

**PARENTS' ROLE IN GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF EARLY  
CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES IN MABOPANE**

**by**

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## DECLARATION

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Exact wording of the title of the dissertation as appearing on the copies submitted for examination:

**PARENTS' ROLE IN GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT CENTRES IN MABOPANE**

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated firstly to my dear wife, Mpho Josephine, who provided me all the support and encouragements that I needed to persevere from the beginning until the completion of this work. Secondly, to my departed dear mother, whom we affectionately called Ma-Mbele, for her towering personality that served as a source of inspiration to me and my siblings to love education and to persist working hard. Finally, to my many siblings, nephews, nieces and extended family and relatives for allowing me to be their source of inspiration and a pathfinder whom they would follow.

## **ABSTRACT**

Good governance occupies a centre stage in the development discourse. Since there are currently no guidelines on the practice of good governance for ECD centres, this qualitative study followed the exploratory research approach and employed the case study research design to gain insight into how ECD centres in Mabopane practiced good governance concerning the roles played by parents in decision-making and accountability.

The study used the Social Capital and Stakeholder theoretical frameworks to contextualise the investigation and employed eclectic methodological approaches involving triangulated sampling techniques, data collection methods and tools as well as data sources to generate data. The data were analysed using thematic content analysis and it was found amongst others that there were weaknesses in the governance practices within the ECD centres regarding parents' roles in decision-making and accountability. The study recommended, amongst others, for concerted efforts involving all stakeholders to address those flaws.

**Key words:** accountability, civil society organisations, decision-making, early childhood development, early childhood development centres, ECD centre managers, good governance, Mabopane, non-governmental organisations, non-profit organisations, Social Capital theory, Stakeholder theory

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
CBO(s)	Community Based Organisation(s)
CSO(s)	Civil Society Organisation(s)
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FBO(s)	Faith Based Organisation(s)
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
IoDSA	Institute of Directors of Southern Africa
King III report	Third Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa issued by the Institute of Directors Southern Africa (IoDSA)
King IV report	Fourth Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa issued by the Institute of Directors Southern Africa (IoDSA)
NDA	National Development Agency
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO(s)	Non-governmental Organisation(s)
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPO(s)	Nonprofit Organisation(s)
NPO Act	Nonprofit Organisations Act (Act no 71 of 1997)
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SESRIC	Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNISA	University of South Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study aimed to explore good governance within civil society organisations (CSOs) with a focus on the roles that parents played in decision-making and accountability within the Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. Good governance has been highlighted as a crucial component of social, economic and political activities across all sectors of society, be it in government, business or civil society. Governance issues have become topical developmental concerns, not only for South Africa, but also for developing countries in general. The roles that different stakeholders play in governance is but one of the central foci in the field of Development Studies.

This chapter provides an overview to the study on “parents’ role in governance: the case of Early Childhood Development Centres in Mabopane” and begins by outlining the background to the study, followed by articulating the problem statement and presenting the aims and objectives, research questions and the value of the study. Concepts that are key to this study are defined and then issues of the delimitations and limitations of the study are discussed before concluding with the outline of the chapters of this report.

#### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Good governance has emerged as critical in various spheres of society. In their elucidation of the concept of good governance, various writers (Du Plessis, Rakolojane, De Beer, Stewart, Mokgupi and Moloji 2011:1-3; Farrington 2011:136; Grindle 2011:295) have acknowledged its inherent complexity and ambiguity but have nonetheless highlighted it as a crucial component of social, economic and political activities across all sectors of society.

Some definitions of the concept of good governance include the fact that it implies a process of working towards strengthening the systems and practices concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organisation (Department of Social Development [DSD] 2001:7). It also involves the management of

public affairs in a manner that is free of abuse and corruption, respects to the rule of law and involves government, civil society organisations, the private sector, as well as the citizens as role players in good governance (Du Plessis et al. 2012:2-3).

The concept of good governance is further understood to incorporate the common and universal components including participation, accountability, predictability and transparency, amongst others (Waheduzzaman 2010:11). It also incorporates specific elements, including: representation and voice; in-house democracy; performance and trust; and structured accountability mechanisms (Cangas 2004:2). In the context of this study good governance will be operationalised to entail the participation and the clearly delineated roles, functions and responsibilities of parents in relation to decision-making and accountability matters within the governance of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres.

As an illustration of the importance of good governance at a macro level or national level, the South African government has acknowledged that poor governance was one of the factors that seriously inhibited early childhood development (ECD) service provision (Republic of South Africa [RSA] 2015a:10). This is against the backdrop of the high premium that government has placed on ECD as central towards attaining the national development goals of reducing poverty and inequality (RSA 2015b:22).

At micro or local organisational level, the issues of good governance are equally important as is the case at macro or national level. This is so because good governance contributes to the success of the organisation by improving the performance of its leadership through providing guidance on how to manage the governance affairs of the organisation (Institute of Directors of Southern Africa [IoDSA] 2016:87). This implies that the organisation would likely be in a better position to achieve its goals if it embraces the ideals of good governance.

In its articulation of the benefits of good governance for nonprofit organisations (NPOs), IoDSA (2016:87) emphasises improved integrity and reputation of the NPO as well as increased effectiveness in executing its programmes through the involvement of its stakeholders. For an ECD centre, one of the key stakeholders are parents (DSD 2014: xii)

and hence they would be expected to play a meaningful role in the governance of ECD centres to enable the latter to be successful in the delivery of services to its beneficiaries.

It has been estimated that, as of 31 March 2017, the number of ECD centres that have been formally registered by government as NPOs stood at 40 000 (DSD 2017). The implication of this is that the ECD centres exist in every community in South Africa and as such it would be expected that the impact of the challenges of governance in relation to the roles played by parents would be significant.

It was therefore significant that this study sought to investigate governance practices within the registered ECD centres focusing on the roles of parents. The aims were to gain insight into the governance practices of ECD centres specifically in relation to the roles of parents in decision-making and in holding ECD centres accountable, identify the challenges in relation to parents' roles in decision-making and accountability issues within ECD centres and explore how the challenges could be addressed.

### **1.3 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres, or crèches as popularly referred to, occupy a precarious space within civil society sector in that, unlike other civil society organisations or nonprofit organisations (NPOs) as they are often referred to, they straddle two worlds. This is so because, while they provide statutory services regulated by the Children's Act (RSA 2005), a significant number of the ECD centres are also voluntary organisations, meaning that they have been constituted voluntarily.

Additionally, these ECD centres provide educational services similar to schools. Yet, unlike the legislated provisions for the latter, there are no guidelines or regulations on their governance structures and mechanisms of governance for ECD centres that can guide them towards practicing good governance.

The phenomenon of "Founder's Syndrome" is also prevalent within the ECD centres. This phenomenon refers to the influential powers and privileges that the founder or founders impose on organisations, or those powers or privileges that are attributed to the founder or

founders (Block & Rosenberg 2002:353). In this instance, the person or a group of people that had founded an ECD centre tended to hold sway in key aspects of decision-making, often to the detriment of the ECD centre as an organisation.

In terms of participation of parents in the governance of ECD centres and the roles, functions and responsibilities they execute, an audit study conducted by the Department of Social Development in 2014 found that parents did not necessarily play any significant role in the running of the ECD centres (DSD 2014:41). This audit study recommended, amongst others, for the development of standardised templates and guidelines towards ensuring the proper establishment and running of management committees, and that these should incorporate the detailed roles and responsibilities of committee members (DSD 2014:47).

This could entail the development of models to address the flaws within the ECD centres in relation to parents' role in governance decision-making and accountability and to promote the role of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision making and accountability. And against the backdrop of an estimated 40 000 ECD centres registered by the DSD under the Nonprofit Organisations Act, 1997, (Act 71 of 1997) (DSD 2017), the need to address this problem is proving to be urgent and therefore requires a focused investigation. This study, therefore sought to address the problem of lack of good governance by exploring the role that parents play in governance decision-making and accountability within the ECD centres.

#### **1.4 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this exploratory study was to gain insight into the practice of governance in relation to the roles of parents in decision-making and accountability within ECD centres in Mabopane, which have been registered by government in terms of the Nonprofit Organisations Act, 1997 (NPO Act). The study intended, through the employment of the social capital and stakeholder theoretical frameworks, to investigate the role of parents in governance decision-making and accountability within ECD centres registered under the NPO Act.

The objectives were to:

- Explore the role of parents in governance within ECD centres in relation to governance decision-making and accountability,
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the role of parents in the governance of ECD centres specifically to discover the barriers to their participation in the governance decision-making and accountability;
- Assess the extent to which these roles are compatible to the available governance tools (such as King Codes of Governance, civil society's Independent Codes and government issued Codes of Good Practice for South African NPOs),
- Identify possible model to guide the promotion of the role of parents in decision-making and accountability in an endeavour to improve governance practices of ECD centres.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The key questions to be addressed were concerned with the practice of good governance within the ECD centres and were as follows

- 1 What roles do parents play in the ECD centre's governance in relation to decision-making and accountability?
- 2 What are the barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres?
- 3 To what extent do parents' roles in governance within ECD centres promote good governance in accordance with the available governance tools, such as King Codes of Governance, civil society's Independent Codes, and government issued Codes of Good Practice for South African Nonprofit Organisations. (NPOs)?
- 4 In relation to 1-3, what guidelines can be developed to promote the roles of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability?

## **1.6 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

The government of South Africa has acknowledged that poor governance is one of the factors that seriously inhibits ECD service provision (RSA 2015a:13). Furthermore, given

the priority placed on ECD in South Africa (RSA 2015a:18), the findings of this study could assist, firstly in practical interventions to improve governance practices within this sector in particular, and to civil society organisations in general, which provide services to various sections of the population of the Republic of South Africa.

Secondly, the study underscores the centrality of the stakeholder participation in good governance towards enhancing the effectiveness of service delivery. Thirdly, the outcome of the study could be used to pave the way for practical and policy interventions towards the improvement of the role of parents in governance of ECD centres.

## **1.7 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS USED IN THE STUDY**

The study has used several terms and concepts and their meanings are critical for understanding aspects that are important in this study. These terms and concepts are listed below and defined for the purpose of establishing common understanding of what they mean in the context of this study.

### **1.7.1 Accountability**

Accountability has been defined as the means by which individuals and organisations report to a recognised authority (or authorities) and are held responsible for their actions (Jönsson 2011:13; Coule 2015:78; Naidoo 2003). For a civil society organisation (CSO), accountability implies the CSO's willingness and ability to answer and take responsibility for its actions, activities and messages (Civicus 2014:8). To ensure that the CSO is responsible for its actions, all the stakeholders need to be involved at every stage of the decision-making process (Jönsson 2011:17). For ECD centres, this means that they should involve all the stakeholders and consider their views and needs when making decisions or taking actions that could affect their stakeholders.

### **1.7.2 Codes of Governance**

The term Codes of Governance refers to “a set of values and principles intended to guide and inform the way organisations are managed and conduct their affairs. It serves as

standards and measures of performance that guide governing boards and those responsible for governance” (Working Group 2010:2).

### **1.7.3 Decision-making**

The dictionary definition of decision-making is “the process of deciding about something important, especially in a group of people or in an organization” (Hornby 2015:386). In political sciences, decision-making is seen as a process towards the fulfilment of the goals of the organisation and can either involve several steps in which political decisions are adjusted over time according to the theory of incremental changes or the choosing of an option that best fulfils the goals of the organisation from amongst a number of available options by following the rational model (Nyhlén & Lidén 2011:3). This means that decision-making can be taken as a step-by-step process or through choosing a particular option from two or more options.

### **1.7.4 Early Childhood Development**

Early childhood development (ECD) is “the composite cognitive, emotional, physical, mental, communication, social, and spiritual development of children that takes place from conception until they enter formal schooling (i.e. Grade R) or reach the age of 8 years, whichever occurs first” (RSA 2015a: 6). These include terms such as “crèches, day care centres, pre-schools, and after care centres, which are provided mainly by the NPOs and private sectors” (RSA 2015a:18).

### **1.7.5 Early Childhood Development Centres**

Early childhood development centre is defined as “any structure, place, or a building that admits and cares for more than six children in any day who are not with families or guardians” (RSA 2015a:6). These include but are not limited to crèches, day care centres, pre-schools, and after care centres.

### **1.7.6 Good Governance**

Good governance involves working towards strengthening the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability

of an organisation (DSD 2001:7). Furthermore, good governance “will promote participation, transparency, accountability and freedom from corruption and nepotism” (Du Plessis et al. 2012:5). It is also about the management of public affairs in a manner that is free from abuse and corruption and with regard to the rule of law, and involves government, civil society organisations, the private sector, as well as the citizens as role players (Du Plessis et al. 2012:2-3).

### **1.7.7 Governance**

The literature has defined governance as “the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken - it includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest” (Streeten in Du Plessis et al. 2012:2).

### **1.7.8 Governance Body (or Board)**

Governance body (or board) refers to “the uppermost governance structure of an NPO - whether it is known as a Board of Directors; Executive Committee; Board of Trustees, or some other term.... (and) is the body which exercises responsibility for high-level decision-making, and reports to the members of the organisation, if any” (Working Group 2010: vi).

### **1.7.9 Nonprofit Organisations**

The nonprofit organisations (or NPOs), which are also known as Non-governmental Organisation (NGO), Community Based Organisation (CBO), Civil Society Organisation (CSO), refer to as “... [the] collection of people who come together for common purpose, and agree to formalise a programme to fulfil this purpose and they conduct activities towards this purpose and should there be excess income after expenditure, this excess is made available to the benefit of the purpose” (RSA 2010: xiii).

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

As discussed in Mapfumo (2013:173), limitations are about the constraints which could affect the validity, credibility or feasibility of the study and over which the researcher has little if any control. Some of the limitation include: limited resources available to the researcher to undertake the extensive investigation, language problems when the research is conducted in a language that is not commonly used by the research participants as well as the small size of the sample which would not allow for the generalisation of the findings to the target population (Mapfumo 2013:183).

For this study, the accuracy of the findings could have been constrained by the time and resources available to the researcher and the resultant narrowness of the issues that could be investigated. Furthermore, the relatively small sample sizes of the participants and the language dynamics as well as the status of the researcher as a government official were the other limitations identified in the study which could have had a bearing on its outcomes. These issues and the remedial actions taken to ameliorate them are discussed below.

### **1.8.1 Constraints of time and resources**

One of the limitations of the study was the constraints of time and resources available to the researcher to undertake an extensive investigation as this would have taken more time and consumed more financial and material resources. This meant that with the tight budgetary constraints and timeframe to complete the study, the researcher could not expand the research to cover other ECD centres that were either unregistered or did not fall within the cut-off timeframe of 31 March 2017. Furthermore, the limitations of time and resources meant that the study could not cover other aspects connected with the topic of good governance and as such the investigation was restricted to exploring only the role of parents in decision-making and accountability within ECD centres.

There was not much that the researcher could do to mitigate against the constraints of time and resources given that the timeframe available to the researcher to conduct the research and finalise the research report was a period of nine months, starting from January 2018 and ending in September 2018. This included the period of two months from June to July during

which the collection of data was undertaken before the subsequent phases of the research could be completed.

The time and resources at the disposal of the researcher as well as the availability of the research participants were considered when deciding on this timeframe. Furthermore, this timeframe was favourable to the researcher within the context of the distance and accessibility of the research site as it involved frequent travelling using public transport.

### **1.8.2 Sample sizes of the study**

The study drew a sample size of 24 ECD centres out of an estimated population size of 116 ECD centres registered as NPOs in Mabopane as of 31 March 2017. For the individuals that participated in the study, 16 were interviewed in the face-to-face interviews while 14 participated in the two focus groups. Furthermore, some targeted participants could not avail themselves to take part in the study and this meant that there were fewer participants than planned. Invariably, this had the potential to affect the results of the study.

There was unfortunately not much that the researcher could do except to try and validate the information by using multiple methods of data collection as well as diverse sources in efforts to mitigate these limitations in the study. The use of three methods of data gathering; namely face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions as well as documentary review; and the use of three sources in the forms of ECD centre managers, parents and archived records of ECD centres; mitigated against the concomitant limitations of the sample sizes.

### **1.8.3 Language constraints**

Language, and lack of transferability of concepts across languages, was the other limitation that had the potential to influence the final research findings. This was so because most of the participants did not use English as a medium of communication and as such the interview questions had to be translated into Setswana before they could be asked to them. Similarly, the responses were later translated from Setswana into English during the transcription of the interviews. This back-and-forth translation was the potential source of the limitation on the correctness of data as some meanings could have been lost during the translations.

To mitigate the effect of this limitation posed by language constraints, the researcher ensured that the follow-up questions and clarity seeking questions were employed. The researcher also sought to cross-check meanings of the concepts that were ambiguous and could not be transferable between English and the language of the participants. Furthermore, the fact that the researcher was fairly conversant with the language of the respondents, made it possible to effectively interact with them in the face-to-face interviews and focus groups.

#### **1.8.4 Status of the researcher**

The fact that the researcher was at the time of conducting the interviews an official in the employment of a government could have posed challenges of accuracy of information given by the participants because of fear and apprehension that the information might be used to prejudice them. To mitigate against this limitation, the researcher made efforts to allay such fears by seeking informed consent from the participants and by assuring them that the information gathered would in no way be used to disadvantage them.

### **1.9 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Delimitations describe the scope of the study and they demarcate the parameters within which the study will be conducted (Mapfumo 2013:183). They are the boundaries or limits which the researcher imposes on the scope of the study in order to make the study more manageable (Magwa & Magwa 2013:165). Some of the delimitations or issues that inform the scope of a study include the extent of the geographic area covered, the sample size decided upon, the composition of the sample, and the timeframe available to conduct the research (Mapfumo 2013:183-184).

For this study, the key delimiting factor was the geographic area chosen for the research site. The study focused only on the geographical area of Mabopane, Gauteng province. This research site was purposely chosen for the study because the researcher was familiar with the geographic area and had contacts that could assist with the preparations for and conduction of the fieldwork.

## **1.10 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT**

The research report is divided into five chapters, with each chapter dealing with and detailing specific aspects of the study as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study: The chapter introduces the study and outlines the background to the research problem and articulates the problem statement, research aims and objectives. It further discusses the value of the study and its delimitations and limitations before defining the key concepts important in this study and concluding with the demarcation of the chapters of the report.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical frameworks: The chapter presents and discusses the review of the literature relevant to the topics addressed in the study and discusses the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology: This chapter documents the research design and methodology employed during the data collection in the fieldwork, narrates the sample design and sampling methods used. It also explains data analysis and explicates the various limitations or shortcomings encountered in the study.

Chapter 4: Presentation, discussions and interpretation of the findings of the study: The chapter presents the study results, discusses these findings and uses the literature and theoretical frameworks adopted for this study to tender the interpretations of these findings.

Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study: This chapter presents the summary of entire study and proffers the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study, the reviewed literature and the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter begins with the detailed review that draws from a wide array of literature on the key concepts informing this study. These include civil society, good governance as well as good governance within civil society, which are addressed from the global (that is generally), regional (that is within the African context) and local (that is South African context) perspectives. It also presents and discusses the issues of accountability within the civil society sector at global, regional, domestic levels as well as cascading down to the organisational level of an Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre, which is the primary focus of this study.

Secondly, this chapter introduces and discusses the theoretical frameworks that are used to interrogate the study and to use as prisms through which this study is underpinned and emerging issues are put into perspective. This study therefore adopts a blend of the social capital and stakeholder theories to shed light on the roles of parents in governance practices within the ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability, which is the focus of this study. It is the contention of the researcher that these theories are useful for the contextualisation of this investigation.

#### **2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**

One of the key concepts underpinning this study is the concept of civil society organisations (CSOs). These types of organisations are regarded as important agencies involved in service provision and poverty alleviation at the margins of society and the ECD centres form part of these organisational forms.

The concept of civil society has, however, generated a myriad of views and definitions. Some of these are broad, nuanced and more theoretical while others are more practical and manifest. Therefore, this section of the chapter seeks to locate the ECD centres within the bigger picture by firstly discussing these views and definitions on the concept of civil society

and then contextualise the concept within the African context, as well as from the South African perspective.

### **2.2.1 Defining Civil Society Organisations**

While acknowledging lack of consensus amongst scholars on the conceptualization of civil society, some commentators have nonetheless pointed out that the concept of civil society denotes “...the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the State...” (Igbuzor 2010:3). Through this expanded definition, civil society is understood to encompass various forms of organisations, which include professional bodies, developmental organisations, trade unions, ethnic organisations, community-based organisations, student associations and other similar formations.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines civil society as “...a third sector existing alongside and interacting with the state and private industry...” (UNDP 2005:1). The UNDP also takes a view that CSOs, of which nongovernmental organisation (NGOs) are an important part, engage in both collaborative and contentious relationships with the state and the business sector (UNDP 2005:1). This implies that civil society, in its different forms and manifestations, can and does indeed play dual roles of supporting the state where necessary, while it can also take the state to task where the latter is deemed to be at fault.

Furthermore, civil society has been defined as “...the wide diversity of not-for-profit, non-state organizations as well as community-based association and groups (distinct from both the governmental and business sectors) ...” (Management Sciences for Health 2009:2). This wide range of organisational forms includes nonprofit organisations (NPOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charities and voluntary organisations which are formed voluntarily by individuals or group of individuals with some vision and mission to pursue or to solicit support of others to pursue some public good, including issues such as human rights, women’s rights, children’s rights, disability rights, as well as addressing issues of poverty and inequality, amongst others.

Carrol (2011:256-266) discusses various perceptions of the notion of civil society and concludes that, while it is generally held by various scholars that civil society occupies the space outside of government, business and family or kinship, it includes all voluntary associations; both formal and informal, and that they operate outside of government to impact on public life or public good by peaceful means without aspiring to seize the power of government. This finds resonance with Feldman's (2011:280) assertion that while these organisations share a not-for-profit status, they are not in any way formally affiliated to any level of government, nor to private sector entities; that is business sector. Feldman (2011:280) goes further to underscore their characteristic of altruism by stating that civil society organisations are focused on addressing social inequalities, social problems, including long- and short-term crises.

Based on these considerations, Robinson and Friedman (2011:39) have posited that "...civil society organisations that are internally democratic and motivated by broader societal concerns (rather than narrow, self-interested, behaviour) can make a positive contribution to the process of democratization by fostering pluralism, promoting democratic values, and enhancing political participation..." (Robinson & Friedman 2011:39).

This also finds expression by Salamon et al. (in RSA 2010:19) who, in defining a civil society organisation, state that: "...[a] civil society organisation is one that promotes the public good, encourages empowerment and participation, or seeks to address the structural roots of poverty and distress...". In this perspective, civil society organisations, in their various formations, are deemed to be essentially developmental in that they seek to effect positive change in the lives of people, particularly the poor.

In what can be regarded as classical, the concept of civil society has as early as the 1990s been associated with the notion of social capital. To this end, Bratton (1994:3) draws upon the theoretical work about civil society and argues amongst other things that civil society procreates communal men and women who are freely associating and interacting in different groups, solely for sociability's sake. Furthermore, within the context of an organisation, social capital can be used as an instrument to influence both the individual and organisational performance (Yu & Junshu 2013:251).

Importantly, the glue that holds these groups together consist of the norms of reciprocity and networks of interpersonal communication and exchanges through which people, as social actors, learn to trust one another. These norms and networks interplay to comprise a supply of social capital which social actors can tap upon in their collective action (Bratton 1994:3). Therefore, it is safe to surmise that social capital serves as an integral building block of civil society organisations.

### **2.2.2 Understanding Civil Society Organisations within an African Context**

In their discussions of civil society in Africa, various scholars (Mushi 2011; Orji 2009; Igbuzor 2010) argue for an Afrocentric understanding of civil society as inclusive of ethnic and other types of political activity which have been ignored or condemned in the literature, and thus to avoid copying too much from Western Europe. They argue further on the need to widen the conception of civil society so that it incorporates different forms of associational lives in Africa, which encompass ethnic, religious, regional, gender and class aspects when attempting to understand contemporary civil society in Africa (Mushi 2011:68; Orji 2009:82).

Mushi (2011:87) further draws the parallel between the origin of NGOs and civil groups in some parts of Africa and concludes that whereas in Eastern and Southern Africa civil society organisations were oriented towards meeting the escalating service provision demands during the late 1970s and 1980s, in others like South Africa, the focus was predominantly political. Many were organised around opposition against apartheid, while others were engaged in the provision of services in communities that were neglected by the apartheid government.

This resurgence of civil society coincided with the end of the cold war during the late 1980s to early 1990s (Igbuzor 2010:2). The author however contends that some scholars have attributed its rise to the nefarious schemes to curtail the state power while also contributing to the de-legitimisation of the post-colonial nationalism and bolstering the neo-liberal theories that propagates for the separation of the State and society (Igbuzor 2010:2).

From the foregoing, it can be surmised that, within the African context, civil society organisations are more concerned with the delivery of services and in addressing the needs of people, empowering them to participate in their development and poverty reduction. They are constituted of social formations that are inclusive of ethnic and other types of associational lives outside of family structures.

### **2.2.3 Civil Society Organisations in South Africa**

The South African civil society is characterised by variety of organisations of different structure and sizes across the socio-political and economic spectra of society. These organisations range from faith and community based organisations, charities (welfare), to traditional organisations like social and sport clubs and a host of other development and social forms of organisations working on the social fabric of society.

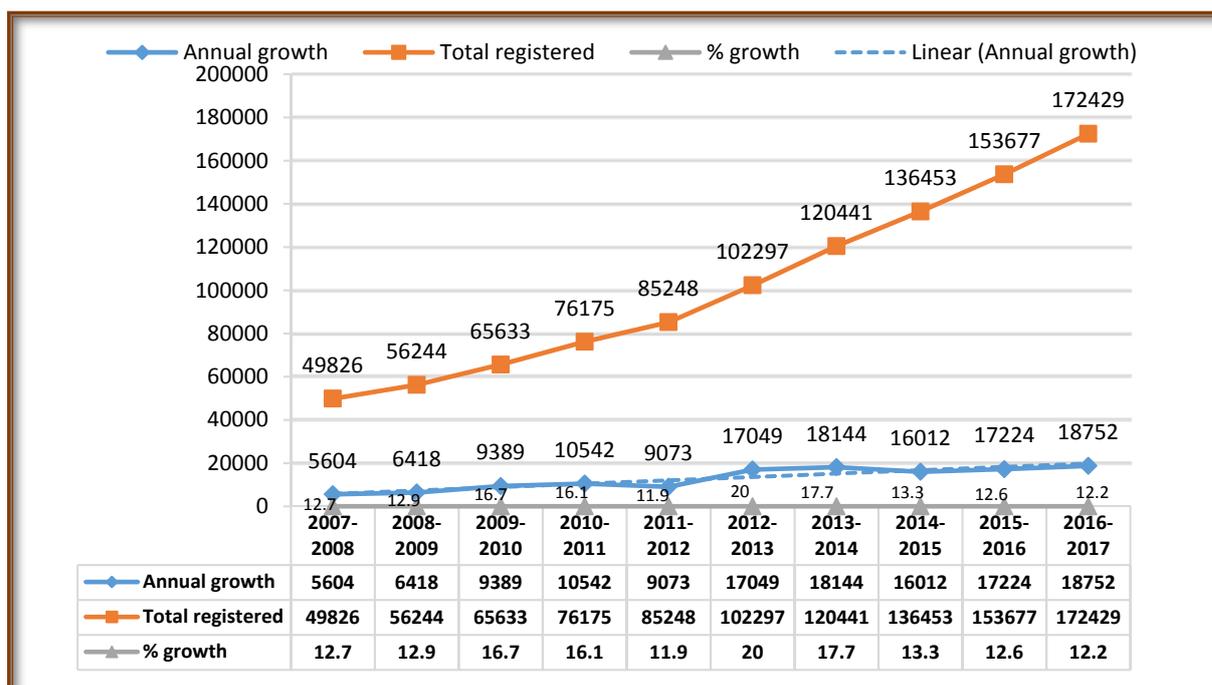
These types of organisations are legally defined as NPOs in terms of the Non-Profit Organisations Act of 1997. According to this piece of legislation, an NPO is defined as “(A) trust, company or other association of persons - (a) established for a public purpose; and (b) the income and property of which ‘me not distributable to its members or office-bearers except as reasonable compensation for services rendered” (Republic of South Africa [RSA] 1997:5).

These NPOs are also known by different names such as CSOs, NGOs, CBOs and faith based organisations (FBO), amongst others. They include formations such as social movements, school-governing bodies, women’s groups, special interest organisations (safeguarding the interests of vulnerable people such as refugees, people with disabilities and others) as well as professional associations and trade unions (Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa 2012:9).

If the trends in the registration of NPOs in terms of the applicable legislation can be used as a proxy measure of general growth of the civil society sector, then it is safe to argue that since the implementation of the NPO Act in 1998 in South Africa, the civil society sector has experienced a sustained growth rates of between 12% and 20% annually over the ten-year period from 2007/08 to 2016/17. For example, over this period, the number of

registered NPOs has grown on an average of approximately 15% yearly from 49 826 by 31 March 2008 (representing 2007/08 financial year ending 31 March 2008) to 172 429 by end of March 2017 (or by end 2016/17 financial year). The chart to follow (Figure 1) represents the trends in the actual numbers registered, amounts of growth as well as rate of growth in percentages over this ten -year period.

**Figure 1: GROWTH OF NPOs REGISTRATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: 2007/08-2016/17**



Information was sourced from the annual state of registration reports for these periods (DSD 2008; DSD 2009; DSD 2010; DSD 2011; DSD 2012; DSD 2013; DSD 2014; DSD 2015; DSD 2016; DSD 2017).

An analysis of the database of registered NPOs held by the Department of Social Development has revealed that of the 172 429 registered by end of March 2017, the largest proportion of 39% (67 504) are NPOs that provide social services (Department of Social Development [DSD] 2017). It is in social services cluster that organisations such as those providing ECD services and other welfare oriented organisations are categorised. On their own, NPOs providing ECD services account for 39 132 of the 172 429 (approximately 23% of all registered NPOs or 58% of all social services NPOs). This represents almost a quarter of all registered NPOs, which is quite a significant number when compared to NPOs involved in other activities.

This is followed by development and housing (22%) and religion (13%), while health (8%), culture and recreation (6%), education and research (6%) come next in order of prevalence. The advocacy NPOs, which are constituted of organisations involved in civic and advocacy activities account for a paltry 2% (3 987 of the 172 429). These organisations incorporate those that are involved in the protection and promotion of the rights and interests of specific groups of vulnerable people, such as people with disabilities, the elderly, children and women.

## **2.2.4 Roles Played by Civil Society Organisations**

Literature on civil society organisations has emphasised on their role in welfare service delivery, advocacy and watchdog roles (Cangas 2004:2; Ibon International 2014:1). Other roles attributed to civil society organisation are those concerned with promoting transparency, accountability and the advancement of public good (Du Plessis et al. 2011:8).

### ***2.2.4.1 Welfare service delivery role of civil society organisations***

In terms of welfare service delivery, civil society organisations do provide the necessary institutional basis for service delivery and thus promote collective action to improve access to basic services, such as health and education at the local level (Cangas 2004:2). In the South African context, the highest proportion of registered NPOs which accounts for an estimated 53% are involved in the provision of welfare services, which encompasses social services (39%), health (8%) and education (6%).

### ***2.2.4.2 Advocacy role of civil society organisations***

In respect of advocacy role, civil society organisations do empower citizens to play a role in political life by enabling them to make demands upon the state (Cangas 2004:2;) and by ensuring accountability through putting pressure on the political power and therefore creating avenues for people's participation and empowerment (Igbuzor 2010:2). Furthermore, civil society can also play the role of being conduits through which citizens can make their needs and wishes known to the state (Dallimore & Durno 2014: 21).

Dallimore and Durno (2014:22) also captured the role that civil society organisations play in mediating between citizens and the state by representing and mobilising particular

sections of society, which can include both confrontational and collaborative mechanisms such as petitions, media campaigns and civil disobedience. This is aptly demonstrated by Mbali (2011:377-398) where the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) used the legal and political spaces created by the new political dispensation in South Africa to lobby and advocate for the rights of people living with HIV for access to anti-retroviral (ARV) medication.

While taking government to task on its policies through campaigns, including civil disobedience campaign (Mbali 2011:392), the TAC also partnered with government to oppose copyright laws preventing the distribution of generic AIDS medication (Mbali 2011:395). In this context, the dual role that civil society can play in its interaction with government, that is work with the government on some issues that are of public good and oppose it on other issues that are detrimental to public good, has been demonstrated.

Therefore, using advocacy, civil society organisations can be an effective means for not only articulating but also negotiating and representing the interests of citizens in dealing with the state, or for that matter the power that be. This suggests that civil society play concurrent roles of advocating for and actively pursuing the realisation of a better life for the poor. As indicated earlier, the registered advocacy NPOs make a small contribution of 2% of the total NPOs registered in South Africa as of end of March 2017.

#### ***2.2.4.3 Watchdog role of civil society organisations***

In playing the role of watchdogs, civil society organisations can promote good governance and social equity by monitoring both state and market performance (Cangas 2004:2) and ensuring that they are accountable and respond to the needs of the citizens (Dallimore & Durno 2014:21). Thus, civil society organisations can and do indeed serve as an agency and a tool to keep tabs on the performance of the state and that of the business sector in as far as they affect the citizens.

The discourse in South Africa is replete with the watchdog role that civil society organisations, such as the Treatment Action Campaign, Section 27, Equal Education, the Save South Africa and others, play through taking government to task on a variety of issues.

For example, the Treatment Action Campaign and others engaged in concerted campaigns in the forms of marches on the streets and court cases to compel government to make medical treatment available to those with HIV/Aids, while the Section 27 and Equal Education approached the courts to compel the government to deliver textbooks to learners and to standardise the norms and standards for a decent quality education (Pityana 2017).

In terms of their numbers, it is apparent that the watchdog NPOs constitute a handful when compared with other types of NPOs. This may be so because it might be disadvantageous and therefore less profitable and riskier for them to be seen to be adopting a confrontational posture against government, particularly given the NPOs' high reliance on government funding as well as on its goodwill for their existence. It was therefore difficult to estimate their contribution to the total NPOs registered in South Africa as of end of March 2017.

#### ***2.2.4.4 Role of civil society organisations in partnering with government in South Africa***

The civil society in the South African context has historically played pivotal roles in the fight against the racial system of apartheid prior to 1994 (Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa 2012:9; National Development Agency [NDA] 2008:15). After 1994, the civil society began to play a role in influencing policy and legislation as well as in engaging in service delivery following the end of apartheid (Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa. 2012:9). Furthermore, Nhlapo (2012:37-38) argues that following the end of apartheid and the beginning of black majority rule in 1994, there was a shift in the role of civil society towards partnering with government in service delivery in the area of implementation of poverty alleviation programmes.

The South African government's National Development Plan (NDP) has also placed civil society in focus by highlighting the latter's role in the promotion of development and community cohesion and stressing that welfare NGOs and CBOs were delivering vital socio-economic programmes in many poor communities (National Planning Commission [NPC] 2011:27). This has also been highlighted in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), wherein the service delivery aspect has been accentuated (RSA 1994:120).

This demonstrates that most of the NPOs are involved in service delivery rather than in advocacy and in building participatory democracy as previously asserted. This may be so given that South Africa is presently grappling with enormous developmental challenges, most of which lend their existence from the country's history of apartheid inequality, poverty and underdevelopment.

The relationships between civil society organisations, the majority of which are CSOs involved in service delivery functions, and the state have been cooperative since the former gets state funding. As reported by Statistics South Africa, a large proportion of income to NPOs is derived from government subsidies, local donations and membership subscriptions, where government funding is the largest source (Statistics South Africa [StatsSA] 2017:15). For example, in 2014 the contribution of government was 44.3% of the total revenue of the NPOs, with the highest proportion (46.1%) of this government funding going to social services NPOs (StatsSA 2017:16 & 17). This reliance on government funding by the NPOs could have an undesired potential to erode the independence of the NPO sector.

At least three key inferences can be surmised from the foregoing pertaining to the interplays between civil society, the citizens and the government. Firstly, that civil society can and does play an important role in advocating for the poor and representing those that do not have a voice. Secondly, that the voice of the poor can find expression in the extent to which they are empowered to participate in political discourse which has the potential to impact on pro-poor policy in the fight against poverty. Thirdly, that the fight against poverty and the quest for development require an active citizenry that is mobilised by civil society organisations, as well as a state that is responsive to the needs of its citizens.

### **2.2.5 Challenges Faced by Civil Society Organisations**

While the focus of this study is not on the topic of civil society as a whole or on its challenges, nonetheless a cursory overview of this aspect will be dealt with in an effort to provide contextual basis for the current study. This study focuses on the role of parents in governance and accountability within ECD centres, which form one of the components of the civil society organisations.

A select number of countries at the global and regional levels will be assessed in relation to challenges faced by their CSOs. Further discussions on the challenges faced by the CSOs will focus locally within South Africa. These challenges exist within the context of the prevailing political, social and economic environments in which CSOs operate and include struggles for funding, the dynamic and challenging social, political and economic spaces within which CSOs operate, as well as internal governance and accountability issues.

#### ***2.2.5.1 Challenges faced by civil society organisations globally***

According to Civicus (2016: 53), since they commenced with compiling annual reports on the state of civil society in 2012, they have established that the three fundamental human rights underpinning the work of the civil society; namely the right to association, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of expression, have been consistently under attack in many countries at global level and that civil society space had been severely impacted upon. The culprits have been cited as the state actors and political, private sector, criminal and extremist interests (Civicus 2016:229).

It is noted further that, while the attacks and restrictions have been concentrated in some regions, the trend has been worldwide and that as recent as 2015, these challenges were being experienced in all global regions (Civicus 2016:53). However, these issues were receiving attention within the global human rights and international development community and that on their part, CSOs at global level were engaging in building international solidarity, defending their rights and championing their right to exist and act (Civicus 2016:53).

For example, Dhakal (2007:61) showed that, while NGOs were growing in number and able to create their institutional space in Nepal, they were being confronted with the challenges of lack of effective coordination, weak financial base, lack of professionalism as well as lack of transparency and public accountability. Similarly, CSOs in the Central Asian region, made up of the former members of the USSR, have experienced growth but have also faced challenges including internal governance weaknesses, the difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships with government and their over-dependence on external donors (Giffen, Earle & Buxton 2005:135).

In some Central and Eastern Europe, it has been highlighted that the challenges faced by CSOs include government's corralling and restrictions placed on CSOs as well as the persecution of independent CSOs in Hungary (Kuti 2017:58). However, in Slovakia and Croatia the dominant challenges are the issue of funding to civil society organisations (Strečanský 2017:104; Bežovan, Matančević & Baturina 2017:115).

Overall, the challenges faced by CSOs in various countries of the Central and Eastern Europe relate to issues of the space they occupy in the context of the rise in right-wing parties and their relationships with their respective governments as well as lack of public funding (Meyer, Moder, Neumayr, Traxler & Vandor 2017 38). This may as well be because of the reprioritisation of international funding from civil society sector to the newly established governments in the region, ostensibly following the collapse of the Soviet Union during the late 1980s given that most of these countries were once part of the Soviet Union. This aspect of drying up of foreign funding bears similarities across the globe, including in South Africa wherein the new political dispensation post-1994 created identical challenges in the civil society space.

A glimpse in the Islamic world revealed that, in the 57 countries affiliated to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the environment was not enabling for the civil society to emerge (Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries [SESRIC] (2014:5). In effect, it was found that in all aspects considered for assessment of an enabling environment for civil society to engage, all these OIC member countries, on average, lagged the world as well as the developing countries (SESRIC 2014:14).

This suggests that, for these countries, there is lack of people's participation in civil society activities and organisations. Amid this prevailing context, it is expected that the CSOs in these countries would themselves suffer concomitant challenges of poor governance, lack of funds and general lack of popular support.

### ***2.2.5.2 Challenges faced by civil society in Africa***

Civil society in Africa have not been spared of the challenges that other civil society organisations have and continue to experience in other parts of the world. The issues of funding, restriction of the activities and harassment have been highlighted as the main concerns for CSOs in Africa (Gumede 2017).

Furthermore, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) highlighted the issues of declining funding to civil society in Sub-Saharan Africa as one of the endemic challenges faced by the civil society in this part of the continent (USAID 2016:xiv). The challenges of good governance was also recorded for some of the CSOs in Tanzania (USAID 2016:xvi), Botswana (USAID 2016:19&23), and Uganda (USAID 2016:248). The strenuous relationship with government was also highlighted as another area of challenge that the CSOs in the region, particularly those that were involved in human rights and democracy campaigns, while the social service oriented CSOs had generally maintained cordial relationships with their governments (USAID 2016:xvii).

### ***2.2.5.3 Challenges faced by civil society in the South African context***

The new role that civil society organisations play in the contemporary era in South Africa has been accompanied by a myriad of challenges and demands, which included poor management and leadership capacities as well as the drying up of international funding that used to flow to them (Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa 2012:11; Weideman 2015:3; Hamber, Mofokeng & Simpson 1997; NDA 2008:16). The reasons for this dearth has been occasioned by the resultant exodus of skilled and experienced cadres who joined the new government lead by the ANC as well as the channeling of international funding via the new government (Charities Aid Foundation Southern Africa. 2012:11; Hamber et al. 1997). This resulted into many civil society organisations downsizing or closing down (Weideman 2015:3).

Another challenge that the civil society organisations in South Africa faced could better be characterised as a “crisis of identity” in relation to how they were supposed to relate to the “new government”. This was so because, during the apartheid era, the question was pretty much simple in that the apartheid government was an enemy and its policies needed to be

fiercely fought against. However, the post-1994 era brought a dilemma on the part of civil society regarding the nature of its relationship with the state, which they have contributed into setting up.

Furthermore, following the democratic breakthrough in 1994, the civil society organisations had had to renegotiate their relationships with the state (NDA 2008:3). Thus, the crisis faced by the CSOs was to concurrently play the dual role of a supportive partner on the one hand as well as an ardent critic on the other.

This dual role of both partner and critical evaluator thrust on the CSOs has not been without challenges on the part of these CSOs. Primarily, the challenges are accentuated by the reality that most of the civil society, at least those that are involved in service delivery activities on behalf of government, depend heavily on the government for their funding (NDA 2008:18). However, this relationship between government and CSOs has not been a balanced one based on equal partnership. The risk implication is that the CSOs may lose their independent voices because of this skewed relationship with government.

## **2.3 OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE**

While there is widespread literature on the role of civil society organisations in promoting governance in society through influencing the state, little has however been written about their role in practicing good governance. In effect, it has been noted that, while there is literature on the role of NGOs (or CSOs) in promoting democracy, there is a gap in research on their internal democracy in respect of grassroots participation and accountability and that this area needs further research (Jönsson 2011:50). Governance, and by extension good governance, is regarded as a key determinant for growth, development and poverty reduction.

### **2.3.1 Defining Governance**

The concept of governance has been defined as the management of society by the people, as the exercise of authority or control to manage a country's affairs and resources (Dayanandan 2013:1). Additionally, governance is conceptualised in terms of how other actors, such as

civil society organisations, may play a role in taking decisions on matters of public concern (Graham, Amos & Plumptre 2003:2).

Accordingly, the concept of governance may be usefully applied in different contexts, namely in the global, national, institutional and community contexts (Graham et al. 2003:1). Regardless of the level at which governance is considered, it is about the process whereby societies or organisations make decisions, establish whom they involve in this process and how they ensure accountability (Graham et al. 2003:1).

Consequently, at the global governance or governance at global space, the issues considered exist outside the purview of individual governments, while governance in ‘national space’ - that is within a country - is understood as the exclusive preserve of a government at the national, provincial or local levels (Graham et al. 2003:1). This includes institutions of global governance such as the United Nations and similar institutions that are responsible for ensuring governance at global level.

In the similar vein, regarding the concerns at community governance level, or ‘governance in community space’ the focus is on activities at a local community level where there is no formal or legal form of structure that is constituted to discharge this responsibility (Graham et al. 2003:2). However, at organisational level, or governance at ‘organisation space’ which is the focus of this study, the spotlight is on organisational activities for which the boards or governance bodies are accountable (Graham et al. 2003:2).

### **2.3.2 Global Perspectives on Good Governance within Civil Society Organisations**

Related to the notion of governance is the concept of good governance. Good governance within CSOs has been defined as “...the exercise of power and authority, based on the established values of the organization, to achieve the mission and make proper use of resources...” (Management Sciences for Health 2009:2). Of particular significance is the notion that good governance within CSOs should encompass the provision of direction and oversight so as to enable the organisation to know where it is going through monitoring its progress, safeguarding the interest of its beneficiaries while also ensuring that it is accountable to its beneficiaries, donor and the society at large in a process that is transparent,

fair and appropriate to the needs of its beneficiaries (Management Sciences for Health 2009:2). These elements of good governance within CSOs are consistent with the five principles of good governance, namely legitimacy and voice, direction, performance, accountability and fairness, which have been articulated in Graham et al. (2003:1).

Carroll (2011:264) asserts that a strong civil society is required to ensure democratisation, support institutions of democracy and enhance state's capacities for policy development and implementation. For Robinson and Friedman (2011:39), in order for civil society organisations to contribute positively to the process of democratisation, they would be required to be internally democratic and be driven by broader societal concerns. This, they could do by fostering pluralism, promoting democratic values, and enhancing political participation (Robinson & Friedman 2011:39).

While these are positive attributes of civil society, Carroll (2011:264) also alludes to the negative roles that CSOs can play in supporting and perpetuating inequalities and reinforcing political domination, such as during the past era in South Africa where some sections of civil society supported apartheid and resisted democratisation. This illustrates that CSOs may be used for the good of the public, or as the latter has shown, they can also be used to advance policies that are detrimental to the interest of the public.

### **2.3.3 African Perspectives on Good Governance within Civil Society Organisations**

In the context of Africa, Mushi (2011:77) mentions that in both the Eastern and Southern Africa, NGOs have played a pivotal role in effecting changes in countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Zambia and that most of their former leadership were now occupying the political offices in those countries. Therefore, it does appear that CSOs can and do indeed act as the cradle of leadership development or growth for various governments, ostensibly because they have learned through the trials and tribulations of leading in civil society space.

Regarding the role of CSOs in Africa towards consolidating democracy and good governance, Orji (2009:92) indicates that this can be analysed on the basis of four critical areas, namely (i) promotion of social justice, rights and the rule of law; (ii) enhancing state

performance; (iii) promotion of popular participation in public policy making; and (iv) the promotion of transparency in governance. Within the area of social justice, rights and rule of law, the African CSOs have performed in the defence and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups as well as in the advocacy work towards the preservation of the rule of law and social justice (Orji 2009:92).

Around enhancement of the performance of the state, African CSOs have worked in collaboration and partnership with the state in the aspects of delivery of public services, such as in health, education and other social services (Orji 2009:93). These collaborations and partnerships, which draw from the pool of social capital existing within local communities, help in promoting the legitimacy of the state as well as in improving its performance (Orji 2009:93).

With regards to the promotion of popular participation in public policy making, CSOs have played a prominent role in mobilizing the people, particularly the socially disadvantaged groups, to participate fully in politics and public affairs and in enabling them to articulate their demands at different levels (Orji 2009:94). Lastly, the CSOs have contributed towards good governance through lobbying for improved transparency in government and in increasing accessibility of policy related information, which contribute to development and poverty reduction (Orji 2009:94).

As noted by Igbuzor (2010:2), with the increase in influence of CSOs, there was now growing public scrutiny and debate about their legitimacy and accountability; wherein issues of efficiency, organisational reliability and legitimacy of CSOs were emerging. As an illustration of this, Igbuzor (2010:2) notes further that the issues of good governance and accountability in CSOs have occupied a centre stage in Nigeria, amidst high levels of unemployment and corruption. It is remarkable how the parallel can be drawn with South Africa where these issues are very relevant and where issues of good governance have gained prominence.

To further underscore the importance of CSOs, Igbuzor (2010:3) has argued that owing to a variety of factors, greater expectations were being placed on civil society organisations

regarding the promotion of participation, empowerment, transparency, accountability and good governance. This could be because the capacity of the State within African countries to maintain law and order and to meet the welfare needs of its citizen has deteriorated.

Good governance has therefore emerged as an important feature in ensuring credibility of the sector in the eyes of governments, donor agencies, development theorists and the civil society sector itself (Cangas 2004:2). In relation to CSOs, therefore good governance entails elements including ethics, performance and trust; representation and voice; in-house democracy; and structured accountability mechanisms (Cangas 2004:2). Additionally, issues of participation, accountability, transparency, predictability and rule of law are quintessential elements of good governance within organisations (Dayanandan 2013:10; Du Plessis et al. 2011:3).

All these suggest that good governance can be construed to mean a form of governance where the ideals of participation by all stakeholders, adherence to the rule of law, justice, openness and sensitivities to the needs of the people are present and work together to underscore that form of governance. For civil society organisations, and in particular for the ECD centres which are the focus of this study, effective participation of members and stakeholders such as parents in their organisations ensures watchfulness, which is essential to creating a sense of responsibility among the board members.

#### **2.3.4 South African Perspectives on Good Governance within Civil Society Organisations**

In South Africa, various efforts towards developing good governance have been separately made by government, business and civil society organisations. For example, the South African government enacted the NPO Act in 1997, whose aim was to create an enabling environment that would allow NPOs and other civil society organisations to maintain adequate standards of governance, transparency and public accountability, while at the same time enjoying a wide degree of freedom and autonomy (DSD 2010:40).

Other efforts have been the development of the Codes of Good Practice prepared and issued by the Department of Social Development in 2001 (DSD 2001), the Independent Codes of

Governance developed in 2010 by a conglomeration of NPOs (Working Group 2010:2), as well as the King Code of Governance Principles (or King III codes) developed in 2009 by the Institute of Directors of Southern Africa. (IoDSA 2009). Subsequently, the King IV report was developed in 2016 with the intention to make corporate governance applicable to different forms and sizes of organisation and companies, including the NPOs (IoDSA 2016:6).

The King IV report sets out 17 principles for good governance of which 16 are applicable to all forms of organisations (IoDSA 2016:7). Expressly for NPOs, the King IV outlines the 16 core principles that it claims lead to good governance which contributes towards the success of an NPO since they improve the functionalities of their leadership structures and guide the governing bodies towards meeting the NPO's strategic objectives (IoDSA 2016:87). These principles are focused on the achievements of governance outcomes that incorporate issues of ethical culture, good performance, effective control and legitimacy (IoDSA 2016:41).

While premised on building the capacity of civil society organisations for good governance, all these efforts have been unconnected and have created uncertainty and anxiety within the civil society. For example, one of the concerns raised was that the implementation of King III carried a threat to the sustainability of the majority of NPOs, ostensibly because it was largely inaccessible to NPOs and that it did not adequately reflect the values and ethos of the NPO sector (Working Group 2010:2). Similarly, Chelliah, Boersma and Klettner (2016:7) have indicated that the corporate governance codes are not appropriate for the NPOs owing to the intricacy of the NPOs and their distinct governance challenges. Therefore, what is good for goose may not necessarily be good for the geese.

#### **2.4 GOOD GOVERNANCE WITHIN THE ECD SECTOR**

In their discussions of the role of governance within ECD, Vitiello and Kools (2010.1) note that while several countries have developed policy frameworks, such as an ECD policy, strategy, or action plan that address facets of ECD, the governance of ECD has remained one of the weaknesses. The authors note further that as the ECD sector continues to develop, governance, which involves responsibility for decision-making within government,

becomes increasingly important and therefore policymakers must ensure that there is a coherent ECD policy for all levels and actors (Vitiello & Kools 2010.1).

Accordingly, good governance within the ECD sector has been deemed as central for facilitating the collaborations amongst actors and can further ensure that services provided are of quality standards, are affordable, meet local demand, promote cost-effectiveness and achieve equity goals (Vitiello & Kools 2010.1). Several key characteristics of good governance have been identified and include the involvement of stakeholders to ensure that ECD policy development and implementation meet the diverse needs of children, amongst others (Vitiello & Kools 2010.1).

Notwithstanding these noble approaches to enhancing governance capacity of the state towards ECD sector, however, there is no reference to the internal systems within ECD centres for the enhancement of their governance capacities. This omission is glaringly ominous for the attainment of a coherent policy on ECD because the absence of a directive on developing governance capability within the ECD sector does not augur well for the sustainability of the sector.

It is also worth saying that the South African government has developed an ECD Policy which is premised on addressing, amongst others, the challenges of poor governance (RSA 2015a:48). However, the draft policy is silent on outlining guidelines to address poor governance within the ECD sector itself.

## **2.5 ROLES OF PARENTS IN THE GOVERNANCE OF ECD CENTRES**

Regarding the role played by parents in the governance of ECD centres, an audit study conducted by the Department of Social Development in 2014 found that, while a significant majority of the audited ECD centres had a management committee (or governing bodies), it could not establish if the committees served their intended functions in the centres (DSD 2014:41). Furthermore, the audit found that, whereas parents were represented in the majority of these ECD management committees, few of them occupied any position of significance; such as that of a chairperson, secretary or treasurer within these committees (DSD 2014:41).

This audit study recommended that the Department of Social Development should develop standardised templates and guidelines through which it would ensure the proper constitution and functioning of management committees, which should incorporate the detailed roles and responsibilities of committee members (DSD 2014:47). This could entail the development of models to address the flaws within the ECD centres in relation to parents' role in governance decision-making and accountability and to promote the role of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision making and accountability.

## **2.6 ISSUES OF ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**

The issues of accountability within civil society organisations has in recent years gained prominence. In effect, as indicated by Naidoo (2003), an increasing interest has been shown regarding accountability within the CSOs and other formations in civil society in relation to their increasing role of contributing to and in shaping public life within global, regional, domestic and local community arenas. Furthermore, there is also growing demand bearing on CSOs from various sections of society, including within the civil society sector itself, to improve on accountability in respect of the management of public funds, efficiency and responsiveness to their beneficiaries (Civicus 2014:8).

### **2.6.1 Defining Accountability within Civil Society Organisations**

In defining this concept of accountability, it has been asserted that "... (A)ccountability means the CSO's willingness and its ability to answer and take responsibility for its actions, activities and messages..." (Civicus 2014:8). The importance of accountability as a validation of the CSO's activities and communications to its stakeholders are underscored (Civicus 2014:8).

In tandem with this, Cangas (2004:3) instructively articulates the issues of transparency in decision making, honesty in accounting as well an existence of review processes as important for accountability. While these are inward-looking, accountability also extends externally to other people (or organisations) that may be affected by the organisation's actions, which should also have the means and avenues to express their concerns and to

expect redress. This would ensure public trust and the legitimacy of the organisation in the public's eyes.

In addressing the issues of accountability within civil society organisations, Kaldor (2003:5) distinguishes between what she terms moral and procedural accountability and indicates that while the former is concerned with accountability towards the people for whom the organisation was established to help, the latter is inward-looking and involves aspects of internal management. For Kaldor (2003:5) these aspects of accountability are more applicable to NGOs, which are a more formalised subset of civil society.

### **2.6.2 Accountability Dimensions and Their Applicability to ECD Centres**

Taking forward the discussions on the question of accountability, Anheier (2005: 237) introduces three dimensions in which accountability can be analysed, namely: explanatory accountability, responsive accountability as well as accountability with sanctions. The first two, that is explanatory and responsive accountability dimensions, are not legally binding, while in respect of accountability with sanctions, there is legal obligation to account and an expectation for sanctioning noncompliance (Anheier 2005:238).

In applying these dimensions of accountability to the ECD centres, which is the focus of this study, explanatory accountability would revolve around the individual centre's focusing on answering to parents as its indirect beneficiaries while also ensuring that children's needs are catered for. For responsive accountability, the onus would be on the individual ECD centre to take into consideration the needs of the public at large in their programmatic activities and ensure that they deliver quality services.

On the issue of accountability with sanction, the ECD centre is obligated to account to the relevant authorities and to comply with the requisite government's regulatory framework where this exists. Towards this end, the ECD centres would be required to comply to the NPO Act given their registration status as well as to any other applicable government legislation.

To further expand on the issue of accountability, Helao (2015:174) proposes political, financial and administrative accountability dimensions through which this issue can be considered. For this research, all these dimensions of accountability, namely: political, financial and administrative accountability, appear to be patently relevant.

In the case of political accountability dimensions, this entails the employment of systems of checks and balances to ensure that those that hold position of public trust are held to account and to be rewarded or sanctioned accordingly (Helao 2015:174). For Kaldor (2003:6), this political accountability, or moral (or an external or strategic) accountability, is focused towards the beneficiaries and relates to the extent to which the organisation remains true to its stated mission or that which it seeks to achieve.

For the ECD centres, therefore, the moral or political accountability focuses on the parents who are the primary stakeholders and indirect beneficiaries of ECD services. This emanates from the fact that parents would have children that are the direct and primary beneficiaries of these ECD services.

In the case of financial accountability, the individuals handling resources or holding a position of trust is obligated to report on both the intended and actual utilisation of resources (Helao 2015:174). Furthermore, there is a strong call for increased financial transparency and an emphasis on value for money as well as responsible use of public money on the part of civil society organisations (Civicus 2014:8).

Given that there are high incidents of mismanagement of funds reported amongst organisations, financial accountability has become a crucial component of accountability and good governance (NDA 2008:35). While it is often taken as a primary consideration by funders and donors, financial accountability ought not to take precedence over other aspects of accountability, since many civil society organisations, and in particular a multitude of ECD centres, do not receive any form of funding. For this reason, accountability should transcend beyond financial dimension, but must take cognisance of other dimensions of accountability.

Finally, regarding administrative accountability, the focus is placed on the system of internal control, codes of ethics and reviews of administrative decisions making (Helao 2015:173). For Kaldor (2003:6), this relates to procedural accountability which is also referred to as internal or management accountability.

To realise the administrative dimension of accountability, it would be required that the ECD centre governing board ensures that communication in terms of making staff aware of the activities and programmes the centre is engaged in or planning is undertaken regularly. The ECD centre should create avenues for staff members' meaningful involvement founded on participatory consultation and ensure that there is open interaction among all levels of staff.

### **2.6.3 Accountability Framework for Civil Society Organisations**

An accountability framework for civil society organisations can be distinguishable as manifesting in four different levels, each of which is based on different stakeholders to whom accountability is to be directed (Civicus 2014:8). These are upward, downward, outward and inward, which are directed at donors and regulators; beneficiaries and constituencies; other civil society organisations, and to their organisation's mission, values/ethics, board members and staff, respectively (Civicus 2014:8; Ibon International 2014:2; Cangas 2004:3; Brown & Jagadananda 2007:9).

#### ***2.6.3.1 Upward accountability and its applicability to ECD centres***

Upward accountability is directed at the regulators or government and donors (or resource providers (Civicus 2014:8; Cangas 2004:3). These are the stakeholders that have made it possible for the organisation to exist legally and to get resources to enable it to operate and to deliver on its mission. They include on the one hand, the government or its agencies which provide the regulatory frameworks for the organisation's formulation, registration and thus accord a legal status to the organisation. On the other hand, are the funders or sponsors that provide financial and other forms of material support to the organisation, without which the organisation would find it difficult to achieve its mission and to engage in related activities towards realising its mission.

For the ECD centres, this upward accountability focuses on their compliance with the government's legislation which has facilitated their establishment or registration to legalise them. The applicable legislation in this regard, and which is the focus of this study, is the NPO Act, which provides a compliance framework for registered NPOs. It also concerns itself with the ECD centre having to account to its funders or its financial and material supporters where applicable.

### ***2.6.3.2 Downward accountability and its applicability to ECD centres***

The focus of downward accountability is to the organisation's beneficiaries (or constituency, clients, users, and communities) (Civicus 2014:8; Sawandi & Thomson 2014:431; Cangas 2004:4; Brown & Jagadananda 2007:9). These are the stakeholders for whom the organisation has been primarily created and those intended to benefit directly or indirectly within the community.

Furthermore, in their attempt to theorise on downward accountability Sawandi and Thomson (2014:431) postulated that in order for an organisation to achieve downward accountability, it should embrace accountability processes and practices that allow relevant stakeholders to be actively involved in the accountability activities and practices of the organisation instead of being passive and expecting these to be organised for them. To this end, an organisation should avail avenues that would enable engagement, debate and authentic dialogue with the relevant stakeholders, which are informed by their needs and not based on the powers they may hold in relation to the organisation (Sawandi & Thomson 2014:431). This implies that downward accountability to the stakeholders should be linked to the organisation's concern for others and not how the organisation regards them or their influence on the organisation.

### ***2.6.3.3 Outward accountability and its applicability to ECD centres***

Outward or horizontal accountability on CSOs is focused towards partner or fellow civil society organisations and networks (Cangas 2010:3) and to its allies and peers with whom they cooperate in programs and projects (Brown & Jagadananda 2007:9). This is critical because it safeguards the integrity of the sector as a whole and therefore anything untoward that is committed by one CSO would invariably affect the other CSO.

For ECD centres, this aspect of accountability is directed at other ECD centres and those other organisations providing ECD services. Because communities look up to these ECD centres to provide quality services to their children and expect high standards of integrity and consequently anything short of that could have adverse effects on how the communities view not only the implicated ECD centre but may extend generally to other ECD centres. It is therefore important that the dogma of “one rotten apple spoiling the barrel” is avoided.

#### ***2.6.3.4 Inward accountability and its applicability to ECD centres***

Inward or internal accountability of CSOs relates to being accountable internally to those stakeholders that exist and operate within the organisation itself, including its staff, board members and volunteers who are involved within the organisation (Civicus 2014:8; Cangas 2004:3, Brown & Jagadananda 2007:9). These are the various groups of people that have invested their talents and time in the organisation and its activities.

It is also important that the governing body of individual ECD centre is accountable to the staff members as well as to individual board members. This should involve participatory consultation and active involvement in decision making as well as transparent and effective communication with all internal stakeholders that invariably incorporate parents.

## **2.7 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS UNDERPINNING THIS STUDY**

While governance has been considered as a central concern to NPOs, the theories that can shed light on NPO governance are underdeveloped compared to those in relation to corporate governance and there is a gap in the knowledge of how governance practices can achieve broadened accountability to various and varied stakeholder groups (Coule 2015:76). Some of these governance theories, which include agency and stewardship theory, focus on principal-agent relationships which explain how actors involved behave within a hierarchical order (Coule 2015:75). These theories tend to focus more on the power relations between various actors within the governance space (Coule 2015:76).

This study, instead, draws from the social capital and stakeholder theoretical frameworks to contextualise the investigation of the role of parents in governance practices within the ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability, which is the focus of this study.

The intention to use this eclectic approach, of utilising the social capital and stakeholder theories, is to pursue a nuanced understanding of the issues of participation in and roles played by parents as stakeholders in the governance of the ECD centres, which are central to this study.

### **2.7.1 Social Capital Theory and its relevance to this study**

While acknowledging lack of uniform understanding and precise definition of the concept of Social Capital, Yu and Junshu (2013:251) have nonetheless argued that social capital; which is the resource embedded in the social relationship; can be explored and used for some specific aims, including for the facilitation of organisational performance.

#### ***2.7.1.1 Defining Social Capital***

The modern conceptualisation of social capital derives from the works of Pieere Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam, who theorised and popularised this concept (Claridge 2004:7; Aluko 2015:36). Accordingly, these scholars viewed the concept complementarily from structural and functionality perspectives. For example, the definition of Putnam et al (in Durlauf & Fafchamps 2004:4) characterises social capital by noting that: “Social capital refers to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society...” (Durlauf & Fafchamps 2004:4).

Furthermore, social capital has also been defined as “...a concept that refers to the ways that people create social networks and social relationships, and to the trust and norms of engagement that ease these interactions” (Franklin 2004:2). Other definitions consider social capital as “the goodwill available to individuals or groups...” (Claridge 2004a:9) and as “...the social network of relationships, possessed by an individual or group” (Sanchez-Famoso 2015:68). Thus, issues of belongingness, trust, norms, rules of engagement and social relationships and networks fostered amongst people within a group or organisational form are essential components of social capital.

In terms of its types and characteristics, Claridge (2004a:11) distinguishes between structural and cognitive social capital, as well as between bonding and bridging social capital. In the case of the latter, bonding exists horizontally and is associated with interaction

between and among equals within a community, whereas bridging is vertical and occurs between communities (Claridge 2004a:11). Regarding the structural and cognitive distinction of social capital, the former enables "... mutually beneficial collective action through established roles and social networks supplemented by rules, procedures and precedents" (Claridge 2004a:11). As for the cognitive social capital, which incorporates the notions of shared norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs, it influences individuals towards collective action that is mutually beneficial (Claridge 2004a:11).

Given the focus of this study on individuals in the form of parents who operate within an organisational context of an ECD centre, attention will be on only the structural and cognitive forms of social capital. This follows that bonding and bridging types of social capital will not be used as they consider communities as the units of analysis, which is not the focus of this study.

For this study, and gleaned from the preceding discussions, the working definition of social capital entails the working relationship between parents associated with the ECD centres, which is underscored by collective action that is guided by the roles they play, as well as the rules and procedures under which they operate in the ECD centres. This will also include how they (parents) work together towards shared goals for better outcomes for themselves and their children, as well as their willingness to cooperate for the benefit of good governance in the ECD centre in which they participate. The latter will incorporate the notions of shared norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs towards governance within these ECD centres.

#### ***2.7.1.2 Critical Perspective of Social Capital Theory***

In elucidating the concept of social capital, Lin (1999:28-29) juxtaposes it against capital in economic terms and argues that the former is akin to investing in social relations with an expectation to gain profit or returns. Through this, the individual is said to be involved in the interactions and networks with the intention to profit or derive benefits out of such interactions and networks (Lin 1999:29).

Additionally, the explanations advanced for why social capital can generate the benefits are because, firstly it eases the flow of information, secondly it exerts influence on decision making, thirdly it confers social credentials to the individual (Lin 1999:29) and it also serves as a source of solidarity (Adler & Kwon 2002:29). Furthermore, while these returns or benefits could be gained for the group or the individuals, they are nonetheless generated through the interactions of the individuals who enable their maintenance and reproduction (Lin 1999:30).

There have however been some controversies associated with the concept of social capital, one of which is about whether it is for collective (or public) good or individual good (Lin 1999:31). Nonetheless, Claridge (2004a:10) asserted that the concept can manifest at the level of individual (micro level), the informal and formal social groups and organisations (meso level), the community and even at the national level (macro level). This implies that social capital can transcend the individual and can be used by groups as collectives or by individuals within a group or organisational situation or even at a nationhood level.

The other issue of contestation with the concept of social capital is that it has been considered as the preserve of the dominant class, who utilise it to ensure that they can maintain and reproduce group solidarity as well as to preserve their dominant status (Lin 1999:32). Furthermore, social capital can also foster negative behaviours that can be detrimental, such as serving as an impediment to inclusion and social mobility, as well as having divisive effects on communities (Claridge 2004a:12).

Similarly, Haynes (2009:4-15) identifies at least eight criticisms levelled against social capital which cover inherent issues related to its definition as well as its measurability and operationalisation, amongst others. Noteworthy, social capital has been deemed neither a capital, social nor a theory (Haynes 2009:4-7). Nonetheless, Haynes (2009:18) concluded that through the development of a research paradigm, social capital could still offer a progressive social perspective to the explanations otherwise located within economic discourse.

On the positive side, the strength of social capital resides in its combination of “macro-sociological historical structures with micro-level causal mechanisms” as well as in its ability to blend together concepts such as social support, integration and social cohesion (Claridge 2004b). Furthermore, because it forms the basis for, and a product of, cooperation across sector and power differences, social capital is considered important for the wellbeing of society (Claridge 2004b).

### ***2.7.1.3 Relevance of Social Capital Theory to this study***

Since social capital is essentially about how people interact with each other (Claridge 2004a:9), one can argue that, in the case of governing bodies within ECD centres, social capital theory gives insights into the dynamics of building trust among members of the governing body which include parents, as the key stakeholders. These groups represent diverse interests, but they are expected to promote the organisational activities in the community.

Through the social capital theoretical lens, the study seeks to explore the extent to which the interactions of trust could build ties between people; and in this case parents participating in ECD governance; and enhance social capital for the benefit of the ECD centres. Towards this end, the elements that will be considered as benefits will include the facilitation of information, exertion of influence in decision making as well as solidarity and collective action amongst the parents, which are guided by the roles they play as well as the rules and procedures under which they operate within the ECD centres in relation to good governance and accountability issues.

### **2.7.2 Stakeholder theory and its relevance to this study**

The origin of the stakeholder theory could be traced to the work of Freeman (1984) who has been widely credited as the founder of this theory, although the concept was developed earlier in the 1960s (Barret 2001:38; Fontaine, Haarman & Schmid 2006:7). This concept was initially applied in relation to the corporations (or companies) but has also been used in the context of the NPOs in recent years (Barret 2001:36).

### ***2.7.2.1 Defining Stakeholders***

According to Clarkson (in Barrett 2001:38), stakeholders refers to either persons or groups of persons (natural and legal persons) who, by virtue of their transactions, have or claim ownership or rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities during anytime and that such a claim, ownership, right or interest could be legal or moral as well as individual or collective. The definition puts a focus on the corporations or companies, however, Barret (2001:48) has demonstrated that it was equally applicable to the non-profit organisations (NPOs) context.

Furthermore, Fontaine et al. (2006:3) reflect on the traditional definition of the concept of stakeholder and assert that it is “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives”. The other related definitions reflect on the importance of the stakeholders in an organisation by professing that these groups’ support is essential for the life, survival and success of the organisation (Fontain et al. 2006:6). Collectively, these definitions are organisation oriented and posit an all-encompassing notion of the concept of stakeholders which can be applied in all organisational forms, including an ECD centre; which is the focus of this study.

### ***2.7.2.2 Critical Perspective of Stakeholder Theory***

Since the stakeholder theory has developed and been applied in the context of for-profit organisations, or companies, to deal with issues of accountability, Barret (2001:48) has concluded that, while the list of non-profit organisations (NPOs) stakeholders differ in some way from that of the for-profit organisations, it is nonetheless possible to apply this theory to NPOs. It was also concluded that, by using the theory, it was possible to examine how the NPO manages its relationship with its stakeholders and thereby evaluate how it could be accountable to its stakeholders (Barret 2001:48).

From a stakeholder perspective, Barret (2001:48) has argued that, for an organisation to achieve positive outcomes, there is a need for an active and positive participation of all stakeholders towards achieving the desired outcomes and that the stakeholders have a right to participate in organisational decision making. The reason for this is that stakeholders have

an interest in the organisation and have invested in that organisation, either in financial or non-financial terms (Barret 2001:48).

### ***2.7.2.3 Relevance of Stakeholder Theory to this study***

It is the contention of the researcher that the stakeholder theory is relevant in the study as it seeks to provide a nuanced basis on which the concept of governance within NPOs, and in particular within the ECD centres, can be explored. The way the ECD centres manage their relationships with their various stakeholders is of critical importance to this study.

Furthermore, because stakeholder theory assumes that stakeholders have different interests (Coule 2015:78), it is important within the context of an organisation such as an ECD centre that the representatives of parents, who are the stakeholders, constitute its governing body. This is so because parents represent an interest group and they have invested in that ECD centre, financially or otherwise, for the benefit of their children who are the direct beneficiaries of the ECD centre services. Furthermore, the governing body's role is to "...represent diversity of interests and balance stakeholder needs, to make policy, and to control management" (Coule 2015:79).

On why organisations should be responsive (and accountable) to their stakeholders, Barret (2001:38-39) identifies the normative and instrumental perspectives to explain these reasons. From the normative perspective, the reason is that it is inherently desirable and thus ethical that the organisations are responsive to their stakeholders (Barret 2001:39). On the other hand, the instrumental perspective posit that the organisations are responsive to their stakeholders because it is good business for them to do so (Barret 2001:39). These imply that an organisation, such as an ECD centre, is firstly morally bound to respond to the needs of and account to its stakeholders, amongst which parents are the primary ones. Secondly, that it makes 'good business sense' for the ECD centre to respond to those needs of its stakeholders, particularly given the primacy of the parents as the key stakeholders.

### **2.7.3 Integration of social capital and stakeholder theories**

With regards to the participation of parents in the governance of ECD centres, which is the focus of this study, Claridge (2004a:6) postulates that social capital theory can be used as a

prism for the analysis of participation, as well as participation theory. The author (Claridge 2004a:6) goes further to emphasise that social capital theory can also ensure that the approaches and practice of participation are improved.

It is worth mentioning that the concept of participation has itself generated its fair share of controversies and that it has meant different things to different people. Participation has been defined as “a range of processes through which local communities are involved and play a role in issues which affect them...” (Claridge 2004a:20). One other definition considers participation as giving participants a voice and influence in decision making (Claridge 2004a:20).

Furthermore, as opined by Claridge (2004a:19), participation is underpinned by involvement of stakeholders in decision-making within an organisational context. Commenting on the value of effective participation in this context of an organisation, Dayanandan (2013:10) argues that, while it is vital for the creation of a sense of responsibility amongst members, it also ensures greater vigilance over the affairs of the organisation.

The goals of participation are related to the modalities in which the stakeholders are engaged. For Moggi, Leardini, Rossi & Zardini (2016:8), the goals of engaging the stakeholders cover a wide spectrum ranging from informing, through consulting, involving and collaborating, to empowering them. Of these forms of engagements, empowering the stakeholders is the only one that places the final decision-making in the hands of the stakeholders and makes it possible for the shareholders to take joint responsibilities for the decisions and to become jointly accountable to the outcomes. However, in respect of the other modalities of engagement between the organisation and its stakeholders, the power for final decision-making and accountability reside with the organisation concerned and is not jointly held with the stakeholders.

From the social capital and stakeholder perspectives, the participation of stakeholders, such as parents in the governance of the ECD centres, is critical towards understanding the roles that they play in decision-making and accountability. Importantly, it will be informative to understand the extent to which these roles manifest and how solidarity and collective action

amongst the parents, which are elements of social capital, facilitate information sharing and influence decision-making and accountability within the governance of ECD centres.

## **2.8 SUMMARY**

The chapter presented and discussed literature review on the concepts of civil society and its roles in society, good governance as well as good governance within civil society at both global, regional and domestic levels as well as issues of accountability. It also highlighted, from an African perspective, the need to adopt an Afrocentric conceptualisation of civil society to incorporate other contemporary associational forms that include ethnic and other types of political activity, which have been excluded when using a western conception. Some other consideration was that within African perspective, civil society organisations were more concerned with the delivery of social and welfare services. This aspect has been more pronounced in South Africa, where the highest proportion of CSOs are involved in social services delivery, often in partnership with government, at the expenses of advocacy and watchdog roles.

While the recent past has witnessed general growth within the civil society globally, this sector has also experienced various challenges, including decline in funding, poor internal governance, lack of accountability to a range of its stakeholders as well as the general diminishing space in which to operate. It has been highlighted that a strong civil society is a prerequisite for societal democratisation, support to institutions of democracy and to enhance state's capacities for policy development and implementation.

The literature on good governance has emphasised that good governance practices are essential in enabling civil society, and NPOs, to be effective in the delivery of its programmes. Towards this end, various initiatives in South Africa have been undertaken to encourage and improve the practice of good governance through the development of governance tools such as codes of good governance for NPOs issued by government, King codes of governance as well as the independent codes developed by various NPOs. Despite these efforts, many NPOs, notably the ECD centres, have failed to use or are incapable of using these mechanisms and tools to improve their governance practices, particularly in relation to the role of parents in decision making and accountability.

Furthermore, the issues of accountability within civil society had in recent years gained prominence and there was a growing demand bearing on CSOs from various sections of society, including within the civil society sector itself, to improve on accountability in respect of the management of public funds, efficiency and responsiveness to their beneficiaries. For ECD centres, which were the focus of this study, the issues of decision-making and accountability are critical in ensuring that parents play meaningful roles in governance decision-making and accountability in respect of the management of public funds, efficiency and responsiveness to parents as their key stakeholders.

This study has adopted an eclectic approach of using these two perspectives of social capital and stakeholder theories as the intellectual frames of reference for this investigation of the participation of parents and the roles they play within the ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability. The discussions on social capital as one of the theoretical lenses that underpin this study have highlighted its relevance to the exploration of the extent to which the roles that parents play within ECD centres as well as the rules and procedures under which they operate could build ties of solidarity, collective action and trust amongst them for the benefit of good governance and accountability within the ECD centres. Similarly, the exposition on stakeholder theory, as the second lens underpinning the study, has focused on its potential to cast light on the participation of parents, as the key stakeholders, in decision-making and accountability within the governance of ECD centres.

The subsequent chapter documents the research design and methodology employed during the data collection in the fieldwork and it further narrates the sample design and sampling methods used.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter documents the research design and methodology employed for the data collection in the fieldwork and narrates the sample design and sampling methods used. It also presents the overall description and the justification for the choice of research methodology, research method, population, sampling frame, strategy and data size, as well as the data collection techniques and data collection tools employed, including their pre-testing.

In addition, the chapter explicates on the process that was followed towards data analysis and it further highlights the various challenges encountered while collecting data as well as ways of addressing concerns about reliability and validity. Finally, the chapter discusses the ethical considerations relevant to this study and concludes with the summary discussions of issues that were focused upon.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Creswell (2007:5) defines research design as referring to the entire research process starting from the conceptualisation of the problem and the writing up of the research questions on to data collection, data analysis, interpretation and ultimately to the writing up of the research report. In qualitative research, the process begins with philosophical assumptions that the researcher makes in deciding to undertake a qualitative study and the researcher brings his or her own worldviews, paradigms, or sets of beliefs to the research project, and these inform the conduct and writing of the qualitative study (Creswell 2007:15). It involves the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and leads finally to its conclusion (Creswell 2007:5).

As advised in Collodel, de Beer and Kotzé (2012:3), a social research has numerous purposes, some of which include to describe, explain or explore a topic of research interest.

Similarly, Tshuma (2013:115-116) mentions descriptive survey, case study, correlational and experimental designs as some of the research designs at the disposal of the researcher.

In the descriptive research, Babbie and Mouton (2001:80) note that the idea is to describe situations and events, that is the phenomena, whereby the researcher observes and describes that which he or she has observed. For Bhattacharjee (2012:6), the focus of descriptive research is to make careful observation, based on scientific method, to provide detailed description of the problem or phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, descriptive research design is geared towards descriptions of perceptions, opinions, relationships with the aim to generalise about the population (Tshuma 2013:119). Thus, descriptive research, as the word indicates, is intended to create a clear picture of what the problem or the phenomenon that is being investigated entails.

In respect of explanatory research, Babbie and Mouton (2001:81) state that the purpose here is to explain things with the aim to point out causal relationships between them. Explanatory research, according to Bhattacharjee (2012:6), seeks to provide explanations of a problem or phenomena and therefore seeks to give answers to the “why and how” questions, through discovering causal factors and outcomes (that is cause-effect relationships) of the problem or phenomenon.

In the case of exploratory research, the idea is to examine a new interest or a new and unfamiliar subject with the aim to get insight and understanding of the topic (Babbie & Mouton 2001:79-80; Babbie 2013:90-92; Creswell 2007:107). Bhattacharjee (2012:6) mentions the possible goals of an exploratory research as including those to assess the magnitude or extent of a particular problem or phenomenon, create initial ideas about that problem or phenomenon as well to test the feasibility of undertaking further research on that problem or phenomenon.

This qualitative study will pursue the exploratory research approach, using case study research design, to explore the practice of good governance within ECD centres, as it relates to the roles of parents in decision-making and accountability, to obtain a detailed understanding of this phenomenon. The main advantage of using case study design is that it

offers to the researcher the opportunity for deep probing, extensive analysis and in-depth and detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study (Tshuma 2013:118).

### **3.3 APPROPRIATENESS OF THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN**

A case study design, which is located within the qualitative methodological approach, has been adopted in this study with a view to exploring and gaining insight into how ECD centres practice good governance in relation to parents' roles and participation, decision-making and accountability. The aim is to study complex phenomena within their natural contexts using a variety of data sources and it should be considered in circumstances where the researcher does not intend to manipulate the behaviour of the research participants and where the focus of the study is on how and why a phenomenon manifests within a particular context. (Baxter & Jack 2008:544-545)

As argued in Watkins (2017:1), qualitative research methods are essential in providing deeper examinations and insights into the human experience and unlike quantitative methods, they help researchers acquire more in-depth information for a phenomenon of interest. This, therefore, enabled the researcher to gain a greater depth of understanding on the concept of good governance within ECD centres as it relates to the roles of parents in decision-making and accountability, from the perspectives of the participants.

The quantitative methodological design would not have been appropriate for this study. This is because, aside from being costly, inflexible and requiring the employment of complex statistical analysis tools, one of its other limitations is its inability to enable deeper understanding of issues (Collodel et al. 2012:37). Its strength, however, lies in the fact that it can be used in large-scale research projects, since it can generate statistics (Dawson (2002:15). It was, nonetheless, not the intention of this study to target a large population but rather to understand and gain insight into the phenomenon of governance in relation to parents' roles in decision-making and accountability within a select sample of ECD centres within the geographic area of Mabopane, Gauteng Province.

### **3.4 POPULATION, SAMPLE FRAME, SAMPLING TECHNIQUES AND SAMPLE SIZE OF THE STUDY**

This section of the research methodology chapter describes the study population, the sample frame and sampling techniques that have been utilised to select the sample as well as the sample size that was used for the study. It also provides the justification for the choices made with regards to the type of the sampling technique used for selecting the units of observation.

#### **3.4.1 Population of the Study**

Nationally, by the end of March 2017, there were approximately 40 000 ECD centres that have been formally registered by government as NPOs, of which 116 were recorded as operating within Mabopane, in the South of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (Department of Social Development [DSD] 2017). Thus, the population of this study is the 116 ECD centres in Mabopane that have been formally registered by government as NPOs as of 31 March 2017. This constitutes the cluster of elements from which a sample for this study will be drawn (Babbie 2013:135).

The decision to select this research site was motivated by the ease of access and the level of its familiarity to the researcher. Furthermore, the population of the units of observation are relatively small to be covered while at the same time are numerous to be managed.

#### **3.4.2 Sample Frame**

The sample frame covers the population to be studied and constitutes a list of the elements making up the study (Babbie 2013:145), or a list of population that is numbered in such a way that their numbering corresponds to numbers randomly generated for selection from that list (Becker, Bryman & Ferguson 2012:410). Similarly, Bhattacharjee (2012:65) advises that sample frame consists of an accessible section of the target population from where a sample can be drawn.

Since this study focuses on the geographical area of Mabopane and targets the managers and parents within ECD centres that have been registered as NPOs, the sample frame of this study composes of a list of all 116 ECD centres in Mabopane that have been registered by

government as NPOs as of 31 March 2017. These ECD centres were assigned numbers from 1 to 116 according to their NPO registration numbers, which have been sequentially assigned to them when they were registered.

### **3.4.3 Sampling Techniques**

The study employed three sampling techniques for the collection of data. These techniques were the random, purposive and snowball sampling strategies. This triangulated sampling technique ensures that different sets of data are collected at different times and social situations and it enables the use of a variety of sources from which the data can be gathered (Berg 2001:5).

#### ***3.4.3.1 Use of a random sampling technique***

A simple random sampling technique was used to identify the twelve ECD centres that were to be targeted for participation in the study. This sampling technique, which is one basic form of probability sampling (Bryman 2012:190), is one in which each element or subset of the population has an equal and independent chance (or probability) of being included in the sample (Pandey & Pandey 2015:47; Bhattacharjee 2012:67; Bryman 2012:190). Therefore, all the 116 ECD centres operating within the geographic area of Mabopane as of the cut-off data of 31 March 2017, had an equal chance of being selected as part of the twelve that constituted the sample.

Towards this end, the database of the 116 ECD centres in Mabopane that are registered in the Department of Social Development's NPO Register was drawn and arranged sequentially according to their registration numbers and thereafter they were assigned entry numbers consecutively from 1 to 116 according to their order in the list. Using a computer based random number generator (RNG) downloaded from Google Play (<https://play.google.com>), twelve (12) random numbers were generated. This technique produced the following numbers: 013; 024; 054; 078; 008; 038; 010; 095; 040; 090; 087 and 034.

Following this, the ECD centres assigned those random numbers that had been generated were identified and taken as the sample for this study. The managers of those sampled ECD centres were then approached and requested to take part in this study.

#### ***3.4.3.2 Use of a purposive sampling technique***

A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify the parents from the sampled ECD centres who could be available and willing to participate. The aim of this type of sampling technique is to have those that will generate information that is relevant to the purpose of the study (Yin 2011:88) and it involves the selection of those participants or source of data based on the expected relevance and value of the information to the research questions of the study (Yin 2011:311).

This type of sampling, amongst others, is suitable for studying a small subset of the population that could be easily identified but difficult to enumerate (Babbie 2013:128 & 129) and where the goal is to describe and not to generalise for the population (Dawson 2002:54). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the researcher should be open towards changes and be cognisant of the fact that "... sampling of subjects may evolve as the structure of the situation being studied becomes clearer and certain types of subjects seem more central to understanding than others do" (Babbie 2013:129).

It was therefore necessary that the ECD centre managers be involved in the identification of the participants from amongst the parents because, while it will be straightforward to isolate centres managers within ECD centres as participants, there were challenges of accessibility to parents due to their work and other commitments. Hence, the respective ECD centre managers were engaged to identify and recruit the parents who could avail themselves to participate in the study.

#### ***3.4.3.3 Use of snowball sampling method***

In addition to the afore-mentioned methods of sampling used, the researcher also employed the snowball sampling strategy in constituting the participants for the two focus groups; one formed by ECD centre managers and the other by parents representing both those within and outside of the governing bodies of the ECD centres. This snowballing sampling technique

implies instances where the researcher asked the participants to recruit or recommend other (relevant) individuals to join the study (Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007:286; Bhattacharjee 2012:70; Yin 2011:89). Its advantage is that, while it may not lead to representative samples, it is useful to gain access to the informants that are hard to reach (Bhattacharjee 2012:70).

To this end, the ECD centre managers sampled through the random sampling strategy were requested to recommend others of their peers that could join to constitute the focus group of ECD centre managers. Similarly, the parents who constituted the focus group participants were identified through the snowball sampling method using the ECD centre managers. The purpose of the focus group discussions with these two groups was to validate the outcomes derived from the other methods of data collection used in this study.

#### **3.4.4 Sample Size**

This study used different sample sizes depending on the source and sampling technique employed to generate the samples. Also, there were challenges encountered by the researcher with regards to the availability and the willingness of the targeted participants to participate in the study. It is, however, the contention of the researcher that the use of different data gathering methods and sources, would mitigate on these challenges and that they would not have any significant bearing on the outcomes.

The table below reflects the planned and actual sample sizes for each of the categories of the research participants. It also stipulates the sampling strategies used to generate the respective samples.

**Table 1: Comparison between planned and realised study samples**

Category of study samples	Sampling strategy used to generate the sample	Sample size		Deviation (realised minus planned)
		Planned	Realised	
ECD centre managers in face-to-face interviews	Simple random	12	10	- 2
ECD centre managers in focus group discussions	Snowballing	None	6	+ 6
Parents in face-to-face interviews	Purposive	12	8	- 4
Parents in focus group discussions	Snowballing	8	8	0
ECD centres' records for documentary review	Snowballing and simple random	12	24	+ 12

As reflected in Table 1 above, five categories of sources were used to generate the samples which were generated using distinctive sampling strategies. For example, the sample for the ECD centre managers that participated in the face-to-face interviews were generated using the simple random sampling strategy. Furthermore, to produce the sample for parents that participated in the face-to-face interviews, purposive sampling strategy was employed because these participants could not be identified independently by the researcher, hence the ECD centre managers were requested to assist in their selection based on their knowledgeability and availability.

For the focus groups, the samples were created using the snowball sampling strategy wherein the ECD centre managers were used to recommend the relevant participants. In the case of the sample of ECD centres that participated in the documentary review, two sampling strategies were employed at different levels. Firstly, a simple random sampling was used to identify the planned 12 ECD centres from amongst which the individual ECD centre managers in the face-to-face interviews were identified. Secondly, the snowball sampling strategies were used to generate participants in the two focus groups and the ECD centres that were associated with the parents and ECD centre managers in these groups were identified.

Furthermore, Table 1 reflects that the actual numbers of participants that took part in the study were different from those that were initially planned. For example, in the case of the

ECD centre managers and the parents, 83% (10 out of 12) of ECD centre managers and 67% (8 out of 12) of parents among those that were targeted were able to participate in the face-to-face interviews. This was because of the unavailability or lack of interest on the part of some of those that were targeted to participate. The researcher nonetheless made concerted efforts to recruit others to replace those unavailable, but these efforts could not bear fruits. In view of this, the researcher endeavoured to supplement these discrepancies by recruiting additional participants for the focus groups and documentary review.

For documentary review, the intention was to analyse 12 (twelve) records that have been archived by the Department of Social Development. However, the focus groups provided additional records that resulted into a total of 24 records. This assisted in providing more data for the study which compensated for shortages caused by non-participation of the participants in the interviews.

In the case of focus groups, the plan was to convene one focus group constituted by parents only, but it became possible for the researcher to recruit ECD centre managers to constitute another focus group. This was made possible by the overwhelming support received from the ECD centre managers who felt that they needed their views to be considered following recommendation by those that participated in the face-to-face interviews. This overture was welcomed as it contributed to both the amount and diversity of information for the research.

It is the contention of the researcher that, given the commonalities and consistency of the data gathered during the data gathering from those that participated, the inclusion of additional participants would not have elicited new information. This refers to the achievement of a saturation point wherein the emerging ideas (or themes) become more stable and the researcher becomes satisfied with the understanding and explanation that the data is generating (Walliman 2006:135), or whereby no new insight into the phenomenon of interest is yielded (Bhattacharjee 2012:106).

Similarly, this point of saturation occurs when information occurs so repeatedly that the researcher can anticipate it and whereby the collection of more data appears to add no interpretive value (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran 2009:4). Therefore, the sample

sizes of the participants that eventually participated in this study were deemed adequate due to the realisation of the saturation stage. It would not have served any useful purpose for the researcher to seek additional participants or endeavour to proceed beyond the sample sizes that could be achieved.

### **3.5 DATA SOURCES, COLLECTION TECHNIQUE AND INSTRUMENTS**

This section of the chapter discusses the data source, data collection method and the data collection tools used in this study. It also provides the rationale for the use of those sources, techniques and the tools.

#### **3.5.1 Data Sources**

Data was collected from multiple sources through the employment of various data gathering tools. The tools involved were the face-to-face interview schedules, focus group guides and documentary review guides. For the individual face-to-face interviews, the sources consisted of the ECD centre managers as well as the parents.

Additionally, data were generated from different sets of groups of parents and ECD centre managers that participated in the focus groups. For documentary review, the source was in the form of archived records held by the Department of Social Development in compliance with the legal requirements under the NPO Act. These records consisted of the copies of the ECD centres' constitutions as well as annual narrative and financial reports that had been submitted by the ECD centres to the Department of Social Development as required by the applicable legislation.

#### **3.5.2 Data Collection Techniques**

As argued by Bridgemohan (2001:11), the use of multiple methods and data sources serves to enhance the validity of the research findings. Therefore, this study adopted a triangulation technique by employing three data collection methods which consisted of face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions as well as documentary review to collect data.

The researcher used the combination of primary and secondary data in the study. The primary data was collected by means of face-to-face interviews and the focus groups discussions. The collection of this primary data was important because it enabled the researcher not only to get first-hand information on the issues important in this study, but to also to place into perspective the resultant analysis and interpretation of data.

The secondary data was collected from archived documents by means of documentary review. Secondary data are data that have previously been collected and tabulated by other sources (Bhattacharjee 2012:39). This form of data may be effective means for the researcher where primary data collection is costly or infeasible, and secondary data is available at a level that is suitable for answering the researcher's questions. (Bhattacharjee 2012:39). It was the contention of the researcher that this information would be suitable to the study and while not able to respond to all the questions, it would nonetheless provide answers to the applicable research questions.

#### ***3.5.2.1 Use of individual face-to-face interviews***

The face-to-face interviews were conducted using the uniform interview guides consisting of predetermined questions which had been constructed in line with the research questions and research design. These interview guides were divided into three sections. The first section provided for the profiles of research participants, the second section requested the registration details of the ECD centre and the number of enrolled children; and the third section contained the four main research questions together with their related sub-questions. The design of the sub-questions was such that collectively they would seek to provide answers to the related main research questions.

In qualitative research, the interviews usually assume a conversational mode and its goal is to provide to the participants the opportunity to reconstruct their own experiences and reality from their own perspectives (Yin 2011:32). Thus, these in-depth face-to-face interviews, which used the semi-structured schedules, were conducted with ten (10) ECD centre managers, as well as a 8 (eight) parents who were made up of an equal number of those who were in the ECD centres' governing bodies and those who were not.

Using the qualitative interview, in contrast to structured interviews which are limited, the researcher tried to offer an avenue wherein the participants were able to use their own words and derive meanings to their own lives and experiences. Interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints on a particular topic (Turner 2010:754). Therefore, it is required of the researcher to be a good listener and to try and understand the meaning of what is being said (Yin 2011:135).

Before doing the interviews, it is important that different stages are undertaken for preparation. To this end, Turner (2010:757) has identified eight principles that inform the preparation stage of interviewing. These principles are intended to maintain clear focus and to maximise the benefit to the research study and these are: (1) choosing a setting with little distraction; (2) explaining the purpose of the interview to the respondents; (3) addressing issues of confidentiality; (4) explaining the form that the interview would take; (5) indicating the expected duration of the interview; (6) informing the respondents how they could get in touch with the researcher should they want to after the interview; (7) asking them if they have any questions before the start of the interview; and (8) ensuring that the interview is recorded so that the researcher does not only rely on his or her memory to recall the respondents' answers (Turner 2010:757).

In choosing the settings for the interviews for the respondents that consisted of the ECD centre managers and parents, the researcher relied on the targeted interviewees to pick venues that would not only be convenient to them but that were also conducive for the conduction of interviews. For these purposes, the venues used for the interviews for both parents and ECD centre managers were the office spaces at the ECD centres. Some of these venues were found to be noisy since the interviews were at times held concurrent with the learning activities that the children participated in.

The other type of distraction was the occasional interruptions that happened when the ECD centre managers were required to personally respond to queries from the staff or had to answer telephone calls. However, these distractions were minimal and did not have adverse effects on the interview interactions. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that, notwithstanding these distractions, the interviews could be conducted without

compromising either the learning programme within the affected ECD centres or the success and quality of the interviews.

Before the interviews could commence, the researcher introduced himself and explained the purpose of the interview to each respondent. The issue of confidentiality was discussed with the individual respondents and the researcher emphasised that the information that the respondents would give would be treated with the strictest levels of confidentiality and that nothing would be communicated or used outside of the study.

The researcher also explained to the respondents in each interview that the interview would take the form of question and answer interactions that were guided by the interview schedule of questions wherein the researcher would also make follow-up questions to probe for clarity and further information from them, when needed. Furthermore, the researcher indicated that the duration of the interview would be between 30 and 45 minutes depending on the extent and intensity of the deliberations.

The respondents were advised that should they want to, they could get in touch with the researcher regarding any matter that arose from or was connected with the study. To this end, the researcher provided his contact details. In addition, the respondents were invited to ask any questions that they might have had about the interview or the study overall.

Finally, the respondents were informed that the interviews would be recorded to ensure that the researcher did not miss any inputs that they would be making and their permission to use the audio device was sought before the recordings could be made. The researcher reiterated the fact that the information would be treated with the strictest level of confidentiality and that in reporting, the researcher would ensure that the information would not be traced back to the individual interviewees.

### ***3.5.2.2 Use of focus group discussions***

Like the individual face-to-face interviews, the focus group discussions were conducted using the standardised questionnaire guide. The questionnaire guide was divided into three sections namely, profile of research participants, registration details of the ECD centre and

the number of enrolled children; and the four main research questions together with their related sub-questions.

As mentioned in Bhattacharjee (2010:40), focus groups are suitable for use in exploratory research, but are not suitable for explanatory or descriptive research. Therefore, the researcher used the focus groups in this exploratory study to gain insight into the practice of governance in relation to the roles of parents in decision-making and accountability within the select ECD centres.

The well-designed focus groups typically last between 1 and 2 hours and consist of between 6 and 12 participants (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009:3) and involves the researcher bringing together a small group of subjects at one location and having them to discuss a phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Bhattacharjee 2012:40). This is to ensure that enough participants are included for diversity in information, while concurrently creating an environment where participants feel comfortable to share their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009:3).

One of the downsides of using the focus groups is that it is difficult to establish internal validity due to lack of controls on the part of the researcher (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009:2). Therefore, it would be problematic to generalise the findings to other settings because of the small sample size used in this technique (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009:2).

There are, however, many benefits and advantages that the use of focus groups can generate for the researchers. These include (1) providing a sense of cohesion amongst the participants, (2) generating feelings of cohesiveness and a sense of belonging, (3) feeling of safety amongst the participants when they share their information, and (4) being an economical, fast, and efficient method because it enables the researcher to obtain more data from multiple participants and as such increases the overall number of participants in a study as well as the amount of data that can be generated (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009:2). Additionally, and of importance to this study, the focus groups can create an environment wherein the participants can discuss personal problems and thus be in the position to develop possible solutions to the problems that they encounter (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009:2).

Therefore, two focus group discussions were conducted; one with a group of eight (8) ECD centre managers and the other with six (6) parents drawn from an equal number of those who were governing body members and those who were not. These focus group discussions were arranged in line with the eight principles identified by Turner (2010:757) and these ensured that the discussions were properly prepared for and appropriately conducted and recorded.

The focus groups discussions were used to authenticate the findings that have emerged out of the other two methods of data collection. The focus groups are deemed to create a helpful environment that enables participants to discuss their views, thoughts, opinions and perceptions in a less threatening setting (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009:2) and they also generate data and insights that would be less accessible without the interactions found in a group (Fick 2009:203).

### ***3.5.2.3 Use of archived documents for documentary review***

The third data gathering technique used in this study to further enhance the amount, diversity and cogency of the data was the documentary review. The documentary review was conducted using the uniform schedule of questions which had been constructed in line with the research questions and research design. Like the case of the data gathering tools used in the face-to-face interview and focus group discussions, the schedule was divided into the three sections delineated previously.

The documentary review involved the analysis of secondary data in the form of reports and founding documents that have been submitted by the ECD centres in compliance with the law applicable to registered NPOs. In the whole, documents from a total of 24 ECD centres were collected and used to further explore the role of parents in governance decision-making and accountability within the ECD centres.

There are both advantages and disadvantages of using archived documents in the study. Berg (2001:258) notes that the most important advantage of documentary review is that it can be practically unobtrusive, it can be used non-reactively; that is without interacting with research participants, and is also useful for the analysis of records, such as newspaper

reports, public addresses, libraries, archives, and similar sources. However, one of the weaknesses of the documentary review is the relevance of the information because this information has often not been purposefully left as data for future research and therefore might not have been recorded in a particular manner as to enable the scrutiny of the investigation (Berg 2001:108). This weakness can be ameliorated if the documentary review is used as an analysis tool rather than as a complete research strategy (Berg 2001:118).

The motive for choosing archived documents for documentary review was because the material necessary for this data gathering technique was readily and inexpensively accessible. This was also because this method is cost-effective (Berg 2011:258; Babbie 2013:306) and eliminates researcher reactivity as it is unobtrusive (Berg 2011:189). This means that it would cost little of time and money to access that information since the data have been archived by the Department of Social Development in compliance with the NPO Act and is therefore already publicly available. Furthermore, research participants would likely not be influenced by the presence of the researcher.

As advised by Dey (2005:105), the criteria for selecting documents, or for focusing on particular extracts in the documents, for documentary review should be informed by the issues on which the researcher seeks evidence. These archived documents were made up of founding documents (or constitutions) and annual reports submitted by the targeted ECD centres and they contained information about the structures of governance and mechanisms of decision-making as well as how accountability was exercised, amongst others. This information generated from the documentary review was used essentially for the validation of data generated from the other two data collection methods employed in this study, as mentioned earlier.

### **3.5.3 Data-Gathering Instruments**

The study employed three separate data gathering instruments to collect data from three different sources. These instruments were pre-tested during the pilot phase prior to the commencement of the actual study. The pilot test assists the research in determining if there are defects, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design and will allow the

researcher to make necessary revisions and refinements of research questions prior to the implementation of the study (Turner 2010:757).

This pilot enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the ECD centres in the targeted geographical area of Mabopane and it assisted the researcher to estimate the time the interviews would take and to identify possible challenges, gaps and issues to be emphasised upon during the probes. All these matters were taken into account during the actual data collection exercise.

For the face-to-face interviews, focus groups discussions and documentary review, data were gathered using appropriately designed interview schedules and guides. These schedules and guides were composed of three sections, namely section one which reflected the profiles of the participants section two entailed the legal registration status of ECD centres as well as the numbers of enrolled children, and section three outlined the main research questions and their related sub-questions. The latter incorporated the issues pertinent to this study and were related to the roles that parents played in decision-making and accountability within the ECD centres. As argued in Turner (2010:755), the strength of the general interview guide is that it enables the researcher to collect uniform information using similar questions to different respondents, while also allowing the researcher the flexibility to probe the respondents further.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted separately for ECD centre managers and two sets of parents; those who were involved in the governing bodies of the ECD centres and those that were not part of the governing bodies of the ECD centres. Similarly, the focus group discussions were conducted separately for two groups of participants; one involving ECD centre managers and the other one consisting of parents. These groups of participants in the focus groups were composed of different individuals from those that were involved in the face-to-face interviews.

The convening of the focus group discussions not only served to confirm and enrich the information gathered through the face-to-face interviews, but it also proved useful in cross-validating information wherein participants either corrected or elaborated on the views

expressed by other speakers. This also enhanced the amount, diversity and quality of the information gathered in the study.

To ensure that data collected from the interviews and focus group discussions did not miss out any inputs by the research participants, the interviews were recorded using an audio recorder. These recordings were later transcribed manually from audio into text and simultaneously translated from Tswana into English in preparation for subsequent analysis.

Furthermore, to capture the salient nuances that could not be recorded through the audio device, the researcher compiled the field notes during the fieldwork and interviews with the respondents to provide the contexts and the backdrop within which the fieldwork interviews were conducted. The field notes, which give an account of the conversations with the respondents and serve as fieldwork journals for the researcher, should contain the essentials of the interviewee's answers and information about the proceeding of the interviews (Flick 2009:296 & 297).

Similarly, related sets of questions were designed to guide documentary review part of the investigation. These questions covered all aspects about the nature of governance practices and the extent to which the ECD centres conducted their governance practices in relation to parents' participation, accountability and mechanisms of decision making. These questions were then applied on the records of the 24 ECD centres that participated in the study in order to garner further information for the study, which would also be used for validation of the information obtained from the primary data sourced through focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION**

Data that have been collected from the interviews, focus group discussions, field notes as well as the archived records of ECD centres were manually analysed to initially identify and isolate the emerging themes in relation to research questions. This was followed by classifying the responses under the main themes and finally, these themes were interpreted using the theoretical frameworks that the study employed to derive their meanings.

### **3.6.1 Data Analyses**

According to Creswell (2007:148), the process of data analysis in qualitative research involves firstly preparing and organising the data for analysis, followed by condensing the data into themes through coding and then presenting the data in discussions, figures or tables. Coding entails the reduction of data into meaningful segments and designating these segments into names or categories (Creswell 2007:148; Dey 2005:59). In qualitative analysis, the emphasis is on making sense or understanding a phenomenon, rather than predicting or explaining it (Collodel et al. 2012:41 & Bhattacharjee 2012:113).

This study applied the thematic content analysis and constant comparison analysis to identify the main themes that emerged and to compare the difference and similarities based on the data sources and data collection techniques. Thematic content analysis, which entails analysing the contents of interviews in order to identify the main themes that emerge from the responses given by the respondents, involves a number of steps that include: (i) identifying the main themes, (ii) assigning codes to the main themes, (iii) classifying the interviewees' responses under these main themes and (iv) integrating the themes and responses into the text of the report (Kumar 2011:248).

The thematic content analysis also focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behaviour and it involves three distinguishable but related steps which comprise of the collection of data, followed by identifying all data that relate to the classified patterns, and finally combining and cataloguing related patterns into sub-themes (Aronson (1995:1-2). Themes are then consolidated by bringing together the related sub-themes to form a comprehensive picture of the respondents' collective experiences (Aronson 1995:2).

The constant comparison analysis method was also used in the study to make sense of the data collected using the three data collection techniques employed in the study for cross-validation and enrichment of information. As advised in Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009:5-6), data can be analysed using constant comparison analysis, which involves three major stages; namely open coding wherein the researcher attaches codes to text, followed by an axial coding wherein the codes are grouped into categories and then selective coding is undertaken through which themes are developed.

These methods of analyses employed by the researcher, namely thematic content analysis and constant comparison analysis, are compatible with each other and can be used together to provide a nuanced understanding of the data that have been generated using triangulated methods comprising of face-to-face interviews, focus groups discussions and documentary review. There are commonalities and differences when it comes to these two methods of qualitative data analysis. In both these methods, the processes include the coding of the data, but in the case of constant comparison analysis, the stages involve the creation of themes from the codes and their analyses, while in content analysis the codes are placed into similar categories and then counted or analysed (Onwuegbuzie et al. 20089:6).

Thus, this study adopted the combination of the thematic content analysis and constant comparison analysis approaches towards analysing the research data. The analysis was done in three steps involving firstly, recording and transcribing the face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions from audio into text, followed by coding of transcripts into themes and thirdly undertaking the comparison within the themes across the data sources and data collection techniques. These steps, which followed each other, are further discussed in detail below.

#### ***3.6.1.1 Transcription of interview audio recordings into text data***

The first step towards the analysis of data involved the transcription of information that was gathered using an audio device for the face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. This transcription involved the researcher listening to the audio recordings and then manually writing down the content of the conversation with the participants into textual form. Since the interviews were conducted in Setswana, which was the language of preference for the participants, the audio recordings had to firstly be deciphered into English from the original language of the interviews before they could be transcribed into written form.

This process was undertaken for each of the 18 individual face-to-face interviews making up of well over 15 hours of recordings from interviews with parents and ECD centre managers averaging the duration of 45 minutes each. For the focus group discussions, a total of 2½ hours of audio recordings was similarly transcribed. The overall process of

transcription produced volumes of pages of data in text form which, together with the documents retrieved from the records of the ECD centres held by the Department of Social Development, were prepared for the second step of analysis which involved coding into specific and identifiable themes.

### ***3.6.1.2 Coding of data and development of themes***

The transcription mentioned earlier was used as the basis for the analysis and each transcript was read in full to identify patterns for coding. Coding techniques involve processes of classification and categorisation of text data segments into set of codes or concepts, categories (constructs), and relationships (Bhattacharjee 2012:113) in relation to research questions. According to Stemler (2001) this analytical technique is useful for probing trends and patterns in documents.

The documents that resulted from the transcribed interviews and focus group discussions, as well as archived documents retrieved from the records of the ECD centres, were coded in terms of the emerging themes. This process enabled the researcher to use content analysis to scrutinise the documents, which have been developed from the interviews and those retrieved from the records of ECD centres, to identify and isolate the emerging themes. These themes or codes are consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were common among research participants (Turner 2010:759).

Coding was done through the identification of interviewees' responses to the questions that were linked to four main research questions. The coding identified the four themes that related to: (i) *the roles and responsibilities of parents in ECD centres governance in respect of decision-making and accountability*, (ii) *barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres*, (iii) *extent to which the roles of parents promote good governance in line with existing codes of good governance*, and (iv) *suggestions of what can be done to promote the roles of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability*. Therefore, the coding of the transcripts comprised of phrases, terms or descriptions that could be associated with the nature and dynamics of parents' roles in governance decision-making and accountability within the ECD centre.

### ***3.6.1.3 Comparison of the themes across data sources and data collection techniques***

The third step of analysis involved the comparison of the emerging themes across data sources and data collection techniques. Towards this end, the emerging themes from the responses in relation to the questions were firstly analysed for their similarities and differences within and between the ECD centre managers, parents and archived documents before comparison across the three data techniques, involving face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and documentary review, could be conducted. These were intended for cross-validation and augmentation of data and it involved the identification of similarities and differences of the emerging main themes from the three data collection techniques.

This third step of analysis also involved searching the interview transcripts to identify verbatim quotes from participants' responses that could be used in order to highlight the salient views. This was to ensure that the gist of the participants' views is retained (Kumar 2011:249) and therefore find proper expression in the report.

### **3.6.2 Interpretation of Data**

For Dey (2005:41), the classification of data allows the researcher to begin the process of analysis since it forms the conceptual bases upon which interpretation and explanation are based. Since data only provide the basis for analysis and do not dictate it, it is still the responsibility of the researcher to develop "a meaningful and adequate account" of the meanings of the data (Dey 2005:41). Therefore, interpretation of data is really the process undertaken by the researcher of giving the data meaning and making it understandable.

To provide the framework for the interpretation of data, the researcher used the theoretical frameworks that underpinned this study. Therefore, the theoretical lenses of social capital and stakeholder theories were employed to derive meanings from the data. Concerning social capital theory, the issues of facilitation of flow of information, exertion of influence on decision making (Lin 1999:29) and solidarity (Adler & Kwon 2002:29) were some of the pertinent elements used for the interpretation of data. These elements, which were guided by the roles that parents played as well as the rules and procedures under which they operated within the ECD centres in relation to governance decision-making and accountability issues,

were with regards to: (i) *the facilitation of information*, (ii) *exertion of influence in decision making*, and (iii) *solidarity and collective action* fostered between and amongst parents.

Similarly, the researcher used the elements in the stakeholder theory to interpret and account for the participation of parents within the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability. As elucidated in Moggi et al. (2016:8), the aims of engaging the stakeholders are to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and to empower those stakeholders for collective decision-making and joint accountability.

Therefore, the elements related to the engagement of stakeholders were identifiable and would be categorised into three main focus areas, namely: (i) *who are the stakeholders engaged in governance decision-making and accountability*, (ii) *how are the stakeholders engaged in decision-making and accountability*, (iii) *why are the stakeholders engaged in decision-making and accountability*. These focus areas formed part of the research questions for which participants in both interviews and focus groups responded and these responses would assist to clarify and account for the nature and extent to which parents were engaged as stakeholders within the governance of ECD centres concerning the decision-making and accountability.

### **3.7 ISSUES OF MEASUREMENT**

One of the areas of difference between the quantitative and qualitative research, and which has generated a great deal of controversy, is in the use of and the importance attached to the concepts of validity and reliability (Kumar 2011:171; Golafshani 2003:601-602). This debate centres on whether these concepts are applicable in the context of a qualitative research. As argued by Bhattacharjee (2012:110), this is because these concepts do not apply similarly in the two research approaches since they are based on different sets of ontological and epistemological assumptions about social phenomena.

Validity from the quantitative research perspective refers to how a research instrument is able to measure what it is intended to measure (Babbie 2013:191; Golafshani 2003:599) or achieve the outcome for which it has been designed (Kumar 2011 :171). On the other hand, reliability refers to the consistency of arriving at similar outcomes when a research

instrument is used repeatedly (Kumar 2011:171; Babbie 2013:188; Golafshani 2003:598). However, the achievements of these qualities in a qualitative research are difficult because of the use of multiple methods and procedures that are both flexible and evolving (Kumar 2011:171).

In trying to resolve these challenges, Guba and Lincoln (in Kumar 2011:171) have proposed a framework of four criteria in qualitative research as the equivalents of validity, reliability and objectivity established in quantitative research. Furthermore, Trochim and Donnelly (in Kumar 2011:171) compared the criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln with those defined in quantitative research and found as follows:

<b>Traditional criteria for judging quantitative research</b>	<b>Alternative criteria for judging qualitative research</b>
Internal Validity	Credibility
External Validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Adapted from Trochim and Donnelly (in Kumar 2011:172).

Mindful of these issues concerning validity and reliability, the researcher has elected to use the framework proposed by Guba and Lincoln for the discussions of aspects of the trustworthiness in this study. Towards this end, the researcher will use credibility, transferability and dependability together their equivalences of internal validity, external validity and reliability for purposes of adhering to the norms.

### **3.7.1 Credibility or Internal Validity**

Within the quantitative paradigm, internal validity, also known as causality, is examined through examining whether the change observed in the outcomes or effect is caused by the corresponding change in the independent variable, and not by causes that are outside the context of the study (Bhattacharjee 2012:35). As noted further, this is discernible within a laboratory experimental setting wherein the researcher can manipulate the independent variable (Bhattacharjee 2012:36). This is however not practical within the qualitative

research paradigm wherein the researcher relies on the perceptions, experiences, feelings and beliefs of the people (Kumar 2011:171) and not on objective reality.

While validity in quantitative research is synonymous to credibility in qualitative research, it has been argued that the concept of validity is not applicable to qualitative research, but at the same time, some researchers using qualitative research have identified the need to derive measures for their research studies (Golafshani 2003:602). Furthermore, Creswell & Miller (in Golafshani 2003:602) have suggested that the researcher's opinion of validity in the study and the choice of paradigm assumption affect validity.

Credibility within the milieu of qualitative research paradigm, which is the equivalence of internal validity in quantitative research (Bhattacharjee 2012:110), involves determining that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research (Kumar 2011:171). This is based on the notion that, since the qualitative research studies explore perceptions, experiences, feelings and beliefs of the people (Kumar 2011:171), it is considered that research respondents are the best judges on whether the research findings have accurately represented their opinions and feelings (Kumar 2011:171).

To enhance credibility, or internal validity, it is required of the researcher to use multiple data sources (Baxter & Jack 2008:554). Similarly, other authors (Flick 2009:381; Bryman 2012:390) advocate for the use of triangulation as a strategy to enhance data credibility in qualitative research. To triangulate means to use different sources of information by examining evidence from sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes (Creswell 2009:191).

Towards this end, the researcher used the triangulated data collection methods (namely interviews, documentary review and focus group discussions) as well as the multiple sources of data (parents, ECD managers and archived documents) to enhance credibility of the information. Furthermore, the researcher compared individual face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions to assess similarities and differences among them.

### **3.7.2 Transferability or External Validity**

In quantitative research, external validity, or generalisability, refers to whether the findings of the research can be generalised from the sample to the population (population validity), or to other people, or in other organisation, or contexts or time (Bhattacharjee 2012:38). In qualitative research, transferability refers to the degree to which the research findings can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings (Bhattacharjee 2012:111). Similarly, qualitative findings are contextual and unique to the phenomenon being studied (Bryman 2012:390-392).

While transferability is difficult to accomplish in qualitative research, it can be achieved to some extent through the rich, extensive and thorough description of the processes that the researcher has followed (Bhattacharjee 2012:111). However, since the focus of this study is limited to the geographical area of Mabopane and targeting the ECD centres operating within this geographic area, it would be problematic to attempt to generalise the findings to other geographical areas.

### **3.7.3 Dependability or Reliability**

In quantitative research, reliability defined as the extent to which the measure of a construct is consistent or dependable (Bhattacharjee 2012:56), or the consistency of arriving at similar findings when a research instrument is used repeatedly (Kumar 2011:171; Babbie 2013:188; Golafshani 2003:598). In the framework suggested by Guba and Lincoln (in Kumar 2011:171) dependability is akin to the concept of reliability in quantitative research (Bryman 2012:392; Kumar 2011:171; Bhattacharjee 2012:110).

Like on the issue concerning transferability in qualitative research, it is necessary to keep complete records of all phases of the research process and interview transcripts, amongst other, in an accessible manner for other researchers to ascertain if the findings are dependable (Bryman 2012:392). This is what is termed inquiry audit where both the process and the product of the research are examined for consistency (Golafshani 2003:561) and where the researcher keeps an extensive and detailed record of the process for others to replicate to ascertain the level of dependability (Kumar 2011:172).

Since the study also relied on the responses by the informants, the information could be influenced by the respondents' inclination to provide information that was either advantageous or that would not be prejudicial to themselves, which is referred to as a researcher reactivity (Babbie & Mouton 2001:375). Given the potential of reactivity, some responses may not be truthful, complete or comprehensive. The researcher used standardised interview schedules for the face-to-face interviews as well as standardised questions to guide the focus groups so that everyone of the respondents and group participants had to answer similar questions. Furthermore, the participants were asked follow-up questions as an endeavour to probe them further.

These interview schedules and group discussion guides were pre-tested during the pilot phase of the study to ensure that the questions were easy to understand and that they would lead to the relevant responses. Furthermore, the triangulation of the data collection methods (namely interviews, documentary review and focus group discussions) as well as the sources of data (namely the parents, ECD centre managers as well as archived documents) were used to ensure that reliability was improved.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Given the fact that researchers are unable to conduct their research projects successfully if they do not receive the help and participation of other people, there is an expectation that if participants are to give up their valuable time to help the researchers, it follows that the researchers should offer them something in return (Dawson 2002:146). It is therefore important to make sure that both the participants, and the information that they are willing to provide, are treated with honesty and respect (Dawson 2002:146).

The UNISA's policy on research ethics (University of South Africa [UNISA] 2016) provides amongst others, guidelines for research that involve human participants. The university promotes four internationally recognised moral principles of ethics that researchers should abide by and these include: autonomy (research should respect the autonomy, rights and dignity of research participants); beneficence (research should make a positive contribution towards the welfare of people); and non-maleficence (research should not cause harm to the research participant(s) in particular or to people in general) (UNISA 2016:11).

Ethics are the rules of conduct in research (Walliman 2006:148), and whenever the researcher work with human participants in his/her research, the ethical issues about how the researcher treats the participants arises (Walliman 2011:42). Some of the ethical principles in research include informed consent; voluntary participation, protection from harm; and anonymity and confidentiality (Bhattacharjee 2012:137-139). In this study, the relevant ethical issues were identified and are discussed below.

### **3.8.1 Informed Consent**

Informed consent, which is considered a key principle in social research ethics, means that the intended research participants should be given as much information as needed for them to make an informed decision as to whether they wished to take part in a research (Bryman 2012:712). Furthermore, all research participants must, prior to taking part in the study or having their responses recorded, receive and sign informed consent form which stipulates their right to either participate or not to participate as well as clearly indicating their right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time they so wish (Bhattacharjee 2012:138).

The researcher has an obligation to provide information about their study to potential study participants before data collection to enable them to decide whether or not they wish to participate in the study. This information could include, for example: who is conducting the study, for what purpose, what outcomes are expected, and who would benefit from the results (Bhattacharjee 2012:139).

When contacting the targeted ECD centre managers as well as the parents to participate in the study, the researcher started off by introducing himself and briefing them about the research project that the researcher was undertaking as well as the procedures that the study would follow to collect information. The researcher emphasised that the study was being conducted as part of researcher's academic requirements and that the Research Ethics Review Committee of the university has granted permission to conduct this study.

The participants were also informed about the objectives that the study sought to achieve and that they have been identified to participate in the study because of their knowledge about the issues that the study sought to investigate. They were also assured that the

information they would provide would solely be used towards the completion of this research project and that nothing would be used outside of this study.

The researcher then handed the informed consent forms to the participants and explained that they had the right to take part or to decline to take part in the study. Upon agreeing to participate, the research participants were requested to first indicate in the forms that: (i) the purpose of the research had been explained to them, (ii) they understood that they would be expected to answer a number of questions that the researcher would ask; (iii) they could withdraw from participating in the interview at any time if they wished to, and (iv) that they voluntarily gave their consent to participate in this research.

As confirmation of their consent to participate, the research participants then signed the consent forms. As advised by Bryman (2012:140), researchers prefer to obtain the informed consent of research participants by getting them to sign the informed consent forms as it gives the participants the opportunity to be fully informed of the nature of the research as well as the implications of their participation at the beginning before they could participate. Therefore, by attaching their signatures onto these consent forms, the participants confirmed that they have not been coerced to take part and that they have knowingly and willingly participated in this research study.

### **3.8.2 Voluntary Participation**

As asserted by Bhattacharjee (2012:137), participants in the research project must be made aware that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any unfavourable consequences. Therefore, since participation in the research should be voluntary, the participants should be invited to participate with a clear understanding that they were under no obligation to do so and that there would be no negative consequences for them if they did not participate.

As highlighted concerning the ethical principle of informed consent above, the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they should not feel compelled to take part. They were also advised that they could withdraw from participation at any time if they wished to do so without any obligation to give any explanations.

### **3.8.3 Protection from Harm**

As emphasised in Babbie and Mouton (2001:522), social research should never injure (or harm) the people that are being studied, irrespective of whether they have volunteered to take part in the study. Additionally, people should not be harmed because of their participation or non-participation in the research (Bhattacharjee 2012:137).

This issue of not harming the people is more pronounced when the research focuses on the more vulnerable groups in society, such as children, mentally disabled individuals, the aged and prisoners (Babbie & Mouton (2001:523). In this study, the participants were adults and did not fall within the category of vulnerability.

All steps should be taken to prevent harm, whether physical, psychological and/or spiritual, injury or loss of opportunity to participants (UNISA 2016:13). The researcher took due care to ensure that no harm, be it physical, psychological or emotional; is visited on the participants because of their participation in the study. To this end, the participants were reassured of the aims, purpose and objectives of the study and were informed that the information they would provide would only be used for the purpose of this study and that it would further be protected in line with the university's policy on research ethics. Furthermore, the participants were encouraged to raise any feelings of discomfort they may experience towards the content of the questions or the manner of questioning by the researcher.

### **3.8.4 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

To protect the interests and the well-being of the study participants, their identity must be protected by using the dual principles of anonymity and confidentiality (Bhattacharjee 2012:138). While anonymity entails that the participant who provided a given response would not be identifiable in the report, confidentiality implies that the researcher would not divulge the identity of the participant in the report or in public (Bhattacharjee 2012:138).

Since anonymity and confidentiality go together, the researcher ensured confidentiality by anonymising the participants and the ECD centres they came from and assigning identity codes that only the researcher could decipher, while also leaving out information that could

identify either the informants or their ECD centres from the report. Participants were also advised that, in order to maintain anonymity and to protect their confidentiality and privacy, they ought not disclose their names or the names of their ECD centre during interviews.

### **3.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented and discussed the research design, approach and the methodology used to collect and analyse data to respond to the research questions. It highlighted that a case study research design was adopted for this study to explore and gain insight into the practice of good governance within ECD centres in relation to the roles of parents in decision-making and accountability, which was the focus of this study.

The chapter further described the study population, the sample frame, sampling techniques and the sample size used for the study and it also provided the justifications for the choices made with regards to the sampling technique and the instruments used to collect data. It also explained the processes followed to approach research participants and highlighted unavailability of some participants as one challenge encountered during data collection. The triangulated methods of data collection, using interviews, focus group discussions and documentary review, was employed and data were collected from three sources made up of ECD centre managers, parents and archived documents.

The issues of data analysis and interpretation were expounded, and it was highlighted that the triangulated methods of thematic content analysis and constant comparison analysis approaches were employed to analyse data and that the analyses were guided by the coding based on the research questions. For data interpretation, it was clarified that the elements from the theoretical frameworks of social capital and stakeholder were used to give meaning to the data.

The chapter then discussed issues of measurement as they apply to the qualitative research paradigm in relation to credibility, transferability and dependability. It concluded with the discussion of ethical considerations relevant to this study and which the researcher bore in mind in the conduction of this study. These ethical issues were informed consent, voluntary participation, protection from harm and anonymity highlighted.

The next chapter, namely Chapter Four, presents the findings in broad themes based on the key questions of the study. It also uses the theoretical frameworks that have been adopted for this study to further discuss and interpret the findings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION, DISCUSSIONS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the study results by starting with the profiles of the research site and participants and then revealing the salient findings. These findings are presented in broad themes that are informed by the key questions of the study as well as the research objectives. They detail the accounts by respondents which are compared across the data sources as well as the data collection methods used in the study.

The chapter further discusses the findings made in the study based on the research questions. It also draws from literature review and theoretical frameworks underpinning this study to proffer the interpretations of these findings based on the research questions.

#### **4.2 PROFILES OF THE RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS**

This section of the chapter provides a brief description of the geographic area in which the study was conducted as well as the summarised profiles of the participants that took part in the study. The participants could be categorised into four categories, namely the ECD centres which formed the focus of the sampling, ECD centre managers that participated in face-to-face interviews and focus group, parents that participated in the face-to-face interviews and focus group, as well as the records of all the ECD centres that were considered in the study.

##### **4.2.1 Profile of Research Site**

Mabopane, which covers an area of 42.20 km<sup>2</sup>, is one of the townships found in the City of Tshwane, within the province of Gauteng and it is situated at a distance of about 55 Kilometres from the city centre in the North, with the GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates of 25.5128 S, 28.0485 E ([www.StatsSA.gov.za](http://www.StatsSA.gov.za)). The township of Mabopane came into being following a proclamation of the then Transvaal administration in 1963 and it was designated as a black-only residential settlement (Jordaan 2014:8). It was incorporated

into the bantustan of Bophuthatswana and shared a railway line with the township of Soshanguve (Jordaan 2014:8), which was demarcated as part of South Africa. With the advent of the new political dispensation in 1994, and the resultant downfall of bantustans; which included Bophuthatswana; the township was reincorporated into South Africa.

According to the 2011 census ([www.StatsSA.gov.za](http://www.StatsSA.gov.za)), the population of Mabopane was 110 972, of which 50.5% were females and 49.5 males. There was a total of 32 290 households, of which 41.1% were headed by females ([www.StatsSA.gov.za](http://www.StatsSA.gov.za)).

In terms of the racial makeup of its population, the predominance was the Black Africans at 99.2%, while the rest consisted of other racial groups ([www.StatsSA.gov.za](http://www.StatsSA.gov.za)). Furthermore, in respect of the languages spoken, the predominant first language was Setswana (58.8%), followed by Northern Sotho (9.9%), Tsonga (8.5%) and IsiZulu (5.6%), while other languages made up the remaining 17.2% ([www.StatsSA.gov.za](http://www.StatsSA.gov.za)).

The 2011 census ([www.StatsSA.gov.za](http://www.StatsSA.gov.za)) recorded the educational levels in Mabopane as having adults aged 20 years and above having no education at 4.3 %, with primary schooling (grade 1 to 7) at 12.1%, while a further 66.1% had completed secondary education (grade 8 to 12) and 17,5% of this age group had higher education (post-matric). Compared to the national statistics of 8.6% with no schooling, 28.4% with matric and 12.1% with higher education, the population of Mabopane fared relatively well.

In terms of amenities available to the communities of Mabopane, it has been recorded that 62.5% of households had piped water into their dwellings while 93.1% used electricity for lighting ([www.StatsSA.gov.za](http://www.StatsSA.gov.za)). Furthermore, 85,4% of households had flush toilet connected to sewerage and 87.6% receive weekly refuse removal ([www.StatsSA.gov.za](http://www.StatsSA.gov.za)). Similarly, these statistics compare favourably when compared against the national figures of households having access to mains electricity (85.4%), access to piped water (89.9%) and municipal refuse removal (66.0%) ([www.StatsSA.gov.za](http://www.StatsSA.gov.za)).

#### 4.2.2 Profiles of ECD Centres in the Study

A total of 24 ECD centres participated in this study out of an estimated 116 ECD centres that operated in the geographic area of Mabopane and that have been formally registered by government as NPOs as of 31 March 2017. These ECD centres consisted of a variety of centres that differed in terms of the number of children enrolled as well as their registration status and availability of archived records.

Table 2 below provides the list of these ECD centres together with the respective numbers of children enrolment as well as their types of registration and availability of archived records held at the Department of Social Development.

**Table 2: Summary of the profiles of ECD centres that participated in the study**

ECD centre ID #	Type of registration			Children enrolled	Records availability	
	NPO (Y/N)	PBO (Y/N)	ECD (Y/N)		Constitution (Y/N)	Annual Reports (Y/N)
ECD01	Y	N	N	58	Y	N
ECD02	Y	Y	Y	25	Y	N
ECD03	Y	N	Y	32	Y	Y
ECD04	Y	Y	Y	39	Y	N
ECD05	Y	Y	Y	66	Y	Y
ECD06	Y	Y	Y	118	Y	Y
ECD07	Y	N	N	129	Y	N
ECD08	Y	N	Y	13	Y	N
ECD09	Y	N	Y	42	Y	N
ECD10	Y	N	Y	37	Y	N
ECD11*	Y	Y		13	Y	Y
ECD12*	Y	N		22	Y	N
ECD13*	Y	N	Y	21	Y	N
ECD14*	Y	Y	Y	10	Y	N
ECD15*	Y	N	Y	30	Y	Y
ECD16*	Y	N	Y	52	Y	Y
ECD17**	Y			30	Y	Y
ECD18**	Y			11	Y	N
ECD19**	Y			18	Y	Y
ECD20**	Y			32	Y	N
ECD21**	Y			30	Y	N
ECD22*	Y			36	Y	N
ECD23**	Y	Y	Y	16	Y	N
ECD24**	Y		Y	13	Y	Y

\* ECD centres for which managers participated in the focus group;

\*\*ECD centres for which parents participated in the focus group

The number of ECD centres that participated in the study were made up of two categories. The first category, consisting of ten (10) ECD centres, were those that have been sampled using the random sampling and for which the ECD centre managers and parents were interviewed. The other category consisted of the fourteen (14) ECD centres that did not form the original list but were identified and incorporated into the study by virtue of their ECD managers and parents that participated in the respective focus groups.

Of all the ECD centres considered in the study, as reflected in Table 2 above, all of them were registered as NPOs and only nine of the 24 had annual reports archived at the Department of Social Development. This was because these ECD centres had not submitted the requisite reports, except for the founding documents which were required as part of the registration requirements.

#### **4.2.3 Profiles of Research Participants**

The research involved two sets of participants. The first set of the participants were made up of ECD centre managers and parents who participated in the face-to-face interviews, totalling ten (10) and eight (8), respectively. The second set of participants were made up of ECD managers and parents that constituted the focus groups, and these were composed of six (6) and eight (8) individuals, respectively. Among the parents, there were four (4) each of those that were involved in the governance committees in the ECD centres and those that were not involved.

##### ***4.2.3.1 Research participants in the face-to-face interviews***

As mentioned above, a total of 10 (ten) ECD centre managers out of the 12 (twelve) that had been planned participated in the face-to-face component of the study. For the parents, a total of eight (8) out of the planned 12 (twelve) participated in the face-to-face interviews. Tables 2 and 3 below present the profiles of these ECD centre managers and parents respectively, focusing on their gender, employment status, age and educational levels.

**Table 3: Summary of the profiles of ECD centre managers that participated in the individual face-to-face interviews**

Respondent ID#	Gender		Employment status		Age	Educational status		
	M	F	Employed	Unemployed		None to primary	Grades 8 - 12	Post matric
CM01		X	X		45			X
CM02		X	X		39		X	
CM03		X	X		39			X
CM04		X	X		72		X	
CM05		X	X		69			X
CM06		X	X		67			X
CM07		X	X		57			X
CM08		X	X		53			X
CM09		X	X		39			X
CM10		X	X		37		X	

CM= Centre manager; M= Male; F= Female.

All the ECD centre managers were females with ages ranging from 39 to 72. All of them recorded that they were employed in their respective ECD centres and as such were drawing salaries or stipends from those ECD centres. Educationally, the majority (70%) of them had post-matric educational levels, either degrees or diplomas. The remainder had a secondary schooling level (grades 8 – 12).

**Table 4: Summary of the profiles of parents that participated in the individual face-to-face interviews**

Respondent ID#	Gender of respondents		Employment status		Age	Educational status		
	M	F	Employed	Unemployed		None to primary	Grades 8 - 12	Post matric
PB01		X		X	62			X
PB02		X		X	57		X	
PB03		X		X	49			X
PB04		X		X	31		X	
PN01		X		X	28		X	
PN02		X	X		37		X	
PN03		X	X		29			X
PN04		X	X centre		41			X

PB= Parent who participated in a governing body; PN= Parent who was not a governing body; M= Male; F= Female.

As reflected in Table 4 above, all the parents that participated in the face-to-face interviews were females and their ages ranged from 28 to 62 years. The majority of these parents stated that they were unemployed, with only 3/8 of them employed. Educationally, the numbers were equally split between those with secondary schooling and those with higher education level.

#### 4.2.3.2 Profiles of research participants in the focus groups

Two focus groups discussions were conducted; one consisting of 6 (six) ECD centre managers and the other of 8 (eight) parents, respectively. The tables below (Tables 4 and 5) reflect the profiles of those ECD centre managers as well as parents according to their gender, age and educational status.

**Table 5: Summary of profiles of ECD centre managers that participated in the focus group discussions**

Participant ID #	Gender		Age	Employment status		Educational status		
	M	F		Employed	Unemployed	None to primary	Grades 8-12	Post matric
FGM01		X	57	X			X	
FGM02		X	35	X				X
FGM03		X	35	X				X
FGM04		X	30	X			X	
FGM05		X	52	X			X	
FGM06		X	42	X				X

**FGM**= Focus group respondent who was an ECD centre manager; **M** = Male; **F**= Female

All the ECD centre managers who participated in the focus group were females and their ages ranged from 30 to 57 years. All of them stated that they were employed in their respective ECD centres and were drawing salaries or stipends from those ECD centres. Educationally, one half of them had post-matric educational level and the other half had secondary schooling level.

**Table 6: Summary of profiles of parents that participated in the focus group discussions**

Participant ID #	Position in ECD centre		Gender		Age	Employment status		Educational status		
	GB	Non-GB	M	F		Employed	Unemployed	None to primary	Grades 8 – 12	Post matric
FGP01	X			X	49	X				X
FGP02		X		X	52		X		X	
FGP03	X			X	69		X		X	
FGP04	X			X	67	X		X		
FGP05	X			X	39		X		X	
FGP06		X		X	32	X				X
FGP07		X		X	22		X		X	
FGP08		X		X	32		X		X	

**FGP**= Focus group respondent who was a parent; **GB**= Governing body member; **Non-GB** = Non-governing body member, **M** = Male; **F**= Female

All eight parents that participated in the focus group were females and their ages ranged from 22 to 69 years. There were equal numbers of parents who were in the governing bodies and those that were not in the governing bodies. Five of the parents were unemployed while the remaining three were employed at the ECD centres. Educationally, one (1) parent had up to a primary educational level, five (5) had secondary education and two (2) had achieved higher education above matric.

#### **4.3 PILOT STUDY AND TESTING OF DATA-GATHERING INSTRUMENTS**

The importance of undertaking a pilot study to pre-test the data gathering tools on a small number of people before it can be used in the actual research has been highlighted (Walliman 2011:98). Its aims are manifold and include the validation of the procedures and quality of responses (Walliman 2011:175) and to help in detecting potential problems in the research design and/or instrumentation (for example whether the questions asked made sense to the targeted sample) and to ensure that the measurement instruments used in the study are reliable and valid measures of the constructs of interest (Bhattacharjee 2012:23). This means that the pilot study sought to establish, amongst others, the validity and relevance of the questions in the interview schedules against the research problem by targeting a small set of the target population.

### **4.3.1 Preparation of the Pilot Phase**

The pilot study was undertaken over a period of three weeks during May 2018. The purpose was to test the draft interview schedules for their validity and reliability in relation to addressing the research questions and the objectives of this study. For this purpose, four respondents drawn from two ECD centres operating in the geographic area of Mabopane were involved.

In the preparation for this pilot, the researcher identified the two ECD centres through the convenience sampling. This was done through telephonically contacting the centre managers and requesting their consent to participate in the interviews. The first two that responded positively were chosen and appointments were arranged.

### **4.3.2 Pre-testing of the Instruments**

All the instruments were pre-tested during the pilot phase of the study. Regarding the testing of the face-to-face interview schedules, the researcher administered the draft to four respondents drawn from two ECD centres operating in the geographic area of Mabopane, which did not form part of the sample of the study. These respondents were made up of an ECD centre manager as well as a parent.

Similarly, in respect of the testing of the tool for documentary review the same two ECD centres were targeted to test for its relevance and appropriateness in respect of being able to identify issues concerning organisational structures, mechanisms of their governance in relation to the role of parents in decision making and their systems of accountability. However, the researcher did not test the instrument for the focus group discussions because it contained similar question as the other two instruments. The other reason was because the focus groups were to be constituted by the identical sets of participants, namely parents and ECD centre managers.

These pilot interviews were timed to estimate the average duration it would take to conduct the actual interviews. At the end of the pilot interviews, the respondents were requested to indicate their views regarding how they felt about the questions asked, whether the questions made sense, and whether they were easy to answer. The answers were analysed and based

on the resultant analysis, a determination was made as to whether the questions and the how they have been asked (including the wordings) enabled the research to address the research questions and to achieve the research objectives. Considering the results of the pilot study and the views of the respondents, these research instruments were found to be appropriate and therefore there was no need for editing or adjustment of the questions.

#### **4.4 PREPARATION FOR FIELD WORK AND GAINING ACCESS**

The researcher coordinated the fieldwork throughout the study. This phase of the study was conducted for a period of two months and it commenced in June and ended in July 2018, and it involved two steps: preparation for the field work and gaining access.

##### **4.4.1 Preparation for the Field Work**

The first step that the researcher took was to recruit one research assistant who was well versed with the geographic area of Mabopane. The research assistant was to assist with the location of the sampled ECD centres as well as to support the researcher during data collection. The research assistant was also briefed about all the aspects of the study as part of preparing for the field work.

All the data gathering instruments as well as the informed consent forms were printed, and copies were made for the participants. These were packaged into batches which included the informed consent forms, face-to-face interview schedules and focus group guides. Two recording devices, consisting of the smart cellular phone and an electronic Dictaphone, were procured for use in the interviews. The simultaneous use of the two devices was to ensure that one of them would be a backup should any mishap happen with another one.

In the preparation for this pilot, the researcher identified the two ECD centres through the convenience sampling. This was done through telephonically contacting the centre managers and requesting their consent to participate in the interviews. The first two that responded positively were chosen and appointments were arranged.

#### **4.4.2 Gaining Access to the Participants**

The second step was to identify the ECD centres that would be sampled for the study. The Database of registered NPOs was accessed and the list of all the ECD centres operating in Mabopane was drawn. The list was arranged sequentially according to their NPO registration numbers and the sample was identified through the use of the random number generating programme.

The researcher used the contact details of the sampled ECD centres to telephonically contact the ECD centre managers to firstly introduce the research project to them and then to request their consent to participate. The researcher also used the opportunity to arrange for tentative appointments with the managers which were later confirmed for the dates and time at which they would be available. A schedule of the confirmed dates and times was diarised so that dates and times that clashed could be rescheduled.

The researcher ensured that the ECD centre managers were contacted a day before the appointed day. This was intended to confirm the appointment and to ascertain their availability in case there were changes. On the dates of the appointments, the researcher and the research assistant travelled together to meet with the ECD centre managers. The meetings served three purposes; firstly, to provide further information about the study projects, and then to ask the ECD centre managers to identify and recruit parents that could participate in the study. The third purpose was to conduct the interviews.

The ECD centre managers that participated in the interviews were also requested to recommend the other ECD centre managers and parents that could participate in the focus groups. This strategy was helpful because, after their own interviews, the ECD managers became more willing to assist in the recruitment of their colleagues for the group sessions. In the similar spirit, one of the ECD managers even offered their facility as the venue for the focus groups. This venue proved to be convenient for the two groups of participants as well as for the research team composed of the researcher and the assistant.

As indicated earlier, the researcher managed to conduct face-to-face interviews with ten ECD centre managers and eight parents. For focus groups, the researcher managed to bring

together six ECD centre managers and eight parents. All the interviews and the group discussions were recorded using the two recording devices mentioned earlier.

#### **4.5 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

This section of the chapter details the salient findings made according to the emerging themes in relation to the four main research questions. These questions and their related themes identified were with regards to (i) the roles and responsibilities of parents in ECD centres governance in respect of decision-making and accountability, (ii) barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres, (iii) extent to which the roles of parents promote good governance in line with existing codes of good governance, and (iv) suggestions of what can be done to promote the roles of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision making and accountability.

All these questions were only applicable for and were asked in the face-to-face interviews and focus groups. For documentary review, it was not expected that it would embrace all the information relevant to this study since the information that was analysed was of secondary nature and as such it could not have been specifically generated for the current purpose.

The analysis of the data from the documentary sources revealed the sub-themes which could be grouped together into three main themes that could be related to those observed from the analyses of the data generated from the other two methods. Consequently, the relevant themes identified were: (i) existence, size, composition, and roles and responsibilities of ECD centres governing body as they relate to decision-making and accountability, (ii) barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres, and (iii) extent to which the roles of parents promoted good governance in line with existing codes of good governance.

The data generated from the interviews, focus group discussions and documentary review were analysed in terms of the emerging themes across the research questions and objectives. This was followed by the comparison of findings across the data sources and data collection techniques in order to assess cross-validation in terms of congruences and diversions. To

assist this process, the verbatim quotations for different participants were labelled differently by corresponding alphabets and numbers. Towards this end, the quotations have been labelled as CM for an ECD centre manager; PB for a parent who served on the board of the ECD centre; PN for a parent who was not in a governing body; FGM for a focus group of ECD centre managers; while FGP denoted a focus group of parents. The numeric labels merely denoted the individual to whom the specific quotation was attributed according to their profiles as reflected in the respective tables (Tables 3 to 6).

#### **4.5.1 Roles that parents played in the ECD centres governance in respect of decision-making and accountability**

The participants were asked several questions that were intended to establish what the roles and responsibilities of parents were in the ECD centres governance in relation to decision-making and accountability. These question were concerned with: (i) understanding the factors that motivated the parents to get involved in the ECD centres and their governance, (ii) establishing what the actual roles were that parents played in decision-making and accountability in the ECD centres, (iii) determining what was being done to ensure that the parents played their roles and (iv) to find out how ECD centres engaged with their stakeholders, who those stakeholders were and what roles parents played in ensuring that the ECD centres accounted to its stakeholders. Applicable questions from this list were adapted for application regarding the documentary review component of data collection.

##### ***4.5.1.1 Motivation on parents to participate in the ECD centres and their governance***

It was important to understand the motivations that enticed parents to get involved in the governance of the ECD centres. Participants in the face-to-face interviews and focus groups were asked the question about what they thought motivated the parents to participate in the ECD centres and in their governance.

In respect of the face-to-face interviews, the views of the ECD centre managers and those of the parents did not differ as they both focused more on what was considered as the benefits derived by the parents from their involvement in the ECD centres. These views included that the parents were impressed by the levels of growth they were observing in their children as a result of attending at the ECD centres, they felt at ease because their children were safe

during the day while they were at work; the encouragement they were getting from the ECD centres; the extent to which their inputs were valued in the ECD centres and that the ECD centres were welcoming to them and practiced the open-door policy.

One of the ECD managers in the face-to-face interviews felt that the factor that influenced parents to get involved in the governance of the ECD centres was that it was one of the legal requirements from government for them to obtain government funding. ECD centres were therefore required to have a governing body constituted of stakeholders that included parents who would be involved in the decision-making in the ECD centre.

The follow-up question regarding the factors that motivated the parents to get involved in the governance of the ECD centres also elicited a variety of responses. Some of the views reflected by the ECD managers included the fact that parents wanted to know what was going on within the ECD centres; they were part of the communities in which the ECD centres operated from and that they wanted to add value towards the proper governance of the ECD centre and desired to see the ECD centres succeed.

The focus group discussions on what motivated parents to be involved in the ECD centres elicited a variety of factors. For the focus group of ECD centre managers, the factors reflected were: (1) the manners in which the ECD centres treated and cared for their children; (2) the progress that parents observed in their children; (3) the positive environment that was being created in the ECD centres; and (4) the accommodating management style in the ECD centres. From the side of parents, the view was that of their desires to see their children receiving quality care and preparation for formal schooling.

From the focus group of parents, the main concern was to ensure that the ECD centres were properly run for the benefit of their children. One of the responses succinctly captured the motivation for parents' involvement in the ECD centres as follows:

*“I feel parents get involved when they have an interest of seeing the ECD centre succeed and they want to ensure that the centre makes progress and goes forward. So, they want to come and support the ECD centre management and to also give their inputs and ideas*

*towards the proper running of the ECD centre because they have access to the ECD centre and are able to provide that support” (FGM04).*

For the documentary review, the corresponding questions applied sought to explore the existence, size, composition, and roles and responsibilities of ECD centres governing body as they related to decision-making and accountability within the ECD centres. It was found that the constitutions of the ECD centres indicated that they all had governing bodies or management committees. The sizes of these committees ranged from three to seven members and these committee members were elected from amongst the parents and other stakeholders during annual general meetings. The terms of office of the committees ranged from one year to three years and members could stand for re-election for additional terms of office for as long as they were needed and were willing to serve.

#### ***4.5.1.2 Roles that parents played in decision-making and accountability***

On the question of what roles parents played in the ECD centres, the parent respondents in the face-to-face interviews were of the views that they supported the ECD centre management and ensured that the environment was conducive for parents to sit and address issues with the centre management. Some of the issues included raising funds for the ECD centres given that some of them did not get funding from the state and therefore relied on raising funds to supplement the fees paid by the parents.

One of the parents stated as a matter of fact that:

*“We sit down with the principal (centre manager) wherein we also draw up the plan for the entire running of the centre, we have to come up with the year plans, fund raising strategies, and we basically come up with plans that will ensure that the centre achieves its aims and that it provides effective services” (PB03).*

While concurring with the parents regarding the role of raising funds, some of the ECD centre managers in the face-to-face interviews indicated that the parents also played supportive roles towards the management of the ECD centres and provided strategic direction and guidance on the development of annual plans, proper management of the budget and in ensuring that the centre complied with its legal obligations. The other activities

that the parents were involved in included the logistical support in the preparation of meals and in attending to the physical maintenance of the facilities at the centres.

On the important issue of participating in the governance decision-making and accountability, most of the parents interviewed were of the view that their roles involved active participation in the governance committees of the ECD centres. These entailed included assisting the ECD centre managers to make governance decisions and their involvement in meeting discussions and making inputs. To underscore the importance of parents in decision-making, one of the parents' respondent mentioned that:

*“Parents are important, and nothing can be done or achieved without the involvement of them. We share ideas and put suggestions to the table for free and fair resolutions thereby ensuring that we play the role towards the proper running of the ECD centre”* (PB04).

While concurring with these views of parents, the ECD centre managers emphasised that parents were involved in the governance committees and that they played active roles in supporting and collaborating with the ECD centre managers in decision-making within the ECD centres. This matter was articulated by one of the ECD centre managers who emphasised that:

*“Parents take part in the decision making, they are active and want to see their kids developing. They bring ideas and some even go the extra mile of securing sponsors for us, it is not all of them but so far am pleased with percentage of those who are actively involved”* (CM07).

For the focus groups, on the question of what roles parents played in the governance of the ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability, a myriad of responses was elicited. The focus group of ECD centre managers felt that parents ensured the proper running of the ECD centres and played a role in dealing with challenges that the ECD centres encountered. The other role highlighted was with regards to monitoring wherein parents were concerned with ensuring that the ECD centres were managed properly and that they were able to provide effective services.

Additionally, one other role for parents stressed was that of supporting the efforts of the ECD centres by contributing into decision-making. To further underscore the importance of the roles that parents played in the governance of the ECD centres, one of the views expressed in the focus group discussions of the ECD centre managers was that:

*“It is important to get parents involved in decision-making because you can’t take a decision alone as the management of the ECD centre and to satisfy our own needs without considering those needs of parents” (FGM05).*

It was also stressed in the discussions within the two focus groups that parents worked together amongst themselves and with the ECD centre managers to encourage those amongst them that were not so enthusiastic by coaxing them to participate. In expressing this view, one of the participants stated that:

*“When we are in the meetings, the participation of the parents is not the same. Some are difficult to work with and others are easy to work with. Those that are easy to work with understand and assist the ECD centre to try and encourage and invite those that are non-participants so that they can support us” (FGM04).*

Regarding the findings from the documentary review, the roles and responsibilities of the management committees in the ECD centres included exercise of the power and authority to raise funds, to invite and receive contributions, and to make by-laws for proper governance and management of the ECD centres. The other roles and responsibilities reflected on the constitutions include making decisions and acting on such decisions, which the committees believed it needed to make to achieve the objectives of the ECD centres. However, such decisions and their activities should not conflict with the laws of the country.

#### ***4.5.1.3 How the ECD centres ensured that parents effectively played their respective roles in the ECD centres***

Regarding the question about what was being done to ensure that the parents played their roles in the ECD centres, the findings from the interviews with parents and ECD centre managers showed marked similarities. Towards this end, the parent respondents indicated that there were regular communication and interaction with the parents as well as meetings where they were able to make inputs. In these ways, the ECD centre management ensured that the parents played their roles effectively.

On the part of ECD centre managers in the interviews, the views were that ECD centres encouraged parents to make their inputs in terms of suggestions and were engaged in discussions towards collective decision-making in collaboration with the ECD centre management. The ECD centres were also convening meetings regularly with parents and using various modes of communication, such as WhatsApp messaging, communication books and SMS's, whereby they were reminded about the roles they were expected to play.

Furthermore, a conducive environment was created within the ECD centres to make parents aware about the roles and responsibilities that they were expected to discharge. Towards this end, the parents in the governance committees played central roles in inspiring other parents to play their roles effectively. However, one dissenting view was that the ECD centres were experiencing challenges in getting the parents to play their roles because of a number of factors, including lack of interest amongst others. These issues will be discussed further in the later section dealing with barriers that inhibited parents from playing their roles effectively.

For the focus group discussions, on the question of what was being done to ensure that parents were enabled to play their roles within the ECD centres, there were marked similarities between the focus groups of ECD centre managers and the one of parents. In both respects, some of the participants mentioned communication as central and that they used multiple media of communication, including WhatsApp messaging, communication books, SMS's as well as informal one-on-one engagements with them. They indicated further that they generally ensured that they kept communication channels constantly opened and that parents were often invited to assist in various activities when required.

There was also a view expressed in the focus group of ECD centre managers to the effect that convening regular meetings with the parents was a challenge. This was because some parents stayed far from where the ECD centres operated and some of them had work commitments which prevented them from being available to attend meetings, hence the ECD centres had resorted to using other modes of communication when they had to alert the parents about matters that needed their attention.

In the case of the documentary review regarding what was being done to ensure that parents were enabled to play their roles within the ECD centres, no relevant information could be sourced. However, there was reference to the fact that parents participated in the affairs of the ECD centres in different forums since they constituted a sector of the key stakeholders.

#### ***4.5.1.4 Stakeholder engagements and the roles of parents in ensuring that the ECD centres accounted to their stakeholders***

On the questions about who their stakeholders were and how they engaged with those stakeholders, there were similarities between the findings from the interviews with parents and those of ECD centre managers. The parents in the interviews reported that the stakeholders with whom the ECD centres engaged included the parents who were cited as the key stakeholders, staff at the ECD centres, government departments as well as the governing body members and the community at large.

In the regards to what made these groupings the stakeholders, one of the parents explained as follows:

*“The government departments are stakeholders because they provide the legal and regulatory framework under which the ECD centre work, they also provide funding and other material support such as food for the children at the centre. Yes, parents are the key stakeholders because it is through them that there is an ECD centre which takes care of their children. The community is also the stakeholder as they support the centre. Besides, parents are drawn from the very same community. The centres also benefit from the community at large” (PB03).*

In concordance with the finding from the interviews with parents, the ECD centre managers listed the parents as their main stakeholders, the community at large, government departments, local business and other community organisations. Some of the ECD centre managers specified their stakeholders and these were explained as follows:

*“Some of the stakeholders include the DSD (Department of Social Development), Department of Education and the Department of Health. They are the stakeholders because they provide us with finances, they help with advises such as guiding us on issues of proper nutrition, and they advise when they pick up something that is not right at the centre. They also provide advice on the safety of the children in the centre*

*and ensure that the administration and programme work of the centre are in line with the applicable policies. Other stakeholders are parents because without parents there will be no children, and without children there will be no ECD centre. Also, the community is one of the key stakeholders, who help the centre more so about the security of the centre as they are the eyes and ears that make sure that the centre is safe and secured. We don't employ the security because the surrounding community serve as the security for the centre” (CM05).*

Another ECD centre manager in the interviews emphasised that:

*“The community is the key stakeholders, they are the ones am serving, we do not have any support or assistance from the government and other authorities because we are still a young ECD centre” (CM07).*

Yet another ECD centre manager stressed the stakeholders and their roles as follows:

*“My stakeholders are local businessmen and women who regularly give us donations, community members who help in upholding law, order and security, the parents and youth organisations who volunteer to come and give us a helping hand” (CM08).*

On the issue about how the ECD centres accounted to their stakeholders, the parents and ECD centre managers in the interviews agreed that the ECD centres consulted with the stakeholders through a variety of processes. These included regular communication using various media, meetings and formal reporting. To emphasise this, one of the ECD centre managers stated as a matter of fact that:

*“Regarding the government departments, normally we account by complying with the reporting requirements, often the departments visit the centre to come and provide oversight visits to check if things are going alright. For parents, we also have annual general meetings where the financial, programme and administrative reports are presented to them. For the community, we normally at the end of the year host celebrations where the community is invited, and we also hand over the remaining food parcels to the surrounding poor households when the ECD centre goes on recession. By so doing, we entice the community to feel as an important*

*stakeholder of the centre so that they can protect the centre from criminal elements who may steal the very same food parcels that the community would benefit from at the end of the year” (PB03).*

Instructively, on the question about what roles parents played in ensuring that the ECD centres accounted to the stakeholders, the issues mentioned amongst the parents and ECD centre managers in the interviews included consistently asking and interrogating about updates and progress that the ECD centres had made, ensuring that the governing body and management were answerable to them and to other stakeholders. The other role mentioned amongst the two groups was that of assisting the ECD centres to comply with their legal and contractual commitments.

Furthermore, on the issue of what could be done to guide the ECD centres on how they could improve on how they accounted to their stakeholders, the ECD centre managers were emphatic that the backing of government was critical in the development of the guidelines. There was also a view that, since there was a need to have a two-way relationship with the stakeholders, together they should collectively deal with the challenges that the ECD centres faced about issues of accountability.

The focus groups produced similar findings as those elicited from the interviews on the questions about who their stakeholders were and how they engaged with those stakeholders. The two focus groups reported that they had a variety of stakeholders and that they engaged with them on matters to do with the ECD centres. Stakeholders mentioned were the parents, government departments, funders as well as the local ECD forum. This forum was an informal structure consisting of numerous local ECD centres where they meet regularly to discuss matters of common interest.

On what this ECD forum was created to do, one of the ECD centre managers indicated as follows:

*“This forum is where we discuss issues that affect all of us as ECD centre managers and we discuss programmes and share information amongst ourselves. This enables other people to advise on how to address some of the challenges that we encounter,*

*so we learn from each other and we also report on what each of us is doing in their ECD centres. This is because if one ECD centre has issues, those can also affect other ECD centres. Again, we share information about developments within the sector for the benefit of everyone in the forum” (FGM01).*

In terms of how they engaged with parents as one of their key stakeholders, one of the ECD centre managers indicated that they involved the parents in everything that happened in their ECD centres and reported to them regularly. To stress this point, one of the respondents indicated that parents ensured that the decisions that had been taken were implemented and that the ECD centres were accountable to their stakeholders.

One participant in the focus group of ECD centre managers captured the essence of accountability to stakeholders and indicated that:

*“I see our stakeholders as existing in two forms. First, those that are relevant programme-wise, and this is the ECD Forum, and secondly those that are relevant administratively; which are made up of the members of the governing committee. Before we go to engage with the parents, we start internally with the committee and engage with them to source their views and guidance. At the ECD Forum, the accountability is about cooperation with other ECD centres and it serve as a platform where we engage on mutually beneficial matters issues that may affect all of us as members of the ECD Forum” (FGM05).*

On the question about what roles parents played in ensuring that the ECD centres accounted to the stakeholders, the finding from the focus group of ECD centre managers was that the ECD centres continuously strived to interact with the parents and to work in partnerships with them. The finding from the focus group with parents went further than that and stressed that parents proffered advices and support that were critical in ensuring that the ECD centres were accountable to their stakeholders. To this end, it was emphasised that:

*“I regard accountability as important because, if one person takes a decision, then it does not become the decision of the collective and this can create problems in future. So, it is important that decisions are taken by involving all relevant people to ensure accountability and collective decision-making” (FGP03).*

On how best ECD centres should consult with various stakeholders, the focus group of ECD centre managers were unanimous in their assertions that they always interacted with their stakeholders through meetings and other forms of consultations. For example, in the regards of interacting with other ECD centres in the ECD forum, they mentioned that they communicated and liaised regularly on matters of common interest. Similarly, the ECD centres accounted to government by way of adhering and complying with the law and policies of government as they relate to the ECD centres. For example, as registered NPOs, ECD centres must abide by the NPO Act and submit the required reports annually.

Furthermore, on the question of what could be done to guide the ECD centres towards improving how they accounted to their stakeholders, the focus group of ECD centre managers emphasised the need for development of a document that could guide them. This guidance should direct how to identify their different stakeholders and how they should account to their various stakeholders. To this end, one of the ECD centre managers stated as a matter of fact that:

*“...We account differently to different stakeholders, and therefore we need something that can guide us on how to identify the different types of stakeholders and how we can account to those varied and various stakeholders...”* (FGM05).

From the side of the focus group of parents, the emphasis was placed on the use of message books wherein as parents they were expected to sign as an acknowledgement that they have read the messages. Similarly, they were also able as parents to communicate to the ECD centre managers and educators using message.

Regarding the findings of the documentary review on the question of accountability, all the constitutions of the ECD centres reflected that different meetings were convened with the stakeholders wherein the ECD centres would report back to the stakeholders. The types of meetings were listed as annual general meetings which was held once a year, the special or extra-ordinary general meetings which could be held anytime when needed to address urgent matters as well as ordinary meetings which were scheduled quarterly to attend to standard order of business matters. The other type of meetings was that of the committees which were held regularly to provide oversight roles on the governance and management of the ECD centres.

The other aspect of accountability was with regards to the submission of written reports. To this end, the ECD centres were obligated by law to compile and submit annual reports to the government's Department of Social Development, amongst others. These reports detailed the ECD centres' major achievements over the preceding year. As stated earlier, only nine (9) of the total of 24 ECD centres had submitted these reports and therefore there was limited information that these documents could provide. Additionally, all these reports were of standard format which essentially provided for the annual achievements and the types and number of meetings held during the preceding year, with no other information provided.

#### **4.5.2 Barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision-making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres**

Given the importance of the roles that parents played in the ECD centres in relation to governance decision-making and accountability, it was critical that the study explored what barriers parents faced in their involvement in the ECD centres. Towards this end, the participants in the face-to-face interviews and focus groups were asked to reflect on these barriers and to also indicate what was being done to remedy that situation where it occurred.

The findings from the face-to-face interviews reflected differences between the parents and the ECD centre managers regarding the barriers that parents experienced in their involvement in the governance of ECD centres. The parents were of the strong views that the major hindrance was lack of interest on the part of parents in the running of the ECD centres, particularly in the case of male parents. The other factor mentioned amongst the parents was the negative attitudes they had about being expected to pay the fees while also being expected to participate in the activities of the ECD centres. It did appear that for them it is more than enough to just pay the money and leave the rest to the ECD centre management to sort out.

In the case of the ECD centre managers, the factor that was highlighted as a barrier that impeded parents' involvement in the governance of the ECD centres was that parents did not care and were just not interested in getting involved for as long as their children were cared for. However, there was also a view amongst the ECD managers which denies any barriers. One of the managers stated confidently that:

*“For me, up to so far, we have not experienced any barriers that may hinder parents’ participation and involvement. This may be because, as parents, they come and advise the centre and provide it with the suggestions that can assist towards making the centre effective...They are in fact willing and committed to supporting the centre” (CM05).*

On what was being done to address the barriers that prevented parents from participation in the governance of the ECD centres, where they existed, the sentiment shared by the parents and ECD centre managers in the interviews was that the ECD centres attempted to lure the parents through initiating activities which could motivate them to develop a keener interest and to be involved in the affairs of the ECD centres. To illustrate this, one of the ECD centre manager interviewee pointed out that:

*“I try to plea with them during meetings putting an emphasis on the importance of their input in our structured activities and the confidence it gives to their children... we make them aware of the challenges their children may have” (CM06).*

The findings in the focus group discussions regarding the barriers that affected parent’s involvement in the governance decision-making and accountability differed between the two groups. For the group of parents, the views were that they felt excluded and therefore discouraged to participate. The focus group of ECD centre managers mentioned lack of interest in the education and wellbeing of their children; not caring about what was happening in the ECD centre and the wrong impressions that parents had that it was enough to just pay the fees for their children and play no further role. The latter was well articulated by one of the respondents in the focus group of ECD centre managers who stated as a matter of fact that:

*“I think that the major hindrance that make parents not to play their roles is the issue of money. Here, parents think that their only role is to pay the money and beyond that, they feel they have no other roles to play in the running of the ECD centres” (FGM05).*

For the documentary review aspect, none of the sourced records referred to the matter of the barriers that affected the parents’ involvement in the governance of the ECD centres.

However, the constitutions of the ECD centres stipulated that, where a member of the committee was not able to attend three meetings in a row without approval, such a member would be relieved of his/her duties and a new member would be appointed to take the place of that member. There was therefore no evidence suggestive of barriers that parents encountered in respect of playing their roles and executing their responsibilities with regards to governance decision making and accountability.

#### **4.5.3 Extent to which the roles of parents promote good governance in line with existing codes of good governance**

It was important to assess the extent to which the roles that parents played promoted good governance in line with existing codes of governance, such the King Codes of Governance, civil society's Independent Codes, and government issued Codes of Good Practice for South African Nonprofit Organisations (NPOs). The participants were asked several questions that were intend to: (i) discover if the ECD centres had the codes of conduct or policies related to governance and whether or not they were being implemented in their ECD centres; (ii) identify the roles that parents played in ensuring that the codes of conduct and the policies were being adhered to and were enforced; (iii) clarify if the ECD centres considered the codes of governance and policies important; and (iv) establish if the ECD centres required guidance on how to develop or improve those codes of conduct and policies. As indicated earlier, some of these questions were not applicable to the documentary review, however those that were applicable were adapted for use in this data gathering technique.

##### ***4.5.3.1 Existence of the codes of conduct or policies related to governance in the ECD centres***

Regarding the question of whether the ECD centres had codes of conduct or policies, the parents and ECD centre managers in the interviews collaborated each other to the effect that the ECD centres had the codes of conduct that were applicable to ECD practitioners as well as to the parents, separately. However, the ECD centre managers felt that those codes were insufficient and needed to be strengthened to give them more biting power.

The parents and ECD centre managers in the interviews also agreed together that there were also strict policies for admission of learners which parents had to comply with. Additionally,

the committee members who were constituted of parents and other stakeholders also signed contracts with the ECD centres at the beginning of their terms of office, binding them to obey the rules of conduct as committee members. The other rules which they were compelled to obey were those built into the constitution or founding document of the ECD centres, which had been approved by the parents and other stakeholders. However, as one of the ECD centre managers mentioned, not all the parents obeyed them:

*“We do have a code of conduct in place as well as an admission policy and the constitution, although certain parents do not adhere nor respect them, but we try earnestly to instil those in our operation” (CM03).*

In an endeavour to enforce the codes and related policies and rules, the parents and the ECD centre managers in the interviews reported that they regularly reminded the parents and other stakeholders about them and ensured that those that did not comply were encouraged to do so. While parents did not play any significant role in the enforcement of these instruments, there was an understanding and acknowledgement that it was the responsibility of everybody involved in the ECD centres to ensure that these were understood and adhered to.

Similarly, on the question of whether their ECD centres had codes of conduct or policies, the focus group discussions with parents and ECD centre managers confirmed that they indeed had the codes and policies. However, there were views from the focus group of ECD centre managers that those codes and policies were not enforceable because they were not good enough, were insufficient or not useful. They stressed further that they would like to be assisted to develop the codes and policies that they could apply in their ECD centres and which would be enforceable.

One of the participants emphasised this point and indicated that:

*“While we have policies in our ECD centres, those are not adhered to. For example, even when parents have signed them and had made an undertaking that they would comply with them, they do not. It will help if we have something that comes from the government and that has official status, perhaps they can comply” (FGM05).*

On the side of the parents in the focus group, the sentiments were contrary to those of the ECD centre managers as they felt that if these codes of conduct and policies were ineffective, the situation in the ECD centres would have descended into anarchy wherein everyone would be doing as they pleased. Nonetheless, they stressed the need to strengthen those instruments for the enhancement of governance and management systems within the ECD centres.

#### ***4.5.3.2 Guidance on how the ECD centres could develop or improve on the codes of conduct and policies.***

Given the challenges of compliance and the weaknesses observed in the existing codes of conduct and related policies within the ECD centres, it was critical for the study that the participants reflected on what guidance could be developed towards the improvement of those instruments. The finding from the interviews with parents and ECD centre managers suggested that there was a great need for guidelines that would ensure the strengthening of the governance and managements systems within the ECD centres to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in the running of the ECD centres.

The responsibility was placed on the side of government to assist towards the development and improvement of the codes of conduct and related policies. The interviewees also expressed the sentiments that the state should additionally develop norms and standards that would be applicable to all the ECD centres, and that would be binding to all the various actors within the ECD sector. This issue was expressly expressed by one of the interviewees who declared that:

*“We would also like to get guidelines that will ensure the effective and efficient running of the centre. Issues such as conflict management always emerge when there is more than one person involved. We will really appreciate support to develop them since the social workers enquired about them, but they did not provide the guidelines of how we can develop them” (CM05).*

Similar sentiments were expressed in the focus group discussions with the ECD centre managers regarding the value placed on the codes of conduct. The discussions emphasised that the codes of conduct and the policies were important for the proper running of the ECD centres and confirmed that there was a need for the development of the norms and standards

that would be binding to parents and other actors involved in ECD centres. It was also pointed out that these norms and standards should use the more authoritative language that would compel everyone to comply and these should be applicable to the entire ECD sector.

There was also a view in the focus group with ECD centre managers that government should develop these norms and standards as they would carry more authority and authenticity. This was emphasised as follows:

*“We would like government to develop something that can guide us in those matters of codes of conduct and by virtue of them being official, that can help a lot with enforcement” (FGM04).*

With respect to the documentary review, the analysis in this regard was based on the various roles and responsibilities that have been articulated in the constitutions (or founding documents) of all the ECD centres that participated in the study. As indicated earlier (in subsection 4.5.3.2), these included exercising the power and authority to raise funds, making by-laws and rules for proper governance and management, decision-making and ensuring that those decisions were actualised.

The founding documents of the ECD centres also stipulated that the meetings of the committees should quorate such that a simple majority of members should physically be present in any meeting for that meeting to be an official meeting and be entrusted with the responsibility to make binding decisions to all the committee members. Similarly, the general meetings of parents and other stakeholders would also require quorums for them to carry authenticity and make binding decisions.

#### **4.5.4 Suggestions towards promoting the roles of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision making and accountability**

Considering the current roles that the parents played within the governance of the ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability and the challenges that were currently experienced in that regard, the participants were asked several questions intended to provoke them into suggesting how the roles could be promoted. These questions were intended to probe the participants regarding: (i) what roles they would want parents to play

in decision-making and accountability; (ii) what could be done to make the parents aware about the roles that they were expected to play in the governance of the ECD centres and (iii) what was required to assist the parents to be able to play the roles that they were required to play.

#### ***4.5.4.1 Suggestions on the roles that parents should play in decision-making and accountability***

The views canvassed in the interviews showed similarities between those of parents and ECD centre managers. The sentiments expressed in the interviews with parents were that, while female parents were trying their level best to play out their roles, the male parents were not actively involved in the affairs of the ECD centres ostensibly because of their lack of interest. Another feeling was that more focus should be directed towards ensuring that the fathers played the more meaningful roles in the education of their children and not just be the providers of funds towards the fees.

From the side of the ECD centre managers in the interviews, the feeling was that there was a need for improvement in the level of involvement by parents. This was because not all the parents were putting enough efforts, and this required the management to design activities in which all parents could participate and collaborate in the development of healthy and supportive partnerships and make the ECD centres the centres of excellence.

The focus group of ECD centre managers wanted the parents to assist them and to cooperate with them regarding the activities within the ECD centres. The other views were that parents should try to understand the needs of the ECD centres and to respond positively when called to the meeting. They were also urged to participate actively in supporting the ECD centre management so that they could collectively move the ECD centres forward.

There was however a concern raised by one participant in the focus group of ECD managers who felt that because Black people undermined each other, they were more willing to support and play the roles they were supposed to play in White-run ECD centres. This ECD centre manager indicated that:

*“They will follow all the rules required of them, but here because we are Blacks, they tend to undermine us, and they have ideas that the ECD centre management rely only on their children to exist and that we only depend on their fees for our own needs. So, they tend to do as they please. We Black people seem to require to be coerced into doing something and we cannot willingly comply in the absence of some coercion” (FGM05).*

Regarding the documentary review, this aspect of the inquiry could not be explored in the archived documents of the ECD centres. This was because, as mentioned earlier (in section 4.5.3), some of these questions in the study were not applicable to the documentary review as they were not specifically collated for that purpose.

#### ***4.5.4.2 Suggestions on what could be done to make the parents aware about the roles that they were supposed to play in the governance of the ECD centres***

The interviews with parents and ECD centre managers elicited similar sentiments on what could be done to make the parents aware about the roles that they were supposed to play in the governance of the ECD centres. To this end, some of the parents and the ECD centre managers interviewed felt that there was a need for training and awareness campaigns where parents could be made aware of the important roles that they ought to play in the ECD centres.

The responsibilities to conduct those trainings and awareness campaigns were entrusted on the relevant government departments, such as Department of Social Development and Education. Additionally, the participants from both the parents and ECD centre managers suggested that there was a need for meetings and consultations with parents where the opinions could be shared about how to conscientise them on the important roles they could play in the ECD centres’ quests towards the holistic development of their children.

For the focus group discussions, the responses from the focus group of ECD centre managers placed the responsibilities on the hands of government do something towards encouraging parents to play their expected roles. The need was expressed for government to development the norms and standards that could guide and instruct what roles parents should play and how they should play those roles. The impression was that if the rules or norms and standards

emanated from government, then they would have authority and credibility and would therefore be likely to be followed to the letter by the parents.

There was also a feeling in the focus group of ECD centre managers that government should provide people that should come and educate the parents and advise them about the importance of the ECD and how they could participate in making the ECD centres successful. Parents should also be made to understand that those norms and standards were legally binding to all of them.

One participant in the focus group of the ECD managers insisted that:

*“We would like to make a call to government to bring in someone who the parents can listen to because in most cases they do not listen to us since they are familiar with us. It would need someone that they are not familiar with and who has authority to persuade them regarding the roles that they should play in the ECD centres”* (FGM01).

Additionally, there was one other feeling to the effect that someone from government should come and workshop parents in an endeavour to make them aware about those roles that they were supposed to play and that these workshops should also involve other stakeholders within the ECD centres. It was expected that the parents would be more willing to obey if they were also informed why it was important for them to get involved and play those roles in the ECD centre.

On the issue of how government could assist the ECD centres, the two focus groups concurred that the state was not taking its responsibilities seriously. To underscore the importance of the role that government could play in ensuring that the ECD centres were supported, one of the participants in the focus group stressed fervently that:

*“Government talks about universal ECD for children and yet they do not support all the ECD centres. There are those that receive support and others, like most of the ECD centres here, do not get any support from the government, even in the form of subsidies”* (FGP02).

Similar to what was indicated earlier (in section 4.5.4.1), the documentary review could not explore this aspect of the inquiry because of the limitation alluded to. To reiterate this limitation, it was emphasised that since they were not specifically collated for that purpose, some of the questions in the study were not applicable to the documentary review.

## **4.6 DISCUSSIONS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

This section of the chapter discusses the findings made in the study based on the research questions. It draws from literature review and theoretical frameworks underpinning this study to proffer the interpretation of these findings based of those research questions.

### **4.6.1 Findings on the roles and responsibilities of parents in the ECD centres governance in relation to decision-making and accountability**

#### ***4.6.1.1 Discussions of the findings on the roles and responsibilities of parents in the ECD centres governance in relation to decision-making and accountability***

The first question of the study asked was “*what motivates parents to get involved in the governance of the ECD centre in which they participate?*”. The views of the participants were numerous and included that: the parents were motivated by their desires to see the ECD centres achieving their objectives for the benefit of their children; they wanted to add value towards the proper governance of the centres; and that they were encouraged by the positive attributes inherent within the ECD centres as well as the enabling environment created within the ECD centres.

On the next question which asked, “*what roles do parents play in the ECD centre's governance in relation to decision-making and accountability?*”, the finding indicated that the parents played supportive roles towards ensuring that the ECD centres practiced effective governance regarding decision-making and accountability. These roles included participation in governance committees; enacting by-laws for proper governance and management of the ECD centres; assisting the centres to raise funds; developing annual plans together with the centre management; assisting the ECD centres to comply with their legal and contractual commitments and attending to the manual tasks when required.

Regarding how the ECD centres ensured that parents did indeed play their roles, the parents and ECD centre managers in the individual interviews and the focus groups agreed that regular communication, meetings and other interactions between the parents and the ECD centre management were the channels used for this purpose. Some of the modes of communication included SMSs and WhatsApp messaging on the cellular phones as well as written messages in the message books. There were, however, dissenting views to the extent that some parents were not as enthusiastic to get involved in the affairs of the ECD centres for various reasons, including lack of interest and general apathy.

On the issue of stakeholder engagement and accountability, the participants shared the views that the ECD centres accounted to their stakeholders through formal reports, report-backs in meetings as well as other forms of consultations. The stakeholders mentioned were the parents since they brought the children to the ECD centres, funders who supported the ECD centres financially, government departments; such as Departments of Health, Education and Social Development; which supported them materially and otherwise as well as the surrounding communities and organisational forms within the communities that served as the protectors and beneficiaries of the ECD centres.

On the question about what could be done to guide the ECD centres towards improving on how they accounted to their stakeholders, one of the findings was that there was a need for government interventions through developing relevant guidelines that should direct ECD centres on how they could identify and account to different stakeholders. The other finding was that the managements of the ECD centres and the stakeholders should collectively address the challenges faced about how the ECD centres accounted to their stakeholders.

#### ***4.6.1.2 Interpretation of the findings on the roles and responsibilities of parents in the ECD centres governance in relation to decision-making and accountability***

There were four key findings made in respect to the research question on the roles and responsibilities of parents in the governance decision-making and accountability. These findings were with regards to (i) the nature of the roles that parents played in decision-making within ECD centres, (ii) accountability issues within the ECD centres, (iii) stakeholder engagement of the ECD centres, and (iv) reasons for the ECD centres to account to parents as their key stakeholders.

***(i) Roles of parents in decision-making***

The literature on the governance of ECD centres has found that, while the parents were represented in the governing bodies of the majority of the ECD centres, there were no clearly defined roles that they played (DSD 2014:41). Furthermore, the literature found that there was no evidence that the governing bodies served their intended roles within the ECD centres that were part of the previous study, except to indicate that parents did not occupy positions of significance such as chairpersons, secretary or that of a treasurer (DSD 2014:41). It was emphasised that, whereas parents were represented in the majority of these ECD management committees, few of them occupied any position of significance which included those of chairpersons, secretaries or treasurers within these committees (DSD 2014:41).

The government issued codes of governance (DSD 2001:23-24) stipulates that the roles and responsibilities of the board should include (i) setting and maintaining the vision, mission and values of the organisation, (ii) establish and monitor policies for proper functioning of the organisation, (iii) ensure compliance with organisation's governing document and to the law, (iv) ensure accountability and (v) maintain effective board performance. When compared to these roles outlined in the literature, the ones mentioned by the research participants, which included fund raising, passing of by-laws, development of annual plans and compliance with legal and contractual obligations, could be deemed to be consistent and to some extent practicable to ensuring that the ECD centres exercised some aspects of good governance in regards to the roles of parents, particularly within governance structures of the ECD centres.

***(ii) Accountability within the ECD centres***

Further on the issues of accountability, the literature has underscored that the civil society organisations, of which the ECD centres are a part, are bound on moral and procedural bases to account to their stakeholders (Kalder 2003:5). This implies that the organisations of civil society have a moral or ethical obligation to account to the people for whom the organisation has been established, and as a matter of procedure they are obligated to account to their staff by following internal management processes (Kaldor 2003:5).

On the moral obligation for accountability, the ECD centres should be accountable to their beneficiaries, or the people for whom the ECD centres have been established and who invariably consisted of the children directly and the parents indirectly. It would therefore be expected that one of the groups of people to whom the ECD centres in the study were required ethically to account to would be the parents before anyone else. The finding in this regard has confirmed the centrality of parents in the accountability framework for ECD centres. However, the finding did not clarify what the roles of parents were in the moral accountability framework except as the beneficiaries of accountability from the ECD centres.

Regarding procedural accountability, it would be expected that the ECD centres' management would account internally to the staff in line with the procedures or the policies that they followed in the management of the ECD centres. The finding of the study has alluded to the fact that the ECD centres accounted to their staff members by way of holding meetings at which the programmatic issues were dealt with and the staff was given the opportunities to know what was happening within the ECD centres.

### *(iii) Stakeholder engagement within the ECD centres*

The literature reviewed has defined stakeholders as persons or groups of persons that could either be natural or juristic and who either individually or collectively have either a legal or moral claim of ownership on an organisation or a company (Barrett 2001:38). Another definition pointed to any group or individual who could affect or was affected by the achievement of the objectives of the organisation and on whom the existence, survival and success of the organisation depended (Fontaine et al. 2006:6). The participants in the study aptly mentioned the stakeholders of the ECD centres that fell within these broad definitions of what the concept of stakeholders entails. To this end, participants cited parents, the state and other interested parties such as the surrounding communities and funders as the stakeholders of the ECD centres.

Regarding the engagement of stakeholders, Moggi et al. (2016:8) have referred to the aims of engaging the stakeholders as including to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and to empower those stakeholders for collective decision-making and joint accountability. In this regard, the findings have suggested that the ECD centres somewhat kept their stakeholders

informed about what was going on in the ECD centres on a regular basis by ways of written reporting as well as report-backs in the meetings and other interactions.

The other finding was that the stakeholders were being consulted, involved and that they were collaboratively taking part in the decision-making and accountability within the ECD centres. However, on the mechanisms to empower the stakeholders for collective decision-making and joint accountability with the ECD centre management, the participants did not mention this aspect. They have instead mentioned that government should develop relevant guidelines that could direct and empower ECD centres to identify and account to their different stakeholders.

Furthermore, since the stakeholder theory assumes that stakeholders have different interests (Coule 2015:78), it is important within the context of an ECD centre that the representatives of parents, who are the stakeholders, should be an integral part of its governing body. This is so because parents represent an interest group and have invested financially and otherwise in the ECD centres for the benefit of their children who derive direct benefits from the services provided in the ECD centres. The findings have emphasised that the parents were the key stakeholders and that they were actively involved in the ECD centres, although some of the parents were deemed to be lacking in their commitments.

From the social capital perspective; which emphasises on collective action and working relationship between parents associated with the ECD centres; it would be expected that these collaborations amongst the parents would lead to the attainment of the shared goals for better outcomes for themselves and their children and motivate them to cooperate for the realisation of good governance in the ECD centres they were associated with. Similarly, the findings have emphasised that parents participated cooperatively because they shared the aspirations of better outcomes for their children and the success of the ECD centres.

*(iv) The reasons for the ECD centres to account to parents*

The literature has emphasised the reasons from the normative and instrumental perspectives on why organisations should account to their stakeholders (Barret 2001:38-39). From the normative perspective, it is considered inherently desirable and ethical to account to the

stakeholders, it makes good business sense from the instrumental perspective account to the stakeholders (Barret 2001:38-39).

The study has found that the ECD centres accounted to parents as important stakeholders. This may be so because they were morally compelled to do so given that the parents had entrusted their children's care and safety to them. Again, because the ECD centres depended on the parents for their existence and survival, it made good business sense for the former to account to the latter, and to ensure that the services provided met the latter's expectations. Keeping with what the participants have admitted to, it was also found that the practice of accounting to stakeholders was not effective and hence the participants appealed for guidance to be able to identify who their stakeholders were, why they were stakeholders, and how they as ECD centres could effectively and comprehensively account to their different stakeholders.

On the accountability dimensions of explanatory, responsive and accountability with sanctions (Anheier 2005:237-238), it would be expected that the ECD centres would explanatorily account to parents as their indirect beneficiaries while also ensuring that children's needs were catered for as the direct beneficiaries. The ECD centres would also be expected to apply responsive accountability when they consider the needs of their immediate communities when developing and implementing their programmatic activities and service delivery. Regarding accountability with sanction, the ECD centre would be legally bound to report to the relevant authorities and to comply with the requisite government's regulatory frameworks, such as the NPO Act amongst others.

In all these respects, the findings of the study suggested that the ECD centres were not adequately aware of and did not sufficiently fulfil these dimensions of accountability in the manner and extent to which they accounted to parents, their communities and organisations within their communities as well as to the government departments. Nonetheless, the modes of exercising accountability that the ECD centres followed in respect of these various stakeholders took the forms of meetings, report-backs as well as formal reporting mechanisms which the participants described as ineffective and in need of strengthening.

## **4.6.2 Findings on barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision-making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres**

### ***4.6.2.1 Discussions of findings on barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision-making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres***

The question asked of the participants was “*what are the barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres?*”. The study found that there was no consensus amongst the participants about the existence of the barriers that affected the involvement and participation of parents in the governance decision-making and accountability within the ECD centres. One view, which was not dominant, was that there were no barriers since parents were actively involved in advising the ECD centre management and in providing the necessary governance support.

The other view, which was dominant amongst the participants, was that there were barriers affecting the involvement of parents in governance decision-making and accountability. To this end, the participants identified the lack of interest and care regarding the education and wellbeing of children on the part of parents, as well the demotivating feelings of exclusion from the affairs of the ECD centres experienced by parents.

The other finding was that, while female parents were generally more actively involved, their male counterparts were deemed to be lacking interest. The reason advanced by the participants was that the male parents saw their roles only in terms of paying the fees for their children and leaving the rest as the responsibilities of the management of the ECD centres. In effect, the study has found that the predominance of the research participants was female, ostensibly because of lack of interest on the part of their male counterparts on getting involved in the activities focused on caring for the children. Anecdotally, this may emphasise the strongly held views that females were more inclined towards caring professions than their male counterparts. However, it was not the preoccupation of the study to focus on that aspect.

Regarding what the ECD centres were doing to address these barriers, the finding was that the ECD centres tried to lure the parents through introducing internal activities of interest

that would involve the parents. The views were that these would motivate the parents to have more interest to getting involved in the affairs of the ECD centres and thus play a more meaningful role in the education and wellbeing of their children.

#### ***4.6.2.2 Interpretation of the findings on the barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision-making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres***

The literature and the theories of social capital and stakeholder do not directly address the barriers that could affect parents, as key stakeholders in the ECD centres. Nonetheless, the literature has underscored the critical roles that parents could play in the governance of the ECD centres. To this end, the audit study commissioned by the Department of Social Development in 2014 has found that parents did not effectively play their roles, and more so that those roles were not clearly outlined (DSD 2014:47).

Similarly, the findings from the interviews and focus groups highlighted some of the barriers that were said to affect the involvement of parents in the governance decision-making and accountability within the ECD centres. Some of these barriers had to do directly with the parents as they related to their perceptions about the ECD centres and their lack of interest particularly on the part of male parents, while others were said to be inherently institutional, and that the ECD centres were not doing enough to motivate the parents to play their expected roles.

#### **4.6.3 Findings on the extent to which the roles of parents promoted good governance in line with existing codes of good governance**

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##### ***4.6.3.1 Discussions of findings on the extent to which the roles of parents promoted good governance in line with existing codes of good governance***

The central question here was “*to what extent do parents' role in governance within ECD centres promote good governance in accordance with the available governance tools, such as king codes of governance, civil society's independent codes, and government issued codes of good practice for South African nonprofit organisations. (NPOs)?*”. The participants were in accord with regards to the need to strengthen the roles that the parents play in the

governance of the ECD centres as one of the endeavours suggested towards ensuring that the roles become compatible with aspects of good governance.

One of the findings was that ECD centres had the codes of conduct and policies related to governance, and that these applied to the parents, committee members as well as ECD practitioners, separately. These were either stand-alone documents or they were integral parts of the ECD centres' constitutions or their admission policies which parents were required to sign upon the admission of their children in the ECD centres. However, there was also a strong feeling amongst the participants, particularly the ECD managers, that these codes of conduct and policies on governance were ineffective and thus they needed to be reinforced and given more biting power.

With regards to guidance on how the ECD centres could develop or improve their codes of conduct and policies on governance, the participants suggested that there was a great need for guidelines from the side of government that would be binding to all actors within the ECD sector. These guidelines, or the norms and standards as some participants suggested, should be geared towards the strengthening of the governance and managements systems within the ECD centres to enable achievement of effectiveness and efficiency in the running of the ECD centres.

#### ***4.6.3.2 Interpretation of the findings on the extent to which the roles of parents promoted good governance in line with existing codes of good governance***

The literature on good governance has pointed out to the importance of clear delineation of the roles that the governance boards (or bodies) should play. For example, the King codes of governance (IoDSA 2009:20) prescribes that the board should have a charter that outlines its responsibilities. It goes further to outline the roles and functions of the governing bodies (or board) as including those to provide strategic direction of the organisation and to set the values to which the organisation should adhere (IoDSA 2009:19-21).

Furthermore, the government issued codes of good practice (DSD 2001) outlines the focus on good governance within NPOs. This involves the understanding of a cluster of dynamic and interconnected issues that include the development of and adherence to codes of conduct, ethical behaviour and integrity, public trust, and transparent decision-making and

accountability (DSD 2001:9-10). The King IV report (IoDSA 2016) outlines the 16 principles which guide good governance practices within NPOs. These include the requirement for the governing body to provide ethical and effective leadership, support ethical culture, instil values of responsible citizenship, inspire good performance, advocate for effective control, ensure role clarity, inculcate effective exercise of authority and responsibilities, and promote custodianship of good governance, amongst others (IoDSA 2016:89-93).

In these regards, the findings of the study revealed that the ECD centres were not practicing good governance to the extent that it had been articulated in the available governance tools, such as the King codes of governance (IoDSA 2016) and government issued codes of good practice (DSD 2001), for example. The deficiencies that existed could be perceived in the areas of the provision of effective leadership and lack of a charter or codes of conduct that was being applied within the ECD centres since the participants admitted that their instruments on good governance were ineffective. They also intimated on the need for the development of guidelines or the norms and standards by the state that would guide the ECD centres by outlining the roles that parents could play that could lead to the promotion of good governance.

The literature has also emphasised the centrality of stakeholder involvement in good governance within the ECD sector towards ensuring that, among others, the diverse needs of the children were met (Vitiello & Kools 2010.1). In this regard, the findings of the study have underscored the importance of stakeholder engagement in the affairs of the ECD centres particularly in respect on governance decision-making and accountability. As indicated earlier, the findings have also alluded to the urgent need for intervention towards strengthening and expanding accountability to stakeholders as one of the remedial action that government should undertake. It was therefore clear that, on the issue of involving stakeholders as part of ensuring good governance, the ECD centres fell short of the realisation of this principle of good governance.

#### **4.6.4 Findings on suggestions towards promoting the roles of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability**

##### ***4.6.4.1 Discussions of the findings on suggestions towards promoting the roles of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability***

The relevant question here was “*what guidelines can be developed in order to promote the role of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision making and accountability?*”. On what suggestion could be put forward towards promoting the roles of parents in the governance of the ECD centres in relation to governance decision-making and accountability, the finding of the study was that the parents were needed for assisting and supporting the ECD centres with regards to advancing the work of the ECD centres. Parents were also implored to actively participate in supporting the decision-making and accountability processes within the ECD centres.

There was also a finding to the effect that improvements were needed in the level of involvement by parents, and more so from the side of the male parents, so that they could play more meaningful roles in their children’s education and welfare and not just serve as sources of funding only. The ECD centre management body was required to design activities as a way of luring parents to participate and collaborate towards the creation and strengthening of healthy and supportive partnerships and improving service provision.

Regarding what could be done to make the parents aware about the roles that they were supposed to play in the governance of the ECD centres, the finding made was that neither parents nor ECD centre manager participants wanted to take the responsibility and instead sought to abdicate this responsibility to government. They also felt that government, by virtue of the resources, authority and credibility it commanded, was well-placed to assume that responsibility and that they should develop norms and standards to direct parents on what their roles should be and how they should execute those roles. The state was also given the responsibility to inform and educate parents and other stakeholders about their respective roles and that it should further ensure that it took its responsibilities seriously by supporting all the ECD centres towards the realisation of the goals of universal access.

#### ***4.6.4.2 Interpretation of the findings on suggestions towards promoting the roles of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability***

The literature reviewed has pointed to the fact that the ECD centres used improper constitutions which did not adequately reflect the functions of the governance committees and it enjoined the Department of Social Development, as a government department integral to the ECD programmes, to develop standardised templates and guidelines for the ECD centres which should among others outline the core roles and responsibilities of governance committees (DSD 2014:47). The findings of the current study have underscored these weaknesses in the regards of the roles and responsibilities of parents in governance decision-making and accountability.

One of the tenets of engaging parents as stakeholders is for the engagement to result into their empowerment which aims to locate the final decision-making in the hands of parents so as to enable them to share the responsibility for the decisions and resultant accountability for their outcomes (Moggi et al. 2016:6). The findings suggested that parents were not empowered to be able to actively and effectively participate in and influence decision-making. This was so because, admittedly, parents lacked understanding and appreciation of their roles in the regards of decision-making and accountability, and hence their pleas to government to develop the norms and standards that could direct them about their roles and educate them about how they could play those roles.

Furthermore, the King codes of governance provides that the organisation should consider the knowledge, skills and resources required for conducting the business of the board when determining the number of directors serving on the board (IoDSA 2009:25). This implies that the recruiting of members of the governing bodies of organisations should be informed by what the organisations need to ensure their effectiveness. In the context of this study, it is critical that when recruiting parents to participate in the governance bodies of ECD centres, a consideration should be borne of the skills and capabilities that the parents bring. Having parents for the sake of having them only serves as an endeavour towards tokenism and does not serve the purpose of empowering them and advancing good governance.

On establishment and composition of governance bodies, the study found that the governance bodies of the ECD centres in the study were constituted of parents of children currently and recently enrolled in the ECD centre as well as educators or practitioners, who collectively represented the core stakeholders. Their composition seemed to be comparable with the provision of the King codes of governance which dictated that the board should comprise a balance of power, with most non-executive directors who should be independent (IoDSA 2009:25). In the case of the ECD centres, the equivalence of the non-executive directors would be the parents serving on the governance bodies.

#### **4.7 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the findings from the data collected using the triangulated data collection method encompassing the face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions as well as the archived records of the ECD centres using documentary review. It commenced by presenting the profiles of the geographic area of Mabopane before focusing on the profiles of the research participants in the forms of the ECD centres, ECD centre managers and parents that participated in individual interviews and focus groups. Ten ECD centre managers and eight parents participated in the individual interviews while different sets of six ECD centre managers and eight parents took part in the focus groups, respectively.

The findings were presented in line with the emerging themes that were condensed into four main themes. These themes focused on the roles that parents played in governance decision-making and accountability; the barriers that affected parents' involvement in governance decision making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres, the extent to which the roles that parents played promoted good governance in line with existing governance tools and finally outlining the guidelines towards the promotion of parents' roles within ECD centres. Overall, the findings suggested concurrences within and between the sources and the data collection methods.

The findings were further discussed and interpreted using the theoretical frameworks of social capital and stakeholder theories that have been adopted for this study. The subsequent chapter will present the summary, conclusions and recommendations based on these findings.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and the recommendations of the study. It starts off with sketching out the synopsis related to the various aspects of the study before presenting the conclusions that were drawn and proffers recommendations based on the study findings, the literature on aspects pertinent to the study as well as the frameworks of social capital and stakeholder theories used to support this study.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

This qualitative research used case study research design to explore and gain insight into the practice of good governance within ECD centres operating in Mabopane in relation to decision-making and accountability. The issues of governance

The study was guided by the four main research question relating to (i) exploring the type and extent of the roles that parents played in the governance of the ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability, (ii) identifying the barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision-making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres, (iii) establishing the extent to which the roles that parents play promote good governance in line with existing governance tools and then (iv) outlining the guidelines that could be developed to address the identified flaws within the ECD centres in relation to parents' role in governance decision-making and accountability.

The objectives of the study, which related to its questions, were to explore the roles of parents in governance within ECD centres in relation to governance decision-making and accountability, evaluate the effectiveness of the role of parents in the governance of ECD centres specifically to discover the barriers to their participation in the governance decision-making and accountability; assess the extent to which these roles were compatible to the available governance tools (such as King Codes of Governance, civil society's Independent

Codes and government issued Codes of Good Practice for South African NPOs), and to identify possible models to guide the promotion of the role of parents in decision-making and accountability in an endeavour to improve governance practices of ECD centres.

The research respondents were constituted of ECD centres, ECD centre managers and parents associated with the ECD centres, and who either participated in their governance committees or were not involved in the committees of the ECD centres. Furthermore, one set of the respondents participated in the individual face-to-face interviews and another set was involved in the focus groups. In these regards, ten (10) and eight (8) of ECD centre managers and parents, respectively, took part in the face-to-face interviews. A further six (6) ECD centre managers and eight (8) parents participated in their respective focus groups. Thus, the numbers of individual participants were 18 (eighteen) for the individual interviews and 14 (fourteen) for focus groups, culminating into a total of 32 research participants.

Moreover, records of 24 ECD centres made up of copies of the constitution (or founding documents) together with the annual reports were examined in the documentary analysis. This number was made up of ten (10) ECD centres whose managers took part in the individual interview, six (6) whose managers participated in one of the two focus groups and a further eight (8) ECD centres from whom parents who took part in the other focus group were drawn.

A triangulated method of data collection, incorporating individual face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and documentary analysis, was used to collect data from three sources consisting of samples of ECD centre managers, parents and archived documents. Data generated were analysed using the thematic content analysis and constant comparison analysis.

The key findings of the study were presented in the previous chapter (Chapter 4) and this section presents their summaries in line with the research questions and objectives. This section also employs the literature and the theories used in the study to draw interpretations and conclusions on the research findings.

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS ON THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

This section of the chapter presented the conclusions made with regards to the findings of the study based on the objectives that the study sought to achieve. The relevant aspects of the literature that was reviewed were used to contextualise these conclusions.

#### **5.3.1 Conclusions on the findings in respect of the roles and responsibilities of parents in the ECD centres governance in relation to decision-making and accountability**

The objective of the study here was to explore the roles of parents in governance within ECD centres in relation to governance decision-making and accountability. From the social capital and stakeholder perspectives, the participation of parents as the major stakeholders in the governance of the ECD centres and the roles that they played were underscored in the findings. Importantly, on the basis of the findings made with regards to the roles and responsibilities of the parents in the governance decision-making and accountability, the study concluded that there were appreciable levels of consistency with what the literature on good governance had enumerated in this regard, but that these roles tended to be more on the operational side than on strategic level to the extent that they would be more influential towards making the ECD centre more effective.

Furthermore, it was informative that one of the findings of the study emphasised that parents, as the key stakeholders, were playing central roles in the governance decision-making and accountability within the ECD centres. However, the study also found that there was a general feeling that the nature and extent of accountability to the stakeholders was lacking and hence the need was identified for interventions by way of the development of guidelines in this regard.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that the ECD centres did not practice adequate accountability and there was inadequate understanding of issues of accountability. These issues relate to the accountability dimensions proposed by Anheier (2005:237-238) that can be used to analyse and apply accountability, namely: explanatory accountability, responsive accountability as well as accountability with sanctions. Additionally, other dimensions of accountability, namely political, financial and administrative (Helao 2015:174) which are

essential for the ECD centres were not stressed despite their centrality when diverse stakeholders were involved.

### **5.3.2 Conclusions on the findings in respect of the barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision-making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres**

The objective here was to “*evaluate the effectiveness of the roles that parents play in the governance of ECD centres specifically to discover the barriers to their participation in the governance decision-making and accountability*”. The findings of the study have confirmed that there were some barriers and factors that negatively affected the parents in their involvement in governance decision-making and accountability. By their nature, these barriers were not insurmountable and therefore they could be addressed both from the structural and agency perspectives.

This means that there was a need for interventions that were directed firstly at the ECD centres to improve their accessibility to parents and make them parents-friendly through, amongst others, the initiation of inclusive activities. Secondly, the interventions could be directed at the parents themselves to enable them to be more positive about their interactions with the ECD centres, particularly because of their children's interests and as a way of motivating them to get involved in the governance decision-making and accountability.

### **5.3.3 Conclusions on the findings in respect of the extent to which the roles of parents promoted good governance in line with existing codes of good governance**

The related objective of the study here was to “*assess the extent to which these roles are compatible to the available governance tools (such as King Codes of Governance, civil society's Independent Codes and government issued Codes of Good Practice for South African NPOs)*”. Overall, the findings have pointed to general flaws inherent in the governance practices of the ECD centres that participated in this study, particularly within the domains of parents' involvement and participation in governance decision-making and accountability. These weaknesses were more pronounced when it came to the functions and responsibilities of parents within the ECD centres boards, aspects of decision making as well as issues about accountability. While this may be the case, nonetheless there was a common

appeal among the participants in the study for the improvements on these aspects of their ECD centres. On their parts, the research participants were also more than willing to embrace those efforts that could bring about improvements in the status quo.

Therefore, the conclusions that can be drawn are two-fold. Firstly, the ECD centres were not at the level wherein they could practice good governance in respect of the roles that parents, as the key stakeholders, were currently playing. Secondly, by their admissions, there are concerted interventions needed to strengthen the practice of good governance within ECD centres that participated in this study, appreciably in the domains of governance decision-making and accountability roles of parents. The clearly delineated roles, coupled with the willingness and capabilities to execute them, by the parents as the major stakeholders would likely lead to the realisation of good governance and substantial accountability systems with the ECD centres.

#### **5.3.4 Conclusions on the findings in respect of suggestions towards promoting the roles of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision making and accountability**

The associated objective here was to “*identify possible model to guide the promotion of the role of parents in decision-making and accountability in an endeavour to improve governance practices of ECD centres*”. On the basis of the findings in this regard, it can be concluded that there was a strong need for the development of governance model to address the flaws identified within the ECD centres in relation to parents’ role in governance decision-making and accountability and to promote the role of parents in the governance of ECD centres toward the attainment of appreciable standards in relation to decision making and accountability.

Based on their own accounts, the recruitment of parents into the governing bodies of the ECD centres did not draw the candidates with requisite knowledge base and required commitment and temperament that would be of value to the ECD centres. The compelling conclusion arrived at was that the lack of understanding and appreciation of their roles regarding decision-making and accountability on the part of parents did not auger well for the realisation of good governance within ECD centres. More needed to be done from the

side of the state and other stakeholders to capacitate and empower the parents to be able to understand and carry out their requisite roles, functions and responsibilities within the ECD centres. Without any empowering interventions, the involvement of parents and the roles that they played would remain token and not add value to the ECD centres in their quest for attaining and maintaining adequate standards of governance decision-making and accountability.

## **5.4 STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of the study have pointed to several flaws that existed within the governance practices of ECD centres that formed the samples of the study. These findings must be considered within the context of the existing endeavours to promote acceptable governance practices within the civil society organisations, and notably within the nonprofit sector, which the ECD centres registered as NPOs fall within. These findings are to a large extent consistent with previous studies on governance within NPOs as well as the literature reviewed in the topic of governance in general and governance within ECD centres in particular (Vitiello and Kools 2010:1; RSA 2014:18).

Based on the findings of the study and the literature canvassed about governance decision-making and accountability, this study is proposing several recommendations. These recommendations are linked to the research objectives and are made in relation to the gaps that were highlighted and with the aim to endeavour towards ameliorating the situation with regards to the roles of parents in governance decision-making and accountability.

### **5.4.1 Recommendations on roles of parents in the ECD centre's governance in relation to decision-making and accountability**

Objective One of this study was to explore the role of parents in governance within ECD centres in relation to governance decision-making and accountability. The findings have alluded to the gaps with regards to the roles that parents were currently playing in the governance decision-making and accountability within the ECD centres that participated in the study.

- The recommendation made in this regard is for the government, as one of the stakeholders and benefactor of the services of the ECD centres, to develop standardised templates and guidelines through which it would ensure that the ECD centres have and use the proper constitution which would clearly delineate the roles, functions and responsibilities of the parents as the primary stakeholders. Towards this end, the Department of Social Development, as the key government institution charged with the responsibility to extent ECD programme to the public, should take the responsibility to execute this function.
  
- Since the parents are the core participants in the governance of the ECD centres, they would be the primary actors with regards to the exercise of those roles. It is thus recommended that the roles, functions and responsibilities of parents in the governance decision-making and accountability should be both practical and strategic and should include those advocated for in the available governance tools, notably the government issued codes of good governance (DSD 2001:23-24):
  - a. Formulate, maintain and promote the vision, mission and values of the ECD centre
  - b. Provide strategic direction and leadership towards ensuring that the ECD centre succeeds in its mission and is able to achieve its goals
  - c. Establish and monitor policies for proper functioning of the organisation,
  - d. Ensure that the ECD centres comply with their individual constitutions, policies, all their governance instruments and abide by the applicable laws of the country
  - e. Safeguard that the ECD centres have accountability systems in place and are able to account to their various stakeholders, and
  - f. Uphold effective governing body performance and set up systems for the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the governing bodies of the ECD centres.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations in respect of the barriers that affect parents' involvement in governance decision making and in ensuring accountability within the ECD centres**

Objective Two of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the role of parents in the governance of ECD centres specifically to discover the barriers to their participation in the governance decision-making and accountability. The findings have pointed to the challenges that parents experienced when they were to get involved in the governance of the ECD centres, while the ECD centres also encountered hindrances in getting the parents to be involved within their governance structures.

Two distinct recommendations have been developed in order to address the barriers that parents have identified; which include the feelings of exclusion that they experienced in the ECD centres as well as the inconducive and less-friendly environments they reported at the ECD centres:

- Firstly, it is therefore recommended that all the barriers and other factors that could encumber parents should be addressed so as to create an enabling atmosphere within the ECD centres for the parents to feel welcomed and to instil the sense that their participation and involvement within the ECD centres were valued.
- Secondly, to draw in different individual members with requisite skills, knowledge and other such attributes that would enhance the capacity of the ECD centre to be effective, it is hereby recommended that the ECD centre should set out the recruitment criteria and skills base for the members who would participate in the governance body. These skills should include, amongst others, leadership, basic financial and fund-raising skills as well as administrative skills. Additionally, training, capacity development and empowerment of parents and other stakeholders should be prioritised to ensure that they acquire and improve on these requisite skills so as to enhance sustainability of individual ECD centres and to improve efficiency in the delivery of services to the beneficiaries.

### **5.4.3 Recommendations on the extent to which parents' roles in governance within ECD centres should promote good governance in accordance with the available governance tools**

Objective Three of this study was to assess the extent to which the role that parents played in the governance of the ECD centres were compatible to the available governance tools (such as King Codes of Governance, civil society's Independent Codes and government issued Codes of Good Practice for South African NPOs). The findings of the study have intimated that, while the ECD centres in the study had the stand-alone or integrated codes of conduct and policies on governance that were applicable to the parents, committee members as well as ECD practitioners, these were deemed ineffective by the participants and there was therefore a need for strengthening them. Given the high premium placed on good governance from the literature reviewed, two recommendations are hereby made with regards to addressing the situation:

- Firstly, it is hereby recommended that to ensure that the governance instruments of the ECD centres are effective, the ECD centres should develop codes of conduct or related policies that clearly and distinctively outline the expected behaviour, roles, functions and responsibilities of the people that are involved in the running of the ECD centres. This should include those of parents, governing body members and educators, as well as the ECD centre managers. Towards this end, the relevant government department, notably the Department of Social Development, should assist the ECD centres by developing norms and standards in relation to issues such as responsible behaviour, expected roles, functions and responsibilities that would guide them towards being able to develop their own tools that are appropriate to their own circumstances.
- Secondly, where the codes of conduct or related policies currently exist and whether as stand-alone or as part of the constitution, the responsible government department should review those instruments with the aim to strengthen them. They should also ensure that these governance instruments focus on governance and management systems within the ECD centres aimed at achieving effectiveness and efficiency in the governance and management of the ECD centres.

#### **5.4.4 Recommendations on suggestions towards promoting the roles of parents in the governance of ECD centres in relation to decision-making and accountability**

Objective Four of this study was to identify possible model to guide the promotion of the role of parents in decision-making and accountability in an endeavour to improve governance practices of ECD centres. Concerning the roles and responsibilities of the boards, the study found that the board members did not understand their roles and responsibilities because these have not been well defined. The King III codes of governance prescribes that the board should provide effective leadership based on an ethical foundation and that it should have a charter that outlines its responsibilities clearly (IoDSA 2009:19-20).

In terms of the recruitment and appointment of the members of the governance body, the King III codes furthermore requires that the board should be appointed through a formal process (IoDSA 2009:26). The study has found that the members of the governance bodies of the ECD centres were constituted of parents and educators or practitioners who have been elected to participate in the governance of the ECD centres.

Furthermore, in relation to the meetings and decision-making processes, the study found that meetings were not being held as prescribed, were poorly attended by members and that the decisions were generally taken by consensus or by voting on issues. The King III codes requires that the board should meet at least four times per year; that is at least once per quarter (IoDSA 2009:22). With regards to decision-making, the King III codes prescribes that the organisation should strike the balance between the valid interests and expectations of its stakeholders and the best interest of the organisation when taking decisions within the organisation (IoDSA 2009:47).

Given the foregoing, this study has made three recommendations on how the issues raised could be addressed. These recommendations are with regards to improving governance practices and entail: promotion of the roles of parents; recruitment and appointment of the governance body members; as well as the meetings and decision-making of the governance bodies.

Therefore, this study recommends as follows:

- On what suggestions could be made towards promoting the roles of parents in the governance of the ECD centres, it is hereby recommended that the DSD together with relevant stakeholders should develop models to address the flaws within the ECD centres in relation to parents' role in governance decision-making and accountability. These models should clearly outline the functioning of governance bodies and should incorporate the clearly delineated practical and strategic roles and responsibilities of parents in general, and in particular of those that participate in the governance bodies of the ECD centres, to enable them to not only understand their responsibilities but also to know how they could execute those responsibilities within the context of improving governance in the ECD sector. Some of these roles and responsibilities are articulated in the Codes of good governance (DSD 2001:23-24).
- Regarding the recruitment and appointment of the governance body members; it is recommended that an open process of nominations, elections or appointment of members be followed for the new members of the governance bodies who should be drawn from parents, practitioners and other stakeholders, where this is possible. This should be followed by the induction of new members upon commencing their tenure as governance committee members. This would ensure the authentication of the election process, legitimisation of the governance body and ultimately ensure the effectiveness of the structure.
- On the issues of meetings and decision-making of the governance bodies, it is thus recommended that the meetings of the ECD centres must be scheduled appropriately in accordance with the needs of the individual ECD centre and in consideration of the circumstances of the individual committee members to ensure effectiveness. However, there should be at least four meetings per annum, one per quarter, which should be attended by governance committee members consistently. The decisions by the governance body must be responsive to the needs of the individual ECD centre as well as those of different stakeholders, and notably those of the parents as the major stakeholders.

#### **5.4.5 Recommendations for further research**

This study has attempted to make a modest contribution to knowledge on governance in relation to the participation and the roles played by parents in decision-making and accountability within the ECD sector, and generally in civil society on issues of stakeholder involvement in governance. Given the limitations of the scope of the study in terms of the geographic area, sample size, methodologies, the research objectives as well the constraints of time and resources, it is recommended that:

- There is a need to study how the flaws and the shortcomings related to parents' effective involvement in the governance of ECD centres could be ameliorated for the benefit of good governance and value-addition for the sake of their children's education and development. Such further study needs to be undertaken to develop a suitable course of action to encourage parents, capacitate and provide them with the knowledge and the tools on how to get involved and contribute to improving governance practices within the ECD centres.
- This further study should seek to comprehensively explore the issues of governance within the ECD sector as a whole with the aims, amongst others, to develop relevant theory or theories that could best be applied towards understanding governance practices within the ECD sector in South Africa specifically, and the South African NPO sector in general.
- Furthermore, since this study was not exhaustive and did not cover even a fraction of the issues of governance and development as these are vast and expansive, future studies could focus on the explorations of the roles of stakeholders in other facets of good governance and development from the civil society perspective. Such aspects could include how participation, accountability, rule of law, equity, transparency, effectiveness and efficacy could apply in endeavours towards the promotion of good governance and development within civil society in general, and the NPO sector, given their proximities to communities.

## **5.5 SUMMARY**

This exploratory study was aimed at gaining insight into the practice of governance within a sample of 24 (twenty-four) ECD centres operating in the geographic area of Mabopane, situated in Tshwane Metro, Gauteng province. It employed a triangulated research method of face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and documentary analysis to collect data from three sources consisting of ECD centre managers, parents and archived records to investigate governance practices and their challenges within the sampled ECD centres.

The key findings of the study have pointed to limitations that existed within ECD centres with regards to how they conducted governance, such as poor attendance of meetings, absence of codes of conducts which guide the behaviour of members as well as indeterminate decision-making processes. These findings should be understood as not representative of all the ECD centres, but given the priority placed on ECD sector by the government of South Africa, they could be used as the bases for improving governance practices and guiding policy towards enhancing effectiveness of service delivery by all stakeholders

The study made several recommendations that included capacity building and training of board members to ensure that they were made aware of and empowered to execute their roles and responsibilities, which role and responsibilities should be well defined. Finally, the study has recommended for further studies which could focus on the exploration of the roles of stakeholders in other facets of good governance and development from the civil society perspective, including how participation, accountability, rule of law, equity, transparency, effectiveness and efficacy could be applied in endeavours towards the promotion of good governance and development within civil society in general, and the NPO sector in particular, given their proximities to communities.

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## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1 APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

  
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**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE  
APPLICATION FOR ETHICS REVIEW AND CLEARANCE**

Date: 13 December 2017

Ref  
#:2017\_DEVSTUD\_Student\_15  
Name of applicant: K MBELE  
Student #: 41864859

Dear Mr/Ms K MBELE

**Decision: Ethical Clearance**

**Name: K MBELE**

---

Student in the Department of Development Studies  
Supervisor: Dr SO Oloruntoba  
Co-Supervisor: N/A

---

**Proposal: PARENTS' ROLE IN GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES IN MABOPANE**

---

**E-mail:** 41864859@mylife.unisa.ac.za  
**Qualification:** MA in Development Studies

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Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Department of Development Studies' Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Your application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the Department of Development Studies' Research Ethics Review Committee on 7 December 2017.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Department of Development Studies' Research Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are



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substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.

- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

**Note:**

The reference number, 2017\_DEVSTUD\_Student\_15, should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Department of Development Studies' Research Ethics Review Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof DA Kotzé  
Chairperson: ERC  
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## 7.2 APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FOR INFORMANTS OF THE STUDY

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in the research project entitled “*Parents’ role in governance: The case of early childhood development centres in Mabopane*”. The research project is in compliance with the requirement for me as a student of the University of UNISA to complete a Master of Arts (MA) degree in the Department of Development Studies of the university.

Through this research, I intend to investigate the role of parents in governance practices within ECD centres registered under the Nonprofit Organisations Act (NPO Act) with the objectives to:

- Explore the role of parents in governance within ECD centres in relation to governance decision-making and accountability,
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the role of parents in the governance of ECD centres specifically to discover the barriers to their participation in the governance decision-making and accountability;
- Assess the extent to which these roles are compatible to the available governance tools (such as King Codes of Governance, civil society’s Independent Codes and government issued Codes of Good Practice for South African NPOs).
- Identify possible model to guide the promotion of the role of parents in decision-making and accountability in an endeavour to improve governance practices of ECD centres.

You have been selected as a possible participant to provide information regarding governance practices within your organisation. I will use this information solely to complete this research project and I will ensure that I adhere to all applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to my field of study.

I also confirm that the University, through the Department of Development Studies’ Research Ethics Review Committee, has granted permission with reference number **2017\_DEVSTUD\_Student\_15** to conduct this study.

Please note that this information will be treated in the strictest confidential manner to ensure that your name and that of your organisation will not be recorded anywhere in the report and that no one

will be able to link you or your organisation with the answers you have given. You are participating freely and voluntarily and can at any time withdraw your participation.

The interview will take approximately 25 to 45 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your participation

Yours faithfully,

**Mbele Kgoto Jan**

**Student #: 41864859**

---

**Consent Form**

Please indicate your consent to participate in this research by completing the form below and returning it to me on [caesar.mbele@gmail.com](mailto:caesar.mbele@gmail.com) (email) or alternatively to [41864859@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:41864859@mylife.unisa.ac.za) (email).

I,.....(name) the undersigned, hereby confirm that (Please tick with **X** on the appropriate space provided):

<b>The purpose of this research exercise has been explained to me</b>	Yes	No
<b>I understand what is expected of my participation and that I deserve the right to withdraw my participation at any time</b>	Yes	No
<b>I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this research</b>	Yes	No
<b>Please sign and date to indicate that you agree to participate fully in this exercise</b>	Signature:	Date: