posture, likes to use fine motor skills, enjoys jumping, running, skipping and doing stunts. Socially the child extends his/her interactions with children beyond the members of his/her immediate family. For some children this is the time to join pre-school and meet new figures of authority i.e. teachers. Emotionally children are less dependent on their parents. The child can take responsibility for himself or herself and his or her behaviour and participate in making decisions for himself or herself and his or her actions (Gordon and Browne 1993:91-92; Mwamwenda 1990:30).

Barbour and Seefeldt (1993:48) explain that cognitively five and six year olds are ready to acquire many intellectual and academic skills. Their language has grown in terms of vocabulary. Fine muscle control has developed enough so that they can draw representational pictures and can write though not on a line or in a restricted space.

* The Primary School Child

The child in the junior primary phase has all kinds of potential, abilities and possibilities and with educational help progresses on his/her journey to adulthood. He/she moves progressively out of the protective safe haven of the pre-school, the family and ventures into the unfamiliar world of the school. Although the child's physical development follows a reasonable predictable pattern, considerable differences occur among children. These differences are generally attributed to his/her readiness for formal schooling.

Socially and emotionally primary school children observe rules and make social connections through play. They are sensitive to others' reactions; shame is a common emotion; he or she may

leave rather than face criticism and ridicule and there is evidence of peer pressure. Physically, growth has slowed down; however children are boisterous, and motor development is the tool for socialising. Intellectually they can use logic; systematic thinking skills are evident and they have an appetite for "real" knowledge (Gordon and Browne 1993:92).

All periods in development from conception through to adolescence, are critical periods in the life of the child. Just as all periods of development are critical, so too are all areas of development. The areas are based on the total development of the child.

In view of the discussion on the different philosophies, it is evident that the underpinning principles of early childhood development programmes should be based on:

- *an understanding of child development and learning theories;*
- *an understanding of the fact that children develop holistically.*

2.4 THE TOTAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

It is important to understand that children develop holistically. Aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, language, social and physical development are all interrelated. No one facet of development exists independent from the others, nor is any one most valuable. An interesting example of the interrelatedness of these facets is

explained in Kostelnik (1993:39). When observing children engaged in a vigorous game of "dodgeball" one might categorise their activity as purely physical. Yet the children's ability to play the game is influenced by other developmental processes.

- Emotional development involves coping with the disappointment of being out.**

- Cognitive development includes figuring out the sequence in which the game is played.**

- Aesthetic development involves appreciating the grace of another player's movements and enjoying the rhythm of the game.**

- Language development involves determining what scripts to use to get into the game or out of it and using words to describe the rules.**

- Social development involves negotiating the rules of the games and working out disagreements over boundaries and teams.**

Therefore, it is best to remember that children are integrated human beings whose development is enhanced when teachers concern themselves with all aspects of their development. It has been found that serious problems arise when one facet of development is emphasised to the exclusion of all others. The different facets will be discussed separately. However, educators must remember that these aspects cannot be separated and they are all interrelated.

2.4.1 Physical Development

Stages of growth can be identified for every child, but these stages do not occur at the same time for each child. Charts categorise physical development according to average age, but of course the "average" child does not exist. Each child is unique. One may grow more quickly in some phases of development than others (Lindberg and Swedlow 1985:41, Hamachek 1990:78).

Adults should not prod children beyond their abilities to stand, walk, climb, or hold a crayon. As he/she begins to develop co-ordination of his/her large muscles, he/she develops his/her small muscles as well, and he/she achieves better eye-hand co-ordination. Motor skills become highly developed with age. A child should be allowed to enjoy his or her growth and to feel in control of his/her physical being. In this way, they gain an increasingly positive concept of themselves.

2.4.2 Emotional Development

Emotions are the feelings a person has of joy and sorrow, love and hate, confidence and fear, loneliness and belonging, anger and contentment, frustration and satisfaction. They are responses to events, people and circumstances. Feelings are an outgrowth of what a person perceives is happening. Emotionally healthy people learn to give expression to their feelings in appropriate ways (Gordon and Browne 1989:400).

A teacher needs to be aware of a child's emotional development. How a child feels about himself or herself and others affects the way he or she behaves and learns. A

teacher's awareness of how a child feels makes it possible for him or her to provide for his needs. She can find out how children feel through observation. Children feel much more secure if they know they will not be forced to do something which they have had no previous experience (Hamachek 1990:87; Kostelnik et. al. 1993:107).

Independence is developed as a child decides where, what and with whom he or she will play. He or she needs to be able to make choices and have experiences in making decisions (Lindberg & Swedlow 1985:43). Although making choices gives the child confidence this does not mean that they should be left on their own to make judgements about all activities.

Emotional development is a lifelong process, requiring experience with one's own feelings. Each child has a unique emotional foundation. Emotional skills learned in the early years are the ability to deal with feelings and with change, to be able to exercise judgement and to know and enjoy one's power (Gordon and Browne 1989:409).

2.4.3 Social Development

Unlike physical development, which follows an inexorable path towards maturation, children do not acquire standards of behaviour nor do they develop the ability to control their feelings without guidance. Social behaviour is learned, and kinds of behaviour that children develop are influenced by culture and their family experiences. The ways they interact with each other and with adults depend upon the quality and quantity of social experiences they have (Lindberg & Swedlow 1985:43; Hamachek 1990:85-86; Hendrick 1994:3).

Social development is the process through which children learn which behaviour is acceptable and expected. Quality programmes promote the following social skills:

- In their relationship with adults, children learn

- * They can stay at school without parents.
- * They can enjoy adults other than parents and respond to new adults.
- * Adults will help in times of trouble or need.
- * Adults will assist in learning social protocol.
- * Adults will keep children from being hurt and from hurting others.
- * Adults will work with them to solve problems.

- In their relationship with peers, children learn

- * There are different approaches to others, some work, some don't.
- * How to solve conflict in ways other than force.
- * How to share materials, equipment, other children, friends teachers and others.
- * How to take turns, how to anticipate and avoid problems.
- * How to be helpful, how to work together as a group.
- * To respect the rights, feelings and property of others.
- * To follow a daily schedule, to adapt to school routines and follow school rules.

- As an individual he or she learns

- * To take responsibility for self-help, to cope with rejection, hurt feelings, disappointment.
- * To initiate own activities and make choices.

- * To manage social freedom, to work alone in close proximity to other children (Gordon and Browne 1989:413).

2.4.4 Cognitive Development

Much of cognitive development theory has its roots in the work of Piaget. A detailed exposition of the cognitive learning theory has been discussed at the beginning of this chapter (see par.2.2.4 Piaget; Vygotsky; Bruner and Montessori). Therefore the researcher will now discuss cognitive skills and the relationship between cognition and language.

Gordon and Browne (1993:403) define cognition as follows:

"Cognition is the mental process of faculty children use to acquire knowledge. To think is to be able to acquire and apply knowledge. By using conscious thought and memory, children think about themselves, the world and others".

Early childhood programmes promote the development of cognitive skills. Hamachek (1990:90); Lundsteen and Tarrow (1981:131); Kostelnik et. al. (1993:128); Gordon and Browne (1993:405-409) identify the following as important cognitive skills:

- **Skills of Inquiry** : Young children are curious, watching the world carefully. Children ask questions, listen, get ideas and make suggestions. This includes interpreting what others communicate. Reasoning and problem solving are also inquiry skills.
- **Knowledge of the Physical World** : As they learn the properties of objects, children gain a better understanding of the concepts of cause and effect.

- **Knowledge of the Social World** : Children are encouraged to notice both similarities and differences in people and then are led to develop tolerance for both. Children learn rules for social living. They learn appropriate conduct in various situations.
- **Classification**: Knowledge of the world teaches children to have different responses to different objects. Classifying this knowledge, means learning the attributes of objects.
- **Seriation** : This involves arranging items according to a graduated scale. Often through trial and error, children learn seriation systematically.
- **Numbers**: Understanding the concept of number means learning about quantity; that is, understanding amount, degree, and position.
- **Symbols** : A symbol stands for something else; it is not what it appears to be. Children enjoy playing favourite characters.
- **Spatial Relationships**: As children experience one object's position in relation to another, they begin to have a mental picture of spatial relationships. This skill is learned only through experience.
- **Time**: Understanding time is a complicated affair. Having an order of events through a consistent daily schedule helps children learn this aspect of time.

2.4.4.1 Cognition and Language

The relationship between language and thought remains one of the most tangled and controversial issue dividing developmental psychologists. Language is the powerful tool that turns actions and events into thought. Cognition is the mental process or faculty children use to acquire knowledge. Language is the primary form of expression through which people communicate their knowledge and thoughts (Gordon and Browne 1993:420).

Four different views on language and thought are explored.

The Environmental-Learning Perspective: According to learning theorists such as Skinner, language is more than a means of communication with others. It is believed that words deepen a child's understanding of certain aspects of objects and of the subtle relations among various events. Association among words provide a kind of mental map of the world, which shapes the way a child thinks. This view suggests that thinking should change markedly when children begin to acquire language (Cole and Cole 1993:308).

The Piagetian Interactionist Perspective: Piaget believed that language is a verbal reflection of the individual's non-linguistic understanding. He maintained that language clearly illustrates the child's existing schemes but plays no meaningful role in shaping thought or helping the child to construct new knowledge. The acquisition of language provides a means of thinking more rapidly, since a sequence of thought can often be carried out more quickly than a sequence of actions. But since language reflects thought,

language development cannot cause cognitive development. Rather cognition determines language (Cole and Cole 1993:308; Shaffer 1996:278).

A Cultural-Context Perspective: The most important cultural theory of language and thought was developed by Vygotsky (see par.2.2.4 b). He insisted that children's experience of language is social. Vygotsky asserted that the relationship between language and thought is not constant. Both language and thought develop, and so does the relationship between them. During the first two years of life, language and thought develop along more or less parallel, relatively unrelated lines. From two years the development of language and thought begin to intermingle. This intermingling fundamentally changes the nature of both thinking and language, providing the child with a uniquely human form of behaviour in which language becomes intellectual and thinking becomes verbal (Cole and Cole 1993:309; Edwards and Knight 1994:29; Shaffer 1996:277).

As previously stated Vygotsky's theory challenges Piaget's ideas on language and thought (see par.2.2.4). He argued that language, even in its earliest forms, is socially based, whereas Piaget emphasised young children's egocentric and non-socially oriented speech. Young children talk to themselves to govern their behaviour and to guide themselves. By contrast, Piaget stressed that young children's egocentric speech reflects social and cognitive immaturity (Santrock 1995:221).

The Nativist Perspective: Nativist theorists such as Noam Chomsky explicitly deny that it is possible for language to grow out of sensorimotor schemas, declaring that there are no known similarities between the principles of language and the principles of sensorimotor intelligence. Chomsky believes that language acquisition is made possible by a specifically human language acquisition device (LAD). Chomsky has used the term mental module to signal the self-contained nature of the capacity to use language. In claiming that language forms a distinctive mental module, nativists seem to portray that language and thought do not depend on each other (Cole and Cole 1993:309).

2.4.5 Perceptual Development

Perception refers to the processes by which we read messages that are conveyed by our senses. Shaffer (1996:204) defines perception as follows:

"Perception is perceived as the interpretation of sensory input: recognising what you see, understanding what is said to you".

Among the mental processes, perception probably makes the greatest progress during the first couple of years of life. Perceptual development in childhood is largely a matter of the development of attention i.e. the ability to use one's senses strategically to gather information most pertinent to the tasks one faces. From birth infants actively use their senses to explore the environment and even prefer some sensory stimuli to others. As children grow older, their attention spans increase, they become more selective in what they will attend to, and they are better able to formulate and carry out systematic plans for gathering information necessary to accomplish their goals.

Because young children have very short attention spans, they rarely concentrate on any single activity for very long. The capacity for sustained attention continues to improve throughout childhood and early adolescence, and these improvements may be due, in part, to maturational changes in the nervous system.

Furthermore, with age, children develop selective attention: i.e. they get better at concentrating on whatever it is they are trying to attend to, while ignoring irrelevant or distracting sensations. The environment also influences perceptual development. Moreover social/cultural environments may influence auditory perceptions and judgements about physical characteristics of objects that are valued. It also appears that cultural and family environment contribute to the development of broad perceptual "styles" that may have important implications for many other aspects of development (Shaffer 1996:204-241).

2.4.6 Creative Development

The young child is open to experience, exploring materials with curiosity and eagerness. For children, developing the senses is part of acquiring creative skills. Hendrick (1994:3); Gordon and Browne (1989:425) identify some important creative skills:

- **Flexibility:** This is the ability to produce many ideas and the ability to shift from one idea to another. Children who are flexible in their thinking have original ideas and usually demonstrate a unique perspective on issues.

- **Sensitivity:** Being creative involves a high degree of sensitivity to one's self and one's mental images. Creative people, from an early age, seem to be aware of the world around them, how things feel, smell and taste.
- **Use of Imagination:** Imagination is a natural part of the creative process. Children use their imagination to develop their creativity in many ways, for example in role playing and in building and constructing activities.
- **A Willingness to Take Risks:** Being open to thinking creatively or seeing things differently is essential to creativity. Self-esteem is important. Generally people do not like to make mistakes or be ridiculed, therefore they avoid taking risks. When a child is relaxed and not anxious about being judged by others, creativity will be more likely expressed. With support children can be encouraged to take risks.
- **Using Self as a Resource:** Creative people who are aware of themselves and confident in their abilities draw upon their own perceptions, questions and feelings. They know that they are their own richest source of inspiration.
- **Experience:** Children need experience in order to gain skills in using materials creatively. They must learn how to hold a paint brush before they can paint a picture; once they know how to paint they can be creative in what they paint.

Teachers should also take cognisance of the spiritual development of the child. School communities have children from different religious backgrounds. Although Christianity is the predominant religion in South Africa, due account must be

taken of the other religions represented in our country. Quality programmes endeavour to promote the holistic development of children. Children who have achieved optimal growth in all of the above areas will be ready to accept and meet the demands of formal schooling and life long learning.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Today, many teachers find it difficult to make useful links between the theories and their daily work. Either the implications for classroom practice have not been clearly defined, or the theories offered have been so contradictory that teachers have simply given up in exasperation and rejected the whole package. Anning (1991:21) states:

"It is only when research helps one to see with one's own eyes that it gets beneath the skin".

Research has advanced a number of theories that explain the development and learning of young children. The behaviourist emphasises the effects of the environment on the child's growth and learning. The psychoanalysis theory stresses the personality and emotional development. The maturationist theory implies that behaviour emerges in a fixed order according to a genetically determined timetable. Interactionalism advocates children's learning through interacting with the environment. In other words, children are active learners.

Many theories have been discussed. Some believe in inner growth, and spontaneous learning, others study behaviour from a more environmental perspective. However, their collective value assist us in understanding early childhood development and learning.

It is pertinent to observe the sentiments expressed by Leeper et.al. (1987:115) who state:

"We believe that any programme that ignores major areas of growth and developmental needs of the child will not succeed in producing individuals who can function intelligently in a democratic society".

Programmes of high quality hold tremendous promise. It must be noted that programmes draw from a number of theories, choosing those methods and ideas that best suit their needs. The early childhood education field is not represented by a sole philosophical orientation or a uniform set of practices. The knowledge of children's development and learning is integral to formulating suitable goals for the programme. This would be discussed in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO QUALITY PROGRAMMES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and identify criteria that should be met in order to provide quality programmes. According to the Reconstruction and Development Policy Document (ANC 1994:65) improving the quality of early childhood development programmes will depend on improving the quality of early childhood development programme staff and curricula. However curriculum development in pre-primary education in South Africa is a relatively new concept. It must be noted that although the approach in pre-primary education differs from that in the primary and secondary education, pre-primary education is also guided by the curriculum, to ensure that interaction between the teacher, child and subject matter is planned. In the Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (1996:2) "curriculum" refers to all aspects of teaching and learning and "curriculum development" refers to the development of learning programmes, learning materials and lesson preparation. In order to examine the nature of the curriculum in pre-primary education, an understanding of the concept "curriculum" is essential.

3.2 DEFINITION OF CURRICULUM

As yet, consensus has not been reached on the meaning of the concept curriculum. The reason for this is that it is a very comprehensive concept and many different interpretations, meanings and emphases have been assigned to it (Fraser, Loubser and Van Rooy 1993:91).

In this study the definition of the curriculum as espoused by Fraser et. al. (1993:92) is used as a point of departure. The term curriculum is defined as follows:

"The curriculum is the interrelated totality of aims, learning content, evaluation procedures and teaching-learning activities, opportunities and experiences which guide and implement the didactic activities in a planned and justified manner".

Each of the components which occur in the above definition namely: aims, situation analysis, learning content, teaching-learning opportunities and evaluation will be discussed in chapters three and four. However in order to explain the concept curriculum in early childhood development there is a need to refer to other viewpoints. Hence the following exposition.

The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (1991:20) in referring to the curriculum states as follows:

"The curriculum is not just the goals of the program and the planned activities but also the daily schedule, the availability and the use of materials, transition between activities, and the way in which routine tasks of living are implemented. Criteria for curriculum implementation reflect the knowledge that young children learn through active manipulation of the environment and concrete experiences that contribute to concept development".

Robinson & Schwartz (1982:12) expand this by arguing that the curriculum of early childhood programmes may take different forms e.g. curriculum is "what happens" when most of the choices are left to the child or the curriculum as being everything the child experiences at school.

Hendrick (1994:3) discusses curriculum in terms of "selves" (selves are identified as the physical, emotional, social, creative and cognitive selves). The curriculum should be designed to provide various learning experiences that are suitable for the development of competence for each of these selves.

At this point it must be mentioned that in early childhood education literature the terms "programmes" and "curriculum", both refer to the content and method and seem to be interrelated. Moreover the terms are generally used synonymously.

The term "programme" as discussed in (1.2.2) generally reflects the needs of the age group it serves, the length of the daily programme, activities offered in the daily programme it follows, the educational aims and practices, the method of instruction and the philosophy. Kostelnik et. al. (1993:11) writes that programmes encompass a wide range of educational philosophies and curricula.

On analysis of the above, two key aspects come to light, namely that programmes and curricula vary from one setting to the next and that they involve both the content and the method in an educational setting. The curricula of programmes in South Africa is not prescriptive. According to Ebbeck (1991:38) when the curriculum becomes prescriptive then it would ignore the diversity

found in early childhood education. In this regard Grobler quotes Reilly (1983) in stating:

"If such prescription should be rigid it will lead to programme uniformity which is incompatible with the present international trend towards the greater recognition of the need for pre-school programmes which meet the diverse needs of specific groups of children" (Study Guide OPP 453-R :3).

It is however important to consider certain assumptions about curricula and programmes. Of particular relevance to the curriculum in early childhood development programmes are the following assumptions. It:

- * Must focus on the whole child (Hendrick 1990:3).**
- * Serve many functions (Bredekamp 1978:1).**
- * Understand child development and learning theories (Seefeldt 1987:275).**
- * Accept that children are active learners (Seefeldt 1987:4-5).**

The absence of a prescribed curriculum in pre-primary education in South Africa (see par.3.1) does not imply that teachers teach aimlessly. They are directed by the aims of the programme, and teaching is geared towards achieving these aims.

3.3 DETERMINING AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

In the contemporary world, in which accountability is stressed in both the public and private sectors, early childhood educators are challenged to be articulate about what children should be gaining from early childhood development programmes. This implies aims of the programme.

3.3.1 Definition of the terms aims and objectives

Aims and objectives are defined by the Bureau for Educational Development of UNISA (University of South Africa) as follows:

An aim is a more general and broader formulation of intention. It provides long term guidelines and has an element of permanence. These general aims are usually of little value when it comes to detailed planning of the actual teaching activity. For this reason specific aims or objectives are required (Study Guide OPP 453-R :20).

Smith and Schloss (1994:44) explain that long term aims are very broadly stated and generally require an academic year to master. Short term objectives are derived from aims and are completed in a much shorter time span. Further instructional objectives are derived from short term objectives and can be mastered in a single lesson. These three are strongly related, a small number of long term aims should generate several short term objectives, which should suggest even more instructional objectives.

3.3.2 The functions of aims and objectives in programme development

The plans and activities involved in everyday school life do not occur in a vacuum. In this regard Morrison (1995:266) comments that all programmes should have aims to guide activities and on which to base teaching and methodologies. Without aims, it is easy to end up teaching just about anything without knowing why.

Robinson and Schwartz (1982:21) argue that a major function of aims is to distinguish one programme from another. A programme with aims focusing on academic skills can be easily distinguished from a programme with social-emotional development aims. Another function of aims is to serve as a basis for evaluation of consistency and continuity of the programme. Therefore a programme with the stated aims of fostering independence would be inconsistent with a programme design that fails to provide children with opportunities for making choices.

Although programmes may have well formulated aims this does not necessarily mean that the teaching methods support and achieve these aims. A problem often observed in programmes, is that there is a difference in what is said and what is done. This view is confirmed by (Beane, Toepfer and Alessi 1986:128) who correctly states:

"One of the consistent problems in education has been the gap between theory and practice. That is to say, we often do not practice what we preach. One prominent example of this gap has been the inconsistency between our goals and our specific curriculum plans".

3.3.3 Traditional aims

Traditional aims of the curriculum were formulated for a particular programme serving the needs of a particular group of children. In today's heterogeneous classrooms there may be a need to reconsider and reformulate traditional aims. This is endorsed in the Reconstruction and Development Policy (ANC 1994:65), where it is stated:

"The existing curriculum bears the mark of racism, sexism, authoritarianism and outmoded teaching practices. Transformation is essential".

It is further stated that the new programmes, curricula and teaching approaches for the first four years of schooling must take into account the language, learning and developmental needs of young children (see par.4.1).

Spodek (1985:41) correctly states that one of the prime aims of early childhood education, as of all education, is the development of knowledge in children. Knowledge however, must be broadly defined and continually redefined as the socio-cultural context changes.

A further problem related to traditional aims is that they are often formulated in vague, general and even ambiguous terms, and do not provide the necessary guidelines for teaching practice. Sometimes it is even impossible to derive appropriate short-term objectives from these vague and general aims. For example, there is no sense in stating "the holistic development of the child" as a curriculum aim if it is not clear what is meant by "holistic".

The reality of most curricula and pedagogical approaches is a focus on teaching children the skills they need in order to succeed in primary school and not addressing the full range of children's needs. There is a need for the emerging and existing programmes in the new South Africa to examine the traditional aims of the programme in view of the changes in the country and in education.

3.3.4 Early childhood education a preparation for formal schooling versus early childhood education a preparation for life

In discussions of the aims of early childhood programmes, no issue generates as much debate as the school readiness issue. It is therefore important to discuss the school readiness issue as a factor that could influence the nature and quality of the programme. The increased universal interest in school readiness has resulted in numerous definitions of the concept. This study briefly refers to the following views that could influence the nature and quality of the programme with regard to this issue.

3.3.4.1 Defining school readiness

De Witt (1988:25) explains that the stage of school readiness can be reached when the child in his/her totality, is ready to meet the demands of formal education. She goes on to explain that the readiness for learning starts at birth and continues throughout life.

Morrison (1995:293) comments on school readiness as follows:

For most parents readiness means the child's ability to participate and succeed in beginning schooling. From this perspective, readiness includes a child's ability, at a given time, to accomplish activities and engage in processes associated with schooling. Readiness does not exist in the abstract. It must relate to something. Increasingly in today's educational climate, readiness is measured against the process of formal schooling. By the same token, a child's lack of readiness may be considered a deficit and a detriment, because it indicates a lack of what is needed for success in the first grade.

De Witt, Rossouw and Le Roux. (1994:1), argue that increased demands are made on the child in formal schooling and it is only through experience built up during the pre-primary years that he or she is able to keep up the pace.

Mac Farlane (1991:68) draws a distinction between school readiness and learning readiness. The child who is emotionally and socially mature enough to cope with the discipline, restrictions and demands of the formal classroom situation is school ready. Learning readiness is reached when the child is cognitively mature to cope with the academic demands of grade one.

From the above it seems clear that school readiness is measured against the ability of the child to cope with

formal schooling. However, Morrison (1995:293) argues:

"Today the term readiness is being replaced with the concept of early development and learning. Readiness is no longer seen as consisting of a predetermined set of capabilities that must be attained before entering first grade".

The differing views of school readiness have implications for early childhood development programmes. This is clearly explained in Hamachek (1990:468-470) who cites two notable views about readiness. He refers firstly to "The Natural View". Those who advocate the natural view of development feel that school experiences should be geared to the natural unfolding of each child's developmental patterns. Hamachek quotes the early work of Hilgard (1932); Gesell (1940); and Olson (1959) whose investigations into the developmental process led them to promote the idea that practically all children will develop the general skills of readiness as they grow up. Embedded in their philosophy of natural readiness is the idea that development and behaviour at all levels are controlled by internal forces.

If this view is adopted then it implies that teachers will have to wait until maturation occurs. The burden is on the child to develop the necessary readiness. This view also relieves the teacher of the need to find ways to move towards promoting readiness, since it is unlikely to be hastened by teaching decision.

However Robinson and Schwartz (1982:46) argue that withholding learning opportunities for the optimum moment of readiness may contribute to the child's declining interest in learning and lack of security in feeling able to learn. This

can have a detrimental effect on all later learning and school success.

The second view is known as "The Guided Experience View". This view is favoured by those who see little sense in waiting for the child to unfold naturally and prefer to speed up the process. Hamachek (1990:469) quotes Jerome Bruner (1966) who maintains that readiness should not be left to chance and goes on to state:

"The idea of 'readiness' is a mischievous half truth. It is a half truth largely because it turns out that one 'teaches' readiness or provides opportunities for nurture one does not simply wait for it. Readiness, in these terms, consists of mastery of those simple skills that permit one to reach higher skills."

If the second view is adopted then it would be the task of the teacher to nurture readiness. As Read and Patterson (1980:289) state that a good teacher is continually nurturing a child's readiness to move towards more advanced activities. However, nurturing readiness for formal learning does not imply early teaching of school subjects.

The views expressed above are challenged by Katz (1992:106) who argues that the most important strategy for addressing the school readiness aim is to prepare the school to be responsive to the wide range of experiences, backgrounds and needs of the children expected to come to school (see par.1.7.1).

Morrison (1995:297) supports the above in stating that schools and professionals should promote readiness for children, not the other way around. He contends that

schools should get ready for children and provide programmes based on the needs of children and families, not on preconceived notions of what children ought to be able to do.

Furthermore, Penning (1994:74) quotes Kagan (1992) who highlights "readiness to learn" as a concept opposed to "readiness for school". According to this viewpoint, the onus of readiness is placed on the school rather than stressing what the child must be able to do. The onus rests on the adult to ensure that the child continuously receives developmentally appropriate activities and learning opportunities in order to enhance his or her development.

From the exposition on school readiness in the preceding paragraphs it is amply apparent that psychologists and educators differ on their views of "school readiness". Yet they agree on the influence and importance that parents and other adults have on the child's development.

Furthermore, the different views may have a direct influence on the content and teaching methods in early childhood development programmes. In this respect Morrison (1995:295) concludes that providing children with quality pre-school programmes is one way to promote and ensure that children will enter school ready to learn.

3.3.4.2 School readiness and maturity

There is some degree of confusion with regard to school readiness and maturation. School maturity and school readiness are two related, but different concepts. Sometimes they are used as if they were synonymous. In this regard there is a need to examine the issue.

Some early childhood professionals and many parents believe that time cures all things, including the lack of readiness. Arnold Gesell coined the concept of developmental age to distinguish children's development growth from chronological age. Gesell believed that parents make their greatest contribution to readiness by providing a climate in which children can grow without interference to their innate timetable and blueprint for development. The popularity of this maturationist view has led to a persistent sentiment that children are being hurried to grow up too soon (Morrison 1995:294).

Duminy and Sohng (1991:90) point out that school maturity refers to the physiological growth that takes place without any noticeable exercise i.e. the aspects of change in the child's abilities that can be attributed to the hereditary traits and/or incidental experiences in which specific exercise is not a factor.

According to Vrey (1979:80) school readiness refers to the child's total readiness to benefit by formal education in a group context. Readiness includes the child's biological, neurological and motor development.

Maturity cannot be speeded up or forced but must be reached in its own term. Because maturity for school is achieved at a rate unique to each individual child, it cannot be linked with any particular age (Study Guide EMPSOS-E:85). In South Africa it is generally accepted that children reach school maturity by the age of six. However the child at age six may be mature but he /she may still not succeed in school.

Hence age should not be the sole criteria in considering the child school ready. Only a careful evaluation of the child's ability and developmental status can provide an adequate basis on which the teacher can judge whether children possess a sufficient readiness for specific experiences. This point is well articulated in Leeper et.al. (1987:143). They argue:

"Because readiness is related to maturation and development rather than chronological age, some children can benefit from certain experiences long before the majority of children of the same age".

Grove and Hauptfleisch (1976:10) indicate that from a pedagogical point of view this kind of maturity (age) is not a guarantee for school success, because even if a child is sufficiently mature he may still have difficulty adjusting to the demands of formal teaching. This means that the child is not yet ready for school. Thus the term school readiness.

The argument presented in Kostelnik et. al. (1993:48) sums up the issue of school maturity and school readiness. She states that although children cannot profit from certain experiences without the appropriate neurological and physical structures they do not gain knowledge and skills from maturation alone.

The environment plays a critical role in the learning process. It can be retarded by environmental insults such as malnutrition and accelerated through environmental stimulation.

One has to remember that school readiness doesn't just happen. It is a culmination of a vast variety of pre-basic experiences, that should be included in the early childhood development programmes. Children do not come to school as blank slates but rather they come to school exposed to a great deal intellectual and quasi-intellectual stimulation. Readiness is a complex phenomenon influenced by both genetic and social factors.

Early childhood development programmes do play a vital role in this aspect. However "learning to learn" seems to be confused with "early teaching" as espoused by Feeny et.al. (1987:147):

"Early childhood programs should not be boot camps or training grounds for elementary school. The time that the child spends in pre-school should be spent on experiences that are appropriate for early years".

3.3.4.3 The effect of informal and formal approaches to school readiness on early childhood development programmes

The NAEYC position statement (1991:1) mentions that in recent years, there is a trend towards increased emphasis on formal instruction in academic skills in an effort to promote school readiness as the most important aims of

early childhood education. Despite this trend among some educators to formalise instructions, there has been no comparable evidence of change in what young children need for optimal developments or how they learn.

Leeper, Witherspoon and Day (1984:64) explain informal education as a situation where the emphasis is placed on the learner. Educators who design programmes of this kind believe that the development of the whole child is the first priority. They also feel that school experiences should be rich and personally meaningful to children; that the process of learning is more important than the product and that education is for life and not just preparation for later schooling.

The informal approach to teaching is most relevant to teaching young children. This is endorsed by Ipaye (1992:64) who contends:

"Educationally, children at the age of 3+ to 5, because of their stage of psychological development should not be exposed to formal classroom teaching with the hope of developing permanent literacy and numeracy in them. This stage of educational development is reserved for the primary school stage 6+".

The researcher shares the sentiments expressed by Van Den Berg and Vergani (1986:7) who states:

"School readiness should not be allowed to become an excessively formal process imitative of much that is disturbing about many primary schools".

No authority in the field of child psychology, paediatrics, or child psychiatry advocates the formal instruction at any level of the young children's development. Elkind (1989:305) argues that the weight of solid professional opinion opposes formal instruction and advocates providing young children with a rich and stimulating environment that is at the same time, warm, loving and supportive of children's own learning pacing and priorities.

The trend towards increased emphasis on formal instruction in academic skills can also be attributed to pressures from parents.

3.3.4.4 The influence of parents' views of school readiness in early childhood development programmes

Parents today have a vast array of information and advice regarding school readiness. So great is the amount of printed material that it is easy to become confused by contradictory or conflicting points of view. Guidance is needed in distinguishing between advice based on sound research and theory and that proposed by biased persons or groups.

Every year parents of children who have reached school-going age wonder whether their children are ready to go to school. Popular magazines, many of which are targeted to meet the insatiable needs of parents for child-rearing

information, stress the importance of the early years for learning. Articles in popular magazines in South Africa attract the parent's attention:

"Are you ready for school ?" (Oxford T. Living and Loving: 1986 Jan.)

"Is my child ready for big school yet ?" (Davis A. Living and Loving: 1987 Jan.)

"Ready for the three R's-Are you giving your pre-schooler the best start ?" (Evrille B. Living and loving: 1990 Jan.)

Ebbeck (1983:9) agrees that some pre-school teachers report that they are under increasing pressure from parents to introduce "formal work". These teachers further comment that no amount of reassurance convinces parents that what they are providing is more appropriate for children at their particular stage of development than is pre-conceived formal and sometimes abstract material desired by parents.

The school readiness issue is a legitimate concern of parents. However what seems to be the most misdirected effort is the attempt by some parents to teach children to formally read and write very early. It must be noted that there is a natural emerging literacy which develops from the time the child starts looking in his or her first picture books, having stories read to him or her, becoming aware of print in the environment.

3.3.4.5 Economic Implications of school readiness in early childhood development programmes

Referring to the situation in the USA, Catron (1993:258) states that comparing the cost of pre-school education to the cost associated with additional programmes to children who lack pre-school education, reveals that the latter outweighs the former seven times.

It is interesting to note the findings of the Research and Policy Committee (1985:13) which states that an examination of the Perry Pre-school Programme in U.S.A indicates that the investments return of one year of the programme is an extraordinary economic buy. It is further argued that it would be hard to imagine that society could find a higher yield for a dollar of investment than that found in a pre-school programme for its *'at risk'* children.

Of particular importance within the South African context is that early childhood investments can reduce cost and improve the efficiency of primary schooling. According to the NEPI report (1992:3) the former Department Of Education and Training (DET) has estimated that 10.4% of primary school expenditure for grade one and grade two is effectively wasted through drop outs and repetition. The new government shares the above views and has made provision for early childhood educare as part of the Reconstruction Development Program (ANC 1994:62). In this regard McAfee (1994:11) made the following statement about the U.S.A. which could be applied to the educational situation in South Africa today:

"Political, community and business leaders as well as educators and parents are looking to early childhood care and education to lessen the inequalities in background and experiences that contribute to so many children's lack of success in school".

In view of the above discussion and debate on school readiness, there is a need to provide guidelines for the formulation of aims for quality early childhood development programmes. In this regard the study mentions briefly aims that promote the total development of the child.

3.3.5 Early childhood development programme aims

The writer shares with Taylor (1980:2) the conviction that setting up aims without considering the need of the children first is ineffective. Grobler; Penning; Orr; Calitz and Van Staden (1987:4) provide the following aims based on the total development of the child:

*** Social Development Aims**

To enable children to interact with adults.

To enable children to interact with his/her peer group.

To encourage independence and a sense of responsibility.

To develop communication skills.

To develop an awareness of needs of others.

*** Physical Development Aims**

To develop manipulative skills.

To provide opportunities for children to gain control over their bodies.

To develop spatial awareness.

To develop hand/eye co-ordination.

*** Cognitive Development Aims**

To enable children to grasp mathematical and scientific concepts.

To develop language and reasoning skills.

To encourage learning through direct experience.

To develop concentration and learning skills.

To encourage creativity and use of imagination.

To develop observational skills.

*** Emotional Development Aims**

To develop each child's self-esteem and sense of achievement.

To encourage children to express their feelings.

To provide a secure environment.

To develop confidence.

To enable children to cope with fears, anxieties and difficult experiences.

The researcher agrees that the stated aims of individual pre-schools vary, but all programmes should have certain essential aims. In this regard Morrison (1995:266-267) contends that most good pre-schools plan aims in these areas: social and

interpersonal skills, self-help and intrapersonal skills, building self-esteem, academics, thinking skills, learning skills, language, and nutrition.

By means of making a synthesis of what most authors (De Witt (1988:25), Grobler et.al. (1987:4), Leeper (1984:64), Taylor (1980:2), Vrey (1979:80)) find important as being the aims of early childhood development programmes, the following criteria can be identified:

- *Aims should take the development level of children into account;*
- *The child's development in totality (physical, emotional, creative, cognitive and language and social) should be taken into account.*

3.4 SITUATION ANALYSIS

To identify criteria for quality programmes the first step in curriculum development must be considered; namely a situation analysis. Situation Analysis includes all factors and variables which impose conditions and limitations on and provide guidelines for the meaningful implementation of the didactic activities in the didactic situation (Fraser et.al. 1993:93). The variables include all people involved in the didactic situation. Hence the child, parent, teacher and community will be discussed.

3.4.1 The child

The Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (1996:39) state that all children are of equal worth and are entitled to achieve their full potential. Furthermore, they share the same entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum in an environment which accepts them unconditionally.

Programmes are designed to meet the needs of the child. Kostelnik (1993:6) posits children between the ages of three to eight have common needs and characteristics. In addition, between the ages of three and eight children work through several developmental tasks characteristic of the period that represent essential milestones in social, cognitive, physical and language development (par.2.3.1).

Van Staden (1991:318) suggests that for the child to become a whole person the following needs have to be fulfilled: consistency, continuity, stability and order, safety, shelter, food and clothing, predictability, protection, dignity, respect for and recognition for being a person, understanding and acceptance, love and warmth and the need for self-actualisation (refer to 3.3.5).

In early childhood development there are children with special needs. Beaty (1984:259) makes reference to children with special needs i.e. bilingual; bicultural; handicapped and gifted children. The Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (1996:39) maintain that children with special education needs should be included within early childhood development services. It is not in the scope of this study to go into details of special needs. However, the writer supports the idea of

mainstreaming children. Teachers should use strategies of acceptance stressing similarities to others not differences.

The researcher also views environmentally deprived children in South Africa as children with special needs. They have not had the types of experiences and opportunities that would assist them in attaining school readiness. This does not mean that they do not have normal intellectual potential, but we can say that they may fall into the "at risk" category (i.e. they may be in danger of failing). These children are not eager to learn because their emotional needs for safety and security have not been met. Teachers need to understand how economic and social factors impact on learning.

3.4.2 The influence of the parents in early childhood development programmes

Young children are integrally connected to their families. Programmes cannot adequately meet the needs of children unless they also recognise the importance of the child's family and develop strategies to work effectively with families (National Academy of Early Childhood Programs 1991:26).

3.4.2.1 Importance of parent involvement

Parents should be valued as primary educators of their children and as active partners with other family and community members in facilitating the process of learning. In this regard the early childhood development sector recognises the importance of parent and community involvement (Interim Policy for ECD 1996:40).

Research shows us that programmes with a strong parent component have the longest lasting positive effects on children (Beaty 1984:205; Blakely 1991:22). Parent involvement has long been part of early childhood programmes. Historically many early childhood programmes had parent involvement; Friedrich Froebel developed activities and materials for mothers to use with their infants. From the late 1800's to early 1900's kindergarten teachers in the USA taught children in the mornings and spent the afternoons visiting parents in their homes (Decker and Decker 1988:127).

In reviewing the research on pre-school intervention Shaefel (in Berns 1985:204) concluded that the accumulating evidence suggests that parents have a great influence upon the behaviour of their children particularly their intellectual and academic achievements. Parent involvement is critical to the success of an educational programme. Clark-Stewart (1982:91) comments that the first care-giver is the parent.

In addition the findings of studies conducted in a variety of publicly funded programmes such as Head Start and Perry Pre-school indicate the following as effects of parent involvement:

“There was positive effects on academic performance; self-esteem and motivation to learn on children; parents had an improved understanding of child development, and teachers had a greater understanding and more positive support from parents for policies, procedures and activities in the programmes” (Brickman & Taylor 1991:239-241; Morrison 1988:321).

In some traditional programmes in South African, the desired parent involvement is lacking. From the researcher's experience she found that parents have given the following reasons for the lack of involvement: both parents are working and they do not have the time; they feel inadequate in terms of their ability to contribute in a meaningful way; others stated that they feel embarrassed to communicate with teachers since they are illiterate. However, there are others who are just not interested and see education as the responsibility of the school.

Sometimes parents remain uninvolved because the teacher does not permit them to become involved or fails to create the communication channels necessary for involvement. Creating these channels to increase parent involvement will, therefore, improve the quality of existing early childhood development programmes.

3.4.2.2 The teacher-parent partnership

Teachers and parents are primarily concerned with the optimal growth and development of the child and this common interest makes parents and teachers important allies. They should therefore work together to forming a teacher-parent partnership (Gloria 1992:22).

Swick (1993:78) comments that once teachers and parents have developed a foundation for having meaningful relationships, an empathetic-ecological framework can promote strong teacher-parent partnership. Integral to this framework are the following philosophical points:

- * Teachers and parents must have a sense of respect for each other's integrity, for abilities to grow and develop in positive ways as individuals and within their respective roles.**
- * Teachers must be sensitive to the possible limitations of their orientation towards parents.**
- * Parents must be cognisant of the dynamic role of teachers as it relates to planning and carrying out good early learning programmes.**
- * Teachers and parents must recognise and respond to the serious limitations in the ways that schools are currently structured.**
- * Parents and teachers should have a commitment to carry out the needed planning, dialogue and responsive involvement essential to their partnership.**
- * Teachers and parents must continually strive to become "children's advocates" through the significant roles of nurturing, teaching, and modelling.**

It is within this framework that teachers and parents can explore the ways that they can assist each other in achieving their mission. Offering parents multiple opportunities to be involved in their children's education increases the potential for strengthening teacher-parent partnerships and provide a quality programme. The traditional role of parents simply providing for school parties or attending the once a year parents night should be expanded.

On analysis of the research evidence presented in the preceding paragraphs, (Beaty (1984:205), Blakely (1991:22), Brickman and Taylor (1991:239) and Berns (1985:204)) the following are identified as criteria for quality early childhood programmes:

- *Recognition of the importance of the child's family as primary educators of their children and opportunities and strategies are provided to work effectively with families, thereby establishing a strong teacher-parent partnership.*

3.4.3 The influence of the teacher in early childhood development programmes

At this point the researcher wishes to point out that today the term "practitioners" is also used in referring to teachers in the early childhood development sector. The term refers to all ECD education and development practitioners. This encompasses the whole spectrum of ECD educators, trainers, facilitators, lecturers, caregivers, development officers, etc. including those qualified by their experience, and who are involved in provision in homes, centres and schools (Interim Policy Document 1996:3).

3.4.3.1 Personality Attributes

In early childhood development the personality, competence and dedication of the teacher is decisive. Feeny et.al. (1987:38) agrees the personal characteristics (personality) of teachers have a powerful effect on how they relate to

children and adults and how they behave in the classroom. Personality includes distinctive traits of mind, behaviour and emotion.

There are many attributes and characteristics that good teachers of young children possess. Research found that the best teachers of young children exhibited the following: care; compassion; courtesy; dedication; empathy; enthusiasm; friendliness; helpfulness; honesty; intelligence; kindness; lovingness; motivation; patience; sensitivity; trusting; warmth; integrity; flexibility; naturalness; a sense of humour; acceptance of individual differences; self confidence and understanding (Catron 1993:34; Morrison 1995:610; Gordon and Browne 1993:157; Read and Patterson 1980:47; Feeny et.al. 1987:38).

It is recognised that teachers are individuals. They may possess some or all of the attributes listed above. However, teachers can use the above list to evaluate themselves. This should be viewed as personal development.

3.4.3.2 Role of the teacher

With a clearer understanding of the attitudes, attributes, and abilities of effective teachers, the different facets of the complex and interrelated roles of teachers can be explored. They must learn to understand these varied roles, develop evaluation and judgement skills, and make effective decisions about their role in classroom situations.

The Interim Policy for ECD (1996:40) states that practitioners should understand their critical role in bringing about changes in pedagogy from teacher-centredness to learner-

centredness. They should be competent to develop programmes to meet the needs of children, including children with special needs.

Catron (1993:37) provides a conceptual model that will help to clarify the different aspects of the teacher's role in the classroom.

Table 6: A conceptual model of the teachers' roles.



(Source: Catron 1993:37)

Thus from the model it is clear that teacher's role indicates that the teacher should interact frequently with children in their care. They are encouraged to nurture children with touch and physical affection. Children today experience stressful events, and teachers should help children manage stress. Teachers who encourage children to self select activities, to explore a wide range of alternatives facilitate the development of divergent thinking skills and original problem solving. Teachers are required to plan for childrens' need for activity, attention, stimulation and success in providing a safe and stimulating environment. Another aspect of the teacher's

role is to enrich the learning environment. The teacher as a problem solver uses a process that includes acquiring information, evaluating outcomes and applying the feedback to on - going programmes. The teacher's role in learning implies that good teachers are committed to continually learning and developing as early childhood professionals.

The role of the teacher is crucial to any quality programme. In this regard Gordon and Browne (1989:144) write that an understanding of the role a teacher is expected to play in each particular setting is essential for the smooth functioning of an early childhood programme and for the teacher's well being. Lundsteen and Tarrow (1981:342) confirm that whatever it is that the teacher does is more important to the effectiveness of any programme than curriculum, materials or facilities. A clearly defined teacher's role also serves as a guard against legal and ethical problems.

It is accepted that the role of the teacher is to teach. This study resides in the field of didactics. The essence of the concept teaching, remains central to didactics. According to Strydom (1981:45-46) didactics is the art of teaching; the theory of teaching/instruction; the practice of subject teaching. Teaching is an act initiated by the teacher. In early childhood development teaching is better understood as planning; guiding; facilitating and evaluating based on knowledge and skills.

3.4.3.3 Knowledge and Skills

The quality of the staff is the most important determinant of the quality of early childhood programmes. Research has found that staff training in child development and/or early

childhood education is related to positive outcomes for children such as increased social interaction with adults, development of prosocial behaviours, and improved language and cognitive development (National Academy of Early Childhood Programs 1991:30).

Furthermore, the teacher's view of the child is important. When children were viewed as sinners, miniature adults or as blank slates it was believed that learning preceded development. This position encouraged teacher's behaviour which implied that if learning can be forced, guided or stimulated then development will naturally flow. These beliefs were firmly entrenched until Piaget helped establish the principle that development precedes learning (Shepherd and Ragan 1982:179).

Teachers should possess knowledge of child development, pedagogical content and managerial skills. Kostelnik et. al.(1993:37) writes that the need for teachers to have specialised knowledge about child development and learning is well established in the literature. Knowledge of child development will assist the teacher in selecting activities which might be presented to children and the degree of developmental readiness necessary for children to achieve programme aims.

Pollard and Bourne (1994:85) correctly state that the teacher should also possess pedagogical knowledge which includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult, the conceptions and preconceptions that children of different background bring with them to the class.

The following managerial skills are identified in Badenhorst et.al. (1986:63): the ability of the teacher to create a secure and safe climate in which the child will feel comfortable; the ability to create opportunities that cater for each child's needs and interest. The teacher should be able to mediate or act as an arbitrator when conflict arises and must be able to encourage and initiate learning experiences. Lastly the teacher should possess skills in observing and evaluating children's behaviour. The Interim Policy for ECD (1996:41) clearly indicates that practitioners require observational skills to meet the needs of individual children and to assess their progress with regard to growth and development.

The acquisition of knowledge should never be regarded as complete. The teacher should always remain a student of child development. Reading and expanding one's knowledge is a career long process. This view is supported by Kauchak and Eggen (1993:9). They state:

"Becoming an expert teacher is a complex, multifaceted process that continues throughout an individual's professional lifetime."

Today's diverse pre-school population, inappropriate curricula, unrealistic expectations and inappropriate manner of assessment are dilemmas educators are faced with. If teachers are equipped with knowledge they would be able to address these problems with greater expertise. However, it should be noted that knowledge and skills are the result of appropriate professional training.

3.4.3.4 Teacher Training

Weiser (1991:265) quotes Ruopp in writing that only one teacher characteristic was related to programme effectiveness, that is, the amount of early childhood training. Professionally trained early childhood development teachers have become a luxury in the South African situation (compare par.1.7.3).

The Interim Policy for ECD (1996:40) proposes that practitioners should be afforded opportunities to build personal and social skills, and through an on-going in-service programmes they will have the opportunities to build their self-confidence and motivation.

Research has provided conclusive evidence on the importance of professionally trained teachers and their impact on quality programmes.

“Teachers who have specialised training in early childhood development tend to demonstrate greater responsiveness to children, increased effort to stimulate children, promotion of children's verbal skills, encouragement of children, and more effective adult direction. They are more likely to use indirect guidance, be less restrictive in the classroom, and be more supportive of children's verbal expression and self-initiated activities” (Kostelnik et. al. 1993:27) (see par.3.4.3.3).

However training should not be regarded as complete on attainment of a degree or diploma (par 3.4.4.3). Gordon and Browne (1993:168) confirms that creative classes are the product of teachers who continue to learn more about how to teach. This implies lifelong learning.

The value of in-service training has been documented in Gordon and Browne (1989:148), Morrison (1988:477) and Johnson and Stoop (1967:385). They write that the outcomes of a well-planned in-service programme can be measured in personal growth and satisfaction, in improved physical and social environment for learning, in an educational programme better adapted to the needs of the child.

The issue of teacher training can be concluded with the appropriate words of Modisane in (Van Staden 1991:224) who states:

"The need for professional and paraprofessional training in pre-primary education is A LOUD CRY brought about by educational theories".

One can no longer doubt the need for training of teachers. Professionally qualified teachers will undoubtedly improve the quality of early childhood development programmes.

A synthesis of the information provided above, indicates the following criteria with regard to teachers for a quality early childhood development programme:

- *Programmes should be staffed by adults who understand child development and who recognise and provide for children's needs i.e. they should have specialised training (Kostelnik et. al. (1993:27); NAEYC (1991:30); Weiser (1991:265)).*

- *The role of the teacher includes planning the environment, interacting with children, guiding, facilitating and evaluating based on knowledge and skills. Moreover the personality of the teacher is a quality indicator in early childhood education programmes (Gordon and Browne (1989:144); Feeny et.al. (1987:38); Lundsteen and Tarrow (1981:342); Catron (1993:34)).*

3.4.4 The influence of the community in early childhood development programmes

The school must gear its educational programme to the unique and basic needs of the community it serves. Communities seeking to raise children in accordance with their own cultural traditions may want these traditions to be continued in the pre-school. In this regard Dekker and Van Schalkwyk (1990:6) comments as follows:

"Traditions and customs that have evolved in a community over a long period cannot be ignored in any new developments".

An important need of the child is to develop a sense of identity and belonging. A child's ethnic identity is part of his or her individuality, an integral part of the self concept. Ignoring cultural ties can only lower self-esteem (Mock, 1984:12).

The school and the community interact and influence one another (Johnson and Stoops 1967:132). Since the programme fulfils a direct need in society, the religion, values, norms, culture, language, beliefs and other social structures that bind the society together should not be ignored. The norms and values upheld by the particular community should guide the

programme design. Teachers need to understand the concept of multiculturalism explained below:

3.4.4.1 Multiculturalism

Lemmer and Squelch (1993:11) define culture as:

"...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society".

South Africa is a culturally diverse society. The young children, especially in the new democratic country, experience this diversity daily through personal contact, travel, the media and literature. Many of the existing programmes have a multicultural environment. This means that teachers must create a suitable environment that will enhance the formation of cross-cultural relationships and the development of positive attitudes.

Joan Squelch (in Van Staden 1991:302) contends that in order for children to understand their diverse world and to enjoy socially constructive and personally fulfilling lives in a pluralistic society, they need to acquire appropriate attitudes, skills and knowledge.

Early childhood programmes serve a major role in developing appropriate attitudes. This is supported by Tibbetts (1984:8) who writes that most educationists would agree that the first six years of a child's life are crucial for the development of social attitudes and values. Early experiences influence later development. If young children are exposed to various cultural and multicultural material in early childhood, they will

learn at an early age, that cultural diversity is an integral part of life. This will facilitate the child's participation as an adult in a culturally diverse society.

Multicultural programmes do attempt to recognise the worth of other cultural heritage's and language. However there are criticisms that programmes are often tokenistic. Quality programmes should provide an anti-bias curriculum, which actively seeks to change prejudiced attitudes. This approach is needed in all programmes and not just in so-called multicultural settings.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The various factors contributing to quality programmes are discussed separately in this chapter. However, they all function together as an integrated whole. The teacher is seen as the key element in determining programme aims that should take the development level of the child into account and promote the holistic development of the child. Parents involvement is essential to the success of the programme. Recognising the importance of the child's family as primary educators of children is identified as an important criteria. The role of the teacher is integral to the smooth functioning of the programme. The teacher's personality and specialised training are identified as quality indicators in a programme. Having discussed the aims and situation analysis as components of the curriculum the researcher proceeds with the other components namely the content and assessment in the programme. Chapter four thus focuses on content and assessment in early childhood development programmes.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING CONTENT AND ASSESSMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aims of the curriculum have been discussed in chapter three. However, successful achievement of the teaching objectives will be affected by the criteria which can be used for the selection of subject content for instructional purposes, and the way in which this content is ordered (sequenced) to facilitate the mastery thereof. Grobler et.al. (1990:30-31) quote Penning (1986) in writing that education cannot take place in the absence of content and content is thus essential to the whole educational process. It is the task of the teacher to impart content to the child and the task of the child, to master the content provided by the teacher. Education therefore implies that content should be made available to the child by the teacher, whose obligation is to act responsibly by providing appropriate content. The Interim Policy for ECD (1996:23) states that the curriculum content in early childhood education can be viewed in terms of knowledge, skills, processes, values and attitudes. This should be considered in the context of changing social, political and economic conditions in South Africa.

In order to design an appropriate curriculum to match the development of the child educators must understand the concept "developmentally appropriate". The "concept developmentally

appropriate" has two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. Ebbeck (1991:34) explains these concepts as follows:

Age appropriateness: "Human development research indicates that there are universal predictable sequences of growth and changes that occur in children during the first nine years of life. These predictable changes occur in all domains of development - physical, emotional, social and cognitive. Knowledge of the typical development of children within the age span served by the programme provides a framework from which the teacher prepares the learning environment and plans appropriate experiences".

Individual appropriateness: "Each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background. Both curriculum and adult's interaction with children should be responsive to individual differences. Learning in young children is the result of interaction between the child's thoughts and experiences with materials, ideas, and people. These experiences should match the child's developing abilities, while also challenging the child's interest and understanding".

Dye (1984:95-105) in an article, refers to the results of a sample based study which indicate that curriculum content and organisation are likely to be amongst the most important items of provisions relevant to the needs of pre-school children. This study examined the curriculum content and organisation in a normal nursery practice as compared with a specifically designed curriculum element, the NFER "My World" programme.

Tredoux (1982:7) states:

"Any educational model is timebound. The contents of a programme are determined by the current knowledge of child development and what was known about the learning process at the time a particular programme was initiated".

As stated in paragraph 3.2 no specific curriculum is provided as regards to content and time allocation. Grobler (1990:10) writes that the pre-primary teacher chooses the subject matter according to her own subject knowledge and according to the knowledge she has of her group of children.

In order to ward off the danger of random or intuitive methods, it appears that teachers should be guided towards the meaningful selection and presentation of the subject matter according to the fundamental aims of the programme. Hence the following discussion.

4.2 SELECTION AND ORGANISATION OF CONTENT

4.2.1 Criteria for the selection of content

It is generally accepted that the nature of the learning content (i.e. the subject content to be mastered) is an important criterion for the selection of content (Fraser, Loubser & Rooy 1993:125). Since the quality of the programme would depend on how well the teacher selects the content, it is important to examine criteria that can be used in selecting content. The following criteria as outlined by Penning (1986:84-91) will be discussed.

4.2.1.1 Content should take the development of the whole child into consideration

This criterion is very important, as the main aim of pre-primary education is the development of children as whole people (see par.2.4). Hendrick (1990:3) states:

"In real life all aspects of the person must be treated together and educated together. Only when this is recognised and provided for in the curriculum can true learning and competence develop".

The implication of this is that children's learning does not occur in narrowly defined subject areas. Their development and learning are integrated. Any activity that stimulates one dimension of development and learning affects other dimensions as well (Bredekamp 1987:3).

The Interim policy for ECD (1996:42) suggests that wherever possible the programme should be integrated rather than fragmented into subject areas. Furthermore, to enable the child to develop emotionally, physically, spiritually, morally, intellectually, creatively, and socially, the needs of the child as a whole should be emphasised

Piek and Mahlangu (1990:47) emphasise that this means the learning materials must be organised in such a way that the physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, moral, social, cultural and religious formation of the child can be achieved. It is important to remember that all these different aims make up one whole educational process.

4.2.1.2 Content should be relevant and meaningful.

For content to be meaningful it should be selected from the child's lifeworld experiences. The Early Years Curriculum Group (1994:15) states that activities designed to promote learning should be concerned primarily with knowledge of content which builds on experiences which are familiar to the children. There is evidence that children's play and conversation is more elaborate when they are thinking about familiar "real world" situations rather than unfamiliar ones.

With regard to content being meaningful and relevant the Interim Policy for ECD (1996:45) refers to areas of learning (viz emotional, intellectual, perceptual, language, numeracy, physical, spiritual, moral and ethical and cultural). It is suggested that all areas of learning should be seen and offered in an inter-related manner within the broader context of the development of life skills.

Kostelnik et. al.(1993:58) and Bredekamp (1987:4) comment that the most concrete experiences are tangible ones that involve physical contact with real objects and that learning activities and materials should be concrete, real, relevant to the lives of young children.

4.2.1.3 Content should be planned with specific aims in mind.

Fraser et.al. (1993:128) comment that the aim of teaching is the realisation of given aims and objectives. Tutors wish to achieve aims with their instruction, and this is possible through the use of appropriate subject content. The subject

content selected should, therefore, contribute to the development and realisation of instructional aims and objectives.

The work presented must be directed towards the realisation of the aim of pre-primary education. The subject matter should be selected so as to provide the optimum guarantee that will lead to the acquisition of the behaviours expected of the children and expressed in the aims (see par. 3.3.5).

The absence of a curricular focus (aims) may result in ineffective programming. The lack of unified, carefully thought out and considered sources for planning children's experiences promotes slipshod teaching and virtually no accountability or responsibility. Therefore, educators must think seriously about their purpose and the aims of the programme (Catron 1993:5; Hunter 1994:77).

4.2.1.4 Content should be in harmony with the life-view and values of the home and community.

It is acknowledged that learning success is determined to a large extent by the ability of the learner to link the new content and skills taught to his/her existing preknowledge or frame of reference. However Fraser et. al.(1993:132) advocates that learning will be enhanced if the new subject content to be taught is user friendly and culturally compatible. This means that the content taught should be taken from the cultural environment of the learner.

The Interim Policy for ECD (1996:43) proposes that programmes should embody anti-bias criteria so that each child is affirmed in his/her own culture, heritage, religion, language, and socio-economic background.

Therefore, the content should complement the life view norms and values of the home and the community. The term life-view refers to the child's environment as he/she immediately or directly experiences it in the subjectivity of his everyday life. The child's environment and his/her activities in the environment constitute his/her life-world. The norms and values of the community are grounded in their religious and cultural beliefs (see par.3.4.4).

The content of the curriculum is determined by many factors such as tradition, social or cultural values and parental desires. Knowledge of children's family background, language, expressive styles, culture and religion are essential to meet this criterion.

The words of Piek and Mahlangu (1990:47) are noteworthy, they write:

"...the cultural heritage of the relevant group should also constitute part of the learning material offered at school. It is clearly impossible for the school to provide everything that forms part of a particular group's culture. Accordingly a selection can be made".

4.2.1.5 Content should be socially useful

This criteria implies that the content should equip the child to adapt to life in a changing society (see par.3.4.4.1). For content to be socially useful it should promote social skills such as co-operating, helping and negotiating.

De Witt and Booyesen (1995:25) correctly state that social development involves the development of both the child's need for human contact and his/her social skills. Socialisation refers to the process whereby the child learns to meet his/her particular society's moral standards, role expectations and demands for acceptable behaviour. Therefore content should help the child to become independent and to make a meaningful contribution to society.

Fraser et.al. (1993:131) suggest that when the usefulness of subject content is under consideration, it must be decided which learning content will be of most value to the learner. In this regard various criteria for example social activities, religious activities, citizenship, education and training can be used to assess the usefulness of the learning content.

4.2.1.6 Content should increase knowledge both vertically and horizontally

The horizontal increase in content links up with the previous criterion of integrating content into a meaningful whole. The vertical increase in content results in children developing more advanced skills. The teacher must try to strike a

balance between extending and deepening the children's knowledge (Penning 1994:103).

Bredekamp (1987:3) and The Early Years Curriculum Group (1994:15) point out that teachers provide a variety of activities and materials. They should increase the difficulty, complexity and challenge of an activity as children are involved with it and as children develop understanding and skills. This variety enables children to explore and elaborate knowledge.

In addition learning is an interactive process. Kostelnik et. al.(1993:46) states that children are active participants in their own experiences. They are not empty vessels waiting to be "filled up" with information and experiences determined by others. On the contrary, they energetically seek ways to achieve their maximum potential in both structure and function.

The Interim Policy for ECD (1996:43) states that the teacher is not the only source of learning. Wherever possible, learning should take place through first hand experience. Children should interact with one another to explore and find out things for themselves and see how things work. Having children with differing abilities and talents working together is a rich source of learning.

In view of the discussion on criteria for the selection of content, the following are emphasised for quality early childhood development programmes:

- *Learning content should be concrete, real and relevant to the lives of young children* (Kostelnik et. al.(1993:58); Bredekamp (1987:4); Early Years Curriculum Group (1994:15)).
- *Learning content should be socially useful and culturally compatible* (Interim Policy Document (1996:43); Piek and Mahlangu (1990:47); De Witt and Booyesen (1995:25); Fraser et.al. (1993:91).
- *Content should be planned with specific aims in mind* (Fraser et. al.(1993:128); Catron (1993:5); Hunter (1994:7)).

4.2.2 Organisation of subject matter

Fraser et.al. (1993:133) quote the words of Klausmeier and Goodwin:

"In general, better organisation of the subject matter leads to more efficient learning, whether the material is to be memorised, or fully comprehended".

The authors further state that from the point of view of instruction, very few factors have as strong an influence on the learning experience as the nature and structure of the subject content. The above quotation stresses this fact. Therefore, it is important to present the content in an organised manner. The teacher should be careful not to impart selected contents to the child in a haphazard manner. In this regard the principles of

systematising subject matter are discussed. It must be noted that a variety of principles for the ordering of learning content can be applied in practice.

4.2.2.1 The symbiotic systematisation principle

When subject matter is organised symbiotically, it is not arranged according to school subjects but is integrated. This principle is highly suitable for pre-primary teaching as children are brought as far as possible into contact with reality and pre-schoolers need this contact because of their markedly pathic tendency and concrete orientation (Penning 1994:104).

4.2.2.2 The divergent systematisation principle

The divergent principle aims at arranging the learning elements into a coherent whole arising from a central theme related to the children's experiential world. The subject matter is extended from a specific central point and organised into a coherent whole. This principle is suited to pre-primary teaching because young children generally have a global experience of reality (Penning 1994:105).

In this regard Gullo (1990:31) maintains that the curriculum in early childhood education should reflect an integration of content areas. An integrated curriculum is one in which each of the parts (maths, social studies etc.) is recognised for its significance in and of itself, but also is recognised as being a part of a significant whole.

It is significant to mention that in addition to integrating the individual content areas to make up the whole, the curriculum is usually constructed around a theme. Krog (1990:77-83) claims that planning a web around a theme has the advantage in that it closely matches the way in which children learn spontaneously in their environment; it provides for a greater depth of curriculum coverage; it builds upon children's natural interest; it teaches children knowledge, processes, and skills in a meaningful context, it provides for maximum flexibility in a curriculum, and it provides teachers with a curriculum-planning device.

Further, in pre-primary education subjects are not compartmentalised and are not taught in isolation. Robinson and Schwartz (1982:33) emphasise that thematic selection breaks the boundaries of subjects to help create order and unity in children's school experiences. The logic of content and the psychological patterns of development are thought to be more easily interrelated in thematic than in subject approaches.

4.2.2.3 The spiral systematisation principle

In spiral systematisation the subject matter is arranged from the very simplest to the more complex elements. It must be noted that irrespective of the principle employed the pre-primary teacher must always organise his/her materials so that the presentation moves from simple to complex (Pening 1994:107).

However, the learner has to be at that point in his/her development whereby he/she will be able to conceptualise what he/she is to learn before being directed to the specifics

of learning. The beginning task must be within the potential of the learner. Piek and Mahlangu (1990:47) support this statement that the range and degree of difficulty of the learning material should relate to the pupil's stage of development and interest.

4.2.2.4 The chronological systematisation principle

This principle applies when subject matter has to be taught strictly according to the sequence in which the content took place. It involves the organisation of subject matter in terms of time. This means certain themes must be presented before others can be introduced. Because pre-school children have a limited understanding of time, material is not often arranged chronologically for them (Penning 1994:108).

Thus it is clear that various important factors influence the manner in which learning content is ordered. The nature and structure of the subject content determines to a large extent what method of ordering can be followed, and the ordering of subject content is also influenced by the learner's ability, already acquired knowledge and skills.

The words of Elkind in (Persky and Golubchick 1991:99) are noteworthy. He states that the way curriculum materials work will always depend on the specific group of children in the classroom in any given year. So the curriculum should never be final; it should always be open, flexible and innovative.

In the light of the foregoing discussion the following criteria are identified as integral to the organisation of content in quality early childhood development programmes:

- *The child's stage of development should be taken into account* (Piek and Mahlangu (1990:47); Penning (1994:108); Persky and Golubchick (1991:91).
- *Content should be presented in an organised manner and should reflect an integration of content areas* (Fraser et. al.(1993:133); Gullo (1990:31); Interim Policy Document for Early Childhood Development (1996:42); Bredekamp (1987:3) ; Robinson and Schwartz (1982:33)).

The manner in which the content is selected, organised and presented is integral to providing high quality programmes. Having executed the above task it then becomes necessary for the teacher to evaluate curricular effectiveness. Therefore it is important to provide an insight into assessment in early childhood programmes.

4.3 ASSESSMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Learning, teaching and assessment are inextricably linked. It is only in the context of one that the other has meaning: without learning, assessment has relatively little value; without assessment, the effectiveness of learning and accountability of teaching cannot be determined. In this study the terms assessment and evaluation are used synonymously.

The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (1991:59) argue that ongoing and systematic evaluation is essential to improving and maintaining the quality of an early childhood programme.

4.3.1 Definition of assessment

In a joint position paper on appropriate curriculum and assessment in programmes, the (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 1991:32) define assessment as follows:

"Assessment is the process of observing, recording and otherwise documenting the work children do and how they do it, as basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child. Assessment is integral to curriculum and instruction".

4.3.2 Aims and purpose of assessment

In a position statement of the (NAEYC and NAECS/SDE : 1991:23)) it is stated that in early childhood programmes, an assessment serves different purposes: to evaluate how well a programme is meeting its goals; to identify children who may be in need of specialised services or intervention; to plan instruction for individuals and groups and to communicate with parents.

Seaver and Cartwright (1986:113-115) agree that evaluation offers us knowledge and understanding of programme effects and outcomes. It provides a systematic source of information for effective decision making.

4.3.3 Evaluation of programmes

In South Africa early childhood programmes lack uniform and appropriate regulations. A further problem is that they are scattered throughout the country in a variety of separate agencies. There is a desperate need to set national standards and policies so that programme effectiveness and quality are ensured.

The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (1991:59) maintains that evaluation efforts are based on programme goals and assessment of needs and identify both strengths and weaknesses of programme components.

The importance of evaluating the programme is cited in Gordon and Browne (1993:334) who aver that evaluating a programme gives an overview of how all the various components function together. A programme evaluation establishes accountability and it determines where and how improvements can be made. Also, evaluations are a necessary step for schools who wish to be approved for certification or accreditation.

4.3.3.1 Criteria for determining quality programmes

Sue Bredekamp (in Gordon and Browne 1989:297) provides a definition of high quality programmes. She states as follows:

"A high quality program provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children".

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1984) has established a criteria for high-quality early

childhood programmes, based on a consensus of thousands of early childhood professionals (Gordon and Browne 1989:32-33). The findings include:

- (a) Interactions between children and staff provide opportunities for children to develop an understanding of self and others and are characterised by warmth, personal respect, individuality, positive support, and responsiveness.**

- (b) The curriculum encourages children to be actively involved in the learning process, to experience a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials, and to pursue their own interest in the context of life in the community and the world.**

- (c) Parents are well informed about the programme and welcomed as observers and contributors.**

- (d) The programme is staffed by adults who understand child development and who recognise and provide for children's needs.**

- (e) The programme is efficiently and effectively administered with attention given to the needs and desires of children, parents and staff.**

- (f) The programme is sufficiently staffed to meet the development needs of the child and to promote the physical, social, emotional and cognitive aspects.**

- (g) The indoor and outdoor physical environment fosters optimal growth and development through opportunities for exploration and learning.**
- (i) The health and safety of the children and adults are protected and advanced.**
- (j) The nutritional needs of the child and adult are met in a manner that promotes physical, emotional, social and cognitive development.**
- (k) Systematic assessment of the effectiveness of the programme in meeting its goal for children, parents and staff is conducted to ensure good quality care and education are provided and maintained.**

These criteria are essential to any childhood programme that desires to provide quality teaching and nurturing of young children. Therefore, they can be used in developing quality programmes and to evaluate the quality of existing programmes. Since the way childrens' progress is evaluated is an important factor in a quality programme, this study reviews assessment of children.

4.3.4 Assessment of children

The Interim Policy for ECD (1996:42) proposes that assessment of children should be largely qualitative, with the aim of assessing children to develop their full potential, not for promotion purposes.

The researcher through her experience has observed that assessment of children is done with the specific objective of writing a "report" on the child's performance that is required to be sent to the parents at least twice a year. Since this practice ignores other important purposes of assessing children there is a need to explain the purpose of assessment.

De Witt and Booysen (1995:189) claim that assessment enables the educator to determine whether the goals set in the programme have been attained. Leavitt and Eheart (1991:4) state in an article that the purpose of assessment is to help caregivers and parents better understand, appreciate, and respond to the growth, development and unique characteristics of each child in their care.

The following two purposes for assessment of children are cited in Seaver and Cartwright (1986:113-115): The first is to describe children's abilities. Such descriptions are important for parent conferences, where the teacher is requested to inform parents of their children's progress. The second is for diagnostic purposes. This process assists in identifying

children's needs and for planning programme activities that match these needs.

The above is endorsed by Sunal (1990:91) who comments that learning and evaluation are closely tied together. She goes on to state that evaluation should be positive. Its goal is to help adults meet children's needs.

Hendrick (1994:124) agrees that evaluation serves two basic purposes. First it can describe the child's current abilities and secondly, if repeated, it can show ways he/she has changed over a period of time. The results give essential information to have when planning what should happen next in the curriculum.

In light of the above it is clear that assessment of children is not merely a ritualistic activity but serves a far more didactic function. In this regard the following criterion for the assessment of children in quality early childhood development is identified:

- *Assessment of children's progress is essential to individualise planning to assess the level of the child's development and to knowledgeably communicate with parents* (Seaver and Cartwright (1986:113-115); Sunal (1990:91); Hendrick (1994:124)).

4.3.4.1 Methods of assessment

*** Observation**

Unlike the formal classrooms where there are formal testing programmes, pre-school children are mainly evaluated on the basis of observation. According to Bentzen (1985:11) observation is something we do continually, whether we are aware of it or not. All observation whether casual or scientifically rigorous, consists of more than physical reception of stimuli. We really observe when what we have received through our senses has meaning for us. Observation is both spontaneous and planned. Teachers write spontaneous records any time and anywhere throughout the day. Having observed an incident the teacher records what was seen in clear, concise, detailed and descriptive language. However, teachers cannot depend solely on spontaneous observation for a record of each child's development. The essence of the assessment process depends on regular, planned observation. Therefore to ensure that all children are observed, time for observation must be a priority and should be planned accordingly.

Catron (1993:13) states that children's' development can be appropriately assessed using a variety of observation and recording procedures. The assessment process should be based on an understanding of developmental milestones and should include an emphasis on the uniqueness of each child.

The researcher through her experience found that in some programmes it is constantly argued by teachers that there

is simply no time to record observations; they make mental notes and besides they know their children well. The researcher contends that it is not humanly possible to remember all the events of the day without recording. As Bentzen (1985:7) and McAfee and Leong (1994:81) comment that observation includes "noting and recording of facts and events".

There are various methods of observation. In this regard Bentzen (1985:56) and McAfee & Leong (1994:107) identify several methods of observing and recording behaviour:

- * Specimen description
- * Time sampling
- * Event sampling
- * Anecdotal records
- * Diary records
- * Frequency counts
- * Checklists
- * Rating scales
- * Audiotapes, Videotapes
- * Diagrams, sketches, pictures
- * Portfolios

Bentzen (1985:11) quotes Goodwin and Driscoll (1980) who distinguish between formal and informal observation methods. Formal methods are conducted in a highly structured manner whereas informal methods, involve a less structured and less elaborate approach to observation. Informal methods are more suited to instructional planning and day to day programme operation.

In addition, assessment in early childhood programmes is based on samples of children's work, interviews with their parents and test results. These are standardised tests which are used in the pre-school years to test the child's readiness for certain learning tasks.

*** Samples of children's work**

The method of observation, together with samples of children's work will provide a more consolidated assessment of the child. With regard to developmental assessment Elkind (in Persky and Golubchick 1991:101) comments that it involves documenting the work that a child has done over a given period of time. Usually this is done by having a child keep a portfolio that includes all his/her samples of work. In looking through such a portfolio we can get a good idea of work that the child is capable of doing in a given period of time.

*** Interviews with parents**

Leavitt and Eheart (1991:5) emphasise that developmental assessment includes acquiring information from parents. It is necessary to get information about each child's individual needs, interest, capabilities, and personality, so that teachers can respond in individually appropriate ways. This information will provide insights on some of the children's skills since behaviour at home may often differ from that at school.

The researcher believes that communication is necessary to gain insights into the child's behaviour at home. Interviews are an invaluable way of acquiring information

about the child's development. When parent involvement is a problem, questionnaires and scheduled personal interviews could be of use for us.

Leavitt and Eheart (1991:5) further comment that a substantial number of records accumulated over a period of time provide a more comprehensive report. A comprehensive assessment consolidates all the information acquired about each child. It involves a review of all observational records, conversations with parents and colleagues and also samples of the children's work.

Gullo (1990:65) quotes Uphoff and Gilmore (1986) who have advocated that evaluation be used for purposes other than for determining curricular needs and propose that children be evaluated to determine whether they are ready for school. This is better known as the school readiness test.

*** Testing for school readiness**

Testing young children has become a widespread practice. In this regard Cook (1992:131) argue that in recent years there has been a shift from the use of standardised tests to assessing learning strengths and weaknesses. Increased emphasis is given to the logical match between instructional aims and assessment procedure. Standardised tests continue to be used, but increasingly, teacher-developed informal techniques are seen as the "mainstay of assessment and evaluation".

Penning (1994:75) comments that tests are currently used to determine the child's level of development. She argues that tests, however, are not the most suitable way of assessing the young child's readiness for reasons which are embedded either in the child or in the test and test situation. She recommends an alternative method which is observation. This method of assessment has been discussed previously (see par.4.3.4.1).

In South Africa two school readiness tests have been developed by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC): the School Readiness Evaluation by Trained Teachers (SETT:1984) and the Aptitude test for School Beginners (ASB). The SETT was developed to screen children for the Bridging classes as either ready or not ready for school. They are administered by formally trained teachers who received additional training from the HSRC in test administration. Thus its accessibility and interpretation is very limited for educare workers who do not have adequate professional training.

The ABS test is a paper and pencil test administered from the sixth to the eighth week of the school year. If administered prior to this period the norms have to be cautiously interpreted. Norms for all races and instructions in the major languages are available. All the materials are pictorial, which does not render it less culturally based. (World Bank 1994:133-134).

The researcher has had experience in using school readiness Test A and Test B (Ex-HOD School Readiness Test). Test A is administered at the beginning of the year in class one by the Junior Primary teacher. Depending on the

individual child and his/her prior experience a second test (Test B) is administered at any time between entrance of grade one and six months later. This test covers the same areas as Test A but in more detail. If a child has successfully completed both tests then he/she is considered ready for school.

From practical experience the researcher found that the validity of these results are questionable. It often appeared that although some children did not complete the test successfully they were school ready and similarly children who completed the test successfully did not cope with the work in class one. Also, it has been found that the results of a test when the test was repeated differed considerably. Robinson and Schwartz (1982:432) also mention that the test results of young children are often unreliable; if a child is tested and retested within a short period of time the two sets of results may actually differ drastically.

The testing of young children has come under attack in recent years (McAfee & Leong 1994:13). Cook (1992:131) offer the following as criticism of these formal tests: These tests lack reliability and validity for use with young children as they do not provide information that can easily be transformed into individualised instructional plans; the presence of cultural biases built into many of these tests; the influence of situational factors on test performances and the recognition of the teacher as the individual most responsible for any child's progress.

Freeman (1990:29) raises the same arguments when he writes that these tests pose a danger of labelling children and determining their placement based on scores from

tests that have limited reliability or validity. He also expresses concern that many of the testers lack proper training or appropriate supervision. Concern has been voiced regarding the accuracy of these tests in identifying children for special programmes. Although many tests were initially for screening, they are now being used to determine critical decisions for example, retention in a grade.

Further Gullo (1990:65) agrees that the practice of testing to determine developmental level for the purpose of school entrance constitutes both a class and gender bias. He quotes Shepherd and Smith (1988) who state that both socio-economic status and sex have been shown to correlate with scores on tests such as these. He goes on to state that much of the variance of readiness test scores across groups of children is actually caused by the types of experiences each child has prior to taking the test.

The controversy on the readiness test is summed up in a position paper on school readiness of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Young Children 1990:21-23.vol.46). The document states that it is often assumed that the test exists to reliably determine which children are ready to enter school. Because of the nature of child development and how children learn, it is extremely difficult to develop reliable and valid measures of young children's abilities. When tests are used to make decisions which have such considerable impact on children's lives as denial of entry or assignment to special class, they must offer the highest assurance of reliability and validity. No existing readiness test measure meets this criteria. Therefore, the only legally and ethically defensible

criterion for determining school entry is the legal chronological age of school entry.

The researcher found that another major issue is the self-image and stress of the child who is pronounced as not ready for school. Administering these formal tests definitely puts the child under stress and anxiety, which in turn affects him /her negatively and he/she may develop a negative self concept, a condition that definitely does not help the child in successful scholastic performance.

In spite of all the criticism, formal readiness tests are still administered by many. In this regard Hendrick (1994:129) comments that some continue in favour of extra time for the child to mature (Gesell Institute, 1987; Wood, Powell, & Knight, 1984). There is a further argument that simply allowing extra time for the child to mature is not enough. There is more to healthy development than maturation. Children who are immature, require stimulation and the opportunity to learn.

In an article Freeman (1990:30) refers to the results of a recent study by Graue and Shepard (1989) on the test predictive validity which indicates a small positive relationship between developmental age as postulated by the Gessel Institute and first grade report card grades.

In light of the reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraphs it can be concluded that evidence does not support the benefits of adding an extra year before grade one for children who are deemed not ready. Although

some tests may be useful in particular circumstances, it is currently so overused that many children and parents are too concerned about grade and test scores. A synthesis of what most authors (Persky and Golubchick (1991:101); Leavitt and Eheart (1991:5); Catron (1993:13)) find important as methods of assessment in quality early childhood programmes, is identified below:

- *Assessment should involve documenting the child's work, using observational methods and receiving information from parents so that a valid assessment of the child's readiness is made.*

4.3.5 Evaluation of the teacher

Improving the quality of programmes will depend on evaluation and supervision of teachers. As Decker and Decker (1988:224) correctly state that "The quality of any programme is determined by content and staff". The researcher believes that evaluation of teachers should be done with positive objectives in mind. This implies evaluating with the purpose of guiding them towards more effective teaching in their work with children and parents.

Gordon and Browne (1993:326) emphasise that teachers are evaluated for several reasons. The end result of an assessment may be setting guidelines for what kinds of teaching are expected, or the intent of an evaluation might be to set clear goals for job improvement.

- * **Physical characteristics** - physical health and vitality conducive to effective performance.
- * **Mental ability** - the ability to conceptualise the philosophy of the programme; the needs of the child ; and the role function.
- * **Professional qualification** - knowledge of methods and materials used in performing ones role.
- * **Personal attributes** - enthusiasm, poise, ability to adjust to frustrations, ability to co-operate with colleagues, and ability to accept constructive criticism.

In South Africa teachers teaching in the former state-aided pre-schools were evaluated by the superintendents of the various Ex-Education Departments. In some private schools the principal of the pre-school evaluates the teaching staff while others are not evaluated.

Although most trained teachers are afforded the opportunity for practical teaching and guidance during the training programme there is no formal system of evaluation after the teacher has qualified and is teaching in a programme. Evaluation becomes the responsibility of the respective organisations that have employed teachers.

Catron (1993:43) refers to Katz who states that new teachers are in the survival stage and this stage is marked by an awareness of the realities of teaching. Teachers at this stage need support, guidance and training to develop a baseline of knowledge and skills. This is not just valid for new teachers, but all teachers need support and guidance and this could be offered by constructive evaluation.

Evaluation of teachers is seen as an integral part of any quality programme. Given our situation in South Africa where the

knowledge and skills. This is not just valid for new teachers, but all teachers need support and guidance and this could be offered by constructive evaluation.

Evaluation of teachers is seen as an integral part of any quality programme. Given our situation in South Africa where the majority of teachers in early childhood programmes are not formally trained, evaluation and assessment will contribute to improving teaching performance. This will in turn contribute to the quality of the overall programme.

With regard to assessment guidelines for the accreditation of practitioners, the Interim Policy for ECD (1996:67) offers the following preferred methods of assessment:

- * Direct observation of performance in the workplace;**
- * Oral questioning of the practitioner's performance to cover areas that are not readily observable;**
- * Asking the practitioner to give a rationale for activities and performance;**
- * Investigating relevant work products such as programme preparation;**
- * Observing the setting provided;**
- * Observing the children in the setting;**

Furthermore teachers should be able to fulfil the requirements of the accreditation guidelines. The accreditation guidelines reflect the needs and working conditions of the ECD practitioners in relation to the aims for teacher education and the outcome for teacher education programmes provided by COTEP (Interim Policy for ECD 1996:57).

Systematic assessment of the effectiveness of the programme in meeting its goals for children, parents, and staff is essential in early childhood development programmes to ensure that high quality care and education are provided and maintained.

Evaluation of teachers is an essential criterion to maintaining and improving the quality of early childhood development programmes (Decker and Decker (1988:224); Catron (1993:43); Gordon and Browne (1993:326).

4.4 CONCLUSION

Present day educators are discussing and accepting the importance of a developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp 1987:2), but when it comes to putting it into practice, there are as many differences in definition and practice as there are individuals discussing it. If the guidelines provided with regard to content selection, organisation of content and assessment of children and teachers are adopted by programme developers, then it would assist in promoting quality early childhood development programmes. A description and analysis of selected early childhood development programmes in South Africa is undertaken in Chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF SELECTED EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher attempts to describe and analyse selected early childhood development programmes currently in use in South Africa. Contemporary programmes differ from one another in methods and the degree to which they endorse a philosophical school of thought. Van Den Berg and Vergnani (1986:60) point out that differences in programmes can be explained in terms of differences in the nature of the teacher-child interaction and that they reflect different degrees of structure. At this point it must be noted that there are a variety of programmes currently used in South Africa. However the Montessori, High Scope, Traditional and the Open Education model are most common and therefore only these programmes are selected for analysis. When one analyses one finds and shows the essence or structure of something (Fowler and Fowler 1978:34) which will be done with the programmes mentioned above. In order to make decisions on whether the programme is a quality early childhood development programme, the programme will be analysed and data will be interpreted against the identified criteria with regard to the learning philosophy (2.3), aims (3.3.5), parent involvement (3.4.2.2), role of the teacher (3.4.3.4), selection and organisation of content (4.2.1.6 and 4.2.2.4) and assessment in the programmes (4.3.4 and 4.3.4.1). The description and analysis of

the programmes are based on available literature as well as observations of early childhood development programmes.

It should be kept in mind that these programmes were not always analysed in their pure forms, which might be a short coming of this research. Apart from consulting the literature where programmes are described, they were observed in schools working under the banner of each type of programme.

5.2 THE MONTESSORI PROGRAMME

The underlying philosophy of Maria Montessori has been discussed in chapter two (par. 2.2.4). The cornerstone of her principles rests in the respect for the child, the uniqueness of each child, and therefore education being individualised for each child. She believed that no human being is educated by another, but rather by oneself. Morrison (1988:85) comments that Montessori referred to this concept as auto education.

Martin (1994:200) comments on auto-education as follows:

"Auto-education utilises a form of differentiation and suggests that Montessori recognised the differing abilities of each child, taking into account the ability of each unique individual".

Montessorian education finds the basic principle of auto-education its greatest merit. In this regard Fisher (1964:20) explains that each individual child must accept the fact that he/she is responsible for his/her own education and that all growth must come from voluntary action of the child himself/herself. The underpinning principles of this programme is based on Montessori's theory of child development and learning.

5.2.1 Aims in the Montessori programme

The primary aim of the programme is to aid the child's spontaneous personality development and to foster a sense of competence. This goal incorporates such internal goals as the development of independence, self confidence, inner discipline and the ability to direct one's own activities. Through the programme the child gradually trains himself or herself to observe the environment. This leads to the child making comparisons between the objects, forming judgements, and ultimately, to reason and make decisions.

Montessori (1964:33) states as follows:

"The aim (of establishing order in the child's mind and the world) is an inner one, namely, that the child trains himself to observe, that he be led to make comparison between objects, to form judgements, to reason and to decide, and it is in the indefinite repetition of this exercise of attention and of intelligence that real development ensures".

According to Montessori (1958:187-188) the primary (overall) aim of education is twofold: biological and social. The biological aim is to help the child unfold, as a physical being, while the social aim is to prepare the individual for interaction with his/her physical environment. All educational aims can be realised through the senses.

The stated aims of the Montessori programme observed indicate the following:

- to identify sensitive periods of the child and to assist him/her to refine his or her senses;
- to enable the child to progress in maths and language, and achieve dexterity of the various muscles in the body;

- to make the child aware of his or her environment .

The development of the senses, conceptual (intellectual) development, competence in daily activities, independence, self-fulfilment, self-discipline and character development, are the overall stated aims of the Montessori programme.

5.2.1.1 Analysis of the aims in the Montessori programme

With regard to the identified criteria aims should focus on the total development of the child (physical, social, emotional, creative, cognitive and language) and the developmental level of children should be taken into account (par.3.3.5). Although the Montessori programme accentuates the physical, social and intellectual aim, the programme fails to realise the educational aims related to inter alia, the emotional and aesthetic functions of the child. The total needs of the child are therefore not catered for. The aims are focused too narrowly on learning specific sensory and spatial concepts. The programme's aim with regard to sense training is especially geared to the objective of developing the intellect.

Although the programme suggests social aims, the Montessori programme stresses individualised learning, and does not place much value on group activity. It neglects social skills and co-operation which are integral to social development (par.2.4.3). It must be borne in mind that social skills and co-operation are promoted when children work together in groups. It is in this manner that they learn to share, take turns, accept and respect the feelings of others. Respecting the feelings of others and being able to express one's own feelings is emotional development (par.2.4.2)

which is not catered for in the stated aims of the programme. The inflexibility of didactic material and the exclusion of the use of the imagination will be discussed later. However, it must be mentioned here that these factors restrict creative development (par. 2.4.6) which is essential to the total development of the child. Since the aims of the Montessori programme neglects the social, emotional and creative development of the child, it is concluded that the aims do not meet the identified criteria of the total development of the child.

5.2.2 Content in the Montessori programme

In order to understand the content in this programme it is necessary to describe the materials used. With regard to the didactic material for the training of the senses, Montessori (1965:203) personally defines the complexity of the didactic material:

"Our sensory material, in fact, analyses and represents the attributes of things: dimensions, forms, colours smoothness or roughness of surface, weight, temperature, flavour, noise, sounds. It is the qualities of the objects, not the objects themselves, which are important".

The material, furthermore, proceeds on different levels. It advances from the concrete to the abstract, from simple to complex. In order that the child be given the opportunity to develop individually, the didactic material is specially devised for the intellectual development of the individual child. Further, in order for the material to be utilised to its fullest, the material has to lend itself to repetition. The materials are also self correcting. The Montessori's sensory didactic material is arranged in such an order that if a child makes a mistake he/she

is able to correct himself or herself. According to Montessori (1958:148):

"The material control of error leads the child to apply to his reasoning power, his critical faculty, and that attention which grows more and more interested in exactitude In this way the mind of the child is prepared to control errors, even when these are not material and apparent to the senses".

The Montessori programme observed was equipped with materials including rods, cylinders, colour tablets, food preparation utensils, buckets, plants, brushes, household utensils, shapes, pencils, coloured pencils, templates of alphabets, phonic sounds displayed, books and flashwords. In addition to the classroom an outdoor playground with the general equipment is used daily. Activities are presented individually to children; if the child is not successful, it is recorded and the presentation is repeated at a later stage. It is interesting to note that a certain aspect of the environment (world) is discussed daily. There is great emphasis on language development which is clearly evident in almost all activities in the daily schedule.

5.2.2.1 Analysis of the content in the Montessori programme

In terms of the identified criteria (par.4.2.1.6) the content should be concrete, real and relevant to the lives of young children. The inflexibility of didactic materials does not meet the criteria of selecting material and content that is of interest to the child and relevant to the life-world of the child. The didactic materials are designed to teach a specific concept and are to be used only in this manner and can therefore be considered prescriptive. Furthermore, as

mentioned previously (par.5.2.1.1) the structured materials de-emphasise creativity and the use of the imagination. The researcher believes that dramatic play permits the children to express their emotions in an acceptable manner, and by taking on the roles of others they come to accept shortcomings and also to understand the world around them better.

However the researcher found that materials used in exercise for daily living is relevant to the child's life world. Therefore the criteria of content being socially useful and culturally compatible (par.4.2.1.6) is to some extent met. Since the materials are used to facilitate specific sensory, motor and intellectual development the criteria of selecting content with specific aims in mind (4.2.1.6) is adequately met.

The didactic materials in the Montessori programme are graded (simple to difficult) and are presented to the child according to the child's level of development. Thus the identified criteria of considering the child's level of development in the presentation of content (par.4.2.2.4) is adequately met.

It is also interesting to note that in the traditional Montessori programme no formal attempt was made to teach the child language. In this regard Verster (1989:186-187) comments that the acquisition of language was never separated from the child's other activities. However, in this programme language development is emphasised and is reflected as an aim of the programme. Therefore this could be considered a variation of the traditional Montessori programme.

5.2.3 Assessment of children in the Montessori programme

Montessori predated the notion of recognising sensitive periods (par.2.2.4.). However, the secret of using sensitive periods in teaching is to recognise them as they occur. This implies careful observation. With regard to observation Montessori (1958:2) felt that once the individual was known through the medium of observation, the art of education would come into existence almost naturally. Roopnarine and Johnson (1987:116) state that through systematic observation the teacher is able to assess the children's individual needs and thereby introduce the appropriate materials for the child's success.

Assessment of children in the Montessori programme involves recording the daily progress of all children. This is done through careful observation. Teachers also gather information from parent interviews which are scheduled for the first and third terms. In addition to the child's academic progress, provision is made to record the child's physical health. Each individual child is observed as he goes about his/her activity. According to the teacher the results of the observation has implications for the prepared environment and also serves as a source of information for parents. In this regard progress reports are sent to parents in the second and fourth term.

5.2.3.1 Analysis of assessment in the Montessori programme

The identified criteria on assessment indicate that assessment is essential for individualised planning and to knowledgeably communicate with parents (par.4.3.4).

Furthermore, assessment should involve documenting the child's work, using observational methods and receiving information from parents (par. 4.3.4.1). In this regard the purpose of assessment and the method of assessment used in the Montessori programme is indicative of a quality programme.

5.2.4 The role of the teacher in the Montessori programme

Because the didactic material promotes auto-education and correction of errors is present in the didactic material, (par.5.2.2) the role of the teacher is minimal. The task of the teacher is to set an example, and to be an aid and resource to the child in the process of auto-education. The teacher has to prepare the environment and has a dynamic role to play: namely that of a keen observer.

The teacher's first duty, according to Montessori (1959:87), is to watch over the environment, and this takes precedence over all matters. Furthermore, she metes out neither praise nor criticism, and she uses a minimum of verbalisation. She is called a directress. Montessori comments as follows:

"It is not necessary for the adult (educator) to be a guide or a mentor in conduct, but to give the child opportunities of work that have been hitherto denied".

According to Montessori (1959:88) the teacher must withdraw totally from the situation once she has structured the environment. She states as follows:

"... the teacher withdraws into the background, and must be very careful not to interfere- absolutely not, in any way".

The role of the teacher in the local Montessori programme also involved preparing the structured environment and observation. The principal of the local school (not identified in order to stay anonymous) was trained at a Montessori College in London. The teachers had training in the Montessori method of teaching. They agree that their major role is to prepare the structured environment and that observation is important. Furthermore, weekly meetings are held to discuss teacher presentations and relationships with children. It is during this time teachers are evaluated and corrected if necessary. Casual appraisals are also undertaken by the principal.

5.2.4.1 Analysis of the role of the teacher in the Montessori programme

The identified criteria with reference to teachers suggests that quality programmes should be staffed by adults who understand child development and who recognise and provide for the needs of children i.e. they should have specialised training (par.3.4.3.4). In this respect the Montessori programme satisfies the above mentioned criteria. The personality and the diverse role of the teacher is identified as a criteria in quality programmes (par.3.4.3.4). The Montessori teacher's role, however, is limited to observation after having carefully structured the environment. The conceptual model (see par.3.4.3.2) clearly indicates that the teacher's role includes interaction, nurturing, managing stress, and facilitating. For example, managing stress involves acknowledging children's feelings and encouraging children to express their feelings. In comparison emotions are not considered in the Montessori

programme; therefore teachers need not unduly concern themselves with stress management. In addition the Montessori teacher is sometimes viewed as an authority figure, who, in the researcher's opinion, can be viewed as a guest in his/her own classroom. Furthermore, teachers have prescribed materials and strict rules (non-interference), which limits the spontaneity and originality of a teacher. Creative teachers are an important component of high quality programmes. Therefore, the role of the teacher can be regarded as partially acceptable in terms of the identified criteria for quality programmes.

Ongoing and systematic evaluation of teachers is essential to improving and maintaining quality in programmes (par.4.3.5). The programme meets the identified criteria since teachers are evaluated and assisted by the principal regularly.

It is necessary to note that the role of the present day Montessori teacher under observation differs markedly from the role of the teacher as espoused by Maria Montessori herself, for example there was a great deal of verbalisation and "interference" by the teacher. Ironically the verbalisation included praise. Furthermore, the teacher demonstrated exercises, and children did not work entirely on their own. The teacher provided assistance and responded immediately to their queries and problems. The researcher thus concludes that this is another variation to the traditional Montessori programme.

5.2.5 Parent involvement in the Montessori programme

The Montessori programme does value and regards parent involvement as important and vital to the smooth functioning of the programme. In this respect parents are involved in fund raising projects and assist in building and maintenance of school areas. Two parent interviews are scheduled as part of the school year calendar i.e. in the first and third school terms. Other meetings are called up when necessary and parents do visit the school when requested, or when they find it necessary. The principal of the programme observed commented that there is a need for greater parent involvement, where parents can assist in completing certain tasks with children thereby enabling teachers to undertake other necessary tasks.

5.2.5.1 Analysis of parent involvement in the Montessori programme

The identified criteria for parent involvement indicates that quality programmes recognise the importance of the child's family and develop strategies and opportunities to work effectively with parents (par.3.4.2.2). This criteria is adequately met in the programme. However the comment of the principal on the need for greater involvement of parents indicates that the desired parent involvement is lacking. Thus there is a need to formulate effective strategies that will help in involving parents in the programme.

5.3 THE HIGH SCOPE PROGRAMME

The High Scope programme was developed in The United States of America, but its effectiveness in helping young children to plan their activities has gained recognition in pre-school groups in South Africa. The High Scope programme was discussed in a personal paper by Weikart at an international conference at UNISA (1991) where he explains that the fundamental premise of the programme is based on the child development ideas of Piaget. This programme was one of the first pre-school programmes designed to combat the negative scholastic effects of poverty. He goes on to state that the programme shares its emphasis on the child as an active learner with historic early childhood methods like those of Froebel and Montessori. However it differs in its use of cognitive developmental theory to place primary emphasis on problem solving and independent thinking, while the historic approaches focus on social development and relationships (Van Staden 1991:8).

In this programme the learning process is based on matching children's developing levels of intellectual ability to learning tasks and activities. No effort is made to push the children, speed up the learning process, teach for achievement of a developmental level, or teach facts as substitute for thinking. The childrens' emerging abilities are broadened and strengthened rather than being taught in the conventional sense (Morrison 1988:125). The underpinning philosophy of the High Scope programme is therefore based on the learning theory of Piaget. Since the programme is based on an understanding of child development it meets the identified criteria (par.2.3).

5.3.1 Aims in the High Scope programme

The High Scope programme aims to develop in each child the ability to make choices and decisions about what to do and how to do it, using his or her own time and energy effectively.

The aims include:

- a. The ability to define and solve problems and the ability to apply classification, seriation, spatial, temporal, and quantitative mathematical reasoning in diverse life situations;
- b. Self-discipline and ability to identify, pursue and complete self chosen goals;
- c. A knowledge of objects, skills in the arts, and comfort with physical movement;
- d. Expressive abilities-to speak, write, dramatise, and graphically represent their experiences, feelings, and ideas;
- e. The ability to work with other children and adults, sharing leadership and co-operating together (Morrison 1988:121, Tomlinson 1987:32, and Schweinhart and Weikart 1986:9).

5.3.1.1 Analysis of the aims in the High Scope programme

It is observed that the High Scope programme emphasises the intellectual development of the child. In terms of the identified criteria the total development (par.3.3.5) of the

child is seen as the overall aim of early childhood programmes. The researcher agrees that the social, physical and emotional development (aims c; d & e) above, are not totally ignored. However, the intellectual development is seen as more important than social and emotional development. This practice contradicts the point made previously that no one area of the child's development is more important than the others (par.2.4).

Although key experiences in movement, social and emotional areas have been included in the High Scope curriculum, the key experiences are based largely on the development of cognition. Furthermore, the local (not identified to stay anonymous) High Scope programme caters for a disadvantaged group of children and it is evident that school readiness (pre-reading, pre-numeracy and pre-writing skills) is a priority. The primary aim is to help children cope with a new social environment and to experience success in later schooling.

Since there is emphasis on the intellectual aspect of development at the expense of social and emotional development the researcher concludes that the criteria of the total development of the child (par. 3.3.5) does not apply to this programme.

5.3.2 Content in the High Scope programme

In order to explain the content (activities) used in this programme it is imperative to understand the pre-school key experiences which are integral to this programme. Weikart personally stated that key experiences are a way of helping the teacher support and extend the child's self designed activity

and active learning. They provide a way of thinking about curriculum that frees the teacher from the workbook of activities. Furthermore, there are additions in the areas of movement, music, computers and drama, and provision is made to include additional key experiences (Van Staden 1991:12-13).

Barnett (1989:459) one of the educationists responsible for compiling the "Young Child in Action" (a manual for the High/Scope programme) identifies the areas in key experiences: key experiences in active learning; key experiences in using language; key experiences in representation, which includes concepts of classification, seriation, number concepts; and key experiences in understanding time and space. Therefore, the content is designed around these key experiences. Weikart personally stated that the teacher does not have defined subject matter to teach the child. He/She merely provides settings in which children learn actively and construct their own knowledge. Children determine the content (Van Staden 1991:6-7).

In the local High Scope programme the researcher observed that the learning materials included wood, blocks, clay tools, paint, paint brushes, paper. Play and dramatic activities are part of the programme. This area had household utensils and a variety of costumes and real objects from the child's life-world. The researcher observed that the music area was equipped with musical instruments. Other materials included: lotto game, blocks, activities for the development of fine and large muscle development. Regular excursions are part of the programme. The outdoor play area had a variety of equipment.

With regard to the materials Weikart personally stated as follows:

"Unlike many curriculum models, the High Scope curriculum does not require the purchase of special materials; the only cost of equipping the classroom would be typical of any good nursery school programme anywhere. The activities are chosen from the cultural background of children, from field trips, and age appropriate group activities such as cooking, art, and so on" (Van Staden 1991:2).

5.3.2.1 Analysis of the content in the High Scope programme

The identified criteria indicates that content selected should be real and relevant to the life of the child, socially useful and culturally compatible (par.4.2.1.6). The didactical materials used in this programme are flexible, real and relevant to the life-world of the child. Furthermore, most of the materials are simple and selected from the child's home background and can, therefore, be considered as socially useful and culturally compatible. In addition content is planned with specific aims in mind (key experiences) thus meeting the identified criteria of selecting content with specific aims in mind (par.4.2.1.6). However, the researcher does question the extent to which the content caters for the development of the whole child. Although learning materials are real objects from the child's world, they seem to be used with the distinct objective of achieving the key experiences, which as stated earlier, focuses on intellectual development. The children in this programme were grouped according to their abilities. The content was presented to them according to their abilities. In this regard the identified criteria of taking the child's stage of development into account (par.4.2.2.4) is relevant to this programme.

5.3.3 Assessment of children in the High Scope programme

In a paper presented by Weikart, he explains that child progress in the curriculum is reviewed around a set of key experiences. Broad developmental milestones are employed to monitor the "youngster's" progress. By daily evaluation and planning, teachers study their experience of children and classroom activities and strive to achieve new insights into each child's unique tapestry of skills and interests (Van Staden 1991:6).

Tomlinson (1987:33) comments that regular observation in the classroom forms the basis for sharing with parents the individual abilities of the child. It also underpins the whole curriculum and particularly the role of the adult. Observation of individual children helps to assess each child's needs and from this the teachers plans the key experiences for the day or week.

Schweinhart and Weikart (1986:11) support that it is essential to evaluate the progress of children and the success of the programme with observational techniques that are sensitive to children's developmental status and needs. Teachers should use feedback to evaluate their classroom strategies.

The teachers in the local programme observe what children are doing, and question children about their work. The teacher then completes a checklist based on his/her observations. In this manner a developmental record is available to indicate the child's progress and programme success. School readiness tests are administered only when there is a doubt concerning the child's readiness for school. However, this is a rare

occurrence. Parents are informed at regular workshops and individual sessions and they receive progress reports .

5.3.3.1 Analysis of assessment in the High Scope programme

The identified criteria suggests that assessment is essential for individualised planning and for informing parents. Furthermore, assessment should involve documenting the child's work, using observational methods and receiving information from parents (par.4.3.4.1). The purpose of assessment in the High Scope programme is to assist the teacher in future planning; evaluating the success of the programme and to inform parents of the child's progress. Therefore the programme meets the identified criteria. However, it must be noted that observational records are the only source of information used to evaluate the child's development. Teachers argue that it is not possible to get information from parents, as parent involvement is minimal. The researcher further believes that achieving insights into each child's "unique tapestry of skills" may be a problem, since the teacher-child ratio in this programme is 1:35.

5.3.4 The role of the teacher in the High Scope programme

Weikart, asserts that an important aspect of the curriculum is the role of the teacher in guiding the child. The adults listen closely to what children plan and then actively work with them to extend their activities to challenging levels. The adults questioning style is also important since this permits free conversation between adult and child. This approach permits

the teacher and the child to interact as thinkers and doers rather than the traditional role of active teacher and passive pupil. The child's active learning takes place because the teacher stands out and permits it to take place, not because the teacher encourages it to happen (Van Staden 1991:7-8).

Since the fundamental principle is that children are free to choose activities, it is the task of the teacher to make all materials and equipment available and accessible to children. The researcher describes the role of the teacher in the classroom in terms of the plan-do-review cycle which is the hallmark of the programme. Firstly the teacher helped children to recognise their choice and helped them to express their choices in words. After planning the children spent time working on their plans (do or work time). Thereafter the children recalled their work time. It was observed that the teacher is very active, and the role of the teacher is equally important to that of the child's in any activity. The teacher in this programme possessed a certificate in early childhood educare and was not adequately professionally qualified. However she attended many workshops especially on the "plan-do-review" method. Teachers are monitored and evaluated by trainers regularly.

5.3.4.1 Analysis of the role of the teacher in the High

Scope programme

In terms of the identified criteria programmes should be staffed by adults who understand child development, and they should have specialised training (par3.4.3.4). This programme fails to meet the identified criteria. The training teachers receive equips them with the method of teaching and knowledge of improvising teaching media in the

classroom. They have no formal education on child development or learning theories that are relevant to children.

The second criteria states that the personality and diverse roles of the teacher is identified as a quality indicator in programmes (par.3.4.3.4). Although the teachers under observation did not possess adequate professional qualifications they displayed the characteristics of good teachers; they were warm, friendly and sensitive. They were active in planning. Furthermore, they talk to children about their plans and then follow up with questions and challenges and offer praise, thus meeting the role of interacting, problem solving, enriching and nurturing. Therefore, it is accepted that the programme does meet the above mentioned criteria. Ongoing and systematic evaluation of teachers is essential to improving and maintaining quality programmes (par.4.3.5). In this regard the evaluation of teachers is undertaken to assist teachers and to improve the quality of the programme. The identified criteria is adequately met.

Although it has been stated that the teacher stands out of the way and permits active learning of children, it is noted that there is a great deal of interaction between the teacher and child during the activity, which contradicts the traditional role of the High Scope teacher.

5.3.5 Parent involvement in the High Scope programme

Teachers commented that parent involvement was very poor. Although regular workshops are scheduled for parents, the attendance in these workshops is poor. Most parents have valid reasons for not attending, for example both parents are working

and are not available. Few parents are involved in committees set up and do sometimes assist in general maintenance. However parents are informed of children's progress by means of reports that are sent twice a year.

5.3.5.1 Analysis of parent involvement in the High Scope programme

Quality programmes recognise the importance of the child's family and develop strategies and opportunities to work effectively with parents thereby forming a strong teacher-parent partnership (par. 3.4.2.2). In the High Scope programme this criteria is lacking. Although the researcher sympathises with the problems of parents, their involvement is imperative. The programme has to devise different strategies of getting parents involved since they are the primary educators of their children. The programme cannot be totally criticised since attempts are made to involve parents, for example regular workshops. However, the strategies used may need to be revised, for example, scheduling workshops on Sundays.

5.4 THE TRADITIONAL PROGRAMME

Feeny et.al. (1987:20) explain that the earliest nursery schools emphasised social, emotional and physical growth with much less emphasis on cognitive growth because it was believed that children were not ready to do academic work until they entered school at the age of six. Today the term pre-school or pre-primary is used to describe the traditional programme that grew out of the legacy of nursery school. The programme is based on the theories of Piaget, Froebel and Montessori.

The traditional programme is followed in most state subsidised pre-primary schools in South Africa. The reason behind this may be deduced from the NEPI report (1992:84) which states:

"The more structured, teacher-directed approach has been heavily influenced by remedial education as a source of curriculum content and teaching methods, to an extent that early childhood programmes have become associated with special education. An underlying assumption of this approach is that children from disadvantaged backgrounds who are not ready for school are in need of a remedial-type education".

The programme is designed to meet the developmental needs of the three-to-five year old child. However most programmes are a part of the primary school and cater for the five year olds only. It must also be noted that for many children this programme is the first learning avenue outside their home and the transition year from home to formal school. At this point the researcher points out that she has had the experience of teaching and supervising teachers in the traditional programme. The underpinning philosophy of this programme is that children are active learners and they learn through discovery as espoused by Piaget. Since the programme is based on an understanding of child development, the identified criteria (par.2.3) is relevant.

5.4.1 Aims in the Traditional programme

The primary objective of this programme is to ensure the total development of the child in a non formal setting. There is emphasis on meeting the needs of individual children. In the guide "A School Readiness Programme" used by the Ex-House of Delegates the broad aims of the programme includes the holistic development of the child (physical, emotional, social and cognitive development). Furthermore, as the name of the

guide suggests the programme aims at preparing the child to cope with the work in grade one. In this regard the researcher refers to the White paper on provision of education in the previous Republic of South Africa (1983:23) which states that pre-basic teaching is aimed at achieving school readiness.

5.4.1.1 Analysis of the aims in the Traditional programme

In quality programmes the aims should focus on the total development of the child (par.3.3.5). With reference to this criteria the researcher found that since the stated aims of the programme include the total development of the child, one may assume that the identified criteria is adequately met. However, in practice this is not the case. It is evident that greater emphasis is placed on the physical and cognitive (school readiness) aspects of development. Promoting cognitive development to the exclusion of other areas, may be attributed to pressures from parents who insist on their children being taught the 3R's and teachers in grade one who expect most of the children to be ready for formal work in the first week of grade one. Furthermore, with regard to meeting the individual needs of children, this is not always possible owing to the high ratio of 1:36 and sometimes 1:40. Therefore, the researcher concludes that the aims of the traditional programme fails to meet the identified criteria of the total development of the child (par.3.3.5).

5.4.2 Content in the Traditional programme

To understand the content in this programme it is necessary to look at the informal nature of the daily programme. The daily programme has the following time blocks: arrival and departure; freeplay (indoor and outdoor); routines (lunch, toilet

and wash); adult directed group presentations (music, movement, discussion and story). Freeplay is time when the child is free to choose the activity he/she desires.

The variety of activities to stimulate the child's development is offered. The traditional programme has learning areas which include an area for blocks, dramatic play, art, water play, sand play, woodworking, outdoor play area, discussion or quiet corner, music, discovery science and a reading corner. Group activities like drawing, singing, stories, poems and movement are included. Themes are used and the subject matter is integrated throughout the programme. Excursions and field trips are included. However, excursions are undertaken once a year or at a maximum twice a year, because of the cost factor. The didactical material used are generally the creations of the teachers. In addition there are materials like workbooks (Threshold), worksheets, pencils and in some cases a jotter called "the busy book".

5.4.2.1 Analysis of the content in the Traditional programme

In terms of the identified criteria the content should be real, relevant and meaningful to the lives of young children and it should be socially useful and culturally compatible (par.4.2.1.6). The didactical materials used in this programme are drawn from the child's background and can, therefore, be regarded as relevant and meaningful. Since the content is selected from the child's cultural background it can also be considered as socially useful and culturally compatible. Thus the above mentioned criteria is applied.

The criteria of content being planned with specific aims in mind (par.4.2.1.6) is also applied in the programme. However, the content is used to promote academic skills required for grade one, thus ignoring areas of development namely: emotional and social. An example of this phenomena is the adult directed activity where the teacher taught the concept "same and different" from the Threshold. This lesson was aimed at teaching concepts same and different and involvement of the child was minimal. This process is a watered down version of the grade one syllabi. In addition the letters of the alphabet were taught. This exercise could be detrimental as phonic teaching is carried out in grade one.

The criteria of content should be organised and presented according to the levels of development (par.4.2.2.4) is relevant to this programme as children are grouped according to their abilities. However the manner in which it is done can be criticised, the researcher does not agree with grouping children according to their intellectual ability especially if they are called "A" group; "B" group etc. This practice could result in a negative self concept for the child in "C" group, and can affect his or her social and emotional development.

5.4.3 Assessment of children in the Traditional programme

The teacher uses the observation method and samples of children's work in assessing children. In this regard the teacher has an observation book in which she records her observations. However, the records seem to be based on what concepts the child has mastered. The school readiness Test A

and Test B are used. It seems that the sole purpose of assessment is to inform parents of the child's progress. In this regard reports are sent out either once or twice a year. The programme has a "graduation" ceremony where all children receive certificates that verify that they have attended pre-school.

5.4.3.1 Analysis of assessment in the Traditional programme

The identified criteria indicates that assessment of children's progress is essential to individualised planning and to knowledgeably communicate with parents (par.4.3.4). In this regard, the programme fails to meet the identified criteria in that assessment is done with the purpose of informing parents and not to direct future planning. The identified criteria suggests that assessment should involve documenting the child's work, using observational methods and interviews with parents (par.4.3.4.1). The criteria is applied to some extent in that observational records are kept and samples of children are used. However the school readiness Test A and Test B are used to determine school readiness. The validity of these tests has been discussed in (par.4.3.4.1). The researcher is critical of the use of these tests and believes that continuous assessment will provide a more accurate picture of the child's progress.

5.4.4 The role of the teacher in the Traditional programme

The teacher has a role to structure the learning environment so that the child has the freedom to choose his/her activities. She provides a wide variety of appropriate materials and equipment which are generally made by the teacher. It is the task of the teacher to guide and facilitate the child's learning and to present group adult directed activities. Teachers work with children individually or in small groups. In the adult directed activity (ring-music) the teacher displayed confidence and was very warm and friendly. The researcher observed that all teachers in the programme were not adequately professionally qualified. They attended workshops over a period of fifteen Saturdays and received certificates in "Caregivers- Foundation Course". Assessment of teachers are carried out by the school principal and/or the junior primary head of department. However this is rarely done.

A disturbing observation is that the teachers in this programme have other duties like ground duty, sport duty and are also requested to serve relief in the primary school in the afternoons when teachers are absent. The researcher does not approve of such practices, since the afternoons should be part of the teachers day for planning and preparation for the next day.

5.4.4.1 Analysis of the role of the teacher in the Traditional programme

According to the identified criteria quality programmes should be staffed by adults who understand child development and who recognise and provide for children's

needs i.e. they should have specialised training (par.3.4.3.4). The programme fails to meet this criteria as teachers are not professionally trained and do not have knowledge of learning and child development theories. The second criteria maintains that the personality and diverse role of the teacher is a quality indicator in the programme (par.3.4.3.4). This criteria is applied to the programmes as the teachers are planning, presenting, facilitating, nurturing and interacting with children all the time.

The identified criteria indicate that ongoing and systematic evaluation of teachers is essential to maintaining quality programmes (par. 4.3.5). The traditional programme fails to meet this criteria. The researcher attributes the inappropriate methods (use of Threshold, teaching of the alphabet) to the fact that teachers are not professionally qualified and in addition they do not receive much guidance from the head of department, principal or superintendents of the respective education departments.

5.4.5 Parent involvement in the Traditional programme

Parent involvement in this programme is poor. This could be attributed to the fact that in most cases both parents are working; however, some parents are just not interested in becoming involved. The teachers plan meetings and parent's days, but attendance is poor. A few parents are involved in committees and are responsible for finance and the provision of equipment. Parents do accompany the teachers on excursions and the attendance at the graduation ceremony is good.

5.4.5.1 Analysis of parent involvement in the Traditional programme

Quality programmes recognise the importance of the child's family and develop strategies and opportunities to work effectively with parents (par. 3.4.2.2). The programme fails to meet the identified criteria. Although the programme endeavours to incorporate parents, the efforts are not sufficient. Furthermore, if both parents are working then other opportunities should be devised to accommodate parents.

5.5 THE OPEN EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Gordon and Browne (1989:48-49) define open education which is sometimes called "open schools" or "informal education" as a term used to describe a child-centred learning environment. It is based on the belief that children learn and grow at different rates, that they are eager and curious about learning, and they learn best when they are able to pursue their own interest.

Feeny et.al. (1978:18) comment that open education is an attempt to restructure pre-school into settings that support individuality, promote independence, encourage freedom, and demonstrate respect for children. Open education is an attitude that encourages children to become involved in their own learning. This approach has been described as open school both because the use of space is "open" allowing children to move freely between interest areas, and because the content is "open" derived from children's interests rather than prescribed curriculum. The same principles apply to the Open Education model in South Africa. However the term Integrated Day is used

to describe the organisation of the programme. The programmes observed are based on the theories of Piaget, Chomsky, Feuerstein, Froebel, and Montessori. The cognitive-orientated theory as espoused by Piaget is used as a guideline to the overall programme. Since the programme is based on learning theories of child development, it adequately meets the identified criteria (par.2.3).

5.5.1 Aims in the Open Education programme

The aims are very similar to those of the traditional programme. The aim as stated in the Learning Through Activity (LTA) guide prepared by the Ex House of Assembly is based on the principle of totality and with an aim description of: The aim of pre-primary education is to promote the harmonious development of the young child, particularly his spiritual, physical and intellectual well-being as well as aesthetic, moral and religious development.

According to the LTA programme children entering this class usually range between ages four to six years. Learning experiences are consolidated in this year and skills, concepts and attitudes needed for formal learning are consciously pursued. Thus the programme aims at the development of skills that underpin those necessary for formal learning.

The broad aims of the programme incorporated social and interpersonal aims; self help skills/interpersonal aims; self-image aims; academic aims; thinking aims; learning readiness aims, language aims; and nutritional aims.

5.5.1.1 Analysis of the aims in the Open Education programme

In quality programmes the aims focus on the total development of the child and the developmental levels of the child are taken into account (par.3.3.5). The criteria is applied to the open educational programme. However, the programme aims are directed towards the child's future academic success in school, although advocates of this programme argue it is not strictly academically orientated. The researcher believes that it has a leaning toward stressing the cognitive development with the intention of promoting school readiness. School readiness should be incidental and not the primary focus of any programme. Since the aim states the total development it can be criticised for emphasising formal learning skills because it pre-empt a sequential developmental programme.

5.5.2 Content in the Open Education programme

The programme integrates the content and activities around themes. Classrooms are divided into a number of interest areas: a reading corner, math centre, art centre, creative arts, building area, and areas for block, fantasy, sand and water area. The centres are equipped with selected materials based on themes. In the programme observed different classrooms were used for the different learning areas. Children move from one classroom to another at different times in the day.

Since the LTA programme takes cognisance of the demands of formal learning the organised time activities are aimed at achieving pre-literacy, pre-writing, and pre-maths skills and are

teacher directed. An interesting feature of this programme is design and technology which focuses on developing the child's thinking skills.

Both receptive and expressive language are developed through exposure to the spoken word for example listening to stories, rhymes, conversations, questions and instructions. Emphasis is placed on children's literature.

5.5.2.1 Analysis of the content in the Open Education programme

The criteria for the selection of content indicates that learning content should be real, relevant and meaningful to the lives of young children and content should be socially useful and culturally compatible (par.4.2.1.6). This criteria is relevant to the programme as content is selected from the child's world. The themes are also drawn from the child's background and can therefore be regarded as culturally compatible as well. This is the only programme that included design and technology , therefore content will definitely be socially useful.

Content should also be planned with specific aims in mind (par.4.2.1.6). In this regard the organised group time is directed by the teachers with the specific aim of developing a particular skill. Therefore the criteria is applied. It is noted that although the programme advocates the freedom of choice for children, the basic skills of reading, writing and computing are emphasised and children are not free to ignore these areas.

The programme has a mixed group of children and the content is selected and presented to their level of development, thus meeting the identified criteria if taking the stage of development into account (par.4.2.2.4).

5.5.3 Assessment of children in the Open Education programme

It was found that ongoing observation of the child's performance in the programme is carried out to continuously assess the child's strengths and needs throughout the year. The observation method is used to determine children's levels of maturity, levels of learning, and how they interact with each other and the learning environment. Information from parents are considered when assessing children. The purpose of evaluation is to teach effectively, engage in timeous intervention and remediation and to report accurately to parents. Parents are informed of the child's progress at meetings and reports are sent out twice a year. Although the LTA programme openly criticises formal standardised test by "outsiders", the researcher found that psychological support services are called in to carry out assessment.

5.5.3.1 Analysis of assessment in the Open Education programme

The identified criteria on assessment of children indicate that assessment of children's progress is essential to individualised planning and to knowledgeably communicate with parents (par.4.3.4). Assessment in this programme serves as guidelines for future planning and to inform parents; therefore the identified criteria applies to this

programme. Assessment should involve documenting the child's work, using observational methods and receiving information from parents (par.4.3.4.1). This criteria is relevant to the programme as the method of observation and parent interviews are used. However; the use of the psychological support services can be intimidating to young children.

Since there is team teaching in this programme more than one teacher is involved in the assessment of the child. The researcher believes that this is excellent, since it would rule out any degree of bias or subjectivity.

5.5.4 The role of the teacher in the Open Education programme

The role of the teacher is that of a facilitator and a guide. Through the provision of a carefully structured environment, he/she seeks to enhance the total development of the child. The task of the teacher is to provide an enriched and learning environment in which he/she assumes a supportive role through warmth and sensitivity. The teacher is also responsible for the assessment of children and to inform parents accordingly.

This was the only programme where the researcher found team teaching. Teachers work together to plan the environment. It was observed that the teacher-child interaction was good. The teacher and the children were actively involved in the learning process. All teachers in this programme had adequate professional qualification in early childhood education. Informal appraisal of teachers and regular checking of record keeping is done by the principal.

5.5.4.1 Analysis of the role of the teacher in the Open Education programme

Quality programmes should be staffed by adults who understand child development and who recognise and provide for children's needs i.e. they should be professionally trained (par.3.4.3.4). The criteria is relevant to this programme since all teachers are professionally qualified. Furthermore, the personality and diverse roles of the teacher is a quality indicator in the programme (par.3.4.3.1) which is applicable to the Open Education programme. As stated above the teacher involved in duties like planning, nurturing, managing stress, advocating, and is warm and sensitive to children.

Ongoing and systematic evaluation of teachers is essential to improving and maintaining a high quality in programmes (par.4.3.5). This criteria is relevant to the programme as regular appraisal by the principal is undertaken.

With reference to team teaching, the researcher views the change of teachers positively as both children and teachers are exposed to different personalities during the day. This could be interesting and motivating to children. Since all teachers have strengths and weaknesses, team teaching will ensure that children are not disadvantaged, especially if they are confined to a weak teacher all day. On the negative side it may be difficult to teach and work together with other teachers. Problems may arise when other teacher's style and philosophy is different from one's own.

5.5.5 Parent involvement in the Open Education programme

There is a greater degree of parent involvement in this programme. Parents serve on parent management committees, executive parent management committee and assist in fund raising projects. Mothers are referred to teacher-aides and assist with special events; parents are involved in maintenance and repairs to equipment and run the puzzle and book library where parents borrow and return items. The attendance at parents' nights and meetings is good.

5.5.5.1 Analysis of parent involvement in the Open Education programme

Programmes of high quality recognise the importance of the child's family and develop strategies and opportunities to work effectively with parents (par.3.4.4.2). In this regard the Open Education programme adequately meets the identified criteria. The researcher believes that the degree of parent involvement in this programme contributes to the success and quality of the programme

5.6 CONCLUSION

Four selected programmes have been described and evaluated in this chapter. The programmes are analysed according to the identified criteria regarding aims, content, assessment of children, the role of the teacher and parent involvement. It is concluded that the programmes differ with one another and have much in common as well. Aims such as fostering independence, responsibility, increasing in knowledge and preparation for school and later learning are common to all programmes. Language development may be implicit or explicit. But the specific content, and methods used differ from programme to programme. The role of the teacher is important in all programmes. Assessment of children is integral to all programmes. There are differences in the degree of parent involvement. There are also differences with regard to evaluation of teachers. In addition the programmes are based on a particular theory of child development for example Montessori or Piaget or a combination of theories are used. Programmes have strengths and weaknesses. However, the delivery of high quality programmes is priority in the field of early childhood development. This study could serve as a guideline for parents in selecting programmes and for educators in assessing the quality of existing programmes.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Government White Paper on the Provision of Education in South Africa (1995:75) recognises the importance of early childhood development and has made provision for the reception year programme as part of compulsory education. Therefore, one would expect the advent of many early childhood development programmes. However, the quality of early childhood education will depend to a large degree on the quality of early childhood development programmes. This study constitutes an attempt to address the problem of providing quality early childhood development programmes in South Africa. In this dissertation the researcher uses the term "quality" to refer to early childhood development programme that is of a high standard, a standard that is worth striving for. In that, a quality programme that satisfies the criteria laid out in this study. It must be noted that the situation with regard to education in South Africa is changing daily, and that the study attempts to provide insights into this domain through analysis, discussion and conclusions to date.

6.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

The basic problem which has been addressed in the study is rooted in the fact that there is a lack of consensus on which criteria could be used to assess whether programmes could be

regarded as quality programmes. Providing quality early childhood development programmes in South Africa are of utmost importance because of :

- the importance of early childhood education (Chapter 1 paragraph 1.3) ;
- the long term effects of quality early childhood development programmes (Chapter 1 paragraph 1.4) ;
- the need for quality early childhood development programmes in South Africa (Chapter 1 paragraph 1.6) ;
- the need for continuity between the pre-primary and junior primary phase (Chapter 1 paragraph 1.7.1) ;
- the need for learning continuity between the home and pre-school (Chapter 1 paragraph 1.7.2) ;
- the need for teacher training in early childhood development programmes (Chapter 1 paragraph 1.7.3) ;
- the need to address the adult-child ratios in early childhood development programmes (Chapter 1 paragraph 1.5).

6.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem on which the focus of this study rests is the lack of consensus within the early childhood profession in South Africa regarding a definition for a quality early childhood development programme.

A further problem stemming out of the previous problem is the lack of agreed upon criteria by means of which early childhood programmes may be assessed.

Both these problems were addressed in this dissertation , by means of a literature study and an analysis and interpretation of data with respect to finding criteria against which programmes may be analysed.

6.4 PROGRAMME OF INVESTIGATION

In the first chapter an introductory orientation to the problem of providing quality early childhood development programmes was provided. The need for and importance of providing quality early childhood development programmes is also highlighted. In chapter two the influence of educational philosophies is recognised. Hence educational philosophies and the total development of the child are discussed. Factors (aims, parent and the teacher) contributing to quality programmes are discussed in chapter three. In this chapter criteria for the selection of aims (par. 3.3.5) ; parent involvement (par. 3.4.2.2) and the role of the teacher (par. 3.4.3.4) are provided. Other factors, namely, content and assessment are discussed in chapter four and criteria for the selection and organisation of content

(par. 4.2.1.6 and par.4.2.2.4), and assessment in the programme (par. 4.3.4 and par.4.3.4.1) are provided. Chapter five focuses on a description and analysis of selected early childhood development programmes in South Africa.

6.5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher after making a descriptive analysis of the chosen programmes and probing the literature relevant to the problems, is able to draw conclusions and to make the following recommendations.

6.5.1 The influence of educational philosophies on early childhood development programmes

It has been found that all early programmes are based on one or more of the educational philosophies discussed in chapter two. However, as many teachers in the programmes are not adequately professionally qualified, they have little or no knowledge of the underpinning philosophy of the programme. Furthermore, teachers who have training find it difficult to make useful links between theories and their daily work.

It is suggested that educational theories on child development be presented in a practical manner where the theory is linked to the realistic situation of the classroom. In other words the course content for trainers should be "user-friendly", where trainers are equipped with content that could be easily translated for practice in the classroom situation.

6.5.2 Aims of early childhood development programmes

The researcher found that while the global aims of most programmes advocate the promotion of the total development of the child, in reality most pedagogical approaches focus on teaching children skills they need in order to succeed in primary school.

- In order to achieve the aims as suggested in the criteria (par. 3.3.5) it is recommended that programmes take cognisance of the premise that the aim of pre-primary education is based on the principle of totality and that aims should take the development level of children into account. This implies that:
 - programmes should be concerned with the promotion of the harmonious development of the young child, particularly his/her physical, emotional, social and emotional well being as well as his/her aesthetic, moral and religious development;
 - it does not exclude the school readiness perspective. There is a need to have a broader vision, rather than focusing narrowly on school readiness. When the primary aim is school readiness there is a danger of programmes becoming academically and test orientated;
 - when addressing the school readiness aim, there is a need to transform the traditional view where emphasis was placed on the child being made ready for school. Today it is equally important that schools should be ready for children (vide chapter 1 par. 1.7.1 and chapter 3 par. 3.3.4.1);

- the traditional aims of many programmes should be re-examined and revised in light of the current political and socio-economic changes. South Africa faces a totally new dispensation in which children from a variety of socio-economic and environmental backgrounds are in the same programme. Therefore, the aims should permit a curriculum that is culturally sensitive, that prepares the child for a culturally diverse society (vide chapter 1 par. 1.6.2 and chapter 3 paragraphs 3.3.3 and 3.4.4.1).

6.5.3 Content in early childhood development programmes

The researcher concludes that although the criteria for the selection of content is adequately met in most programmes, these programmes dictate a predetermined structure with the primary aim of cognitive development. Material is presented in a definitive manner to help the child acquire school readiness skills. The content and materials prescribed in guides (Young Children in Action, A School Readiness Programme and Learning Through Activity Guides) tend to formalise early childhood education. The confining aspects of a plan in advance establishes expectations of what the programme should accomplish. Ironically this is contrary to the individualistic nature of early childhood development programmes.

- It is recommended that the programmes confront the child with content that is real, relevant and meaningful to the lives of young children. Furthermore, content should be presented in an organised manner that reflects an integration of content areas. This implies that:

- content should be presented to the child taking cognisance of the child's level of development. Content should promote the total development of the child and not just cognitive development (chapter 4 par. 4.2.2.3);
- content should be culturally sensitive, anti bias and gender sensitive (chapter 3 par. 3.4.4);
- content should not only prepare the child for later school, but more importantly, it should be socially useful and prepare the child for life long learning (chapter 4 par. 4.2.1.4 and par. 4.2.1.5).
- It must be noted that there is no universal curriculum that is "best" for all children. Therefore content should be viewed as a continuum along which teachers and children will travel, albeit at different rates.

6.5.4 Assessment of children in early childhood development programmes

It is concluded that the purpose of assessment in the programmes analysed, satisfy the criteria as provided in chapter 4 (par. 4.3.4). However, the researcher is critical of the methods used, where assessment is based solely on teacher's observations (vide chapter 5 par.5.3.3.1 and par. 5.4.3.1). Furthermore, criticism is also levelled against the use of screening tests still being administered in some programmes.

- It is recommended that children are assessed on the basis of observation on an ongoing basis. Programmes should also endeavour to document the child's work and get information from parents when assessing children, as this would provide a cumulative, and a true reflection, of the child's progress. Furthermore, this will rule out the possibility of any form of bias (chapter 4 par. 4.3.4.1).
- It is also recommended that formal screening tests be discouraged generally as research has provided evidence that the test results are often unreliable and can cause undue stress to a child (chapter 4 par. 4.3.4.1).

6.5.5 The role of the teacher in early childhood development programmes

On analysis of the different programmes it is concluded that although teachers possess the desired personality attributes, many are unqualified and do not have specialised professional training. This is a serious shortcoming in providing quality early childhood development programmes in South Africa (vide chapter 1 par 1.7.3 and chapter 3 par. 3.4.3.3 and par. 3.4.3.4). Furthermore, it was found that evaluation and supervision is lacking in many programmes.

- Since the quality of the staff is the most important determinant of quality early childhood development programmes (chapter 3 par. 3.4.3.3) there is a need to address the issue of training of teachers. The researcher strongly recommends that provision be made for professional training of teachers. This could be implemented through :

- **in-service training programmes designed and provided to teachers who are presently in early childhood programmes (see chapter 3. par 3.4.3.4). Training of teachers should be offered at different levels i.e. from training educare workers, teacher aids, teachers and head teachers.**

In order to facilitate the training of teachers there is a need for the following:

- **education authorities acknowledging the scarcity of professionally trained teachers in the early childhood development phase, and to make provision for their training;**
- **recognition of prior learning and training provided by NGO's in South Africa (chapter 1 par. 1.5.1). In this regard there is a need for both the non-formal (NGO's) and formal education sectors to work in collaboration. In this way a system of course accreditation could be established, which would facilitate the transfer between non-formal and formal sectors. The training within the non formal sector must be recognised and utilised.**
- **using distance education is a cost effective delivery mode. This method can serve the needs of our country. Its flexible nature will allow students to earn an income while they study. Distance education and limited contact teaching time can be combined. Teachers who wish to upgrade their qualifications need this type of training.**

- giving attention to teachers who have knowledge and skills to act with effectiveness, but are not certified. Alternative training programmes could be designed for such persons. The establishment of resource and training centres could provide the training and support required.

6.5.6 Evaluation of teachers in early childhood development programmes

- With regard to the evaluation of teachers the researcher believes that if we are to provide quality early childhood programmes then evaluation of teachers is vital (vide chapter 4. par 4.3.5). It is therefore recommended that:
 - there should be regular assessment and evaluation of teachers even if they do not have professional training. In this regard broad guidelines for the assessment of teachers are provided in the Interim Policy Document for ECD (1996: 57) programmes in South Africa (see chapter 4 par 4.3.5). Other guidelines are suggested in this study. However, it must be noted that the assessor should be a person who has knowledge of child development;
 - evaluation of teachers should be done in a positive manner and not in a manner where teachers are harassed. It is important for evaluation to be undertaken with the objective of assisting teachers and providing a support system. Even if teachers are unqualified they need to know what is expected of them as educators of children. If there is to be any form of accountability then evaluation is necessary. Teachers who are not evaluated may adopt an attitude that they can do what they want to.

6.5.7 Parent involvement in early childhood development programmes

It has been found that the desired parent involvement in most of the programmes is lacking. This is a serious shortcoming in providing quality early childhood programmes in South Africa. Parent involvement is essential (vide chapter 1 par. 1.7.2 and chapter 3 par. 3.4.2.1).

- It is recommended that parent oriented programmes be provided to parents. The objectives of such programmes should be to promote the development of parenting skills, to educate parents on how they can promote school readiness without pressurising children to read and write. There is a need to tap parent power. Parents should be invited to contribute in various ways to the programme. These may include helping in the classrooms, maintaining the facilities and providing resources for the programme.
- If both parents are working and do have genuine problems then meetings could be scheduled for the weekends; questionnaires and message books could be used to get information from parents. Parents should be encouraged to participate in any way that is convenient to them.

In addition, in South Africa where a high proportion of parents have very little or no schooling, these programmes will be beneficial. The researcher is of the opinion that such a programme will benefit not only the children but the parents themselves; it will help in terms of their egos and level of literacy. The media provisions (radio, television) can be used to reach out to parents

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following themes require further research:

6.6.1 The short term and long term effects of a particular programme discussed in this study.

6.6.2 A programme or approach to include the disadvantaged and children with special needs into early childhood development programmes.

6.6.3 A comparative study of the different early childhood development programmes in South Africa.

6.6.4 An examination of the Head Start Model as a viable option to be adapted for the disadvantaged population group in South Africa.

6.6.5 A study of the effects of the development approach model and the structure based model.

6.6.6 The relationship between teaching method and child growth and development.

6.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

It became apparent as the study progressed (particularly in chapter 5) that the programmes were not always analysed in their pure forms and this might be a shortcoming of this study. It is suggested that when research of this nature is attempted again in

the future that more schools be involved, which would make the research more reliable.

The tempo of change in education policies in South Africa is so fast that it is impossible to keep this study up to date. In South Africa quality programmes can help rectify previous imbalances; however, we need to look closely at existing programmes. It is hoped that the criteria provided in this study will be used to assess the quality of existing programmes. The researcher agrees that there is no one early childhood programme that best meets the needs of all the children and all the families; however programmes could benefit from sharing certain programme resources and goals.

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