

**CHALLENGES TO THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION DELIVERY AT PRE-PRIMARY LEVEL: A CASE OF
FIVE SCHOOLS IN ZAMBEZI REGION**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to document the nature of challenges faced by pre-primary teachers when delivering quality early childhood education at pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. The quality of delivery of early childhood education is crucial for the cognitive, emotional, physical and social wellbeing of children (Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture [MEAC], 2016). The researcher envisaged that a high standard of delivery of early childhood education will potentially equip young children with skills and knowledge that will be important to their success during primary schooling. The study should prove essential for policy makers and other stakeholders to help them deliver early childhood education in pre-primary schools of a high standard in five schools that were purposefully selected for the study. The case study collected qualitative data using face-to-face interviews with pre-primary teachers and junior primary heads of department. Observations were conducted in pre-primary classrooms during the conduct of lessons. In addition, documents were reviewed, which included ministerial documents, journals and newspaper articles, to gather data that could be used to facilitate the improvement of early childhood education in pre-primary schools.

The central question posed by the study was: What are the challenges of quality delivery in early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools? In order to answer this primary question, the following supporting questions were formulated: What are the challenges faced by pre-primary teachers in order to implement a curriculum that will provide quality early childhood education at the five schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia? How does the classroom environment influence the delivery of quality early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools? The findings of the research revealed that several challenges inhibit the quality of delivery of early childhood education at the five pre-primary schools selected for the study in the Zambezi Region. These challenges included: the use of SiLozi as a medium of instruction, a discrepancy between learning objectives as presented in teacher's manual and in the curriculum, the lack of educational corners, the lack of teaching materials, the lack of recreational facilities and a deficiency in parental involvement in their children's schooling.

Key words: Early childhood education, pre-primary schools, pre-primary education, curriculum

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, James Simasiku Nfwile, who encouraged and supported me throughout the period of my studies.

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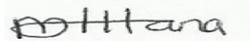
DECLARATIONS

I, Gloria Chizimbo Mubiana, hereby declare that this study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research. I affirm that this work and all parts thereof have never been submitted for a degree at an institution other than the University of Namibia.

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Gloria Chizimbo Mubiana



29 October 2019

Name of the student

Signature

Date

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ECD -	Early Childhood Development
ECE -	Early Childhood Education
EFA -	Education for All
HOD -	Head of Department
ICESCR -	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
MEES -	Ministry of Education in Enugu State
MEAC -	Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture
MEC -	Ministry of Education and Culture
MOI -	Medium of Instruction
MT -	Mother Tongue
NAEYC -	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NCQTL -	National Centre on Quality Teaching and Learning
NIED -	National Institute for Educational Development
NERA -	Namibia Educational Research Association
OECD -	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNESCO -	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
DEDICATION	IV
DECLARATIONS	V
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	VI
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VII
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	1
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	5
1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	7
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	7
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	7
1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	8
1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY	9
1.9 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS	9
1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY	11
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	12
2.1 INTRODUCTION	12
2.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE	12
2.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND PRIMARY EDUCATION	17
2.4 QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	19
2.5 FACTORS THAT DETERMINE THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.....	22
2.5.1 <i>Determinants of quality in pre-primary teachers</i>	23
2.5.2 <i>Quality environment at pre-primary schools</i>	25
2.5.3 <i>Quality in the early childhood education curriculum</i>	27
2.5.4 <i>Quality OF parental involvement in early childhood education</i>	29
2.6 CHALLENGES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DELIVERY	32
2.6.1 <i>Early childhood education curriculum</i>	32

2.6.2 <i>Overcrowded pre-primary classrooms</i>	33
2.6.3 <i>Medium of instruction in early childhood education</i>	36
2.7 PLAY-BASED LEARNING IN PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS	38
2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	41
2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY	43
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	44
3.1 INTRODUCTION	44
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN	44
3.3 POPULATION	44
3.4 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES	45
3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS	45
3.5.1 <i>Interviews</i>	46
3.5.2 <i>Observation</i>	46
3.5.3 <i>Document analysis</i>	47
3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES	48
3.7 DATA ANALYSIS	49
3.8 RESEARCH ETHICS	51
3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY	52
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION	54
4.1 INTRODUCTION	54
4.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY PRE-PRIMARY TEACHERS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE	
CURRICULUM	54
4.2.1 <i>Challenge of SiLozi as a medium of instruction</i>	55
4.2.2 <i>Misalignment of learning objectives between the teacher’s manual and the curriculum</i>	58
4.2.3 <i>Challenge posed by curriculum content and subjects</i>	62
4.3 CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AS A CHALLENGE TO QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING	64
4.3.1 <i>Classroom location</i>	64
4.3.2 <i>Lack of educational corners</i>	65
4.3.3 <i>Lack of teaching materials and recreational facilities</i>	66
4.3.4 <i>Overcrowded pre-primary classrooms</i>	69
4.4 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	70

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY	71
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	73
5.1 INTRODUCTION	73
5.2 SiLozi AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION	73
IN SHORT, THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF SiLozi AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN THE PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE ZAMBEZI REGION RUNS COUNTER TO THE LINGUISTIC THEORIES ADVOCATED BY VYGOTSKY (1978), IN WHICH HE STATES THAT CHILDREN AT AN EARLY AGE SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO INTERACT USING A LANGUAGE THAT IS MOST FAMILIAR TO THEM.	75
5.3 DISCREPANCIES IN LEARNING OBJECTIVES BETWEEN TEACHER MANUALS AND SYLLABUS	75
5.4. CONTENT COVERAGE IN THE ECE CURRICULUM	77
5.5 CLASSROOM LOCATION	78
5.6 LACK OF EDUCATIONAL CORNERS	79
5.7 LACK OF TEACHING MATERIALS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES	80
5.8 OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS	82
5.9 LACK OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	83
5.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY	85
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	87
6.1 INTRODUCTION	87
6.2 SUMMARY	87
6.2.1 Challenges of SiLozi as a medium of instruction	88
6.2.2 Discrepancies in learning objectives between teacher manuals and the early childhood education curriculum	89
6.2.3 The challenges of content coverage in the ECE curriculum	89
6.2.4 Lack of parental involvement	90
6.2.5 Classroom location	91
6.2.6 Lack of educational corners and recreational facilities	92
6.2.7 Lack of teaching materials	93
6.2.8 Overcrowded classrooms	94
6.3 PROPOSED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	94
6.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY	95

REFERENCES 96
APPENDICES 107

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and its research objectives. It also defines the significance of the study, its limitations and delimitation, its theoretical framework, and presents the operational definitions of key terms used in the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Early childhood education (ECE) is education delivered in educational institutions to children before they enter formal primary schools (UNESCO, 1996). Recently, heightened concerns have been expressed by the stakeholders in education (representatives from the private sector, civil society, and development agencies) and parents in Namibia concerning the quality of early childhood education (Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture, 2015). This research aims to explore challenges to the delivery of quality of early childhood education in five pre-primary schools selected for study in Zambezi Region.

When Namibia gained its independence in 1990, education was a primary concern and therefore was given a high priority by the newly formed Namibian government. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC, 1993:1):

The chief motivation for the struggle for sovereignty was a promise that independence would not only bring new, but more and better schools which would be free of segregation, and therefore education would no longer be a privilege for the few elite but a right of every Namibian citizen.

It is against this background that early childhood education has come under scrutiny in Namibia, for it is a critically important stage in a child's life (UNESCO, 2000). UNICEF (2013) shows

that children who participate in early childhood education programmes of a high standard are more likely to enter primary schooling equipped with requisite social, cognitive and emotional skills. This stage of a child's development is often referred to as an important building block in brain development (UNICEF, 2013). The benefits children accrue extend well beyond pre-primary school. Higher levels of educational success, employment and social skills have all been linked to moderate levels of participation in quality early childhood education (UNICEF, 2013). Mustard (2010) opined that basic construction and functions of the brain are established during this period. Essential physical, emotional and mental development of a healthy child occurs during this period. The foundation of successful learning is also believed to be laid during this critical stage, UNICEF, (2013). Nakpodia (2012) posited that a child begins to initiate, imitate and develop specific essential habits that will be useful throughout schooling.

Inspirational and learning opportunities are better provided in a formal setting than in one most parents can personally provide. Because some parents in Zambezi Region are illiterate, they will not be able to prepare their children adequately for school. For these reasons, the education of young children needs to be effectively organised; the quality of education a child receives in its early years will be crucial to his or her overall development as well as for the opportunities of which they may avail themselves later in life. Pre-primary education, according to Hague (2013), promotes cognitive development in children in the early grades of early childhood education and has a strong bearing on their attendance and participation once they enter primary school. It is believed that this level of education is appropriately considered to be the crucial foundation stone upon which other levels of education are built, developing a child's confidence, empowering them to face the challenges they will meet in the 21st century.

Wikan (2008) concurs with the opinion that the development of Namibia's educational standards lags behind and further states that 'this is apparent in low reading proficiencies on the

part of learners in different grades. There is indeed need for an intervention to improve the quality of Namibia's education' (Wikan, 2008:1).

According to Wana (2010), a large number of teachers view early childhood education to be of great significance in relation to the educational advancement and wellbeing of children in terms of their personal needs and character development. This is an idea extracted from Page (1954) who believes that during a normal pre-primary period, a child passes through a distinct stage which can also be regarded as a gradual change. According to him, a child developing along a well-guided path, becomes a self-confident, admirable person with whom it is a joy to interact. This aspect can be achieved through the delivery of well-structured, early childhood education at the pre-primary level.

A primary indicator in school populations world-wide is defined by the effort to provide education for all children. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article 26, every person has the right to an education, at least at an elementary level, at which it shall be compulsory.

Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1976 recognises the right to education for everyone. Furthermore, education will promote the aim of achieving the full realisation of this right for children; the nation's party to the agreement recognises that primary education shall be compulsory, available and free for all and shall be of a high standard.

In Namibia, early childhood education is the first formal step on the path of education, and is structured to benefit children five to six years of age. The teaching methods and approach to learning of early childhood education in Namibia is based on the philosophy of constructivism, which advocates learner-centred education (MEC, 1993). Pre-primary teachers are expected to

encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning by promoting personal choice in their daily activities (MEAC, 2015). The Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (2015) postulates that children learn most effectively when they are actively involved in learning processes through a high degree of participation, contribution and production. Consequently, early childhood education has been organised to help children enter formal primary school later. Its intention is to prepare children to begin formal school life and promote academic achievement in years ahead. By providing a wide range of educational experiences for young children, early childhood education builds a background of experience that will promote the attainment of academic, social and life skills (Butler, 2001).

As a noteworthy example, the demand for early childhood education in Ethiopia has increased due to the growing recognition that the programme can contribute to all aspects of children's learning. Consequently, the subject of early childhood education was given an important place in the education and training policy of the country to address the special requirements of pre-primary children.

In Namibia, the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (2016) regards early childhood education as the first formal step on the educational path and is offered to infants and children up to the age of eight in pre-primary schools. The justification for the organisation of early childhood education in pre-primary school is to bridge the gap between home and formal school life into which children will enter later (MEAC, 2016).

In Namibia, as in Ethiopia, the perception that early childhood education is important is due to the growing recognition that the programme promotes general learning in children (MEAC, 2015). Consequently, the Government of the Republic of Namibia has given precedence to early childhood education in the education sector in order to address the needs of pre-primary children (UNESCO, 2000). The government's action in Namibia is in line with the Dakar

Framework of Action (UNESCO, 2000), which values early childhood education for its importance to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in societies, which includes children in the Zambezi Region.

The Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (2011) has stated that, due to illiteracy, some parents in Namibia are not able to offer appropriate early childhood education for their children than what can be provided for them in pre-primary schools. Based on this reasoning it has been stated that early childhood education should be formally organised, since the education a child receives in the early years of life is critical to his or her overall progress in learning and to the access to opportunities that may be available later in that child's life.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The quality of experiences in a child's early years will affect the quality of that person's life in later years. Initial life experiences have the potential to enhance or retard future advancement (Chowdhury & Choudhury, 2002). Provisions for pre-primary school experience for children aged five to six years, typically promotes educational orientation, but this varies with the type and quality of those pre-primary schools. This study focused on challenges to the quality of early childhood education delivery observed in five pre-primary schools in Zambezi Region.

Many governments have recognised early childhood education as a starting point for implementing the goals of education, which include 'Education for All' and 'Universal Basic Education' (MEAC, 2016). Following this recognition, an increase in the establishment of pre-primary schools in various countries and regions has been witnessed, each one having to face its own challenges. Seeing the emergence of these challenges may prompt one to wonder whether the education offered in pre-primary schools is truly geared towards the delivery of quality, early childhood education.

According to Quiggin (1999), the quality of education can be measured by characteristics exhibited by schools, such as their pupil-to-teacher ratio, class size, professional qualifications of their teachers, retention rates in school, transition rates to primary schooling, staffing and remuneration of teachers, among others. Pre-primary schools face some challenges that emanate from their geographical location and diverse environmental conditions. Various researchers, such as Myers (2006), Sheridan (2008) and Edwards (2009) have tried to evaluate the quality of early childhood education in pre-primary schools in developing countries like Nigeria. Unfortunately, their research has not been conducted in the Zambezi Region of Namibia. This study, therefore, has been based on the challenges that pre-primary school teachers encounter in the delivery of early childhood education in the five selected schools in the Zambezi Region.

The Namibian cabinet's decision, taken in October 2006, to transfer responsibility for pre-primary education from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to the Ministry of Education, allowed five- and six-year-old children to attend pre-primary schools. The transfer of responsibility was made under the premise that a child's experiences in its early years can positively or negatively affect the quality of its life later. Hence, the Ministry of Education was considered to be the more appropriate ministry to oversee the delivery of early childhood education in Namibia. Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002) assert that the experiences a child has during early childhood education, or their absence, can either enhance or retard the future education of that child.

Despite the fact that formalisation of early childhood education in pre-primary schools was a noble initiative on the part of the Government of the Republic of Namibia, teachers continuously face challenges in their effort to deliver early childhood education of a high

standard. This study investigates those challenges that hinder the delivery of quality early childhood education in the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine what challenges to the delivery of quality early childhood education exist in five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region.

1.5 Research questions

The study was guided by the central question it posed: What are the challenges of quality delivery in early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools?

In order to answer this question, the following supporting questions were formulated:

What are the challenges faced by pre-primary teachers in the implementation of an ECE curriculum that will provide quality education at the five schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia?

How does the classroom environment influence the delivery of quality early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia?

1.6 Significance of the study

Early childhood education is fundamental to the future and ongoing development of a child. It is a powerful force which can improve the health of a child and ultimately reduce poverty. Furthermore, early childhood education prepares children to be more productive, which may lead to earning a better living and enjoying a higher quality of life. Healthy and productive children can contribute to a country's overall economic growth. Logically therefore, the quality of early childhood education offered at pre-primary schools has a significant effect on the

process of lifelong learning of children and future adults. This relationship thus demands that all stakeholders in education promote both the quality of teaching and the learning environment in pre-primary schools. Consequently, this research will benefit both teachers and children in the provision of quality early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools in Zambezi Region. The researcher posits that children who are exposed to programmes that deliver quality early childhood education have an advantage over children who are exposed to poorly designed or poorly implemented early childhood education programmes or curricula.

1.7 Limitations of the study

Gay, Mills and Airsan (2009:109) define limitation as “some aspect of a study that the researcher cannot control which may negatively affect the results of the study.” In this study, the first limitation confronted was the limited amount of time available to conduct the research. Data could only be collected from the participants after working hours and during weekends. Naturally, data collection was always conducted with participants’ consent.

The second limitation confronted was the availability of suitable literature to review regarding the implementation of quality early childhood education in pre-primary schools in Namibia. The researcher, therefore, referred mostly to studies conducted elsewhere, such as in sub-Saharan African countries. The researcher also acknowledges the influence of different contexts, for example, that some of the referenced studies were conducted in developed countries, while Namibia is still categorised as a developing country. Only issues relevant to the educational context in Namibia were applied in this study.

A third limitation confronted was that some teachers were not willing to give information or to initially participate in the research because they lacked interest. The researcher made attempts to overcome this limitation by creating rapport with teachers and assuring them that their

responses would remain confidential. After rapport could be established, teachers actively participated in the study.

1.8 Delimitation of the study

Even though the challenges that impact the delivery of quality early childhood education in pre-primary schools in Namibia may be country-wide, this study was conducted solely in the Zambezi Region. Furthermore, the research was conducted only at five pre-primary schools selected in the region.

Interviews were conducted only with teachers who had experience of five years or more teaching at the five selected schools. Both financial and time constraints were limiting factors compelling the researcher to conduct the study at only five schools in the Zambezi Region. Furthermore, the study was restricted to challenges facing the delivery of quality early childhood education delivery only at pre-primary schools. The boundaries and scope of this study, therefore, do not allow for a generalisation of the study's results to the entire Zambezi Region.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Sallies (1993) contends that it is important to clarify terms and concepts in a research study, since they may carry different meanings for people under different circumstances, and as a result, may have different connotative meanings. The terms and concepts clarified below are critical to understanding the discourse on early childhood education conducted in this study. (Additional detail is provided with explanations in relevant sections of the study.)

Curriculum: Refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school that outlines explicit theories, policies, principles and learning outcomes for early childhood education (MEAC, 2015 & 2016).

Early childhood development: Encompassing multiple disciplines, development that focus primarily on a child's physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional capacities from the prenatal stage up to the age of eight years. It is also a term used to describe the gradual emergence of those capacities in children up to the age of eight years (Mwamwenda, 2014).

Early childhood education: refers to educational programmes offered to children in so-called grade zero in the junior-primary phase at pre-primary schools in Namibia (Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture, 2016).

Early childhood: the developmental stage of children from the prenatal state to the age of eight years (MEAC, 2016).

Pre-primary education: terminology often used synonymously with early childhood education, referring to education offered children in grade zero, i.e. before they commence with formal education in grade one at primary schools, specifically in this study, applied to Namibia (MEAC, 2016; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Quality education: Education that helps children develop capabilities conducive to becoming economically productive, so that they may acquire sustainable livelihoods and advocate for a peaceful, democratic society as well as education that promotes their personal growth (UNESCO, 2005).

Quality: The degree to which pre-primary schools deliver early childhood programmes to meet children's learning needs. It is a measure of both the extent and value of early childhood education delivery (Kirkpatrick, 1994).

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter of the thesis provided an introduction to the study. It reviewed the orientation of the study which serves as its background. Relevant to orientation, the discussion of quality in early childhood education in pre-primary schools in Namibia was opened. In this chapter the statement of the problem was also presented, followed by the research questions that guided the study. Furthermore, this chapter presented the significance of the study, its limitations, delimitations, and operational definitions.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The chapter reviews literature related to challenges facing the delivery of quality early childhood education in the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. The objectives of the current study guide the literature review, in which gaps are identified and suggestions for bridging those gaps are provided.

2.2 Early Childhood Education and its importance

Early childhood education is often linked to early childhood development, despite the fact that a distinction between the two concepts exists. The former (early childhood education) refers to any kind of educational programme that serves children before they enter pre-primary school. Whereas the latter (early childhood development) encompasses multiple disciplines that focus primarily on the development of a child's physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional capacities from the prenatal state up to the age of eight years (Mwamwenda, 2014). This study focuses on early childhood education rather than on early childhood development, in order to determine the challenges that pre-primary teachers face in their attempts to deliver quality early childhood education programmes at the selected five pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region.

It is worth noting that in Namibia, pre-primary schools for five- to six-year olds became part of basic education in the year 2006 after cabinet transferred responsibility for pre-primary education from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to then Ministry of Education, now designated the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC, 2016). In Namibia, early childhood education is offered in the junior-primary phase, i.e. pre-primary (grade zero) and grades one to three (MEAC, 2016). This study focuses specifically on early

childhood education for five- to six-year olds in grade zero in the five selected, pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region.

Pre-primary schools provide a foundation for early childhood education which forms part of a child's learning in an educational setting prior to his or her entry to a primary school (Nakpodia, 2011). According to Nakpodia,

This educational level of the child provides for the physical, motor, health, nutritional, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional and social development of the pre-school child. If child education can provide these vital necessities, which are fundamental in human life, it is not therefore unlikely to have an important and strong relationship with the pupils' performance at the primary-school level and perhaps at the secondary and tertiary levels (Nakpodia, 2003:1-2).

Maduewesi (1999) refers to early childhood education as the education offered to children who have not reached the statutory age when primary school becomes compulsory, for example, seven years of age in Namibia. He further states that early childhood education is a semi-formal arrangement, in which children between the ages of three and five years are exposed to early childhood education, through play and activities in a group setting, and which will promote their mental, social and physical development, until they reach the age when governmentally approved formal schooling becomes compulsory.

On completion of early childhood education, children are expected to have a strong foundation which will support learning as a lifelong process. Early childhood education is expected to produce competencies in each of the learning areas depicted in Table One below.

Table 1: Early childhood learning areas and competencies (MEAC, 2015)

Learning Area	Competencies
Language	Learners receive information and respond appropriately. They can read signs and words in their immediate environment and communicate effectively and confidently in their mother tongue (or when communication in their mother tongue is not possible, in the locally spoken language, i.e. SiLozi in the Zambezi Region).
Preparatory Mathematics	Learners can express orally their understanding of number concepts and mathematical symbols. They recognise and describe patterns, relationships and shapes and can solve simple problems in everyday contexts.
Environmental Learning	Learners are aware of the importance of their basic health condition and nutrition. They act positively towards the natural environment and interact positively in the social environment.
Arts	Learners demonstrate personal and interpersonal skills freely through participation in creative activities; they express themselves through art forms and appreciate the artistic expressions of others.
Physical Development	Learners participate, according to their ability, in a variety of physical activities that promote movement and motor development.
Religious and Moral Education	Learners have a basic understanding of their beliefs, are tolerant of others and share common, positive values.

Early childhood education should be delivered in a child's mother tongue or, when communication in their mother tongue is not possible, in the locally spoken language. For instance, the SiLozi language is the lingua-franca in the Zambezi Region. It is locally spoken

and used in pre-primary schools because other local or indigenous languages have not been written. Consequently, the SiLozi language functions at the deepest level of identity for children of the region and determines membership in their primary social groups, namely the family and the local community (MEAC, 2015).

Early childhood education is widely recognised to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of children's subsequent education. It facilitates a smooth transition between home and pre-primary school and lays a foundation for a lifelong process of learning, which can provide more and better benefits for a child as he or she grows to adulthood. In a rapidly changing social environment, it is of special importance that teachers at pre-primary level learn more about children's actual educational needs to be able to deliver quality early childhood education.

Early childhood education is now under closer scrutiny globally than ever before. Numerous lines of research have converged to produce a compelling case for prioritising policy and service development in this area. Research has revealed that the earliest years of a child's life represent a crucial period of biological, neurological, psychological, social and emotional growth and change, that poverty and other disadvantages can affect a child's 'developmental potential' in numerous (and in some respects irreversible) ways, and that well-planned early interventions can have long-term positive outcomes for children.

Early childhood education is appropriate for children aged five and six. It is also often referred to as pre-school education that helps prepare young children for their transition to formal primary schools. Parents who expose their children to early childhood education programmes provide them with a head start for a bright future. Early childhood education for which pre-primary education is a constituent part, is widely recognised as a critical period in a child's preparedness for learning. This recognition implies that all children, from their prenatal state to

eight years of age, need to be nurtured in a safe and caring environment that promotes their capacity to learn and to become healthy, alert and emotionally and mentally secure.

The competencies (refer to Table One above) that children are expected to gain in early childhood education can have a direct impact on their collective learning experiences and on the adult they will grow to become. That is why investment in very young children is of utmost importance: its returns amount to a maximisation of their future well-being. Considerable evidence is available from those who work in the field of early childhood education, that young children gain from being in a high-quality, early-learning setting (Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2007), early childhood education is concerned with the education of children from birth to the age of eight years, the period which is considered to be the most vulnerable stage of a person's life. Infants and toddlers experience life more holistically than any other age group. Social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic and physical lessons are not learned separately by very young children. Robert (2009), states that the most effective teachers for this age group are teachers who understand their holistic experience of life. Researchers and educators in the field of early childhood education regard all adults in a child's life (parents, families, educators) to be an integral part of their educational process.

Underpinning the importance attached to early childhood education which pre-primary education is an integral part, the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in 1990 undertook a joint commitment to make an urgent universal appeal to give every child a better future. In addition, the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasized urgent priority to ensure access to and improve the quality of education for all children (Maduewesi, 2001:3).

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2004), early childhood education (ECE) is referred to as the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering primary school. For this level of education, it is important to note that young, impressionable children are the focus. As such, pre-primary teachers, in addition to possessing an academic qualification, must be humane, have genuine love for children and have the ability to be patient with them. The significance of these qualities is that a person may have a range of academic qualifications but without these fundamental qualities, one cannot be an effective pre-primary-school teacher. The pre-primary level is the stage in education that prepares children for primary school. In other words, the period prior to primary school is the area of focus in early childhood education.

2.3 Relationship between early childhood education and primary education

Children typically face multiple transitions as they progress from a home environment through social groupings via different institutions, such as pre-primary schools (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006; Woodhead & Moss, 2007). Acknowledging the potential significance of early childhood education at pre-primary schools, this case study aims to identify impediments to the delivery of services that support quality in early childhood education at pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region.

Research and experience have repeatedly demonstrated that early childhood education not only enhances the progress and achievement of children in pre-primary schools and lays the foundation for future growth, learning and development, it also promotes positive attitudes in children and strengthens their desire to learn (UNESCO, 2000).

According to Utting (2003), four relationships define the interaction between early childhood education and pre-primary schooling. These four relationships include preparing the child for

school, the 'stand-off', making the school ready for children, and shaping the vision of a meeting place.

The first relationship is based on the preparation of a child for pre-primary school. In this relationship, Utting (2003) states that the compulsory pre-primary school is the clear and unquestioned dominant partner, and the task of early childhood education is defined as ensuring the child is prepared to meet the requirements that will be placed on him or her by the pre-primary school system. The child must align itself with the school system so as to successfully prepare him/herself for the school and its long-established culture. Another way of expressing this relationship is 'readiness for school', i.e. ensuring a child is fit for the purpose when the time for compulsory education arrives.

The second relationship is referred to as the 'stand-off'. In this relationship, Utting (2003) identifies the culture of some ECE systems to be quite different from the culture of the pre-primary school. Indeed, the services and practitioners of these systems may define their identity in part by opposition to the school foregrounding their distinct ideas and practices. Here the ECE relationship may be marked by suspicion and some degree of antagonism, the ECE seeking to defend itself and its children from what it may discern to be a narrowly didactic approach to education that it regards as typical of the pre-primary school system. This relationship may be most apparent where ECE is based on a strong pedagogical tradition, with attention on education in its broadest sense, treating education as the sum of inseparable parts in a holistic approach to work with children in pre-primary schools.

The third relationship is concerned with making the pre-primary school ready for children. This relationship is founded on a more critical questioning of the traditional pre-primary school, and indeed, whether it should change its ways, both to better meet the needs of children or in response to a rapidly changing world. Furthermore, the pre-primary school should provide a

welcoming environment for children. Children's interest should be aroused when they are at pre-primary school, particularly in the first days of attendance (Utting, 2003).

The fourth relationship envisages creation of a meeting place. It is built on the premise that concepts of ECE have often emerged from very different traditions, support very different cultures, and that these traditions and cultures are expressed through diverse understandings, values and practices. If they are to collaborate more closely, a better appreciation of differences must be nurtured and a collaborative search for new and shared meanings, values and practices pursued. A meeting place will be created by gathering in a pedagogical arena, marked by mutual respect, dialogue and cooperative construction. Put another way, this relationship envisages a strong and equal partnership created by people from diverse backgrounds working together to structure early childhood education (Utting, 2003).

2.4 Quality early childhood education

Quality is a slippery term; its definition depends on who is writing it. In this study, quality refers to the effectiveness of educational programmes that serve children in their pre-primary (including grade zero) school years. It could be regarded as a measure of the extent or value criterion for early childhood education in pre-primary schools (Kirkpatrick, 1994). Because early childhood education is a key priority of the Namibian government, it is important that the quality of early childhood education delivery in pre-primary schools be examined.

There exist many definitions for quality in education, proving how dynamic and multifaceted the concept is. The Ministry of Education (1993) and Adams (1993) consider the terms efficiency, effectiveness, equity to be synonymous with quality. Despite the fact that a single definition of quality does not exist, considerable consensus does exist concerning the basic dimensions of quality education. According to UNICEF (2000), quality education includes:

- Quality children, i.e. children who are healthy, well-nourished and eager to participate and learn, children who enjoy quality support from their teachers in carrying out their tasks in pre-primary schools;
- Quality environment, one that is healthy, safe, protective, gender-sensitive, and provides adequate resources and facilities that promote children's success in pre-primary schools;
- Quality content, reflected in relevant curricula and materials that support the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and life skills and knowledge;
- Quality processes, by which pre-primary teachers employ child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms in pre-primary schools;
- Quality outcomes, which encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals and objectives for education and constructive participation in society.

The above-listed features that distinguish quality affirm that in pre-primary schools, quality is a complex phenomenon that is determined by a variety of factors outlined by UNICEF (2000).

The quality of early childhood education can be compromised if the pre-primary school environment is not conducive to learning. Structural conditions, such as a classroom environment that is not conducive or does not cater for activities appropriate for early childhood education, or do not work in concert to support quality teaching and learning experiences derived from the teacher's knowledge fall into this category (Johansson, 2004). Determinants of quality in early childhood education incorporate a whole range of variables such as teacher-to-learner ratio, teacher training and experience, a teacher's personal involvement accompanied

by the organisation of the environment and the philosophies that drive practice (ERO, 2009; Johannson, 2004; Rockel, 2009).

Jankowski (2010) explains that early childhood education for children before they enter primary school is of great importance for their own development and continued progress in school. Early childhood education programmes can help children develop their full potential. Children who attend quality early childhood education programmes are more likely to have positive learning experiences. For instance, children who receive warm and sensitive care are more likely to trust people, to enter school prepared and eager to learn, and to get along well with other children. Juanita and Hilaria (1998) state that other factors conducive to quality early education include small group size, a high teacher-to-child ratio, generous staff wages, well-trained staff, a curriculum geared specifically to meet the needs of young children, as well as parental involvement in the programme.

Early childhood education programmes play a major and increasingly important role in young children's lives, even in countries where primary-education systems are still in the process of consolidation. Unfortunately, education-related services often fluctuate in quality, as do the classrooms that are designated to accommodate the children. Identifying cost-effective and sustainable ways to improve quality in early childhood education and primary-school classes, should be a high priority to ensure the quality of education.

Hassan (2007) believes that the quality of early childhood education refers to features in a pre-primary school environment and to children's experiences which promote their growth, development and welfare. The Ministry of Education in Enugu State [MEES] (2014) has indicated that the environment in which learning takes place in many pre-primary schools in Enugu State is terrible. The study (MEES, 2014) also identified the existence of dilapidated

classrooms and a limited number of classrooms as challenges to the delivery of quality early childhood education in that Nigerian state.

2.5 Factors that determine the quality of early childhood education

A person's level of education determines not only their earning capacity but also the quality of human life itself. Education is the best long-term investment of any society. Quality may mean different things to different people, because it is a complex phenomenon. For instance, Houston (2007) highlights how teachers differ in their description of quality learning and teaching.

Ensuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and the learning process at any level, including early childhood education, has become a prominent demand in Namibia (UNESCO, 2005). The government, children, various industries and the community at large are expecting pre-primary schools to provide evidence of improvement in the quality in their activities, including the quality of teaching and its contribution towards the success in children's outcomes (MEAC, 2011; Krause, Hunt & Chalmers, 2012).

Improving quality can begin at the micro level, meaning that it can be initiated at the level of an individual lesson or even a single activity. Engaging at this level to enhance the quality of learning and teaching provides a person with the opportunity to identify one's personal or professional perceptions of developmental needs. These may include a description of how teaching activities and associated resources facilitate children's achievement of learning outcomes and produce evaluative feedback from peers and consequent changes that may have been introduced to learning and teaching activities as a result.

The interaction of many attributes and skills is necessary to produce effective teaching. Clearly, a sound understanding of the content area is prerequisite, as is an understanding of children and

their preferences conducive to learning, how to engage children and a solid skills base that relates will enable pre-primary teachers to engage learners in the kind of learning a conscientious person would wish to provide them. When facilitating quality learning at the micro level, we need to be able to step back from the role of content provider, to assume the role of a person who guides discussions and the learning processes and encourages children to embrace diverse perspectives. It is also important to have a strong background in the content itself.

2.5.1 Determinants of quality in pre-primary teachers

Quality early childhood education does not manifest itself simply by establishing pre-primary schools and hiring teachers. It is the result of specific, intentional practices that support the recruitment and retention of well-trained teachers (Ackerman, 2006). This section aims to answer the following questions: How does a person become a qualified pre-primary teacher, what kind of training do pre-primary teachers receive; what different routes of entry are available to the pre-primary teaching profession?

According to Bertram and Pascal (2002), working with three- to six-year olds requires some training in the majority of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. In contrast, many middle- and low-income countries, such as Namibia, continue to recruit high numbers of untrained and poorly qualified pre-primary teachers (UNESCO, 2005).

One indicator that has been widely used to measure countrywide differences with regards to pre-primary teacher quality is the proportion of pre-primary teachers that have received a minimum amount of pre-primary teacher training. This indicator refers to actual training received and not necessarily to the minimum requirements to become a qualified pre-primary teacher. While a number of countries cannot verify even this most basic indicator, it is the most

widely available country statistic and therefore can be helpful in identifying regions and countries of the world where the quality of teachers is likely to be a serious problem.

However, the ability to make regional comparisons is somewhat limited using this indicator since the statutes which dictate minimum teacher training vary significantly from country to country. In Nigeria, the minimum requirement to become a qualified pre-primary teacher is receipt of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) which is stipulated by the (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004).

According to a study conducted by Abe (2014), three indicators are specified after which teacher qualification can be measured, namely the level of education, the number of years of experience in preparation of subject matter and teaching, and certification in teachers' areas of expertise and on-going professional development. It is noted that the children observed in the Abe study learned under the guidance of teachers in well-managed classrooms. Trained teachers used learner-centered teaching approaches and skillful assessment to simplify learning and to reduce the effect of differences among children in the study (Salem-al-amarat, 2011).

In addition, studies have consistently shown that teacher quality, whether measured by content, experience, training and credentials or general intellectual skills is strongly related to children's achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Anderson, 1991). Furthermore, researchers and analysts argue that assignment of experienced and qualified teachers at poorly performing schools or to teach children who perform poorly, is likely to be rewarded through smaller gaps in performance levels (Adegbile & Adeyemi, 2008).

The above correlations amply demonstrate that knowledge of subject matter (i.e. competence), teacher qualification, teaching experience, classroom behaviour (indicators of teachers' attitudes, skills and teacher-learner relationships) are strong variables that are reflected in children's performance. Kimberly (2009) stated that teachers must be knowledgeable in their

area of study. In fact, if a teacher is not fully prepared to teach the content of his or her subject, their effectiveness will not be measurable.

Moreover, a teachers' qualification is another indicator of the quality of a teacher; this clearly means that a qualification is important to a teacher's ability to teach effectively. Darling-Hammond (2000) opined that a certificate or licensing status is a measure of teacher qualification that integrates knowledge of subject matter with an understanding of teaching and learning processes. Hence, effective teaching could be measured by the level of a teachers' competence in subject matter which Nakpodia (2003) regards as a prime predictor of how well children learn.

2.5.2 Quality environment at pre-primary schools

The classroom setting for early childhood education should provide an environment conducive to learning. Furniture, equipment and materials are carefully selected and arranged to appeal to young children and to promote the curriculum's content goals. The learning environment encourages a mix of independence and cooperative play and provides materials that reflect the diversity of children's family lives. 'Interest areas' or 'learning centres' are specific spaces in a pre-school room's physical environment where specific activities are arranged for children's exploration.

The learning environment plays a crucial role in molding the character potentials of the individual child, and the schoolroom has always been regarded an important factor in a child's education. The educational achievement of a child is determined to a large extent by the varied and dynamic roles of teachers and the facilities provided by them for the child's education. Learning outcomes and educational performance of children are strongly affected by the standard and the type of educational institution in which they study. Shah and Inamullah (2012)

showed that the school environment and teachers' expectations of their charges have a strong influence on their performance.

Young children learn by doing and actively engaging with materials, equipment and people in their learning environment. Creating a physical space conducive to the developmental needs of six-year olds provides a context in which optimal learning can occur. The choice and organisation of classroom materials in the learning environment influences the way in which a pre-primary teacher guides a child's development and sets expectations for engagement.

The environment affects children that interact with it. This is especially true in children who are susceptible to the influences of their surroundings (Watkins & Durant, 1992). The physical environment in the pre-primary school setting influences a child's behaviour (Read, Sugawara, and Brandt, 1999). The physical design of a developmentally appropriate classroom supports experiences in areas created for reading, writing, listening, dramatic play, art, numeracy, technology and an area created for large group meetings. Ensuring balance among these various learning areas is an important component in the organisation and planning of the physical space in a pre-primary classroom. While classrooms may look different, the space should accommodate these learning processes so that children can learn to move independently throughout the room to utilise equipment and materials. According to Isbell and Exelby (2001), the environment is a good indicator of how children should respond or act. Room arrangement and materials determine where children focus their attention. The physical environment should anticipate individual, small group, and whole group involvement that provides a balance between teacher and learner-initiated activities to ensure delivery of quality early childhood education.

2.5.3 Quality in the early childhood education curriculum

The implementation of early childhood education curriculum requires putting into practice officially prescribed courses of study, syllabi and subjects. The process involves helping the child acquire both knowledge and experience. It is important to note that curriculum implementation cannot occur without the presence of children. The child is therefore the central figure in the curriculum implementation process. Implementation takes place as the child acquires the planned or intended experience, knowledge, skills, ideas and attitudes that are aimed at enabling the same child to function effectively in society (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

The provision of a curriculum is how the educational enterprise works, and through which an educational programme can be successfully implemented. The ECE curriculum is an important written plan that includes goals for children's development and learning, experiences through which they will achieve basic competencies, what staff and parents should do to help children achieve these goals and the materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum (National Centre on Quality Teaching and Learning [NCQTL], 2012). The early childhood education curriculum helps to ensure that pre-primary teachers cover important areas of learning, adopt a common pedagogical approach and reach for a certain level of quality across age groups. These descriptions of the ECE curriculum indicate that it is an indispensable component in the business of implementing an ECE programme.

According to NAEYC (2007), certain standards need to be met to ensure that a high quality of early childhood education is delivered. A pre-primary teacher should be committed to those standards, especially when their role is related to curriculum implementation. By the same token, thorough knowledge of the ECE curriculum on the part of pre-primary teachers becomes

more crucial as greater responsibility is placed on their shoulders. Despite what is envisaged and documented, it appears that provisions of the curriculum are not being fulfilled by the practices of some pre-primary teachers or in the teaching events they organise in the classroom setting (NAEYC, 2007).

Pre-primary teachers have specified roles to play in the implementation of the ECE curriculum in addition to other responsibilities they carry as teachers, such as child guidance and discipline, respecting cultural diversity (McDonnell, 1999), establishing reciprocal relationships with families (Lundin, 2000), fostering a caring community of children and, of course, teaching to promote development and learning (NAYEC, 2007) in the classroom. In curriculum implementation, both personal and environmental factors exercise an important influence. For example, pre-primary teachers, as individuals, bring their personal experience into the classroom setting, and their beliefs regarding how children learn and develop will naturally affect the quality of their implementation of the curriculum.

In the study of Cronin-Jones (2006), it was elaborated that if teachers' personal belief structures were not in harmony with the philosophy of the curriculum, then they will affect the implementation of the curriculum adversely. Parallel to this study, Kern, Kruse and Roehring (2007) found that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning strongly influence curriculum implementation. In other words, once a teacher supports the ideology underlying the curriculum, their performance in the classroom setting will constructively influence its implementation.

Furthermore, besides appreciating the philosophy at the heart of the new curriculum, Park (2008) suggested that teachers' understanding of the curricula is crucial for proper implementation. If teachers do not comprehend the curriculum's theoretical framework in

detail, they will not be able to implement it successfully. Similarly, Butera, Czaja, Daniels, Goodman, Hanson, Lieberal and Plamer (2009) claimed that the character of teachers also impacts curriculum implementation. Moreover, Punch and Waugh (1987) claimed that teachers' personal appraisal of the change produced by the new curriculum is significant in ensuring the quality of implementation. In other words, openness to change produces a constructive difference in curriculum implementation.

According to Utting (2003), early childhood education by way of effective implementation of the pre-primary school curriculum is prerequisite to educational efficiency. Through proper implementation, children will acquire the basic skills, concepts and attitudes required for successful learning and development prior to entering the formal education system, thus reducing their chances of failure and laying a foundation for lifelong learning. As reflected in many official documents such as Gachathi and Kamunge, Education Commission Reports (Republic of Kenya, 1976), the Kenyan government is keenly aware of the importance of investing in quality care and education for pre-primary school children by supervising the curriculum's implementation. ECE is a holistic and integrated approach to pre-primary education that requires a healthy nurturing environment which creates opportunities for the holistic development of children. Kenya is ranked fourth in Africa for implementation of the ECE curriculum; only Mauritius, Namibia and Ghana have a higher number of children who benefit from ECE services.

2.5.4 Quality OF parental involvement in early childhood education

When pre-primary schools and their pupils, the children's parents and other stakeholders are united in strong mutually supportive relationships for the purpose of achieving a common goal, namely effective teaching and learning, children will certainly succeed in pre-primary schools.

Parents' involvement in early childhood education helps them discover their own potential which can be applied for the benefit of their children. Consistent findings have emerged from researchers like Christenson and Sheridan (2001), and Epstein (1987) that parental involvement in pre-primary school programmes improves children's academic achievement, and their attendance and behaviour at school. Hara and Burke (1998), Hill and Craft (2003), Marcon (1999) and, Stevenson and Baker (1987) also confirm that parental involvement in early childhood education improves children's academic performance. Researchers have reported that parent-child interaction, specifically stimulating and responsive parenting behaviour, is an important influence on a child's academic development (Christian, Morrison, & Bryant, 1998).

Hara and Burke (1998) defines educational involvement of families as activities that parents conduct at home, and in early childhood settings, to directly or indirectly support their child's learning. According to Webb and Benesova (2017) the involvement at the pre-school level has a number of lifelong benefits, such as establishing the importance of education and developing a network of helpful connections. Parental involvement at this crucial stage provides the child with a springboard that makes the move to elementary school a more tranquil transition. Furthermore, parents who are involved in their children's education establish a vital connection between the home and school environments.

Parents who participate in the school's programme along with their child are privy to many aspects of their child's day. At home they are able to replicate and extend the activities their child experiences in school. An astute parent will be able to 'pick up' where the school 'left off' and will develop an intuitive sense for the areas on which their child may need to concentrate more in order to increase his or her competency and confidence. Ideas gleaned from the classroom can give a parent inspiration for home activities that complement classroom tasks. Involved parents learn the names of their child's classmates, at the same time learning who

form their child's social circle, or who may cause trouble or help their child be a successful member in their social environment.

Parental involvement in their child's early childhood education appears to become a constant factor in the child's ongoing academic achievement and social adjustment. Although a parent may not be confident enough to help their child complete assignments, they can actively guide and support home-learning activities, as well as teach them and be a role model for their children (Dekker & Lemmer, 1996). Keane (2007) has also asserted that parental involvement improves a child's chances to succeed at school.

Parents are the first and most important teachers for their children because they are in a position to share their own early experiences which can promote the development of life skills, abilities and attitudes that form a foundation for a child's success in pre-primary school (Pelleter & Brent, 2002). The role played by parents is crucial to providing a generally positive learning environment for the child and strongly contributes towards the quality of education and consequently the child's performance. Parental participation is an important element of quality early childhood education.

Due to the intense competition that is prevalent in every field of endeavour in today's world, parents should be aware how important their role is in their child's life, rise to the occasion, and provide a strong head start for their child at the onset of their educational journey. This is where pre-primary schools enter the picture and provide the vital support to parents to shape a child's personality in the formative years of their life. Parental involvement can ensure a highly effective, positive transition from the home environment to their child's school experience. On the other hand, a lack of parental participation and involvement can be detrimental to the outcome of a child's transition to the school environment (John & Ruch, 1993).

2.6 Challenges to early childhood education delivery

2.6.1 Early childhood education curriculum

According to Azzi-Lessing (2009), educational infrastructure provides the basis for the delivery of early childhood education. Deficiencies in infrastructure may trigger other problems in the implementation of the curriculum. In the study by Aktan and Comert (2007), one of the major problems encountered in pre-primary school curriculum implementation was the lack of suitable facilities.

In-service training provided by early childhood education officers (in Namibia, advisory teachers) is not sufficient to ensure that pre-primary school teachers keep abreast of current trends in the development of the ECE curriculum (Gundogan, 2002). According to that study, it was revealed that the kind of in-service training received by pre-primary school teachers was not from the field of early childhood education. Thus, the in-service training in which they participated might not have helped them answer their questions regarding curriculum implementation. For example, the study of Cisneros, Cisneros-Chernour and Moreno (2000) revealed that pre-primary school teachers experienced problems when implementing the early childhood curriculum due to the fact that parents mistakenly believed that the purpose of ECE was merely to provide children a playground, but not a setting for learning. According to Reid, Webster-Stratton, and Hammond (2008), the teaching experience of pre-primary school teachers may also include problems of a practical nature, when implementing ECE curriculum. The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (2012) also found that teacher deficiencies, such as a lack of knowledge about the curriculum, is critical for its effective implementation.

2.6.2 Overcrowded pre-primary classrooms

According to Isbell and Exelby (2001), the term ‘environment’ refers to the conditions that influence the development and growth of an individual in society. Isbell and Exelby (2001), points out that environment is the totality of objects and conditions that surround man. Isbell and Exelby (2001), further observed that environment includes both physical and non-physical elements, among other things, man’s relationships to social and economic institutions and conditions, the latter including family, education, culture, religion and law. Houtonsonen (2011) regards overcrowding in classrooms as a form of overpopulation in an academic environment, which he refers to as ‘classes’. Overpopulation describes a situation in which more children occupy a classroom than the available resources, teachers, infrastructure and instructional materials are able to accommodate. On the other hand, Ike (2009) opines that the overcrowding of classrooms merely indicates that the demand for early childhood education currently exceeds the ability of pre-primary schools, i.e. their plans, instructional materials and facilities, to meet the demand. In the views of the researchers mentioned above, it is clear that overpopulation and overcrowding of classrooms are not divergent terminologies, though overpopulation regards the number of people in a society or state and their relationship to available resources, while the overcrowding of classrooms is when the number of learners exceeds the optimum level such that it causes hindrance in the teaching-learning process.

According to Olaleye, Ajayi, Oyebola and Ajayi (2017), Pre-primary teachers must fill several roles. These include imparting knowledge, ensuring a child’s physical and spiritual development, helping improve a child’s behaviour, attending to a child’s interests, and helping a child with personal problems. These roles cannot be effectively filled in an overcrowded classroom, because of an inherent limit in the number of children any teacher can effectively manage and supervise. Comparing the situation in other countries for example, Sotomade

(2004) states that Nigerian schools are presently in a deplorable state characterised by dilapidated structures, overcrowded classrooms and insufficient staffing. As a result, Nigeria's pre-primary school children learn under extremely difficult conditions, which stifle their creative abilities and stall their development. This situation is so dire, according to Sotomade (2004), that it has affected Nigeria's development as a nation.

With the increasing number of children enrolled in pre-primary schools in Namibia, the National Center for Educational statistics (UNESCO, 2005) has reported that schools are forced to put more children in each classroom or utilise smaller spaces as classrooms. Overcrowding produces negative effects on both children and their teachers. For example, children who are forced into cramped space in a classroom must sit so close to one another that they have difficulty concentrating on their lessons, resulting in poor learning and lower test scores. The intrusion of personal space and feelings produced by a crowded environment both contribute to the inability of children to focus on lesson content and produce correspondingly poor performance in class activities. In addition, children are easily distracted by noises in their environment which, in overcrowded classrooms, is always in their close proximity. Such classrooms often do not have sufficient space to accommodate supplementary equipment. For example, a classroom might have to forgo the creation of reading-corner stations to use the space for learner desks. Indoor play also requires space that an overcrowded classroom cannot provide.

Class size has become a topic of heated discussion these days in many countries, including Namibia (Taylor & Francis, 1994). In Namibia, as in Nigeria, pre-primary schools have witnessed a sharp rise in enrolments. Population growth is anticipated to continue into the near future as well. Children are among the most affected population groups as they should be accommodated in pre-primary schools in accordance with the government's declaration of

‘Education for All’. According to the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (2016) meeting this requirement often produces overcrowded classrooms filled with children from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Today pre-primary schools need reform in order to reduce the burden carried by teachers and to remove children from crowded classrooms which produce boring conditions that inhibit learning. Overcrowded classrooms is one of the alarming factors that contributes to a low literacy rate in Namibia. The enrolment rate of children in pre-primary schools has led to overcrowding, resulting in the overuse of facilities, equipment and materials and the degradation of the school environment. Moreover, since most pre-primary schools are overcrowded, they must contend with environmental and classroom problems such as truancy, noise making, medical and health problems, and fighting between learners among other problems. Such problems are symptomatic of the pre-primary schools in Nigeria, for example.

Shah and Inamullah (2012) in their studies found that overcrowded classes at pre-primary schools could have a direct impact on children’s ability to learn. In addition, they not only affect the children’s performance but teachers had to deal increasingly with disciplinary and behavioural problems as well as problems of poor health and poor performance among the children in their classes. These conditions cause teachers to place stress on other teachers and raise the school drop-out rate. In his study, Carlson (2000) found that quality learning was not possible when large numbers of children were crowded into small classrooms because the children were unable to work or even move.

Overcrowded classrooms in pre-primary schools appear to be a problem not only in Namibia, but universally. At the time of a study conducted by Phillips (2011) it was found that the number of overcrowded classes in New York was the highest experienced in the previous ten years. Salem-al-amarat (2011) concluded that overcrowded pre-primary classrooms was one of the most serious factors affecting the delivery of quality early childhood education.

2.6.3 Medium of instruction in early childhood education

According to the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2003), the Namibia language policy states that school grades one to three will be taught either in children's mother tongue or in a dominant language of their locality. If parents or a school wish to use English as the medium of instruction in the lower-primary phase, permission must be obtained from the Minister of Basic Education, Sport and Culture based upon well-grounded, convincing motivation.

Additionally, Abidogun, (2012:23) defines the concept of 'mother tongue' as "the language that a child acquires from birth and which becomes his or her natural tool of linguistic interaction". Nzwala (2015) puts it briefly by stating that the mother tongue is someone's basic language, the language used for communication in the home. Similarly, Phiri, Kaguda and Mabhena (2013:47) states that the "mother tongue should be used as the medium of instruction as it is the most used... because it has [been the foundation of] a child's [language] experience". A child's mother tongue is the language that a child knows well and which she/he can best use to form sentences and express him or herself. "Children learn easily in their mother tongue because they easily identify with it, than they can with a foreign language" (Phiri, Kaguda & Mabhena, 2013:48). Furthermore, Phiri, Kaguda and Mabhena (2013:48) say that "the mother tongue allows for proper social integration in schools and therefore helps to avoid maladjustment in children." Moreover, research had proven beyond reasonable doubt that children learn most easily when they are highly proficient in their medium of instruction (Phiri, Kaguda & Mabhena, 2013: 48).

Furthermore, a very strong expression of opinion is made in the language-policy document favoring mother tongue as the medium of instruction for every child in Namibia. According to Ausubel (1968) one of the most important principles of educational psychology is to first

ascertain what a child already knows, and then with education proceed accordingly. When a child enters school, his/her competence to understand and manipulate their mother tongue is well developed. Therefore if the mother tongue becomes the medium of instruction education becomes more meaningful because the cognitive faculties are ready to receive and act, transfer and integrate. On the other hand, preparing young children to meet the challenges of a globalised world, they will need to keep up with the rapid spread of English as the world language. Many education systems around the world have adopted English as their MOI.

The National Education Act of 1980 in Nigeria referred to “the universally accepted educational principle” regarding the role of the mother tongue in the cognitive development of a child as the major reason for supporting the use of national languages in lower primary grades (UNESCO, 2005). However, as this principle became engulfed in the apartheid ideology, the potentially divisive implication of instruction in several national languages became more important than the educational benefits. Children whose MT is English, perform better when information is scaffolded in their first language (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Language is a communication tool which is used to consider, negotiate and carry cultural values, beliefs and knowledge from one generation to the next. Two people can understand each other only when they understand verbal and non-verbal signals they both use in communicating. In the process of teaching-learning, teachers communicate subject content and instructions through language and children listen and interact through language. Cantoni (2007), in her paper on MOI issues in Namibian schools, writes that the arguments given in support of using a mother tongue as medium of instruction in schools were linked more to the child’s needs, the local context and factors such as concept formation, cultural identity, closer interaction between school and home, and its practical use after primary school.

The question concerning the choice of a medium of instruction and its impact on learning is a complex issue. Hence, the subject of language in education policies continues to present challenges to policy makers around the world who attempt to balance the emphasis given to children's first language and to English, i.e. the language that appears to be emerging as the global lingua franca (Töttemeyer, 2010).

Evidence does exist, however, based on consistent research that contradicts the claim sometimes made that heavy emphasis on the mother tongue as MOI in early grades will compromise the ability to learn and use the second language (UNESCO, 2005). It should be noted that the predominant language of SiLozi is used as the medium of instruction in the pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia. Ball (2010), in her report for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), writes that research shows that children's ability to learn a second or additional languages is not impeded when their mother tongue is the primary language of instruction throughout primary school. Fluency and literacy in the mother tongue lays a cognitive and linguistic foundation for learning additional languages.

2.7 Play-based learning in pre-primary schools

Play is regarded as one of the most important vehicles in which young children acquire essential knowledge and skills that help them develop as they grow. For this reason, opportunities to play, as well as environments that promote play, exploration and hands-on learning are at the core of effective pre-primary programmes in schools. Play is meaningful to children. Children play to make sense of the world around them, and to find meaning in experience by connecting it to something they already know. Through play, children express and expand their understanding of experiences. Play is recognised whether it is observed on

streets, in villages, on playgrounds, in classrooms or anywhere else. Most people, regardless of culture, economic background or diverse communities, engaged in play from their earliest years. Even though play may be difficult to define precisely, researchers and theorists agree on the key characteristics of playful experience. According to Smith and Pellegrini (2008), children's agency and control of an experience is regarded an important aspect of play. Furthermore, Zosh (2017) defines agency as children's initiative, decision-making and self-choice in play. Ultimately, play should involve some degree of agency, enabling children to assume an active role and to take ownership of their experiences. Equally important is for adults to recognise and trust children to be capable, autonomous, and agents of their own playful learning journeys. In Namibia, learning at pre-primary school level as specified by the National policy, should occur through play (Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture, 2016).

Play also requires accessibility to facilities and objects, such as toys, so that children can explore while playing. Moreover, the socialization of children occurs mainly through interaction with friends while playing. Unfortunately, Kayode (2014) observed that facilities for play are not always available to children. In addition, Osho (2014) discovered that play equipment in Nigeria is nearly totally unavailable in any of the pre-primary schools he studied. Under these circumstances, adjustments that need to be made later in life as part of socialization and in order to benefit a child maximally, are at risk.

Stegelin (2005) stated that, with reference to early childhood education, aspects of children's play, their social, emotional, cognitive, physical, language, and creative skills are all being developed through playing and exploration. He further explained that social interaction between children is enhanced during constructive play. Moreover, constructive play produces several benefits for children, which include problem solving, and use of their imagination and creativity to learn, as well as to cooperate with others.

In well-organised pre-primary schools, play experiences are enriched when children are provided with sufficient time and space to engage freely with the pre-primary environment. Play can occur in many forms: playing with objects; imaginary playing; playing with friends and adults; playing alone; supportive playing; associative playing; and physical playing. Play can be considered as a child's "work"; it is the way through which children acquire knowledge and skills, allowing them to engage independently and with others. The role of teachers in the classroom environment is to enable, support and scaffold playful experiences and learning. This role requires thoughtful planning and spontaneous interactions that build on children's natural curiosity and ideas, for example, following children's lead in pretend play. Providing children with active and playful hands-on experiences help foster and enrich learning.

Through the process of using real-life experiences in their play, children come to terms with their reality and make sense of life as they know it (Bhroin, 2007). In addition, expressing life through art or play is important for the child's emotional, cognitive and social development (Bhroin, 2007). This type of play also creates meaningful connections in the child's life and gives them a way to express these connections. On an educational level, the children learn to express experiences, thoughts, fears, dreams and ideas in a safe and fulfilling way, which in turn develops skills of self-expression and communication that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Most pre-primary school curricula include: letter, shape and sound recognition, forming patterns, and understanding how to combine letters to form words (Bredenkamp, 2005). Studies have shown that dramatic play during the early years develops school readiness skills such as language and communication, cooperation, and literacy skills (Bredenkamp, 2005). A range of social play can be identified to support an assessment of skills based on the observation of and the interactions among children (Broadhead, 2006). It also encourages educators to assess the

child's learning progression from social interaction to cooperation and at the same time connects developmental skills and cooperation. Furthermore, Broadhead (2006) advocates that teachers should use observation, reflection and interaction among children to promote developmentally appropriate practices.

When children engage in play, they are not aware that they are involved in a process of learning something from that activity (Broadhead 2006:145). Yet their play creates powerful learning opportunities across all areas of development. Development and learning are complex and holistic, and yet skills across all developmental domains can be encouraged through play, including motor, cognitive and social and emotional skills. Indeed, in playful experiences, children are able to tap from a range of skills at any given time. This often occurs during 'corner play' or 'centre time' in the context of early learning or pre-primary programmes. Corner play, when well-planned, promotes learning competencies more effectively than any other pre-primary activity. For example, while children are playing, they can experiment with new social skills (for example, how to share toys with others, how to cooperate when using materials), and they often take on challenging cognitive tasks (such as figuring out how to make a building with small blocks when larger ones are not available). Children are 'hands-on' learners. "They acquire knowledge through playful interaction with objects and people" (Hedges, 2000:16).

2.8 Theoretical framework

Concepts of early childhood education are supported by several, equally significant theories that have an impact on the research conducted in the present study. To evaluate challenges facing delivery of quality early childhood education in pre-primary schools, the researcher has drawn on the socio-cultural theory advocated by Lev Vygotsky. Socio-cultural theory is an emerging theory in psychology that focuses on vital contributions that can be made by society

for individual development. Furthermore, the socio-cultural theory places emphasis on the interactions that occur among people as well as their culture. Teaching, schooling and education are considered to carry profound implications for society based on a socio-cultural perspective (Tharp and Gallimore, 1998). A higher order of functional development based on social interaction, is regarded a key feature in an emerging view of human development. The significance of education is highlighted for the place it occupies in that broad category of development, as it is generally regarded the cornerstone of everything, the key to a better life (Cooney, Cross & Trunk, 1993; Black, 1996; Cooper, 2002) and the means of improving life for all individuals. It is also an irrefutable conclusion that early childhood education is the foundation for primary education and beyond. Moreover, Tharp and Gallimore (1988:6-7) have indicated that through participating in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions, children become familiar with these functions will be nurtured in their use, i.e. scaffolding will take place. In addition, Sayeed and Guerin (2000:11-12), believe that ‘the early years of childhood are the most important because the foundation of later years is laid during these years’

The major theme of Vygotsky’s theoretical framework is that social interaction plays an important role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky (1978) believed that everything is learned on two levels: firstly, through interaction with others, secondly, by integration into an individual’s mental structure. The second aspect of Vygotsky’s theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development is limited to a ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD). This ‘zone’ is an area of exploration for which a learner is cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction to fully develop (Bruner, 1996). Vygotsky (1978) further stated that children are born with basic biological constraints embedded in their minds. Each culture, however, provides ‘tools of intellectual adaptation’. These tools help children use their abilities

in a way that is adaptive to the culture in which they live. For example, while one culture might emphasize memory strategies such as note-taking, another might use tools like reminders or rote memorisation.

2.9 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a review of relevant literature on the subject of early childhood education and discussed the importance of early childhood education. It also considered how quality is produced and assured in early childhood education delivery. Furthermore, it discussed the relationship between early childhood and primary education. It presented what kind of training a teacher requires receiving a qualification in early childhood education, and on the classroom environment of pre-primary schools. Furthermore, the chapter discussed curriculum implementation and the quality of early childhood education at the pre-primary level, considering at the same time the importance of parental involvement in the pre-primary schools, and the challenges that may be faced by pre-primary teachers in their attempts to implement the early childhood curriculum in overcrowded classrooms. Finally, it discussed the theoretical framework that informed the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology that was employed to reach the objectives of the study, and thereby answer the research questions presented in chapter one. This chapter discusses the research design, identifies the target population, sampling techniques, sample size, and research instruments. The chapter also presents the data collection techniques used to gather qualitative data, methods employed to analyse data and ethical considerations observed in the study.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is a procedure used by the researcher to select a sample, administer the instrument and analyse the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Creswell (2008) states that a research design is a type of inquiry that provides specific direction for procedures in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research studies. In this study, the researcher used the qualitative research design to gather data on challenges to the quality of early childhood education delivery in pre-primary schools. Qualitative research is useful because it meets the need to individualise early childhood education and captures the nature of children's experiences at that stage of their development (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). According to Creswell (2008), the focus of a qualitative approach to research is to determine what participants think about a particular phenomenon, in this case how quality in early childhood education delivery is experienced in pre-primary schools.

3.3 Population

According to Orodho (2004), population is defined as all the people under consideration in any field of inquiry. Similarly, Creswell (2008) also defined a population as 'a complete set of

people to which the research findings can be applied.’ In the Zambezi Region, there are 98 pre-primary schools scattered over five educational circuits (Bukalo, Chinchimane, Katima Mulilo, Ngoma and Sibbinda). A circuit is a group of schools that are located geographically close to one another and is typically comprised of approximately 15 or more schools. The population in this study consisted of 85 pre-primary school teachers and 25 heads of departments in the Zambezi Region (Education Management Information System [EMIS], 2019).

3.4 Sample and Sampling procedures

Gall (1996) defines a sample as a small proportion of a target population selected using sound systematic procedure for the study. Sampling is described by Gay et al. (2009) as the procedure of identifying and choosing a number of individuals (a sample) from a larger group with similar characteristics (a population). In this study, purposive sampling whereby the technique of non-probability sampling was used to select five pre-primary schools from the 98 pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. The five schools were selected because they were closer to the researcher. The sample of participants comprised ten pre-primary teachers and five heads of departments. Expert sampling technique was used in selecting pre-primary teachers and HODs. Gall (1996) defines expert sampling as a type of purposive sampling technique that is used when your research needs to glean knowledge from individuals that have particular expertise. Pre-primary teachers who had many years of teaching experience in early childhood education at pre-primary schools were selected to participate in the study. Also, the most experienced heads of department in pre-primary education were purposefully selected to provide in-depth data on early childhood education delivery in the selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region.

3.5 Data collection methods

Three methods were employed by the researcher to collect qualitative data: face-to-face interviews, non-participant observations and document reviews. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with pre-primary teachers and heads of departments to seek their personal perceptions on the quality of early childhood education delivery in their respective pre-primary schools. Non-participant observations were used in real classroom settings so that the researcher could observe first-hand any challenges the pre-primary teachers encountered in their delivery of early childhood education. Lastly, document reviews were conducted to inform the researcher about literature available that discussed the quality of early childhood education at pre-primary schools in Namibia.

3.5.1 Interviews

The first instrument used to collect data in this study was face-to-face, semi-structured interviews that were conducted with pre-primary teachers and heads of departments. Semi-structured interviews were used because their predetermined questions are flexible and therefore allow spontaneous, additional questions or probing during the interview process (Robson, 2002). The face-to-face semi-structured interviews sought to elicit information from the participants on the main question and the supportive question of the study: 1. “What are the challenges to quality early childhood education delivery in the selected pre-primary schools?” 2. “What are the challenges faced by pre-primary teachers on the implementation of quality ECE curriculum in the five schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia?”

3.5.2 Observation

The second instrument used to collect data in this study was non-participant observation. There are basically two types of observation: participatory and non-participatory. Participatory observation allows the researcher to be actively involved in the participants’

activities and therefore the researcher makes observations while assuming an active role in whatever is being studied. This study, however, used the second type, non-participant observation. In this type of observation, the role adopted by the researcher is passive, who does not take part in what is being observed in the pre-primary schools (Robson, 2002). Robson (2002) indicates that people's actions and behaviour are key aspects in almost all inquiries, therefore the most natural technique to obtain data in such settings is to watch (observe) and record these actions, after which they are described, analysed and interpreted.

Observations were conducted in two classrooms at each selected school. Firstly, the physical setting was observed: Where is the school located; what is the school's environment; what learning facilities or resources are available for the teaching and learning process?

Secondly, the classroom environment was observed: If the classroom was conducive for learning? If the classroom walls have posters (word walls, alphabets, sight words, numbers, etc.) to facilitate learning. Finally, the teaching and learning was observed: To see if learners participate during the lesson or the class was too noisy. Can the teacher manage the class during a lesson?

3.5.3 Document analysis

Finally, the method of data collection in the form of document-analysis was used in this study. Poulson (1998) notes that documentation is a way that people deal with aspects of their responsibility since documentation creates transparency and improves communication between the school staff and other stakeholders. Document analysis was used to obtain secondary data on the challenges to quality delivery of early childhood education in five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia. Documents that were reviewed included teacher-planning manuals, syllabi, circulars, and policy documents.

3.6 Data collection procedures

Data collection refers to the compilation or accumulation of objects (documents, artifacts and archival records) or data (which are the smallest or most fundamental entities or recorded elements resulting from experience, observation, experiment, or similar situation) related to the subject of the study. Most of the collecting process occurred while the observer was in the field, however it is also possible to collect objects from other sources, to include libraries, historical archives, and electronically based sources (Sherman & Webb, 2005).

The researcher used a variety of data-collection instruments: observations, interviews and document review to collect qualitative data during research. Data collected from different sources of information enabled the researcher to construct a clear picture of typical trends and practices exhibited by children during their experience of early childhood education programmes in five selected pre-primary schools in Zambezi Region.

After the researcher was granted permission to conduct research by the Regional Director and the circuit inspector of education, preliminary visits were conducted at the pre-primary schools to familiarise herself with the sites and to personally request principals to allow the pre-primary teachers and the heads of department to participate in the study. Other participants were purposefully selected based on their teaching experience in early childhood education. Before actual data collection began, the researcher sought informed consent from each of the participants. The researcher explained the ethical issues involved in the study before appointments for interviews were scheduled.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants. During the interview sessions, the researcher posed questions and allowed the participants to respond without interrupting them. Follow-up questions were also posed when the researcher felt it

would be appropriate. The researcher also took notes and recorded participants' voices with their consent. The time consumed to conduct an interview was approximately one hour for each participant.

The non-participant observations were conducted at the convenience of the participant during the lessons. The researcher observed and followed the observation check list on how the classroom environment was structured, how the pre-primary teachers delivered content to the children, and how teaching and learning processes were planned and implemented. The children in the classrooms were instructed to ignore the presence of the researcher in the classroom. The observation notes were made by the researcher in the field right after the observation session in order to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness.

Document analyses were conducted at the five selected pre-primary schools. The researcher requested the participants to share with her the documents they used in preparing the lessons they conducted at the pre-primary schools where they work. These documents included: teacher planning manuals, syllabi, lesson plans, weekly overviews of lesson plans, circulars, time tables, and policy and ministerial documents. With permission granted by some of the participants, the researcher was able to analyse the above documents to collect data that enhanced the quality of delivery of early childhood education in the pre-primary schools.

3.7 Data analysis

Qualitative data was obtained from observation notes, face-to-face transcripts and document analysis. An inductive analysis was used for the qualitative data in this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:395) state that an "inductive analysis is the process through which qualitative researchers synthesize and make meaning from the data, starting with specific data and ending with categories and patterns." In this particular case, a thematic analysis of

common themes and conclusions that emerged from the collected data were synthesized and coded according to the research questions rather than being imposed on the data prior to collection. As inductive data analysis is “iterative and recursive, going back and forth between different stages of analysis” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:395), return visits to schools by the researcher in order to gather more data on the research questions was justifiable when it was established that information was missing from records of the first visit.

To facilitate data analysis the research findings were organised primarily according to the main and sub-research questions of the study. Saldana (2009) regards data analysis as a process that requires the analyst to capture their understanding of the data in writing. To extract the emerging themes, the researcher read through raw data several times to ensure comprehension of the responses produced by the participants. Meaningful data from the passages were identified and categorised under the supplementary questions. Robson (2002) points out that coding is the process of identifying and selecting texts or phrases which are meaningful and highlighting them, so that similar ideas are highlighted in the same manner, for example using the same colour to label the passages. The idea behind coding was to facilitate the retrieval and categorisation of texts that were associated with a similar thematic idea quickly, so that they could be examined collectively and comparisons or similarities made.

Data collected through interviews, observation and document analysis was processed using Creswell’s (2008) six-step model. Step one organised and prepared the data. In step two the data was reviewed several times. In step three data was analysed and characterised by iteratively developing themes and grouping data within those themes. In step four the data was coded and described, whereby the coding process was derived from several iterations. In step five the data was presented based on the research findings. In step six the data was interpreted, which produced descriptions of the challenges faced according to groupings that were further

translated into research observations. At the end of the process, interviews were recorded in their entirety and the observational notes were typed and organised. All collected data was reviewed, classified and examined in order to establish common trends and themes according to the research questions.

3.8 Research Ethics

Gay *et al.*, (2009) and Robson (2002) define ethics in research as moral principles that have been established in practice and are widely accepted. Ethics provide rules and behavioural expectations of researchers concerning appropriate ways to deal with subjects, both in experimental- and social-research studies. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014) ethical principles have been published to guide planning and conducting research in such a manner that protects the rights and welfare of research subjects. They define ethics of research as attitudes about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad. Research ethics deal primarily with the interactions between researchers and the people they study (Natasha 2005).

Robson (2002) warns that data should never be collected at the expense of the welfare of human beings; researchers should observe ethical principles when collecting data. Ethical standards, therefore, form the basis upon which researchers must evaluate their conduct when collecting data. Awareness of the ethical dimension in qualitative research methods has grown considerably over the past decade (Flick, Kvale, Angrosino, Barbour, Banks, Gibbs, & Rapley 2007). Of cardinal importance is cognisance of the fact that the subject of ethics does not merely arise at the point when information is being gathered, but rather is relevant to the entire process of designing and conducting research (Sapford & Abbott, 1996). During the conduct of the current research the researcher closely observed those guidelines, ensuring that the interests of the subjects were safeguarded and protected, also facilitating recognition of any conflicting

concerns that could have arisen (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Against this background, the area of the research was thoroughly described, both in writing and verbally, to those individuals who participated in the research. It was explained that the main purpose of the research was academic and therefore the information gathered would be used only in that context. Issues of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy were spelt out and respected at all times.

Participation in the research was predicated on consent freely granted by the principals, teachers and the senior education officers. All participants were given an informational document about the nature of the study, which included a description of the aims of the research as well as why the individual participants had been invited to take part, and what participation in the study entailed. Participants were also assured that their identity would remain anonymous. All participants were offered the opportunity to ask questions. Participants were told they could withdraw from the research at any time. All relevant documents were provided to the participants.

Research ethics were observed out of respect for the subjects and as a means of protecting their rights by upholding anonymity, by ensuring that their participation would remain confidential and by soliciting their informed consent to participate in the study. The researcher sought informed consent with openness about the truth and facts of the research in order to help them make an informed decision about their participation in the study. The researcher explained the aim of the research to the participants. No participant was forced to participate in the study or to answer any question. The study used codes, rather than names, to identify input confidentiality, and for the sake of anonymity of the participants.

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the research design and methods that were applied to collect and analyse data for the study. It also discussed on the population and sampling of the case study. Data was collected using interviews, non-participant observation and document analysis. It discussed the research instruments, the data-collection procedure, and how data was analysed through reading and coding, which was completed by identifying and highlighting similar responses under common themes, comparisons and interpretations. Finally, the chapter described in minute detail the research ethics that were applied in designing and conducting the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

The study sought to establish what challenges are being faced on the delivery of quality early childhood education at the pre-primary level at five selected schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia. As noted in the previous chapter, data was collected by means of interviews, observations and document analysis. In the context of common trends and themes, the collected data was reviewed, classified and examined to determine what those challenges to quality were at pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region.

For ease of review and the observance of anonymity, the following coding was used to distinguish participants from different schools. To give an example, the source who was the first teacher working at the first school would be identified as S1T1. The head of the first department at the first school would be identified with the code, S1H1.

The main challenges to delivery of quality at the selected pre-schools include: challenges faced by the pre-primary teachers to implement the early childhood education curriculum, challenging classroom environments at the schools, and engaging parental involvement.

4.2 Challenges faced by pre-primary teachers regarding the implementation of the curriculum

In answer to the first supplementary research question, four major challenges were identified by the participants during face-to-face interviews. These challenges negatively impact on the delivery of quality early childhood education and include: the use of SiLozi as the medium of instruction, discrepancies in learning objectives between teachers' manuals and those carried

in the official syllabus, challenges arising from subject content of the curriculum, and overcrowded classrooms.

4.2.1 Challenge of SiLozi as a medium of instruction

SiLozi is a language that is spoken and taught at schools in the Zambezi region; it is used as a first language and as a medium of instruction in the junior primary phase. Its use as MOI has become a challenge for most of the pre-primary teachers in the selected schools, because most of their learners have not used the SiLozi language prior to pre-primary schooling. Against this background, the following statements were made during interviews with pre-primary teachers at the selected schools.

S1T1 indicated that the medium of instruction affects her ability to implement the pre-primary curriculum at a high standard. She gave an example from her classroom. “Most of the learners in my classroom attended kindergarten at which English was the medium of instruction. SiLozi is a new language for these children that they are forced to learn”. She also stated that,

When they are taught in SiLozi, the learners are not able to understand what is being taught; they do not have a SiLozi-language background, neither at home nor in the pre-primary schools they previously attended (S1T1).

With the same complaint S2T2 cited an occurrence from one of her lessons in preparatory mathematics. She stated:

One time while teaching a mathematics lesson, I asked learners to identify which container was half empty, and which was full. Because the question had been posed in SiLozi without switching to English, most of the learners just looked at me. No one raised their hand to give an answer. I realised that they had not understood what I said. Due to the language barrier it is a challenge for me to implement the curriculum correctly (S2T2).

Another example regarding SiLozi as an MOI was offered by S4T1. She stated that, “translating from SiLozi to English is a challenge.” She further specified that some words seem to completely change their meaning in the process of translation. “Some words in English become a whole phrase when translated into SiLozi”. An example was given by S5T1:

A word like ‘mountain’ In English cannot be translated directly into SiLozi, because if I happen to translate it using a single word, the meaning will change and a mountain ends up being a hill. Another example is the translation of words like ‘long’ and ‘tall’; they only have one word for both in SiLozi and that word does not indicate the difference that is shown by the English words. This also makes my teaching lose quality when implementing the curriculum in pre-primary, because translating some words from one language to the other cannot be done with a single word, and this is a problem for me (S5T1).

A similar problem was identified by S3T1, who indicated she faced a challenge regarding language development, explaining that subjects were taught in SiLozi, but in the teacher’s manual were printed in English. Furthermore, the expenditure of time needed to translate sounds becomes a challenge. For instance, when a lesson requires that words rhyme, there are a lot of words in English, e.g. cat and mat that rhyme. However, in SiLozi the teacher will be hard pressed to find sounds, because children are taught vowels in SiLozi, and letters of the alphabets are all taught in phonics, e.g. /o/ ‘opela’. It becomes very difficult for a teacher to translate the rhymes in English into SiLozi. This challenge is repeated when teaching the songs that are published in the teacher’s manual.

S2T2 also identified the medium of instruction as a challenge. She explained that it is very difficult to translate words from English to SiLozi. Elaborating, she said translating a word in English often becomes an entire phrase in SiLozi. For example the word ‘weather’ becomes

‘mayemo a lihalimu’ in SiLozi, which is a phrase. “On a strong note, translating from English to SiLozi is a challenge.” (S2T2)

According to information in the document review of the teacher’s manual (2015:55), the theme of the following song is ‘my family’:

Where is father, where is father?

Here I am, here I am.

How are you today, friends?

Very well I thank you

Run away, run away.

Translating the above song would change the meter of the song’s lines of lyrics completely. For one, an adequate translation would contain more words. S4T2 admitted that she does not translate the song into SiLozi before it is to be sung in class because its meaning would probably also change when translated.

From classroom observations that were conducted by the researcher, it was evident that pre-primary teachers using SiLozi to communicate with the children at the five selected pre-primary schools encountered serious challenges. In one classroom that was observed, children were not able to follow the teacher’s instruction on how to express themselves through art as was stipulated in the syllabus.

Despite several attempts by the teacher to simplify her instructions to help the children express themselves when drawing, they were not able to make ‘meaningful’ drawings. The teacher eventually resorted to code switching, using local languages such as Subiya to help children express themselves in the art exercise. Although a few children nodded their heads as a sign

that they now understood the instructions, those who were comfortable only speaking other languages simply gazed at the teacher and their peers.

In another classroom, the researcher observed that children were not able to communicate effectively and confidently in SiLozi, the locally spoken language in Zambezi Region. During small group activities, children whispered to each other in their mother tongue and seldom communicated in SiLozi. When the teacher approached the groups, children would become silent and murmured a few soft words that the observer could not recognise.

4.2.2 Misalignment of learning objectives between the teacher's manual and the curriculum

Learning objectives are statements that define goals in a curriculum, course, lesson or activity in terms of expected and demonstrable skills or knowledge that will be acquired by a learner subsequent to instruction (MEAC, 2016). Referring to this definition as background, the syllabus is supported by the Teachers' Manual, a Learners' Workbook, and the Teacher's Resource Book. The Teachers' Manual contains more detailed information that helps pre-primary teachers teach curriculum content. On the other hand, a challenge has emerged for teachers because the learning objectives in the Teachers' Manual are different from those published in the early childhood curriculum. S1H1 indicated the following:

The challenge faced is that the teacher's manual does not match the syllabus, which makes it difficult for the teacher to implement the curriculum in a correct manner. On most topics, the objectives in the teacher's manual are not the same as the ones in the syllabus guide (S1H1).

Furthermore, S3T1 and S2T1 also identified the lack of alignment between the teacher's manual and the syllabus as a challenge. "The basic competencies and learning objectives do not match

the topics given in *Religious and Moral Education* that should be delivered” (S3T1). “The learning objectives in the syllabus and teacher’s manual do not complement one another” (S2T1).

S5H1 explained that she was facing a challenge because of the lack of materials that should be available for some areas of instruction. She noted that children learn by touching and seeing the teaching materials, explaining further that, by doing, the children will learn the objects being taught by name and will also recognise the objects by seeing. The problem however, is the fact that the objects are not provided by the school (S5H1).

S2H1 concurred with S3T1 and noted the following:

Regarding learning objectives and basic competencies, sometimes the topics do not match. For instance, there is a topic entitled ‘pencil grip’, but the activity for the topic describes using scissors to cut paper. We normally interchange unsuitable assessments and plan an activity in which children will be able to write their names using the correct pencil grip (S2H1).

According to information in the document review, the researcher used three subject areas to present information that justifies teachers’ identification of learning objective discrepancies as a challenge confronting pre-primary teachers at the five selected schools. The information from the document review was used to verify what participants maintained as actually true or not, and are presented in a Tables, 2, 3 and 4 below.

Table 2: Sample of misaligned learning objectives in Religious and Moral Education

Religious and Moral Education

Theme: My home

Topic: Morals

Document	Teacher's manual	Syllabus guide
Learning objective(s)	Children will appreciate being cared for as the basis of becoming oneself and be a competent social member of the peer group. Page 78	Differentiate between good and bad and value the guidance from adults and peers. Be aware of rules and positive discipline. Page 24

The table above is an example that highlights a discrepancy between learning objectives in the teacher's manual compared to those found in the syllabus on the same topic. The teacher's manual places emphasis on belonging, whereas the syllabus bases its objectives on discipline.

Table 3: Sample of misalignment of objectives in Language development

Subject: Language development

Theme: Myself

Topic: Incidental reading

Document	Teacher's manual	Syllabus guide

<p>Learning objective(s)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Expand their incidental reading vocabulary by reading names.</p> <p>Page 27</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Incidentally recognise and associate the written word with the spoken word.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Expand their reading vocabulary.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Develop skills in visual memory and recall.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Become aware of the need to read and develop a desire to read.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Organise the basic features of print.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Develop decoding strategies for picture reading.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Develop phonological awareness.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pretend 'reading' silently and aloud.</p> <p>Page 12</p>
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The table above is another example that illustrates a discrepancy between the learning objectives found in the teacher's manual compared to those found in the syllabus on the same topic. The teacher's manual focuses on vocabulary, the syllabus aims at phonological awareness.

Table 4: Sample of misalignment of learning objectives in Preparatory mathematics

Subject: Preparatory mathematics

Theme: Myself

Topic: Classification

Document	Teacher's manual	Syllabus guide
Learning objective(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Expand their mathematical knowledge in terms of 'red' and 'circle'. Page 31	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop their skills in visual, auditory, tactile, taste and smell perception, discrimination and sequencing and expand their mathematical vocabulary. <input type="checkbox"/> Understand form constancy. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop skills of logical thinking. Page 15

The table above is a third example that illustrates a discrepancy between learning objectives found in the teacher's manual compared to the learning objectives found in the syllabus on the same topic. The teacher's manual targets identification of shapes and colours, the syllabus focuses learning on mathematical vocabulary.

4.2.3 Challenge posed by curriculum content and subjects

A curriculum incorporates all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether carried out in groups or individually, on or beyond the school's premises. Pre-primary teachers in the selected schools faced challenges because too little content was offered in the curriculum to cover a full week's instruction.

S3T1 indicated that she faced challenges with subjects like religious and moral education, environmental learning, and language development. She explained that the content was not enough to fill a month's instruction, as the curriculum specified that a month be spent on each

theme. Each week should feature two to three topics, a content volume which is too little to accommodate five days of teaching.

S2H1 complained about the amount of time allocated for early childhood education at her pre-primary school:

Forced delay in presenting topics is challenging. The policy states that during the first two weeks the teacher must teach the letter 'A', whereby talented children already know the 'A' sound and will be forced to experience a delay in learning other sounds. The resulting frustration will sometimes turn them into a source of disruption in the lesson because it will bore them. Teachers are encouraged to prepare three different activities on the same topic. Where slow children concentrate on learning number '1', for example, children who know number '1' will be given an activity that is more complex, i.e. geared to their level of knowledge (S2H1).

S2T2 made a point about the absence of English in the pre-primary curriculum, complaining that English is not included as a subject. "At our school, we only teach SiLozi as a subject and use it as a medium of instruction, since it is the 'predominant language' of the Zambezi Region. We normally code switch to English when we want to provide examples, explain topics or words that are not understood by children, or to provide emphasis, which all the children are capable of understanding." She further explained that the pre-primary curriculum limits the children when it comes to learning numbers, because the policy states that the children should be taught numbers one to ten. She added, "You will find that several children already know their numbers and repeating that instruction will bore them".

S2T2 explained further:

Some topics in the curriculum are not taught because they are not favored by the environment. For example, under the topic, 'forms of transport', transport like trains, ships, canoes and so forth, are designated to be taught. Most of the children

have not seen these modes of transport. If a picture is shown to them, they will pretend that they understand, though they do not. But if you teach a car as a mode of transport, since they know about cars and have seen one, the children will participate actively and tell you more things about a car (S2T2).

4.3 Classroom environment as a challenge to quality teaching and learning

4.3.1 Classroom location

The classroom location has been identified by S1T2, S4T1 and S3T2 as a challenge faced by some teachers in the selected schools. They indicated that their pre-primary classrooms are often located a distance from other junior-primary classrooms, i.e. grades one to three. For instance, S1T2 said that:

My pre-primary classroom is situated between two senior-grade classes. It turns out to be a challenge because it becomes disturbing and is very uncomfortable to teach. When it is break time for pre-primary, the senior learners will still be in their classes, and when they go for a break, the pre-primary children will be at their lessons. During the break of the senior children, there will be too much noise and some of the pre-primary children lose concentration (S1T2).

S4T1 also identified the location of her pre-primary classroom as a challenge:

The pre-primary classroom is also used as a storage room for the maize meal that is used to cook porridge for the children to be served during break time. In addition, the pre-primary classroom is more or less used as a staff room by some teachers, so there are too many interruptions while I am trying to teach. Pre-primary is regarded as a less important class (S4T1).

S3T2 alluded that classrooms were situated in the wrong places. She thought it would be better if the pre-primary classrooms could be located in the area that is near to the playground to make it less time consuming and easier for the teacher to take the children for outdoor activities and

play. She also said that her pre-primary classroom was situated next to the staff room, which makes her feel uncomfortable when she is teaching her children. She added by citing a situation that occurred. One day during her lesson, a teacher was on a phone call just outside the classroom and spoke and laughed so loudly, that both she and her children had to pause, forced to listen to what was going on just outside their door.

4.3.2 Lack of educational corners

Interest areas or 'learning centres' are specific spaces in a pre-school classroom's physical environment where specific activities are arranged conducive to children exploring. S2H1 stated:

In the pre-primary classroom we need to have reading corners. Unfortunately we do not have them because the classroom is too small to accommodate such space for our children. In a reading corner, mats should be scattered on the floor for the children to sit on while they listen to the teacher, but the mats that were provided in the pre-primary classrooms are now too old (S2H1).

According to S5T2, educational corners are very important in a pre-primary classroom. She said she was disadvantaged because her classroom did not have educational corners due to a lack of space; her classroom was already overcrowded with the number of children in her class. However, in an inspired moment she decided to turn her personal table into an educational corner. She explained that, whenever a reading corner was needed, she gathered the children around the table. She extended its use to function as other educational corners such as an interest, fantasy, writing or art corner. These activities are all very important because during speaking and listening, skills of the children are developed as they communicate with each other while playing. Two other participants (S3T2 and S4T1) noted the following:

A pre-primary classroom should include educational corners, but the classroom we are using is small. The educational corners that we need are not there because there are too many children in the classroom. There should be an interest corner, a fantasy corner, a display corner, and a reading corner (S3T2).

My pre-primary classroom is not a conducive space. Immediately when you enter you notice that there is too much dust, because the floor is not up to standard. This dust can lead to diseases like flu and asthma. Given this situation, learning corners cannot be made (S4T1).

4.3.3 Lack of teaching materials and recreational facilities

According to information in the document review regarding playground equipment, one reads, “children must have the opportunity to climb, swing, crawl and balance on playground equipment. Old car tires could be used to construct such equipment if funds are not available to purchase them. Ideas for these are in the Teachers’ Resource Book” (NIED, 2015:24).

In addition, the pre-primary policy states that teachers should plan activities in such a way that their children enjoy coming to school, and in a way which caters for their learning needs. Pre-primary teachers should be creative in designing and constructing resources for teaching and learning. Materials used in pre-primary classes are often put together from pieces, like puzzles. Teachers must manage the distribution and collection of materials in such a manner that pieces do not get lost. Materials must always be kept clean for hygienic reasons, (NIED, 2015:14).

S3T2 made the following statement:

No meaningful teaching and learning can take place without provision of adequate resource materials. This means that for the officially designed curriculum to be fully implemented, the government or Ministry of Education should supply adequate resource materials, such as textbooks, teaching aids, and stationery in order to

enable teachers and children to play their roles satisfactorily in the curriculum implementation process.

S2H1 said that, “Our classrooms do not have chalkboards. Chalkboards are important in a pre-primary classroom, as they serve as an interactive tool for teaching and learning.” She further explained that a chalkboard is a powerful teaching tool because, as the teacher writes on the board, the children are able to observe how letters are formed and also see the size of lettering they should use when writing in their exercise books. She also said that the chalkboard can be used to explain an activity in pre-primary, especially in situations when the children have stopped following instructions given to them. S5H1 also stated that:

The pre-primary classroom is facing a big challenge regarding teaching material, for example, due to the lack of exercise books and stationary supplies. Each child has to use one exercise book for three different subjects. I am also unable to make copies for the children for pasting on the wall, because the school does not have a photocopy machine.

Pre-primary teachers face challenges due to poor or missing facilities which pre-primary schools really need to have. According to S1T1 and S1T2, there is no playground for the pre-primary children at their school. A properly equipped playground should have a seesaw, a merry-go-round, swing set, slide, sandbox, playhouses and mazes (MEAC, 2015). Beyond providing recreation and pleasure, these facilities help children develop physical coordination, strength and flexibility, and support social and emotional development that are essential in the delivery of early childhood education.

S2H1 concurred with S1T1 and S1T2 by stating that, “When government decided it should support pre-primary education, it did not consider the importance of providing resources and equipment for playgrounds. In pre-primary instruction, children need to play with concrete

objects because their learning is based primarily on touching. Unfortunately we do not have a playground at our school.”

According to the information provided in the document review of the teacher’s manual for pre-primary, children investigate the world through play as espoused by the social constructivist theory of Bruner (1996). For this reason play forms a very important part of the child’s pre-primary school activities. It is through play that much of children’s initial learning at pre-school level is achieved. The physical, socio-emotional and intellectual development of children are dependent on vigorous engagement in physical activities. Through touching, manipulating, exploring and testing, children discover the world around them. Through interacting with other children and adults, they learn about themselves and their relationship to others. Through fantasy-play and role-play, children imitate adults and experiment, discovering what it means to be a teacher, a doctor, a banker or a fisherman, for example. Through play they learn how to solve problems and interact cooperatively with others. Children love to play. At this young age, children are very curious and have great capacity to absorb and learn. Children learn by doing. Therefore, activities must be built around children’s learning needs and interests. These activities not only make learning easier, they help children develop self-confidence and to assume personal responsibility for their learning.

Play is a natural part of a child’s life. Play provides the very foundation for children’s learning and through play activities, they acquire the skills needed for holding and using objects, for controlling their bodies, for developing the ability to communicate and the understanding of how things work. Play is pleasurable, rewarding, and provides children a great number of opportunities to explore the world they inhabit. Play teaches them to share and to cooperate. Children discover entirely new things through play (NIED, 2014:10).

4.3.4 Overcrowded pre-primary classrooms

According to S5T2, the early childhood education curriculum is not being implemented appropriately. She supported this opinion by stating that, according to policy published in the teacher's manual, each pre-primary classroom should serve a maximum number of twenty-five children. In her classroom, that number is almost doubled: "I have forty-six learners in my classroom." She pointed out some of the challenges she encounters due to overcrowding. For example, she complained that, too many learners in the classroom makes it impossible for the teacher to pay equal attention to all the learners in the classroom.

According to S4T1, overcrowding was one of the challenges that adversely affected implementation of the early childhood education curriculum in the pre-primary schools. S4T1 stated that:

In pre-primary education, the number of children in each classroom should not exceed twenty-five. But I am currently teaching forty-four children, which is not good for the class. Overcrowding affects both me and the children because I cannot even move easily among them while teaching or helping children who need special help, such as the fast and the slow learners. Some children cannot listen or concentrate while I am busy with the lesson (S4T1).

S1T2 concurred with S4T1 and S2H1, stating that she encountered challenges due to the high level of enrolment in her pre-primary class. She explained that, according to the pre-primary policy, not more than twenty-five children should be accommodated in each classroom. However, in her class there were thirty-eight children. She finds the challenges she faces are primarily due to overcrowding, i.e. come from not having enough classroom space for the number of learners. Because of the numbers, she gives less support to the children who need special attention, simply because enough time is not available to attend to the needs of all thirty-

eight children. By the time she is done assisting about twenty children, it is time to start the next lesson, each lesson being only thirty minutes long.

Moreover, S3T2 indicated that the quality of teaching and learning in pre-primary schools is being compromised because the children are taught without the opportunity to play. “The children seated at the back of the classroom are at a greater disadvantage, because when it is time to touch concrete objects during a lesson, they will not come forward to participate. I have noticed that only the children seated in front are actually able to touch the objects.”

4.4 Parental involvement

According to information in the document review, i.e. in the section of the teacher’s manual on parental involvement, from the time a child is born, parents respond to him or her by expressing warmth and their love in many different ways. On its part, the child feels loved, secure, and learns to trust. A child thrives under the nurturing and guidance provided by its parents and grows toward the goal of reaching its highest potential. Parents who spend time with their children and who talk, read, sing, hug, and play with them, who answer their questions with clarity and honesty, are nurturing their child’s readiness for early childhood education and help the child develop self-confidence and emotional stability as well. In addition, parents need to be aware of the importance of accepting differences among their children, and avoid comparing them in order to avoid a situation in which one child feels inferior to its siblings or peers (NIED, 2014).

Poor or absent parental involvement in a child’s pre-school education is experienced as a challenge to some teachers, while active parental involvement is perceived as a great benefit by others at the five selected pre-primary schools. S2H1 affirmed that some parents were very

involved in their children's learning. Some were so committed that they visited the school to make sure the classroom environment was conducive to their child's learning.

S2H1 further noted, however, that a challenge is presented when parents insist on bringing their children to pre-school before they reach the age of five. The policy states that a child should be at least five years of age on or before 31 December of the preceding year before he or she attends pre-primary. Some parents bring their children in the year they will turn five. On the other hand S1H1 stated that,

At our school in pre-primary, we face challenges with some of the parents. Some parents do not appreciate the importance of pre-primary, during which children are prepared for school and are introduced to the new education system, since pre-primary was introduced with the new curriculum (S1H1).

S5T1 concurs with S1H1, mentioning that some parents are a challenge because they do not purchase the specified stationary materials their children require in the classroom. S5T1 also said it was evident that parents were not involved in the learning process when their children frequently, or most of the time, did not complete the home work assigned in class. S5T1 believes that in some of these cases, parents do not show interest in their children's learning because they are illiterate.

4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented, analysed and interpreted the findings produced by the data. Analysis was guided by responses, i.e. answers, to the questions posed in Chapter One of the study that emerged during the research.

The first supporting question addressed challenges faced by pre-primary teachers regarding the implementation of the early childhood education curriculum at the selected schools. This chapter discussed, analysed and interpreted the findings produced in asking this question.

The second supporting question addressed the influence of the classroom environment on the quality of teaching and learning in the selected pre-primary classrooms. This chapter discussed, analysed and interpreted participants' views regarding this question.

The central research question sought to determine which challenges are faced by pre-primary teachers in their attempts to deliver quality early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools. Interviews and observations conducted during the research elicited participants' views on these challenges, the presentation of which forms the substance of the discussion, analysis and interpretation of the challenges, either implied or directly expressed in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five discusses the challenges to delivery of quality early childhood education at the five pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. The chapter discusses the findings of the study under the following topic headings: SiLozi as a medium of instruction, Discrepancies in learning objectives between teacher manuals and syllabus, Lack of educational corners, Lack of teaching materials, Lack of recreational facilities, Overcrowded classrooms, and Lack of parental involvement.

The central research question sought to determine which challenges are faced by pre-primary school teachers in their attempts to deliver quality early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools. Interviews and observations conducted during the research elicited participants' views on these challenges, the presentation of which forms the substance of the discussion, analysis and interpretation of the challenges, either implied or directly expressed in this chapter.

5.2 SiLozi as a medium of instruction

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2003:4) states that Grades 1-3 will be taught either through the mother tongue or a predominant local language. As stated in sub-section 2.2 above, SiLozi is a language that is spoken and taught at the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi region. It is a lingua franca in Zambia and is not an indigenous Namibian language (Kangumu, 2009).

Instruction in children's mother tongue during early childhood education delivery is encouraged by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2016). This is based on the

premise that when children are taught in a language with which they are familiar, teaching and learning processes become simplified and the concepts underlying instructional content will be easily understood by them. Thus, the language most familiar to the children will be the most efficient medium for early childhood education.

Mooney's constructivist theory posits that children learn without conscious effort from the environments in which they speak their mother tongue (Mooney, 2000). Unfortunately, for obvious practical reasons, this principle cannot be applied consistently and uniformly to the diverse children who attend the five pre-primary schools selected for the study. These children come from families that speak a variety of indigenous languages at home, which include Chiyeyi, Mbalangwe, Sifwe, Simbukushu, Sitotela, Subiya and others, even the San language (Kangumu, 2009; Nzwala, 2015). In practice, none of these indigenous languages are used as a mother tongue to teach the early childhood education curriculum in the five pre-primary schools because none of them is developed.

As a medium of instruction, SiLozi was perceived by the participants in the study to present a serious challenge because most of the children are only exposed to SiLozi as a predominant language for the first time during their instruction at pre-primary school. The teachers at the selected schools are not able to communicate effectively with their learners in the SiLozi language. For example, S1T1 (Sub-section 4.2.1) narrated an experience with the children in her class who were unable to comprehend a question she posed in SiLozi, tasking them to distinguish between full and empty containers. The children's failure to respond to the question could be attributed, most likely, to their poor background in SiLozi and not their ability to fulfil the task. The fact that the children struggle to follow SiLozi as a medium of instruction originates in their diverse social and cultural backgrounds that have little or no practical experience with SiLozi.

Alberto, Rossario, Gabinete, Sunny and Rañola (2016), state that the only disadvantage created by the use of a mother tongue occurs when the children do not speak their native language as a mother tongue, specifically when they are accustomed to using a third language. This is a typical situation experienced by children in the pre-primary schools selected for the study. Kangumu (2009:7) states that a majority of the children in the Zambezi Region “do not have access to education in a language they understand because nearly 80 percent of the learners taught in SiLozi use other languages at home.” In this regard the children at the selected pre-primary schools are disadvantaged and consequently are deprived of accessing quality early childhood education because of the use of SiLozi as a medium of instruction.

The use of a mother tongue could enhance the delivery of early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools if the children were allowed to express themselves, and their teacher is capable of understanding, that language. Communication in a mother tongue would encourage a child to actively participate in class discussions. Furthermore, children become less inhibited in their choice of expression if the delivery of early childhood education is conducted in their mother-tongue rather than in SiLozi as a predominant language.

In short, the exclusive use of SiLozi as a medium of instruction for early childhood education in the pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region runs counter to the linguistic theories advocated by Vygotsky (1978), in which he states that children at an early age should be permitted to interact using a language that is most familiar to them.

5.3 Discrepancies in learning objectives between teacher manuals and syllabus

Discrepancies between the learning objectives that appear in the teacher’s manual and those given in the early childhood education curriculum were identified as a challenge to early childhood education delivery at the five selected pre-primary schools.

In the document review, some pre-primary teachers in the selected schools indicated they are challenged to meet learning objectives. On the other hand, it is problematic for a school if teachers prepare lesson plans for which, at the end of the day, children at the same level achieve different outcomes. As a school, all pre-primary teachers should plan and teach uniform content across all classes. Below is an example of a learning objective from the teacher's manual which does not correspond to the learning objective given in the syllabus guide:

For the subject of preparatory mathematics on the theme of 'Myself' under the topic of 'Classification' (MEAC, 2015:31) of the teacher's manual, the learning objective states "Expand [children's] mathematical knowledge in terms of 'red' and 'circle'." However, in the syllabus, the learning objectives are three and given as follows: 1. develop their skills in visual, auditory, tactile, taste and smell perception, discrimination and sequencing and expand their mathematical vocabulary; 2. Understand form constancy; 3. Develop skills of logical thinking (MEAC, 2015:15).

With reference to the above discrepancy, the statement of the Ministry of Education below clearly does not acknowledge the lack correlation between the teacher's manual and the syllabus guide for the purposes of planning, teaching and learning to occur in a consistent manner, and that in conformity with reference materials and guides available at the selected pre-primary schools.

The Ministry of Education (2015) states that the syllabus is supported by a teachers' manual, a children's workbook and a teachers' resource book. However, information in the teacher's manual is more detailed, a characteristic that provides pre-primary teachers more leeway to

understand the syllabus and to teach its content. In addition, the teacher's manual contains a scheme of work, assessment guidelines and record forms and a complete glossary of terms.

To further deepen the perplexing situation in which teachers find themselves, Park (2008) in a study in Korea, with appreciation for the philosophy of the new curriculum, suggested that teachers' understanding of the curricula is crucial for proper implementation, indicating that if teachers fail to comprehend the curriculum's theoretical framework in detail, they will not be able to implement it successfully.

Considering the finding that discrepancies exist between the manuals and the syllabus, teachers' ability to implement the early childhood education curriculum will be compromised. Teachers in the selected schools were confused whether they should use the syllabus or the teachers' manual as a reference standard. This affected the quality of delivery as some teachers just avoided those sections.

5.4. Content coverage in the ECE curriculum

During face-to-face interviews, participants indicated that the early childhood education curriculum is limited in content coverage. The pre-primary school teachers at the five selected schools perceived that the stipulated themes and topics prescribed in the curriculum were inadequate. The competencies and learning outcomes for the early childhood education curriculum are outlined in Table 1 above (sub-section 2.2): language, preparatory mathematics, environmental learning, arts, physical development and religious and moral education (MEAC, 2015). According to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2015), on completion of the early childhood education curriculum in grade zero, children should have a strong foundation on which they can build to become active participants in lifelong learning.

However, the limited coverage of content in the early childhood education curriculum appears to be a challenge for pre-primary school teachers at the selected schools.

The themes and topics covered in the early childhood education curriculum are not broad enough to adequately prepare children for the higher levels of schooling. Consequently, pre-primary school teachers often find themselves with very little or nothing to do once they have covered the prescribed themes and topics during the course of a week's instruction.

In response to the questions: "Are teachers present? With what are they occupied?" in the observation instrument (Appendix F) under the sub-section, the researcher observed in two different classrooms (schools two and five) that the pre-primary teachers had dedicated Thursday and Friday of every week for revision of themes and topics covered during the week. This adjustment of the lesson plan attested to the fact that teachers perceived the themes and topics prescribed in the curriculum to be insufficient, resulting in scheduled topics being covered in three school days of the week. Covering prescribed themes and topics in a mere three days of a five-day schedule undermines delivery of quality in early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools. Children need to be challenged to explore their immediate environment as specified in the curriculum rather than merely spending time with a revised schedule that unnecessarily extends the instruction of themes that have been covered already

5.5 Classroom location

In order for quality early childhood education delivery to be realised at the pre-primary schools, it is essential that the classrooms are located in an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning. The participants indicated that the space allocated for their classes was in rooms that were used as storerooms, or were similar to storerooms, or were located near

staff common rooms. According to the participants, the location of the classrooms affected their teaching and learning due to continual distractions from other staff members at the schools.

Young children are curious and explorative by nature. Any distraction in the form of noise or movement can easily pull their attention away from their classroom activities. Classrooms used for early childhood education need to be situated in stimulating teaching and learning environments that promote children's concentration on their classroom activities.

5.6 Lack of educational corners

Lack of educational corners in the classroom environment was identified as a challenge by most of the pre-primary teachers, among them S3T2 and S4T1 stated that in a pre-primary classroom, there should be educational corners in the class, due to the small classroom that we are using; the educational corners that we are supposed to have are not there, because there are too many learners in the classroom. There should be an interest corner, fantasy corner, display corner, and reading corner (S3T2). My pre-primary classroom is not conducive for learning, because immediately when you enter the classroom, there is not enough space to fit when you have to move around in the classroom, for the reason that the chairs and desks of the learners are too close to each other. Based on this background, learning corners cannot be made in this regard. (S4T1). To promote active child-centered learning, children need to be exposed to educational corners which foster independence and the love of learning. Read, Sugawara and Brandt (1999) assert that the physical environment in the pre-primary school setting can influence children's behaviour. The pre-primary classroom environment needs to be designed to encourage exploration by the learners of the immediate surroundings through play while the children work on various tasks in the same area, all conducted under the

supervision of their pre-primary teacher. The early childhood education curriculum should provide equal opportunities for all children and should equip them with skills and learning experiences that are developed to a level where they can be applied to their full extent in the learning environment.

Pre-primary school classrooms in which educational corners are provided and are readily accessible can benefit the children who interact with them, particularly those children who are exceptionally sensitive to influences in their surroundings (Watkins & Durant, 1992). The lack of educational corners at the five selected pre-primary schools deprives the children of potential experiences to explore their immediate environment for learning purposes. This deficiency can suppress motivation in children to learn because their creativity is stifled or extinguished altogether at the pre-primary schools studied. In addition, children's democratic and critical-thinking skills can be negatively affected by a classroom environment that does not allow them to explore their immediate surroundings, for instance through play. Children's communication skills and self-regulated exploration can also be affected by the lack of educational corners in the classroom of their pre-primary school.

5.7 Lack of teaching materials and recreational facilities

Teaching materials and recreational facilities were found seriously lacking at the five pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region that were selected for the study. The participants believed that meaningful teaching and learning could not take place at the selected schools due to the lack of teaching materials and recreational facilities appropriate for pre-primary schools. Examples of teaching and learning materials not available at the schools included textbooks and teaching aids. Teaching and learning materials can be used to save time and effort, to stimulate interest, to promote conversations among the children, and to explain, illustrate and reinforce concepts and meanings in the early childhood education curriculum.

Furthermore, visual materials can help children build memories that over the long-term help them retain information. Recreational facilities at the five selected pre-primary schools, which were missing included the play area, ICT and multimedia center, music and art room, traffic park, and the library. These could have simplified the learning process, and enhanced the delivery of quality early childhood education. S1T1 and S1T2 pointed out that their pre-primary schools had no playgrounds, a resource that would encourage social interaction among children and naturally develop zones, i.e. areas of exploration, for which children are cognitively prepared (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996).

Additionally, teaching and learning materials would promote development of the reading, listening, speaking and writing skills of the children facilitated by both individual and teacher-guided activities at the selected schools.

The researcher observed that teachers at the five selected pre-primary schools do not have sufficient resources for use in teaching. This finding is similar to findings of Nakpodia and Achugbue (2012) in which they discovered that facilities for pre-primary education were also inadequate in Nigeria. Suitable textbooks are crucial and a veritable treasure chest as a source for references that pre-primary school teachers must have for preparation and teaching lessons. Recreational facilities at pre-primary schools can provide children opportunities to develop social and educational skills.

With reference to the teachers' comments above, the selected pre-primary schools need to have recreational facilities to ensure that delivery of quality early childhood education is realised. Since pre-primary children learn through play, it is imperative that the recreational facilities that are lacking at the five selected pre-primary schools be made available as soon as possible for the children's indoor and outdoor play.

The Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (2015) encourages pre-primary schools to procure appropriate teaching materials and facilities that will enhance delivery of quality early childhood education both inside and outside classrooms. Recreational facilities such as the merry-go-round can help children to socialise and play with their peers, thereby creating a conducive atmosphere for learning in the pre-primary schools. The Teacher's manual (2015) for early childhood education encourages teachers to motivate children's investigation of the world around them through play to ensure that early learning is achieved. It is essential that teaching materials and recreational facilities are available to ensure that delivery of early childhood education is enhanced, for it will certainly be inhibited at the five selected pre-primary schools if they continue to be lacking.

5.8 Overcrowded classrooms

The Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (2016) stipulates that the teacher-to-learner ratio in pre-primary schools should be 1:25. This ratio is designated to ensure that interaction between teachers and learners is optimal at pre-primary schools for the provision of early childhood education. Some participants in the study, for example S4T1, indicated that the number of learners in her class is nearly double the number recommended by the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture, and that she has forty-four learners in her class. To her mind, her overcrowded classroom was a hindrance to delivery of quality early childhood education, noting that she could barely move between the children when she needed to assist a child who required special attention with class work.

To be able to deliver quality early childhood education, the teacher-to-learner ratio needs to be maintained at the selected pre-primary schools. However, due to the national policy regarding equal access to education, the pre-primary schools are not in a position to turn

children away despite high enrolment figures. This situation forces pre-primary school teachers to find ways of coping and despite overcrowding in the classroom still do their best to deliver quality early childhood education.

Overcrowded classrooms can negatively affect the ability of children to learn at pre-primary schools because teachers cannot offer them quality early childhood education in congested classrooms. With so many children in a classroom, a teacher might not be able to conduct one-on-one interactions with the children that need special assistance. It is impossible for some teachers to devote sufficient time to learners that might need special attention due to the high number of learners in the classroom. Therefore not only the number of learners, but the limited teaching time available can produce low performance levels of children at the selected pre-primary schools.

An additional drawback created by overcrowded classrooms is the lack of space needed to accommodate supplementary equipment such as educational corners. For example, in an overcrowded classroom, pre-primary school teachers might be forced to forgo educational corner stations to create space for learners' desks. Consequently, overcrowded classrooms can prevent children from exploring their immediate environment through play due to lack of space in the classrooms. Indoor play requires space that an overcrowded classroom does not have. As a result, overcrowded classrooms can create a challenge to pre-primary school teachers to keep all children active during delivery of early childhood education at the five pre-primary schools.

5.9 Lack of parental involvement

The Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (2015) encourages parents to be actively involved as much as possible in the teaching and learning processes of their children in pre-

primary schools. Parental involvement helps extend the delivery of early childhood education outside the classroom. It creates a more positive experience for children and helps them perform better during their time at pre-primary school (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 1995 & 1987).

However, the current study revealed that a lack of parental involvement in their child's early childhood education created a challenge at all five selected pre-primary schools. As an example, S5T1 explained that some parents became a challenge for her class because they would not purchase the specified stationary materials their children needed in the classroom. S5T1 further complained that it was evident that parents were not involved in their children's learning when their homework was not done frequently or most of the time. S5T1 ultimately offered the opinion that some of the parents of children at the schools possibly showed no interest in their children's early childhood education because they were illiterate. Hamunyela (2008), in her studies on parental involvement in Namibia, also discovered that in schools where parental involvement is present, parents are more involved in non-academic activities than in academic activities. A tendency by parents to be active only in non-academic activities at pre-schools could possibly be attributed to illiteracy.

Keane (2007) states that parents' levels of education can also pose as a barrier to involvement in their children's achievements at school. Parents may not assign value to early childhood education due to their upbringing or a lack of academic success of their own. It is also possible that parents may have a negative attitude about school because of negative experiences they had. Avoidance of a child's pre-primary school by its parents can also stem from feelings of inferiority they experience in the presence of their children's teacher because they have no understanding of early childhood education. According to Pelleter and Brent (2002), parental involvement improves the chances of a child's success at pre-primary school. On the other

hand, it should be remembered that a parent is the first and therefore most important teacher of a child because he or she provides the child's first learning experiences that promote life skills, abilities and attitudes that form the foundation of their success in pre-primary school and beyond.

The findings of this study suggest that the lack of parental involvement in delivery of early childhood education like not helping learners with their homework, not motivating and encouraging their children on their education can impact negatively on their children's success at the pre-primary level. Parents play a pivotal role in ensuring that children succeed at pre-primary school. Therefore, parents should not leave the delivery of early childhood education solely in the hands of pre-primary school teachers, but should be actively engaged in the education of their children, both during and beyond their child's attendance at pre-primary school.

5.10 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the findings of the data. The first research question produced responses by participants, a discussion of which revealed their views regarding challenges faced by pre-primary school teachers in their attempts to implement the pre-primary curriculum at the selected case schools. The second research question addressed participant's views on how the classroom environment influences the quality of teaching and learning in the selected pre-primary classrooms. The last question addressed the findings on views of other challenges that impact quality in the delivery of early childhood education faced by pre-primary school teachers at the selected pre-primary schools.

Evolving concepts of learning, academic achievement and curricula have produced changing notions of what constitutes genuine education reform. Furthermore, the reformers have

increasingly relied on quality to attain their objectives, to substantiate their contentions, or to promote implementations of their innovations on the pre-primary curriculum. The enrolments that swell the size of many classrooms at the selected schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia continue to produce teacher-to-learner ratios well beyond the recommended government ratio of 1:25 and teachers, who are the key to delivering quality education content to the children at pre-primary level are not thriving in a favorable environment. They are inhibited from providing crucial input to the education system that could ultimately help achieve the objectives of the policy guide for pre-primary education.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the study, important conclusions and makes recommendations to improve delivery of quality, early childhood education in the Zambezi Region of Namibia.

6.2 Summary

The aim of this study was to find out challenges to the quality of early childhood education delivery at five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region, with the purpose of making a meaningful contribution to existing literature on the subject of early childhood education. The following main research question was used to guide the study: What are the challenges to delivery of quality, early childhood education at selected pre-primary schools?

Two supporting questions were also formulated to guide the study:

- What are the challenges faced by pre-primary teachers in order to implement a curriculum that will provide quality, early childhood education at the five schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia?
- How does the classroom environment influence the delivery of quality, early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools?

This qualitative study revealed the following findings under the first supporting research question stated above.

6.2.1 Challenges of SiLozi as a medium of instruction

Summary

The study revealed that pre-primary school teachers encountered challenges using SiLozi as a medium of instruction at the selected pre-primary schools. Despite the fact that SiLozi is officially used as the language of instruction in Junior Primary schools in the Zambezi Region, not all children are familiar with SiLozi. Pre-primary school teachers find it difficult to offer early childhood education to children in SiLozi language simply because it is not the children's mother tongue and children are consequently not familiar with the SiLozi language.

Conclusion

The use of SiLozi hampers the delivery of quality, early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. Children in the region will learn most effectively when they are taught in their mother tongue and not in SiLozi, which is unfamiliar to most young children, despite the fact that the language is predominantly spoken in the Zambezi Region. Since SiLozi is the only developed language in the region, it will continue to be used as the only medium of instruction in pre and junior primary schools in the region.

Recommendation

Kinder gardens should include a period of teaching the mother tongue (SiLozi), so that learners can learn the language at a tender age and cope up with it in pre-primary and others. This will help children learn SiLozi before they enter the primary phase of education.

6.2.2 Discrepancies in learning objectives between teacher manuals and the early childhood education curriculum

Summary

The study revealed that the learning objectives given in the teacher's manual were not the same as those presented in the early childhood education curriculum. Pre-primary school teachers were therefore challenged when making a choice which learning objectives they should use as reference in preparing their lessons in early childhood education.

Conclusion

The discrepancies in learning objectives between the teacher's manual and the early childhood education curriculum diminished quality in the delivery of early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools. Pre-primary school teachers were often confused when attempting to select the most suitable learning objectives when planning and teaching the early childhood education curriculum.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture, should liaise with the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) and in a cooperative effort, amend the teacher manual and the early childhood education curriculum so that learning objectives are aligned.

6.2.3 The challenges of content coverage in the ECE curriculum

Summary

The study revealed that the early childhood education curriculum did not cover a sufficient amount of theme or topic content. Pre-primary school teachers were therefore compelled to either draw out lessons or repeat topics in order to fill a week's schedule of instruction.

□ Conclusion

The early childhood education curriculum is limited in scope. Consequently, pre-primary school teachers must either extend lessons or repeat the topics stipulated by the early childhood education curriculum. This situation creates frustration among the children, particularly in the fast learners, and in so doing, diminishes their motivation and capacity to learn.

□ Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, through the National Institute for Education Development (NIED), should review the early childhood education curriculum to add more content, i.e. topics, themes or subjects, appropriate for early childhood education. This would add value to the curriculum by offering a wider variety of activities in which the pre-primary teachers can engage their children.

6.2.4 Lack of parental involvement

□ Summary

The study revealed that a lack, in some cases the absence, of parental involvement created a challenge to teachers in their delivery of quality, early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools, because teachers are not in a position to fulfil *all* the needs of pre-primary

learners, whose learning processes require attention that extends well beyond the classroom environment.

□ Conclusion

The lack of parental involvement hinders the delivery of quality, early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. Parents are not actively engaged in the learning and teaching processes for delivery of quality, early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools.

□ Recommendation

Pre-primary school teachers should devise teaching and learning activities that would motivate parents to participate more actively in the delivery of quality, early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools. Teachers should also use every opportunity in their contact with parents to help them appreciate, in a non-confrontational manner, the pivotal role parents play in preparing their children for pre-primary schooling.

6.2.5 Classroom location

□ Summary

The study revealed that the location of the classrooms at the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region was not conducive to delivery of quality, early childhood education. Some classrooms were also used as storerooms or were located near staff common rooms, thereby hindering delivery of quality, early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools. There was a class among one of the selected schools where a classroom shared the

same space with maize meal storage. This resulted to a situation where cooks entered the class at will to collect the maize meal on a daily basis.

□ Conclusion

The pre-primary classrooms were inappropriately located, or were used for purposes other than conducting classes, a situation that hinders the delivery of quality, early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools.

□ Recommendations

At each selected pre-primary school, school management needs to ensure that classes are conducted in rooms that are conducive to delivery of quality, early childhood education. Instruction of children should not be accommodated in storerooms, or in rooms also used as storerooms, because such spaces hinder children from exploring their immediate environment for the purpose of social interaction and play.

6.2.6 Lack of educational corners and recreational facilities

□ Summary

The study revealed that the lack of educational corners and recreational facilities negatively affected the delivery of quality, early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools. The absence of these spaces and facilities prevent children from engaging in crucial individual and group activities in and outside the classroom.

□ Conclusion

The lack of educational corners and recreational facilities hinders the delivery of quality, early childhood education at the selected five pre-primary schools.

□ Recommendation

Pre-primary school teachers should be encouraged and assisted to be innovative and creative in devising spaces as educational corners, and in creating recreational facilities from found materials when these facilities have not been purchased, in order to enhance the delivery of quality, early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools.

6.2.7 Lack of teaching materials

□ Summary

A critical lack of teaching and learning materials exists at the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. Pre-primary school teachers were not provided with appropriate teaching and learning materials, or in adequate amounts, for teaching the early childhood education curriculum effectively.

□ Conclusion

The lack of teaching and learning materials inhibits the delivery of quality, early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region.

□ Recommendation

Pre-primary school teachers should be encouraged by school management to improvise in the provision or creation of teaching and learning materials in order to deliver quality, early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools.

6.2.8 Overcrowded classrooms

Summary

Classrooms at the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region are overcrowded due to high enrolment numbers at these schools. The size of classes at the case schools exceeds the officially recommended teacher-to-learner ratio of 1:25.

Conclusion

The five selected pre-primary schools were overwhelmed by the number of enrolments of children, which exceeded the recommended teacher-to-learner ratio of 1:25, creating serious challenges for teachers to deliver quality, early childhood education at the selected pre-primary schools.

Recommendations

For delivery of quality, early childhood education to be realised at the five selected pre-primary schools, it is essential that children are accommodated in classes of a manageable size of not more than 25 learners. To this end, school managers should assign children in accordance with the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture guideline regarding teacher-to-learner ratio of 1:25. To achieve this objective, schools should employ more pre-primary school teachers in conjunction with an appeal to government to provide pre-fabricated structures to increase the schools' capacity with temporary classrooms in order to reduce overcrowding at the selected pre-primary schools.

6.3 Proposed areas for further research

The main focus of this study was to establish what challenges hindered or prevented the delivery of quality, early childhood education at five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. It would be commendable to extend this research in order to address other areas that would deepen understanding of the issues raised in the study.

- The scope of the study was limited to five, specifically selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia. Similar studies could be conducted at more pre-primary schools across the country to evaluate delivery of early childhood education in the region as a whole.
- The sample of the study comprised only pre-primary school teachers and junior-primary heads of departments. A similar study could sample other stakeholders, such as school principals or senior-education officers, to capture perceptions on more levels of administration relevant to the delivery of early childhood education in the Zambezi Region.
- The study was conducted in public pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. A similar study could be conducted at private pre-primary schools in order to compare challenges and accomplishments in delivery of early childhood education between the private and public sectors.

6.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the researcher summarised the findings of the study and drew conclusions prior to making recommendations that might mitigate the challenges that inhibit delivery of quality, early childhood education at selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region. In conclusion, proposals for further research were made in the chapter.

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APPENDICES
Appendix A: Ethical clearance certificate



ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FOE/458/2019 Date: 7 June, 2019

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project: 3 Challenges Of Quality Early Childhood Development Delivery In Pre-Primary: Case Of Five Schools, Zambezi Region

Researcher: GLORIA CHIZIMBO MUBIANA

Student Number: 201101170

Supervisor(s): *Dr. D. Nkengbeza (Main) Dr. A. Zulu (Co)*

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
 - (i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - (ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

UREC wishes you the best in your research.

Dr. E. de Villiers : HREC Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. de Villiers", is written over a horizontal line.

Ms. P. Claassen: HREC Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Claassen", is written over a horizontal line.

Appendix B: Permission to conduct study in selected schools



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA ZAMBEZI REGIONAL COUNCIL



Tel: +26466261962

Fax: +26466253187

Enquiries: Ms Adrenah K Mukela

Ngoma Road
Govt Building

Our Ref:

Private Bag 5006

Katima Mulilo, Namibia

PO Box 834
Ngweze
Katima Mulilo
Namibia

Dear Ms Gloria Chizimbo Mubiana

REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN SELECTED PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ZAMBEZI REGION

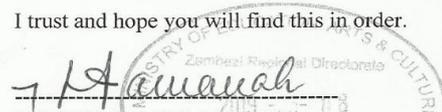
Your letter to the office of the Regional Director: Zambezi Region dated 06 May 2019 with the caption request for permission to conduct a Research in selected Pre-Primary Schools in Zambezi Region was received.

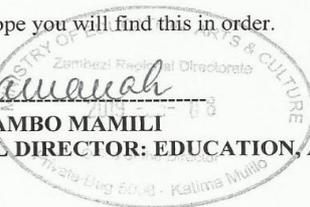
Kindly be informed that approval is granted to you to conduct a research as requested, but let me draw your attention to the following aspects: **NOTE!**

- The granted approval should not disrupt the normal teaching and learning at those schools you intend visiting.
- You are therefore, requested to share your findings with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture.

By copy of this letter Inspector of Education concerned is notified accordingly of your presence to these schools.

I trust and hope you will find this in order.


MS JOY ZAMBO MAMILI
REGIONAL DIRECTOR: EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE



Appendix C: Letter requesting permission to conduct the study



Letter requesting for permission to conduct research from the Regional Education Director

Ms Gloria Chizimbo Mubiana

P. O. Box 834 Ngweze

Katima Mulilo

06 May 2019

Ms. J. Mamili
Regional Education Director
Zambezi Region

Dear Madam,

A request for permission to conduct research in selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Education Region

I am Ms Gloria Chizimbo Mubiana, a registered Masters Student (student number 201101170) in the faculty of Education at the University of Namibia. As part of the curriculum requirements for the award of Master of Education degree of the faculty of Education, I am undertaking a study on “The challenges of quality early childhood education in pre-primary schools: A case of five schools in the Zambezi Region”.

I therefore hope that the findings of my study will be able to inform policy makers in education in Namibia and also lead to further research by other scholars given that little research has been conducted in this area. I hope that my request to conduct this study will be granted.

Yours sincerely

Gloria Chizimbo Mubiana

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Chizimbo', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Appendix E: Informed consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

ANNEX 5



TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: CHALLENGES OF QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DELIVERY IN PRE-PRIMARY: CASE OF FIVE SCHOOLS, ZAMBEZI REGION

REFERENCE NUMBER:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: GLORIA CHIZIMBO MUBIANA

ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 834 NGWEZE KATIMA MULILO

CONTACT NUMBER: 0817147069

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the study staff or doctor any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at The University of Namibia and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and Namibian National Research Ethics Guidelines.

1. What is this research study all about?

a) *Where will the study be conducted; are there other sites; total number of participants to be recruited at your site and altogether. THE STUDY WILL BE CONDUCTED IN ZAMBEZI REGION, KATIMA MULILO CIRCUIT with 15 participants.*

- b) *Explain in participant friendly language what your project aims to do and why you are doing it?*

This calls for attention to all stakeholders of education to advance quality of teaching and learning in the school centers..

- c) *Explain all procedures.*

- d) *Explain any randomization process that may occur.*

Orientation design will be used to target only the teachers and education officials who have sufficient information to enrich the study.

- e) *Explain the use of any medication, if applicable.*

N/A

2. Why have you been invited to participate?

- a) *Explain this question clearly.*

You have been invited to participate because you are school principals, senior education officers and the inspector of education in Katima Mulilo circuit.

3. What will your responsibilities be?

- a) *Explain this question clearly.*

- b) *Explain the duration the participant is expected to participate in the study (i.e. 2 hours, 4 days, etc.)*

You will be asked to answer a few open-ended questions and the interview will last for about 50 minutes.

4. Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- a) *Explain all benefits objectively. If there are no personal benefits then indicate who is likely to benefit from this research e.g. future patients.*

This research will benefit both the teachers and the learners in the provision of quality early childhood education in Katima Mulilo Circuit pre-primary selected schools

5. Are there in risks involved in your taking part in this research?

- a) *Identify any risks objectively. N/A*

6. If you do not agree to take part, what alternatives do you have?

- b) *Clearly indicate in broad terms what alternative treatment is available and where it can be accessed, if applicable.*

No implications.

7. Who will have access to your medical records? N/A

a) Explain that the information collected will be treated as confidential and protected. If it is used in a publication or thesis, the identity of the participant will remain anonymous. Clearly indicate who will have access to the information.

8. What will happen in the unlikely event of some form injury occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?

a) Clarify issues related to insurance cover if applicable. If any pharmaceutical agents are involved will compensation be according to ABPI guidelines? (Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry compensation guidelines for research related injury which is regarded as the international gold standard). If yes, please include the details here. If no, then explain what compensation will be available and under what conditions.

9. Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No payment and no cost involved.

10. Is there anything else that you should know or do? N/A

a) You should inform your family practitioner or usual doctor that you are taking part in a research study. (Include if applicable)

b) You should also inform your medical insurance company that you are participating in a research study. (Include if applicable)

c) You can contact Dr at tel if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.

d) You can contact the Centre for Research and Publications at **+264 061 2063061**; **pclaassen@unam.na** if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the investigator.

e) You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

11. Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study entitled CHALLENGES OF QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DELIVERY IN PRE-PRIMARY: CASE OF FIVE SCHOOLS, ZAMBEZI REGION

I declare that:

a) I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.

b) I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.

c) I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurized to take part.

d) I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalized or prejudiced in any way.

e) I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the study doctor or researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

12. Declaration by investigator

I *GLORIA CHIZIMBO MUBIANA* declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter. (*If an interpreter is used then the interpreter must sign the declaration below.*)

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)

.....
Signature of investigator

.....
Signature of witness

13. Declaration by interpreter

I (*name*) declare that:

- a) I assisted the investigator (*name*) to explain the information in this document to (*name of participant*) using the language medium of English and SiLozi.

Appendix F: Observation schedule

Physical settings

Where is the school located?

What is the school's environment?

What learning facilities, resources are available for the teaching and learning process?

Activities during and beyond official school time

What activities are taking place during the official class hours?

What teaching or learning activities are taking place beyond the official class hours?

Is there presence of teachers? And what are they occupied with?

Is there presence of learners? What are they occupied with

Indicators of diversity amongst the learners

Racial differences

Means of transport to and from school

Any Emotions and expressions expressed by the participants during the interviews.

Appendix G: Interview questions
Pre-primary school Teachers and HoDs

Student names: Gloria Chizimbo Mubiana

Student number: 201101170

Topic: Challenges of quality early childhood education delivery in pre-primary: Case of five schools, Zambezi Region

Interview questions

- What are the challenges faced by pre-primary teachers in order to implement an ECE curriculum that will provide quality education at the five schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia?
- How does the classroom environment influence the delivery of quality early childhood education at the five selected pre-primary schools in the Zambezi Region of Namibia?

Thank you!

Appendix H: Language editing

KATIMA MULILO CAMPUS
Private Bag 1096, Windhoek road
Katima Mulilo, Namibia
☎ +264 66 262 6000, URL: <http://www.unam.edu.na>



TO: Dr D. Nkengbeza
Dept. of Foundation and Management
Faculty of Education
University of Namibia

From: Chris Masule
Lecturer: Language Centre
University of Namibia
Katima Mulilo Campus

Date: 31 October 2019

Dear Supervisor,

Re: Proof of Language Editing of Master of Education in Early Childhood Education

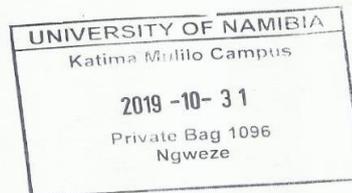
Candidate: G. C. Mubiana (201101170)

I write this letter to confirm that I, the undersigned, conducted a language editing exercise on the Master of Education thesis of candidate G.C. Mubiana during the period 13 – 23 /10/2019. The exercise was strictly on language editing, therefore any other errors that may or could be noticed could be a result of the candidate's own after the editing exercise.

Your's sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "C. M. Masule", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

C. M. Masule (B.A.; PGDE; MAES)



30 June 2020

Don Stevenson
P.O. Box 3799, Windhoek 081-
417 4506
don@africaonline.com.na

Dr. D. Nkengbeza
Department of Foundation and Management
Faculty of Education
University of Namibia

Re: English-language edit
Candidate: G. C. Mubiana

Dear Supervisor,

I hereby confirm that I, the undersigned, have today completed an English-language edit of the Master of Education thesis supplied to me in soft copy under the title, **CHALLENGES TO THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DELIVERY AT PRE-PRIMARY LEVEL: A CASE OF FIVE SCHOOLS IN ZAMBEZI REGION**, by candidate, Gloria Chizimbo Mubiana, (student number 201101170) on 24 June 2020. Sincerely,



Don Stevenson

Appendix I: Plagiarism-check results

URKUND

Urkund Analysis Result

Analysed Document: Final Thesis G C Mubiana June 30.docx (D75838283)
Submitted: 6/30/2020 4:57:00 PM
Submitted By: dnkengbeza@unam.na
Significance: 2 %

Sources included in the report:

Student Research Projects, 2019.docx (D56066378)
Rachel Matiti.docx (D56008061)
INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES OF LOW PERFORMANCE OF 2 GRADE 2 LEARNERS DURING ENGLISH READING LESSONS AT A RURAL SCHOOL IN THE ZAMBEZI REGION.docx (D31457190)
INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES OF LOW PERFORMANCE OF 2 GRADE 2 LEARNERS DURING ENGLISH READING LESSONS AT A RURAL SCHOOL IN THE ZAMBEZI REGION.docx (D31360124)
HELLOW SUCCESS....FINAL DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT.docx (D30992223)
REASERCH REPORT.docx (D30521108)
Research Mauta (2).docx (D23932593)
Lilian first draft report 20 Sep 2017.docx (D30680815)
<http://hdl.handle.net/11070/506>
https://scholar.sun.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10019.1/100287/negumbo_investigation_2016.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y
[https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/31910/Abidogun_Teachers\(2013\).pdf?sequence=1](https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/31910/Abidogun_Teachers(2013).pdf?sequence=1)
<https://kyuir.kyu.ac.ug/bitstream/handle/20.500.12504/367/Dissertation%20of%20final%20Saleema%20Panjwani.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
<https://docplayer.net/amp/76017669-An-investigation-on-the-role-of-grade-r-teachers-in-creating-a-conducive-environment-for-learning-numeracy.html>
https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/70006/Sibanda_Approaches_2018.pdf?sequence=1
https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/70006/Sibanda_Approaches_2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/bitstream/handle/1828/8540/Kejo_Subilaga_PhD_2017%20.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/11984153.pdf>

Instances where selected sources appear:

44

