Re-envisioning Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality Library and Information Services for the ECD sector through an information-seeking behaviour study

Kepi Madumo and Connie Bitso

18 Annual LIASA Conference
Birchwood Hotel
5 October 2017

Introduction and outline

Introduction

Research design and method

Aim of the study

Findings

Research questions

Conclusion

Theoretical framework

Re-envisioned LIS

Related literature

Introduction

- Based on a Masters' dissertation completed in 2017, this paper reports an information-seeking behaviour study on ECD practitioners teaching Grade R, (the year before formal school starts) in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM) (Madumo, 2017).

- Grade R is part of early childhood development (ECD)

- Purpose of the study:

  – Help inform the design, development and effective delivery of Library and Information services for this user group.

  – Re-envision the library and information services for ECD practitioners in EMM

Significance for the study

- The role of ECD as informed by international instruments and best practice, e.g. SDG Goals. In South Africa ECD is a government priority in the National Development Plan and feeder to National outcome 1 on Education.

- In Grade R, there is no specialisation, therefore ECD practitioners are required to be knowledgeable in a wide spectrum of topics which are fundamental to children's development.

- Motivated by **Batho pele** ethos, the study investigated ECD practitioners' information needs and information-seeking behaviour to inform the design of appropriate library and information services.

Key literature and rationale

- J. Raju and R. Raju (2010:08) and Hart (2004:111) point out that 'community libraries are institutions of [the] education system and should embrace themselves to cope with the entire value chain of our education system in order to support the development agenda in a democratic South Africa'.

- Fourie (2007:02) argues that 'libraries should not just be superficially open to all. They should address all primary needs that can be linked to information needs and access to information.'

- Community librarians can no longer claim to be victims of the current educational changes, but should rather seek to improve availability and efficiencies in the provision of information for educators at all levels in order to achieve SDGs (Hart & Nassimbeni, 2016:199).

The above observations forms a basis for the EMM LIS to provide support to the ECD practitioners and improve the quality education system to achieve aspirations of the National Development Plan and the UN 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) (Hart & Nassimbeni, 2016:199).

Aim

- Determine:
  - information needs
  - Information sources often consulted
  - Information-seeking process
 - Ways to improve library and information services for ECD practitioners in EMM
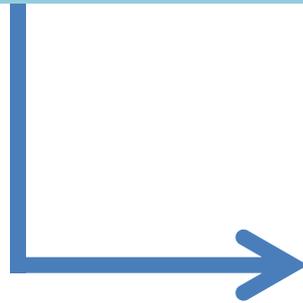
Re-envision LIS for ECD sector in EMM

Research problem & questions

Knowing that current LIS services in EMM are not sufficient to meet the ECD practitioners' information needs; the study addressed these research questions:

1. Which work roles, responsibilities and tasks do Grade R practitioners in the EMM have?
2. What are the characteristics of information needs for Grade R practitioner in the EMM?
3. Which information sources do Grade R practitioners prefer and often use?
4. Which strategies do these practitioners often use to search for and access information?
5. What factors inhibit Grade R practitioners from accessing information?
6. Which information services do Grade R practitioners in the EMM require?

Theoretical framework: (Leckie et al. 1996:181)
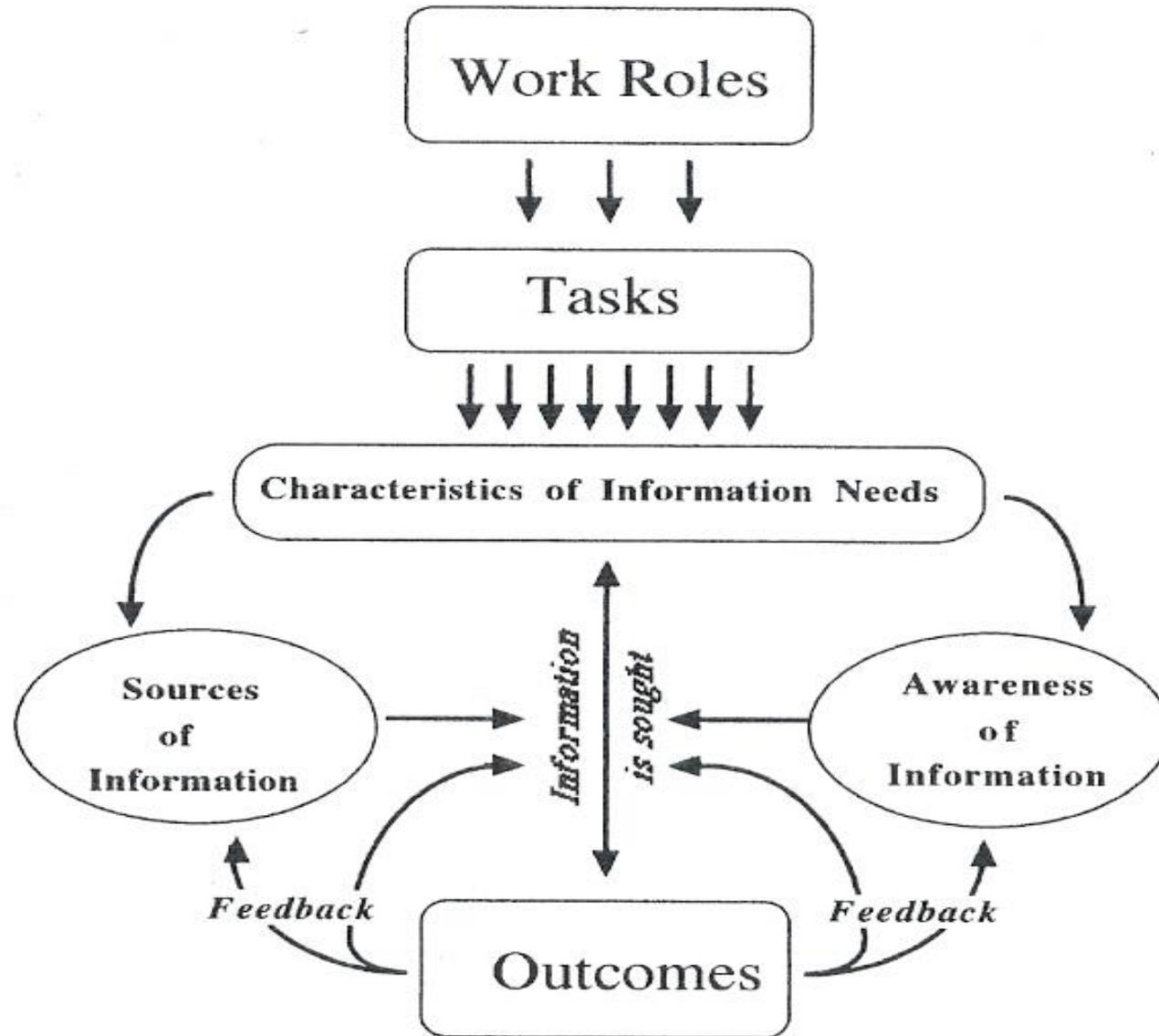
Theoretical framework

- General Model of Information Seeking of Professionals (GMISP), Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (1996) model was therefore chosen a model to conduct the study, focusing on six major components:
  - Understanding of Grade R's practitioner work roles and responsibilities;
  - Associated tasks and how they influence their information needs and prompt information seeking;
  - Characteristics of information needs and factors affecting information seeking;
  - Awareness of information needs and information sources;
  - Outcome of information seeking process.

Research design and methods

- Paradigm   Interpretivist
- Methodology   Qualitative approach
- Research design   Case study
- Population   Grade R practitioners in registered ECD centres in EMM
- Sampling   Combination of both stratified and purposive sampling
- Data collection   Group discussions in a workshop setting
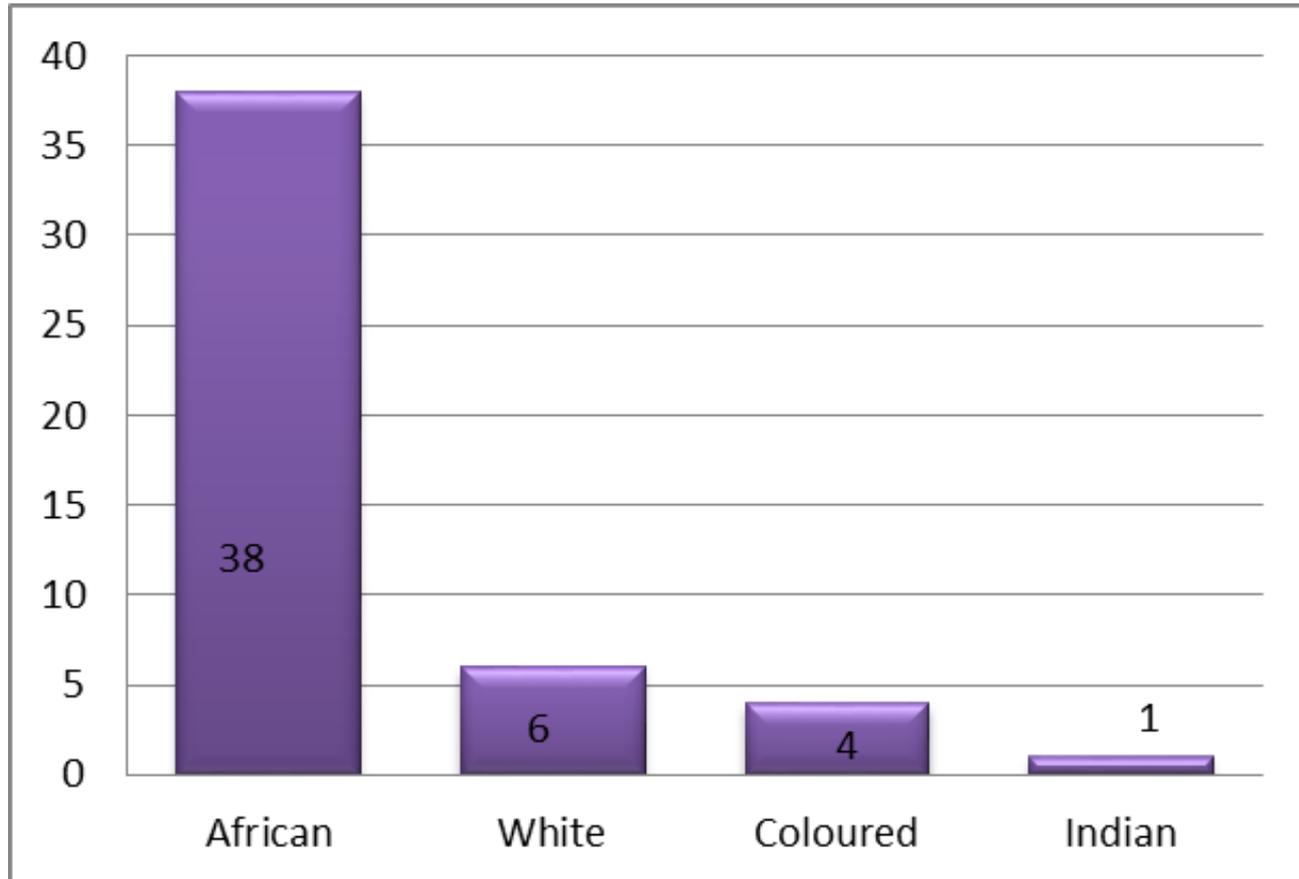- Data analysis   Content/thematic analysis

Target Sample according to facility type

Facility Type (strata)	Target sample
Community/Home-based ECD centre	25 practitioners
Public School ECD centre	20 practitioners
Private/independent school	5 practitioners
Total	50 ECD practitioners

Response rate based on ECD centres
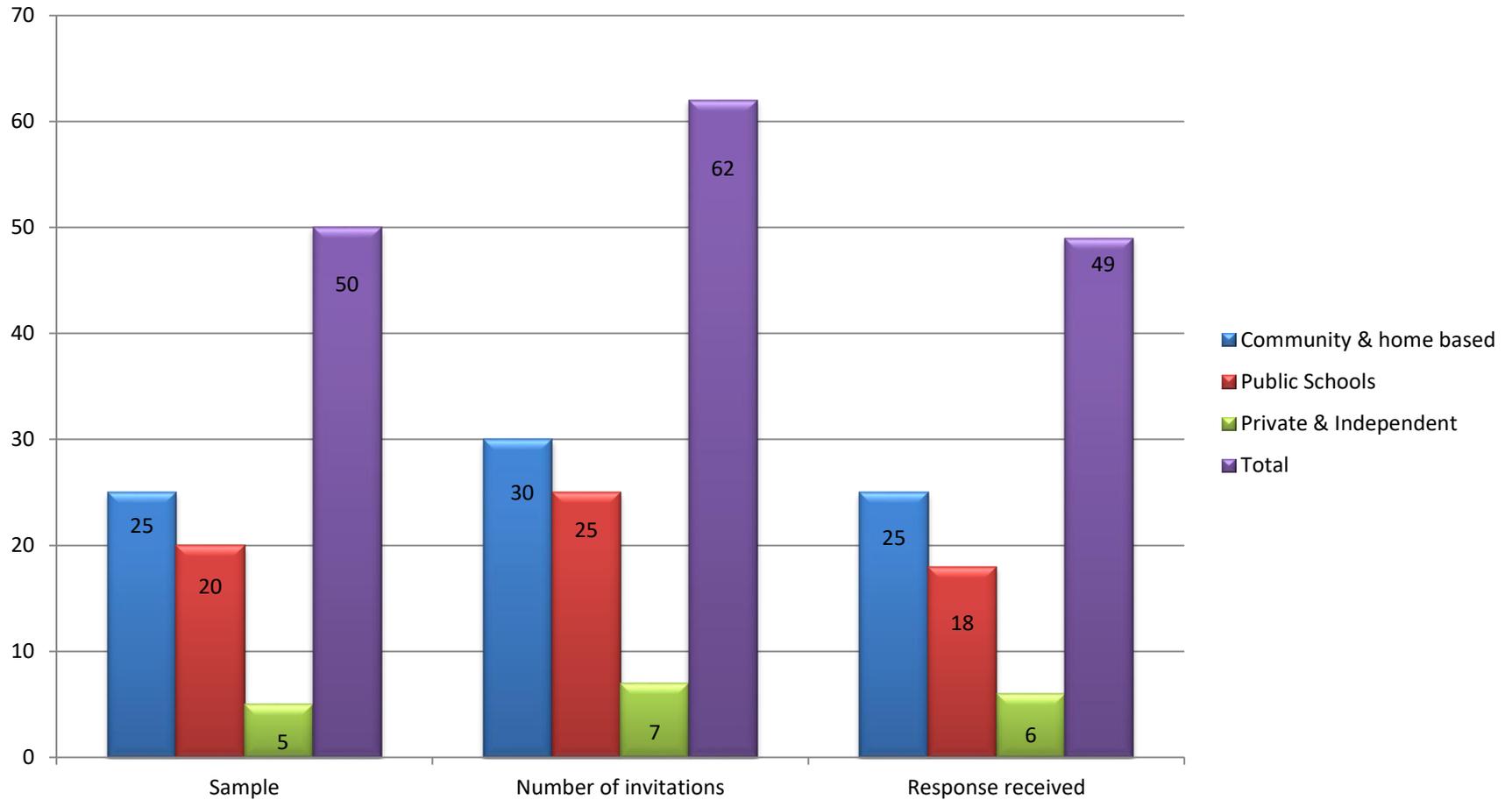
ECD practitioners' racial profile [N=49]

Madumo (2017)

Data gathering schedule

DATE	PLACE	FOCUS GROUP NUMBER	FACILITYTYPE/ORGANISATION	GENDER	RACE
21/09/2016	Tokoza Youth Centre, Tokoza/Katlehong	PS 1	Public Schools	Females	11 African Black
22/09/2016	Reiger Park Community Library, Germiston	PS 2	Public Schools	Females	4 Coloured and 1 Indian,
28/09/2016	Bredell, Kempton Park	PS 3	Public Schools	Females	2 White
28/09/2016	Springs/Nigel	PI 1	Independent/private Schools	Females	3 White
05/10/2016	Winnie Mandela Community Library, Thembisa	CHB 1	Community/Home-based Centres	Females	11 African Black
10/10/2016	Vosloorus/Tsakane	CHB 2	Community/Home-based Centres	Females	14 African Black
17/10/2016	Brakpan Public Library	PI 2	Independent/private schools	Females	3 White
11/11/2016	Alberton Civic Centre	Key Informant	EMM Department of Health and Social Development	Female	1 African Black

Majority of Grade R practitioner in EMM do not use the library despite expressing a positive attitude towards library services by acknowledging that information is a critical and very important tool for execution of their tasks.

The study identified ten work roles and responsibilities within the practice that requires information

Findings

Based on data, the current library services in EMM are not targeting Grade R and are inadequate to meet the information needs, in particular of Grade R practitioners

The study found that Grade R practitioners' information needs fall into four major categories.

- ECD curriculum design, delivery and evaluation.
- Policy and governance including legislation on ECD
- Social, economic, political and environmental trends that impact on ECD.
- Child development in its entirety.

Information sources

Study established that the main information sources preferred and used often by Grade R practitioners to fulfil their roles, responsibilities and associated tasks, are both formal and informal information sources.

In resourced communities, the order of preference is the internet, particularly the search engine Google; social media, such as Pinterest because of its attractive images; and asking a colleague or other professionals and personal contacts.

In under resourced communities, the order of preference is newspapers and magazines; particularly the Nali'bali Newsletter; followed by books

Information sources - challenge

The majority of participants indicated that they have no knowledge or lacked an awareness of information sources, such as online databases that could be accessed freely on the internet. Moreover, the majority of Grade R practitioners that participated in the study were not aware that there are children books in public libraries that they could borrow if they are registered as library members

Information sources needed

Participants prefer Big Picture books because children in Grade R cannot read so they use picture books during storytelling to develop both listening and visual skills.

Information seeking process

Analogue/Print

Heavy reliance on print and analogue resources

Google

Basic searches on google, without critical analysis

Library

Browsing, never searching library catalogue/databases & never asking the librarians
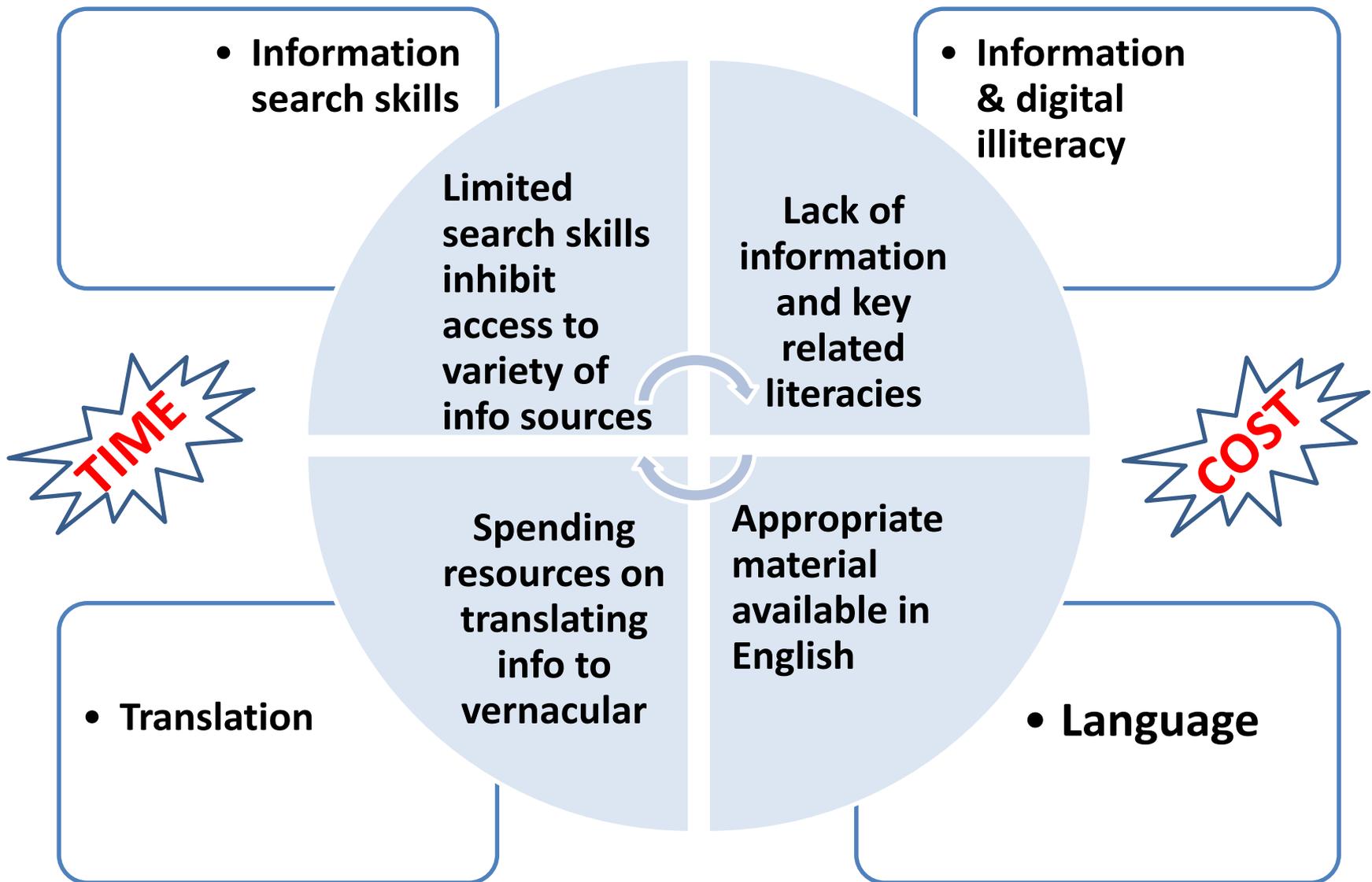
Participants in the study never interacted with online educational databases despite being freely available!

Limitations and incompetency in information and related literacies

Diekema and Olsen (2014:2274) found that:
- Searching for information is a difficult task for teachers.
- Often teachers are not sufficiently equipped to search for information effectively Their info limitations results into inability to address their information needs.

Factors inhibiting access to information

- **Information search skills**

- **Information & digital illiteracy**

TIME

COST

Limited search skills inhibit access to variety of info sources

Lack of information and key related literacies

Spending resources on translating info to vernacular

Appropriate material available in English

- **Translation**

- **Language**

Information services

Information services recommended by Grade R practitioners who participated in the study:

– Travelling or mobile library

– Educational toys

– Active children librarians to promote libraries and reading

– Audio books/DVD/3D books

– Expansion of Free- Wi-Fi to ECD centres

– Big picture books/educational charts

– Vernacular/indigenous language books including bi-lingual dictionaries.

ECD practitioners require appropriate information services pertinent to their information seeking behaviour. In EMM, ECD centres lack resources and have limited access to adequate information resources.

Re-envisioning LIS for ECD practitioners in EMM

Leveraging on mobile technology and Mzanzi online project. Provision of ICT infrastructure and resources

Information repackaging for under-resourced ECD centres

Books and magazines repository; a and exchanges between centres

Under resourced centres should be provided with computers, printers, internet connectivity and free Wi-Fi.

Provision of multimedia information resources – CDs, DVDs, big books, etc. to ECD

DOE/DOSD - design a an Educational website that will serve as an information hub/portal for ECD practitioners.
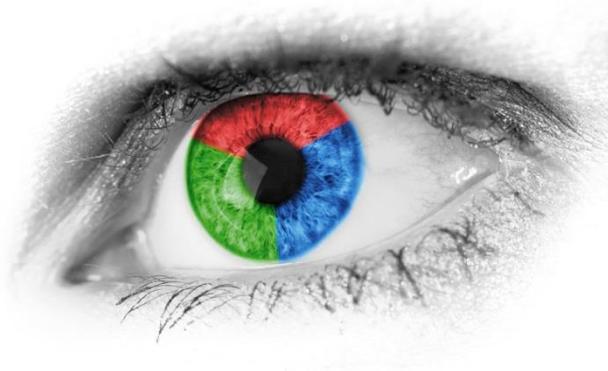
Vigorous marketing of EMM libraries to raise awareness of existing services to ECD centres

Design designated programmes for ECD practitioners that will address information and other related literacies.

Thank you

Connie.Bitso@uct.ac.za
Kepim@joburg.org.za