Parental Involvement in Early Years Settings in Co. Roscommon

The perspectives of Early Years Educators

Linda Madden

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Declaration

‘I declare that this desertion and the research involved in it are entirely the work of the author’.

Signature: __________________________     Date: ____________________________

Linda Madden
Abstract

The aim of the study was to explore parental involvement in early years’ services in Co. Roscommon by examining early years’ educator’s perceptions of the importance and benefits of parental involvement. It attempted to establish the methods used by educators to involve parents and identify any challenges they perceive to prevent this happening.

Aims and objectives were proposed, relevant literature examined and methodology introduced. A questionnaire was used to gather data.

The results described a lack of effective involvement of parents in early years’ settings in Roscommon. The results highlight the significant need for relevant training in Siolta and Aistear. Lack of time was found to be a significant factor in the prevention of involving parents in the setting, highlighting the need to restructure the working hours of staff to accommodate working parents.
Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following people for their help and support during the project.

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Abbreviations

**PI** Parental Involvement

**EYS** Early Years Setting

**EYE’S** Early Years Educator/s
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Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 1. Introduction

The aim of this project is to examine parental involvement in early years’ settings in Co. Roscommon. The focus will be to examine early years’ educator’s perceptions of the importance of involving parents in early years’ setting. The project has two main objectives. The first is to establish the importance and benefits of involving parents in settings. The second is to explore factors that early years’ educators perceive to be barriers to involving parents.

Chapter two reviews relevant literature from 2004 to 2017 and a justification for this research is provided. Chapter three discusses the research methodology, outlining that a questionnaire was used to gather information. Chapter four contains the results in narrative and graphical form. A discussion of results is chapter five regarding the literature in chapter two. The project is concluded in Chapter six and recommendations are outlined.
Chapter 2: Literature Review
Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction
This review is an evaluation of current literature available on PI in EYS. It examines the importance of PI and identifies the barriers and challenges faced by educators to develop a partnership with parents approach. The review begins with a definition of PI and identifies the frameworks which promote PI. The review then highlights the importance of this approach for children, parents and EYE’S in EYS. Following on from this the barriers and challenges to PI are identified and discussed. Due to lack of research in PI in EYS in Ireland, some of the literature reviewed is from Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and Australia.

2.2 The benefits of parental involvement in early years’ settings
The last decade has seen an accelerated change in the early years’ education and care sector in Ireland. Public policy has moved its focus from providing women returning to work with childcare places to the importance of quality based early years’ experiences. These changes are evident in the suite of legislation that has been introduced in recent years. The parent has been identified as the primary carer and educator of the child and the EYE has a role to play in collaborating with parents and families in the best interests of the child (Fitzpatrick, 2012). The introduction of Aistear, (2009) the early childhood curriculum framework and Siolta, (2006) the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education have identified involving parents in the early years setting as the link in providing a holistic approach to the overall development of the child and ensuring consistency between home and the early years setting. Aistear (2009) has described partnership with parents as, parents, families and the early years’ educator all working together for the health, welfare and development of the child. As an EYE one of the most important roles is the relationship with the children and the families. Research shows that parents are comfortable with EYE’S in a way they may not be with other professionals, therefore working and collaborating with parents is now a key factor in the promotion of children’s well-being and identity and belonging.

According to Crosbie (2006), PI is described as “engaged participation by parents in a consistent and meaningful way in the consultation, planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes and activities to assist their child’s development. It includes regular two-way and meaningful communication between parents and early years educators and involving
parents in decision-making”. While Crosbie refers to PI, Aistear acknowledges a partnership with parents approach, subsequently, these terms are often used in accordance with each other. By comparison, (Fitzpatrick, 2012), identified PI to include a quick conversation when the child is going home, occasional fundraising or volunteering. Partnership (Taylor, 2012), on the other hand is much deeper than involvement and includes some of the elements of involvement along with, mutual respect and trust, appreciation of different perspectives, power-sharing and joint decision-making and a willingness to negotiate. They also support the thinking that the child benefits when both sets of experts work together. EYE’S recognise the individuality of parents. They bring a unique set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and culture to the EYS. Share & Kerrins (2013), identify benefits of PI such as, a better relationship between the EYE’S and parents and improved professional identity for the sector. They also discovered new techniques to involve parents and new knowledge about child development.

Aistear (2009) highlights many benefits for children. These include, feeling more secure and benefit more from the educational opportunities offered to them. They see learning as more enjoyable when their home life is reflected in the EYS, and they can move from one setting to another with greater confidence. Parents benefit from being involved in their child’s learning from a young age. According to Aistear (2009), parents feel valued and respected, and they feel comfortable visiting the setting and talking to staff. Barnardo’s (2006), also highlights many benefits for parents such as, building on their knowledge of child development and supporting them with their parenting skills.

Fitzpatrick (2012) identifies benefits for the EYE, for instance, developing a trusting relationship with the child and the parents, enhancing children’s emotional and social well-being by building on knowledge about the family and benefiting from parents expertise and skills.

PI will be evident in an early years setting where there is mutual respect between educators and parents, where connecting with parents is a priority and where specific strategies to support partnership are implemented (Graham, 2017)

However, while all this is very positive many barriers have been identified in the research preventing EYE’S collaborating with parents and families. These will be explored further in the next section.
2.3 Barriers to Parental Involvement

Sometimes parents may vary in their capacity or willingness to become involved in the EYS and there may be a variety of barriers that prevent parent’s participation in the setting. The following were identified during this review, time, communication and language and qualifications and training

2.3.1 Time

In families where both parents work, it can be difficult for parents to find time to engage with EYE. A study carried out by Share & Kerrins (2013), explains that educators found it difficult to engage with parents because of time constraints. Parents were not available during the day because of work commitments and were rushing when dropping off and collecting their child. McDermott (2012), also identified time as a barrier to parental involvement for working parents and for educators, parents and educators are accessible at different times of the day and White (2016) agrees with this highlighting how lack of time can contribute to a breakdown in communication amongst educators and parents. The next barrier identified is communication and language.

2.3.2 Communication and Language/Culture

Educators who strive to genuinely offer an equitable service will be open to meeting the needs of all parents and families, entering into a dialogue to enhance their current practice in a manner that addresses any concerns (Graham, 2017). Educators are aware from the work of Bronfenbrenner that the most central influence on a child is their immediate environment, the microsystem, which is the early years setting, and the people in these settings have the most immediate effect on the child. Communicating with parents about the importance of quality learning experiences which enhance the child’s development and learning are an important part of the educator’s role (Hayes, 2013). One of the four themes of Aistear (2009) is communicating, identified as giving, receiving and making sense of information, signifying its importance in the early years setting. Siolta (2006), standard 12, Communication, suggests information should be available for people who speak other languages or who have additional
needs and information and feedback should be disseminated to parents regularly and confidentiality.

McDermott (2012) in her study found that information was not reaching parents due to limited types of communication strategies being put in place. Events and activities were posted on notice boards but some parents don’t look at notice boards and some children are collected by childminders. She also found that written communication was the least popular form of communicating with parents and the telephone was the most popular, even though previous research stressed the telephone was only used in an emergency. Share & Kerrins (2013) discussed using portfolios of children’s work as a means of encouraging PI, which is also a recommendation by Aistear (2006) on documenting children’s learning. However, educators raised concerns at the time and cost element involved in providing portfolios for all the children. Educators also required specific training in documentation and assessment as outlined in Aistear which highlights the final barrier, training and qualifications.

2.3.3 Training and Qualifications

The Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 requires all staff working in EYS to hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 (Affairs, 2016). All services providing the ECCE Scheme (Free Preschool Year) must implement the Siolta and Aistear framework. They must adhere to staff guidelines and the room leader must have Level 6 or higher.

Murphy (Murphy, 2004) in her research discovered that while training prepared educators very well for direct work with the children, they lacked the skills and knowledge to work with the family as a whole. Share and Kerrins (2013), identified educational levels and learning capacities as a barrier to PI and in particular to documenting children’s learning. Cottle & Alexander (2014), discovered in their research the teaching assistant in the classroom took the role of collaborating with parents daily, however, when it came to participating in formal interviews or focus groups the class teacher was always put forward, never the teaching assistant, highlighting the opinion that qualification exceeds practical knowledge.

McMillan (2005) in her study, discovered educators with professional training were not equipped to engage and work with parents (McMillan, 2005).
2.4 Conclusion

It is evident that PI in EYS has changed significantly over time. This has occurred due to changes in policy and practice, EYE’S are aware of the importance and benefits of PI for the child’s holistic development.

No research on the involvement of parents in EYS’S in Roscommon was identified. There is very limited research on PI in EYS in Ireland. Therefore, further research is required to highlight the benefits of PI in EYS for all stakeholders and to remove the barriers in place preventing this from happening. Research will be conducted based on these findings.
Chapter 3: Methodology
Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section provides an account of the method used for data collection and the rationale for using this method. It describes the sample group and the procedure used to select the group and the procedure used to complete the study. It discusses ethical considerations and research reliability. It explores the limitations of the study and addresses the method of analysis.

3.2 Research Methods

The research method carried out is ‘Quantitative’. The issues to be explored are those outlined in the research aims and objectives. The rational for this research design was founded on the type of investigation, quantitative or qualitative that was required to explore the research topic. Quantitative methods emphasise objective measurements and the statistical, or numerical analysis of data collected through questionnaires. It focuses on gathering numerical data and generalising it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon

http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/quantitative14/01/17

Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience’s range of behaviour and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. It uses in-depth studies of small groups of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predicative.

http://www.qrca.org/?page=whatissqualresearch15/01/17

A quantitative approach is the preferred type based on its characteristics to quantify attitudes, behaviours and opinions and to formulate facts and uncover patterns in the research. The quantitative approach to be used is a questionnaire, which will provide a larger volume of information from preschool services in Roscommon to identify the importance of, and the barriers to parental involvement in services through the perspectives of the early year’s educator. A qualitative method would not be suitable for this research as it focuses on small groups and this research will focus on Co. Roscommon which has fifty-seven services, therefore requiring the quantitative approach for accuracy. The questions are fixed and the
same for each respondent making it more quantifiable. Responses are completely anonymous allowing potentially embarrassing questions to be answered with a truthful response.

3.3 Sample Group

A representative sample of twenty respondents was selected based on the criteria laid down by the college. Preschool services in Roscommon were identified by accessing the list of services on the local County Childcare Committee website. A selection of various types of service were chosen, identified as private or community and full day care or sessional service. All staff working with children in each service were invited to complete the questionnaire. There are fifty-seven services in the County and with the likelihood of half responding to the questionnaire, the required sample should be available to analyse. Questionnaires will be emailed to all services and a copy will also be posted to each service.

3.4 Procedure

A pilot questionnaire was used, “to anticipate any problems with comprehension or any other sources of confusion” (Walliman, 2008). This involved the distribution of a pilot questionnaire to three colleagues working in EYS in Co. Galway. The participants were contacted by phone requesting their participation, the questionnaire was emailed to them on receipt of their consent. Critical feedback was requested to improve the questionnaire. Colleagues replied outlining many changes to be made. These included the order of the questions and some of the questions did not match the objectives. The questions on barriers were too limited and were changed to provide more scope for respondents. The phrasing of question on the importance of PI was changed. When all relevant changes were made, the final questionnaire was forwarded to the supervisor for approval. When approved questionnaires were distributed to EYS in Co. Roscommon.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity and informed of the benefits of the research. Informed consent was requested in a cover letter. They were informed they could withdraw at any point if they wished. They were assured that all data will be destroyed by the end of September 2017. Signed consent was given by all respondents.
3.6 Limitations

To meet criteria for the project only twenty questionnaires could be analysed which may not fully represent all Early Years Educators in Co. Roscommon. A further limitation was the time constraints, only twenty weeks to complete the project.

3.7 Method of analysis

Results of the quantitative research will be analysed systematically and results utilised to find a correlation between variables.

3.8 Conclusion

This section outlined the method used to conduct the research study. A quantitative method was used and questionnaires were completed by early years’ educators working in private and community sessional and full day care early years’ settings. Results were compiled and presented in the form of tables and graphs in section 4 of this research project.
Chapter 4: Results
Chapter 4 Results

4.1 Introduction

Questionnaires were distributed by email to early years’ services in Roscommon and a follow-up phone call took place to arrange collection of twenty questionnaires. The questionnaire was effective as all relevant confidential information required for the research process was provided. Question 1 and 2 gathered general demographic information about the participant’s age and gender. Question 4 to 6 identified the highest qualification of the participant, the type of service they work in, the age group of children they work with and their role within the setting. Questions 7, 8, 10, 13 relate to objective 1 which discusses the importance of parental involvement in early years’ settings for the child. Question 8,9,13 also relate to objective 1, the benefits of parental involvement for the parents and finally questions 3,11,14,15,16 are specific to the second objective which is the barriers to parental involvement in early years’ settings.

Almost half of participants (45%) were aged 40+. 5% of participants were in the 35-39-year age bracket and 25% were in the 31-34-year age bracket. A further 5% were in the 26-30-year age bracket and the final 20% were in the 21-25-year age bracket. All participants (100%) were female are currently working in an early years’ setting.
4.2 Results

Figure 4.2.1 Objective 1

Importance of parental involvement in early years’ settings

One of the objectives was to examine the importance of PI in the EYS according to the early years’ educator, therefore participants were asked to rate from 1-5 with 1 being the most important and 5 the least important factor. 9 people rated “parents are the first educators of the child” as being most important, which means almost half of participants see the parent as the educator before them. The least important factor is “staff are more informed when parents share knowledge” as most participants rated this number 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rated 1-5 1 being most important</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Indicator of a high-quality service</td>
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<td>N=5</td>
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<td>N=2</td>
<td>N=4</td>
<td>N=0</td>
<td>N=5</td>
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<td>Staff more informed when parents share knowledge</td>
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<td>N=6</td>
<td>N=0</td>
<td>N=3</td>
<td>N=6</td>
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<td>Parents have a right</td>
<td>N=3</td>
<td>N=3</td>
<td>N=3</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>N=5</td>
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<td>Essential to work effectively with children</td>
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<td>N=2</td>
<td>N=4</td>
<td>N=4</td>
<td>N=3</td>
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Table 4.2.1

Types of Parental Involvement in Early Years’ Settings

An objective for the research was to explore the types of PI in EYS. The six main types of involvement were listed and participants ticked all types relevant to their setting. 75% of settings have a parental involvement policy and a key worker system in place. Less than half (45%) of participants confirmed having a meeting room for parents or providing daily written records for children. More than half (60%), helped with activities and outings. Parent/staff meetings are only held in 40% of settings.
4.2.1 Methods of communication with parents

Participants were asked to identify various methods of communication in early years’ settings. Almost all settings, provide parent information booklets (95%), notice board for parents and staff (90%), and a daily schedule (90%). Learning stories and newsletters were least popular at 55%, Information provided via text and email scored 60% and 55% respectively.
Table 4.2.1  
**Supports in place for parents**

Participants were requested to identify the supports in place for new parents coming to the setting. 95% of services provide written information for parents. Parents and children are invited to visit 95% of settings before they commence in the setting. 85% of settings require written information about the child from the parent and in 90% of settings a settling-in period is agreed between educators and parents.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Settling-in period</td>
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<td>Written information from parent</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>Child visits setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents visit setting</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written information for parents</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.1 Educators perspective on partnership with parents

Participants were invited to rate a statement on partnership with parents as the core to a quality service. Over half, 60% of participants strongly agreed with the statement, 30% agreed with it and only 5% disagreed with it.
4.2.2 Objective 2

Barriers to involving parents in Early Years settings

Figure 4.4 below shows participants’ views on the barriers faced when involving parents in an early years’ setting. 65% of participants identified lack of time as a barrier. A further 55% highlighted communication and cultural differences, with room for meetings and lack of interest from parents being in the minority at 10%. 

![Chart Title](chart.png)
4.2.2

Staff Qualifications and Training

As shown on next page in figure 4.2.1 half of participants 50% achieved Level 6 in Early Childhood Care and Education, 15% have Level 5, 25% have Level 7, with a minority only 10% attaining Level 8 or higher. In relation to training on national frameworks, 60-65% are trained in Aistear and Síolta, only 25% of participants received training in the Childcare Regulations 2016.

![Qualifications and Training](image)

4.3 Summary

The study set out to identify the perspectives of early years’ educators on the importance of parental involvement in the early years setting and to highlight the barriers and challenges preventing active participation by parents in settings. Participants in the study were aware of the importance and benefits of parental involvement but were restricted by certain barriers. All participants acknowledged parents as educators and presented many strategies to engage parents, however lack of time, at 65% was considered the main factor. While 65% of participants have training in the Aistear framework, only 55% provide learning stories/portfolios for parents, which are an essential part of assessment in Aistear. When identifying barriers, language and cultural background scored second highest at 65%, which is surprising and significant.

In the next chapter the results will be discussed from the research carried out and will be critically evaluated to establish if aims and objectives have been achieved.
Chapter 5: Discussion
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the questionnaires and the significance of results. The objectives form the relevant headings. It highlights the significance of the findings, and the results of this research are related to the findings of others, discussed in the literature review. It has been established in this research that PI is important in EYS as parents are the first educators of their children. This equates with the work of Fitzpatrick (2012) who outlined the legal and policy context associated with involving parents in early years’ settings.

5.2 The benefits of parental involvement in early years’ settings

The consensus, involving parents in the early years is very important and has many benefits which concurs with the findings of Fitzpatrick (2012), however, PI takes many forms, and the reason participants believed it to be important varied slightly from one to another. The main explanation that was provided was that parents are the first educators of their child and so have a right to be involved in all aspects of the child’s life. These findings support the work of (Taylor, 2012), who identified the parent as the primary carer and educator of the child. This also supports the Aistear (Assessment, 2009) framework which describes the role of the parent as providing a holistic approach to enhance the overall development of the child.

The Síolta (Education, 2006), and Aistear (Assessment, 2009), frameworks identify the importance of PI and outline types of involvement to be used in the early years setting. While all participants agreed with the types of involvement, the levels within settings was low. Fifteen participants had a policy and key worker system in place, while only nine provided daily written records and a lesser level provided parent/staff meetings. Share & Kerrins (2013) outlined techniques and strategies to develop trusting relationships with parents and acquire new knowledge on childrens development and well-being. Some of these include the child and parent visiting the setting before starting and providing the parent with written information about the setting. Receiving written information about the child is also an essential technique and over 85% of participants were providing all strategies and techniques. This affirms that the vast majority of participants are developing trusting relationships with parents. However, some challenges to providing these relationships were identified during the study.
5.3 The Barriers to Parental Involvement

PI is not always easily achieved and several factors can get in the way of parents participating in the EYS. Participants in the study outlined these factors and highlighted the difficulty they have in overcoming some of these barriers. Research suggests that participants understand the term PI, yet are struggling with the partnership with parents approach, which requires a deeper involvement as described by Fitzpatrick (Taylor, 2012).

(Taylor, 2012), has also identified many barriers and challenges that lead to a breakdown in communication between parents and EYE’S and many of these can be difficult to overcome if supports are not in place.

In the study 65% of participants acknowledge time as a barrier. These results are similar to those expressed by Share & Kerrins (2013), who discovered parents were unavailable because of work commitments. McDermott (2012) suggests difficulty because parents and educators are available at different times of the day. This lack of time can also lead to a breakdown in communication between parents and educators as outlined by White (2016). Table 4.2 suggests only 40% of settings provide parent/staff meetings, therefore it is plausible to suggest this is due to lack of time on the part of the parents and the educators. Similiarly, Australian research (initiative, 2014), identified time as a barrier to involving parents. Nevertheless, they addressed the challenge in a setting by employing a part-time worker for additional hours each week to give educators time for conversations at arrival and departure times.

Síolta (2006), suggests that information and feedback should be disseminated to all parents regularly, respecting their language, culture and needs. In the study 55% of participants identified language and culture as a barrier to participation with parents. However, in table 4.3 participants identified the most common method of communication used with parents is a noticeboard in the hallway. McDermott (2012) discovered information was not reaching parents because of the types of communication methods used. Therefore, the result suggests that information is not reaching all parents due to the type of communication method used by participants. Share & Kerrins (2013), outlined the use of portfolios of childrens work to encourage parents to get involved in the setting. In the study, portfolios were the least used method of communication, only 55%, which clearly supports McDermotts (2012) findings, that information is not reaching parents due to the method used.
Documenting children’s work and sharing this information with parents requires specific knowledge and skills. Murphy (2004), in her research discussed her finding that training provided educators to work directly with the children, they lacked the skills and knowledge to work with families. This supports the findings of this study highlighting 95% of participants have supports in place for new parents coming to the setting and 75% have a parental involvement policy and key worker system in place. However, less than 45% of participants provided parent/staff meetings or daily written records, suggesting lack of skills to work with families. These results are similar to those of McMillan (McMillan, 2005), where only 55% of respondents agreed that their training prepared them for working with parents.

In the study all participants have obtained the minimum qualification, Level 5 required by The Child Care Act (Affairs, 2016). Half of participants have achieved Level 6 with only two participants (10%) having obtained a Level 8. Share & Kerrins (2013), identified qualifications and training as a barrier to documenting children’s learning. This supports the study which highlights less than half of participants provide portfolios of children’s learning and only 10% have qualified to Level 8 or higher. All services providing the ECCE Scheme (Free Preschool Year) must implement the Síolta and Aistear framework. They must adhere to staff guidelines, the room leader must have Level 6. 65% of participants have training in Aistear and Síolta frameworks but only half are adhering to the types and methods of communication as outlined in the Síolta and Aistear guidelines. This conflicts with Cottle & Alexander (2014), who discovered the room assistant took the role of working with parents daily.

5.4 Unexpected Finding

The overall finding on qualification and training as a barrier to involving parents was an unexpected finding. All staff hold minimum qualification, 50% have Level 6 and 25% have Level 7 and higher, 65% have had training in Aistear and Síolta. Staff have the qualifications but appear to be struggling with the implementation of PI in EYS. Further research can be conducted on all services in the County to give a more comprehensive result. Following on from that research, explore the training courses attended by participants and the content and modules of the courses. Continuous professional development by participants should be explored in the same study to identify the types and frequency of training participants are engaged in. Participants could participate in interviews and questionnaires. Training providers could also be invited to participate in the research which would provide a holistic
overview of current training. The results of the study could be used by policy makers to change current teaching practice and provide students with more relevant and practical information and supports.

5.5 Evaluation of Method

The aim of the study was to explore EYE’S views and perspectives on involving parents in the EYS. I achieved this by researching literature and analysing results from questionnaires completed by 20 participants. All the participants were working in an EYS and varied from private to community and full day to sessional. This ensured quality in-depth information was received from participants. The method used was effective and provided all the information required.
Chapter 6: Conclusion
Chapter 6 Conclusion

The aim of this project was to examine EYE’S perceptions of the importance of involving parents in the EYS and to identify factors EYE’S perceive as barriers to involving parents. The results demonstrated that the majority of EYE’S were aware of the importance and benefits of involving parents in the EYS. However, it is evident their understanding of the level of involvement required varied from one participant to the other, based on the results of how parents were involved in the setting.

The main barrier to effectively involving parents was time, however, language/culture and training were significant barriers also. Time is an essential factor in the lives of EYE’S and parents. Government need to address this issue by providing non-contact time for EYE’S or support strategies like the Australian initiative highlighted. If EYE’S intend on adhering to the requirements of the frameworks and policies in relation to PI then specific training on PI needs to be provided.

These findings indicate that there is a substantial need for further research to ensure EYE’S are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide a partnership with parents approach to their work.
Chapter 7: Recommendations
Chapter 7: Recommendations

This project has highlighted the need for further research in this area as well as implications for practice.

Educators need to address the time factor associated as a barrier for involving parents and discover new ways to change this, for instance employing a part-time staff member to assist during drop-off and collection times.

Síolta and Aistear training workshops need to be sourced by EYE’S to discover new and innovative ways to involve parents in the EYS.

Parental involvement …

The “participation of parents in every facet of childrens education and development from birth to adulthood, recognising that parents are the primary influence in children’s lives”
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Appendix 1

Dear Participant,

My name is Linda Madden and I am a fourth-year BA (HONS) Early Years’ Care and Education student in Athlone Institute of Technology. I am conducting a research project as part of my course and I have chosen to explore parental involvement in the early years’ setting and examine if this type of approach has a positive impact on quality in the setting.

The responses from the questionnaires will be used to identify the level and quality of parental involvement in the early years’ setting in Roscommon.

I would be extremely grateful if you would participate in the research. Participation is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time if they so wish.

The information gathered from the questionnaire will be used only for my thesis and will be completely confidential. Your name or any information which identifies you will not be documented.

The questionnaire will take no more than fifteen minutes to complete and I thank you in advance for taking the time to complete it.

Should you have any questions or concerns please contact me on 087 1209474.

Warm regards,
Linda Madden.

I hereby agree to take part in research conducted by Linda Madden on Parental Involvement in Early Years Settings. The research is conducted as part of the requirements of the BA (Hons) in Early Years Care and Education.

Signed:--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Print Name:---------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Date:----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Appendix 2

Questionnaire

Parental involvement in the early years’ setting - to examine the benefits and importance of parental involvement and the impact on quality in the setting

Please answer all questions. All information will be treated with the strictest of confidence.

1. Please specify your gender
   ○ Male ○ Female

2. Please indicate your general age range?
   ○ 21-25 ○ 26-30 ○ 31-34 ○ 35-39 ○ 40+

3. What is the title of your highest qualification in early childhood care and education? Please select one option.
   ○ Level 5 in early childhood care and education
   ○ Level 6 in early childhood care and education
   ○ BA in early years childhood and education (Level 7)
   ○ BA (HONS) in early childhood care and education (Level 8)
   ○ Level 9
   ○ Other please specify ___________________________

4. Please describe the early years’ setting you work in.
   ○ Private sessional ○ Community sessional
   ○ Other (please specify)___________ ○ Private full-day care ○ Community full-day care

5. As an early years’ educator can you further describe your role in the setting. (Please select one of the following).
   ○
Owner/Manager not working directly with the children  
Owner/Manager working directly with the children

Room leader  Room Assistant  Relief Staff  Other please specify

6. What age group of children do you work with in the setting?

Under 1  1 – 2 years  2 – 3 years  3 – 4 years  4 – 5 years

7. Please rate the value of parental involvement in the early years’ setting in order of importance.

Note, 1 being very important and 5 not very important.

Parental involvement is an indicator of a high quality early years’ setting  Staff are more informed when parents share knowledge about their child

Parents are the first educators of their children and should be involved  Parental involvement is essential to work effectively with children

Parents are interested and have a right to be involved  Other please specify

8. Before a child commences in your setting which of the following occur? Please tick all relevant boxes.

Parents are invited to visit the setting  Parents are given written information about the setting

Parents are requested to provide written information about their child  Parents and child are invited to visit the setting

A settling in period is agreed with the parents

9. Does your early years’ setting provide any of the following? Please tick all relevant boxes.

Parental involvement policy  Parents participate in activities in the setting

Meeting room for parents  Parents help with fundraising and, or outings

Key worker system - worker liaise with parents  Individual parent/staff meetings are held

Parents receive daily written record about their child’s day

10. “Open, honest and respectful partnership with parents is essential in promoting the best interests of the child”(Síolta 2006). Do you?

Strongly agree  Agree  No opinion  Disagree Strongly disagree
11. "Opportunities for formal and informal communication and information sharing between staff and parents is provided" (Síolta, 2006). Does your setting provide any of the following? Please tick all relevant boxes.

- Notice board for staff/parents
- Daily schedule
- Newsletter
- Information via email
- Information via text
- Parents information letter
- Parents information booklet
- Photographs
- Learning stories

12. Partnership with parents is at the core of a quality service, because family is the most important influence on a child’s development. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13. "When staff and parents work together, children are motivated and achieve more, they are happier, their experiences and self-esteem are enriched and they have a more positive selfimage". To what extent do you rate this statement?

- 5 = Very important
- 4 = Fairly important
- 3 = Important
- 2 = Slightly important
- 1 = Not at all important

14. What are the barriers to involving parents in the early years’ setting? Please tick all relevant boxes.

- Language and cultural differences
- Staff and parents disagree
- Time required to consult with parents
- Space - no room to hold meetings/information nights
- Staff lose some control of the service/the curriculum
- Other please specify ____________________________

15. Have you received training on any of the following since obtaining your qualification? Please tick all relevant boxes.

- Síolta, The National Quality Framework
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years’ Services) Regulations 2016, Regulation 17, “Information for Parents”.
- Aistear, The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- None of the above

16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that through continuous professional development, early years’ educators will become more confident working with parents?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

17. Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.