Pre-School Education: Unpacking Dilemmas and Challenges Experienced by Caregivers: A Case of Private Sectors in Mutare Urban-Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Despite the remarkable awareness in Zimbabwe of the importance of Early Childhood Development and Education (ECD), there is insufficient motivation for communities, local authorities and central government to make strategic plans for universal position. The study was to unpack dilemmas and challenges related to the implementation of the ECD program and describe how they override them in support of the government policy of developing the whole child. The qualitative case study design was adopted and data was generated through interviews with semi structured questions, through open-ended questionnaire, direct observation, through institutional artefacts and document analysis, The study used a purposeful sample of 20 participants from private preschool sector who shared similar characteristics and the same geographical area (Mutare urban) when implementing the curriculum. Little is known about dilemmas and challenges affecting the pre-school private sectors to effectively implement the curriculum in-line with the national policy. The data were analysed descriptively using theme identification methods to solicit emerging issues from the data. The grounded theory, constructivism and Interpretivism theories guided the research .the specific challenges included: lack of trained ECD specialists with expertise in special education, shortage of equipment and material resources. The study recommended that there be a coordinated plan for the training of para-professionals and there should be cooperation of government and community in providing facilities.

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECD) is a program that provides for the care and education of children from birth to 6 years. Early childhood Development and Care (ECEC) are services for children under the compulsory school age involving elements of both physical care and education. Apart from their critical contribution to cognitive stimulation, socialisation, child development and early education, they are essential services for employed parents. In Zimbabwe there at least two main categories of ECD institution-based provision, these are 'Public' and 'Private'. The public are registered under the Ministry of Education, Art, Sport and Culture and are attached to primary schools nationally, therefore, are governed by norms and standards by the government. The Private or Independent institutions are also registered under the Local Authority, for this study the Local Authority is (City of Mutare) and do not receive any fund from the government. ECD program include a wide range of part-day, full-school day and full work-day programs. Pre-schools are funded and delivered in a variety of ways in both public and private sectors. Most private pre-schools in Mutare Urban are privately funded and delivered programs as in the less developed countries such as Brazil as well as most of Africa (Kamerman, 2001). Pre-schooling in Zimbabwe is an endeavour to consciously promote the child's development and education. This is done essentially by parents themselves, especially in the earliest years or by caregivers in crèche for some hours of the day when parents are at work. Usually each phase of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sometimes is provided for at the same place and the caregivers are to address the specific needs pertaining to that age group and the relevant stage of the development of the child (The Commission, 1999). Educationists and Scientists, worldwide, draw attention to the importance and advantages of pre-school programmes for the holistic development of the child. These programmes include nutrition, health, motor skills, emotional, social and cognitive development (Van Leer, 1994)

Background to the Study

In the last decade, the boundaries defining the teaching profession in primary schools, the world over and in Zimbabwe in particular, have widened dramatically through the introduction of Early Childhood Development (ECD), to include roles traditionally ascribed to parents (Sadker & Sadker, 2005; Mawere, 2011). That change has also increased the depth of the meaning and significance of teaching/learning within the pre-school education system (Mawere, 2011). Viewing education of the children from this new context suggests challenges that may provide sufficient confusion, regarding what caregivers/teachers of early childhood education should know, what they should be able to do and how they should teach.

One challenge teachers have to grapple with involves understanding and implementing the ECD curriculum in ways that satisfy identified standards for the quality of educating infant children (Faber, 1998; Hart, 1999). Research findings suggest that apart from the traditional roles that caregivers have assumed, currently,

ECD caregivers are now expected to serve as curriculum specialists, diagnosticians, health care providers, family counsellors, adult educators and programme managers (Leer, 2005). With these expectations, as researchers and instructional practitioner, we wonder whether the ECD teachers are currently modelling these roles fairly in order to help to wholly develop the skills to meet the requirements of the ECD national curriculum of developing the child holistically. One question that this study seeks to answer is: *Are the Private ECD caregivers adequately prepared to account for skills that ensure effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?* Therefore, the caregivers should be fully prepared with skills, knowledge and attitudes that ensure effective implementation of the ECD curriculum while at the same time ensuring that students will arrive at the next level ready to start and succeed.

Jansen (1999) suggests that the ECD curriculum should be viewed as something that teachers do with children and not understood as something that teachers do to their students (Cooper &Warden, 1994). This reflection from Jansen (1999) suggests that ECD caregivers should ensure that Piaget's model of constructivist principles and cognitive standards of educating children in the 0-8 age group are strictly met in order to ensure that programmes are fully implemented (Morrison, 1997; Faber, 1998; Noddings, 2002). Elements that this study will attempt to understand include: (*a*) *How does caregiver inadequacy of preparation introduce challenges related to curriculum implementation? (b) How do caregiver use acquired skills to override challenges against smooth teaching-learning processes at ECD level to ensure effective programme implementation?* (c) Which educational models do caregivers adopt for effective implementation of the program? In this highly politicised environment of schools and childcare, ECD educators are faced with challenges related to defining what to teach, when to teach it, and why it is important to teach it, all against enormous barriers related to lack of developed skills and attitudes (Dyanda, Makoni, Mudukuti & Kuyanama, 2006; Dyanda, 2005).

The Genesis of ECD in Zimbabwe.
In Zimbabwe, the ECD program is a Post-Independent initiative that was introduced to correct the colonial imbalances related to equity and inequality in education, which empowers all students regardless of colour, race or creed to acquire skills, mature enough to allow then equal opportunities for registering, participating and learning effectively when they enter the mainstream school systems (No Child Left Behind, 2001). In the Zimbabwean context, the education Statutory Instrument (SI) of 1973 and 1999 that was originally designed to discriminate against Native Black Children while at the same time providing their white counterparts with increased advantages, clearly gave some students advantages over others (Van Leer, 2008; Zvobgo, 1994; Nziramasanga Commission, 1999).

The Even-Start project, an American Policy of the Education for All Act (1983) in Zimbabwe, ensures that when students start school, each student will be equipped with skills, knowledge and attitudes that allow them to start their education projects with enough cognitive and motor skills and or tools to participate equally in education as everyone else in their age group. However, the Zimbabwean version of the policy context only emphasizes access to education and participation, but is silent on how it ensures successful completion of each level especially those at ECD level.

The ECD programme in Zimbabwe has officially been in existence since 1972 and it was referred to as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (Morris, 2001). As a result, current ECD planners and teachers, regardless of their views on knowledge, child development and programme form, they still face challenges in designing and implementing the curriculum, especially when cognisance of the teacher preparation program culture is considered (Nziramasanga Commission, 1999; Morrison, 2001). Therefore, because children who normally left home to start formal education are now entering mainstream education through ECD programmes, it is important that child rearing principles are introduced into the schools systems in order to connect national education from birth-to-school going ages (Stebbing, 1990; Morrison, 1990; 2001).

According to Pherson in Zvobgo (1986), Zimbabwe native educators need to create a provision for pre-school educators in order to ensure an even teaching platform and that all children are sailed through during instructional periods. During the colonial Africa era, and Zimbabwe in particular, education has always been used as a tool for race discrimination through the strategic educational policies that ensured negative impact on the education of native ECD age group (Morrison, 2001; Tassoni & Beith, 2005). The White children were taught reading, writing and arithmetic to prepare them for formal school while at the same time native Africans in pre-independent Zimbabwe were exposed to unguided play activities in the school grounds all of which were meant to help children to pass away non-productive-time while they waited for their parents to return from occupations/labour activities (UNICEF, 1984 & 1989; Zvobgo, 1994).

Soon after independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean government transformed the education policies first by making education accessible to all children regardless of race, creed and religious inclinations (The Education Policy, 1987; Nziramasanga, 1999). Comenius' (1592-1670) theory is based on the idea that education is considered as a universal birth right for everybody and as a powerful tool for achieving one's potentials. Pursuant to Comenius' ideas, the government of Zimbabwe formulated a policy that education is a basic right for

every citizen regardless of race, colour or status. This policy is being implemented today in Zimbabwe education system. Later amendments to the 1987 Education Act extended the right of education to include the introduction of ECD education to Native Zimbabweans (Zvobgo, 1994). Because of the power of the 1987 Education Act, post independent Zimbabwe experienced the mushrooming of countless ECD centres, higher enrolments in primary schools, especially those in rural areas (UNICEF, 1985; Kaseke, 1990). For example, soon after the introduction of the policy of education for all, 4000 ECD centres were registered during the first five-year development plan of 1980-85 in Zimbabwe (Kaseke, 1990; UNICEF; 1985).

The power of the ECD Education Act of 2004 is one aspect of the background to the problem faced by pre-school curriculum implementers; this is the Act on which all approaches of the programme implementation balances. The 2004 Education Act legally ensures that nursery school children are not supposed to be exposed to formal schools' curriculum, but to the total development of the student socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically in a holistic approach. The integration of ECD into formal primary school system calls for the need to ensure that teachers are properly qualified to achieve the standards guiding instruction (Dyanda et al, 2006). However, trained ECD teachers are not attached to private pre-schools but they only practice in primary schools under the Ministry of Education. This implies that private ECD centres employ their own personnel.

The rapid expansion in the demand for education resulted in instruction in the ECD centres being provided by teachers who did not have the necessary professional experience, training and or professional supervision assistance (UNICEF, 1985). Consequently, it is apparent that ECD teachers will not find it easy to impart skills in line with the national policy of developing the whole child. This also reflects that lack of qualified personnel suggests that caregivers providing instruction:

1. May be providing under-quality education to ECD students especially in these days of standards guided education for quality assurance at every level;
2. Face challenges related to the effective implementation of the curriculum;

However, in this study I hypothesize that employing untrained para-professionals and at the same time failing to provide them with necessary tools and resources create even more problems related to program implementation. Therefore, it is against this background to the problem that is faced by the ECD caregivers that has motivated the researchers to want to critically identify and describe challenges faced by ECD private sectors in Mutare.

Statement of the Problem
Despite the remarkable awareness in Zimbabwe of the importance of Early Childhood Development and Education, there is   motivation from community, local authority to make strategic plans for universal provision. Consequently, lack of ECD personnel has resulted in the students' failure to effectively participate in the formal learning grades because of uneven essential rich background for even start at formal level of education.

Purpose of the study
The purpose of this study was to critically identify the dilemmas and challenges experienced by caregivers from the Private Pre-school Centres during the process of implementing the ECD curriculum and find strategies to mitigate the problems related to the program.

Overarching Question
The broad research question that guided this study was: How do ECD caregivers succeed in overriding challenges and dilemmas related to the expected standards for implementation of the curriculum?

Specific Research Questions
The following questions broken down from the broad research question above has provided specific guidance to the data collection process that was collected through interviews, questionnaire, documents and observations.
1. What specific challenges do ECD caregivers meet when implementing the program?
2. How do internal and external factors affect the effective implementation of the program?
3. How do caregivers and their leaders measure effectiveness?
4. What forms of support do Private ECD Centres get from stakeholders?
5. How do caregivers override challenges and dilemmas to enhance effective implementation of the program?

Significance of the Study
The results from this study, when finally published, will provide information which will help pre-school teachers and heads of schools to clearly understand the picture of how successful other pre-school centres in Mutare District Schools override challenges related to program implementation. The findings will also reveal how best ECD students should be taught and also suggest ways for aligning instructional processes with the government policy of developing the child holistically. Therefore, during their training, ECD students will be exposed to an

even platform of preparation for preparing ECD students for formal learning. The study will provide information that will motivate the stakeholders like parents, potential business people, NGOs or the local authorities to find a common ground for supporting the ECD programmes. By seeing the importance of Pre-schools, the role of the local authority will be enabled to set aside land for safe recreational facilities for children. The findings drawn from this study have the potential to provide information to policy makers especially in view of the fact that the results have the potential to help them with an insight into challenges faced by the ECD teachers during the implementation of the ECD curriculum. The recommendations arising from the analysis of the findings have the potential to provide guidelines for implementing the ECD curriculum to teachers and most importantly how to override those challenges.

Assumptions

 The following assumptions guided the researchers during data collection.
   a. Early Childhood Education caregivers in Mutare urban Schools genuinely experience problems related to the implementation of the curriculum.
   b. All volunteering participants provide accurate and honest responses to interview questions
   c. The leaders and their teachers act and perform their duties in honest manner during the observations stages of the data collection processes
   d. Relevant institutional and school documents related to how instructors and leaders implement the program are made available.
   e. Local authorities take a keen interest in early childhood development and care.

Delimitations

We delimited the study to Mutare Urban Circuit because it includes private ECD centres that had expected characteristics to provide answers to the research question. For this study, we delimited the focus of our study to understanding the challenges related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum and how they are overcome by the ECD centres that succeed in order for my study to emerge with a model for effective implementation of the programme. Specifically, we only considered private pre-schools that provided services to students within the 3-4 year age group (ECD class A) and 4-5 years (ECD class B) because these areas are important to equipping ECD students with skills that they need to even-start mainstream education.

Limitations

It is important to remember at this stage that all research suffer from limitations (Marshall and Rossman, 2009).There were inaccurate responses from the participants because some of them failed to comprehend some of the items on the questionnaire. However, to counter this limitation, we gave simple and well structured questions orally. Due to the failure of the sample participants to answer with frankness, data collected did not accurately reflect the opinions of all members of the included population, although we explained the value of the study to the education community and we also stated why they were purposefully selected to participant—this helped them to feel important. We also provided assurance that data collected would be used solely for academic paper writing and guaranteed anonymity through the consent form that we invited them to sign. We administered the questionnaires personally and collected them from the respondents; therefore we were assured of 100% respondents.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and that all volunteering participants completed and signed consent forms. The principles of anonymity and confidentiality were adhered to in order to protect the identity of the participants (Newman, 2000; Wilson, 2009). We ensured all participants that aware participation in the study was voluntary and any of them would be free to pull out at any time without prejudice. We made sure that participants understood what they were going to involve themselves in and we actually explained to all participants why the information would be important for this study and why they were the most appropriate people to supply that information.

Theoretical Basis
Interpretivism

The Interpretivism approach to research accepts that reality is relative and has multiple facets all depending on the context of the individual attaching meaning to that truth (Creswell, 1998; Creswell, 2009). The researchers used the Interpretivism theory that informed data analysis approaches. This was appropriate because the approaches embraced the way people involved in a phenomenon under research gave meaning to the data that they provided during data collection processes. According to the Interpretivism approach of viewing research approaches, there was always more than one reality to a given phenomenon and that there was also more than a

single structured way of accessing such realities (Creswell, 1998;Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba, 1981). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that data that carries multiple meanings requires multiple interpretations—triangulation of data interpretation approaches since understanding of data depends on other variables like culture and the environment creating meaning. When we entered the field to collect data, we were guided by the foundational questions that grounded theorists use to guide their data collection and analysis approaches, included:

    a) How have the people in this Pre-school institutional setting constructed their reality?

    b) What are the people in this Pre-school centre reported perceptions, "of truths' expectations', beliefs, and world view?

    c) What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviours and for those with whom they interact? (Patton, 2002, p. 75)

The goal of approaching data analysis from the interpretivists' perspective was to understand; interpret human behaviour from multiple sources in order to stay grounded in the diversity strengthens interpretation of a phenomenon from the participants perspective (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

The Social learning theory
The Social learning theory is a perspective that states that people learn within a social context (Gibson, 1976). We selected this theory because it enabled people, especially children, to learn from the environment and to seek acceptance from society by learning through influential models. Bandura's approach emphasises cognitive and information–processing capabilities (Noddings, 2002). According to the Social Learning theory, models are an important source for learning new behaviours and for achieving behaviour change in institutional settings. Bandura's ideas have being adopted by the Zimbabwean education curriculum, particularly the ECD department. A question that this study answered was:

    Do Private Pre-school centres in Mutare Urban adopt Bandura's contributions to education of the young in order to address the challenges related to the effective implementation of the curriculum?

Grounded Theory
Grounded Theory method is a systematic method in the Social Sciences involving the discovery of theory through the analysis of data (Glaser, 2000). Grounded theory as a research strategy was appropriate to this study because it ' gave voice to the participants in the research, representing them as accurately as possible, discovering and acknowledging how respondents' views of reality conflict with their own'(Denzin &Lincoln,2003.p.250). According to Rudestam and Newton (2007), '... the theory argues that every person is a social construction, that people become persons through their interactions with society, using vehicles of language, communication and community' (p. 43). Therefore, we were guided to gather information from participants because they had the opportunity to interact with each other in the selected community (pre-schools) on how successful ECD caregivers override challenges related to curriculum implementation.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN
Design of the Study
For this research project, the qualitative paradigm was adopted and we used a case study method. A qualitative case study design was adopted because it gave the researchers opportunity to interviewing people, analysing their responses, observing them and listening to their social interaction (Patton, 2002; Punch, 2009). The ECD process therefore, provides several variables of interest all of which are related to either successful or failing curriculum implementation, making it attractive for a case study inquiry (Wolcott, 1990; Lincoln & Guba 1994). In this study, we envisaged that studying ECD curriculum implementation processes will contribute to a deeper understanding of a specific but often ignored aspect of ECD programme. The use of a qualitative case study to describe a given phenomenon as research methodology provided an in-depth representation of the relevant inputs from all the relevant role players and agencies in the ECD curriculum implementation.

    The application of this approach helped to investigate a contemporary institutional phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Rudestam &; Yin, 1994; Newton, 2007). In this study, we noted that institutionalized ECD is a contemporary phenomenon where pedagogy is not clearly and effectively defined by the user system in Zimbabwe. Therefore, there are greater chances that the process will always account for a deficit in terms of implementation. As Madhlangobe and Gordon, (2012) say, there is always a need to use an effective model that evaluates education, and the model is the one that helps to define success or failure of a system. In addition, we used a qualitative case approach to data collection and analysis for this study because it allowed for '*a thick description*' of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 1994; Borg & Gall, 1996). From that understanding, I embraced the use of a case study to ensure that I will be able to pick up deeper insights into the everyday actions and interactions about a social phenomenon or how the social structures operate (Marshall, 2006).

Participants
Participating Schools Sample
 For this study, we contacted the study with ten (10) private pre-school centres in Mutare Urban District. Mutare urban was the best destination for our study because the schools have similar characteristics and the same level of potential for implementing the ECD curriculum. Taking advice from Newton (2000), we used a purposefully selected sample of ten (10) schools all identified from the same geographical location or zone; and its temporal boundaries of the population.

The Study Sample
Borrowing from Wolcott's (1987) advice we used a small sample of ten (10) purposefully selected pre-schools from Mutare Urban District to ensure an in-depth and detailed collection and analysis of qualitative data through persistent interviews, collection of institutional artefacts and lesson observations. All selected institutions share similar characteristics; and they are currently implementing the same ECD curriculum. However, some of the institutions had shown that they were continuously struggling while others were succeeding and the latter group assisted the researchers to identify a model that was currently succeeding and then we used the information to make recommendations for practice.

Participants from Each Institution
From the ten (10) Pre-school centres, participants for this study included ten (10) pre-school caregivers. Selection of caregivers to inform this study was critical because teachers are the ultimate custodians of programme implementation. The study sample included ten (10) administrators who supervise and lead the implementation of the curriculum at each station. According to Denzin and Lincoln, (1998) the purposefully selected participants are best sources of data that describe a lived phenomenon. The total sample comprised of 20 participants.

Procedure for Selection of Participants
Purposeful or Purposive Sampling
Similar to the advice of various research methods experts, we used a purposeful selection of participants approach because we cannot study everyone, everywhere doing everything (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Marshall & Rossman 2006; Punch, 2009). Purposeful or purposive sampling approach involved targeting only those participants who possessed rich information and experiences related to their direct experience with the phenomenon that we studied, and in this case the successful implementations of the ECD programme (Patton, 2002; Chisaka, 2005; Madhlangobe, 2009). Purposive sampling procedures were appropriate because, we were able to draw from the population, in a deliberate or targeted way that sample that effectively informed the research question that guided this study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Punch, 2009). In this context therefore, purposive sampling emerged as the appropriate sampling strategy for this study because, it enabled the researchers to identify participants based on selected criteria of knowlegeabilty and richness of lived experiences with the phenomenon (Dallen, 1977; Newman, 2000).

Data Collection Procedures
The purpose of this qualitative research was to unpack dilemmas and challenges faced by Pre-school caregivers during the implementation process. In order to collect primary data, we generated the data through interviews, direct observations, participant observations, artefacts and document analysis; and open ended questionnaires with all participants.

Interviews
 For descriptive qualitative studies like this one, the interview was the most prominent data collection tool that allowed participants to describe the phenomenon under study (Punch, 2009). In order to understand others, researchers needed participants' constructions of reality, to ask themselves—and asked participants in ways that they could provide in-depth or thick descriptions of the context under study (Jones, 1985). Instead of writing their responses, interviewees verbally volunteered their information during face-to-face conversations (Wolcott; 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In this case, we had the opportunity to respond immediately to what participants said. We had also the opportunity to record non-verbal communication language, such as facial expressions or gestures because these are all data that addressed the broad question. To understand these unspoken words, we used a standard follow-up question shaped from this model provided by Madhlangobe, (2009) *I saw you acting in this way; may I know what meaning you attach to that gesture, facial expression, way of doing things and language used*?
        A few problems that we experienced was that the some participants felt uneasy and they used avoiding techniques. To ensure confidence, we visited the participants during their working hours and even participated as

one of the teaching staff for a week before the actual data collection for the main study began. According to Madhlangobe (2009), although problems may arise on conflict of timetables, we ensured that during the interviews stage of the data collection procedures, we adjusted our own timetable to fit the needs of the participants. This was because we needed them more to answer our research questions—and that the success and quality of our study depended on how we behaved towards them.

Use of the Questionnaire

For the interviews, we used a questionnaire combining both open-ended and closed questions to gather data from volunteering participants for this study. Among its many advantages, and for the purposes of this study, the questionnaire allowed participants time space to express their views to the questions that we asked. Rudestam & Newton, (2007), explain that questionnaires using both open-ended and closed-ended questions permit researchers to cover a wide range of content and contexts, soliciting for information to specifically answer the research questions. The information was generated to effectively describe how teachers successfully implemented the education programs and in this case the ECD programme. Since the focus of the questions included factors that hinder the successful implementation of the ECD curriculum and how they overcome them, participants had the opportunity to respond to the questions without fear of being victimised—in this study, it was all about them showcasing their positive skills and allowing an outsider to report these to the public domain. While I find questionnaire appropriate for this study, limitations for its use may include that participants may not fully understand the focus of the questions or instructions. However, we made sure that the questions were simply structured.

Review of Institutional Artefacts and Document Analysis

The study of institutional artefacts and documents provided very useful information on how the learners progressed and described the teachers' perceptions on the significance of the documents to the learners. In this research project, document analysis and review of institutional documents, classroom records and student's work provided us with crucial historical background information and data on various aspects of the ECD programme implementing process prior to the current study. Review by Sutton & Levison (2001), explains that results from the review of artefacts will increase trustworthiness based on consistency. This was achieved because we triangulated or integrated various artefacts and documents used by the caregivers with other sources of data to generate data that would help us to identify and describe how successful ECD teachers override challenges related to curriculum implementation.

Classroom Lesson Observations

According to research literature, observations entails the systematic identification and recording of events, behaviours, present artefacts (objects) referred to in a social conversation setting under study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Observational techniques were appropriate because the methods allowed the researchers to gather firsthand data on programs, processes, or behaviours being studied (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Classroom observation as a data collection tool was appropriate to the purposes of the study because helped us to discover reasons for some of the complex interactions in natural ECD social settings (Punch, 2009). Further, research literature reveals that even research using in-depth interviews, acknowledges observations as a strategy for collecting data related to interviewee's body language as a complementary source in relation to their spoken words (Marshall & Rossman, 2009; Punch (2009). However, observation is a method that requires me to have a very critical examination of activities during instruction.

Trustworthiness

We triangulated data collection methods and the interpretative data analysis approaches for this study (Smith, 2000). Multiple sources of data gathering methods were used in order to establish a convergence of facts and this was achieved through interviews, questionnaires, institutional artefacts and document analysis and classroom observations gathering methods. Patton (2002) in Madhlangobe (2009) suggests that each kind of triangulation helps qualitative studies to verify and validate qualitative analysis in diverse ways.

Findings and Analysis
Biodata of Private Preschool caregivers

the research findings reflected that 18 (90%) of the participants were female while 2(10%) were males. This reflects an almost acceptable stereotype that females are more capable of handling children than males especially at pre-school level. In agreement, Froebel in Akinpelu (1981) sees female teachers of young children as good caregivers or teachers of young children than male teachers who are regarded as not familiar with baby minding at home. The distribution by gender from the study concur with the findings of the 1999 Zimbabwe Presidential Commission of enquiry into education which found out that parental groups interviewed were against the

employment of men in pre-school centres, they were rather afraid of the possibility of male abusing the girl child.

The majority 8 (40%) of the caregivers are untrained para-professionals and 5(25%) are awaiting training while 3 (15%) were para-professionals who have acquired a certificate from Marymount Teachers college, and 2 (10%) have received in-service training through the district training programmes and 2(10%) are retired teachers who acquired a Primary Lower Certificate. The pre-school's highest educational qualifications is Form 4 but with less than 5 subjects passed at Zimbabwe Ordinary Level of secondary education. However, in terms of capacities to implementing the ECD curriculum they could be found wanting. Further analysis show that the most experienced caregivers fall under 5-8 years and are those who had been running the pre-school centres before the introduction of qualified ECD personnel.

Availability and Usefulness of Official Documents
Effective implementation of any curriculum hinges on the availability of guiding documents and appropriate interpretation. The official records that are supposed to be used by all Zimbabwe pre-schools are: Social record, Developmental checklist record, Environmental checklist record, Health record and Anecdotal record.

Anecdotal Record
Anecdotal record is written record kept in a positive tone of the child's progress base on milestone particular to that child's social, emotional, physical, aesthetic and cognitive development (Morrison, 2001). According to Bruce et al (2010) it is a brief description of an incident written soon after it has occurred when a teacher records a significant piece of learning or a an important development in relationship with other children. Respondents' views on the usefulness of the records spelt out that, ECD caregivers are aware of the need for ECD records in improving instruction at their level but 12(60%) found the Anecdotal records not effective. They responded by pointing out the challenges they faced when recording anecdotal record like the developmental checklist was mostly concerned with first hand information. This was a challenge to the caregivers because of the large enrolment in their classes. According to Tassoni and Beith (2005) the recording in the anecdotal record are done when appropriate and not forced. The comment raised by one of the caregivers said that it was quite difficult to build a story per child since a teacher can miss an incident which needs recording whilst concentrating on another pupil.

Environmental checklist
A physical check of the environmental checklist record which was found effective by all 10 (100%) of the caregivers was not effectively used and in other centres it was never refer to. It was found out that the recordings were not done on daily basis as per requirement to check on safety of play materials and equipment before children use them. When interviewed why they were not checking on safety of playing materials and equipment on daily basis, they said the checking and assessment was usually done by the owner of the centre. This reflects that most of the caregivers do not know the roles and duties they should do at a pre-school centre.

Health and Social Records
Research findings showed that they were commonly used among all the 10(100%) private pre-school centres in Mutare Urban. The health record recorded medicine information based on the medicine to be taken by children not feeling well and health problems. The social record stipulated variables such as name, surname, date of birth, names of parent/guardian, occupation and contact details. When interviewed on the usefulness of the health and social records, all caregivers mentioned of that the records would enable them to be familiar with the child's home and cultural background which is necessary for effective instruction in the child's development life.

Data generated show that 10(100%) of private pre-school did not have any official ECD draft syllabus as well as the accompanying ECD draft guide. The official ECD draft syllabus is said to be with the education Inspector and district trainers. During their training workshops, ECD trainers use the syllabus as their major source of matter and it is not accessible to the caregivers. Posner (1996) says that the implementers need constant references to the official guide which is their compass and dictionary. From their schemes of work, it was clear that all the 10 (100%) private pre-school centres were not using the ECD syllabus to prepare their schemes of work, instead, they were making use of the ECEC syllabus which was produced by the Ministry of Education Arts, Sport and Culture (MoEASU) in 1988 which was used to standardise the content in all pre-school education. Although the ECEC syllabus has provisions that help to developing the whole child, analysis of the two syllabi drafts reflect a difference. The ECEC is not subject based and has no provisions for information and technology but all have a thematic approach which is a critical requirement for all documents. Worthorn (1996) agrees when he spells out the advantages of the thematic approach. These help children to make connections between new knowledge and information already existing in their minds. However, lack of official documents will cause uneven acquisition of skills and knowledge to students as they enter the formal school as compared to their counter parts, ECD pupils attached to primary schools.

In summary caregivers in private preschool, keep records and carryout assessment on children due to several reasons shown on below
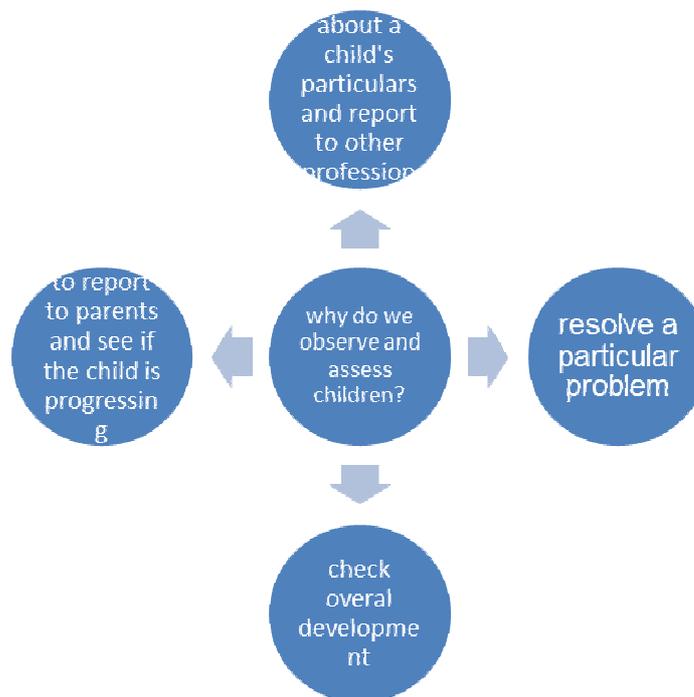
Participants views on the effectiveness of play areas in the pre-school centres.
Successful implementation of any Pre-school curriculum depends to a great extent on the use of play during teaching /learning since it is central to learning and it makes a big contribution towards the development of the whole child. All private pre-school centres exhibited the existence of play area, but a physical check gave a rather gloomy picture because the areas were only symbolic and lacked adequate materials. There was a clear absence of resourcefulness and creativity on the part of the teachers. The inadequacy and poor condition of play materials and equipment were found hindering the effective implementation of the curriculum. According to Montessori, '...children should be encouraged to work alone, she felt that the best learning occurred when children were focussed, silent and completely absorbed in a task (Tassoni and Hucker ,2005:20).

From the research findings it is clear that all caregivers were aware of the benefits of using play as a teaching strategy. When asked to elaborate on the role of play in child development all the participants acknowledged that play was pivotal and critical to child development. However, the 7 (35%) of the same participants were not aware that in order for play to be effective there should be need for planning. The para-professional seemed not very clear on how to enhance play for effective development of the whole child, in support of the national policy of a holistic approach. However, looking at Spenser's Surplus Energy model, he suggests that ECD caregivers should involve children in a lot of play activities which need a lot of energy (Seefeldt and Barbour, 1986).

How caregivers measure the acquisition of skills for child development.
All participants strongly agreed that creative skills, social skills, emotional skills, physical skills, intellectual skills, moral skills and health skills were critical to child development. This reflects the level of awareness among the ECD caregivers on the need to develop specific skills among pupils. The awareness unfortunately is not matched by practice because the same respondents indicated that planning for Pre-school activities was not necessary yet skills are develop through deliberate plans. Atherton (2011) says that the scheme of work is the answer to what the teachers plan to do for the whole term so as to achieve the ECD early learning goals of developing the whole child.

When asked how they measure effectiveness, they said when a child's creative skills have been developed, the child will be able to imagine and create objects from what is in mind. The majority of the caregivers gave examples of Froebel's symbolic behaviour through play when children understand that they can make one thing stand for or symbolise something else. They gave further example of children's creative skills shown when they use a tree bark to stand for a plate, empty
'Matamba' fruit ring for a plate (wild fruit). This symbolic behaviour will in turn develop the children's

creative skills which is the trust of the implementation of any ECD curriculum. Participants said that when social skills are developed the child will be able to form attachments, play with others, cooperate and share and crate lasting relationships with others. When parents were asked to support their views they gave example of a parent handling a child to a new school for the first time. The child will cry to remain with her parent since that child will feel insecure being left with a stranger. However, they confirmed through interviews that with time, the child will feel secure and be involved in all play activities with confidence without feeling insecure. According to Bowlby (1907-1990) this attachment will allow children to play freely when their attachment figure is present.

When a child's emotional skills are developed that child will be able to cope with feelings as well as understand them. The interviewee gave example of a child loosing her temper on a chair for bumping on it during movement, he will be irritated and scold the chair saying, for example, '*you naughty chair*'. In agreement Piaget in Seefeldt and Barbour (1986) considered this behaviour as animism where objects such as tables and chairs are considered by children to have animal feelings during pretend games.

When the respondents were asked on how the children's physical skills contributed towards the development of the whole child they highlighted the effects of the child's physical skills on development. They pointed out that when a child grows physically he/she would be able to use her fine and gross motor skills well. They gave examples of a child managing her drawing tools such as pencil, crayons without difficulties. The caregivers were aware that the physical development of the child should be enhanced since it develops children's body control and coordination in children as advocated by Tassoni and Beith (2005).

When asked through interview how intellectual development contributes to the whole child, they suggested that intellectual development is seen when children try to make sense of the world around them through reasoning using the senses to perceive how things are and make judgements. When asked to support their views through interviews the caregivers gave an example of a child who already knows that in order to build a tower which stands well, one has to assemble blocks which fit well to avoid the tower from falling. They went on to say that when the child tries to build towers she will use prior experience. This is in agreement with Piaget's (1896-1980) view on the use of first-hand experience and prior knowledge in order to learn.

When the interviewees were asked on how children's moral development contributes to the holistic development of the child, they said that the child will acquire accepted values and norms about what is good and wrong. The caregivers pointed out through interviews that moral development in children would be portrayed during play activities. They gave examples of children praising each other for receiving anything from adults using both hands after clapping hands. When a child's health skills are being developed a child will be able to realise healthy habits such as washing hands before eating food, washing fruits before eating them.

Although the caregivers showed that they had knowledge of the essence of all the skills stated to the development of the whole child, they were no records to confirm the recordings in the developmental checklist and the health record which were not even available when they were asked during interview time. Only 5 (50%) had recordings to describe the child's acquired skills but there was need for orientation on how to record the details. Research findings illustrated that most private schools did not take record of events critically but what was readily available were the attendance registers. All the 10 (100%) caregivers were asked how they felt towards providing a holistic curriculum that would ensure all round development of the child. All the 10 (100%) caregivers agreed that this was important. The response indicated that 5 (50%) who had initially indicated that planning for play and play material was not important were doing this out of ignorance. The major thrust therefore, as agreed on by the caregivers was to develop the whole child, as how this is done the curriculum lacks out specifications. Those who had undergone training (para-professionals) exhibited relative understanding but still exposed deficiency when their play materials were scrutinised. However, it was pleasing to not that most caregivers were aware of the ECD goals of developing the whole child as evidenced by their oral responses, although record keeping was an area to be improved.

Support by stake holders

Successful implementation of any pre-school curriculum depends to a great extent on support by stake holders. The ECD supervisor at any pre-school in his/her capacity as the public relations officer has to build a network of the community support with stakeholders to improve children's academic success. Research findings show that the Ministry of education, Arts and Sport and Culture was viewed as providing the most support towards the implementation of the ECD curriculum and train the Para-professionals which is mostly done by colleges. All private pre-schools do not receive any financial assistance, provision of infrastructure from the government because these are privately run. The owner of the ECD centre will be responsible for everything basing on the fees charged and the groceries bought monthly or termly by the parents, the private pre-school owner has to source their own donations in terms of furniture, playing/learning materials, books and any other necessary learning.

Challenges experienced by private pre-school centres in Mutare urban

Private pre-school centres in Mutare urban face a series of major challenges in ensuring a holistic early development for children.

- The stability of the family, the responsibility of care and education by the extended family, the concern and provision by the community, the interest and financial support of the nation all of these have to be promoted to improve the learning conditions of private pre-school centres.
- The challenge is firstly to standardise the training of caregivers and teachers in the ECEC sector and ensure that personnel in that sector is trained.
- The early childhood education and care programme should be designed in such a way that finally the community can own and sustain it. The education of the woman in particular is a prerequisite for the development and education of the child.
- The key to early childhood development and care then are the parents. The greatest challenge perhaps is to ensure that parents will spend quality time with their children and are ready to learn more and more about good parenting.
- One of the greatest challenge in the private sector is infrastructure, shortage of space in order to implement the play areas effectively since play is their major teaching methodology.
- The private pre-school sector has a dilemma of the fate of their life span due to the integration of the ECD classes in the primary school department. Their enrolment has greatly declined on the introduction of ECD in primary schools.

Recommendations

'Child psychologists and educationist regard the early years of a child development as formative and stress the importance of addressing the multiple needs of children. It is in these years that basic education begins, values, skills and norms are learnt and physical, cognitive, emotional, social and moral development takes place and creativity is awakened' 'All I ever needed to learn and learnt in Kindergarten' (Robert Fulghum in The commission ,1999).

The quality of education offered by private pre-school centres should be improved to match primary schools offering a similar quality of education; this overall quality is too low. In order to acquire a higher quality reception year programmes will require the following support:

- Training in teaching methods that are quality controlled and accredited.
- The researchers recommended that there should regular and systematic monitoring of pre-school caregivers through observation and feedback by educational officials.
- More reading books should be provided since the presence of accessible books is highly correlated with improved early literacy assessment results and educational equipment.
- The researchers recommend that the local government should cooperate with the community in providing learning facilities in private pre-school sector.
- Registration requirements should be used to ensure that sites provide safe accommodation and educationally enriching environment of learners.
- There should be a coordinated plan for the training of Para-professionals by the Government to ensure an even platform for students on their entry into formal education.
- We also recommend that the presence of funding subsidy has a positive impact on improving access to resources such as rent, food, equipment and it makes a contribution to poverty alleviation.
- As will be the case with public primary schools based, private preschool centres should also be required to fulfil national policy, norms and standards on the provision of ECD programmes.
- The NGOs should extend their charity to private Pre-schools rather than sticking to ECD attached to the primary schools.
- The government should subsidize all registered pre-school so that they improve the conditions of learning and this will reduce the amount of fees paid by parents. Private ECD is very expensive considering the uncertain economic development of Zimbabwe.
- There is need to revise the curriculum guidelines, incorporating new insights paying particular attention to the 0-3 years. It seems the caregivers are facing challenges in teaching the contented regarding the principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)

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