

*Knowledge Transfer: An Exploration of How Early
Childhood Care Educators Transfer Knowledge into
Practice in a Disadvantaged Setting*

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Abstract

This research study provides an insight into the higher education experience of educators who are working in early childhood care settings which are located within a disadvantaged area. There has been extensive research produced in recent years, indicating the benefit of quality early childhood care education provision and the qualification level of educator's.

This research study proposes to examine the education experience as preparation for the needs of diverse settings, which are located within disadvantaged areas. This study aims to interrogate how knowledge from the education experience has been transferred into practice.

This is a small scale research study as part of a Master's programme in Educational Practice which involved six participants who are working within settings located in disadvantaged areas. The participants took part in semi structured interview's which intended to gain an understanding of their lived experiences of the education course they have completed. The data was collated and analysed using thematic analysis as part of an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis Methodological approach.

There were three themes which emerged from the data following the participant interviews.

The findings show that there were many benefits to the educational experience at the time the course of study was completed. The participants highlighted beneficial course content and identified gaps which existed in their knowledge within the context of the diverse needs of their work place settings. The interview process allowed for the participants to reflect on the course content with consideration to their current workplace setting. These findings provide consideration and recommendations with regard to informing the type of knowledge required to work within the diverse setting within disadvantaged communities, as described by the participants.

The needs identified within these workplace settings require a specific knowledge base and set of skills, however the recommended knowledge base could be transferred into any early childhood care education setting and benefit the needs of all children and families regardless of the setting location.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ECCE	Early Childhood Care Education
ECE	Early Childhood Educators
QQI	Quality Qualifications Ireland
HE	Higher Education
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
ACES	Adverse Childhood Experiences
HSE	Health Service Executive
AIM	Access Inclusion Model
NFQ	National Framework Qualifications
ETB	Education Training Board
DEIS	Delivering Equality In Schools
NEIC	North East Inner City

Terminology

Covid - 19	Coronavirus (Covid-19) is a highly infectious virus affecting the world globally.
Aistear, The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework	National curriculum framework for all children from birth to six years old in Ireland. First published by the NCCA in 2009.
AIM	A seven level Access and Inclusion Model providing government funded supports aimed at supporting the inclusion of children with additional needs participating in the ECCE programme.
ECE	Early childhood educators working directly with children within settings
Síolta	Síolta, The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education
The ECCE Programme	DCYA funded 'free pre-school scheme' for children from 2 years 8 months until commencing compulsory primary school
NCI	National College Ireland Higher Education College
NFQ	National Framework Qualifications Irish qualification system of ten levels applied to school, further and higher education.
QQI	Quality Qualifications Ireland
ACES	Refers to adverse experiences that children are impacted by in their childhood which potentially affect them in life

Introduction and Background to the Study

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the research study and describes the rationale for conducting this area of research, also providing a discussion on what is planned to be achieved. This study is situated within teaching and learning at higher education with regard to the qualifications required to work directly with children within the early childhood care education (ECCE) sector. The study explored the higher educational experiences of the participants and examined how it supported them to transfer knowledge into their workplace, within the context of an ECCE setting located within a disadvantaged area within Ireland.

The benefits of early childhood care education for children in these formative years have been well documented Urban et al (2012). Government of Ireland (2019) set out the First 5 strategy which acknowledged the “First Five years last a lifetime” (First Five, 2019, p7). This indicates the value placed by the Irish government in recognition of the importance of the first five years of a child’s life. These first five years have the potential to set a strong foundation for children in support of reaching their full potential in life and engaging in life-long learning.

Hayes and Filipovic (2018) identify that if children from a disadvantaged socio economic status have a negative experience of poor quality provision within early childhood, this poor start in these formative years, can have a lasting effect on them reaching their full potential within their lifetime. A quality early childhood experience can lead to providing a positive educational foundation which provides a brighter future, with better outcomes and lifelong learning opportunities.

Wood (2020) proposes the notion of “diverse societies” and the importance of the course content at higher education which prepares a workforce for the diversity which exists within settings. Wood (2020) asserts that teaching students through the lens of “Piagetian theories” which proposes the notion that a child’s developmental stage leads to learning. This approach alone will not provide for the ‘diverse societies’ as stated by Wood (2020). This view proposes the course content and approach needs to move beyond solely teaching about developmental theory where the focus is primarily on normative development and explore the potential of a child’s life experiences and the impact upon development. This approach will support the knowledge transfer of our future educators and the educators who are returning to education, to progress in higher education. The course content of higher education courses needs to reflect the diversity which exists within society. The approach to teaching at higher education in ECCE requires consistent reviewing to ensure it meets the needs of the students in preparation for them working in settings in all areas.

This research study provides an interrogation of the perspectives of educators experiences in higher education for the diverse workplace settings which they are working in, these settings are located within disadvantaged communities. This study is intending to gain an insight into the viewpoint of the application of knowledge to be transferred within a diverse workplace setting.

1.2 Background and Rationale

My interest in this research study topic comes from my extensive work experience as a practitioner within Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) in both the private and community sector. I am currently working in a mentoring support role for educators who are working within a disadvantaged community ecce settings.

I am approaching this research study from two perspectives, as a researcher and an experienced practitioner in the area of a disadvantaged community. I worked as a manager for a community early childhood care setting for ten years and within this time, experienced working with families from the local community who were experiencing a wide range of social and economic challenges. In my role as manager, I worked to support the staff to provide quality early childhood care experiences which provided for the needs of the children with family involvement at the centre of my practice.

This approach aimed to support children and families, meeting the needs of these families from where there were 'currently at' rather than focusing on where they should have been. This approach to practice was family centred and intended to build capacity within the child and family relationship recognising the parent as the child's primary educator. This process also advocated for a positive working relationship between the educator and the parent.

Garrity, Moran, Mc Gregor, Devaney (2017) recognises the benefit to children and how they make positive progress in their lives, when they experience positive relationships between the home environment and their ECCE setting. Throughout my work experience I observed many challenges in relation to how the educators worked to meet the diverse needs of the children and families within the setting. These challenges became more diverse within the ten years of working in this role.

The staff who were working in the setting were all qualified to the required standard of higher education. This experience encouraged me to think about how the education experience was supporting educators for the diverse needs of children and families within disadvantaged communities. As a manager I knew how essential it was for all educators to be appropriately qualified, to deliver high quality educational care practice, to provide the children with a positive start in life, so they have the opportunity to meet their full potential as they progress in life.

In my current job role I work as an early years mentor providing mentoring support to educators within settings located in disadvantaged communities. The mentoring support focuses on building capacity within the practice of educators to improve quality and support children's learning opportunities, while also involving their families. In this role I have also observed the diversity which exists within these settings to provide for the adverse childhood experiences of these children within early childhood.

This experience has provoked further reflection and the need for this inquiry into the experiences of the higher education course in preparation for the workforce within diverse settings. I also gained an increased interest in this research area when I completed my teaching practicum as part of my postgraduate diploma in teaching and learning. In this practicum I had the opportunity to teach in a Further Education College which was funded through the Education Training Board (ETB). I gained experience teaching modules from the Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) training course. This teaching practice provided me with the opportunity to consider the module course content and learning outcomes of the course at Quality Qualification Ireland (QQI) level 5, in ECCE.

This is the required qualification to have achieved for the basic entry level, to qualify for employment and work directly with children within a ECCE setting. This experience affirmed further interest in completing this study.

Through my vast experience in practice and experiencing teaching in the area, my interest developed further. Campbell-Barr (2017) asserts the education level of educators as a prerequisite to delivering quality ECCE practice, however there has been less of a focus upon the course content of the higher education course to deliver upon the needs within diverse workforce settings. These settings are potentially providing for marginalised families within disadvantaged communities.

This study is focusing specifically on ECCE settings located within disadvantaged communities. The diverse needs and adversity which is experienced by the families relates to homelessness, alcohol and drug addiction as well as mental health issues. The difficulties being experienced by parents results, in children being affected by ‘adverse childhood experiences’ (ACES). Prevention & Early Intervention Network (2019) refers to the world health organisation (WHO) which recognises ACES as a problem affecting countries around the world globally, and recommends that combating ACES should be a ‘public emergency’. This report also recognises the life-long effects of ACES on the physical and mental wellbeing of children which impacts upon their future life chances. This report provided recommendations of an appropriately skilled workforce to work with children and families in a ‘consistent’ way, providing the appropriate care which is respectful of the cultural beliefs and values of children and families.

In consideration of these recommendation’s and my professional observations, of how the higher education training prepares the educator to understand and respond appropriately to the needs of these children and families, has provided the rationale for considering this area of research.

Garrity, Moran, Mc Gregor, Devaney (2017) recognises the benefit of quality early childhood care experiences which result in positive outcomes for children who are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and where English is not their first language. This paper also recognises that a strong relationship between the educator having achieved a degree level of education and advocates for the approach to education and care being nurturing to the needs of children and families. This paper is recognising the need for the approach to provide appropriate nurturing care for better outcomes.

Hayes and Flipovic (2018) refer to the role of care and the benefits to learning and development. These two perspectives are proposing a nurturing caring approach to planning for children's educational needs. This insight proposes consideration to a child centred approach to practice which considers, planning around the observed needs of the child within that present moment and planning for learning opportunities based on their interests which provides a holistic approach to practice.

1.3 Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to gain an insight into the lived experiences of the participants who are educators, employed in settings which provide education and care to children within a disadvantaged community. This process is conducted through capturing the experiences of the individual participants who will provide an insight into how the education experience has provided for their work as educators within the workplace setting. This process will also identify the potential gaps, as identified by the participants as they reflect upon their higher education experience with consideration to the employment responsibilities they have within their current workplace setting.

This insight allows for reflection on behalf of the participant to consider, what they learned throughout their education experience and the challenges they are now experiencing within their workplace setting with consideration to how the education course prepared them for their workplace, within a disadvantaged community setting.

1.4 The study proposes to:

- Explore the experience of educators in their education course to prepare them for the diversity which exists within the work place, in a disadvantaged early childhood care education setting.
- Identify the education course content which supported knowledge transfer in a disadvantaged workplace setting.
- Identify the gaps which existed in preparing for the role as educator in a disadvantaged workplace setting.

1.5 Research Question

The research question is proposing to examine “ *How do Early Childhood Education Care Educators Transfer Knowledge into their Practice in Disadvantaged Settings*”.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) suggest a research question is designed for the purpose of gathering the appropriate data, to meet the aims and objectives of the study. This research study aims to identify how the educational experience provided for the transfer of knowledge, within the specific early childhood care education setting which provides for children and families living within a disadvantaged community. The experience of the educator is being

interrogated for the purpose of identifying strengths and potential gaps which exist and aspects for further development.

A qualitative methodological approach was applied through semi structured interviews to collect data within a small sample size of six participants. O' Leary (2018) describes a qualitative approach suitable for studies which intend to gain insights into the 'rich descriptions' of the lived experiences of the participants. O' Leary (2018) also asserts that this approach is applied for the purpose of 'detailed descriptions' which employs fewer participants to assist with this process. The study employed this approach to allow for gaining an insight into the perspective of the reality of the experiences from a small sample size of participants who were all working within disadvantaged settings.

The participants were recruited from settings located in an area of disadvantage . The sample size of participant's have experienced higher education from a variety of levels. The qualification achieved by the participants are at different levels from the national framework of qualifications (NFQ). The candidates had achieved qualifications from workforce entry level of quality qualifications Ireland (QQI) level 5, up to honours degree level at level 8.

The variety of qualification levels of the participant's within the sample of the study, allowed for providing an insight in relation to the higher education experience in preparation for the workplace setting. The varying qualification levels of the participants was not a condition of the recruitment of the participants. This was a consequence of the participants who agreed to participate.

The process of data analysis applied, is described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) as an 'inductive process' which applies several rounds of exploring the data collated from the participant interview's. This iterative process is applied in cycles, of listening to the interview recording's a number of times, taking notes which form memos and revisiting the process to

ensure rich descriptions from the data are elicited and then analysed. This method allows for a deep insight into how the participants experienced the course they studied.

1.6 Outline of Study

The literature review is presented in chapter two, which outlines the literature related to the variable's identified within the research question. The variables are education, disadvantage and Knowledge transfer. These areas form the themes which the literature is identified and examined to form the review. Chapter three, the methodology chapter, defines the approach applied for the study design and outlines the steps taken to ensure the research question is answered, authentically. Chapter four, presents the data produced following the research participant interviews. This data is interpreted and themes are identified for the purpose of answering the research question.

Chapter 2 :Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature surrounding the variables within the research question. The research question proposes the following inquiry

“ How do Early Childhood Education Care Educators transfer knowledge into their practice in disadvantaged settings”.

The variables within the research question will form the themes of the literature which are examined. The themes related to the research question are, education, knowledge transfer and disadvantaged settings.

The first section provides an overview with regard to the higher education requirements for educators to qualify and work directly with children in early childhood care and education (ECCE). This focus will relate to the needs of the workforce within a disadvantaged community setting.

The second section relates to knowledge transfer with reference to Bernstein (1999) “theory of knowledge” which identifies the various forms of knowledge to consider with relation to the research question. The third section will refer to the literature with relation to disadvantage and the characteristics which relate to disadvantaged communities.

2.2 Education

This section aims to explore the area of higher education for educators within early childhood education setting’s.

2.3 Quality Practice and Education

The Department of Education and Science (2009) recognised a direct link between the quality of the early childhood education care (ECCE) experience of children and the level of qualification obtained by the educator.

This suggests the higher the qualification the higher the standard of early childhood education care experience for children in early years. This view was characterised within the workforce development plan which set out an agenda for debate on the way forward and planning for the future of the workforce within the early childhood education sector within Ireland.

The Ready to Learn, White Paper on Early Childhood Education (DES,1999) recognised the importance of quality early childhood education experiences for children of disadvantaged communities, to ensure all children are provided with equal opportunities, to learn and develop in early childhood. The early childhood education experience has the potential to set a solid foundation for the future outcomes of children as adult citizens within society and lead to economic growth in the future, as a result of focusing upon the quality of early childhood education for our youngest citizens.

Hayes and Filipovc (2018) recommend there is a need to move away from the ‘discourse’ of early childhood education as a means for future economic investment of adults and focus upon childhood as a valued distinct time in the lives of children.

This recommendation suggests the approach to focus upon the process of quality early education experiences of children in childhood rather than the focus on outcomes.

This argument seeks, to recognise the importance of childhood as a distinct time in a child’s life rather than a stage which leads to an outcome as a future contributing adult citizen.

Urban et al(2012) refers to international literature sharing this view of quality provision and the level of education obtained by the educator. The perspective on the importance of quality experiences for children living in disadvantage was identified as being integral for the future success of the children within this population.(Manning, Garvis, Fleming, Wong, 2017) The disparity between the education levels of teachers and early childhood care educators was highlighted. Another issue raised was a pedagogy debate relating to care and education categorised as being viewed as separate identities. A statistics report which was published in 1999 by Area Development Management (ADM) was highlighted which revealed the sectors reliance on community employment staff to work in services as well as other labour activating initiatives.

The statistics report may have been published in the last century but the reality is, that services within disadvantaged communities have remained reliant on community employment schemes to staff their services until recent years. The relevance of highlighting this report is with regard to the sample size of participants within this study where half were employed within community ECCE services on community employment schemes.

With consideration to these points and the importance of quality experiences and quality practice being linked to the education level of the educator this places a strong emphasis on the education experience to support knowledge to be transferred into quality practice provision.

The Síolta (CECDE,2006) national quality assurance framework provided guidance in relation to what constituted knowledge and care requirements. Síolta, was developed following national and international research which identified the link between the quality of practice and the level of the qualifications of educators working in setting's. The standard 11, professional practice recognises that there are specific skills, attitudes, knowledge and values which are deemed appropriate for the employment setting.

In consideration of the research question being posed and the research question variable related to 'disadvantaged settings', the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to work in these settings, is specialised due to the nature of the challenges related to the lives of the families they provide for. The research study proposes to identify, if the education experience of the higher education course has provided for the needs of the workplace settings.

With regard to this, the research question wishes to explore, if the education experience which has been obtained by educators, supports them to transfer the required knowledge into practice within the workplace setting.

2.4 Role of Reflective Practice

This standard in Síolta also highlights the need for continuous reflection and engagement in ongoing 'professional development'.

This aspect of the standard would indicate that the qualification provides as a starting point, as a base level of knowledge obtained. There is a role within the workplace setting to provide space for reflection on practice, team curriculum planning as ongoing practice within the setting. This is how the educators can continuously develop their practice as professionals providing early childhood education care experiences to children in the earliest stage of their educational journey. There is a focus here on the infrastructure of the service to have the capacity to facilitate this. The qualification is the starting point and the workplace is where the professionalism is harnessed.

In light of this point and the fact that Síolta was published in 2006. This provided a very positive well researched document serving as a valuable resource to guide quality practice development, identifying the educator as central to achieve the outcome of quality practice. It then took a further ten years for the regulation of minimum qualifications to be introduced. This element of the standard being discussed emphasises the need for strong leadership and knowledge upon the manager of the setting, to ensure they have the right disposition to lead practice within the team and support ongoing capacity building amongst educators.

2.5 Role of the Workplace

Bleach (2020) asserts the importance of managers to have the developed skills to navigate change within practice through the implementation of a mentoring approach for staff. This point is highlighted with regard to staff who have attended professional development(CPD) training. This process considers how the content of the CPD training can inform the development of practice within the setting. The manager leads by providing a space for staff members to unpack ideas, based upon reflections from the CPD training and examine what the new practice could look like within the education setting. This view supports the need for managers to lead in the implementation of the quality development process, and the lack of effectiveness of once of training unless the educators are provided with appropriate mentoring support to transfer the course content into practice.

Urban et al (2012) describes the role of education for early years educators to result in professional practice. The professional practice encompasses all stake holder involvement which includes children, families and educators to work together. The educational team reflect on their work together, plan new approaches and extend children's learning opportunities to develop practice which encompasses the needs of all children. The development of professional practice is integral as, low to poor levels of service delivery are viewed as damaging to the development of children.

This perspective demonstrates how important it is that the education experience obtained, allows for the educator to transfer knowledge they have acquired through their education and training effectively into quality practice to deliver positive early childhood education experiences for children.

It is recognised that educators should be qualified to a bachelor of arts degree level. This study also acknowledges the low level of impact that once off continuous professional development training has on practice development. The point has also been presented on the low impact on practice where the educator has been educated to below degree level. This would indicate the need for a more comprehensive staff wide approach to support continuous professional training experiences as led by senior staff to reflect upon content and new ideas and also examining how the training content can be transferred into practice with consideration to what this may look like in the practice setting.

Urban et al (2012) frames this process as ‘continuous pedagogical support’ this approach to practice advocates for a space to be created for team meetings which are structured as reflective spaces and allow for team reflection and co construction of knowledge gained from experiences. These experiences are documented and provide a record to reflect upon and encourage the generation of ideas for extending and developing the quality of the learning experiences for children. This activity allows for the team to consider how theory can be transferred into practice and allows for continuous development of the theory to practice.

This point also confirms the idea that the initial qualification achieved by an educator positions them at entry level into working in early years education.

The continuous professional development is the responsibility of the manager of the service to lead within the service delivery by having the necessary skills to facilitate staff sessions where practice is observed, reflected upon and the learning is documented. This practice in forms developing and planning for future learning experiences. Bleach (2020) asserts the view of the role of the manager as an 'agent for change'.

Urban et al (2012) recognises this process as a need for a "high level of systemic competence". This perspective suggests the need for focused training in modules centred around mentoring and facilitation skills for managers to develop their practice and competence to lead at this high level.

Murphy (2015) highlights the positive findings of the Síolta , quality assurance programme, which identified the benefits of mentoring on staff and the biggest impact on services with drawing from the programme, was due to the lack of resources to release staff for the training support. This would indicate the importance of the managerial role to encompass a mentoring approach to planning for education and care provision. This approach places the role of the manager to lead this practice. Edwards (2007) conducted a research study in Australia which analysed and supported the development of educators professional practice within early education care settings in a variety of municipalities. This project supported the educator's to learn together about early education theory and examine how to transfer the learning into practice. This was achieved through a seven stage cycle.

This process allowed for educators to be provided with the space for praxis and examine existing practice and beliefs to build upon developing their approach.

This allows for improvement of the standards being delivered because the educators have developed an awareness and strengthened their ability to reflect, which led to new approaches.

Through this process the educators developed their ability to reflect through the documentation of their observations of the children's engagement's. This education experience provided the opportunity for educators to examine theory in relation to their existing practice and the application process overtime. This provides a rich learning experience for the educator and has a positive impact upon professional development building the capacity of the educator.

2.6 Importance of Play for Learning

Government of Ireland (2019) set out a programme for government to support children and families referred to as 'First 5'. This strategy identified the goal of a professional workforce within early years education which provides a model of support for settings in disadvantaged communities. This model is similar to that of schools located in disadvantaged communities who receive additional required supports, through the programme delivering equality in schools (DEIS) . The importance of the participation of families in children's learning and development. An approach which places play at the centre of practice and delivers on high quality within the national curriculum framework, Aistear being actively applied to practice.

Wood (2013) argues that play is difficult to measure when the policy focus is outcomes driven and preparing children for future educational achievements. This argument proposes the difficulty for educators to focus upon the process of play as a learning experience when the focus is on measuring learning outcomes.

Manning, Garvis, Fleming and Wong (2017) found a positive correlation between the level of

qualification of the educator and the delivery of high quality learning experiences for children in early childhood education and care. This study provided findings in relation to the qualification level of the educator as an indicator of the standard of planning delivered to children's learning which results in positive learning outcomes in maths and science. This would suggest that the level of education experienced can support the educator to provide rich play experiences which will result in positive learning outcomes for children. This process requires a high skill level from the educator to facilitate the play process and tune into learning which is taking place and provide opportunities to extend the learning.

2.6 Children's Life Experiences and Development

Campbell-Barr and Bogatić (2017) proposes that learning about children's needs through the lens of child development, provides a generalised synopsis of how children develop and how the educator can plan for these needs through provision. The view is proposed that the neuro scientific perspectives to the development of children lends to a broader outlook with regard to supporting the holistic and emotional needs of children. This insight proposes consideration to the higher education course content being supportive to educators to learn about the potential impact on children's normative developmental milestones and how their life experiences can shape the development process.

The role of the educator has been identified as being integral to the standard of education and care being provided for children, therefore the importance of educators being educated to understand their role, in supporting the needs of children who, may not have met normative stages within their development is integral, so educators have a strong understanding and ability to identify the needs of these children and provide appropriate support.

This paper also identified the increased focus within recent years upon a global approach to identifying practices within other countries and an attempt to replicate successful practice from one country to another.

This proposes the question of what is deemed appropriate to the culture of any individual country. The cultural differences can vary from one region within a country to another depending upon the socio economic conditions.

Campbell-Barr and Bogatić (2017) concur with the view that the initial qualification achieved is to prepare for the workforce. The continued professional development is dependent upon the commitment of the educator to develop within their practice and the value the workplace places upon the need for continuous professional development training for educators. The development of practice is dependent upon the openness of the service to allow for educators to come together, examine their beliefs and values while learning from each other. This process allows for the educators of the service to develop their vision and belief system as a team and supports them to develop their practice.

The value of a qualified workforce has been well evidenced within the research, to provide for valuable rich learning experiences for children, in their formative years of education. This foundation provides for a platform for lifelong learning. The provision of positive early years educational experiences has the potential to provide a blueprint for the lives of children.

Vandenbroeck (2010) highlights the importance of the early childhood education experience only providing a benefit to children when it is a quality one. The role of the educator on influencing this positive practice, has been identified as integral to the success of early years education practice. The planning of the environment, ability to identify the child's role at the centre and the planning being influenced based upon the children's interests is paramount.

2.7 Knowledge Transfer

This section aims to explore the literature surrounding, how the education obtained by educators in early childhood care and education supports them to transfer the knowledge into practice.

2.8 Knowledge for Practice

Campbell- Barr (2019) refers to the learning of child development theory as ‘know that’ area of education which the educator learns about to be informed of children’s normative developmental milestones. The idea of ‘know how’ is where the educator learns how, to provide for the care and educational needs of children. This idea suggests that the educator with a strong ‘know how’ ability can adapt the ‘know that’ of theory and the academic course content to apply into the workforce practice. This educator is transferring the knowledge obtained into practice.

This paper focuses upon the requirement of professional knowledges for the workplace.

Bernstein (1999) “theory of knowledge” is illustrated to define this, referring to “horizontal and vertical” knowledge. Horizontal knowledge is defined as the physical practical care which is provided on a daily basis. The notion of “vertical knowledge” is also presented to refer to the theoretical course content and higher order thinking which relates to knowledge. This knowledge encompasses the theory and academic side of knowledge contents.

The argument is proposed that an effective educator in early childhood education care has obtained both vertical and horizontal knowledge. The 'know what' and 'know how' have been acquired which supports them to adapt their education and care approach to work in diverse settings.

Hayes and Filipovic (2018) suggest the educator's role is to focus upon the needs which present within the practice setting and adapt the approach to the needs of children. This approach provides attention to supporting children's well-being, as well as development and learning needs.

Cowan and Flewitt (2019) conducted a research study following the observation of dated practice relating to documenting children's learning. The practice being adopted was not adequately capturing the lived learning experiences of the children's. The study focused upon the use of digital technology as a tool, to enhance observing children's learning experiences. The role of documenting children's learning experiences, is explained as being for the purpose of developing practice further. The educators expressed challenges they experienced completing observations in the outdoor space which proved more challenging. The challenge being experienced was because of the activity levels of the children in the outdoor setting which was more physically active and more difficult to keep track of for the purpose of the observation. It was reported that the type of child who was less observed and documented was a child who was less verbal, withdrawn, more active and looked for less support from the adult.

This study has observed the needs of the children in disadvantaged communities and the potential for adverse childhood experiences (ACES) being a factor within their lives. In consideration to the potential adversity being experienced and the impact on a child's development and how this can present through their behaviour this observation provides concerns in relation to the profile of the child described as being potentially at risk. In consideration of this point and the study being conducted with regard to children, this evidence proposes the need for educators to be appropriately trained on how to observe and document all children's learning experiences in a consistent manner to ensure no child is missing out.

In this study digital technology was introduced as a tool to enhance the practice of observing children during play. The educators had reported the difficulty they were experiencing with observing children in the outdoors because of their activity levels . The recordings were reviewed by the educator and researcher. This allowed for a deeper insight into the diversity of the children within the setting to inform developing practice and planning for the purpose of supporting inclusive environment for all children's learning experiences. One of the main findings of the study showed the increase of parental participation based upon the introduction of the digital format which allowed parents to review the learning stories which were shared with them digitally, providing the parent with the opportunity to view the snapshots of these experiences in their own time.

This practice provided a positive development with consideration to how parents were informed of their children's learning experiences. This practice allowed a positive approach to involving parents in their children's learning experiences.

2.4 Disadvantage

This theme offers an insight into the literature surrounding 'disadvantage' to provide an understanding into the challenges which potentially exist for the children and families who are attending the settings located within disadvantaged communities.

2.5 Adversity In Childhood

Morgan, Rochford and Sheehan (2016) outline adverse challenges relating to childhood and refer to the 'Hardiker Model' which categorize the levels of support required for children and families experiencing adversity, resulting from lack of opportunity.

The lack of opportunity potentially relates to poverty or other social issues such as alcohol or substance abuse. In the Hardiker Model of support early years education services are identified in the first level of support for children and parents. This level is acknowledged as a protective factor which provides a support and early intervention measure to children and families. If the level one supports, provide a positive experience and support structure to children and families they will provide as a preventative intervention measure for families and children. A high quality service has the potential to provide enough supports to build the capacity within the families and support their progression.

This support can act as a protective factor and preventative measure so additional support is not required in the future. As stated previously in this chapter, research has indicated that the educator is central to the success of the early year's service, this places a strong need for educators to be appropriately supported and educated to meet the intricate needs of settings within disadvantaged areas. The education course content needs to examine the diversity of families within different communities and provide for considering the role of the educator to support these families.

Scanlon and Mc Kenna (2018) identify the increase in the numbers of families living in homeless accommodation and the challenges faced by early years services and school teachers to support the requirements of the children charged in their care. This study provided an insight into the experiences of children and the daily challenges they face which was captured through the voice of the parent. The reality of living in homeless accommodation results in families crowded into one room, where they sleep and eat with no food preparation or laundry facilities. The basic daily needs going unmet due to poor living circumstances.

In consideration of this stark reality and Maslow's hierarchy of need theory in order for children to reach their full potential they need their basic needs met. This is an important consideration for educators to manage the expectations set for children and understanding their daily life experiences. The parents expressed the value they placed on education for their children in supporting them to have more opportunities in their future but also to provide them with a sense of stability.

The parents felt that due to the lack of a stable home living accommodation which posed in stability, the education experience provided them with some consistency and stability. In consideration of the role of the education setting providing much needed stability for these children places a need for that experience being one of high quality to provide for the needs of these children.

Egan et al.,(2021) carried out a research study relating to the impact of the Covid 19 on the socio- emotional wellbeing of children. This study reported on the (UN,2020) report which highlights the biggest impact of Covid is on the well-being of children with psychological effect on parents. These impacts relate to children and parents across the country and regardless of their socio economic status. In relation to children who were living in disadvantaged communities and homeless accommodation the impact could be potentially detrimental. In consideration of the role of the educator within early years services they have never been more important than it is now and in the immediate future. This study highlighted the benefits of children's social emotional development in early years settings which has been evidenced. On re opening of early years services in June 2020 following the closure of services since March 2020.

The government recommended that the safe re opening of services was to apply new ways of working through the introduction of a pod system. The pods allowed a smaller number of children with one consistent adult. This approach was for the purpose of preventing the

spread of Covid and allow children the opportunity to socially re adjust with the additional benefit of a consistent carer. With consideration to the challenges within disadvantaged communities and the potential increase of risk posed through Covid restrictions to access essential support services. This exasperates the need for the education experiences of ecce educators to provide for appropriate knowledge to support the transfer into practice.

2.6 Role of the Educator

French (2017) suggests the importance of positive emotional connections between carers and children in early childhood to support the developing brain. This study highlights the strength of the ‘plasticity’ of the brain in early years and the consequence of poor nurturing care can result in affecting brain development which results in difficulties later in life. This affect is more difficult to resolve in adult life.

Prevention Early Intervention Network (2019) developed a policy paper which highlighted policy objectives and areas of focus in relation to supporting children who have experienced adverse childhood experience (ACES). ACES can be categorised as a child experiencing abuse in any form, neglect, parental separation, alcohol and substance miss use. The experience of a lack of financial support and hope, for future opportunities is also highlighted. Prevention is described as providing a “ protective layer”. The early years setting can provide the child and family with this ‘protective layer’ and be a protective factor for children and

families experiencing ACES.

Morgan, Rochford and Sheehan (2016) concurred with this view also, and the prevention element was illustrated through the Hardiker model. This protective factor has the potential to provide a positive intervention which provides the required support to families preventing a further deterioration. This policy paper highlights the importance of children having the experience of one positive adult when they have had adverse childhood experiences. This adult has the potential to be a positive influence providing the necessary emotional support so the child can develop resilience. The resilience can be what helps them to progress and avoid engaging in dangerous risky behaviours in adolescence which could potentially lead to a lifetime of crime. A child who experiences adverse childhood experiences can have difficulty reaching their full potential. This reaffirms the points raised by Scanlon and McKenna (2018) who provided Maslow hierarchy of need theory to illustrate how full potential cannot be achieved when basic needs are unmet.

The role of the early childhood educator is paramount in their position to be that one positive adult within a child's life to support them to build upon the necessary resilience and progress in life. The response from the educator to be skilled in planning for the specific needs of these children is crucial. This highlights how important it is that we are providing a higher education experience which reflects the diversity that exists across the communities within the country so it is supportive to our most marginalised and at risk children.

Prevention Early Intervention Network (2019) also wrote an additional policy paper titled 'The foundations of a healthy adult life are laid in early childhood' this paper identified some key figures regarding children living in poverty and the inequality in relation to health implications. There was 1 in 10 children reported to live in impoverished conditions on a consistent basis. There were 3,811 children reported living in homeless accommodation in 2018. The effect of poverty on mothers resulted in them being 56% more likely to have psychological distress. This is more than half of the population of mothers. There was a comparison made in relation to chronic illness conditions which are reported at a rate of 13% in impoverished backgrounds compared to 9% from more wealthy families. The recession impacted on families who experienced financial difficulties resulting in more socio-emotional difficulties. These figures relate to the impacts on families of our most vulnerable who are living in disadvantaged communities. The majority of difficulties identified relate to the impact on our children and parents mental health and well-being.

Conkbayir (2017) highlights the role of understanding neuro science to support the education and care needs of children. As previously highlighted under the theme 'disadvantage' in relation to adverse childhood development experiences (ACES). This is a significant reality for many children living in disadvantaged. Conkbahir, recommends we look beyond child development and consider the impact early childhood experiences could potentially have on the child's developing brain. The example which is presented to illustrate this point is of a parent who is struggling to emotionally connect with their child. This struggle is a pattern which persists, this goes beyond an isolated incident or a bad day which is categorised as normal.

The vital connections within the brain which the child requires to develop for emotional attachment to the mother is stunted due to lack of reciprocated care provided by the mother as a result of the emotional difficulties she is experiencing.

French (2017) refers this to 'serve and return' and asserts that without healthy responses from the parent the child's brain development can be affected. Bandura's Bo Bo doll experiment is illustrated to describe the impact of what a child witnesses within their environment and how it impacts on their behaviour. In Bandura's experiment a child witnesses an adult hit a blow up doll repeatedly. The child is then left in the room with a bat and blow up doll, the child repeats the violent behaviour which he has witnessed. This illustrates how a child's environment impacts on how they behave. A child will repeat the experiences they have had from their home environment.

Hoffman, Cooper and Powell (2017) refer to a child's experience of secure attachment as a basic need, which is equally, if not more important than being provided with food and shelter. The child who does not experience positive secure attachment will struggle in significant ways throughout their life. This child can potentially experience difficulties in relationships due to a lack of trust they have experienced. Every child requires one relationship in their life with a care giver who they experience secure attachment with.

This view highlights the importance of the role of the early childhood educator to provide appropriate care which is centred around the needs of the children they are working with.

This emphasises the importance of the educator to have been appropriately educated about the impact of attachment theory and neurological development and capable of adapting the approach to their role within the practice setting. French (2018) acknowledges the extent of the research which has concluded that, the child's experiences affect their brain development which impacts on their ability to connect with others. The power of the 'everyday moments' providing support for emotional wellbeing through affection and emotional connection. The experience children have, of being responded to affect's their development and supports them to reach their full potential.

In conclusion, there is no debate on the benefits of an educated workforce to provide quality early years practice which provides a positive educational experiences in the early years of children's lives. The question is, is the early years higher education training providing educators with the appropriate knowledge base to transfer into the workplace setting. The education experience needs to approach teaching with consideration for the diverse needs of children and families in all areas of Ireland. The early childhood education experience has the potential to provide for a life-long learning experiences if children are provided with quality experiences which are appropriate for their needs. These early childhood experiences provide the opportunity for children to believe they can achieve to their full potential. This early intervention has the power to impact children for life as a positive experience or negative experience.

Hayes and Filipovc (2018) suggest the negative impact that poor standard of early childhood education experience can have on children from disadvantaged settings. This perspective suggests that a poor start could have, on a child's potential to achieve in education.

The importance of the role of the early years educator is central to this experience being a positive one or negative one. The appropriate higher education training experience is integral to provide the appropriate knowledge which is transferred into practice. The higher education training allows for students to examine theory and consider how it can be aligned to practice. The theory needs to reflect the diversity which exists within all our communities so it can be transferred into effective quality early childhood education care practice which is reflective of the needs which exist within the setting.

Chapter 3 :Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological approach and design of the research study. The research design was selected for the purpose, of answering the research question, 'How do Early Childhood Education Care Educators transfer knowledge into their practice in disadvantaged settings'. The 'how' within the question proposed, gaining an insight into the lived experience of the participants.

The study applied a qualitative phenomenological approach. The approach intended to support the process of considering the phenomena through the lens of the educator being central to the level of quality care and education being delivered within early childhood education care settings. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) asserts that research studies which apply a phenomenological approach, recognise that it's through an individual's experience that knowledge is obtained. The experience is perceived in a variety of ways which is dependent upon the interpretation of the participant who experienced it.

This study explored the 'phenomenon' through describing the experiences of educators who have studied at higher education in early childhood education and care, with regard to the knowledge which was obtained, being transferred into practice within a disadvantaged community context. O'Leary (2018) suggests the importance of the researcher being explicit regarding their potential bias, and their role in presenting the findings in a neutral way. In consideration of this point and my working relationship with the participant's. I recorded notes 'memos' throughout the process to ensure I was analysing the data authentically (Scotland; 2016). The use of the exact 'verbatim' accounts were provided in the findings and discussion chapter to provide authentic accounts of the interview responses which were interpreted and aligned to appropriate literature. The consultation with my supervisor throughout this process was integral, to ensure I was maintaining a neutral standpoint and avoiding my personal bias to influence how I was interpreting the findings.

The research question proposes, to gain an insight into the ontological position of the participants to gain an understanding into, how they have experienced their education in preparation for the workplace setting they are working in. Scotland (2012) refers to ontology as the interpretations of the individual based upon their experience. The approach applied to the research study allowed to gain, these ontological perceptions of the participants from how they have experienced the education obtained, to qualify as an educator within early childhood care and education. This insight from (Scotland; 2012) proposes that the interpretation can vary, based upon the individuals perception of the experience. O'Leary (2018) also concurs with the notion of 'ontology' relating to the experiences of the participants and the reality of the participants lived experiences as they have perceived it. The researcher positions themselves within this, and presents the lived experiences of the participants.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was applied for analyses of the data, this process is applied to allow for rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants with relation to, their educational experience to prepare them for the diverse needs within a disadvantaged early childhood care education settings. This approach was chosen to allow for the varying perceptions of the participants to be uncovered from their reality of the education experience.

The following areas are included to provide an in-depth examination of aspects to the study, which are population, sampling strategy, data collection process, ethical considerations, data analysis and limitations. The research question was developed to aid the process of uncovering the insights into the experiences of early childhood educators educational experience, to

prepare them for the requirements of working within a disadvantaged setting.

The study aims to:

- Explore the experience of educators in their education course to prepare them for the diversity which exists within the work place, in a disadvantaged early childhood education care setting.
- Identify the education course content which supported knowledge transfer in disadvantaged workplace setting.
- Identify the gaps which existed in preparing for the role as educator in the context of a disadvantaged workplace setting.

The research design employed, for this study is qualitative, through the application of an, interpretive paradigm and a phenomenological approach. The interpretive paradigm and phenomenological approach were chosen to aid the process of answering the research question. Epistemology provides a study design approach which considers the perspective of the participant experience in education as preparation for the workforce. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest applying phenomenology to the research design, which provides the opportunity for the researcher to gain an insight into the perspectives of the participants experiences relating to the phenomenon. The phenomenon related to the research question being addressed for this study, is the education experience to transfer knowledge into the workplace setting. The qualitative method allows for the narrative to be explored through the analysis of the data obtained through the interview process with participants.

Research Design

Research Question:

“How Early Childhood Education Care Educators transfer knowledge into their practice in disadvan-

Methodology:

Phenomenology applied to gain an insight into the lived experiences of participants and interpretations of the education experience obtained

Epistemology:

Providing a lens to consider how the participant transfers knowledge into practice through their interpretation's from the education experience and content of the education

Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA):

Phenomenon- educational experience of participants for disadvantaged settings

Narrative Analysis- the use of an iterative process to describe the experience of the participants based on their perceptions.

Analysis

Through cycles of Inductive and deductive process of organising the raw data, identifying codes provide meaning and develop emerging themes for the purpose of answering the research question.

Method

Six participants involved in semi structured interviews

3.2 Methodology

Cohen, Manion, Morrison (2018) asserts that qualitative research proposes, to gain the insights into the participant's individual meaning of the experience. A phenomenological research approach seeks to capture the individual interpretation of the experience from their perspective and provide the multi meaning which present's, based upon the individual participants experiences. An examination of the value of the education experience as understood by the participants to transfer knowledge into practice within a disadvantaged context..

The rationale for applying a qualitative approach to the research study provided the opportunity to gain an insight into the true meaning of the education experience they had for the purpose of transferring knowledge into the workplace context (O'Leary;2018). The small sample size of recruited participants were educated to varying qualification levels which provided rich descriptions of the individual perspective. Scotland (2012) describes ontology as the reality of the participants. This chosen approach has provided the opportunity to seek multiple realities from varying perspectives, depending on the level of qualification and the reality of the time frame in which the qualification was completed.

3.3 Population

The population represented within the area, relates to 93 early childhood education care services registered by TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA 2021). This population is representative of both community and private settings which are registered to the statutory agency and located within the area of disadvantage. The sample size for the study is the com

munity early childhood education care services which provide for children within the disadvantaged area.

3.4 Sample Description

In this section the sampling techniques applied to the study is presented. This approach was implemented for the purpose of identifying the appropriate participants to take part in the study and produce rich data from the participant interviews in support of answering the research question. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggests a sample size of three to ten participants when applying a phenomenological approach. There were six participants recruited for this study in line with this recommendation.

The participant sample for this study were deemed most appropriate to allow an insight into the education experiences of early childhood care educator who are working as educators in disadvantaged settings. The researcher provides mentoring support within these workplace settings. The rationale for applying this sampling process was to allow for rich descriptions of the education experience to inform answering the research question. This also provided the researcher with the opportunity to inform the development of her future work practices. The aim of the study and reason for forming the sample size of participants was, for the purpose of the researcher developing her future work practice as an early years mentor of educators, supporting to build their capacity and develop the quality of their education care provision for children in early years education practice.

O'Leary (2018) describes the benefit of having access to potential participants through 'pre-

existing relationships' and the importance of credibility being paramount to ensure the research findings are credible. The positive and trusting pre-existing relationships held between the researcher and the participant allowed to mitigate the fears of the participants. This allowed for the recruitment of a sample of the population which represents the diversity which exists within the workforce within early childhood care and education in disadvantaged settings. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) refers to this approach as 'criterion based sampling' which is appropriate for a phenomenological study. This approach identifies how the study participants have experienced the same phenomenon. The phenomenon applies to the education experience from the various education levels which was studied by the participants and how the knowledge was transferred into practice.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) also refer to a sample for a research project which is 'site-specific' this sample applies an area specific approach which recruits participants who work in an area of specific disadvantage. The purpose of this approach is to inform answering the research question and inform the work practices of the researcher in the future.

The participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique as described previously in the 'sampling' section of this chapter. Creswell and Creswell (2018) refer to this process as appropriate to a qualitative research study which aids the researcher in understanding the research problem and supports the process of answering the question. This would indicate the benefit of the researcher being in a position to identify the right candidates to provide richness in responses, to contribute to answering the research question. In consideration to this and the participants being known to the researcher through her employment, O'Leary (2018)

proposes that the researchers role is to communicate the questions and listen with minimal input outside of this.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest a 'purposive sampling strategy', this is the approach applied for this study. The participants were recruited based upon their employment in early childhood care and education settings, which were located within a disadvantaged area.

The inclusion criteria applied for the study was developed to ensure the appropriate participants were involved for the purpose of answering the research question. This was related to the wording within the research question which identified the word 'disadvantage'.

Morgan, Rochford and Sheehan (2016) suggest the term disadvantage as being associated to a number of factors. Disadvantage relates to a potential lack of opportunity for an individual to progress from their current situation. Families who are living in housing which is unsuitable because of safety reasons or it being crowded. Single parent families are reported as experiencing the highest level of consistent poverty. The lack of income to provide food and adequate shelter and clothing for children. Children experiencing poverty are more likely to experience adverse childhood experiences (ACES) which relate to physical abuse and neglect. Parents suffering from mental health issues and substance abuse. These factors contribute to disadvantage. Children and families who are experiencing a number of these factors are classified as living in disadvantage. The consequence for many children according to Morgan, Rochford and Sheehan (2016) is the lack of progression in education.

The research study wished to obtain the views of educators who are working in disadvantaged settings. The participants had obtained various levels of qualifications as set out within the Quality Qualification Ireland, national framework for qualifications and with regard to the childcare regulation which sets a minimum standard of education is obtained to work directly with children. The purpose of this was to reflect the diversity which exists within early childhood education settings in relation to the education levels obtained by educators. This will provide the opportunity to elicit rich description of the participants in relation to the experience they had with regard to the education level they studied at.

The researcher wished to gain a deep insight into the experiences of the participants to understand how their education experience prepared them for the diverse work setting within a disadvantaged area and inform how to develop my practice to support the educator in the future and potentially develop the approach to higher education and care practices in support of the diversity which exists within disadvantage settings (O'Leary; 2017).

3.5 Process of data collection

The participants who were invited to take part in the study were known by the researcher through her work practice as an early years mentor. This post held by the researcher and role is a supportive one which builds capacity within early childhood care and education practice. This post is not one of seniority to the participants which supported mitigating concern's in relation to a 'power dynamic' between the researcher and participants. The participants were informed that involvement was voluntary and they were not obliged to take part and there

was no consequence to their existing relationship with the researcher within their workplace setting.

The process for inviting participants to become involved in the study was through a general email, sent to services inviting their participation in the study with contact details of the researcher to allow participants to request further information prior to agreeing to take part.

The consent form (see appendix i) was sent with an opt out clause offered for participant's who were willing to participate to complete and if they required clarification on any detail prior to signing up the researcher was available to contact them by phone as required.

There were a total of seven participants who expressed an interest in participation initially, some who did not complete the consent form. Two of the seven participants expressed a lack of confidence in completing an interview through a virtual call using Microsoft teams. I was unable to offer an in person interview due to health restrictions in place because of the (Covid-19) global pandemic. Three participants did not complete the consent form without an explanation and I proceeded to recruit alternative participant's within the population.

I proceeded with the recruitment process and recruited a further six participants to take part in the interview for the study. There were two out of the six participants who requested a phone call briefing, prior to completing the consent form and both participants expressed a lack of confidence in terms of 'providing wrong answers', in relation to answering questions. I reassured them that of the intention of the study was to gain an insight into their personal experi

ences therefore there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. Following the phone calls both participants agreed to a time and date for the interview to take place and completed the consent form. This experience informed the decision to extend the recruitment area criteria.

Originally the study was going to specifically focus upon recruiting participants from the North East Inner City area of Dublin (NEIC). I was interested in focusing on this specific area because of specific diverse needs and reported deprivation levels within this area which the researcher wished to focus upon (Department of Children Youth Affairs; 2018). Due to the experience of recruiting participants who were interviewed, the researcher consulted with her supervisor who agreed to the recruitment of participants of all disadvantaged settings known to the researcher through her workplace.

Following this decision the wording of the research question was altered to reflect this change. The word “disadvantage Community” was altered to “disadvantaged settings” to allow for the involvement of participants from all disadvantaged settings rather than being specific to the North East Inner City area of Dublin.

3.6 Participant Demographic Information

The six participants recruited have the following demographics; half (50%) hold a qualification recognised at degree level on the national framework for qualifications (NFQ), two at level eight honours degree and one at level seven ordinary degree. The remaining 50% of the sample had qualified to a level five with two participants in the process of completing the

Level six. The two honours degree participants and three level five participants.

Table 1 Participant Qualification Levels

Participant	QQI Qualification	Year Completed
1	7	2004
2	8	2014
3	5	2017
4	8	2017
5	5	2018
6	5	2017

The aim of the research study was discussed with an explanation for the rationale of the research question which is to explore the experience of early childhood education educators experience in education to transfer knowledge into practice in a disadvantaged setting. The researchers view on the need for the education experience to appropriately support educators for practice in all settings was discussed. The participants were reassured that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and the purpose was to gain an insight into their experiences in an honest authentic way. The right to withdraw without consequence was discussed along with the consent form process. The participants were reassured that they or their place of work would not be identified at any stage throughout their study.

3.7 Data Collection

There was a literature review conducted prior to data collection. The literature review identified literature surrounding the research question which provided guidance in developing the interview schedule for the participant interviews.

The data collection procedures employed to the study were through semi structured interviews conducted with participants. The interviews took place in April 2021, using Microsoft teams online platform and recording function. The choice to use an online interview platform was not by choice but necessity due the restrictions imposed through the Covid 19 global pandemic. The World Health Organisation (2021) recommended reducing contact with others to prevent the spread of the Covid virus. Health Service Executive (2021) state that, the Covid-19 virus is spread from an infected person to others from ‘droplets from the nose and throat’. This infection can be spread from one person to another during a social interaction by droplets dispersing into the air and spreading the virus. The public health guidelines informed the decision to conduct the participant interviews online.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) also refer to the importance of the researcher limiting discussion and remaining focused upon the task in hand so the questions are answered honestly without the influence of the researcher who is conducting the interview’s. These two points remained at the fore front of my mind in preparation for the interviews and probing questions were provided to support participants such as “ you have told me about Can you

tell me more about that” this format supported a conversational flow throughout the interview and helped to keep the interview focus relaxed so participants well-being was at the centre of the process .

The limitation considered was my limited experience as a researcher and due to the interviews taking place through an online platform provided additional considerations such as internet connection issues. I applied the skills and experience I did have as an early years mentor to provide, a relaxed and calm atmosphere to support the participants to speak freely and openly about their experience.

There was a pilot interview conducted prior to the recruitment of the participating candidates. This allowed for the researcher gain experience using the interview schedule and consider the effectiveness of the question design for the purpose of answering the research question and achieving the aims of the study. The pilot interview process revealed a need to adjust the question format to allow for a conversational flow to the interview process. There were two adaptations applied to the research schedule in relation to ‘education experience’. There was an additional probing question included asking, ‘were there any specific skills or strategies you learned about’?. This allowed for a richer description to be obtained and more specific detail provided relating to the education experience of the participants .The original wording of the question was ‘Tell me about your experience of the course you studied’. The pilot interview demonstrated a limited response due to how the question constructed.

The data was collected through inviting six participants to be interviewed using semi-structured questions.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study proposal was submitted to the ethics committee in the National College of Ireland for approval prior to being conducted. The participants were invited to participate and information of the process was provided, in writing to ensure individuals were fully informed prior to signing the consent form. There were participants who agreed verbally to taking part and did not complete the consent form when it was emailed to them.

The researcher respected the right of the participants not to progress and be involved and did not pursue this any further.

O'Leary (2018) suggests that the key to a credible research project is the integrity of the research process as managed by the researcher. The researcher is responsible for ensuring the well-being of the participants at all times without compromising their physical or psychological well-being throughout the process. This is described under the following areas as equity, honesty and conscientiousness.

Equity relates to a participant focused process which intends to provide reassurance to participant's in their decision to participate. This was ensured by carrying out phone calls prior to the interview taking place to ensure the participants were fully informed and had all their questions answered. The consent form informed the participants of their right to withdraw without consequence at any time. The participants who did not proceed by completing the

consent form, were respected and not pursued further.

Transparency was insured by informing the participants of the purpose of the study and the intention for the data to, inform the results and answer the research question. The participants were informed that they, or their workplace would not be identified at any stage throughout the study. The study findings and thesis is available to view by the participants on request at any time. The research study participants or their place of work will not be identified at any stage throughout the study. The participants will be referred to as participant 1 to participant 6 using the following reference system (PO1). This reference system is being applied throughout the study to ensure the participants are not identified and confidentiality is respected. The recordings are saved through a password protected system and will be deleted following the submission date of the study. The written transcriptions will also be deleted.

3.9 Data Analysis

Taylor and Medina (2013) suggest the importance of the researcher positioning themselves within the process of analysing the data, in order to reflect upon how their experiences may affect the interpretation of the data. In consideration of this point, I aimed to maintain awareness of my role as a researcher and my potential personal bias as a practitioner within the field of early years education for over twenty years. I have spent fourteen years of my experience working within a disadvantaged community. My experience as a practitioner proposes a risk to personal bias. The potential bias is protected through the involvement of my supervisor to review my interpretations of the data and findings to provide a neutral analysis which informed the credibility of the research study. The support provided by my supervisor allowed me the opportunity to discuss my initial interpretations and consider how my experi

ences were potentially influencing how I was interpreting the raw data.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) refer to the importance of the researcher declaring their potential personal bias from their experience with regard to the research area being interrogated.

The idea for this area of research stems from my experience in early years practice managing a service within a disadvantaged community. I worked in this post for ten years and observed the diverse changes within that time to the qualification levels of staff and the emerging difficulties experienced by families within area. There was an increase of homelessness, drug addiction and criminality through organised crime groups within the area.

These issues were affecting families and the need for educators working in the area to have an understanding of their role as being integral to support children and families. I am aware of how, my experiences can impact upon my judgement and interpretations of the raw data collected from the participant interviews.

I remained mindful of this and aimed to maintain a neutral position and awareness throughout the data analysis process. O’Leary (2018) suggests the integrity of the research study based upon the awareness of the researcher to remain neutral. This was achieved by making notes of my initial interpretations as I conducted the interviews as I transcribed the raw data. The notes with my initial thoughts and interpretations were reflected upon through the data analysis process to ensure rigour.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) refer to this process and insuring ‘reflexivity’ from the per

spective of the researcher. This practice allows for the researcher to reflect upon their work experiences which have led to the purpose of choosing to study the research topic. This reflective practice remains at the forefront of the researchers mind while interpreting the data and drawing conclusions.

O'Leary (2018) highlights, the importance of using a systematic approach to data analysis.

The first step within this process is identified as the importance of 'noting' observed bias during the initial process of reviewing the data obtained from the participant interview's.

The first step applied was to transcribe the responses to the interviews and taking notes throughout this process to acknowledge my potential bias and become aware from the initial stages. This step is also described as 'deductive' process to data analysis.

The researcher will proceed through an iterative process of 'inductive' reasoning'. This initial step described is where the responses to the interview questions are transcribed so the raw data is explicit. The researcher explores the data and processes the contents before making interpretations and revisits the notes taken as part of an immersive process.

This allows the researcher the opportunity to become familiar with the respondents responses and gain a rich insight into their experiences. This immersive process was completed through several stages of returning to and listening to the participant interviews, developing the patterns of the responses. Reading and re reading the transcriptions line by line to gain an insight and develop rich descriptions of the data obtained.

O'Leary (2018) also refers to this process as allowing for various 'categories' to be identified which then lead to sub categories and through this reduction process then become themes.

The themes are developed and the data is organised under the main themes which have emerged. Creswell and Creswell (2018) identify this process as developing codes to organise

the data. This is a format which systematically provides a relevance to the collated data in preparation for interpreting and writing up the analysis.

Table 2 Data Analysis

Steps In Thematic Analysis	
Analytic Process	Iterative Inductive, deductive Process
Organised Raw Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribe responses to participant interviews • Read transcriptions • Initial notes recorded to identify observations • listened to recording
Created Code Segments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighted text to identify patterns in the participant responses • Group similar responses
Identified emergent themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searched for themes emerging from the data segments • Grouped similar responses to code segments
Finalised Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re worked provisional themes • Developed structure to text responses to allow for thick description to inform addressing the research phenomenon and answer the research question.
Findings and Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided verbatim accounts and personal interpretation of the participant experiences.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided discussion on findings and recommendations.
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3.10 Limitations

Cohen, Manion, Morrison (2018) refer to Denscombe work who notes the lack of a scientific basis for a phenomenological approach. The strength posed by the phenomenological design is the small sample size which limits the possibility of generalising which is a consequence of applying a study to a larger population. In consideration to this strength it may also be interpreted that the closeness between the researcher and participants poses a power dynamic due to the pre-existing working relationship.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that the ‘presence’ of the research in qualitative research participant interviews can pose a limitation with regard to the responses due to the researchers presence influencing the responses provided to the questions. The online nature of the interviews due to (Covid-19) restrictions posed difficulties with relation to the flow of the interview process. I experienced some difficulties with internet connectivity which posed a challenge to maintain a conversational flow throughout the interview process.

3.11 Conclusion

The phenomenological focus of the research study employed a small sample size of six participants. This approach is applied for the purpose of a small sample to provide and account of their experiences in relation to their experience of education for knowledge transfer in their workplaces within disadvantaged settings (Cohen, Manion, Morrison 2018). O’Leary (2018) asserts that applying a qualitative approach to research is an opportunity to gain an in-depth insight into the perspective of the participant. This approach has been applied for the purpose

of answering the research question and gain an insight into the lived experiences of the participant educational experiences to transfer knowledge into practice within their workplace settings.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings and discussion relating to the data collected from the interviews which were conducted with participants, for the purpose of this research study.

The findings seek to inform answering the research question “ *How do Early Childhood Education Care Educators Transfer Knowledge into their Practice in Disadvantaged Settings*”.

The raw data was reviewed and common ideas within the responses were analysed which informed the development to the following themes, workplace setting, family participation and learning for the workplace.

These finding and discussion aim to describe the lived experiences of the participants from an individual perspective and provide rich descriptions of their educational experience . The education experience is interrogated with consideration to the transfer of knowledge into workplace practice setting. The workplace settings relate to early childhood education care (ECCE) settings located within disadvantaged communities in light of the research aims.

4.2 Outline of Chapter

Theme one, presents their knowledge of their workplace as described by the participants of the study. The setting’s relate to the early childhood education care (ECCE) settings where the participants are working. These settings are located within disadvantaged communities.

The participants description of their settings and the needs which exist are identified from the perspective of the educators who are participants of the study.

Theme two, knowledge about family participation identifies how families integrate into the setting and participate in their children's early childhood education and care. This theme examines challenges and potential barriers to participation and the strategies applied by educators to support family participation.

Theme three, relates to pedagogy and how it applies to the workforce. This theme refers to the content and knowledge obtained through the education course for the workplace. An examination of the course content is considered and how the course content supported the transfer of knowledge for the needs which exist in the workplace settings of the participants.

4.3 Participant Profile

There were six participants who were interviewed for the study, the participants had experienced higher education at a variety of levels. The educational levels obtained were identified based upon the guidelines from the Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the national framework of qualifications. The participant qualification levels ranged from QQI level 5, level 6 and a level 7 ordinary degree. The two remaining participants achieved an honours degrees at a level 8. The work experience of the participants was from two years to 31 years. Two of the six participants began working in early childhood on a community employment scheme and completed their training throughout their employment.

There were two participants who had recently progressed into managerial positions. Two of whom were in supervisor and team lead roles. The remaining two participants were in a post under the Access Inclusion Model(AIM) and a preschool educator position.

The variety of educational attainment levels of the participants, allowed the finding to consider how the knowledge obtained at the various education levels is transferred into the context of an early childhood care education setting within a disadvantaged community.

4.4 Theme One, Workplace setting

4.5 Description

The participants described their workplace settings as, providing early childhood education and care (ECCE) for children from babies up to school age childcare. The settings were categorised as referral based and, early childhood education care (ECCE) community settings providing places to children living in the local community.

P01, describes the centre's location within "the north east inner city area of Dublin which is a disadvantaged community and provides ECCE to children living in the local area". Mulvey (2017) conducted a survey of the area on behalf of the department of An Taoiseach which concluded as identifying the area, as presenting with high levels of disadvantage. The issues contributing to the disadvantage status of the local community relate to the high levels of , illegal drug use and the recreational use of prescription drugs. The families are highly dependent upon state intervention to provide housing, with low levels of educational attainment within the community. This report also highlighted higher proportions of immigrant population's than in other areas within Ireland. The immigrant population relate to people from other European countries and in frequent cases have come to Ireland due to human rights issues within their own countries.

The participants provided a description of the families who attend the service and the challenges they face. P02, defines the service as a “referral only service”, “The families who attend are referred based on identified needs, which have been assessed through psychologists, public health nurses, social workers”. This participant also comments, “You focus on the specific child and family’s needs based upon the referral information”. P06 describes that its “the only time children have one to one , we make sure they are fed”. This perspective indicates the need for the setting’s to provide for the child’s basic physical nutritional, emotional and educational needs.

P04, states ,“Every day I have to be mindful of what our lovely families maybe going through. We have to take this into consideration”. This educator is describing her practice as being mindful to the needs of children and families. Urban et al (2011) describes professional competence in practice where the educator demonstrates an ability to adapt the practice to support the holistic needs of the children. This practice is described as empathetic acknowledging an understanding of the potential impact of the daily challenges which the families experience. P02, also describes holistic practice which identifies the individual needs of families and adapts the approach to support the family needs, as they are observed by the educator. P06, is also highlighting the needs of children and the service response to those needs.

Georgeson and Campbell-Barr (2015) refer to this practice as tuning into the present moment and taking the time to observe what is happening, in that moment. This stillness provides the educator with the opportunity to tune into the needs and respond appropriately . P04, describes this skilful act, of awareness in her practice and ability to tune into the present needs of children and families. In consideration to the family background of the children and nature of the service which has been described as ‘referral based’, these families are potentially experiencing difficulties managing on a day to day basis, due to the social and personal challenges they are experiencing . The approach being described demonstrates a strong ability on behalf of the educator to empathetically respond to the needs of children as they present.

4.6 Job Requirements

The participants were asked to describe the requirements of their job within the setting that they are employed. P02, describes her job “ as working primarily as an early years educator and family support, we work with specific families in a key worker system”. National Council Curriculum Assessment (2021) refer to the benefits of a key worker system to provide consistency for children and support for them, to develop emotional connections with an adult outside of their family. The key worker plans for children’s care and developmental needs and provides a supportive link between the home and setting. The key worker is a consistent source of support for families to connect with and provides the opportunity to develop a supportive link between the setting and home environment. Conkbayir (2017) highlights the importance of ‘attachment aware practice’ which recognises the need for children to connect emotionally with a secure adult. This practice recognises the important role of the ECCE educator to provide nurturing care for children who may not have experienced positive attachment with their parent. The consistent and supportive attachment focused care is provided by the key person in the ECCE setting. This practice has the potential to give the much needed emotional support required by the child, to progress and develop.

French (2019) also suggests the benefits of a key worker system to provide for young children to facilitate emotional connection which impacts on positive development of children. French (2019) also asserts the lack of evidence relating to the benefits of multiple carers providing for the physical and emotional care of children. This observation relates to the potentially negative impact of a high turnover of educators.

P03, identifies her role to “work with children from one year, prior to attending an ECCE setting. I am required to meet all the daily demands and create an all-round developmental curriculum for the children while engaging the childcare workers, we work as a team to deliver the best programme for the children according to their interests and developmental

levels”. P03, is referring to practice which plans for children’s learning and development as described by National Council Curriculum Assessment (2021) as ‘emergent and inquiry-based’. This practice is mindful of the interests of children and their stage of development placing the child at the centre of the planning practice. ” P06, refers to her job requirements as “I am a bit of a Jack of all trades” working as a support staff member for the different age groups of children as required in the service, providing an example of supporting staff when new children are transitioning into the service offering support for this process. National Council Curriculum Assessment (2021) asserts the importance of supporting transitions for young children and the positive impact a key worker can provide to help children to move to another group experiencing the stability of a familiar staff member to help this process.

P05, refers to her position as an AIM worker supporting the educational needs of a child who is “non-verbal and presents with a developmental delay as well as behaviour problems. “I am working closely with the family to support the development of the child”. Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2019), describes the Access Inclusion Model (AIM) to provide a resource to specific children within pre-school settings to facilitate their inclusion. Breen, Kelleher, Ring and Stapleton (2018) refer to the role of the AIM worker to provide specific support within the preschool setting for children who are identified by professionals as requiring support to participate in early childhood care education.

4.7 Family Disadvantage

The participants were also asked to discuss the disadvantages they observe the families and children in the setting are experiencing. The predominant disadvantages described were related to housing with many families living in emergency accommodation, hubs and hostels. The other challenges are addiction, substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health issues. The issue of language barrier, a high proportion of parents are from countries outside Ireland and this challenge posed communication difficulties between educators and parents.

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2019) recognise that parents who are challenged with difficulties relating to addiction, substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health as categories related to adverse childhood experiences (ACES) for their children. Children who have experience of ACES can encounter lasting effects which can potentially impact upon them reaching their future potential and progression in life. The categories of disadvantage identified by the participants of this study, in relation to the families they are working with, relate to adversity in childhood.

Scanlon and Mc Kenna (2018) highlight the increase in families experiencing homelessness since 2014, reporting the highest figures exist within Dublin city centre, however this issue is extending to outside this area and throughout the country. The participants of this study are working in settings which are located within Dublin City and reporting a high level of the disadvantage being experienced in relation to these families, is homelessness.

The participants have described their workplace setting with consideration to aspects within this theme, and highlighted the variety of challenges experienced within their role as early childhood educators within these settings. The main areas highlighted relate to homelessness with many children experiencing more than one adverse childhood experiences. The issues identified in relation to the needs of the children and families within these settings would indicate, the need for appropriate course content to be covered in their higher education to be provided to prepare the educators for working within these settings. The course content should reflect the diversity of these settings.

4.8 Family Participation

Another major finding with regard to the families whose children attend the services is, the number of adverse childhood experiences the children have been exposed to, as a direct result of the challenges which relate to their parents. P02, describes the service she works in which supports families in “residential care and parents being assessed regarding the parental capacity with some children in the foster care system”. Morgan, Rochford, Sheehan (2016) highlight that one experience of ACES may lead to the development of another. This is explained by providing the example of a parent relationship breakdown. The parental separation maybe a result of conflict between the couple which may have occurred as a result of substance misuse or alcohol consumption. This example indicates that where one adverse experience exists, others can potentially follow. In consideration of this, the children of these families are at risk of not reaching their potential. The role of the educator to provide appropriate emotional and developmental support is integral. The educators require an appropriate skill set, to navigate through the challenges which exist in practice, providing for the successful outcomes for these children and families.

The participant ,P03 presents the view that “There is great support, opportunity and facilities for parents to be part of their children’s school and early years”, in consideration to the point raised and the view of P01 who acknowledged the” poor parental education relating to literacy and numeracy” the low level of education may cause a barrier to the confidence level of the parents to come forward and engage in the opportunities to be involved in their children’s education as highlighted by P03.

The Early Learning Initiative (ELI) commissioned the Dartington Social Research Unit to ‘conduct a survey of need’ for the local area which indicated that due to parents low levels of educational attainment, they did not feel confident in supporting their children to achieve in their education.(ELI,2021) This survey of need was conducted in 2005 within the area, where

the sample size for this study has recruited participants. In consideration to the finding of this survey, the approach to parental engagement needs to be empathetic to the confidence levels of parents. The educator needs to be aware of this and consider how they plan to engage parents and support them to be involved in their children's education. This approach should reflect the requirements of the individual families and with consideration to the experiences they have had and are working through at that present time.

P02, describes a positive strategy to support engaging parents in the service she works in, called 'Stay and Play'. The parent is invited to visit the setting and engage in a play session with their child, so they can gain an insight into the child's play interests and learn about how they are progressing and developing. This process allows the child autonomy of their environment and provides a positive approach to family centred practice, by taking the lead and showing their parent around the setting. The parent benefits from this opportunity and gain's an insight into what the child is interested in and learning about, in their ecce education. The parent is afforded the opportunity to see their child in the setting and experience this for themselves.

P02, compares this practice to the alternative more traditional approach where the parent is informed of the child's learning experiences when they collect their child. This approach informs the parent but, it does not allow the parent to experience the learning experiences with their child like the 'stay and play' approach does. This practice provides a family centred approach to engaging parents into the setting. This hands on experience for the parent, allowing them to gain an insight into the world of their children within the early childhood education setting.

Bethall et al (2017) concludes, that when ACES are prevalent in children's lives, positive outcomes are achieved through positive relationships being cultivated, well-being is recognised as central to progression. This practice cultivates a positive approach to well-being where the

parent is invited to be involved into the child's early childhood education experience and the child is provided with an opportunity to lead this experience. The child show's their parents the activities they are interested in and demonstrate how they are learning and progressing.

This practice support's the connection between the parent and child and builds capacity within the parent child relationship as well as the relationship between the educator and parent. This practice illustrates a positive move toward a development of practice in relation to approaching parental participation, in comparison to the traditional approach of communicating with the parents at the end of the day. P01 " some parents do not recognise the learning that happens" This participant asserts that parents are not always aware of all the integral learning which is happening for children setting a strong foundation for future learning and development.

The practice of 'stay and play' proposes a strong practice where parents are provided the opportunity to gain an insight into the learning experiences of their children in their ECCE service. This approach provides an opportunity to educate parents on the learning which takes place. L06, describes her experience of working with parents as "you have to be careful with how you approach the parent's sometimes you are 'pussy footing' around them and need to be careful about the words you use. Sometimes you are apologising for something you haven't even done. Your just doing it and I don't know if it comes from the parent's we work with and the area we are in but you have to be very careful because these are the children who need us the most." Hayes and Filipovic (2018) recognise the need for educators to develop appropriate vocabulary to describe their practice. This perspective presents a challenge to how parents perceive communication from the educator which shows a defensive response by the parent. In consideration to this experience and the point raised by P02 relating to the vulnerability of the families she works with, who respond defensively, due to the number of professionals monitoring their parenting capacity.

These examples suggest the need for educators to be provided with adequate training to support them with managing communication with parents which provides them with the skills to communicate in effectively to build capacity within families supportively to ensure a positive early childhood educational experience.

Vaandering (2010) proposes the relationship window which was developed based upon the principles of the social discipline window. This approach provides a framework to consider, which advocates for a collaborative approach to working with people.

In consideration to the examples provided with regard to the barriers which exist for educators in their work with parents. This approach is described as adopting a 'restorative practice' approach which aims to maintain relationships by working with parents through encouragement and nurturing approach to the relationship. This approach advocates for working with parents from where they are currently at and has the potential to build trust, confidence and capacity in the work with parents.

National Council Curriculum Assessment (2007) highlights the positive impact on a child's motivation to learn when they experience good relationships between parents and the early childhood education setting. L01 highlights the importance of parental participation as "it's important to engage parents but working in disadvantaged settings it's essential, there is no parent out there who does not care for their children and they all want to do better and do the best for their children, having the ability to see parents where they are at and be accepting of them and help them move forward" P04 articulates how "it's very important to be able to support these families mental health and our lovely children's everyday struggles". This educator is acknowledging the need to provide support to parents and be cognisant of the challenges that parents maybe struggling with. This statement also recognises the effect of the challenges parents are experiencing can potentially have on children and how they may manifest into 'everyday struggles'.

Conkbayir (2017) suggests that “young brains develop based on the care received”(Conkbayir, 2017 ,P.61). P04 provides awareness of the importance of being mindful, of the challenges which impact the families she is working with and her role, to be understanding within the approach to her practice. Conkbayir (2017) refers to ‘attachment informed practice’ which is being applied in the United Kingdom(UK) in schools and services and proving to have positive outcomes for children and families. This practice focuses upon the emotional well-being of children with consideration to parents who may have struggled to bond with their child and meet their needs within a consistent way. This experience affect’s the ‘attachment’ between the parent and child and can pose difficulties for the child’s emotional wellbeing and development which impacts their progress.

Powell, Cooper, Hoffman and Marvin (2017) describe attachment as a parents ability to be present and emotionally connect with their child. This is demonstrated by the parent responding to the child emotionally, by protecting them so they feel safe and protected from harm. The parent allows the infant to physically explore their environment safely and learn about their physical environment. In positive attachment cycles, the child is reassured emotionally so they can develop and process their emotions. Conkbayir, proposes for educators to consider their practice through the lens of attachment. This practice supports the educator to be informed of the impact of brain development of children in their care. This approach in consideration of the challenges being described by the participants in this study with relation to children and families would be supportive for educators in their practice and beneficial to consider within the education course content.

The value of parental participation has been highlighted by all participants with the diverse needs of families being described. The role of attachment informed practice provides a positive approach for consideration to develop practice within this area. The education course

content could be strengthened in relation to considering a practice base focus upon developing attachment informed approaches rather than the description of attachment theory.

4.9 Perceived Level of Preparation to Work in a Disadvantaged Setting

This theme relates to the area of the research question, knowledge transfer, which will gain an understanding of the participant perspectives for the purpose of answering the research question. This theme will examine how the education experience has prepared the educators for their place of work. The participants described the course content of the higher education course studied, with consideration to the course content and approaches which supported them to transfer knowledge within the context of their workplace and also to identify the gaps which existed. The participants were satisfied with regards to many aspects of the course content and found it beneficial to transfer into their workplace setting. The participants also discussed the areas they felt, they should have learned more about to support them in their role within the workplace setting they were working in.

P01, described the course as preparing her for the workforce “as best it could and relevant at the time”. The degree programme undertaken by this participant was completed 17 years ago.

This participant described the learning content she felt was most beneficial to her workplace was the “abnormal psychology” which “covered toileting issues and supporting parents with toilet training in the setting and at home”. This participant described that, in disadvantaged setting parents sometimes “miss the window” and “children remain in nappies for longer”

Conkbayir (2017) contests the term “missed window” by suggesting that viewing child development within specific time frames, limits how we approach providing for children’s present

stage of development. Conkbayir also asserts that children will develop certain skills at various stages and brain development does not cease after a child turns three years of age. The term 'sensitive periods' is proposed in place of 'missed window'.

This term provides a more empathetic encouraging choice of language than using the word 'missed' as this word could potentially provide a negative connotation for parents and imply that they have 'missed' something in their parenting duties. In consideration of this and the point made by P02 "I am coming to this family as an early years educator looking to support and promote this child's development and recommending to the parent what the child needs. The parent can be defensive because, here is another person coming at me telling me another thing is wrong with my child."

This perspective and with regard to the difficulties described which relate to the challenges being experienced by families, such as mental health difficulties and social work intervention. The families being assessed regarding their capacity to remain as the primary care position for their children. This would suggest a strong need for higher education course content to support educators to explore how they communicate sensitive issues with parents and support their development. The use of language to communicate in order to support capacity building in families. How is vocabulary used in communication with parents and what message does it give parents. Is it supportive to them or critical of them and their children.

Fives, Keenaghan, Canavan, Moran and Coen (2013) refer to, restorative practices which provides a positive approach to maintaining relationships. This report discusses an evaluation of restorative practice, which was conducted by Wilson (2011) in Co Dublin in schools which had introduced the practice into classrooms to manage relationships. This practice provided positive results in relation to families from disadvantaged communities in their response to school. This approach moves away from 'punitive' treatments to resolve conflicts

by using restorative language which encourages the families to take responsibility and work through solutions to the difficulties they are experiencing.

With consideration to restorative practice as a relationship building and an approach to maintain relationships with families. In the case of defensive responses which have been described from educators and the families who are being assessed regarding their capacity to continue to care for their children, restorative practice training could provide for educating students with regard, to a positive approach to consider when working with vulnerable families. This approach provides a framework to support working with families through fairness. In addition to learning about psychology. The psychology can provide for a theoretical basis with the restorative practice providing with a skills based approach to transfer into practice.

4.10 Perceived Gaps in Knowledge and Skills required to work in Disadvantaged Settings

P04 describes the benefit of learning about Aistear and Síolta and asserts that “Aistear is more practical, but Síolta offers us extra detail on how to work with families and children” This participant studied at honours degree level at around the same time as P05, who identifies gaps which existed in her QQI level 5 training and the lack of course content relating to Aistear and Síolta. The participant was working in a setting in a community employment scheme, while studying which supported developing her understanding of Aistear and Síolta and how to apply to practice. This training course was completed in 2017 and Aistear was published in 2009 and Síolta was published in 2006. This provides a significant gap in the contents of the QQI level 5 education training in preparation for the workforce.

Roberts (2003) provides an interpretation of John Dewey's experimental theory who asserts the quality of the educational experience being dependent on the current knowledge level of the teacher. The role of the teacher is to provide the experience for the student to contextualise the learning content. This example of a student studying for a QQI qualification in ecce at a level 5 standard, and not learning about Aistear and Síolta which were introduced 8 to 11 years prior is an example of teaching practice which is not incorporating current quality assurance practice. This example provides an example of the role of the work placement being supportive for knowledge to be realised and transferred into practice.

P04 completed a QQI level 5 and 6 training prior to completing the level 8 honours degree. The level five and six training provided more practical skills which she felt were missing from the level eight such as feeding a baby. This participant also expresses the view that learning more about play, disadvantaged families and attachment would have been beneficial and identified this as a gap in learning to support her for her workplace. Yahya and Wood (2017) suggests the importance of considering the role of play and culture. The value of play and learning can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. This paper highlights the value of play within western culture is viewed as the 'vehicle to learning' compared to Chinese culture which does not value play for the purpose of learning and recognises formal schooling as where learning takes place.

Conkbahir (2017) proposes the importance of neuroscience being included in the curriculum content of higher ECCE education courses to support educators to understand their role in supporting children's learning and development, by being informed of the impact of early childhood experiences on brain development. This approach moves the education experience for educators beyond learning about developmental psychology and normative milestones. This approach is providing consideration to the impact of brain development with regard to

the experiences a child has had. This course content would be highly supportive to the students who will work within disadvantaged settings in consideration to the high level of adverse childhood experiences the children have had as highlighted by (P04).

P02, referred to the course content as “all theory based” and “one size fits all the degree”. She elaborates on these points by discussing “how you learn about the theory and a strategy to support certain behaviour challenges or developmental stages”. She also described “you leave college thinking you have the theory and go into the workplace and realise”, “it’s not all about theory” its practice. The strategies learned about, and the theory covered, did not support the challenges within her workplace and the challenges the children and families were facing. P01, described how it was the “placement supervisors” who supported her to transfer knowledge into practice and without them she did not think she would have been ready to work in a room leader role. P03, asserts the view that the “theoretical side” to learning was important but it was learning from others, and hands on experience that supported her to transfer the theory into practice.

This participant is describing “problem based learning” this approach to teaching provides students with the opportunity to unpack theory and consider how to apply the theory to practice. The role of the teacher is to facilitate discussion and provide the opportunity for the students to consider their practice through a new lens, challenging previously held ideas (Cran-ton;2002).

P01, has acknowledged the role of the work placement supervisor as being integral to support the student to transfer the knowledge into practice. In problem based learning as an approach, the teacher or student placement requires extensive knowledge of practice and teaching subject content, to engage students and achieve a ‘transformative’ approach to teaching.

P03, refers to the benefit of ‘completing her QQI level 5 in house with the team’ Cranton (2002) refers to (Habermas;1971) insights into the various knowledges acquired through education and refers to ‘emancipatory’ which encourages reflection on practice and proposing critical reflection. In consideration to the ‘in house training with the team’ as described by (PO3), if the team are training together at the same level, the role of the teacher within this context to have the skills to engage the team to question their practice as its delivered is paramount, to achieve developing quality practice. L03, referred to the most important aspect of the learning experience was the opportunity to “learn from others” and the opportunity to gain a different perspective from other people’s experiences.

This view proposes the importance of students in education being provided with opportunities to discuss their interpretations and viewpoints and debate their insights with their peers to support their learning and development. Bleach (2015) asserts that learning takes place when we engage with others and communicate are ideas and thoughts.

Campbell-Barr (2017) refers to the issue of the learning contents of higher education courses in preparation for workforce practice. This paper also highlights the importance of quality practice to serve children from less socially economic backgrounds to ensure positive outcomes. Hayes and Filipovic (2018) contest the idea of early childhood education and care focus on outcomes and refers to the ‘present child’ and practice supporting the child that presents on any day and adapt practice to meet the child’s needs. The examples of the contents of the higher education courses at various levels highlighted the need for the course content to provide a more comprehensive curriculum to provide appropriate education for educators entering settings within disadvantaged communities and move away from the “one size fits all” approach described by (PO2).

The viewpoints of the participants indicate that the theory alone was not adequate for the workforce. P01 referred to how “integral the placement supervisor” was to support her to develop the necessary skills required to manage in the workforce.

These insights from the participants with regard to the literature referred to provides consideration to the importance of the education experience to provide a broader content and a workplace component to provide the opportunity to develop practice.

4.11 Key Knowledge and Skills Received through Educational Experience

The participants were asked about their experience in the course they studied. P01 spoke about how “the placement element of the course being key to her success in the workforce” P02 referred to learning about, the importance of reflection in class and developing an understanding through her work placement in the setting.

Scanlon and Mc Kenna (2018) refer to a report from the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) which acknowledged the complex issues being faced by early childhood educators and primary school teachers in supporting children and families who are living in homelessness. The lack of training and guidance provided for educators in how to support these families. These children are struggling within their education as a direct result of their homeless status and the lack of facilities and stability in their living accommodation. This reality is impacting how educators provide holistically for the needs of these children and families.

4. 12 Further Learning

The participants were asked if they had planned to progress in education within ECCE two participants are interested in progressing in play therapy. One participant is interested in considering a masters in the future. Two participants are interested in progressing in ECCE training to the next level. The remaining participant response was “I know there is a legal requirement but I would like to progress to more practical courses to support practice on the ground” (PO2).

These responses indicate that that 50% of the study participant’s wish to engage in further learning that can be transferred into their everyday practice.

4.13 Conclusion

This chapter reported the findings and discussion relating to the data collated from the research study participants providing reference to relevant literature. The findings have been presented for the purpose of answering the research question. The findings were interrogated and revealed that the participants were satisfied with many aspects of their course contents which have been identified. In relation to knowledge transfer the participants have identified the role of the course lecturer and the value of the work placement module of their course in supporting them to transfer the course content knowledge into practice.

Chapter 5 Study Conclusion and Future Perspectives

5.1 Introduction

This section will provide a conclusion to the study with regard to the research question “*How do Early Childhood Education Care Educators Transfer Knowledge into their Practice in Disadvantaged Settings*”. The limitations of the study will be examined and future recommendation’s will be presented.

5.2 Conclusion of the Study

The participants reported that they were happy with their educational experience, with one participant commenting that the course content was relevant when she studied her course. There was a second participant who commented that the course lacked supporting the diversity of needs which existed in the children she was working with. The work placement module of the course was identified as being integral to support knowledge transfer. One of the participants commenting that it was when she was in work placement that supported developing her understanding of the knowledge obtained from the course. There was a second participant who referred to her placement supervisor, who was vital to supporting her in preparation for the workforce. This participant recognised that without the support of the placement supervisor she did not think she would have managed in a room leader position after qualifying with her degree.

This participant described the support provided by the supervisor, who provided her with the necessary tools to use when documenting observations of children’s play which provided the necessary support to observe the learning which was taking place and plan for extending the children’s future learning opportunities. This support provided her with the opportunity to develop the necessary skills for the workplace, and plan for a child centred approach to her practice with a focus on planning around the children’s individual interests.

One of the participants commented about, not learning about Aistear and Siolta in her QQI level five course and it was her work placement which supported her learning. There was another participant who commented on the importance of peer learning opportunities. This participant is describing her learning process in a social context and the importance of shared learning opportunities.

These responses are highlighting the importance of hands on learning experience and social learning opportunities. The benefit of peer learning opportunities through constructive class discussions, which supports educators to reflect upon their practice and share their ideas and perspectives with each other.

The mentoring support provided by the work placement supervisor allowed for the theory learned in the classroom to be transferred into practice. The role of the professional practice placement module provided a quality environment which supported this participant to learn about Aistear and Siolta indicating the important role of the placement to provide for the transfer of knowledge.

In consideration to these observations from the data collated from the participants and insights from their lived experiences, knowledge was transferred through practice. This observation would indicate the importance of the work placement being one of professional practice that is supportive to students in transferring knowledge with the potential to be the vehicle which transfers the theoretical knowledge into practice.

Roberts (2003) refers to John Dewey experimental learning theory which advocates for social learning experiences to contextualise the learning content. In this example by participants of the power of the work placement experience, in supporting knowledge to be transferred and

meaning being comprehended. This experience aligns with Dewey's learning theory. The role of the placement supervisor to support the learning to come into effect and be impactful. This shows the importance of the supervisor of the placement practice to have the appropriate skills and experience to support the theory to be transferred and realised in practice.

5.3 Study Limitations

This study has limitations which I intend to address in the following section. The first limitation is resulting from my potential bias as a practitioner within this area and my role as a researcher for the purpose of this study. This experience has inspired my interest in this area of study. This experience also brings with it, my potential 'bias' as a result of my own truly held beliefs from my experience of working within the area of disadvantage. I have attempted to alleviate this potential bias by acknowledging my bias throughout the study.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggests, acknowledgement of the researchers potential bias will provide authentic honesty and awareness from the researcher which will potentially resonate with the readers. The findings and discussion chapter used 'verbatim' accounts to describe the participants responses within the interviews to ensure the perspectives of the participants were authentically represented and not paraphrased. This approach was applied to ensure the participants exact responses were provided and not adapted or influenced by my experience in this area.

This study could have applied 'triangulation' as a method to strength the position in relation to validity. 'Triangulation' is referred to by (Creswell and Creswell,2018) as an approach which provides for a variety of data sources to be used to allow for validity of a research study. This study lacked triangulation being applied, however thick descriptions were used to

describe the experiences of the participant by using the exact words they responded with and providing 'verbatim' quotes.

This practice could have been strengthened by meeting with the participants for a second time to clarify the 'verbatim' accounts and ensure accuracy. This practice was not possible due to the time constraints of the study timeline. (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

My thesis supervisor provided the opportunity for 'peer debriefing' by providing feedback on my approach to data analysis to ensure validity. This process allowed for an outside viewpoint as suggested by (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

5.4 Recommendations for future Research

This study was conducted on a small scale with six participants which informed a convenience sample. The participants were invited to participate through direct contact from the researcher through her workplace contacts. This process was applied to ensure the timeline of the study made it viable for completion. The future direction following this study could be to broaden the participant sample to a variety of disadvantaged communities within Ireland.

This would allow for a broader opportunity to gain the insights from participants working in disadvantaged settings with regard to their experience in higher education as preparation for the diverse needs of this workforce. This process could potentially allow for varying trends being identified and differences in the challenges of families compared across various areas within the country. This future study has the potential to inform the higher education teaching policy because the perspectives would be identified on a broader scale and from a country wide perspective in comparison to the small scale applied in this study. This approach may also provide the opportunity to provide a larger population and inform more generalised findings through the use of a questionnaire.

A mixed method design approach could be applied to allow for both statistical data from the survey circulated to incorporate a larger population. The findings would inform the design of an interview questions for the purpose of interviewing a smaller population of participants. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe the strengths of using a mixed method approach as allowing for the combination of numerical data to be obtained, as well as the qualitative data from interviews using open ended questions. This combination allows for the numerical data obtained to inform a generalised perspective to the data with the more descriptive narrative obtained from the interviews. This approach could inform a broader analysis of the experiences of participants and provide a stronger findings discussion to influence teaching practice with regard to the diversity which exists within disadvantaged community early childhood care education settings.

5.5 Implications and Recommendations

The research participants reported being happy with their educational experience with regard to providing the necessary knowledge required to work in the early childhood care education sector. There were a number of areas which they expressed the need for more specialised education experience with regard to supporting the diverse needs within disadvantaged communities they were working in.

In consideration to the complexities described by the participants with regard to the children and families who the settings provide for and they were working in. This indicates the need for a rigorous approach to anti-bias training to be included within the course content. This training would propose, the students to consider and examine their personal bias with relation to the socio economic challenges described with regard to families. This training could poten-

tially allow student to examine their beliefs and potential bias with regard to peoples circumstances within society. The following questions are proposed for consideration. Why do we think families become homeless, is this a consequence to their life choices? What about mental health difficulties or substance mis use? What are our views of families from ethnic minorities? Do we have pre existing judgements regarding certain cultures and behaviours or belief systems?

These questions relate to the adverse childhood experiences being identified by the educators which affect the children attending the services of the participants. This course content would provide the opportunity for educators to reflect upon themselves and their potential bias in preparation for working as an educator within a setting located within a disadvantaged area.

Murray (2017) refers to her teaching practice of students studying for a level 8, honours degree in ECCE and her practice teaching about anti bias. This approach was taught in Blanchardstown Institute of Technology, to students in third and fourth year of their Level 8 degree in ECCE in 2016. Murray, describes how she introduced the module “diversity and equality training” to the degree programme in 2014. This was introduced to provide a training module as part of the degree to allow educators to examine their personal bias in preparation for workforce practice.

Murray, asserts the concern regarding the introduction of the ‘access inclusion model’ as providing a lens for educators to identify the area of inclusion solely on disability and lose sight of mindful practice in all aspects of inclusion within society. This module follows a “critical diversity and equality approach” which represents all aspects of diversity within society. The first step of the teaching and learning approach in the module is for students to ex-

amine how they position themselves within society. Identifying how they identify their family background and culture. This allows for students to recognise their own position before examining how other members of our society are represented in Ireland.

The second stage provides the opportunity for the students to work in small groups and observe how different cultural groups are represented within Irish society. Murray (2017) recognises the impact this module can have on students which become vocal and brings much debate. This observation would indicate the importance of the class lecturer to be appropriately skilled to facilitate debate in the classroom which supports the voice of all students and not just the most vocal students.

As described previously by the participants the importance of the work placement supervisor to provide for 'transferring knowledge into practice'. In this situation in order for the important knowledge content to be transferred rather than missed due to a debate not being appropriately facilitated. The facilitation skills of the lecturer are integral to the value of this experience which allows for all voices with the group to be represented, not just the loudest ones.

This approach provides the students with the opportunity to develop their perspective through awareness of their potential anti bias as they consider other people within our society. This awareness can support them to develop personal awareness and consider how they approach their practice and support children and families in all early childhood care education settings.

Conkbayir (2017) refers to the importance of educators in ecce settings to consider their role with regard to providing nurturing relationships for children with consideration to the role of brain development in young children's lives. With regard to this point and the description of

the challenges the families are experiencing who attend the services, who are being considered for the purpose of this study, the role of the educator to potentially provide for the emotional needs of children is paramount. Conkbayir (2017) asserts the importance of educators being educated to consider beyond normative child development theory and educated about 'attachment informed practice' to support the emotional needs of children.

With regard to this perspective and the response from the second participant interviewed as part of this study who recommended that educators need to learn more about 'attachment' and understand their role when working within settings located in disadvantaged areas. Powell, Cooper, Hoffman and Marvin (2017) refer to 'circle of security' training which supports parents to realise their role in providing a 'circle of security' for their children which proposes the 'quality' of the relationship to be at the heart of a child's emotional development.

This training proposes the parents role to support their children's ability to 'self-regulate' their emotions so they can grow up with positive emotional health.

With consideration to the key to success in supporting children emotionally, being the 'quality' of the relationships. This proposes the importance of 'quality' practice in early years education training to support educators to consider how they support building 'quality' relationships with children. Let's approach building quality practice by providing appropriate content in higher education courses relating to supporting quality relationships with children and their families to support emotional well-being. If the starting point is positive relationships and connection, this will inform a safe secure foundation where learning and development can be provided for holistically. This will provide children with a positive start in their educational journey in life.

The participants expressed some challenges with regard to working with parents to support them to be involved in their children's learning. One of the participants acknowledged that some parents can be defensive because of the number of professionals involved in their lives.

This proposes the need for educators to be educated to consider different approaches to relationship building and maintaining relationships which are supportive to the outcomes of children.

5.6 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the perspectives of early childhood care educators, with regard to their higher education experience to support them to transfer knowledge into practice within the context of a disadvantaged community setting. This was achieved through semi structured interview process involving six participants who are working within a disadvantaged community providing education and care for children within their early years. The participants recruited for the sample provided rich descriptions from their educational experience which was at varying educational levels.

These rich descriptions provided the opportunity to consider the education experience at a variety of levels and how the participants experienced it and prepared them for the diversity of the workplaces they work in. The course content supported them to transfer knowledge relevant to the early childhood care setting within a disadvantaged community.

The participants were afforded the opportunity to identify the gaps which existed from the course they studied and provided recommendations for course content for higher education courses in the future for the purpose of preparing educators to work in disadvantaged community early childhood care settings.

The findings informed areas for consideration to strengthen the education experience of future educators to consider the diverse needs which exist within disadvantaged early childhood

care education settings. Early childhood care education has the opportunity to provide children with a positive early educational start in life, the educators role is integral to provide a positive start to ensure lifelong learning opportunities for all children. The educator needs to be provided with an higher education experience which prepares them to work within all diverse communities.

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Appendices

Appendix i :Research Participants Consent Form

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study.

I am completing a Master's programme in Educational Practice at the National College of Ireland, Dublin.

As part of my programme, I am exploring how knowledge is transferred into practice by Early Childhood Educators in a disadvantaged community. I would like to understand your views on how you transferred what you learned in your early childhood education course, into practice.

The questions will relate to your experiences. There is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions, the purpose is to understand about your experience. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time, without providing a reason. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and it will be recorded so that I do not miss out in any of our conversation.

The recordings will be stored securely and destroyed soon after the analysis of the data. I will record the interviews for the purpose of obtaining data for the study. You will not be identified throughout the study. There have been no identified risks associated with participating in the study. The study has ethical approval.

If you have any questions you can contact me by email at x18155944@student.ncirl.ie or my supervisor Dr Meera Oke at meera.oke@ncirl.ie.

Do you agree to become a participant of this study?

Please Insert Your Name _____

Many Thanks Claire O'Buacháin

Appendix ii: Research Study Participant Interview Questions

1. What further or higher education courses have you completed to date?
 - a. When did you complete this course?
2. How do you refer to the profession you work in ie/early childhood care education, childcare?
 - a. What age group of children do you work with?
 - b. Can you tell me about the specific disadvantages that children and families face in your setting?
3. Do you plan to progress to further education in early years?
4. How long have you been working as an early years educator?
5. How long have you been working in your current position?
6. Can you tell me about your job requirements and describe the centre you work in?

Can we talk about your educational experience.

1. What can you recall from the course you studied?
 - i. Were there any specific skills or strategies you learned about?
2. Tell me about your experience on the course?
3. Do you feel the education course provided you with the necessary knowledge and skills and attitude required for your job?
4. You have described the children and families who attend the service you work in, can you tell me about any challenges you face supporting the children's education and care?
 - a. Are there aspects that you enjoy?

5. Can you tell me about any challenges you face with supporting parents/families to be involved in their children's learning and care?
6. What would you like to have learned more about to support you with your current work?
7. Can you tell me about the skills you acquired from the course?
8. Do you feel your education experience prepared you to deal with the challenges you mentioned earlier?
9. Can you tell me about any experience you may have had with demonstrating what you have learned in your education programme into practice in the workplace setting?

Do you feel the education you received has supported you with

1. Tell me about how you plan for children's learning experiences?
2. Where do you think you received this the knowledge from?
3. Did it help you with reflecting upon your practice and documenting children's learning experiences?
4. Did you learn about how to work with children who may have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACES).
5. Do you feel there were gaps in training in this area? If yes, can you elaborate how
6. Do you have anything you would like to say with regards to the education you received and preparation for the service you provide

Thank You For Taking Part

Appendix iii : Sample of Distinctive Responses

Disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor parental education relating to literacy and English • the foster care system • but the community is disadvantaged and located in the inner city • and I feel they are privileged to have so many supports • children lack a stable environment, some children are referred because of language delay or additional needs.
Job requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECEC and school age care and curriculum development • Referral services working with ... • Be sensitive to the backgrounds of families • Deal with challenging behaviour • Be a 'Jack of all trades'
Recall from the course you studied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the most practical and useful • diverse families • child development • child psychology • level 5 and level 6 there is practical knowledge • disadvantaged families there is not enough focus on this
Specific skills or strategies you learned about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • important to engage parents but working in • lot of the learning was done in practice • child is at the centre • respecting everyone • benefits to the children and the training helped me realise why I was doing the activities with the children and the benefits • Reflection, child development

Appendix IV: Emergent Themes

Workplace Setting

Family Participation

**Pedagogy Application
to Workforce**