

**INVESTIGATING THE RELEVANCE OF THE
DIPLOMA IN EDUCARE WITH REGARD TO
MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE
WORKPLACE**

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**INVESTIGATING THE RELEVANCE OF THE
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DECLARATION

I declare that

**INVESTIGATING THE RELEVANCE OF THE DIPLOMA IN EDUCARE
WITH REGARD TO MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE WORKPLACE**

**is my own work, that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated
and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not
previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any other higher education
institution for a degree.**



MASTURA JAMODIEN



DATE

ABSTRACT

Within the broad theoretical context provided by debates on the importance of focussing on programme teaching towards workplace-orientated goals and greater co-operation between the world of work and the higher education sector in order to develop work integrated curricula, this study attempted to investigate the relevance of the diploma in educare with regard to meeting the needs of educare centres.

The study as a whole is set against the general literature on the development of the transdisciplinary curriculum that integrates the world of work with academic programmes and the development of transdisciplinary curriculum in educare in particular. The literature that was surveyed covered the following aspects: The needs of the educare practitioner in the workplace, important aspects that need to be present in the Early Childhood curriculum in order for the child to learn effectively and how could the higher education sector and the workplace, work together to develop a balanced curriculum that is offered to the educare practitioners at the institutions.

Along with this investigation quantitative as well as qualitative data were collected about the curriculum that is offered to potential educare practitioners by means of questionnaires, interviews and focus group interviews.

The conclusion drawn from the findings of the literature survey and the investigation is that the integration of theory and practice in the teaching and learning processes should be encouraged if the development and professional growth of students are to be achieved, and more interaction should take place between the higher education sector and the workplace in order to increase the performance levels of students and their employability in the workplace.

The present study therefore, is an attempt to encourage the integration of theory and practice and collaborative efforts between higher education institutions and the workplace in curriculum development and is in line with the new South African curriculum that places emphasis on the relevance of education to the needs of the workplace and to the lives of South Africans.

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED

TO

MY LATE PARENTS

AGNES AND GABRIEL FERREIRA

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GLOSSARY

ANC	African National Congress
Block area	A section in the pre-school where young children play with blocks
Creative area	A section in the pre-school where young children are involved with art activities
ECD	Early Childhood Development
Educarer	Term used to describe adults who provide both care and education, the service that cannot be separated when working with young children
N4 – N7	These are semester courses. N4 is the first semester. N5, N6 and N7 are second third and fourth semesters respectively
Essential outcomes	A term used to describe generic cross-curricular learning outcomes equated with the aims of traditional curricula.
GNU	Government of National Unity
Learning Outcomes	A generic term used to describe any programme of learning including syllabi, schemes of work and lessons preparation.
National Qualifications Framework	A term used for the regulatory framework of qualifications which is to effect an integrated approach to education and training.

Outcomes-based curriculum development	Curriculum development which starts with the formulation of the purposes of learning and teaching and uses these as the criteria for further curriculum development.
Practitioner	The term refers to both formally and non formally trained individuals providing an educational service in Early Childhood Development.
Specific Outcomes	A term used to describe the learning outcomes specified for individual areas of learning at different levels of complexity.
ECD	Early Childhood Development
Relevance of the Diploma in Educare	Means that the diploma must contribute to the particular work that each educator does.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF FIGURES	
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	i
ABSTACT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
GLOSSARY	v - vi
 CHAPTER 1: THE RELEVANCE OF THE DIPLOMA IN EDUCARE WITH REGARD TO MEETING EDUCARE PRACTITIONERS' NEEDS IN THE WORKPLACE	
1.1 Research context	1
1.2 Problem statement and justification	3
1.3 Objectives of study	4
1.4 Clarification of research focus	5
1.5 The structure of the study	5
 CHAPTER 2: THE LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 The needs of the workplace	7

2.2.1	The roles of the practitioner in the workplace	8
2.3	Changes in the World of Work	12
2.4	The Role of the Higher Education Institution	13
2.4.1	Nadler's events model 1982	14
2.5	The Professional growth and development of the practitioner	16
2.6	Assessing the Curriculum	16

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	18
3.2	The debate about quantitative and qualitative research	18
3.2.1	Quantitative or Positivist Research	18
3.2.2	Qualitative Research	19
3.2.2.1	Interpretivist Research	19
	Characteristics of positivism and interpretivism (table 3.1)	20
3.2.2.2	Critical Research	21
3.2.3	Advantages of qualitative or positivist research	21
3.3	The Researchers Position	22
3.4	Methods of Data collection	23
3.4.1	The Interviews with Educare practitioners	23
3.4.2	The Questionnaire with students who had registered	25
	The Questionnaire	25
3.4.3	Focus group interviews with students	27
3.5	Data Capturing, Analysis and Interpretation	27

3.6	Validity and Reliability of the Study	28
3.7	The Research Group	28
3.8	Limitations of the Study	29

CHAPTER 4: THE RELEVANCE OF THE DIPLOMA IN EDUCARE TO THE NEEDS OF THE WORKPLACE

4.1	Introduction	30
4.2	Interviews with Educare Practitioners	30
4.2.1	What an educare practitioner should be able to do in workplace	31
4.2.2	How the diploma in educare prepared practitioners to perform the duties in the world of work	31
4.2.3	Most useful subjects in the workplace	31
4.2.4	How specific subjects help the practitioners to become effective in the workplace	32
4.2.5	Less useful subjects offered in the diploma	32
4.2.6	Why some subjects did not help much in the workplace	32
4.2.7	What should be done to make the diploma more relevant to the needs of the workplace	33
4.2.8	General comments from the practitioners	33
4.3	Responses of students to the questionnaire	34
4.3.1	The diploma prepares you to perform all duties in the workplace	34
4.3.2	Child Health as a subject needs improvement at the college	36
4.3.2	Personnel development equips students with all the skills necessary to manage an educare center	37

4.3.4	Getting practice to set up a stimulating environment	38
4.3.5	Need more time to practice effective teaching approaches	40
4.3.6	Expressive studies is a useful and enjoyable subject	41
4.3.7	Able to play and teach children to use different musical instruments	42
4.3.8	Regret that you registered for the diploma in educare	44
4.3.9	The rating for Child Health	45
4.3.10	The rating for Personnel Management	46
4.3.11	The rating for Education and didactics	47
4.3.12	The rating for Expressive studies	49
4.3.13	The rating for Music	50
4.4	Focus group interviews with students	51
	Identification of gaps in subjects	51
4.4.1	Health	51
4.4.2	Personnel Management	51
4.4.3	Education	51
4.4.4	Expressive Studies	52
4.4.5	Music	52
4.4.6	Bridging the gaps	52
4.4.7	General feelings and comments about the diploma	54

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Introduction	55
5.2	The summary of the research findings	55

5.3	Recommendations	57
5.4	Conclusions	58
	Bibliography	60
	Appendix A	67
	Appendix B	69
	Appendix C	71

GRAPHS

	PAGE
1. The diploma prepares you to perform all duties in the workplace	35
2. Child Health needs improvement	36
3. Personnel development equips students with all the necessary skills to manage an educare center	37
4. Getting enough practice to set up a stimulating environment	39
5. Need more time to practice effective teaching approaches	40
6. Expressive studies useful and enjoyable	41
7. Able to play and teach different musical instruments	43
8. Regret that you registered for the diploma in educare	44
9. Child Health	46
10. Personnel Management	47
11. Education and Didactics	48
12. Expressive Studies	49
13. Music	50

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

Much has been written about the importance of changing the current approach to higher education from subject teaching towards subject-orientated goals to more marketable programme teaching towards workplace-orientated goals. The training based on the separation of the training encounter from the natural world of work is viewed as unsuited for helping people learn new roles and skills necessary for the workplace (Hirschham L, Gilmore T and Newell T 1989). This shift creates a need for greater co-operation between the world of work and the higher education sector in order to develop work integrated curricula. Lundall P (2002) suggests that the channels of communication between workplaces and higher education institutions need to be more formalised, if they are to influence curriculum development.

In South Africa the changing approach to programme teaching towards workplace orientated goals has been highlighted in the National Commission on Higher Education Report of 1993, Education White Paper of 1997 and the National Plan for Higher Education in 2001. South Africa has a history of an education system that has been perceived to be not good enough for the majority of South Africans (Christie, 1985). Current reforms in the South African education system have led to the introduction of the new curriculum that aims at improving the quality of education. The new curriculum recognises that “education is the tool for developing a person to his or her full potential” (Department of Education, 1997:3). In this new curriculum emphasis is placed on the relevance of education to the lives of South Africans. It has been realised that relevant education has the potential to meet the needs of the learners as well as those of the workplace.

The needs of the educare practitioners in the workplace play an important role in the child’s life because from the moment the children arrive at school until they return to their parents, the educare practitioner influences their lives. The extent to which the educator is qualified for her teaching role, determines the success of the school

programme. The practitioner's role requires intensive academic preparation and certain qualifications are significant. The practitioner's personal characteristics, her professional training, the degree to which she informs herself about new developments in the educate profession, all contribute to her competence (Eisner 1979). The professional responsibility of an educator is to create an environment, which stimulates a child's natural curiosity to learn. A professionally trained educator provides experiences for children in logical manageable steps (David, 1983).

The Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU) is an independent organisation, which plays a key role in the education of pre-school children throughout South Africa as well as training pre-school teachers. ELRU designs **non-formal** training courses for educators and develops programmes and community education about the needs of young children. ELRU do not set any requirements to enrol for their study programme, anybody that teaches or whom intends to teach in the Educare field is welcome to study at ELRU (Van der Merwe, 1988).

The Early Childhood curriculum should enable children to become multiliterate and they should be offered the opportunity to understand and experience things by themselves. Eisner (1979) claims that the curriculum needs to take equal account of the cognitive and affective domains, as the two are interdependent. David (1983) stated that effective early education is characterised by:

- Practical experiential learning;
- The significance of the social context;
- The vital role of adult intervention;
- Dangers of introducing the children to **too formal** a curriculum too soon.

There are important issues that need to be present the Early Childhood Curriculum in order for the child to learn effectively and that is: careful planning and development of the child's experience, sensitive and appropriate intervention by the Educator and the nurturing of and eagerness to learn

Several authors have stressed the importance of pre-and-service education for teachers. "Teachers are the frontline troops of change, and progress depends on their own education, motivation and freedom to innovate" (Beeby, 1986). Hartshorne shares the same view.

Whatever the educational problem has to be faced, the key to the situation is the teacher: her academic background and professional training; her further personal and professional development during her teaching career, ...her competence, confidence and commitment in the tasks of education; her understanding of young people and the processes of learning; All the structures and mechanisms of the education system ... should exist not for their own purposes but to empower the teacher to do an effective and creative job of work in their everyday contact with learners. It is in this intensely personal relationship with the pupil in the tasks of learning that the real meaning of education lies, and it is on the quality of this relationship that the success or failure of schooling is dependent (Hartshorne 1992:218).

Pre-service training is offered to young and mature students at many colleges of education. In-house staff development training can take the form of 'on the job' opportunities supplemented by external course, events and seminars. In-service training is an essential part of the on-going work and development of the staff in childcare. Providing good quality childcare requires considerable skills and abilities. By offering training and learning opportunities, staff is helped to develop their full potential to the benefit of the child. The staff who is not qualified but work well with the children may be able to gain recognition for their existing skills and prior knowledge.

The ANC (1996) has proposed that all Early Childhood Educators should have access to a defined career path with accredited training programmes linked to nationally recognised certificates. The ANC also claims that a phased national and provincial programme of in-service and pre- service education, linked with curriculum development, with five and ten schooling (ANC, 1996).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION

Although Early Childhood Development has been given attention in official documents (ANC, 1996), the current status of education in colleges remains at an

unsatisfactory level. Few if any training programmes adequately prepare educare practitioners to perform all the duties of the workplace in an effective and efficient way. This problem is a cause for concern because Early Childhood Development forms the basis of all educational programmes, regarding the pre-school child, where the correct educational programmes should start and if educare practitioners are not adequately educated, the children's' chances to get meaningful education and development will be limited. There are few studies that portray the intervention of educare practitioners and students in improving their curriculum. Such intervention is necessary because the practitioners will be expected to shift focus from content based to an outcomes-based education as the South African education reforms to demonstrate high competence levels in their workplaces. It was against this background that an attempt was made to identify the gaps between the Diploma in Educare and the needs of the educare practitioner in the workplace.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are to:

- Investigate the needs of the educare practitioner in the workplace.
- To find out what is the match between the diploma and the needs of the educare practitioner in the workplace.
- To identify the gaps between the needs of the educare practitioners in the workplace and the diploma.
- To find out what can be done to bridge the gaps between the needs of educare practitioners in the workplace and the diploma.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following critical research questions were asked:

- What are the needs of the educarers in the workplace?
- What is the match between the diploma and the needs of the educarers in the workplace?

- What are the gaps between the needs of educarers in the workplace and the diploma?
- What can be done to bridge the gap between the needs of educarers in the workplace and the diploma?

In achieving these goals the community may greatly benefit in the sense that their children may get good education from well-trained professionals. The students will be more confident, efficient and effective in doing their job and the children will benefit from trained personnel who may steer them in the right directions.

1.4 CLARIFICATION OF RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of the research was to find out if the following subjects offered in the diploma contribute to the particular work that educarers do:

- Child Health
- Expressive Studies
- Personnel Management
- Education and Didactics
- Music

The relevance of the Diploma course was investigated at a college, where the Diploma in Educare is offered and the needs of the workplace were researched at the three different educare centres situated in Crossroads and Mitchell's Plain.

1.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The present study has been set out in five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction that portrays the importance of programme teaching towards workplace orientated goals in higher education institutions. This chapter also shows how this view is supported by the official documents of the Department of Education in South Africa, especially in the field of educare. The importance of training educare

practitioners at the college in a way that could make them efficient and effective in the workplace is also highlighted.

Following the introduction is a theoretical analysis of the relationship between the needs of the workplace and a quality curriculum for the students in higher education. The links between the curriculum and the world of work are also explored. This chapter also places emphasis on the role of higher education institutions in providing education and training for the changing needs of the workplace. The analysis of quality curriculum and the professional growth of the educate practitioner are also documented in this chapter.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology and the procedures that were followed in this study. This chapter also examines the debate with regard to positivist and post-positivist research traditions. Two post-positivist research orientations, namely interpretivism and critical research are also examined. Chapter 3 also pays attention to the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. The researcher's position is also stated in this chapter.

After data collection tools were designed, they were used to collect data. Chapter 3 focuses attention on how data was collected in order to find out the needs of the workplace and how the diploma prepares the practitioner to perform duties in the world of work. After data was collected from the students and educate practitioners, it was captured, analysed and interpreted. The results that indicated the relevance of the diploma with regard to meeting the needs of the workplace form the subject of Chapter 4.

A summary of the research findings and conclusions is set out in the final chapter, Chapter 5 and some recommendations regarding the improvement of the diploma course are set forward.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the overall aim of this study was to gain deeper insight into the relevance of the Diploma in Educare with regard to meeting the needs of the educare practitioner in the workplace. The nature of the workplace and workforce is changing at an astronomical pace in this post-industrial era. This means that workers require increasingly higher levels of preparatory education in order to retain their jobs and continue learning to keep up with the knowledge explosion (Marsick and Watkins 1990; Marsick 1987; Matthews and Norgaard 1984). The following questions are frequently asked: Does higher education prepare the worker for the world of work? Is there a connection between the world of work and higher education? Does higher education fulfil the needs of the workplace? This chapter examines the development of the theory supporting collaborative efforts in curriculum development by higher education institutions and the workplace in order to prepare students for the challenges of the changing world of work.

2.2 THE NEEDS OF THE WORKPLACE

According to Van Dyk *et al.* (1992), a **need** is a discrepancy or **gap** between the way things are and the way they should be and it should be linked to the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes an individual must possess to perform work competently and thereby accomplish desired results (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1992).

Jerling (1996) states that a **needs assessment** can therefore be seen as a formal process for identifying gaps between present and desired results. It is basically a process of determining the difference between **what is** and **what is desired**.

The common roles that are needed in the workplace have been identified, but this does not mean that the practitioner will perform all these roles. These roles should therefore

be seen as integrated and interrelated (MaLagan, 1989). The following section outlines suggested roles of the practitioner.

2.2.1 The roles of the Practitioner in the Workplace

MaLagan (1989) identifies the following roles of the practitioner as follows:

The Researcher

The practitioner should be able to identify, develop or test new information (theory, concepts, technology, hardware, etc.) and show how the information can be applied to improve individual or organisational performance.

Marketer

The practitioner is expected to fulfil the role of marketing the education programme at the pre-school to the community.

Programme designer

The practitioner should demonstrate the ability to prepare objectives, define content, select and sequence activities (arranging activities into the correct order) for a specific intervention (action). According to Pace *et al.* (1991) the primary task of the programme designer is to prepare the plans for a training session. The programme designer is involved in writing objectives, selecting the materials to be used to accomplish the objectives, deciding how outcomes are evaluated and determining how the skills taught are to be transferred to and reinforced in the workplace.

Materials developer

The practitioner should also be able to fulfil the role of producing written or electronically mediated instructional (learning) materials. The primary task of the materials developer is to produce materials such as films, audiotapes, videotapes, etc., to help the child to learn more effectively.

Facilitator

The practitioner should be able to present information, direct structured learning experiences and manage group discussions and processes. The facilitator suggests ideas and helps the child to learn and behave in ways that make them more productive (Pace, 1991).

Administrator

The practitioner is expected to fulfil the role of providing coordination and support services for the delivery of educational programmes and services. She should also be able to draw up the income and expenditure as well as the budget for the centre, manage staff, address grievances and evaluate staff performance levels in order to improve their performance in the workplace.

Teichler (1988) stresses the fact that there is an increasing demand for computer literacy and sophisticated skills in new information and communication technologies as well as an increase in job roles requiring high levels of knowledge in various areas. Teichler (1988) also advocate that knowledge is viewed as becoming the key resource for economic wealth, societal well being and innovation in all spheres of life. Teichler (1988) pointed out that in order to make graduates ready for the world of work education should prepare them to be:

- flexible
- able and willing to contribute to innovation and be creative;
- able to cope with uncertainties;
- interested in and prepared for life-long learning;
- willing to take on responsibilities, and

In addition the practitioner should have general competencies as well as social and communication skills. Education should also prepare the practitioner for entrepreneurship and the internationalisation of the labour market, by helping them to understand various cultures, be versatile in generic skills that cut across different

disciplines, and be literate in areas of knowledge that form the basis for various professional skills.

2.2.2 Transferring Competencies from the world of learning to the world of work

Moon (1977) suggests that graduates have to find ways of transferring competencies from the world of learning to the world of work. Rodger and Abbot (1995) support this view when they state that in order to build a strong foundation for a workplace programme, it is important to assess the needs of the workplace so that course objectives can be developed. The needs can provide information that can assist the participant, i.e. the higher educational institutions, in identifying programme objectives so that curriculum can be structured to specific programmes that will suit the needs of the workplace. These authors view the meetings with representatives, of the workplace as important to give input to the development of the curriculum.

Matthews (1984) also states that if the industry is to meet the challenges of re-training its workers, it will need to assist higher education in restructuring curricula and updating educational perspectives.

When speaking of partnerships in training and human-resource development, we should remind ourselves that teaching people skills is not enough; we must teach them how to utilize those skills. We also need educated individuals who are capable of applying that knowledge in the real world (Matthews 1984: 12).

The Rumbold Report (DES 1990:47) summarised the attributes that adults working in an educational setting should possess in order to provide a high-quality educational experience in the workplace. These attributes are divided into categories of knowledge and understanding, skills and attitudes.

2.2.3 Knowledge and understanding

The practitioner should understand the following:

- the way young children learn;

- the range and importance of play in the education of the young child;
- the way children acquire language;
- what is necessary to ensure the provision of quality experiences;
- the needs and characteristics of young children;
- appropriate experience for under fives and ability to relate this to National Curriculum requirements;

2.2.4 Skills

- The development of particular skills, interest and expertise in a subject or curriculum area and awareness of appropriate strategies for work with young children;
- Planning and implementing the curriculum in order to ensure balance and continuity;
- Organisational skills and strategies for effective learning;
- Observational skills and effective recording, monitoring and assessment of the curriculum;
- Interactive and communication skills;
- Management and leadership skills;
- Skills in collaborative working, including working with parents and with other professionals;
- Skills and ability to provide, or facilitate the provision of equal opportunities for all under fives notwithstanding differences of race, gender and educational need.

2.2.5 Attitudes

With regard to attitude the educate practitioner should have:

- Respect for children and herself;
- Genuine liking for, and sensitivity towards, children and readiness to value them as people in their own right;
- Respect for, and appreciation of the contribution of other adults – parents, colleagues and other professionals;

- A commitment to develop a partnership with parents – with a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and a willingness to negotiate.

2.3 CHANGES IN THE WORLD OF WORK

From the preceding discussion (paragraph 2.2) on needs of the workplace, it seems appropriate to discuss the changes that have taken place in the world of work. The traditional employment system has changed dramatically in the 21st century, and changes are occurring in our notions of career and education. The post industrial era is one where information is the major commodity, where advanced technology changes the nature of work on a daily basis, and where required skills of workers are more about knowledge and information than about physical strength. Within this context, the traditional concept of a job for life is dying (Watts, 1996).

Other studies have described the transition we are involved in as a shift to a post-industrial society, an information society, and a knowledge-intensive society. Bell (1979) also stresses that the crucial point about a post-industrial society is that **knowledge and information** becomes the strategic and transforming resources of the society.

As we move into the 'information age', 'the knowledge worker' will be in high demand. All workers, regardless of their career, will require high-level employability skills (Education, 1996). Education (1996:16) continues to recommend that

Employers and educators should work together to identify the general employability, entrepreneurship and career-awareness skills and standards that students should develop in school programmes.

Darrah (1994) points out that workplaces are seen fundamentally sound if employers can attract properly qualified individuals. Darrah (1994) points out that the goal of improving workplaces is thereby eclipsed by the goal of preparing people for work.

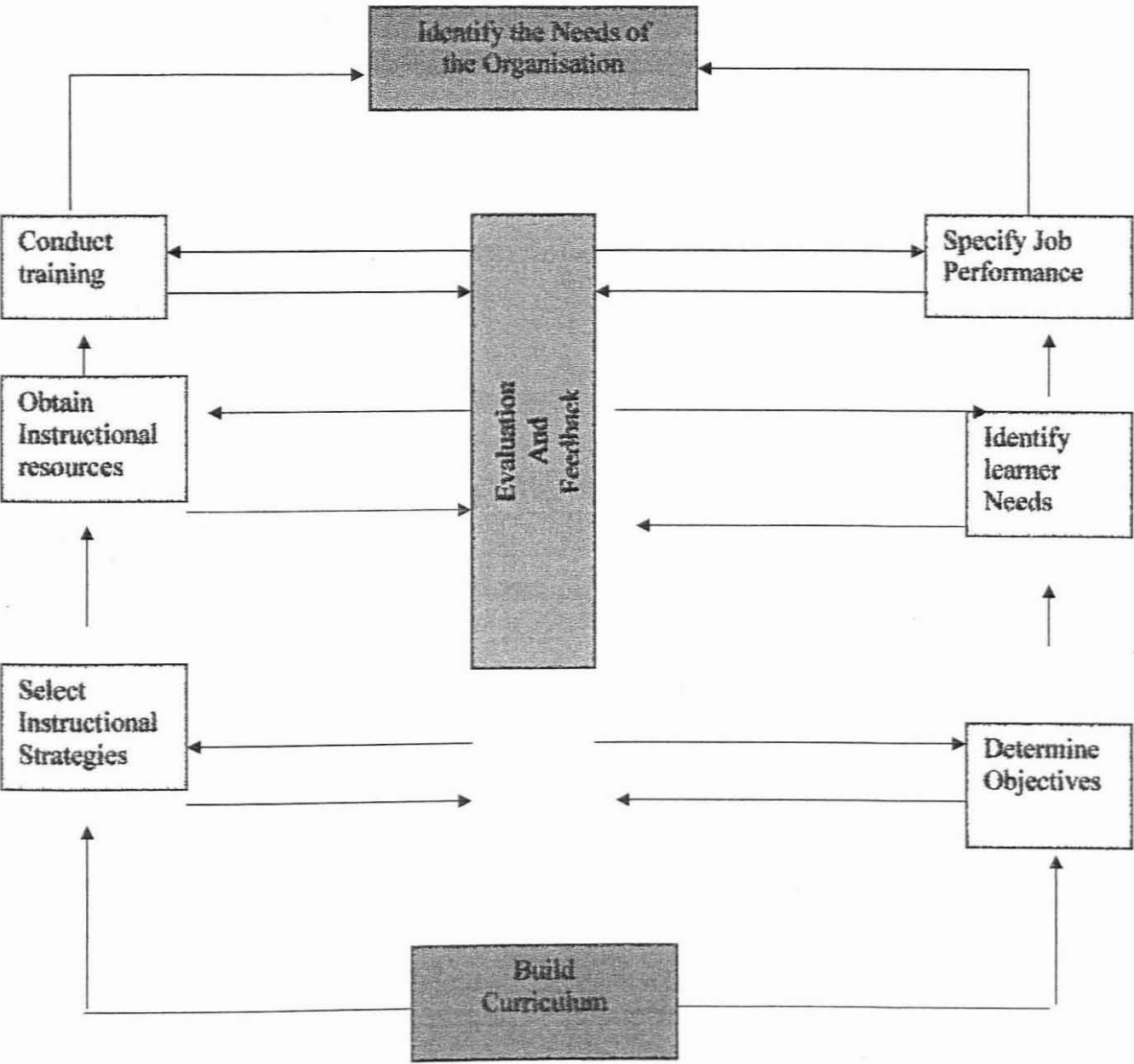
2.4 THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Bottoms (1975) suggest that the workplace and the higher education institutions need to disclose their roles. He further states that higher education institutions keep people informed of innovations and the creation of new knowledge and function at the frontiers of such knowledge. Bottoms further states that institutions of higher education have a professional responsibility to relate new knowledge to the individual.

Matthews and Norgaard (1984) maintain that colleges and higher education institutions should form partnerships with business and industry. They state that these institutions should generally offer greater access to the community and in turn the community should have a greater voice in their educational programmes and services. The connection between higher education and the world of work is the course programme.

The following diagram highlights the events that should occur during the planning and improvement of a programme, i.e. a course programme, to meet the needs of the workplace.

FIGURE 2.1 EVENTS MODEL



(Adapted from: Nadler, 1982:12)

The diagram begins with identifying the needs of the workplace, proceeds through objectives, content and strategies and ends with the evaluation, as illustrated above.

Van Dyk, Nel and Loedolff (1992) mention that higher education institutions should provide education that aims at developing the knowledge, moral values and understanding required in **all aspects of life** rather than knowledge and skills related to only a limited field of activity. Harrison (1989) supports this view when he suggests that education directly and indirectly affect the development not only of knowledge and skills, but also of character and culture.

Van Dyk, *et al.* (1992) also share the same view when they define training as the systematic process of changing the behaviour and/or attitudes of people in a certain direction to increase goal achievement within the workplace. Jerling (1996) also found the **relationship** between education and the workplace.

Teichler's (1988) research findings indicate that many stakeholders agree on the main directions in which higher education must head in response to the changing challenges from the world of work. According to him, higher education is expected to:

- Continue to consider fair access according to socio-biographic background to be a key issue.
- Further diversify structurally the conditions of study and courses provided.
- Devote greater attention to generic competencies, social skills and personality development.
- Reshape its function in the move towards a society of lifelong learning.
- Prepare students for the growing economic and societal globalisation and internationalisation.
- Serve students through an increasing variety of means beyond classroom teaching and learning, for example
- Through out-of-class communication, counselling, the provision of various forms of work and life experience or job-search support,
- Establish regular modes of communication between higher education and the world of work.

There have been increasing calls for an improvement in professional growth and development of practitioners by higher education institutions so that the practitioners

could meet the needs of the workplace. The following section highlights the definitions professional growth and development.

2.5 PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRACTITIONER

Professional growth and development is a complex human task requiring a climate conducive to learning and change and should be based upon clear goals and objectives.

Various definitions of professional growth and development have been provided.

Hoyle (1980) also defines professional development as the process by which teachers acquire the knowledge and skills essential to good professional practices at each stage of a teaching career. Bagwandeem and Louw (1993) define professional growth and development as the capacity to remain curious about the classroom; to identify significant concerns in the process of teaching and learning; to value and seek dialogue with experienced colleagues and to adjust patterns of classroom action in the light of new understandings

Several authors suggest that the responsibility for the professional growth and development of all educators should be a shared responsibility by all concerned with education (Bagwandeem & Louw, 1993; Rudduck 1987).

If professional growth and development of the practitioners has to be improved the curriculum also needs to be improved.

2.6 ASSESSING THE CURRICULUM

Curriculum is a term that is used with several meanings and many authors have offered a number of different definitions. Kelly (1982) explains that many people equate a curriculum with a syllabus that limits their planning to a consideration of the content or the body of knowledge they wish to transmit. Kelly (1982:8) also speak of the 'hidden curriculum where he mentions that:

Many educationist speak of the 'hidden curriculum' by which they mean those things which pupils learn at school because of the way in which the work of the

school is planned and organized but which are not in themselves overtly included in the planning or even in the consciousness of those responsible for the school

Kelly (1992), Sharpes (1988) and Stenhouse (1975) advocate for the distinction between the official curriculum and the actual curriculum. He defines the official curriculum as what is laid down in syllabuses and prospectuses and the actual curriculum as what is covered in the practice of the school.

Evaluation is a process or cluster of processes that people perform in order to gather data that will enable them to decide whether to accept, change, or eliminate something (Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993). Assessment means measurement of the extent of learning in individuals and evaluation can be described as a process by which the effects and effectiveness of teaching can be determined (Siebörger and Macintosh 1998). They also claim that assessment and evaluation are essential for authentic learning. Reddy and Le Grange (1998) share the same view when they mention that assessment should take place to determine what further educational experiences should or should not be developed. Reddy and Le Grange (1998:33) further state that:

Continuous assessment can play an important role in moving towards equity in education as it focuses on the processes involved in education rather than only on the end product...

Kelly (1992) suggests a distinction between in-course and post-course evaluation, which can also be described as summative and formative evaluation. Kelly (1992) describes summative evaluation as concerned to ascertain if the goals of the course have been **achieved**. Formative evaluation is concerned to provide **feedback** that can be described as a base for course **improvement**, modification and future planning.

From the above section it is clear that there is a need for higher education institutions to evaluate and revise their programmes in order to meet the needs of the changing workplace. It is against this background that the relevance of the diploma in educare to meet the needs of the workplace was investigated. The manner, in which this investigation was conducted, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which the diploma in educare is relevant in meeting the needs of the workplace. This was attempted by using questionnaires, interviews with practitioners and focus group interviews with students. This chapter will analyse and reflect on procedures and data generating methods used in the study. The research sample, data analysis and limitations of the study will also be examined. This chapter will start by reflecting on the debate about quantitative and qualitative research since it gives an idea of my own position and how my position was shaped.

3.2 THE DEBATE ABOUT QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Current educational research supports different orientations to inquiry which have been classified as scientific versus humanistic, quantitative versus qualitative, and positivist versus positivist. The following section attempts to capture the essence of the differences amongst these research orientations.

3.2.1 Quantitative or Positivist Research

Quantitative or positivist research is an inquiry that is grounded on the assumption that features of the social environment constitute an objective reality that is relatively constant across time and settings (Gall, 1996). Reality is seen as existing “out there” and science is regarded as the only means to discover the true nature of reality so that it can be predicted and controlled. Only observable and measurable data is taken into account in positivist research. Mouton and Marais (1990) also describe the quantitative approach to research as more highly formalised and explicitly controlled with a range that is exactly defined and which, in terms of the methods used, is relatively close to the physical sciences.

The dominant methodology is to describe and explain features of reality by collecting numerical data and observable behaviours of samples, and by subjecting these data to statistical analysis. Vermeulen (1998) shares the same view when he states that quantitative research involves the study of samples and populations, and rely heavily on numerical data and statistical analysis. This type of research applies scientific methods within a social context. These methods include observations and questionnaires and produce technical knowledge. Positivist forms of inquiry within educational research assume that educational contexts contain law-like generalisations that are identified as systems of distinct observable empirical variables and the task of educational research is seen as quantification of these variables.

The positivist assumption that the researcher can understand the social world in the same way as the scientist can understand the natural world has been criticised. Many assumptions of positivist research have been supplanted by more sophisticated arguments of qualitative or post-positivist research which are discussed below.

3.2.2. Qualitative or Post-positivist Research

The following section examines two post-positivist research orientations, namely interpretive and critical research.

3.2.2.1 Interpretivist Research

Interpretivist orientations to research assume that reality exists only within the context of a mental framework or construct, therefore, social reality is not an independent reality, but is socially constructed and can have multiple meanings. The reality of meanings is found in the interpretation that is influenced subjectively by the values and purposes of the researcher. Researchers are not interested in the abstraction or approximation of a single observable reality, but in the presentation of value-based, multiple, holistic, competing, often conflicting realities of multiple stakeholders and participants (Lincoln, 1990).

This type of research makes very little use of numerical data or statistics, but rely heavily on verbal data and subjective analysis (Vermeulen 1998). Qualitative research

uses interviews, cases and personal documents to produce interpretive knowledge and uncover how people’s understanding of their own realities influence their actions and intentions. The focus is on sharing and developing understanding, rather than on discovering universal laws of human interaction as in the case of positivist research.

The following table demonstrates the differences between positivism and interpretivism.

TABLE: 3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF POSITIVISM AND INTERPRETIVISM

THE SCIENTIFIC MODEL	THE INTERPRETATIVE MODEL
• Positivism • Natural science base • Objectivity • Causality • Quantification • Falsification • Nomothetic • Generalization • Research techniques include: statistical procedures, experiment, social survey • Tends to be MACRO and QUANTITATIVE.	• Interpretivism • Humanities base line • Subjectivity • Interpretation • Language and meaning • Development of grounded theory • Idiographic • Particular cases • Research techniques include participant observation, ethnography, life history, and unstructured interviews. • Tends to be MICRO and QUALITATIVE.

(Source: Hitchcock and Hughes (1989:34).

3.2.2.2 Critical Research

Critical research focuses on a critical understanding of the situation or practice being researched in order to plan for transformative action. It attempts to uncover the systems that underlie social relationships and to understand the causes of social

tensions and conflicts. Socially constructed knowledge is not considered to be a matter of deriving abstract principles, but rather to be about uncovering the historical, structural and value bases of social phenomena. Green (1990) defines critical knowledge as practical, action-orientated knowledge that enlightens and results in social and political change. Inquiry is directed at both understanding and practical transformation of social conditions necessary for emancipation and empowerment. Through critical research people can come to understand their social situations and try to change those situations.

Critical research stresses the importance of human subjectivity in knowledge creation, collaborative or participatory inquiry, local self-determination and finding relevant solutions. It is concerned with what is possible rather than what currently exists. Since critical social science seeks to reassert history, value and ethical choice into the knowledge that we have about social practice, the methods employed represent a cross-checking on the hubris of ideas and power relations that underlie the formation of knowledge itself (Popkewitz, 1990). A combination of different research processes is used to produce critical knowledge. These include empirical, ethnographic, historical analysis and self-reflection.

Bell (1993) argues that each type of research has its strengths and weaknesses and each is particularly suitable for a particular context. The following section highlights some of the advantages of qualitative research.

3.2.3 Advantages of qualitative or post-positivist research

The following advantages of qualitative research have been outlined in several studies:

- Since qualitative research is inductive rather than deductive, it enables the researchers to develop their understandings in the course of the research process. They do not collect data in order to support preconceived hypothesis or theories.

- Qualitative research methodology is more than a set of data gathering techniques; it has a human element as it is linked to the people being researched.
- Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to look at people in their contexts that may include peoples' past as well as the situations in which they currently find themselves. The research is holistic and people are not reduced to 'variables'.
- The researchers are provided with an opportunity to interact with the people they are studying, explain what they are doing, invite comments and suggestions, get to know them personally, learn from their experiences and experience what they experience in their daily struggles in society.
- Qualitative research methods enable researchers to obtain a first hand knowledge of social life, thereby ensuring a close fit between the data and what people actually say and do. These methods therefore emphasise validity without filtering knowledge through concepts, definitions and rating scales.
- Since qualitative methods are not as standardised as quantitative methods, the researchers are able to develop them with their experiences, reflect on them and change them in accordance with the input of the people whom they study.

3.3 THE RESEARCHER'S POSITION

Although this research appears to meet some of the requirements of post-positivist research, some of the methods used can be seen as characteristic of positivist research. The researcher used both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. She did not position herself before doing her research but did research and then reflected on how she did it in relation to research traditions. What the researcher did is in line with a post-positivist interpretive style that has become popular in recent years. This style suggests that data should not be forced to conform to existing theory, but rather should be used to develop theory and interpretive categories (Hones, 1998). The way the researcher conducted her research afforded her with an opportunity for self-

reflection and this is in line the view that sees the researcher as a reflective practitioner.

The following section attempts to describe how the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting data.

3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The data was derived from interviews, questionnaires, and focus group interviews. Data collection was done in a series of phases that are discussed below.

3.4.1 Phase 1: The Interviews with Educare practitioners

According to Vermeulen (1998) a research interview is a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation.

Kerlinger as cited by Vermeulen, (1998) mentions that the interviews can be used to identify possible changes, assist in the formulation of hypotheses, provide direction in further phases of the research, collect data and supplement other methods of data collection

In terms of design the interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured.

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) the structured interview lies close to the questionnaire in both its form and the assumptions underlying its use. The questions and their order are planned in advance and the formulation of the questions is standardised (Vermeulen, 1998).

In unstructured interviews, the researcher encourages the respondent to discuss a topic but provides little or no guidance and very few direct questions. The main disadvantage of these interviews is the difficulty in analysing data obtained. The main

advantage is that the respondent is given freedom and the interviewer can probe in order to elaborate on particular responses, (Dane, 1990).

Semi-structured interviews are less formal; the interviewer is free to modify the sequence of questions, change wording, explain questions and add to the questions; the interviewer can also probe for more specific answers to clarify and eradicate any misunderstanding. Elliot (1990) recommends that a semi-structured interview begin with the unstructured part, as many of the pre-set questions may be asked without them having to be explicitly raised by the interviewer. This helps to establish a climate in which the interviewee will feel comfortable and will be able to respond more freely to the questions raised.

Central to this research is the semi-structured interview (Appendix 1). In this study semi-structured interviews were used for different purposes. The researcher interviewed *educare practitioners to find out what a practitioner should be able to do in the educare centre*. This was an attempt to gain more insight and deeper understanding of the needs of the workplace.

In addition to collecting information about the duties that have to be performed by the students who have passed the diploma in educare after graduating from their institutions, semi-structured interviews were used to develop a questionnaire for the students. The list of duties was used to determine the extent to which different subjects of the diploma prepared the students to perform the duties mentioned by the interviewed practitioners.

Other interview questions attempted to find out how different subjects in the diploma helped the practitioners to perform the duties of the work places efficiently. Every practitioner was asked the same questions. This allowed for comparison of answers by all interviewees.

3.4.2 Phase 2: The Questionnaire with students who had registered for the diploma

Before the administration of the questionnaire the researcher sought permission from the director of the technical institution to execute the investigation. A cover letter was sent to the institution where the researcher explained the purpose and value of the study and the reason why the institution was selected for the study.

Permission was granted subject to the following conditions:

- No disruption of the normal academic programme.
- No names of person should be mentioned.

The Questionnaire

Melville and Goddard (1996) maintain that a questionnaire is a printed list of questions which respondents are asked to answer. All the questions in the questionnaires are structured. According to Vermeulen (1998) in the questionnaire the response is more direct than indirect, data can be easily analysed and classified, the number of possible responses is limited and the respondent must make a choice between alternative responses that are given.

The researcher used the above characteristics to develop a questionnaire for the students (Appendix 2). After summarizing the practitioners' responses to the first interview question that highlighted what an educare practitioner should be able to know and do in the work place (Appendix 1), the researcher designed the questionnaire for the students who are doing the diploma in Educare. The students were given a list of duties that resulted from the responses of educare practitioners.

The questionnaire for this study was divided into two sections.

The first section required the students to indicate whether the subjects of the diploma prepared them to perform all the duties of the work place or not. Attention was

focused on the following subjects: Health, Personnel Management, Expressive Studies, Education including didactics and Music.

The questionnaire made allowance for the following responses and numerical values, according to the Likert scale.

- 1 - Strongly agree
- 2 - Agree
- 3 - Not sure
- 4 - Disagree
- 5 - Strongly disagree

The second section asked the students to rate the subjects offered in the Diploma in terms of preparing them to meet the needs of the workplace. The responses were as follows and were represented by the following numerical values:

- 1- Very Poor
- 2- Poor
- 3- Average
- 4- Good
- 5- Excellent

The aim of including this section was to compare the responses of the students in section A with their rating of subjects in section B.

The researcher did not post any of the questionnaires, but took the questionnaires to the institution, where it was handed to N4 and N6 students. In this way, the researcher could explain questions which students found difficult.

3.4.3 Phase 3: Focus group interviews with students

According to Morgan and Spanish (1984) focus groups bring together several participants to discuss a topic of mutual interest to themselves and the researcher. It is suggested that in focus group interviews all participants should be encouraged to take part in the discussion. Interaction between the participants should be informal to stimulate in-depth discussion and reflection on the topic, and interviews should be timed to last no more than two hours (Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981).

The researcher made use of focus group interviews to get reasons for the students' responses to the questionnaire. The students were given a summary of their responses to the questionnaire and asked to discuss and explain their answers. They were also given a list of the duties that they are expected to perform in educate centres and were asked to identify shortcomings of different subjects in preparing them for the workplace. The students had to discuss how they thought the gaps in each subject could be bridged.

3.5 DATA CAPTURING, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Bell (1993) argue that data collected by means of questionnaires, interviews, diaries or any other method mean very little until they are captured, recorded, analysed and interpreted.

After coding the responses of the students to the questionnaire the data records were created to capture and record data and a frequency table was made. Mahlangu (1987) describes a frequency table as a means of showing the frequency distribution of various possible categories or measurement classes, together with the number of cases falling into these respective categories or measurement classes.

The following step in the statistical method was to obtain an overall picture by representing the data by means of graphs. The researcher used many different types of graphs; e.g. pie graphs, line chart, bar charts, histogram, etc. Tables and graphs were used to present the data and findings in a clear and simple manner. The graphs were

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used to illustrate the differences of opinions. These tables and graphs were rounded off with a wordy interpretation of the data. The responses of students from focus group interviews were also used to interpret graphical data.

The responses of practitioners to the interviews were recorded and summarised. The researcher identified themes that emerged from the summary of the interviews. The thematic analysis of data enabled the researcher to identify patterns and similar ideas that emerged from the practitioners' point of view in the world of work.

The responses of students to focus group interviews were also summarised and used to find reasons underlying the students' responses to the questionnaire.

3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

Whatever procedure for collecting data is selected, it should always be examined critically to assess to what extent it is likely to be reliable and valid, (Bell, 1993). In this study validity and reliability were ensured through the use of a variety of data generating methods. The responses of the practitioners to the interviews were compared with students' responses to the questionnaire. Again, the responses of the students to the questionnaire were compared with focus group interviews with the students with the aim of finding similarities and differences in responses and establishing the reasons behind such similarities or differences. The feedback and discussions with students were also used to improve validity of the research. Another factor that may guarantee validity of this study is my personal experience of working in a preschool after studying the Diploma in Educare.

3.7 THE RESEARCH GROUP

According to Cohen and Manion (1989), a sample is the population upon which the study focuses attention. Vermeulen (1998) also explains sampling as taking any portion of a population or universe as representative of that population or universe.

The research group or sample used in this study consisted of twenty-five N4 to N6 students of a technical institution and six educare practitioners at three different pre-

schools. This sample size is appropriate for the purpose of the study that was to investigate the extent to which the diploma in educare is relevant in meeting the needs of the workplace. This size may appear small, but the non-representativeness of the sample was not crucial since the aim of the study was to improve the diploma course and not to generalise the findings.

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The only limitation of the study was related to the way a few students responded to the questionnaire. The researcher experienced some problems since these students skipped some of the questions. The reason given in the focus group interviews that followed was that they were busy preparing for the test and had little time to concentrate on the questionnaire.

From the above discussion it is evident that both quantitative and qualitative approaches were useful for the purpose of the study. The results from these data generating methods will be documented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

THE RELEVANCE OF THE DIPLOMA IN EDUCARE TO THE NEEDS OF THE WORKPLACE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in Chapter 3, the rationale for designing the questionnaires and interviews was to find out the extent to which the Diploma in Educare is preparing the students to perform all the necessary duties of the workplace effectively and efficiently. Attention was focussed on the following subjects offered for the Diploma.

- Child Health
- Education including didactics
- Personnel Management
- Expressive Studies
- Music

Educare practitioners in the workplace were interviewed and the students who are doing the diploma in Educare were given questionnaires that were followed with focus group interviews to find the reasons for students' responses to the questionnaire. The results discussed below reflect the responses to the interviews and the questionnaires.

4.2 THE INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCARE PRACTITIONERS

The following section presents the responses of educare practitioners to interviews. After each question a brief analysis and interpretation is given.

4.2.1 What an educare practitioner should be able to do in the workplace

The following duties were mentioned by educare practitioners as crucial for effective operation of educare centres.

The educare practitioner should be able to **manage** the educare centre including staff and finances. She should be able to write proposals regarding projects and should be able to initiate projects for different purposes when required. The educare practitioner is expected to set up a stimulating environment where children will be able to learn and develop. She should be able to use a variety of effective teaching strategies. She must also be able to handle sick children when required of her. She should be able to draw up a menu and be able to prepare balanced meals for children.

4.2.2 How the Diploma in Educare prepared practitioners to perform the duties in the world of work

Most of the interviewees felt that the diploma prepared them to perform some of the duties but not all for example, some of them mentioned that they could not write proposals when they were required to do so in the workplace. Other interviewees suggested that they could not draw up business plans. Some of them felt that they could not set up a stimulating environment for the child. Other interviewees mentioned that they had no knowledge on how to handle sick children. Some of them felt that they were unable to draw up a menu and prepare balanced meals.

4.2.3 Most useful subjects in the workplace

Most of the interviewees mentioned that Art helped them in the work place because it enabled them to perform different types of art activities. They felt that this subject is widely covered in the classroom by the lecturers. Some of the interviewees felt that Child Health was useful to a certain extent. The reason given was that they could do some of

the things they learnt from books (theory), but the subject did not offer them enough opportunity to handle sick children, as they were required to do so in the workplace.

4.2.4 How specific subjects helped the practitioners to become effective in the workplace

Art was again mentioned by most of the interviewees as a useful subject. The reasons given were that the practitioners became more creative and that they could teach children different art activities in the workplace, e.g. painting, drawing, tearing, cutting and pasting, play dough and clay and special art activities. They also thought that art helped them with posters and backdrop making. Others suggested that through art they could stimulate the child's imagination and self-expression. Some mentioned that they were able to provide art equipment and materials that help children practise their small muscle skills. Other interviewees mentioned that Child Health did help them as they could keep children and the environment clean and refer them to clinics and hospitals if necessary.

4.2.5 Less useful subjects offered in the diploma

Most of the interviewees felt that Music was less useful because some of them were unable to teach children different musical instruments in the workplace, instead they let children sing but did not make use of the musical instruments even if they have them. Others felt that they could not set up musical activities and did not know how to help the child develop their musical abilities. Some mentioned that they did not know how to do the planning for a musical ring in the workplace. Others pointed out that they could not help the children develop auditory perception through music.

4.2.6 Why some subjects did not help much in the world of work

Some of the interviewees mentioned that personnel management did not help them much in the workplace because they could not perform duties related to the management of the educare centre, for example human resources, grievances, disciplinary hearings, conflict

management etc. Others suggested that they were unable to do the budget for the school, which included the financial accounting for the school. They thought that too little theoretical knowledge was given and that more should be done in developing this subject to help the practitioner to become effective and efficient in the workplace. Others felt that education and didactics did not help them much because they could not set up playroom activities, e.g. the block area, the book area, the fantasy area, etc. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they were unable to do proper lesson preparation or organise educational trips.

4.2.7 What should be done to make the diploma more relevant to the needs of the workplace

Some of the interviewees mentioned that they would prefer more interaction between practitioners in the workplace and college lecturers. Some of the practitioners also indicated that they would like to be more involved in college activities such as curriculum development and development of mentorship programmes. They felt that the time to assist students from the college was minimal. Others suggested that the practitioners from the various fields, e.g. clinic sisters, health representatives from the municipality, social workers and other specialists should be invited to the colleges and interact more with the students and lecturers.

4.2.8 General comments from the practitioners

Some of the interviewees felt strongly about the fact that further training is necessary and that they would like the college to develop the diploma course into a degree course. Others suggested that experiential training should be extended over the three-year diploma. Other practitioners stated that people regard educate practitioners as childcare aids and not real educators. A few of the interviewees suggested that prior learning should be recognised at the college as their experience does not count when applying for the diploma course.

4.3 RESPONSES OF STUDENTS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

As mentioned in the previous chapter the questionnaire was designed after the practitioners in the work places were interviewed. The practitioners' responses that indicated what the students are expected to do in the work place were used to determine the extent to which different subjects of the diploma prepared the students to perform such duties.

The following graphs reflect the responses of students when they were required to assess the diploma in terms of preparing them for the workplace.

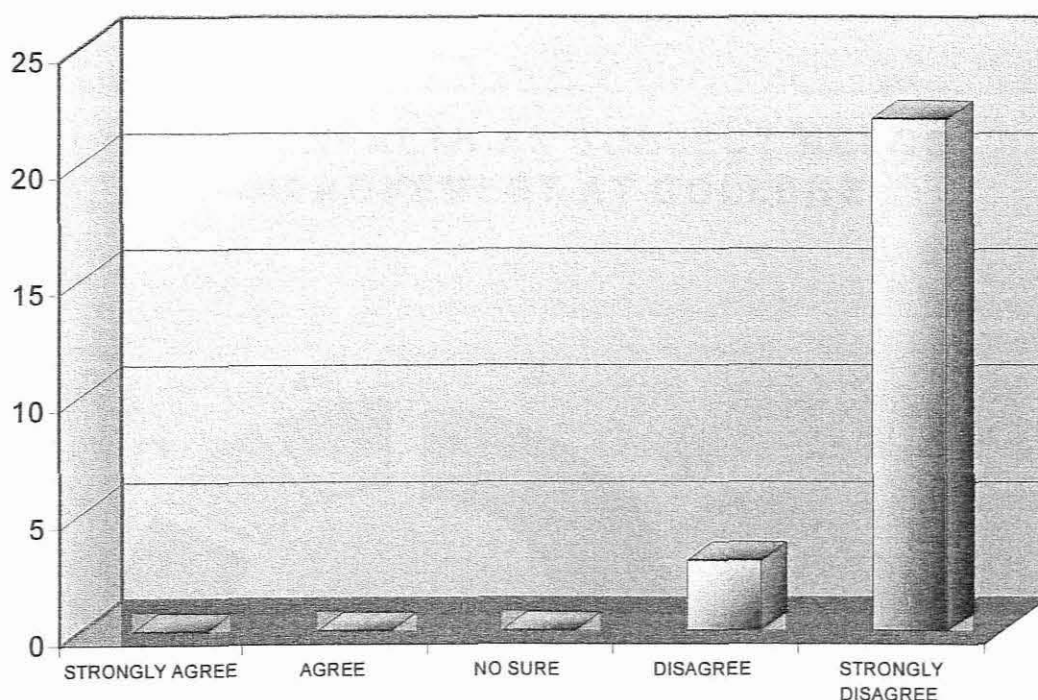
4.3.1 THE DIPLOMA PREPARES YOU TO PERFORM ALL THE DUTIES IN THE WORKPLACE EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY

GRAPH 1: Diploma prepares you to perform all duties in workplace

The first statement attempted to find out if the diploma in educate prepares the practitioner for all the duties in the workplace.

From the following graph, it is evident that all the students stated that the diploma is not preparing them to perform all the duties of the workplace.

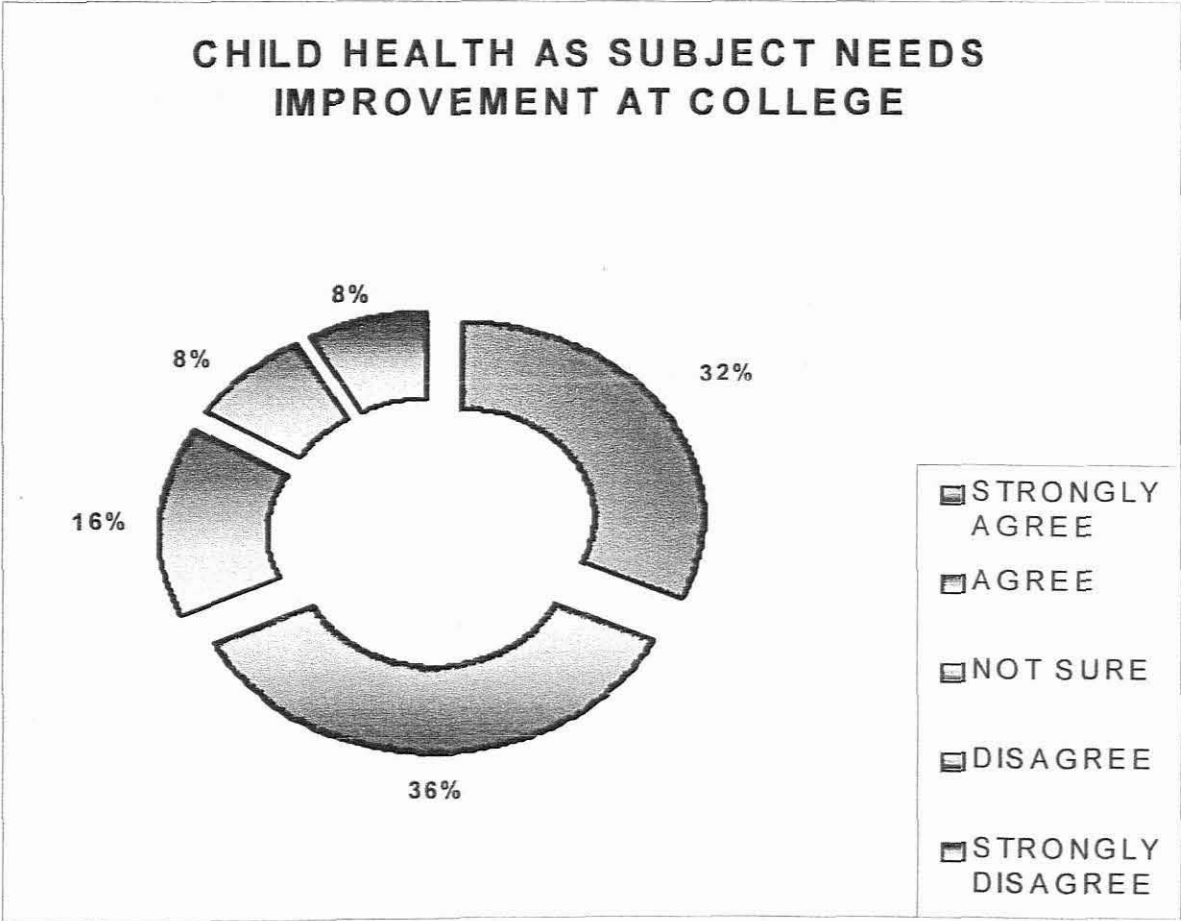
THE DIPLOMA PREPARES YOU FOR ALL THE DUTIES OF THE WORKPLACE



In the focus group interviews that followed, the students mentioned that they would not know what to do when asked to manage an educare center. Management issues seemed to be their main problem and they did not know that they could be required to be managers instead of looking after children. The students also mentioned that they expect some on job training after graduating from the college. Farrant (1996:4) does not support the students' view about on-job training after graduating from the college. He points out that, "at college students must be trained to form habits that will not only make them capable teachers, but help them to shoulder responsibility, show initiative, assist those in need, only as students are given the opportunity to do these things and receive constant encouragement in doing them while at college, will they develop skills and habits they require".

4.3.2 CHILD HEALTH AS A SUBJECT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT AT THE COLLEGE

GRAPH 2: Child Health needs improvement



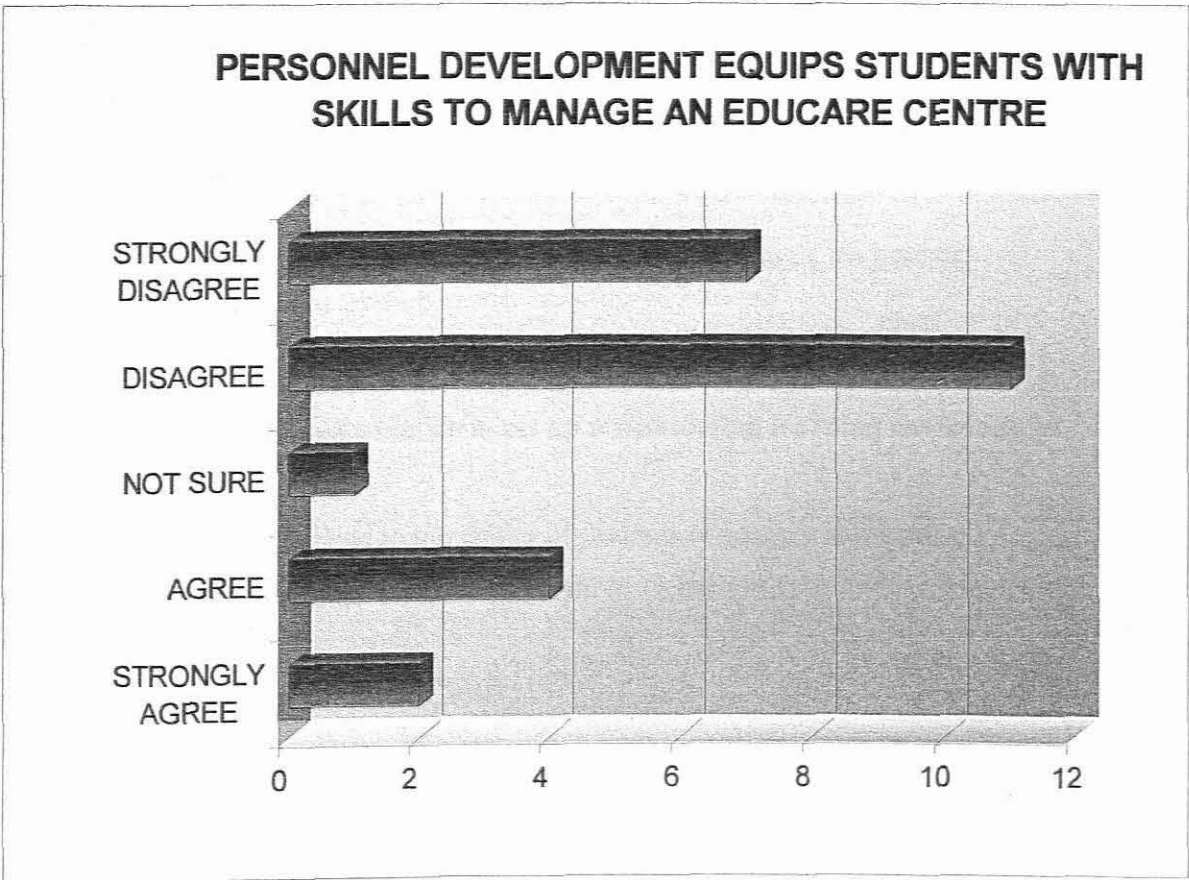
The second statement aimed at finding out whether Child Health as a subject needs to be improved or not at the college.

From the data presented in Graph 2, it is reflected that the majority of the students (68%) agreed to the statement that the subject Child Health needs to be improved, while 16% disagreed and 16% were unsure. The students who did not see the need for improving the subject could be lacking the ability to evaluate the subject critically. From the focus

group interviews it was gathered that the students require more interaction between the workplace (practitioners), local authorities, clinics, hospitals and other members of the health team.

4.3.3 PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT EQUIPS STUDENTS WITH ALL THE SKILLS NECESSARY TO MANAGE AN EDUCARE CENTRE

GRAPH 3: Personnel development equips students with skills to manage an educare centre



The aim of this statement was to find out whether Personnel Management equips the students with management skills or not. It is apparent from Graph 3 that 72% of the students indicated that Personnel Management does not provide them with the necessary

skills required to manage an educare centre while 24% claimed that it does 4% unsure. This might be an indication that this subject does not cover most of the things that are needed to operate an educare centre. This was confirmed by the focus group interviews in which the students suggested a need for good management skills. They indicated that they would be unable to manage the personnel or do efficient administration if they were asked to do so. The students who agreed to the statement (24%) mentioned that they were confused or did not understand the concept of management skills.

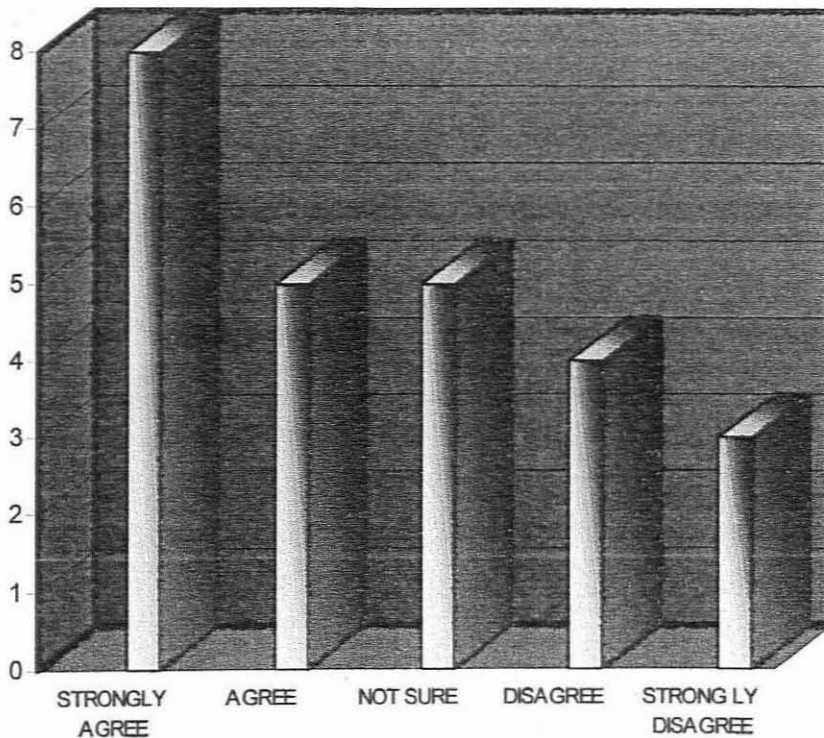
The provision of management skills by this subject seems very crucial. Several studies stress the importance of efficient administration, development of good community relations, good leadership and management for the optimal achievements of school objectives. (Van der Westhuizen, 1995; Squelch, 1994; Sergiovanni *et al.* 1992; Behr and Macmillan, 1971).

4.3.4 GETTING PRACTICE TO SET UP STIMULATING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

GRAPH 4: Getting enough practice to set up a stimulating learning environment

Differences of opinion relating to the ability of students to set up a stimulating environment are reflected in the following graph.

GETTING ENOUGH PRACTICE TO SET UP A STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT

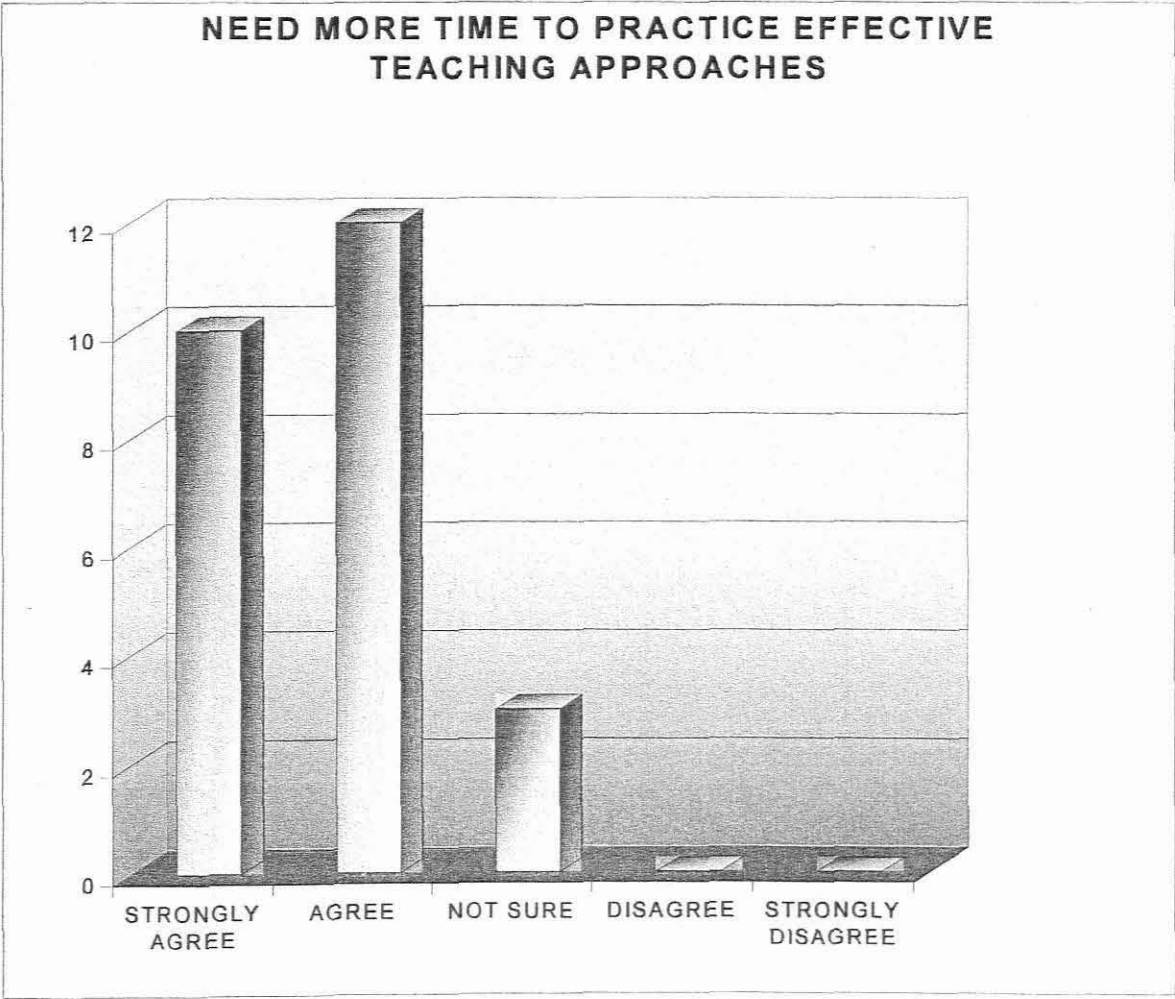


About 52% of the students indicated that they are able to set up a stimulating learning environment, while 28% mentioned that they could not. About 20% were not sure. These different responses could indicate different interpretations of a stimulating learning environment by students. Farrant (1996) defines a stimulating learning environment as a classroom that provides a truly educational environment is a place where children will learn unconsciously as well as consciously.

The responses could also reflect also reflect different capabilities of students with regard to creativity and materials development. Focus group interviews also revealed that some of the students were unsure about the different educational areas in the playroom, and others indicated that they have no knowledge how to set up a playroom.

4.3.5 NEED MORE TIME TO PRACTICE EFFECTIVE TEACHING APPROACHES

GRAPH 5: Need more time to practice effective teaching approaches



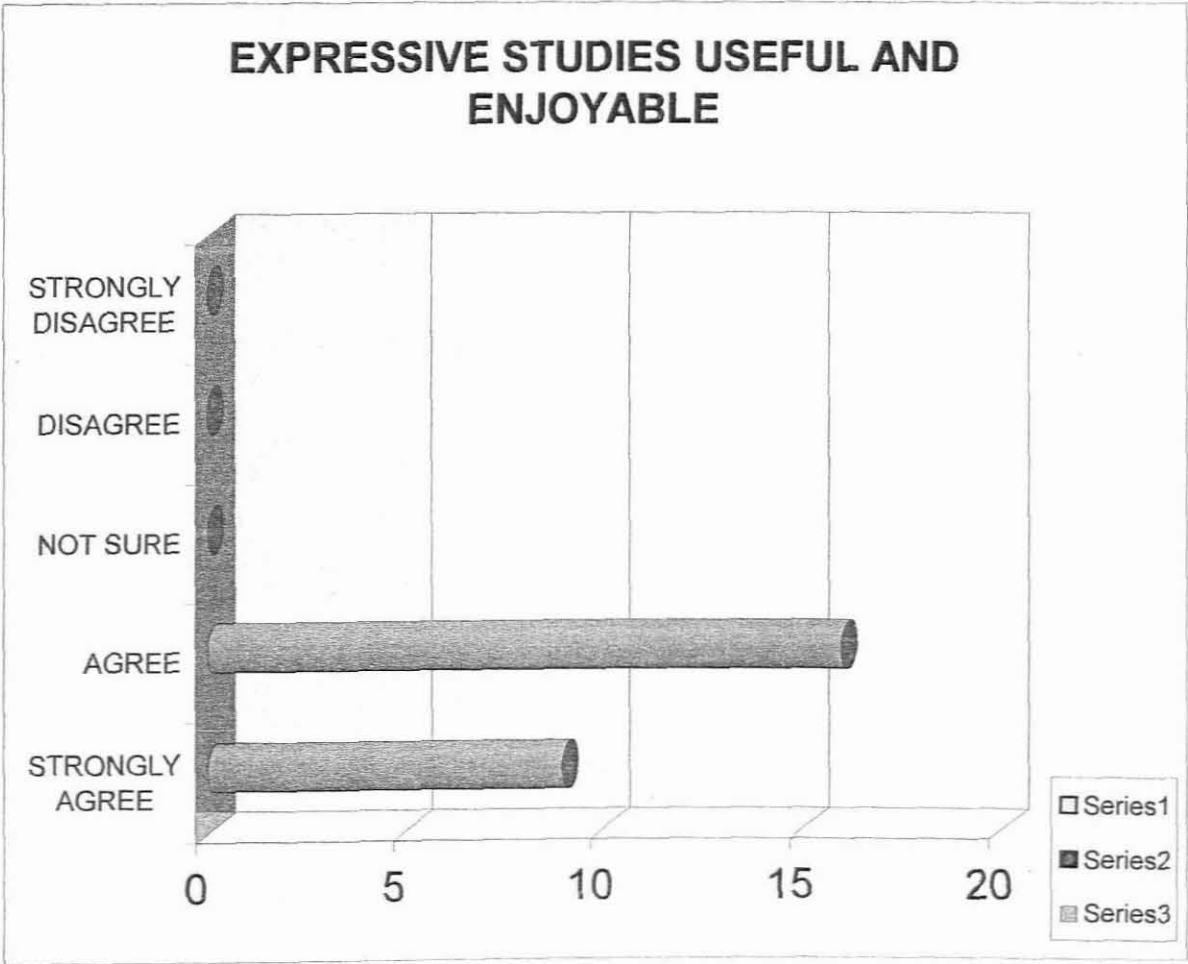
This statement aimed at finding out if the students needed more time to practice effective teaching approaches. With reference to Graph 5 above, about 88% of the students agreed that they need more time to practice teaching methods, while 12% were unsure.

It is evident that Education including Didactics does not make provision for enough time for students to practice teaching approaches. This was confirmed by focus group interviews in which the students expressed the need and desire to expose to longer and frequent practice teaching sessions in order to teach effectively and deliver quality

learning in the workplace. Farrant (1996) shares the same view when he states that a teachers college is a place where the student teacher is introduced to the knowledge and skills needed to do a professional job in teaching. It is doubtful if the teaching skills can be developed fully if sufficient time for practising is not allocated.

4.3.6 EXPRESSIVE STUDIES IS A USEFUL AND ENJOYABLE SUBJECT

GRAPH 6: Expressive studies is useful and enjoyable



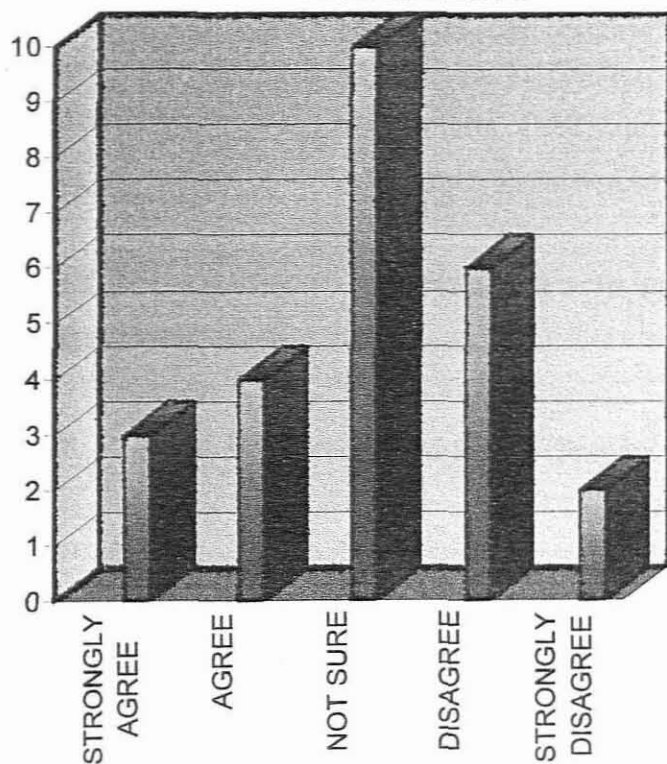
When the students were asked if Expressive Studies is a good, useful and enjoyable subject they agreed unanimously. The focus group interviews revealed that this subject is

widely covered in the classroom and the students are provided with opportunities for creative thinking and problem solving. The students also mentioned that they had confidence in teaching the children to be creative. From these interviews it became clear that the lecturers are spending a great deal of time effectively on this subject. The positive feedback from the students is exciting because art activities are viewed as crucial in developing the child's creativity, communication and problem-solving skills. (Van der Merwe, 1998). Hallet *et al.* (1981) points out that drawing and art develop an aesthetic sense and a critical eye for beauty and it helps the child with concentration skills. He further argues that drawing helps a child to express his/her feelings and record his/her experiences when it may be too difficult for him/her to put them into words. Thus, art activities are seen as the necessary balance of the child's intellect and emotions.

4.3.7 ABLE TO PLAY AND TEACH CHILDREN TO USE DIFFERENT MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

GRAPH 7: Able to play and teach different musical instruments

ABLE TO PLAY AND TEACH DIFFERENT MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS



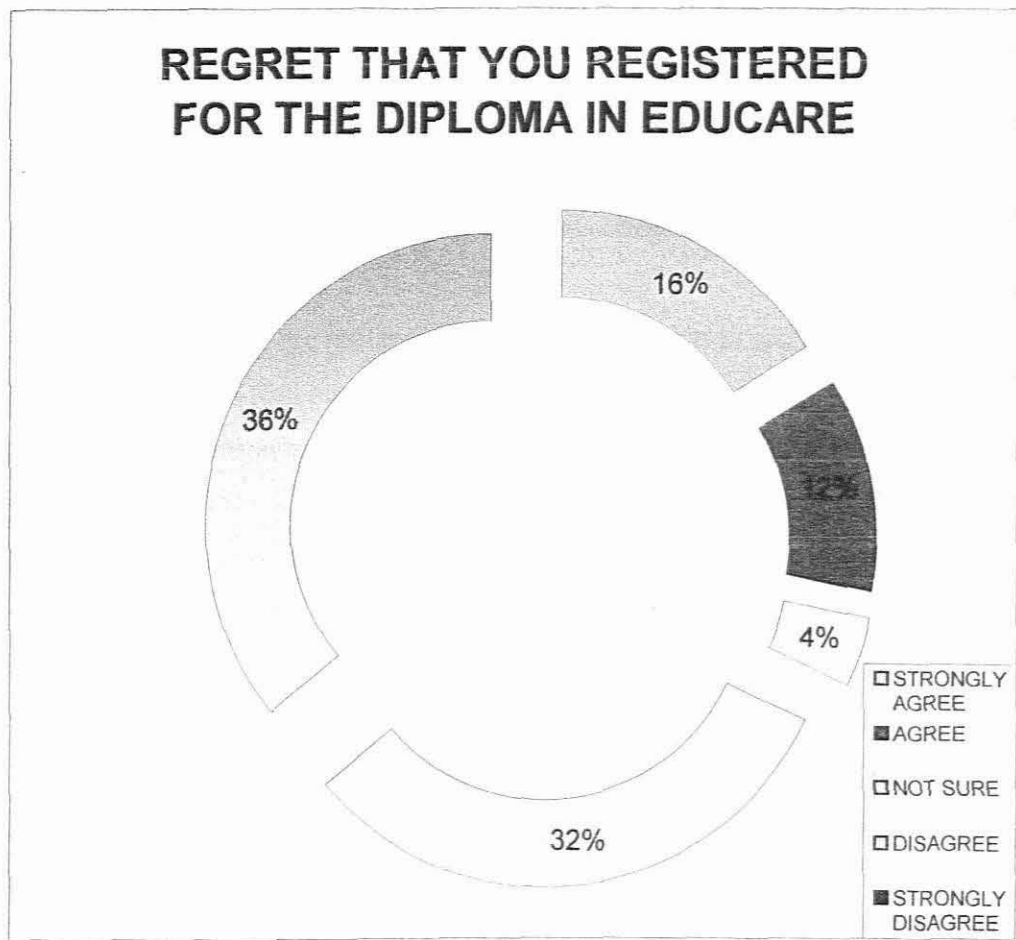
The examination of data relating to the ability of the students to play and teach musical instruments indicates a great variation in the responses. About 28% of the students agreed that they are able to play and teach different musical instruments, 40% were unsure and 32% stated that they were not able to play and teach different musical instruments.

From the focus group discussions it emerged that not enough attention is given to the use of all musical instruments in the classroom. It was also mentioned that there is a need to develop skills to introduce musical instruments in the classroom. The students also stated that they were interested in music and would like to be able to use musical instruments and involve children in music by teaching them the use of different musical instruments practically.

Van der Merwe (1990) claims that involvement in music develops children physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally and socially. Day (1983) shares the same view when she states that the young child's life depends on his or her ability to communicate in some way and music provides many opportunities for children to react and express themselves verbally. She defines music as an art, a form of self-expression that gives children the opportunity to perceive, absorb, react and respond in a creative way.

4.3.8 REGRET THAT YOU REGISTERED FOR THE DIPLOMA IN EDUCARE

GRAPH 8: Regret that you registered for the diploma in educare



The answers relating to whether the students regretted or not for enrolling for the diploma in educate did not only reflect diverse opinions of the students but also confusion, disappointment and uncertainty about the qualification.

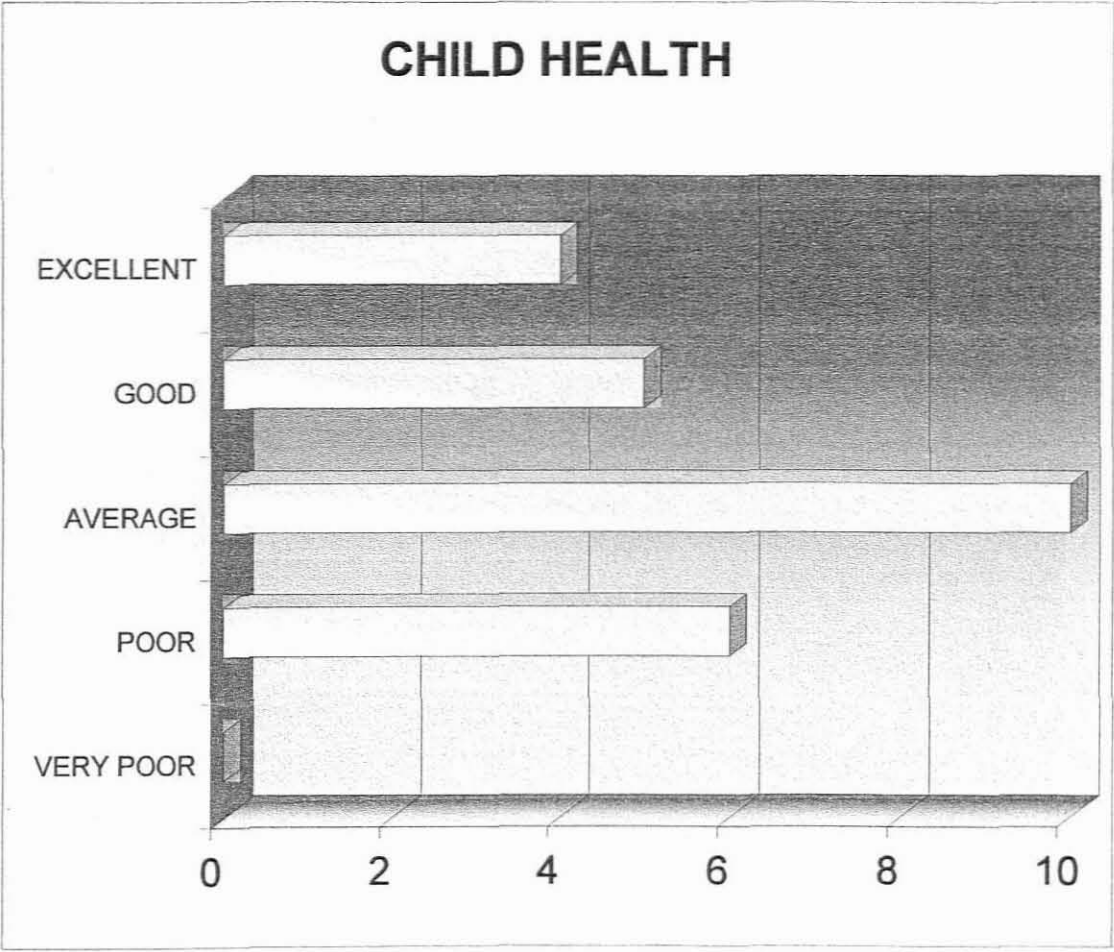
About 68% of the students indicated that they did not regret for choosing educate as their career while 28% of them did regret and 4% were uncertain. The focus group interviews revealed that some of the students only registered for the diploma as a last resort and not because they had love for the children. Others found out after registration that the diploma does not have the same recognition as a teacher's diploma. Some students indicated that they were disappointed that the diploma in educate cannot be converted to a degree course. Another comment from some of the students was the lack of support and clarity with regard to career progression as there is no association for educate practitioners. These negative answers about the diploma highlighted the need for the integration of motivational speeches and psychological services into the diploma. The integration of such services could make students proud of their career and cope with stress and other difficulties that may arise at the college as well as in their workplace.

As stated in Chapter 3, the rationale for rating the subjects in section B of the questionnaire was to find out if there were similarities or differences in the responses of students to questions in section A and the rating of subjects in section B.

The following are the responses of students from Section B of the questionnaire that required the students to give ratings to different subjects in terms of preparing them for the work place.

4.3.9 THE RATING FOR CHILD HEALTH

GRAPH 9: Child Health

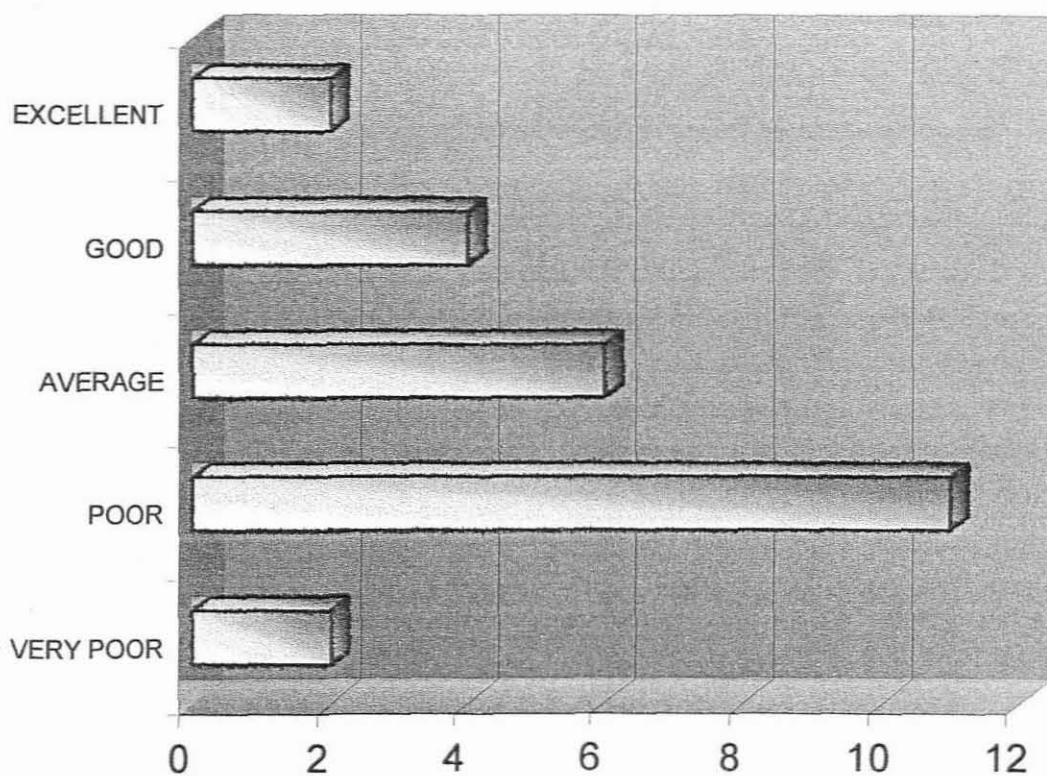


More than 60% of the students did not rate child health as an excellent or good subject. This showed similarities in responses of students who claimed that child health as a subject needs improvement in section A of the questionnaire.

4.3.10 THE RATING FOR PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

GRAPH 10: Personnel Management

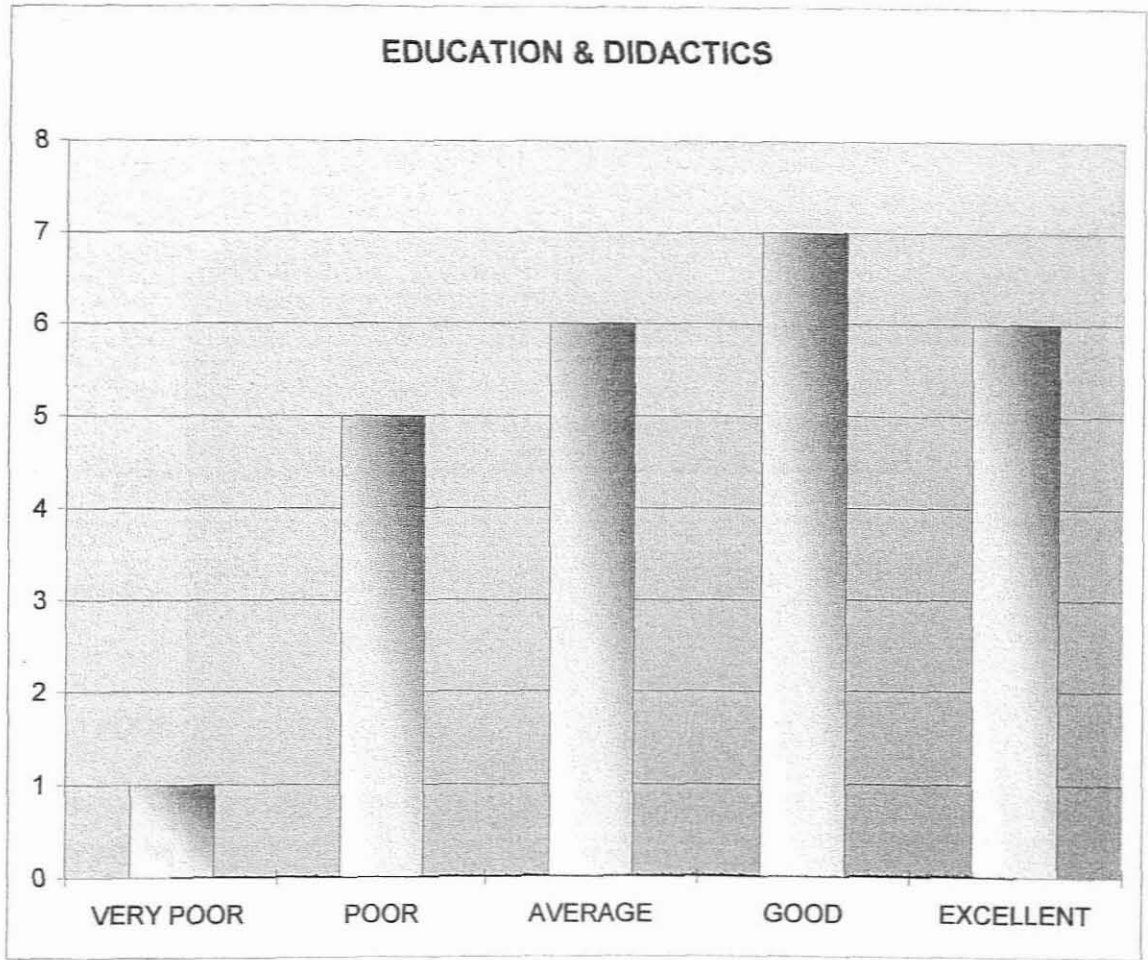
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



The fact that about 72% of students did not rate personnel management as excellent or good indicates similarities in responses of students to section A of the questionnaire in which they pointed out that personnel management does not prepare them to perform all the duties of the workplace effectively and efficiently.

4.3.11 THE RATING FOR EDUCATION INCLUDING DIDACTICS

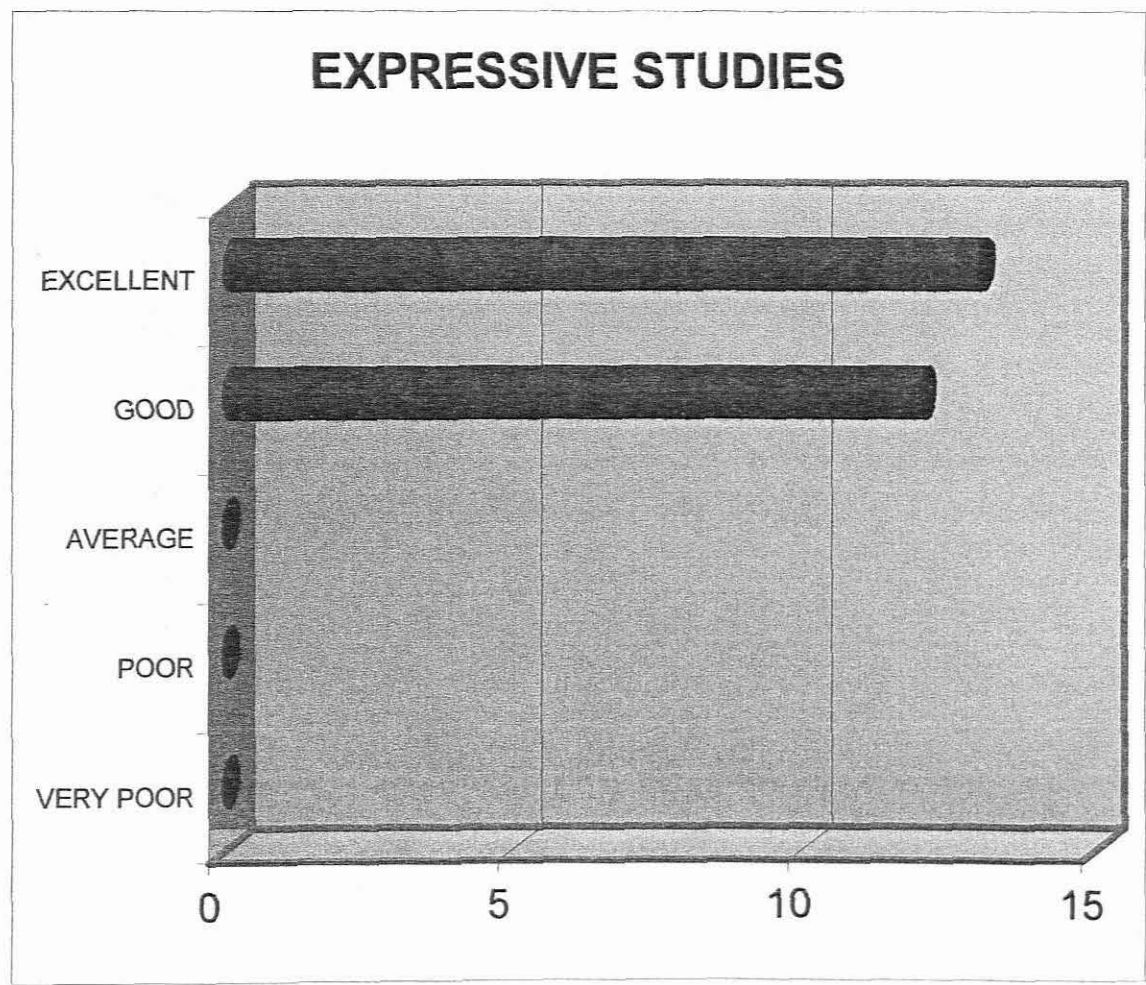
GRAPH 11: Education including Didactics



About 52% of the students rated education and didactics as excellent or good while 48% did not share the same view. The variation in responses could be attributed to the fact that some students may regard the study of subjects in a theoretical way as a valuable exercise (Grave, 1990), while the others may value the practical way more than the theoretical way (Odharo, 1983). On the whole it became evident from the focus group interviews that more should be done to make these subjects more practical than theoretical and to develop creativity in materials development which is necessary in setting up a stimulating learning environment.

4.3.12 THE RATING FOR EXPRESSIVE STUDIES

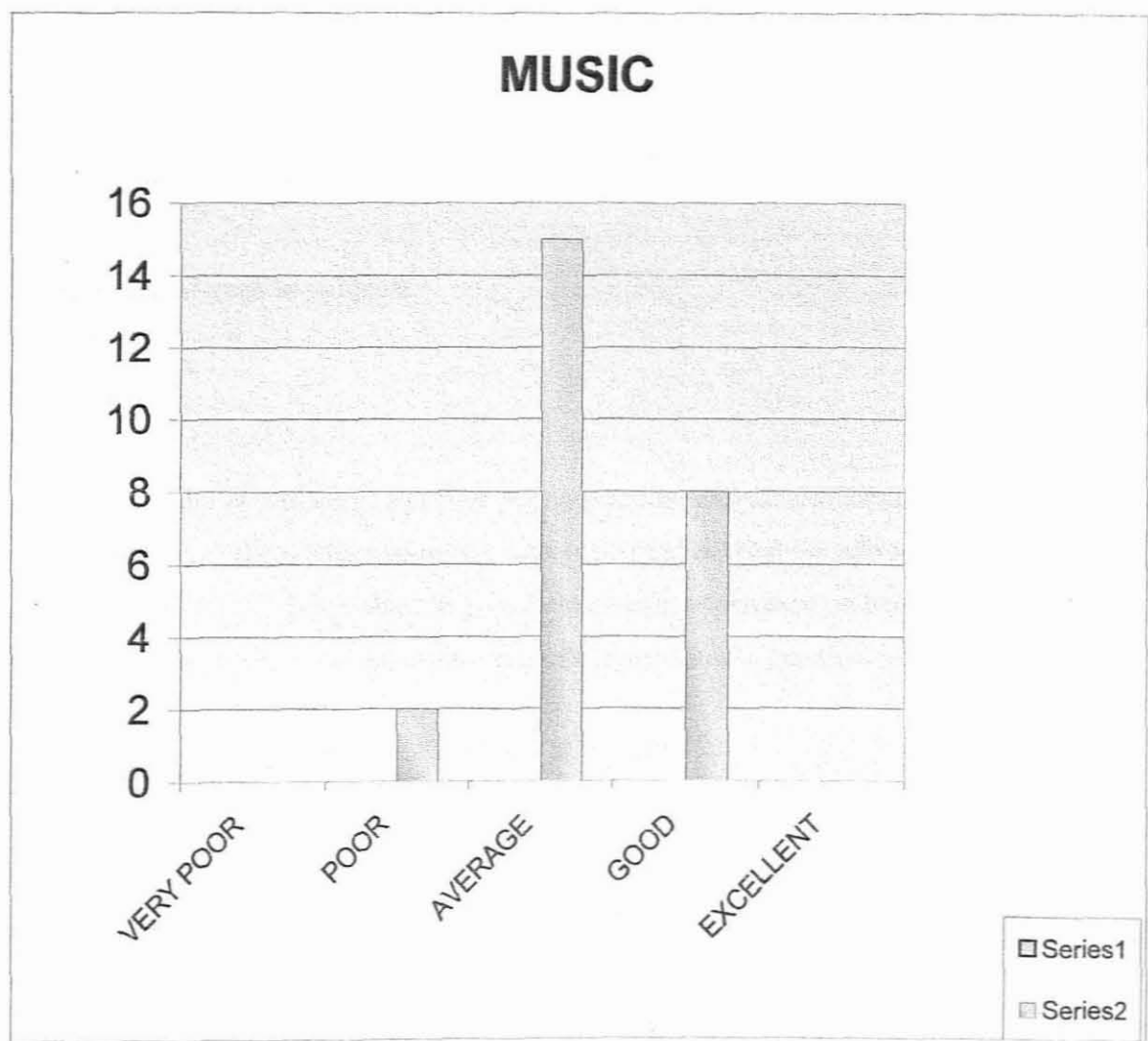
GRAPH 12: Expressive Studies



The fact that all the students rated expressive studies as excellent and good confirms the students responses in section A which indicated that this subject is useful and enjoyable and is presented in a creative and interesting way.

4.3.13 THE RATING FOR MUSIC

GRAPH 13: Music



From Graph 13, it is clear that none of the students rated this subject as excellent, while about 68% of the students rated the subject as average and as poor. This rating is in line with the students’ reflections on this subject which indicated that the subject does not provide the students with opportunities to play and teach the use of different musical instruments

4.2 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS

Focus group interviews with the students were used to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons for the students' responses to the questionnaire. The students were also given a list of the duties that they are expected to perform in educare centers once they graduate from the college. Using this list of duties the students had to identify the shortcomings of different subjects in terms of preparing them for the workplace. The following shortcomings were identified in each subject.

Identification of gaps in subjects

4.4.1 Health

Some of the interviewees stated that they get no practical exposure to handling sick children and giving them balanced meals. Others pointed out that the two weeks that they go for practical training is too short to give them enough experience on handling sick children. This highlights that this subject pays little attention to practical activities.

4.4.2 Personnel Management

Some of the students mentioned that the subject Personnel Management does not equip them with all the skills necessary to manage an educare centre. There was also a feeling that Financial Management and Project Management are given little or no attention at all in this subject because the theory touches only on the basics and does not offer the students opportunities for hands-on experience.

4.4.3 Education including Didactics

It emerged from the interviews that these subjects give the students a good theoretical background, but very little practical exposure to apply in the workplace. Some of the students mentioned that the two weeks that they get for practice teaching in the three

years of their studies is too little. Others mentioned that they are supplied with a workbook to fill in different themes during practice teaching sessions. Some felt that there was little or no supervision or mentoring from the college lecturers.

4.4.4 Expressive Studies

The majority of the interviewees mentioned that Expressive Studies was an enjoyable subject. The feeling of the students was that this subject was thoroughly covered in the classroom and more attention was focussed on practical activities.

4.4.5 Music

It emerged from the interviews that no musical instruments are used when teaching this subject and that the practical component is lacking. Students also indicated that some of them lack the skills to draw up musical activity programmes. Some of them indicated an interest and desire in knowing how to develop the whole child through music.

After identifying the shortcomings of different subjects offered for the diploma in educare, the students had to discuss how the gaps could be bridged. The following section highlights the suggestions of students with regard to the bridging of the gaps.

4.4.6 Bridging the gaps in subjects

Child Health

From the interviews it emerged that students require more interaction with various people who are from the clinics, hospitals and other workplaces that are related to health. They also mentioned that they would like the college to invite representatives from the municipalities to give talks on health issues and share their experiences in the workplace. Some of them suggested that there should be closer links between the college and the community. Others suggested that the college could invite dieticians to help students to

draw up balanced menus. Other students felt that it would be a good idea if some of the pre-school practitioners could bring pre-school children to the institution so that they could be able to practise how to handle sick children.

Education and Didactics

The students suggested that extending practice teaching sessions could bridge the gaps identified in Education and Didactics. There was a strong feeling that the college lecturers, who are supposed to assess students while they are busy with practice teaching, leave the students to find their way by themselves. Students stressed that they need continuous mentorship when they are busy with practice teaching. Others also suggested that more site visits to workplaces would be useful and invitations to different practitioners in the workplaces to come and talk or demonstrate to students at the college would make the difference.

Personnel Management

Incorporating some of the following aspects, e.g. financial accounting, project management and proposal writing into the subject, can bridge the subject Personnel Management. The integration of financial management could enable the practitioners to draw up the income and expenditure as well as the budget. The students felt that more emphasis should be placed on human resources management, for example, how to manage staff, how to address grievances and evaluate staff performance levels. Other students suggested the integration of leadership skills into the subject. Some students felt that quality management should be incorporated into the subject to enable practitioners to continuously improve their performance in the workplace.

Music

With regard to Music the students suggested that more periods for music should be allocated. Others felt that the subject should be more practical than theoretical and give the students opportunities to play musical instruments at college.

Expressive Studies

For expressive studies no gaps were identified.

4.4.7 General feelings and comments about the diploma

The general feeling that came from the students was that they registered for the diploma because of their love for children. Others felt that the diploma should offer opportunities for students to continue studying after they have completed the three year diploma. Others suggested that the diploma should receive the same recognition as any other diploma in education and that practitioners should be regarded as educators and not baby sitters. It was mentioned that the salaries for educate practitioners are not competitive and that the educate profession is not taken as seriously as other professions.

The researcher compared the responses of educate practitioners to the interviews with the students' responses to the questionnaire and focus group interviews in order to present the research findings, recommendations and conclusions in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter 3, the data was produced through the use of interviews with educare practitioners and questionnaires that were followed with focus group interviews with students who have registered for the diploma in educare. The aim of the current chapter is to present the summary of the research findings and to put forward some recommendations and conclusions in the light of the responses of all the participants who were involved in the study. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the summary of the research findings while the second and third sections focus on the recommendations and the conclusions respectively.

5.2 THE SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Comparing the responses of educare practitioners to the interviews with the students' responses to the questionnaire and focus group interviews, the following research findings could be drawn:

- The diploma in educare does not prepare the students entirely to meet the needs of the workplace.
- The subject Child Health, provides the students with good theory but does not give them practical exposure or experience to handle sick children whereas the students need practical skills to perform duties in the workplace.
- The subject, Personnel Management does not equip students with skills that are required to manage an educare centre.
- Expressive studies is a useful and enjoyable subject that enables the students to be creative, critical thinkers and problem solvers. It provides the students with a

feeling of accomplishment and high levels of confidence. This subject, therefore, prepares the student to be effective and efficient in the workplace.

- Education including didactics is more theoretical than practical. There is little time for practice teaching and little or no supervision from the college lecturers. The students need supervision and constructive feedback when they are out on practice teaching. There is also a lack of creativity with regard to materials development.
- The subject, Music, gives little attention to the use of different musical instruments in class. Consequently both the practitioners and students felt that they could not teach their children how to use different musical instruments.
- There is an inferiority complex, uncertainty and dissatisfaction with regard to the qualification due to the following:
 - The educare profession does not have a professional body. The researcher had the same experience when she enquired about her membership from the South African Council for Educators (SACE). She was informed that the diploma in educare is not recognised as a teacher's qualification.
 - There is no job satisfaction as educare practitioners are not provided with opportunities for career progression since they cannot further their studies in the same field.
 - The diploma is accorded low status because teachers are looked down upon as child minders and not educators.
 - The practitioners' salaries are not competitive because they are more dependent on the school fees than on government subsidy.

As the responses of educare practitioners and students revealed similarities with regard to the relevance of the diploma in meeting the needs of the workplace, it was

possible for the researcher to make recommendations from the practitioners and the students' suggestions and from her own experience as an educate practitioner.

The following section outlines the recommendations from educate practitioners, students and the researcher.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The subject Child Health requires more interactions with various people who are from the clinics, hospitals and other workplaces that are related to health. Representatives from the municipalities need to be invited to the colleges to address students on health issues and share their experiences in the workplace. There should be closer links between the college and the community. The college should also invite dieticians to help students draw up menus in order for them to prepare balanced meals. Educare practitioners should be allowed to bring pre-school children to the institution so that the students could be able to practise how to handle sick children.

In Education and Didactics there should be continuous mentorship when students are busy with practice teaching. The researcher has found that sometimes students are left on their own without guidance when they are busy with practice teaching. The time for practice teaching should be extended in order to maintain the balance between theory and practice. More site visits to workplaces would be useful and inviting different practitioners in the workplace to come and talk or demonstrate to students at the college would make the difference.

With regard to the subject Personnel Management financial accounting, project management and proposal writing should be incorporated into the subject. The integration of financial management could enable the practitioners to draw up the income and expenditure as well as the budget. More emphasis should be placed on human resources management. Integration of leadership skills and quality management could enable practitioners to continuously improve their performance in the workplace.

With regard to Music, more periods should be allocated. Students should be given opportunities to play musical instruments at college. The researcher has found that musical instruments are not frequently used at the centres, although they might have them. The researcher has also found that students are not exposed enough to use different musical instruments at the college.

The Department of Education should focus more on the training of the educare practitioners. They should assess whether the examinations meet the standards required by the National Qualifications Framework. The importance of Early Childhood Development has been mentioned in official documents of the ANC (1996) but nothing has been done to improve the diploma. They should speed up the process because the diploma in educare is not recognised as a teacher's diploma although practitioners are trained to educate the young children.

The diploma should recognise prior learning because from the researcher's experience, no credits are given when one registers for the diploma even if one has passed another diploma course. Recognition should also be given to the Diploma of Educare as any other three-year diploma course. Educare practitioners should be recognised as educators and access to further studies should be made possible.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

A review of the relevant literature and the results of the research conducted suggest that the traditional approaches that do not encourage the integration of theory and practice in the learning and teaching processes, do not contribute to the development and professional growth of students. In addition, the tradition of working in separate "boxes" of the world of work and higher education institutions also does not contribute to high performance levels of students in the workplace. Closer co-operation between the world of work and higher education institutions is perceived as being more likely to contribute to high performance levels of students and their employability in the workplace. It is important to develop effective transaction spaces in which the curriculum could be negotiated by both worlds. The present study therefore, is an attempt to encourage the integration of theory and practice and collaborative efforts between higher education institutions and the workplace in

curriculum development. The study is in line with current research that focuses on the development of the transdisciplinary curriculum that integrates the world of work with academic programmes, i.e. research to promote change in curriculum towards one that is more transdisciplinary.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCARE PRACTITIONERS

1. What should an educare practitioner be able to do in the workplace?

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2. Did the diploma in Educare prepare you to perform all the above duties?

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3. Which subjects do you think were most useful for your practice in the workplace?

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4. How did these subjects help you in the workplace?

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5. Which subjects do you think were less useful?

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6. Why do you think these subjects did not help you in the world of work?

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7. What do you think should be done to make the diploma more relevant to the needs of the workplace?

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8. Comments

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APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDENTS

Educare practitioners feel that you should be able to perform the following duties in the workplace after completing your diploma in Educare:

- Manage the educare centre, including staff.
- Write proposals and business plans.
- Initiate projects for different purposes.
- Set up a stimulating learning environment for children.
- Use a variety of effective teaching strategies.
- Handle sick children.
- Prepare balanced meals for children

SECTION A:

Please complete the following questionnaire. The aim of the questionnaire is to find out if the diploma in Educare is preparing you to perform the duties listed above in the workplace in an effective and efficient way.

- 1 - Strongly agree
- 2 - Agree
- 3 - Not sure
- 4 - Disagree
- 5 - Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. The diploma is preparing you to perform all the duties of the workplace effectively and efficiently					
2. Health as a subject needs to be improved at the college					
3. Personnel Development has equipped you with all the skills necessary to manage an educare centre					
4. You get enough practice to set up a stimulating learning environment					
5. You need more time to practise effective teaching approaches.					
6. Expressive studies is a good, useful and enjoyable subject.					
7. You can play and teach the children to play different musical instruments in the workplace.					
8. You regret that you registered for the diploma in Educare.					

SECTION B:

Please rate the following subjects offered in the Diploma in terms of preparing you to meet the needs of the workplace.

- 1 - Very Poor
- 2 - Poor
- 3 - Average
- 4 - Good
- 5 - Excellent

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Health					
2. Personnel Management					
3. Education, including didactics					
4. Expressive Studies					
5. Music					

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEWS WITH GROUPS OF STUDENTS

1. Identify and discuss the gaps between the following subjects and the needs of the workplace.

1.1 Health

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1.2 Personnel Management

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1.3 Education, including didactics

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1.4 Expressive Studies

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1.5 Music

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2. How do you think the gaps in each subject should be bridged?

2.1 Health

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2.2 Personnel Management

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2.3 Education, including didactics

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2.4 Expressive Studies

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2.5 Music

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3. How do you feel about the diploma in general?

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4. Comments:

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