



## Technical Report

# The Perivoli Schools Trust Early Child Care and Education Model:

Exploring lived experiences and  
wider social impacts in Namibia



July 2025



**Dr Victoria Sharley<sup>1</sup> | Prof. Janet Ananias<sup>2</sup> | Dr Emma Leonard<sup>2</sup> | and Dr Elizabeth Ngololo<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Perivoli Africa Research Centre (PARC), and Children and Families Research Centre, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol

<sup>2</sup> Department of Psychology and Social Work, School of Allied Health Sciences, University of Namibia (UNAM)

<sup>3</sup> Social Science Division, Multidisciplinary Research Service (MRS), University of Namibia (UNAM)

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who participated in this study, in particular we would like to share our appreciation to the children who welcomed us to their Early Years Centres. It was a privilege to have been in their company.

We would also like to acknowledge the Educators, Trainers, Perivoli staff, parents, carers, and community members who each gave their precious time to sharing their experiences, thoughts and feelings through participation in interviews and talking circles. Without them and their commitment, this research would not have been possible.

We would like to recognise the Namibian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC), and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPESW) as key stakeholders in the study, both Ministries have supported this research project from conception to completion.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of Mushoka Muyatwa for providing foundational support during development of the proposal by providing help with database and literature searches at the University of Bristol, and Dr Sirkka Tshiningayamwe for contributions to discussions and preparations in the early design phases of the study. We offer great appreciation to Niita Shituula, Selma Ekanjo, Salmone Maumau Tsaitsaib, and Nangura Thipungu, all of whom provided high quality logistical support as Research Assistants during the study's field work. We also share our appreciation to Mercia Forbes and Adelheid Shilongo for their support in administration of the data validation workshops.

## Cross-Institutional Partnership

The project was delivered by an independent cross-institutional team comprised of researchers from the University of Namibia and the University of Bristol, UK. The project was funded by the Perivoli Foundation. Whilst the Foundation has funded this research, the views expressed within this report are those of the authors. For further information contact:

**vicky.sharley@bristol.ac.uk | jananias@unam.na**  
**eleonard@unam.na | engololo@unama.na**

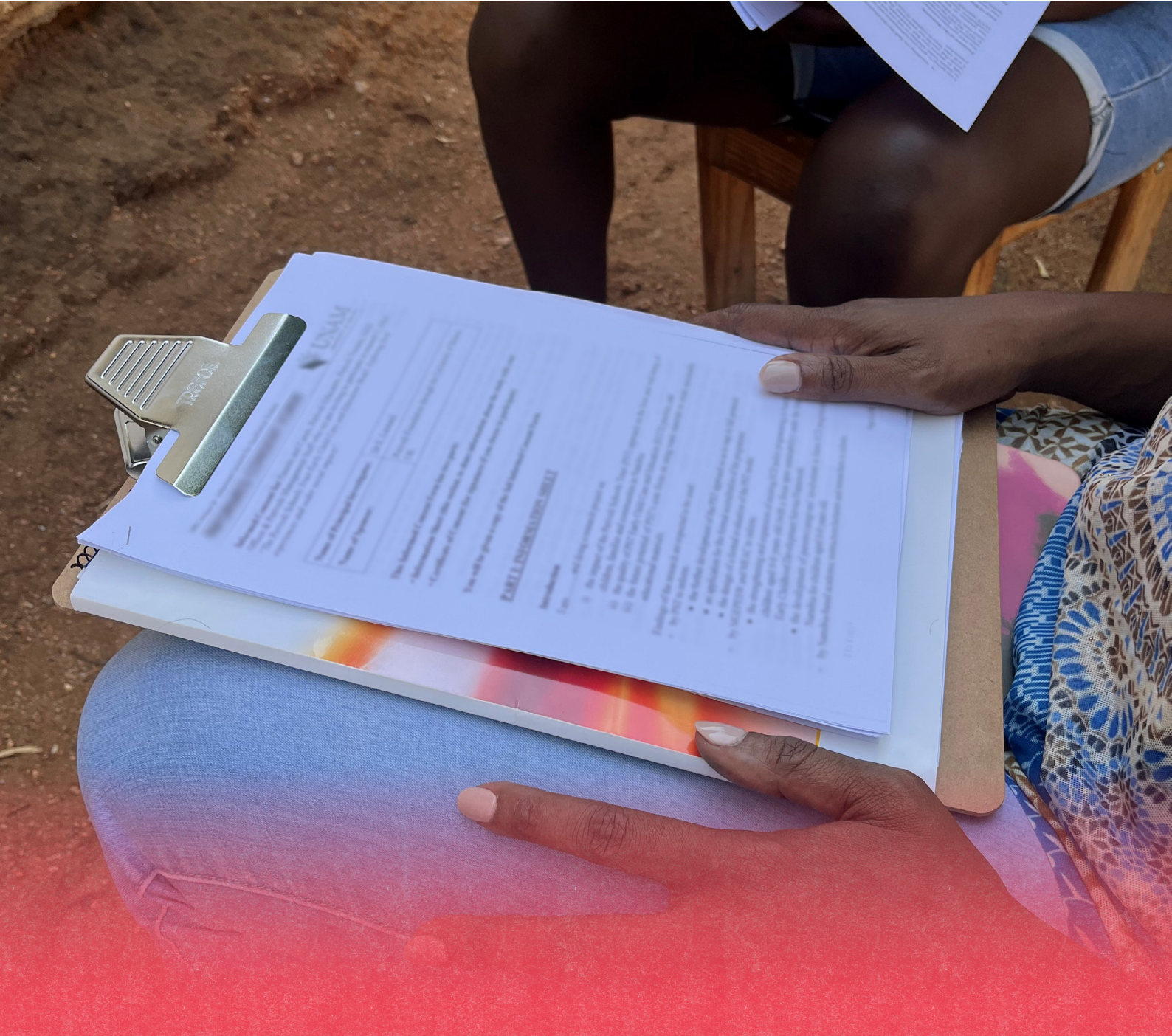


<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sport, Arts and Culture as of 21 March 2025

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare as of 21 March 2025

# Contents

<b>1. Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Background	6
1.2 Aim	6
1.3 Methods	6
1.4 Key Findings	8
1.5 Conclusion & Recommendations	14
<b>2. Introduction</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 This Research Study	17
2.2 This Report	17
<b>3. Contexts</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 The Context of Namibia	19
3.2 Early Childhood Development in Namibia	19
3.3 Early Years Provision in Namibia	20
3.4 Challenges for Early Years Provision	21
3.5 Early Years Training and Qualification	21
3.6 National Curriculum Development	22
<b>4. The Perivoli Schools Trust Teacher Training Programme</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1 Origins of the Perivoli Schools Trust	24
4.2 The Perivoli Schools Trust Aim and Approach	24
4.3 The Perivoli Schools Trust Model	25
<b>5. The Research Study</b>	<b>13</b>
5.1 Background & Rationale	25
5.2 Aim & Purpose of Study	25
5.3 Methodology	25
5.4 Data Analysis	25
5.5 Participants' Characteristics	25
<b>6. Findings</b>	<b>33</b>
6.1 Innovation, Creativity and Applied Learning	34
6.2 Green Education Environmental Stewardship	37
6.3 Children's Readiness for Primary Education	40
6.4 Mobilising Capacity of Individuals and Communities	44
6.5 Sustainability and Longevity	46
6.6 Families' Involvement in Children's Learning	50
6.7 Disruption by Public Health Emergencies	54
6.8 Contexts of Care and Welfare	60
<b>7. Discussion</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>8. Conclusion &amp; Recommendations</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>9. Strengths and Limitations of the Study</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>10. Implications for Future Research</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>11. Appendices</b>	<b>69</b>
A Characteristics of Selected Regions in the Study	69
B Participant Characteristics per Region and Role	72
C The Perivoli Schools Trust - Organogram	73
D The Perivoli Schools Trust - Modules	74
E The Perivoli Schools Trust - Digital Backbone	75
<b>7. References</b>	<b>76</b>



# Abbreviations

<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>ECDCs</b>	Early Childhood Development Centres
<b>EYS</b>	Early Years Sector
<b>IECDF</b>	Integrated Early Childhood Development Framework
<b>MEAC</b>	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
<b>MGEPEWSW</b>	Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication, and Social Welfare
<b>MHSS</b>	Ministry of Health and Social Services
<b>NAMCOL</b>	Namibian College of Open Learning
<b>NIED</b>	National Institute for Educational Development
<b>NQA</b>	Namibia Qualifications Authority
<b>PST</b>	Perivoli Schools Trust
<b>PST TTP</b>	Perivoli Schools Trust Teacher Training Programme
<b>RON</b>	Republic of Namibia
<b>UNAM</b>	University of Namibia
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Background

This research study explores the lived experiences of those involved with the Perivoli Schools Trust (PST). The PST provides training for nursery teachers (Educarers) who care for and provide education to children aged 0-6 years old, in all of Namibia's 14 regions. This study responds to identified needs for evidence from the Perivoli Schools Trust, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare to inform and strengthen the future expansion of existing ECD policy and programming for children aged 0-8 years - under the Integrated Early Childhood Development Service Framework (IECDF) produced by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (2017).

## 1.2 Aim

The study explores the impact of the PST Teacher Training Programme (NTTP) on the lives and well-being of children, families and the wider communities in three selected regions of Namibia. It provides a preliminary evidence base in relation to the fidelity of the PST approach 'on the ground' to the model's principles, and the future potential of using waste materials to build environmentally conscious, sustainable, educational activities and resources to support children's learning and development in their formative years. The study's findings aim to contribute understanding of the PST Educarer training approach, so as to reap its full potential in Namibia and beyond. The study offers knowledge on Educarer training to the early years' education and care sectors to help inform the development of Early Childhood Development policy and programming throughout Namibia.

More broadly, beyond Namibia, the study hopes to contribute to teaching on, and the development of, Early Childhood Development theory and practice. Findings aim to advance scientific debates on the quality, impacts and wider implications of early years' provision, particularly in poor or under-resourced communities, and policy debates on the social and economic costs of not implementing comprehensive services.

## 1.3 Methods

The research study was undertaken collaboratively by the University of Namibia and the University of Bristol. The study was a qualitative investigation into the Perivoli Schools Trust Teacher Training Programme in three diverse regions of Namibia. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, talking circles to promote group discussion in the community, and observations of the model 'in action' in Kavango West (northern), Otjozondjupa (central north), and //Kharas (southern) Regions. Two Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDCs) were purposively selected in each of the three regions (n=6) where the Perivoli Schools Trust Model was being used in practice for (i) less than two years and (ii) 3 years or longer. The total sample consisted of 86 adult participants. This comprised 54 interviews (31 parents and carers, 9 Educarers, 14 Perivoli Staff), 4 Talking Circles (n=32) and 15 observations of practice. Data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.



# 1.4 Key Findings

Findings from this study illustrate participants' overwhelmingly positive experiences of the PST model. That aside, there was a minority of participants (predominantly parents and carers of the children attending the EDCs) who were not familiar with the Perivoli approach, or acquainted with its guiding principles, and as such, were unable to share their understandings within the interviews. That in itself is discussed in theme six which reflects upon families' involvement within children's early years' learning. The findings of the research study are grouped into eight key themes.

## 1.4.1 Innovation, Creativity and Applied Learning

The first theme centres upon the principles of the PST approach, and its innovative use of waste materials to creatively support children's learning and development in their formative years. Participants shared how the PST approach focused on the development of creative activity centres, constructed with waste materials (known as 'corners') which promote children's cognitive skills, and help them to share and interact with other children. Participants felt that using waste materials was a significant principle of the approach, particularly in contexts where little or no resources were available. This theme also included participants' talking about the way the PST approach centres on the application of Educarers' knowledge, within their own classroom practice.

---

**“ The programme shows them [Educarers] how by just using recyclable waste materials, bottle tops, yoghurt cartons, pieces of cardboard, bits of string, you name it, they're able to come up with activity centres, we call them 'Corners'...there might be a toyshop or a nursery box, nature corner...and the idea is to show to the nursery school teacher that it's okay to let the children play and to move from corner to corner according to their desires and interests... some activities stimulate their cognitive skills like the toy shop where they're using different coloured bottle tops to buy items from the shop and they're counting and measuring and identifying colours ” . PST Staff Member**

---

Participants described Perivoli-trained Educarers as bringing active change within the EDCs, explicitly in relation to the way they facilitated learning activities for the children in the classroom. This theme was echoed in what was observed by the research team during observations of classroom practice. Participants stated that Educarers' training sessions were scaffolded by pictorial workbooks and the visual activities they could construct for children's learning in the classroom. Many participants talked effusively and positively about the opportunity to enrol on the PST TTP, to access new knowledge and develop skills. Many reported their own and children's preference for the Perivoli approach over other programmes, due to its innovative and unique use of pictures and visual aids which cater to a wide range of children's needs.

## 1.4.2 Green Education and Environmental Stewardship

The second theme emerged from the range of environmental gains participants felt the PST approach offered. Participants talked about the programme's central principle of 'recycle and reuse' in relation to cost-free waste materials which would otherwise be discarded (e.g. bottles, cartons, newspapers and egg boxes). Many parents and community members shared how they were involved in the collection of waste materials for the centres. The inclusion of green education and environmental conservation within the PST modules was identified by participants as a major strength of the programme, which supported children to learn about their environments from a very young age. Participants talked about the approach being 'environmentally conscious'. In the absence of waste removal systems in many communities in Namibia, many participants shared that the programme was simultaneously helping them to reduce the quantity of waste on their streets, in communities, or left at dumping sites.

---

**“ You are making toys and whatever, but then you don't find bottles on the street thrown so it keeps the environment clean ” Educarer**

**“ [I] encourage the kids...not to throw away empty milk box...not to throw it away, do not burn it...then you save the environment. So, you make this whole environment [a] better place to live in for everybody ” Parent/Caregiver**

---

Perivoli Staff also talked about the PST's future plans to expand the 'green' aspects of their curriculum to include additional modules on global warming and climate change. In doing so, participants reported that Educarers can be positioned as 'citizen scientists' where they can contribute to the development of agricultural practices which respond to the challenges of global warming, and simultaneously embedding those basic principles into early years education.

### 1.4.3 Children's Readiness for Primary Education

The third theme draws upon views and experiences in relation to the ways that the PST approach was thought to positively support children's education and development. Parents and caregivers shared their observations on their child(ren)'s progress in learning, noting a positive change in their children's cognitive and social development since joining an ECDC that uses the PST approach. Educarers and Community Members (which included Primary School Teachers) described the impact of the PST approach on children's development, reflecting that they felt children who had engaged with PST were more independent, more advanced in their educational trajectories than those who had not had the opportunity, and therefore were better equipped to begin class-room based pre-primary and primary level education.

“ There is a difference between the Perivoli, those that have experienced the Perivoli approach versus those that haven't because I always gets feedback from the [primary] teachers say those kids tend to be smarter and they do things on their own, they can write their names, and the teachers are always amazed at where the children come from, so they tend to ask 'where did you do your kindergarten?' ” Educarer

In fact, beyond early years' centres, some participants talked about the PST approach in relation to its' expanding reputation, seeing PST emerge in pre-primary and primary school contexts. Participants commended the appearance of PST in classroom settings as a positive way to bridge children's transition from early years' learning to primary education.

### 1.4.4 Mobilising Capacity of Individuals and Communities

The fourth theme captures participants' views on the range of ways the PST model mobilises the capacities of individuals, of ECDCs, and more widely, supports local communities by increasing opportunities for paid employment and skill-development. Participants talked about the way the model focuses upon training (as opposed to funding infrastructure), to empower local people and provide opportunities in their communities individually and collectively.

“ [PST] just provides more capacity for the nursery school teachers and it doesn't cost them anything. But also, it provides them with a sense of self-belief and validation because they can see before their very eyes what a huge difference it's making. So, it uplifts their lives and encourages ” ST Staff Member

“ I see it like having these centres in our region has brought employment, especially with the teachers ” Community Member

Beyond its direct impact, some participants reflected on the way that the programme has had generational reach. They talked about the PST model not only expanding professional capacity within their local areas, but also inspiring children to remain in education, some wishing to train as teachers to support their communities.

Both Educarers and Perivoli Trainers described how valuable they felt their roles were with PST, and how influential the skills they gained through Perivoli have been in their professional lives. Educarers celebrated the achievement of completing the PST TTP, and shared feelings of joy and accomplishment in participating in a formal graduation ceremony supported by their community. In addition, Trainers shared the desire for their skills and contributions to the knowledge development of Educarers, and by extension their communities, to also be recognised.

## 1.4.5 Sustainability and Longevity

The fifth theme is grounded in participants' views about the sustainability and longevity of the PST model. Participants talked about the strength of the PST model in the way that it establishes 'communities of teachers'. In doing so, it creates a long-term impact within the community with minimal financial resources. Participants described the structure of the PST TTP, using Trainer-led module learning, and Trainer-facilitated support groups, to develop a large-scale, national network of Educarers. Many participants described this approach as nourishing individuals in their teaching practice by connecting Educarers in spaces (both physical and digital) where they can share knowledge and receive support, during learning and post-graduation during the 'maintenance phase'. Given Namibia's extensive size and rurality, participants talked about the manner in which the PST approach increased Educarer reach, and enhanced the longevity of skills and ideas within ECDCs and across localities, even when Trainers ceased interaction.

**“ I would say the best strength...is that we are able to create communities of teachers... using very minimal resource. In a way that we gather teachers in groups of 20...the other thing that I see as a strength is that the programme is sustainable in the sense that we don't have to use a lot of money, but we give the teachers skills that they would use given in our absence, so when we get to a point where we can't train them anymore, they will still remain with the skills... they will still remain with the communities that we have already created...so they would be able to continue giving even after we have stopped interacting with them ”** PST Staff Member

Whilst many Community Members and Perivoli Staff talked positively about the ways the PST TTP benefited communities, they acknowledged that the PST model could be further developed to engage community leaders. Some participants signalled a need to formalise PST's relationships with local stakeholders, with a view to developing links with Government Ministries, industry professionals, to increase and embed a sense of community 'ownership' in relation to the use of the PST model.

## 1.4.6 Families' Involvement in Children's Learning

The sixth theme centres upon the role of caregivers and family members in children's early years learning. Many participants described the importance of family members being involved in children's education from a young age, and being instrumental in providing a strong foundation. Aside from parents and caregivers, all participant groups emphasised the importance of parental involvement in children's learning. Perivoli Staff and Educarers described how the PST modules gave specific focus to parental involvement, and specifically the offer of workshops for parent and caregiver participation. Parents and caregivers reported little awareness of the PST approach, nor its main principles (e.g. the use of waste materials to build educational activities and resources for learning through play). Most parents talked about their satisfaction with the level and quality of education and care their child(ren) received, but beyond approval of the provision, only a small number of parents and caregivers were aware of the way that waste materials were useful to the classroom activities, or that they could become more involved in their children's learning. Participants described the challenges that Educarers experienced in engaging family members directly in children's learning.

**“ One thing that I see that is really a problem for us it's the parent's involvement. You see, if parents could [be] involved in their children's education right from there, things could have been nice or could be very nice but we have problems with parents who really doesn't. Because as Perivoli we have a manual for parents, parent workshops but the attendance is very, very low. ”** PST Staff Member

Some participants talked about the context of poverty in many communities, and the impact of large households requiring care, with domestic duties usually falling to daughters or granddaughters. Others shared that many adults are illiterate, because schools were always so far away, and as such, do not see the importance of promoting children's education, particularly at such a young age.

## 1.4.7 Disruption by Public Health Emergencies

The seventh theme reflects the impact of the Covid19 pandemic in relation to the provision and delivery of early years education and care. Participants reported that during the pandemic, many ECDCs closed and some Educarers communicated PST activities by sharing instructions for home-based learning with families via digital applications (e.g. WhatsApp). Participants shared that during this time many families did not have access to a smart phone, or access to data connectivity in their locality. Where digital communication was not possible, some participants recounted their worries about the transfer of the virus via the shared handling of physical workbooks between Educarers and family homes. Participants also described specific challenges they experienced including difficulties in continuing with the collection of waste materials, resource development and the implementation of consistent hygiene practices at centres (in the absence of running water) during government imposed social distancing.

**“ During that time it really affected our children’s learning because during that time we didn’t really use the approach of Perivoli because we were not collecting the waste materials from anywhere, because we never know who touched that material or those objects that were just lying around ”** Parent

As ECDCs closed due to national guidelines, many Educarers shared they were not paid for their roles, and because parents and family members were not able to continue paid employment, they were not able to pay their children’s early years’ tuition fees. When government restrictions lifted, ECDCs reopened and children returned to early years provision, many participants shared that there continues to be a lasting impact on the payment of centre fees, leaving some Educarers without consistent income for their work despite the provision of services.

**“ the parents couldn’t pay the school fees although they wanted their children back and so because they couldn’t pay because some of them lost their jobs but all the same they took the kids, the children, yet the payment was not consistent up to now it is not up to the level that it used to be. So, they don’t pay regularly. ”** Educarer

Participants shared the ways in which Educarers’ had to adapt to prioritise children’s care over their educational development, and that the global public health emergency meant many aspects of the PST model were not realistic or feasible during this time. Instead, ECDC centres which did not have running water were supported by the PST model to build ‘tippy taps’ from old containers, which allowed children to wash their hands through a foot-operated lever.

## 1.4.8 Contexts of Care and Welfare

The eighth and final theme is Contexts of Care and Welfare. Participants described the strength of the PST approach and its focus upon skill development, rather than the provision of infrastructure or educational toys. Participants shared that the PST TTP empowers Educarers, particularly those located in areas which have very little resources. Many talked about the benefits of the PST training programming having no financial cost to the Educarers, and the implementation of the approach in ECDCs, being centred on the re-use of locally available materials (bottles, egg cartons), which meant that communities were able to offer early years’ education provision without financial support.

**“ ...just to create materials out of waste material, I believe with poverty, it’s going to help us a lot. We don’t need to go buy things, we don’t need to have money for our children to be educated, or for them to know what we want to teach ”** PST Staff Member



Participants also described the challenges of the context in which education was delivered, talking about centres made from corrugated iron sheets, which could be very cold in the winter, and very hot in the summer. The centres were often small structures with no outdoor spaces, which did not allow children to move freely during activities.

Perivoli Staff shared their experiences of collecting basic data through a digital app, with the purpose of understanding the levels of children's patterns of attendance, facilities in the ECDCs, and whether children are being fed and having their basic needs met at home. Some participants referred to undertaking home visits to ensure children's welfare and safety are prioritised and that children are not placing themselves in danger through the collection of waste materials from the side of roads where they could be at risk of hazards such

as snake or spider bites, or exposed to infection from handling dirty materials. There was discussion about the importance of teaching parents, carers and children methods to clean waste materials before their use in ECDCs for purposes of hygiene. Some participants reported the way that the PST model has helped provide safe spaces for children in the community and reduce the use of physical punishment in teaching practice by imparting the skills and knowledge Educarers need to manage classrooms with activities rather than discipline.

---

**“ When they are picking up these materials, they can be exposed to infections...you never know what they will find ...at the dumping sites and how dangerous it can be. They can step on broken bottles and then they can also be injured ”** Community Member

---



# 1.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

**1.5.1** The Perivoli Schools Trust Teacher Training Programme (PST TTP) is a comprehensive 2-year programme for Educators consisting of 16 modules. Findings suggest that its innovative and creative approach is unique, characterised by the way it models the application of knowledge in early child care and education provision. The programme provides extensive in-programme and post-certificate learning support to Educators. Alongside modular learning, the PST approach establishes 'communities' of early years' practitioners, mobilising networks for peer-support at a regional level following graduation.

- ▶ It is recommended that the PST modules are reviewed and aligned to the MGESW's 'National Unit Standards for Educators in Namibia' which is registered at level 4 on Namibia's National Qualification Framework (NQF level 4)
- ▶ Consequently, it is recommended that the PST modules are integrated in the MGESW's 'Curriculum Framework for Children in Namibia' with a view to accreditation.

---

**1.5.2** A guiding principle of the PST approach is the sustainable use of waste materials to construct educational resources for early years' learning. This principle foregrounds the importance of play-based learning for children aged 0-6 years old, whilst simultaneously promoting a broader ethos of recycling and waste minimisation which keeps materials 'in use' as long as possible aligned with Namibia's National Solid Waste Management Strategy (2017). Findings suggest that the sustainable use of waste materials for the construction of educational resources offers Educators and ECDCs a cost-free, widely accessible, environmentally sustainable route which promotes play-based learning.

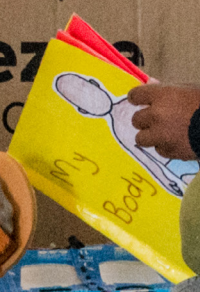
- ▶ It is recommended that the principle of using locally available materials in the development of educational activities be expanded and endorsed at a national level for all early years' education provision, under the MGESW's 'Curriculum Framework for Children in Namibia'.

**1.5.3** The inclusion of environmental education is an asset of the PST TTP. The TTP supports Educators to deliver activities which can develop children's understandings of, and love for, the environment during their formative years. The PST approach promotes the fundamental interdependence between human flourishing and nature from a child's early age. Whilst there is potential for the PST to build upon and expand their modular content in relation to environmental issues, all Educators should be equipped to deliver practical activities for children in relation to the environment, their wellbeing and physical development.

- ▶ It is recommended that principles of and content on 'green' or environmental education be formally embedded in the 'Curriculum Framework for Children in Namibia' through the National Unit Standards for Educators.
- ▶ It is recommended that the PST expand existing modular content which has the potential to improve children's health and educational outcomes whilst protecting the natural environment. Dissemination of new modules should be achieved by leveraging the PST's existing large-scale national network of Educators.

---

**1.5.4** Educators, Primary School Teachers and Community Members recognise an increase in the rate of children's development when they have had opportunity to learn through play during PST activities, compared to children who have not had the opportunity to attend ECDCs where PST activities are employed. Educators' and Community Members' (which included Primary School Teachers) views report that children who received provision from Perivoli trained Educators appeared more advanced in their learning, and as such, were perceived to be better prepared for learning in pre-primary and primary school settings.



- ▶ It is recommended that the principles of the PST approach be adopted by teachers in pre-primary and primary level educational settings, to promote a smooth and natural transition for children from early years' learning into class-based education under MGESW's Integrated Early Childhood Development Framework (IECDF) in Namibia.

**1.5.5** The PST model mobilises the capacities of individuals and communities. The PST provides local, accessible opportunities for training to Educarers working at ECDCs, and for individuals for contractual work as Perivoli Staff (e.g. Trainers, Regional Coordinators). Whilst Educarers' achievements are celebrated and recognised by way of Perivoli certificates awarded at graduation ceremonies in the community, Trainers' skills by comparison, are not currently acknowledged or commended either within the organisation or beyond. Findings of the study suggest that not taking into account the value of the skills and expertise of Perivoli trainers, has potential to weaken commitment to the programme, and beyond the programme limits access to opportunities for career development in the sector.

- ▶ It is recommended that Trainers' expertise in early years' care and education practice is recognised and commended by way of a Perivoli Certificate, awarded upon completion of their pre-service training.
- ▶ It is recommended that Trainers' contributions to the PST TTP be celebrated at Perivoli graduation ceremonies, aligned with their cohort's successful completion of the modular content.

**1.5.6** The PST approach embeds parent and caregiver involvement in children's education directly through the facilitation of Perivoli Parent Support Programme workshops, and indirectly through the request for bringing waste materials from home and community settings to the ECDCs for educational resource development. Findings suggest that whilst the concept of parental and family involvement holds value in a professional and community context, on a practical level Educarers experience challenges in successfully engaging family members in ECDC-based activities which focus

upon their child(ren)'s learning. These challenges could be countered by involving community elders and leaders, retired teachers, School Board members, Community Development Officers, or Social Workers in the facilitation of parent and family member workshops.

- ▶ It is recommended that Trainers collaborate with community leaders, educarers, and or local professionals to scaffold relationships with parents/ caregivers so as to develop a credible environment, rooted in local ways of doing and knowing to carefully explore perceptions about the role of family participation in children's education and learning.
- ▶ It is recommended that responsibility for engaging parents and family members, and the delivery of the 'Perivoli Parent Support Programme Workshops' be held by Perivoli Trainers and facilitated in community spaces.

**1.5.7** Whilst the PST TTP is an established, well-regarded and effective Educarer training programme which benefits individuals and local communities, the financing and ownership of the programme by a UK-based charity is not infinitely maintainable. Findings of the study suggest that the longevity and permanence of the PST TTP could be enhanced if embedded into national curriculum and support systems in the education sector to ensure collaboration with local stakeholders.

- ▶ It is recommended that the PST explores ways to engage community leaders, elders, education and social work professionals, and community groups, to develop collaborations and alliances with local stakeholders.
- ▶ It is recommended that the PST seeks ways to formalise community and organisational alliances at regional and national levels in relation to delivery of the programme, to empower local stakeholders and create a sense of community 'ownership'.

# 2. Introduction

## 2.1 This Research Study

The University of Bristol and the University of Namibia undertook an exploratory qualitative investigation into the Perivoli Schools Trust Teacher Training Programme. The study explored the lived experiences of the early child care and education approach offered by the Perivoli Schools Trust (PST) in Namibia. The programme provides training for teachers (Educarers) who are caring for and providing education to, children aged 0-6 years old, in all of Namibia's 14 regions.

The purpose of the study was to respond to needs on the part of the Perivoli Schools Trust, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC), the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPEWSW), and the local academic community. Evidence was sought in relation to understanding the impact of the Perivoli Schools Trust approach on the lives and wellbeing of children, families and communities, the future potential of the PST programme's core focus on the sustainable use of waste materials to create educational materials and activities for classroom and home settings, and to gain understanding about the fidelity of PST practice to the principles and ideals of the approach.

The study offers rich qualitative insights into personal and community experiences of those involved with the PST training programme in three diverse regions of Namibia. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, observations of centre-based practice in six Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDs) situated within Kavango West (north), Otjozondjupa (central north) and //Kharas (south). Regions were selected based upon diverse environmental and spatial characteristics, poverty rates and budgetary allocation from the State Revenue Fund through Namibia's development programme. Talking circles were facilitated with a diverse range of community members in each of the three regions including individuals from the early years care and education sector.

## 2.2 This Report

This report presents the findings of the research study to provide a preliminary evidence base in relation to the Perivoli Schools Trust (PST) early child care and education model in Namibia. The evidence presented here intends to inform the PST's further development of the programme in Namibia and other countries where it is currently running (i.e. Botswana, Malawi, Zambia), and to support an application for the accreditation of the programme with the National Qualification Authority (NQA) for registration of the qualification on the national Qualifications Framework (NQF).

More widely, this report responds to the identified needs for evidence from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (Republic of Namibia, 2017 & 2007), to offer knowledge to inform and strengthen the expansion of existing ECD policy and programming for children aged 0-8 years under the Integrated Early Childhood Development Service Framework (IECDF). Findings presented in this report lay a strong foundation for the development and strengthening of existing ECD programming in Namibia with an emphasis upon the value of sustainability as prioritised in Namibia's 5th National Development Plan (2017-22) (Republic of Namibia, 2017). This is in relation to two of the Plan's four strategic pillars, namely 'Social Transformation' specifically concerning early childhood as a critical developmental window when children are enrolled in ECD programmes (s.3.22, p55), and 'Environmental Sustainability' in relation to the PST TTP's repurposing and upcycling of waste materials to build educational resources and activities for early years education, simultaneously decreasing levels of waste and pollution within communities (s.4.1, p83).



# 3. Contexts

## 3.1 The Context of Namibia

Namibia is a large country, with a surface area of 824,290 square kilometres, located in southern Africa and has a population of 3,022,401 million people (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2024). It is bordered in the South by South Africa, the West by the Atlantic Ocean, the East by Botswana, the North by Angola and in the Northwest by Zambia. Namibia is the driest country and with the least rainfall in sub-Saharan Africa, with 92% of the country classified as desert. There are 14 regions in Namibia with population densities varying substantially. However, almost two thirds of the population live in the four northern regions and less than one-tenth reside in the south of the country (Republic of Namibia, 2013; & 2007). Urbanisation in Namibia is on the increase, with around half of the population living in urban areas (O'Neill, 2025; National Planning Commission, 2015). In fact, urbanisation is increasing in nearly all African countries (Adeniyi and Folarin, 2025).

Namibia was a colony of Germany (1884-1915) and thereafter under the South African apartheid government (1915-1990) and gained independence in 1990 (Wallace, 2014; Kossler, 2011). It is governed by a multi-party system, with general elections held every five years. A bicameral legislature consists of the National Council (including two members from each regional council) and the National Assembly with 104 members. Namibia is a member state of the United Nations, the Southern African Development Community, the African Union, and the Commonwealth of Nations (Republic of Namibia, 2013).

Namibia is ranked as a lower-middle-income country (Namibia Economist, 2025). It has one of the most unequal distributions of income per capita in the world (World Bank, 2024). Namibia has a youthful population with 37% of residents aged 15 years or under (NSA, 2024; RON, 2018), with only 5% of people aged 65 years old or older, meaning Namibia's working population holds majority. Although English is the country's official language, there are more than 11 indigenous languages

in Namibia (with most people speaking at least two or three). Oshiwambo is spoken by almost half of the population (NSA, 2024).

## 3.2 Early Childhood Development in Namibia

Every child has the right to education as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [art. 28] (Unicef, 2017), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Union, 1990), and the Namibian Constitution. Namibia's Child Care and Protection Act (Act No 3 of 2015) states that 'a multisectoral life-cycle approach is essential in giving children the best start in life' emphasising the first 1000 days of a child's life as crucial. The Education Act (Act No 16 of 2011) also emphasises every child's right to education.

Children in Namibia should have 'a secure education foundation through access to [Early Childhood Development] ECD services and that all learners have access to equitable inclusive quality education that qualifies them to pursue higher education' (MGECW, 2018; NDP5, 2017). With evidence which suggests the rates of return of investment at the very early stages are higher than the rates of return when providing it later in life (DNA Economics, 2019; Unicef, 2018; Republic of Namibia, 2017), a strong foundation in education has long-lasting benefits for individuals, communities and society. Children who lack these early foundations are therefore at risk of not meeting their developmental potential, which in turn impacts their overall health and welfare (Republic of Namibia, 2018) and the contribution they can make to society. Despite a high (around 90%) primary education enrolment rate at age 7 (when children begin school), around 20% of children in Namibia fail their first year of school, either needing to repeat or dropping out of education altogether (Liswaniso, 2023). The majority of children in Namibia either do not attend ECD centres or if they do, are likely to attend poor-quality, informal, under-

resourced provisions which is typically unregistered (not able to meet the high national standards for ECD centres) (Penn, 2008).

Although traditionally, there has not been a strong provision of IECD services in rural Namibia, the current policy environment is greatly supportive of ECD interventions highlighting access to ECD and pre-primary education as a national priority [congruent with Namibia's 5th National Development Plan (NDP5) (National Planning Commission, 2015) and IECD Framework for Action (MGECW, 2017a), and the Integrated ECD Framework. Currently, only 13% of children (0-4 years old) are enrolled in ECD programmes (RoN, 2017) and not all children currently have access to pre-primary education (MEAC, 2017). The MEAC reports a commitment to increasing the percentage of children that have access to one year of pre-primary education from 38% to 80% by 2021. At 2022, UNICEF Namibia report the figure to stand at 55.1% (UNICEF Namibia, 2024).

In Namibia, Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) is underpinned by the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (MGECW, 2007). The national IECD policy takes a rights-based approach to early childhood development, to ensure all children 'have a quality education that respects and promotes his or her right to dignity and optimum development' (Unicef, 2007:16). Service delivery is guided by the IECD framework 2017-2022 (MGECW, 2017), which drives the implementation of an integrated multi-sectoral response to early childhood development in the country. Responsibility for IECD services falls under the mandate of three key ministries: the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC), the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MHSS), and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPESW). The latter, the MGEPESW currently holds responsibility for play, stimulation, early learning and education of children between the ages of 0-4 years, which is followed by one year of pre-primary education in government-funded schools for 5-6-year-olds (which is the responsibility of the MEAC), before children begin school at 7 years old (Haraseb, 2011). More broadly, the MHSS is tasked with ensuring that all children under 5 years of age have access to adequate nutrition, growth monitoring and health services (MGECW, 2018).

### 3.3 Early Years Provision in Namibia

ECD provision in Namibia is offered through a combination ECDCs (for 0-4 years) and primary schools which offer a year of 'pre-primary' education (5-8 years) (Republic of Namibia, 2020). ECD services in Namibia are organised into three categories: 0-2 years for day care, 3-4 years for kindergarten (both delivered in a playroom context) and 5-8 a child's first experience of being seated in a classroom. Whilst services are organised based on children's ages, it is not uncommon for some children who are older than the maximum age for provision to continue to attend after 4 years old. This can be due to their individual educational needs, availability of provision in the local area, or accessibility in relation to the large distances in rural areas, given Namibia's size and small population. Some younger or smaller children may need to develop strength and physical resilience to undertake a 4-5 hour walk to the nearest centre, or parents, more especially in rural areas, may be concerned about young children being attacked by wild animals on their journeys to and from school.

In Namibia, there is a diversity of ECDCs, some run by the Government (typically attached to primary schools) (MEAC, 2017), some by private individuals, communities, NGOs, faith-based organisations, and local authorities (Republic of Namibia, 2012). That said, the majority of ECD provision is supplied by individuals, and private-sector providers who commonly charge families for using their educaring services (Republic of Namibia, 2017). As little investment has been made into IECD services in Namibia (Republic of Namibia 2017a), provision for children 0-4 years is still extremely limited (Republic of Namibia, 2017b), with just less than 3000 registered ECD centres each supporting an average of 26 children. In 2018, this equated to over 76,000 children, which represents an estimated mere 20% of children aged 0-6 years old who have access to formal early years provision (DNA Economics, 2019). In addition to registered ECD centres, there are many more unregistered centres which respond to local demand for provision. At the time of writing, since its inception, the PST has engaged with almost 8,300 Educarers, and 2740 ECDCs in Namibia (PST, 2025).

ECD centre provision is governed by the Namibian Standards for Early Childhood Development Centres

(Republic of Namibia, 2012). The Standards guide early years care and education provision for both Government and non-government funded ECDCs who are required to meet the Standards for registration with the Ministry (Republic of Namibia, 2012). The Standards are centred around six themes: (i) premises and equipment, (ii) health, safety and nutrition, (iii) management, staff and training, (iv) equity and diversity, (v) active learning and (vi) families and communities. In Namibia, ECDCs are run by 'Educarers' and teaching is typically delivered in the Educarers' mother tongue (Haraseb, 2011).

### 3.4 Challenges for Early Years Provision in Namibia

In general, ECD provision in Namibia is limited and under-resourced, especially so in rural areas. Where provision does exist, it is primarily centre-based and run by private individuals, communities, or large organisations, all with little or no government funding, but subsidised through their own monies (Unicef & Republic of Namibia, 2017). Whilst Educarers are eligible to apply to Government for a monthly allowance of N\$1500 to N\$2500, congruent with the Namibian Standards for ECD facilities (RON, 2017), the majority of IECD providers are not formally registered with the MGEPESW (particularly in rural areas of the country). A common reason can be due to the fact that the ECD provision would not meet the Namibian Standards for ECDCs, and as such the centres would not qualify for the allowance. Many physical structures (where present) of ECD centres are in a poor state, and lack basic infrastructure such as running water, electricity or suitable sanitation, which can impact learning, affecting children's gross motor, socio-emotional, and cognitive and language development (Kamara et al., 2018). ECD centres can also lack essential requisites necessary for the provision of quality education for children (Ngololo et al., 2024), with children's development not being holistically supported due to a lack of necessary teaching and learning materials. Ngololo et al.'s study suggests this being due to the skewness of resource distribution in rural areas of the country and a lack of incentives to attract qualified caregivers to the profession. The situation is exacerbated as caregivers also can lack the required professional and academic skills to equip them for preparing children cognitively, socially so as to ensure children are academically prepared for formal schooling (Grade 1).

Besides accessibility, other challenges which affect the delivery of quality and equitable education include the vast size of the country, having the second lowest population density in the world, and its population mostly in rural areas. The implementation of ECD policies is further challenged by Namibia's large number of language groupings (with the needs of children from diverse language groups often overlooked in favour of maintaining national standards) (Matengu, 2018), the caring responsibilities placed upon girls, and the country's significantly uneven wealth distribution (Biraimah, 2016), with more than ten percent (10.7%) of families living in extreme poverty (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2018).

Financially comfortable families are able to access ECD provision in the private sector, whereas parents or carers who are living in poverty or rural areas have access to limited and, inadequate ECD provision, or no services at all. However, in rural and remote areas, children are much less likely to have access to ECD services than those in urban settings. There are also a large number of children who are considered educationally marginalised, not having access to IECD, e.g. those in particularly remote areas (such as the San, Ovahimba, Ovazemba and Ovatuue), children of farm workers, children living on the street, children living in extreme poverty, children who head households, child labourers, girls, children who have disabilities, learning difficulties or chronic illnesses (Unicef Namibia, 2017).

### 3.5 Early Years Training & Qualification

Whilst the MGEPESW offer a free twelve-week ECD Basic Curriculum course to Educarers who currently work at ECD centres which are registered with the Ministry, (RON, n.d.), educarer training and qualification in Namibia is offered across a range of levels from level 1 to level 3 of the existing Unit Standards that were developed by the MGEPESW in collaboration with NIED. At the time of writing, the Unit Standards are currently under review by the Ministries to ensure quality service delivery at all ECDCs in the country. That said, Educarer training for qualification is largely provided by institutions of higher learning in Namibia (both public and private). For example, the Namibian Open College of Learning (NAMCOL, 2021) via two routes: (i) an 18-month Certificate in Early Childhood Development and (ii) a

3-year Diploma in Early Childhood and Pre-primary Education (DECPPE). The University of Namibia (UNAM) also offer a 4-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) in Pre-Primary and Lower Primary Education (Hons) as well as the International University of Management which offers a 4-year Bachelor of Education (Hons) (Junior Primary) (IUM, 2024).

Other alternative providers include the Development Aid from People to People (DAPP, 2018), Sunshine Private College (SPC, 2025), Headstart Montessori Teacher Training College (Headstart, 2025), and the International Training College (Lingua) (2025). Although accredited by the National Qualification Authority (NQA), these routes to education and training in the early years' sector are of varying lengths, but all come at a cost to the student. In addition to accredited programmes, there are charities who offer non-accredited cost-free Educarer training in Namibia such as the Church Alliance for Orphans (CAFO), Lifeline/Childline Namibia (LLCL), and The Perivoli Schools Trust (PST).

With an established national shortage of Educarers in Namibia (RON, 2017a, Penn 2008), key national policy frameworks identify the need for greater capacity building in ECD provision due to inadequate specialised personnel in the early years sector (MGEPESW's Strategic Plan, 2017-2022). Consequently, there is a strategic priority to improve care and protection for children's wellbeing and increase access to and quality of ECD services (MGEPESW, objective 4). In addition to inadequate personnel, the academic qualifications held by Educarers have been reported to be 'insufficient' for purpose (MoEAC, 2017), with Educarers in post either un-qualified or under-qualified with only a few having completed a diploma in ECD (RON, 2017b). In 2012, more than 70% of ECD caregivers were found not to have the necessary qualifications or expertise for ECD delivery (MGEPESW, 2012). Kamara et al. (2018) report that only 13 of the 32 caregivers in their study's sample, had attended the 7-week ECD Basic Course offered by the MGEPESW, identifying concerns about the capacity of Educarers to facilitate children's ECD outcomes. Whilst as a minimum, Educarers should hold a certificate in ECD, most Educarers do not, teaching mostly from personal knowledge or learning from the national seven-week course offered by the MGEPESW for those in registered centres. It was anticipated that by the year 2021/22 at least 60% of 3,800 caregivers would have been qualified (Republic of Namibia, 2020).

### 3.6 National Curriculum Development

In recent years the Ministries tasked with ECD provision in the country have worked collaboratively to demonstrate a strong commitment to ECD, launching the 'Right Start' National Campaign to raise national awareness of the importance of care in the early years of a child's life (Right Start, 2020). The campaign (in partnership with Unicef, InterTeam and Foundation Botnar) has convened key stakeholders in Namibia, focusing upon five pillars of early childhood development: (i) health, (ii) nutrition, (iii) early learning, (iv) responsive caregiving and (v) safety and security. Namibia's integrated ECD framework is supported by way of a package of free resources to professionals and communities in the sector. However, whilst sources report that Namibia has embraced the Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) programme and collaborative approach to service delivery, it is suggested that the lived reality of the majority is that these goals have not yet been fully achieved (Republic of Namibia, 2020).

ECD provision in Namibia, whilst consistently acknowledged as an important element of the education system, still requires significant investment in provision and programming at a national level. Responsibility for the implementation of ECD (currently held by MGEPESW) provision is in the process of transitioning to the portfolio of the MEAC. During this transitional phase the MEAC are revising the existing Unit Standards and developing additional standards to cover the gaps which exist in current pedagogical knowledge and practice in the National Early Years Curriculum Framework to enhance practice (Republic of Namibia, 2020). In 2024, the MEAC announced the launch of a new collaborative assistance programme delivered in partnership with the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef) and the World Food Programme, which intends to improve ECD provision by focusing upon strengthening educators' capacity through training, and the rehabilitation and construction of early years' classrooms. This programme potentially indicates a renewed commitment from sector stakeholders for ensuring children have a strong foundation in their early years, to offer them the best possible start in life (Daniels, 2024).



# 4. The Perivoli Schools Trust Nursery Teacher Training Programme

## 4.1 Origins of the Perivoli Schools Trust

The Perivoli Schools Trust Nursery School Teacher Training Programme (PST NSTTP) is an Educarer training programme funded through the Perivoli Foundation, a UK-based charity. 'Educarer' is the term used in Namibia for early childcare and education professionals who support children aged between 0-6 years old through centre-based provision. The PST provides training courses free of charge to Educarers who are caring for and providing education to, children aged 0-6 years old in southern Africa. The PST NSTTP was founded by James Alexandroff OBE, in Namibia in 2012.

The rationale for the programme's development was rooted in the belief that children commencing primary school were poorly prepared during their early years care and education and that teachers, or educarers, typically held a limited understanding of how to organise the classroom and the case for play-based activities. Hence, the PST NSTTP was established to support children to learn as best they can, to support children to stay longer in school, maximise their attainment, and fundamentally support children to find learning interesting. The programme set out to build Educarers' capacities and skills to move beyond blackboard-centric and didactic methods, instead towards a learning-through-play approach (PST, 2025).

Since its beginnings in Namibia in 2012, the programme has expanded to Malawi (2018), Zambia (2019), Uganda (2022), Botswana (2023), Zimbabwe (2024), Lesotho (2025) and at the time of writing, is being launched in Tanzania. Whilst the PST programme exists in all 14 regions of Namibia, it is more prevalent in rural areas and

communities who experience higher levels of poverty. This is due to the programme's strong focus upon capacity building of staff which is currently the lowest in rural areas, and the sustainable use of locally available waste materials to conduct educational activities and build toys. Since the implementation of the programme, in Namibia, the PST model has reached over 2,766 schools, having engaged more than 8,321 Educarers. Beyond Namibia, at a continental level the PST has engaged over 31,000 Educarers/teachers, undertaking roles in nearly 11,000 centres and schools (PST, 2025).

## 4.2 Programme Aim

The PST TTP aims to improve the prospects of children, their families and communities in sub-Saharan Africa by training Educarers about the power of 'learning through play'. The programme is without cost to Educarers, seeking to equip individuals with the skills required to transform children's formative years of schooling. Educarers gain knowledge and understanding through the programme so they can establish a secure, caring and instructive early years environment that will promote children's wellbeing and optimum development through creativity. The programme aims to support children's development of numeracy, literacy, and cognitive skills through the use of creative ideas (PST, 2025).

The central principle of the PST approach is the use of locally available waste materials to build educational activities and resources for use in the classroom and at home (PST, 2025). All modules are practical, and 'hands-on', drawing upon the use of everyday, easy-to-obtain items such as egg trays, cereal boxes, plastic bottles, lids, printed advertisements and posters, all of which

are free and accessible. The PST also emphasises the importance of ongoing support for Educarers, offering regular opportunities to mobilise local capacity and retain knowledge within local communities.

The PST Teacher Training Programme (TTP) includes content on weekly planning, classroom management (including behaviour management), and how to integrate play into the curriculum. Social skills, language, hand-eye coordination, gross and fine motor skills, and basic arithmetic have all been demonstrated to be developed and enhanced through play activities (Hudson & Willoughby, 2021; Sutapa et al., 2021). The programme also includes content on communication skills to support teachers' ability to connect with parents and children and thus promote parental involvement in early years provision.

### 4.3 The Perivoli Model

The programme is delivered over two years and comprised of sixteen training modules. Each module is 90 minutes in duration. Module delivery is divided into two phases: the modules and maintenance phases. The first phase consists of 16 modules for which certificates are provided upon their completion. Educarers undertake a minimum of one module per month. The first eight modules show teachers how to structure their week, organise classrooms and how to ensure that play is placed at the centre of all they do (PST, 2025). The objective is for teachers/educarers to support children to develop social skills, auditory and visual perception, fine motor skills, coordination, language and simple arithmetic (a list of the modules is attached in Appendix D). Modules eight through to sixteen aim to reinforce the key principles of the programme but give focus to the importance of 'activity centres' personal hygiene, nature, safety and wellness, gender and inclusion and preparation for school (PST, 2025).

All modules aim to foster a love of play, exploration and learning, as well as to develop critical physical, social and cognitive skills through imaginative play and activities. Thus, through the programme children develop cognitive thinking abilities. One module is specifically aimed at promoting parental involvement in their child(ren)'s development in the home setting (PST, 2025). Once all sixteen modules have been completed, Educarers are invited to participate in a Perivoli Schools Trust graduation ceremony. The graduation ceremonies are significant and highly valued celebratory events. Many of the Educarers graduating from the PST TTP have had little formal

schooling, meaning the ceremonies are often the first formal recognition of their knowledge and achievements.

The second 'maintenance' phase of the programme commences post-graduation and is designed to ensure teachers remain supported and connected to the aim and principles of the PST approach. This is achieved through membership of a Maintenance Group which is usually facilitated by a Regional Coordinator. Support groups are held each term to provide opportunities for Educarers to discuss, explore, share ideas and successes, and find resolutions to emerging challenges. The maintenance phase provides the opportunity for Educarers to receive training on new modules, including topics on global warming, natural farming, and family health. The new topics also include the use of storytelling using Supa Sema (Supa Sema, 2025); which is a Kenyan animated series produced by Kakua (a media content company and one of the venture investments owned by the Perivoli Foundation). Sema is a 12-year-old girl from the Kibera Slum settlement in Nairobi who lives with her grandfather, brother, and pet goat. Sema uses technologies and inventions to save their African town, Dunia from the challenges of life. Teachers are able to show the cartoon stories to children attending the ECDs so the stories can be discussed or retold. Sema also has a presence on posters displayed in the ECDs classrooms.

The Perivoli Schools Trust aims to create clusters of self-supporting Educarers in communities to build local knowledge on early years care and education, and thus develop capacity in the sector. Each training programme is delivered by a trainer to a group of Educarers (25-35 persons). The training takes place every four to eight weeks, usually in a local community hall in the region. During the two-year period, trainers not only deliver the module content to Educarers, but they also undertake individual visits to Educarers at their schools to observe applied teaching practice 'in action'. Trainers encourage toy and resource development and facilitate regular support groups for Educarers to promote and encourage learners' progress, share ideas and resources.

In Namibia, Perivoli Trainers (n=22) are grouped into teams of five persons, with each team overseen by a Regional Coordinator. Regional Coordinators (n=8) are teamed together to form two clusters, each led by a Senior Regional Coordinator (SRC) (N=2). SRCs report directly to the PST's Chief Executive Officers (n=2), who in turn liaise with the Programme Director and Founder (n=1) who oversees delivery of the programme at a continental level (see organogram illustrating the organisational structure, Appendix C).



# 5. The Research Study

## 5.1 Background

PST staff had pointed to the salience of wider social impacts of the PST's work and had highlighted the importance of better understanding these - in addition to the more direct impacts on children's education outcomes- in order to inform the further development of the PST's approach. Separately, the leadership of the MGEPEWS had expressed a need for such evidence to inform the government's consideration of a potential inclusion of the PST's approach in further policy and programming to strengthen and expand integrated early child development service delivery in Namibia - aligned with the National Framework for Action 2017-2022.

### **Need Identification**

The project was secured in strong partnerships with governmental ministries at regional and national levels. In late 2021, relevant stakeholders were engaged and consulted on their perspectives on the PST TTP and their needs for evidence and research in this regard, with the purpose of incorporating these into the development of the research study. The consultation involved representatives from a range of early years' care and education sector organisations, policymakers, and academics, including the Namibia Children's Rights Network, representatives from MGEPEWS and MEAC, The Perivoli Schools Trust (PST), National Institute for Education Development (NIED), City of Windhoek, University of Namibia (UNAM) and University of Bristol. Insights gathered from stakeholders shaped and informed the design of the research study.

### **Preparatory Activities**

To lay the foundation for the study, a series of meetings with key informants was completed. Following which the research team undertook visits to a range of ECDCs in Erongo and Khomas regions which employed Educators delivering the PST approach. Whilst these centres were excluded from the study, the preparatory visits served to offer an introduction to the PST model, preliminary observations on the PST approach 'in action' in classrooms and provided opportunities to see how

and in what ways the approach was applied in formal and informal settlements in Namibia.

## 5.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to respond to needs, on the part of the PST; key government ministries (MGEPEWS, MEAC) and the local academic community, for evidence on:

- a. the impact of the PST approach on the lives and well-being of children, families and communities in Namibia
- b. the fidelity of PST practice to the principles of the approach
- c. the future potential of PST's focus on using waste materials to create sustainable educational materials.

The study's findings are expected to be used

### **by the PST to inform:**

- the further development of the PST approach so as to reap its full potential
- an application for the accreditation of the programme
- the design of a substantive, formal evaluation of the model

### **by MGEPEWS and MEAC to inform:**

- the strengthening and expansion of existing ECD policy programming in Namibia for children aged 0-8 years old (with a focus on sustainability) under the IECD Service Framework
- the development of parents/caregivers' involvement in future ECD programming in Namibia for children aged 0-8 years old

### **by Namibia-based lecturers and researchers to inform:**

- teaching on, and the development of, ECD theory and practice

This study provides the first preliminary qualitative exploration of the ongoing work of the PST TTP in the context of Namibia. It will be used to develop a more substantive evaluative study that has the potential to support the upscaling and mainstreaming of the PST training programme at a national level, and in turn, raise the quality of ECD provision congruent with the priorities set out in national and continental level policy frameworks. Beyond Namibia, findings intend to serve to advance scientific debates on the quality, impacts and wider implications of ECCE provision particularly in poor or under-resourced communities, and policy debates on the costs (both social and economic) of not implementing comprehensive ECCE services.

## 5.3 Methodology

### Research Questions

The study's overarching research question was:

What are the impacts of the PST approach on the lives and wellbeing of children, parents, educators, and trainers, their families and wider communities?

The study had four secondary questions:

- a. To what extent and in what ways is the PST building the individual professional capacities of Educators?
- b. What is, and what factors shape the fidelity of PST practice to the principles and ideals of the approach?
- c. To what extent and in what ways does the PST approach as practised prepare children 0-4 years for pre-primary and primary education?
- d. To what extent and in what ways is the PST practice successful in fostering parents'/caregivers' involvement in supporting their child(ren)'s learning?

### Governance & Ethics

The research study was an independent research collaboration between the University of Bristol and the University of Namibia (UNAM). Ethical approval for the project was granted by the University of Namibia on 9th November 2022 (SAH14/22), with permission to conduct the research granted by the Namibian National Commission for Science and Technology (NCRST) on 8th November 2022. Support for the research study was

sought from the MGEPSW and MEAC leadership, who were supportive of the study. Access approval to the research sites was obtained from the respective Centre Managers or Head Teachers at the six participating ECDCs.

### Research Design

This study employed a case study design to generate an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of the PST TTP, the practice of ECCE provision, and the programme's impact on communities within its real-life context. The study was underpinned by Ecological Systems theory which understands persons within their environments. The individual as a system in its totality is in constant interaction with other subsystems and with the environment, while it influences and is also influenced by the environment (Rautenbach et al., 2023; Schenck et al., 2015). Moreover, the individual as a system has several dimensions that affect their behaviour such as the physical, emotional, psychological, cognitive and spiritual dimensions. Furthermore, the individual as a subsystem exists in a hierarchy alongside bigger suprasystems such as the family, the school and the community at large. This theory emphasizes understanding a person or child within their environment, and the way that individuals interact with many systems (Zastrow, 2021), which allowed for an exploration of how the child, parents and educators are influenced and are also influencing the larger environment.

The study selected three regions Kavango West (northern), Otjozondjupa (central north), and //Kharas (southern) based on the following inclusion criteria:

- i. Diverse environmental and spatial characteristics
- ii. Poverty rates across the dimensions of education, living standards, and health in Namibia's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2021 (low, average and high)
- iii. Budgetary allocation 2021-22 from the State Revenue Fund (low, average, and high) through Namibia's development programme.

A summary of the three selected regions' characteristics is provided in Appendix A.



## ***Sampling Criteria***

Within each region, two ECDCs were sampled in accordance with the following principles:

- i. The ECDCs' locations are consistent with the region's characteristics in which they are positioned (urban/rural);
- ii. The centres provide ECD provision to children 0-4 years old.
- iii. The PST approach has been delivered within the centre/school for [2 years or less] OR [3 years or more]

## ***Centre Permissions & Recruitment***

Two ECD centres/schools were identified in each of the three regions congruent with selection criteria. All the ECDCs, Educare staff, and PST staff that were approached were enthusiastic about participation in the study, indicating a desire to share their own, and learn from others', experiences of the PST TTP beyond their immediate communities. Each of the six ECDCs provided assistance in disseminating information about the study through their networks (including to their Educarers at the centres, and the parents and family members whose children attended the ECDC). The PST Trainers in the respective regions identified community members who had knowledge of the PST approach, had professional connection with the sector, or who were residing close to the ECDCs positioned in their communities. Participant consent, and parental consent (for observations) were obtained before the commencement of data collection. In relation to the classroom observations undertaken, the research team sensitively introduced themselves to the children using age-appropriate language, tailored to their initial engagement with the learning activities and explained to them that they had the freedom to move in and out of the spaces being observed.

## ***Data Collection***

Data collection was completed regionally, at three points in 2023 aligned with the availability of the Centres and according to school term dates. The research team visited each of the ECDCs for a maximum of ten days to limit levels of potential disruption to children's early years' provision and staff members' workloads.

The project employed the following qualitative methods:

1. Semi-structured interviews with parents/caregivers, Educarers and PST staff members
2. Talking circles (focus groups) with community members with existing knowledge of the PST
3. Observations for contextual understanding of Classroom practice, Educarer training sessions, and a graduation event

These methods were complemented by a creative arts-based workshop with children at each of the centres to promote familiarity with the project team before data collection commenced. Whilst not formally contributing to the study's research questions, the arts-based workshops were co-facilitated by Educarers and members of the research team to offer opportunities for young children to become accustomed to, and comfortable with, the presence of the team at the ECDCs, and intended to promote their inclusion in the study by taking a child-centred approach to the research. Consent was obtained from parents/guardians for the participation of their children in the workshop.

Researchers used semi-structured interview schedules and Talking Circle schedule, all developed to scaffold the interview process in relation to the study's research questions. The tools were (interview, talking circle schedules, and observation checklists) were piloted in ECDCs in Windhoek (in centres which delivered the PST approach but were not participating in the research study) prior to data being collected.

Written formal consent was obtained from each participant. Interviews with parents and Educarers were conducted at the ECDCs (close to their place of residence). Interviews with PST staff were conducted at an independent venue in the local area. Interviews with Perivoli Executive staff who resided outside of Namibia were conducted via an online platform and audio recorded (n=8). The duration of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes. All data collection was carried out by the research team in pairs with to offer participants an opportunity to communicate in their preferred language. Together the researchers spoke a number of languages and hence interviews were conducted in English and in local languages namely, Afrikaans, Otjiherero, Khoekhoegowab, Oshikwanyama and Rukwangali. Data was digitally recorded and transcribed in English.

## Sample

**The total study sample was 54 interviews, and 4 Talking Circles (n=32).**

The sample totalled **86 adult respondents** comprised of parents and carers (31), Educarers (9), Perivoli Staff (14), and community members (32).

There were 15 observations for contextual understanding: comprised of classroom practice (n=12) [<20 children per class], Educarer training sessions (n=2), and a graduation event (n=1).

The table below provides an overview of the sample disaggregated by ECDC and region.

	Otjozondjupa		//Kharas		Kavango West		Online
ECD Centre	A	B	C	D	E	F	
<b>Interviews (n=54)</b>							
Parents and Caregivers	5	6	5	5	5	5	
Educарers	2	1	1	1	2	2	
Perivoli Staff	3	*	*	2	*	1	
Perivoli Management							8
<b>Creative workshops (n=4)</b>							
Group of Children	1	1	1	1	0	0	
<b>Talking Circles/Focus Groups (n=32)</b>							
Community members	1	1	*	1	*	1	
<b>Observations (n=15)</b>							
Centre Classroom	2	2	2	2	2	2	
Trainers Training Educарers				1	1		
Graduation Ceremony		1					

\* PST staff had accountability for a region (both centres) and held multiple roles in the organisation e.g. Trainer/Regional Coordinator/Senior Regional Coordinator (as opposed to unsuccessful recruitment).

## 5.4 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using a reflexive thematic approach to identify developing themes. Reflexivity was employed by the researchers from both institutions to critically reflect on their differing understandings, values, assumptions, expectations and actions throughout the study (Braun et al., 2022). Reflexive thematic analysis refers to the process of identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data. Once audio-recordings had been transcribed, transcripts were read and re-read for familiarisation. Data was coded using 'Taguette', a free and open-source online tool for qualitative data analysis (Taguette, 2025), accessible across institutions and locations. Initial themes were collaboratively generated by the team, then reviewed and refined to develop shared-meaning-based themes through the process of reflexive group discussions (Braun et al., 2022). Online data analysis was complemented by a period of in-person data analysis and reflexive discussion. Data extracts are used to amplify the voices of participants and illustrate the themes developed.

### **Data Validation**

Three member-checking workshops were completed in 2024, one in each of the three regions (Kavango West, //Kharas, and Otjozondjupa). The workshops comprised participants who were involved in the data collection either as parents, Educarers or community members. Participants comprised of those who wished to attend and were able. The workshops provided an opportunity to reflect on the broad and emerging themes developed during the initial data analysis, with the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of the data, and to collaboratively explore the preliminary findings. The outcome of the validation workshops was that there was consensus from participants regarding the preliminary findings presented.

## 5.5 Participants' Characteristics

The majority of participants' were female reflecting the propensity of women holding roles in the education and care sectors (62 female/24 male). Of the 31 parents and carers interviewed, 7 were male. There were two grandmothers and one grandfather. All the Educarers interviewed were female (n=9). The community members who participated in the talking circles (n=32) held a range of professional roles<sup>3</sup> in teaching, nursing, community development, education, and village leadership. All but one of the 7 Perivoli Staff were female, and most held more than one role within the organisation (i.e. Trainer and or Regional Coordinator and or Senior Regional Coordinator). All of the Perivoli Executive Management staff (n=8) resided outside of Namibia with experience in the programme's delivery both in Namibia and in other countries where the programme is delivered in Africa. A list of participants by geographical region and role is included in Appendix B.

<sup>3</sup> Professional roles included primary school teachers (current and retired), a retired nurse, a Community Development Officer, an Education Officer, a journalist, School Board members, a youth representative, and a Headman (a traditional village leader), students (one was studying towards a Diploma in Early Childhood Education at NAMCOL) and parents (currently unemployed) who were volunteering to clean the environment or assist with the provision of water to the ECD centres.

# 6. Findings

During the interviews and talking circles, the large majority of participants in the sample (n=86) described their very positive experiences of the Perivoli Schools Trust Teacher Training Programme. These included participants' direct experiences of being trained on the programme, of delivering the training to Educarers, participants observing 'on the ground' practice in ECDCs, or as parents, carers and a range of professionals in the care and education sectors who in their roles were seeing children's abilities develop and progress through engagement with the 'learning by doing' Perivoli play-based approach. These experiences were further supported by the research team's observations of classroom-based practice during their visits to the ECDCs.

What developed strongly from the data was the alignment of the PST programme's principles to the reality of the practice taking place 'on the ground'. Application of the programme's key principles, activity-based classroom management, the learning through play approach, and the co-creation of educational activities and resources with locally available waste materials were evident in all centres which participated in the study. The majority of participants described the ways in which they felt the Perivoli approach better prepared children for beginning their formal schooling. Of note, the creative use of locally available waste materials to construct educational toys and resources supported children, the centre staff, and the communities to see the value of recycling and reusing items which would otherwise have been discarded to dumping sites in the villages and settlements (in the absence of formal waste collection systems). Participants described the financial savings made, themes of sustainability, and embedded philosophies through green education within early learners, fostering a strong sense of environmental stewardship within local communities.

A prominent theme which emerged was the broader ways in which the programme mobilised the capacity and skills of local people and their neighbourhoods. Participants expressed that the impact of the PST TTP was not only experienced directly by Educarers

enrolled in the training, and the Perivoli Trainers and staff members employed and tasked with the day-to-day delivery of the training. Of particular note, was the sustainable nature of the PST model which manifested and retained local knowledge and skills within the centres and communities, evidenced strongly through the maintenance phase of the PST programme which established 'communities of teachers' in localities through ongoing group-based networking and support.

Findings from this study report participants' overwhelmingly positive experiences of the PST TTP. That aside, there was a minority of participants (predominantly parents and carers of the children attending the ECDCs) who were not familiar with the Perivoli approach, or acquainted with its guiding principles, and as such, were unable to share their understandings within the interviews. That in itself is discussed in theme six which reflects upon families' involvement within children's early years' learning.

## Our analysis is grouped into eight themes as follows:

1. Innovation, Creativity and Applied Learning
2. Green Education and Environmental Stewardship
3. Children's Readiness for Primary Education
4. Mobilising the Capacity of Individuals and Communities
5. Sustainability and Longevity
6. Families' Involvement in Children's Learning
7. Disruption by Public Health Emergencies
8. Contexts of Care and Welfare

Each of the eight themes are presented in turn and is illustrated with selected data extracts with the purpose of amplifying the voices of the communities within each region. For purposes of confidentiality, participants are referred to by their roles in relation to the PST programme (i.e. Educarer, PST Staff Member, Parent or Carer). The term 'Perivoli Staff Member' comprises Regional and Senior Regional PST Programme Coordinators, and all members of PST who held management roles. The term 'Community Member' is used to describe participants from the focus groups who may otherwise have been identifiable if their specific roles were shared. Given the small population of Namibia (and within each of the three selected regions) for purposes of anonymity, participants' gender and ages are not attributed to individual voices. Names of people, places, and organisations have also been redacted from the text.

## 6.1 Innovation, Creativity and Applied Learning

The majority of participants described the significance of the PST approach's innovative use of waste materials to support children's learning and development in contexts with little or no resources. Participants also emphasised the focus the programme held on the application of knowledge in the context of early years education and care. These experiences were consistently observed during classroom visits in all of the ECDCs sampled in this study. Many participants talked about these two central principles of the PST model and the benefits they felt each brought to children's learning and development:

---

**“... its central aim is to create ways to help teachers provide provision in nursery schools which would result in stimulating development – emotional and physical – of young people in their care; ... get children early enough and you stimulate them with play activities which builds their self-confidence and gives them social skills around sharing and interacting, that by the time they reach primary school age 7, or 6, or 7, they're going to get the most out of their education”** PST Staff Member

---

PST Staff Members described the PST approach as focusing upon the development of creative activity centres, constructed with waste materials (known as themed 'corners') which promote children's cognitive skills, and help them to share and interact with other children. The presence of the themed corners was observed during all classroom observations, and participants talked about the importance of developing Educarers' skills by showing them how to apply these activities within their teaching practice:

---

**“The programme shows them how by just using recyclable waste materials, bottle tops, yoghurt cartons, pieces of cardboard, bits of string, you name it, they're able to come up with activity centres, we call them 'Corners', in fact there are 12 that we aim for in a classroom, and there might be a toyshop or a nursery box, nature corner or a reading corner, or toy kitchen...and the idea then is to show to the nursery school teacher that it's okay to let the children play and to move from corner to corner according to their desires and interests and that shows them how interacting is important... some activities stimulate their cognitive skills like the toy shop where they're using different coloured bottle tops to buy items from the shop and they're counting and measuring and identifying colours.”** PST Staff Member

---

Many participants talked about the value of using waste materials as teaching resources, indicating such to be a guiding principle of the PST approach. The value of playing for children in relation to their development was foregrounded in many interviews, with participants explaining:

---

**“...a child playing with a sophisticated Lego set provided by a foundation, very nice but actually children aren't bothered by whether it's Lego or it's a piece of cardboard, they play with anything because they don't discern the difference, so they don't attribute any value to that stage of their lives as we all know, they just play”** PST Staff Member

---

The majority of participants talked about the applied nature of the PST TTP, and described the way the programme provided an opportunity to learn 'how' to teach in structured and unstructured environments, 'how' to manage classrooms efficiently, and 'how' to create age-appropriate teaching aides from locally available waste materials. Perivoli-trained Educарers were described as actively bringing about change within the ECDCs, specifically in relation facilitating learning activities in the classrooms:

---

**“The teachers who attended the training brought changes in the classrooms. You can see that this percent have been trained on what they are doing, activities that they are doing with the children so that is also one of the good things”** Community Member

---

Some participants described the PST TTP as instilling a behaviour in Educарers' practice through the modular learning, with a focus in the programme on how to apply their knowledge for the benefit of children's learning:

---

**“What should we teach a teacher? What is going to help children from zero to six? – and not just teach them so they can graduate and get a certificate, but teach them in a way that they are going to apply it – and work with the children in that way so it can benefit the children. So, it becomes a behaviour for this teacher – that, “This is how we do this, and that is how this is supposed to be done.”** PST Staff Member

---

This was reinforced in observations of classroom practice and training sessions for Educарers which were scaffolded by pictorial workbooks, and pictorial activities for children in the classrooms. Many of the participants expressed sincere appreciation for the opportunity they had been granted to enroll on the PST TTP, to access new knowledge and develop skills and reported that children preferred the Perivoli approach due to its clarity and use of pictures and visual aides to guide their activities:

---

**“The others [programmes] are not as clear in terms of instruction and therefore they prefer Perivoli”** Educарer

**“...they understand and they can also follow what is being done...because it's in the form of pictures, they can tell where they are and what they're doing”** Educарer

---

The Perivoli approach was described as 'unique' and 'innovative', compared to other early years' training programmes which exist in Namibia, with participants stating it centers upon visits to the ECDCs, to ensure teaching provision is not unduly disrupted for children:

---

**“I think it has got some strength – some uniqueness – some innovations – which I see are critical and fundamental to the programme. The approach, itself, is so unique... if we compare this to our friends who are providing similar services in the same locations...that draw participants away from their schools...it means the kids that they care for most are also suffering within that period when the teachers are drawn away to a particular place for trainings. So, we – by visiting them...[we are] supporting them with the services that are ongoing – and also ensuring that teachers don't travel long distances...this uniqueness of the project that makes it so easily accessible by many.”** PST Staff Member

---

Educарers and Trainers also described how the PST training modules support them in applying their new knowledge and skills within the realities early years' practice. PST Trainers and Coordinators echoed the ways in which their visits to Educарers were aimed at observing the implementation of the PST approach. Such practical focus was reported as being unique in the training provision, not offered by other providers:

---

**“My responsibility is just to make sure that the teachers are implementing the activities that we are learning, because when we learn a module...because there’s an implementation, there’s something that they have to do practically in the class”**

PST Staff Member

---

**“we have to go back again to do a class visit where we can go and observe how the teachers are teaching and how the teachers are implementing the materials in the class. But [programme] and [programme], they just give them and then they go, they don’t come again”**

PST Staff Member

---

Some PST Staff Members described how some Educarers preferred other early year’s training programmes, because they feel other providers have less expectation around observation of their teaching and instead tend to be one-off visits. Educarers reflected upon the benefits of such an applied approach by learning the skills required to create a positive environment for children and connect appropriate activities to stages of their development and learning:

---

**“... in all the modules we are taught what to do in the class, they teach us that the children have to use their fine motor [skills], they need to know how to catch, they need to know how to throw, the physical wellbeing of a child like the child has to jump around, the child has to know the space they are moving around”**

Educarer

---

**“[I] always advocates for Perivoli whenever [I] meet someone who wants to open up a centre then I’ll tell them the same, please go train with Perivoli because what you are learning is worthwhile and it will give you the skills that you need to establish a good centre”**

Educarer

Whilst the majority of participants were strong advocates for the programme, its principles of learning through play and its use of waste materials to build free educational resources and activities, a few conveyed their thoughts that some Educarers may prefer receiving payments from the Ministry or being gifted resources from charities, rather than developing their own resources;

---

**“When you ask them, most of them, they would say “you know, Perivoli programme is good. We have learned a lot from Perivoli but those making materials is too much for us”**

PST Staff Member

---

**“And [Educarers] are also running for other programmes that are supplying these things also...But for us (PST), we feel like if we teach you how to do something, it’s also better. So we don’t give up, we see that many teachers prefer where they get something at least”**

PST Staff Member

---

The majority of parents/caregivers stated they were satisfied with the early years’ provision that their children were receiving. Community Members described how they observed improvements in Educarers’ teaching practice and capabilities once they had completed the PST modules:

---

**“The teachers who attended the training brought changes in the classrooms. You can see that this person has been trained on what they are doing, activities that they are doing with the children so that is also one of the good things”**

Community Member

---

Participants also compared the PST approach to the activities and content included in other early years’ programmes, emphasising their preference for Perivoli due to the ways it caters to a range of needs within the classrooms. Here a participant talked specifically about how they felt aspects of other programmes could also be used within the PST model, by blending aspects together:

---

**“I love knowing all the ECD ways. I have seen the way the [name of programme]’s [module on] daily planning is in the books... but I still strongly believe that Perivoli way is just the best, because it doesn’t really look at one specific child; it look[s] at different kind[s] of children in the class. It also makes the teachers have a full routine for the day... I always tell them to research information, because Ministry’s books, have information [on] morning devotion, whatever song you have to sing, whatever stories, so they could blend it into Perivoli [and] any other books that they want...[to] cater for every child.”** PST Staff Member

---

**“...so rather than throw it away we can send it to school for them to use it, it’s like a recycle”** Parents/Caregiver

**“We are also helping to manage waste – because some of our key resources are shop owners. So, we go there and ask them to say, “When you have done away with these cartons, please don’t throw them. Keep them here – we will come collect them”. So, instead of waste materials, we also deal with the printing shops – we also work with the people in shops...we go there – collect the materials – and use them”**

PST Staff Member

---

## 6.2 Green Education and Environmental Stewardship

This was a central theme that emerged in all of the interviews with individuals and was discussed within all community-based talking circles. The environmental gains of the PST approach were recognised as distinctive in early years’ Educarer training, and educare provision, and as such were a major strength of the programme. This was in terms of the programme’s central principle of recycling and reusing waste materials which would have otherwise been discarded (e.g. bottles, bottle tops, cartons, newspapers and egg boxes), and the inclusion of aspects of green education within the PST modules which supported children to learn about their environments. Participants talked about how in this way, the PST approach was environmentally conscious. In the absence of waste removal systems in many communities, participants explained that the programme was also helping to reduce the quantity of waste disposed of on the streets or at dumping sites:

The majority of participants also talked about the benefits of having a free supply of materials and how it has created a shift in the way members of the community think about waste materials: from items believed to be ‘rubbish’, to viewing them as valuable resources for early years’ teaching. Furthermore, participants discussed the importance of the community’s role in the collection of materials for early years’ education at local ECDCs.

---

**“We never thought that these things are of value, we were always throwing them away but now we are able to bring them into class and the children are enjoying because we are always playing with them”**

PST staff Member

---

Many of the PST staff members explained the value they placed upon locally available resources and waste, which offer a sustainable and environmentally conscious supply of materials for ECDCs:

---

**“You are making toys and whatever, but then you don’t find bottles on the street thrown so it keeps the environment clean”** Educarer

**“it’s not only about collecting waste materials to create something, but it’s also keeping your community clean”** Parent/Caregiver

**“...knowing how we can help our own children and also what excites me is that knowing that everything that we see around us, it can be used to educate our children.”** PST Staff Member

---

In fact, the cyclical nature of reusing waste materials from within the community has attracted external recognition for its sustainable approach:

---

**“ We’ve just been nominated [for] a Project of the Year Award in a sustainability prize...and we’ve also won first prize... last year, so [Perivoli] clearly is being recognised for its green credentials...it does, in its own way, explain to people the case for the sort of circular economy in that the items they’re playing with are all reused, whether they’re yoghurt cartons or bottle tops or whatever. ”** PST Staff Member

---

Many highlighted, that in general, a wide range of waste materials were easy to obtain for use by Educarers, so much so, they were often found in the streets:

---

**“ In the street, in town, there’s always materials lying around. ”** Parent/Caregiver

---

Participants talked about how they established relationships with local shop owners with the purpose of obtaining materials – as soon as boxes are unpacked. Despite successes, some felt it could be challenging to get some items free of charge:

---

**“ We go into the shops asking for posters, the people also they don’t want to give posters willingly or freely, that is one challenge that we face ”** Educarer

**“ We’d go around in the neighbourhood searching for it. The material we found, the boxes, we went to the shops to go collect... they would give us the boxes if they weren’t using it, and the papers we found at the scrapyards ”** Parent /Caregiver

---

However, in some of the more rural areas, some waste materials required to build some of the educational activities, are not as easy to come by compared to their availability in formal settlements. Here participants talked about the need to travel to a nearby town to obtain specific items they were searching for use at the ECDCs. This is illustrated by a parent who said:

---

**“ it[’s] difficult to get those materials...an example, of newspapers and also bottles... unless we have to go to the towns or to the shops to look for those boxes. ”**

Parent/Caregiver

---

Following the Covid19 pandemic, participants explained that it became more difficult to collect waste materials from shops than it had been:

---

**“ After the Corona pandemic... They don’t give such big boxes any more. You need to ask then you will just get a few...because they say they have to use the boxes for something else ”** Educarer

---

Parents also referred to campaigns that were run by local radio stations, raising awareness about the PST approach with the view to informing communities about the importance of reusing waste materials for early years educational benefits:

---

**“ .. the radio station telling people that this sort of waste material is needed at the school. Gives sort of a brief description or explanation as to why they use this waste material. And through the community they can collect the correct type of material they want to use for the school ”** Parent/Caregiver

---

Whilst most items were easy to find and obtain, some participants reported that they still felt they needed to buy paint or glue, to build the activities out of waste materials. A PST Staff Member explained:

---

**“The waste materials [are] very easy to find, unless it’s only the ones that you have to buy, like paint ..to [make it] look more beautiful...I always get posters...to make books...then we also distribute them to teachers.”**

PST Staff Member

---

There was some distinction made by participants in relation to whether ECDCs had financial means to buy resources, and those who did not. In fact, more commonly in areas where there were high levels of poverty, and some parents were yet to pay their child(ren)'s care fees, necessity and passion were cited as motivating factors for using waste materials to build educational resources. A PST Staff Member illustrates this perspective in the following way:

---

**“There are teachers that are more interested and passionate because they do not really want to buy and they don’t have that money, so they will do more to make sure that they get those materials for their classes and the teaching materials, and there are those teachers that are just lazy also. Just lazy. They’ll keep on saying, ‘I’ll do it tomorrow, I’ll do it tomorrow,’ and they will not, just like that.”**

PST Staff Member

---

A few participants acknowledged that not all Educators are creative, so whilst support and guidance is offered within the programme, this could be understood as a potential barrier to some individuals in their application of the model:

---

**“...not everyone is also what you would call - not everyone is creative and it’s not easy and there can be many reasons. Yes, if you look into that but if you also push hard, there’s a teacher I think you will be helped halfway”**

PST Staff Member.

---

Parents reported how they were actively involved in the collection of waste materials and were reminded by their children who asked them to save and recycle containers for building toys and planting flowers. In doing so, they were taking a family approach to keeping their family and community spaces clean, whilst engaging in their children's education:

---

**“They always tell us that...we need to recycle these. It’s like at school they were given a flower. He’s always telling us that our teacher said that we should not throw away these things and we must keep our yard clean and we must [keep] plastic container [for] flowers...”**

Parent/caregiver

---

The majority of participants acknowledged the environmental agenda embedded within the programme, and referred to the ways the modular content of the programme teaches children about the importance of the environment and conservation from a young age:

---

**“[PST approach] is connected to [an] environmental agenda because some of the modules promote the wildlife conservation and conserving the environment, so one of the activity areas is required from the teachers in the schools is what we call the nature corner...where they teach the children how they can keep the environment, how they can do other activities to stop the environment, so they are made aware of their environment and how they can protect it and save it.”**

PST Staff Member]and

---

**“[the] ‘Nature’ corner, which helps to explain the relationship between human beings and the environment - and the world which is around us”**

PST staff Member

---

Parents also conveyed their awareness of the benefits of promoting the environment and talked about saving items and not burning waste materials which would contribute to environmental degradation. One parent stated:

---

**“ [I] encourage the kids...not to throw away empty milk box...not to throw it away, do not burn it...then you save the environment. So, you make this whole environment [a] better place to live in for everybody ”**

Parent/Caregiver

---

Perivoli Staff described how a module in the programme specifically aims to support children to understand the world they live in, with the purpose of educating children early on as guardians and stewards of their precious environments:

---

**“ We have one module which talks about ‘Environmental Management’...we talk about making children ambassadors of the environment – where...the kids understand the world around them – but I think there are certain immediate issues that also need to be introduced to kids at that tender age... particularly the trees, the vegetation, the land – has to be guarded ”**

PST Staff Member

**“ ...we are indicating a culture of environmental stewardship to the kids that we are learning, because they are able to see that the resources they are using are locally-fetched – so, as they grow up, they will grow with the mentality that our problems could have local solutions ”**

PST Staff Member

---

Some PST Staff Members talked about Perivoli’s future plans to expand the ‘green’ aspects of their curriculum to include additional modules on global warming and climate change. In doing so, participants reported the programme’s aim to develop Educarers in Namibia into ‘citizen scientists’ where they can contribute to the development of agricultural practices to respond to the challenges of global warming:

---

**“ [we are] rolling out of modules on global warming because we’re wanting to start to explain to nursery school teachers the meaning of climate change and global warming and what it means for them and equally, how it will intersect with our parallel project around range land restoration...that’s on a journey to visualise our nursery school teachers as becoming citizen scientists to help us change practices around agriculture and also measure prosperity ”**

PST Staff Member

---

## 6.3 Children’s Readiness for Primary Education

Nearly all participants talked about the different ways in which Perivoli-trained Educarers, and therefore the ECDCs using the Perivoli approach, had positively supported their children’s education and development. Parents and caregivers shared observations they had made in relation to their child(ren) making progress in their learning, and Educarers and Community Members (including Teachers based in primary schools) talked about how they felt children from ECDCs using the PST approach were, in their opinions, much better prepared to begin pre-primary and primary education, than children who had not attended ECDCs where the Perivoli approach was applied.

---

**“ The difference that I see for my child is that she really changed in that period. She has got more respect for the elders and the way that she’s talking to people, and she always wants to go back to school. That’s what I could see, the changes. It’s really good. ”**

Parent/Caregiver

**“ There’s a big difference. When I see my own child with my neighbour’s child. They are all the same age, but the other child’s school uses the other approach and mine goes to the Perivoli kindergarten. The difference is that my child reads much better than the one who goes to (name removed) kindergarten ”**

Community Member

---

Broadly, from the classroom observations it was evident that many children were full of respect for other children, and towards their elders. Participants (particularly parents) talked about the importance of children being respectful in society and indicated satisfaction that children were not sent back home, perhaps indications of the Educators skills and children's positive engagement with learning through play activities:

---

**“ I expected that the children would be sent back because of their misbehaviour but she never sends them [home] ”** Parent/Caregiver

---

Participants also acknowledged the impact of good classroom management skills on the efficacy of the learning children receive at the ECDCs. This was commonly observed during the study's classroom observations where centres commonly divided children's learning into age groups:

---

**“ I think the school makes a big difference in the life of my child. She's even able to adjust around other people. When she's coming from school she will show me what she has done, what she has written, so I can see that she's really being taught good lessons when she's coming to the centre. And the one thing that I think is that the children are probably also separated. I saw it with my own eyes that the younger ones is in one group, and the older ones is in the other group where they could be learned according to their age ”**  
Parent/Caregiver

---

One participant shared an example of how her son has benefited from being with other children, and how she feels he has progressed socially having exposure to the PST approach, preparing him better for primary education:

---

**“ Socially getting him to be open with other kids... he's now a bit open now. When he goes to a bigger school at least it won't be that difficult than he's used to being just at home, not even being with a lot of other kids; or even answering in the class when they ask him questions- because now he's trying to do that ”** Parent/Caregiver

---

Parents also stated that they noticed a positive change in their children's cognitive and social development since attending an ECDC that uses the PST approach:

---

**“ Recently we have noticed that he knows the different colours, green, red and white. But previously if you said to him give me the red plate, then he would bring you the other yellow one, that's what we like about the school. ”** Parent/Caregiver

---

**“ ...also my grandson, my son's son, was at this school. When he went to school he didn't struggle through grade one compared to the other children, and he's grade seven now ”** Parent/Caregiver

---

Whilst many parents reported the progress their children were making as individuals, many more conveyed their children's improved rate of development comparing it to children who had not been taught using the PST approach:

---

**“ so if I can look at them, they are better able to write their names and they can also count much better compared to others who have not been to the [PST] centre and, if one looks at the progress, these who went to the centre, they make much better progress compared to the others who are repeating for grades year after year ”** Parent/Caregiver

---

Educators talked about how children gain a solid foundation through the PST approach, which they felt makes them ready to begin and engage with primary education:

---

**“ The Perivoli approach prepares the children very well for pre-primary and once they have graduated from her it doesn't take too much effort to teach them at primary school because they have already learned so much through the Perivoli approach ”** Educator

---

The importance of children establishing a strong foundation in their early years was also described by PST Staff Members, who commented upon the ways in which the approach can improve children's educational trajectories:

---

**“ Those children that don't get this benefit tend to really flounder and the problem then is they drop back at primary school. So come age 10, 10% of children are held back, it's about 10% per annum and that's of course very damaging to their self-confidence at that early age, they're sort of branded as being stupid or failures and their lives then are dramatically impacted. So [PST] it's reducing drop-out rates and reducing hold-back rates ”** PST Staff Member

---

Many participants said they felt there were clear differences between children who had engaged with the PST approach during their early years education in that they were more independent, more capable of learning and more advanced, than children who had not attended ECDCs which were applying the PST approach:

---

**“ There is a difference between the Perivoli, those that have experienced the Perivoli approach versus those that haven't because I always gets feedback from the [primary] teachers say those kids tend to be smarter and they do things on their own, they can write their names, and the teachers are always amazed at where the children come from, so they tend to ask 'where did you do your kindergarten? ”** Educator

**“ I would only be fair if I echo statements from the primary beneficiaries and the stakeholders that we deal with - particularly the school owners - and we also deal with the primary schools to which these learners go...The general picture is that there is a noticeable difference between kids who have gone through the Perivoli training - and are transitioned into formal learning at 'Primary One, Two, Three' - compared to those that have not ”** PST Staff Member

---

In fact, beyond early years' settings, a few participants talked about the PST approach's expanding reputation reporting the PST approach appearing in primary school contexts. This is illustrated by an extract where a PST staff member explained the benefits of the approach bridging the transition from ECDCs through to primary school contexts:

---

**“ ...there are [PST activity] 'corners' appearing in the primary schools along the lines of the ones we've introduced in that very first year and so it's a sort of natural step from the nursery school into the primary school because they're sort of doing the same thing. And then they graduate into Years 1, 2 and 3 and they're on their journey so I think it has huge benefits in preparing children ...and equally, the primary schools themselves ”** PST staff Member

---



## 6.4 Mobilising Capacity of Individuals and Communities

A central theme which developed from the data was the ways that the PST model mobilised the capacities of individuals, ECDC provision, and more widely, served the local communities. Participants talked about the focus upon training people, as opposed to funding infrastructure, and the ways that the training provided opportunities to develop and mobilise their skills, in the community and national sector, by supporting and empowering local people.

---

**“ [Perivoli]’s very scalable...if you spend money on bricks and mortar, it’s a lot of money for not much impact and those people that actually build schools often are disappointed to find they’re empty. Whereas, if you focus on training, then what you’re doing is you’re building capacity which can be shared so quickly, so a trainer is sharing those skills with a teacher who is then sharing them with the children and equally the parents, and so it scales very rapidly...So I think the real strength of the programme is all those things, it’s affordable, it’s scalable and it has huge impact ”** PST Staff Member and

**“ we are not wasting a lot of money for us to buy materials...the money...that the teachers are getting in the community they are doing something else, maybe building a small structure for the school itself and then we are giving them more skills and then we are developing their schools with recycled materials. ”** PST Staff Member

The focus upon funding training and not purchasing materials or equipment was seen as a strength of the programme:

---

**“ this approach is good because it does not require money for us to go and buy materials from the shop ”** Parent/Caregiver

**“ it will also save the Government a lot of money instead of buying equipment every time ”** Educarer

---

Participants talked candidly about the opportunities that the PST TTP has brought to them individually and collectively. Whilst ECDC provision can often be driven by need for income and employment, some participants described the PST approach going beyond, to create positive and enjoyable teaching environments for children, and in turn, benefiting the wider community:

---

**“ If you ask the teachers - most of the teachers, they will say, if it was not for Perivoli I wouldn’t have known how to do things as a teacher because most teachers, they are just doing it is a business, opening up a kindergarten you know but knowing at least that they eventually they are enjoying teaching the children and they, I am sure they are happy to see how the kids are developing ”** PST Staff Member

**“ Because the education that Perivoli is giving, it’s not only ending with the children or with the teachers, but it’s for the whole, entire community, because the communities are the ones that are having children that are going to school ”.** PST Staff Member

---

Beyond its direct impact, some participants reflected on the way that the programme has impact and reach across generations. They talked about the PST model developing professional capacity and skills within their local areas, and further inspiring children to remain in education and train as future teachers for their communities:

---

**“ These centres are also encouraging our children to go to school so that they can get employment in the future. For example, becoming a teacher which is also a good thing that will give an example to other children within the community ”** Community Member

---

---

**“ I see it’s really development in our communities. These kids go to these kindergartens, and they will finish school. Once they finish school they will come back to the community and they will also try to get employment for the others. ”**

Community Member

**“ We send our children to school so that they can study to become the future nurses, the future teachers of the region and also of the communities ”** Community Member

---

Many Educarers did not hold prior qualifications in early childhood development before beginning the programme, and reported the significance of being offered such valuable opportunities to develop skills and knowledge in the early years’ sector. This view was also shared by many PST Staff Members who held the role of Trainers. This is illustrated by a participant who reflected upon their interview with the Perivoli Schools Trust, and the significance of the individual qualities they brought to the role:

---

**“ ..but I thought, okay, what did you saw in me? ... Doesn’t matter whether this person does have the needed qualification or not ”**

PST Staff Member

---

Educarers and Trainers explained how the PST model taught lifelong skills, gave individuals choice, access to opportunities to empower themselves, and contribute to the communities in which they live:

---

**“ Yes, it’s good to teach a person to do something that the person will do for a lifetime rather than just giving. ”**

PST Staff Member

**“ The central part of the [PST] is all about empowering and giving people choice and making them control their own destiny..., it is simply by helping people through training to have the tools to make choices, so I feel that what we’re doing speaks very directly to empowering people and communities ”**

PST Staff Member

---

Some talked about experiencing increased feelings of confidence and self-belief, not only developing skills, but seeing the impact their own and others’ work was creating:

---

**“ [PST] just provides more capacity for the nursery school teachers and it doesn’t cost them anything. But also, it provides them with a sense of self-belief and validation because they can see before their very eyes what a huge difference it’s making. So, it uplifts their lives and encourages ”**

PST Staff Member

---

Economic gains were also reported at individual and community levels, in relation to bringing employment to the region, and the importance of imparting skills that are maintained within the communities they aim to benefit:

---

**“ [I see it like having these centres in our region has brought employment, especially with the teachers. ”** Community Member

**“ [if you want to maybe start up your own kindergarten, you can also find a way...or you can go to Perivoli training first...when you are done you can open your preschool at home to benefit now from that for your financial gain and all those things. ”** Educarer

---

Whilst Educarers described their experiences of receiving a Perivoli Certificate upon completion of the programme and attending a graduation ceremony which recognises their achievements, Trainers talked about their desire for recognition by the PST, to acknowledge and respect the learning they have undertaken, knowledge they have developed, and the contributions and impact they have made to their community, and will continue to make in the early years sector:

---

**“ If I want to go for more studies, people nowadays want documents. If I come to somebody and say, ‘Oh, I’ve been doing Perivoli and I have experienced ECD like this, they won’t believe me if I don’t have any proof. Perivoli is growing...we [Trainers] are gonna end up at schools, government schools... when you go there, you don’t have even a badge saying you are coming from Perivoli, you don’t have even a certificate, like this is what I have studied and so on, so some people will be like, ‘Oh, okay... ”**

PST Staff Member

---

Some Trainers specifically referred to the value and importance placed upon receiving Perivoli Certificates, in recognition of achievements and an opportunity to participate in the graduation ceremonies which are significant events for the local community:

---

**“ It is important because, you know, the teacher sees that they have achieved something in life. They have worked for something and they get it, you know. Some people really doesn’t have much education but if they get just that paper. Everyone wants to study but due to circumstances it’s like, they cannot but once you get something at least that little something ”**

PST Staff Member and

**“ For us also to be respected, I need also to have a certificate, and Perivoli is one of the organisations that can make this possible. Perhaps you can just take us through this training again and add more, and then also let us graduate. Even now, today, I’m out of Perivoli, there is no proof that I have that, I have all this experienc ”**

PST Staff Member

---

## 6.5 Sustainability & Longevity

The fifth theme developed in the data was in relation to the sustainability of the PST model. The majority of participants emphasised the sustainable nature of the programme, its scalability, and the long-term impact they see within the early years’ sector.

---

**“ If we train a teacher today – even if we will leave this teacher for the next two years – without seeing them and visiting them...and they have achieved according to how we want them to achieve all the modules, and then we go and visit this teacher – two years after we worked with them – we’ll still find them doing the work pretty well ”**

PST Staff Member

**“ I think the strength of the programme is in its scalability and equally in its affordability, \$3 a child, but also in the extent of its impact because a child playing with a sophisticated Lego set provided by a foundation, very nice but actually children aren’t bothered by whether it’s Lego or it’s a piece of cardboard, they play with anything because...they don’t attribute any value to that stage of their lives ... they just play... the real strength of the programme is all those things, it’s affordable, it’s scalable and it has huge impact ”**

PST Staff Member

---

Participants described the way the PST model creates ‘Communities of Teachers’. Not only does this maintain skills within teaching communities, it enables the programme to engage a large number of Educарers in a relatively short space of time with little resource:

---

**“ I would say the best strength..is that we are able to create communities of teachers, which means we are able to reach out to a lot of teachers in a very short space of time and also using very minimal resource. In a way that we gather teachers in groups of 20 and it’s only one trainer who is able to train only 30 at once...the other thing that I see as a strength is that the programme**

**is sustainable in the sense that we don't have to use a lot of money, but we give the teachers skills that they would use given in our absence, so when we get to a point where we can't train them anymore, they will still remain with the skills that we have given them, they will still remain with the communities that we have already created with [them] so they would be able to continue giving even after we have stopped interacting with them** 99 PST Staff Member

---

Many participants emphasised the long term support offered to Educators post-graduation. They described this approach as sustaining support to individuals in their teaching practice by connecting graduates in Support Groups where they can share knowledge with each other, during the 'maintenance phase' of the programme, thus extending the reach and longevity of skills and ideas to other centres and localities;

**99 The support could be for example, okay how did you go about this module maybe or what practical activities can you do with this module or things like. Okay what is happening in your region? This is what is happening in my region - have you heard th[is] or [do] you know. For the region, we have a WhatsApp group. Also, for the nation, we also have a WhatsApp group whereby, if you go to the class, you can take pictures and then put it on the group and then other trainers can also view, and then you can also get some examples.** 99 PST Staff Member

---

Participants also talked about the wider impact of sharing their skills and knowledge with others, for the benefit of the community, teaching profession, and the discipline of education:

---

**99 I love sharing nowadays. I will share my skills to the next person, as long as the next person is using it to develop our children. I love that. I do enjoy that... because I've seen teachers who work just in schools and then they only teach a, b, c, d, e, f, g and only colours, and they keep on repeating and repeating, but nowadays you can see the skills that we are learning, Perivoli has trained us, and we impart them to teachers, and it's really helping, especially the discipline.** 99 PST Staff Member

**99 the teachers they are benefiting because their training are free, and they are getting knowledge and now this knowledge is very helpful taking it to the community.** 99 Parent/Caregiver

**99 We don't ask for any money from our primary beneficiaries - who are teachers. We don't ask for any support of any kind from any stakeholder apart from the mutual and voluntary consent to participate in the programme.** 99 PST Staff member

**99 She's saying this approach has the benefits because you won't need money to buy anything for the child, we just take the materials that we've thrown away to use, to make use of this with the children** 99 parent

---

However, many PST Staff Members reflected upon the longevity of the programme in Namibia:

---

**99 Sustainability - it's a huge issue - particularly in Namibia... that's a tall order that we need to deal with...so that, then, the project remains relevant even after we exit.** 99 PST Staff Member

---

Many PST Staff Members talked about establishing links with Government Ministries to embed the programme in localities to increase its sustainability. Further, in relation to potential expansion of early years provision at regional or national level, or a transition in the programme's leadership:



---

**“It is sustainable because the programme that we are giving the people who need it, as well it is sustainable because we are working with the Government. We knew that if we leave it means the Government will be able to follow up on what we are doing. So, it’s sustainable through the Government and the communities that we are working with”**

PST Staff Member

---

---

**“Another thing is that our project seems not to have community – community contributions.”**

PST Staff Member

**“So – in terms of communities seeing the benefit... yes, they see the benefit informally ‘cause their kids go there, but these structures – they’re not there – have not been formally engaged – we engage with them in an informal set-up. So, if we exit today, it means that the project would not be recognised formally – and, because it would not be recognised formally, those that are supposed to ensure continuing of the project would not be doing their rightful duties”**

PST Staff Member and

---

Other reported individual experiences of more fluid arrangements and described their relationships with local stakeholders as informal, whilst present, perhaps a potential limitation to the programme’s sustainability in relation to community ownership:

---

**“Our relationship with the local people is very informal, and things seem to move very well – on the right direction – but I would have loved it if we could have formalised the relationship. I think my concern is on the project – sustainability. This project – I have been into several projects – but one thing that I have seen is that projects that are not founded on community ownership. Those projects don’t work long distances – in their lifespan. So, I think ...we formalise such by signing documents that ought to be signed”**

PST Staff Member

**“My hope would be on the sustainability that is if we would be allowed to engage more on the communities”**

PST Staff Member

---

Discussions around the sustainability within the context of Namibia’s size and therefore the distances between communities, also emerged within the data. Participants talked positively about the ways the PST TTP benefited communities, but indicated the longer-term advantages of formalising stakeholder relationships for purposes of sustainability:

Some PST Staff Members talked about their experiences of retention on the programme, with some sharing their individual experiences of high rates of attrition or turn-over as a result of opportunities for employment, starting their own centres, or the disinterest in making their own educational resources:

---

**“...the fact that you have enrolled 20 teachers. That’s the number that I have started with. But when you come to graduation, maybe you might graduate fifteen, ten, say 50% has gone”**

PST Staff member

**“...some start their own...school, as I say, teachers go. The ones that go, some are [also] coming [in]... So, you will get somebody new, but the problem is that you don’t know how long that person will be there also”**

PST Staff Member

**“some of them they come and then eventually they disappear without any reason and then when you ask them... they would say, teacher you know, Perivoli programme is good. We have learned a lot from Perivoli but...those making materials is too much for us”**

PST Staff Member

---

Whilst the Perivoli Certificates were described by many participants as holding high value in the community and sector, many participants talked about their desire, and need for, the PST TTP to become a formally accredited early years' qualification:

---

**“So, although the certificate, itself, is not recognised by government – or accredited by any formal institution...it carries some sense – it gives them some sort of identity – particularly to the teachers – and it boosted their confidence, especially when they are dealing with parents”** PST Staff Member

**“Although our certificates are not recognised as certificates...they have a value. I wish we were built in such a manner that we give the recognised certificates...I remember one of our teachers left for upgrading, and they went to this institution [who] demanded the previous experiences and papers that she had – and, when she exposed this paper of Perivoli she was exempted from certain module”** PST Staff Member

**“I want to see the training to be recognised Perivoli”** Educarer

---

Knowing the value of the PST TTP most PST Senior and Regional Coordinators were of the view that the training programme should be mapped to the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQF):

---

**“If you undergo Perivoli for a year or two is equivalent to ...one year on the national qualification framework ... they are the custodians of all the programmes and if Perivoli satisfies the NQA requirements then you can be given maybe a Level 1 certificate”** PST Staff Member

---

## 6.6 Families' Involvement in Children's Learning

The idea of involving parents and caregivers in children's early years education was a strong theme that developed in the data. Participants talked about the importance of involvement in children's education from a young age, to provide a strong foundation in their development. Whilst parents and caregivers, Educarers and community members all discussed the significance of the PST modules which hold focus upon parental involvement, the majority of parents and caregivers interviewed had a very limited awareness of the PST model and its main principles (e.g. the creative use of waste materials to build educational activities and resources).

Most parents talked about their satisfaction with the level and quality of education and care their child(ren) was receiving, but beyond their approval of the learning delivered in the ECDCs, only a small number of parents and caregivers were aware of the way that waste materials were useful to the classroom activities. Some parents talked about being tasked with collecting waste materials by the ECDCs, but not many of the parents reported understanding about the high value of reusable materials, and in what way they were used to construct activities. The majority of parents and caregivers stated that they were not involved in their child(ren)'s learning and did not engage directly with the ECDCs, which was reflected by Educarers who emphasised the difficulties of engaging them and fostering participation.

Community Members, PST Staff Members, and Educarers, talked about why prioritising parental involvement was so crucial, firstly to ensure children are brought to Centres. Many PST Staff Members emphasised the aim of the PST model in its focus upon engaging parents in local communities, through community leaders, to garner support to get children into early years' education and care:

---

**“it's helped some parents to take pride in their children's education. So, with this programme we are able to help the parents understand why they have to help the children to attend the nursery schools because we have a lot of parents who don't send children to school. [With Perivoli] we are able to involve the parents, involving**

**the teachers, as well as some communities because as of now like in my region...we are able to engage some community leaders...so we're also working with the communities as well. 99 PST Staff Member**

---

Participants also described parental involvement as the foundation to a child's educational journey, and referred to the benefits of establishing expectations for children early on, during their formative years before a child begins primary education:

---

**99 because of the involvement of the parents, they are understanding well the importance of education and then even the foundation now, even the foundation now is well built because when the child is going to Grade 1 they know already what they will do at school 99 PST Staff Member**

---

Participants also talked about the importance of parents and carers being able to replicate and to expand opportunities for children's learning (beyond the classroom) whilst children are at home with their families, with the aim of promoting their developmental progress:

---

**99 It's very important for me as a parent to be involved in my child's education because I will know the level of learning, how far my child is with her learning...to be involved, to know if she is ready for grade one next year. 99 Community Member**

**99 so if a parent knows about this programme and knows the games and all those things the parent will also whenever they're sitting around, okay 'who is wearing a red jacket in this house?' and then child will look around now, because they know the game already at school and now the parent is also doing the same game. The child will know move faster and it will also help both the parent and child also to communicate 99 Educarer**

---

Within the talking circles, many Community Members articulated the magnitude of family member involvement in children's learning. Participants referred to parents/ caregivers as instrumental in ensuring children get to school, and when they do, that they are ready to learn:

---

**99 Parents are the most important leg of the triangle, because without them there's nobody bringing their kids to school, and the feeding and all that other stuff, it's where the parents come in. So, without parents we don't have schools! 99**

Community Member

---

One aim of the PST Model is to engage and involve parents and caregivers with their approach through parent-focused modules to instil parent and carer involvement in a child's learning through the concept of play:

---

**99 Another thing that Perivoli is advocating is parental involvement in the education of their children, so that parents should also be trained, so that they can do similar things with their kids at home 99**

Community Member and

**99 Perivoli school also gives us that opportunity of taking maybe like six or seven parents to teach them about the school also, how to deal with the kids, how to play with the kids at home educationally wise and how also to build maybe something for the child to use at home 99**

Educarer

---

Participants described PST modules which have specifically been designed for also parents and caregivers to complete, with the purpose of encouraging parental collaboration between home and school settings:

---

**“ We have a deliberate arrangement where parents are also trained in the modules that we have. Such that - during holidays - they should be able to integrate the same into their kids...they should also understand and appreciate what is happening with their kids when they are at school - so that, then, there should be collaborative learning - that the responsibility should never be left ... to the learning centres - but the parents have a role to play - that learning centres have roles to play. So, we are looking at working together with the learning centres. ”**

PST Staff Member

**“ The arrangement is that, when we train our teachers up to ‘Module Number Six,’ they can also arrange what we call ‘Parental Trainings’...where, in the entire 16 months of the programme, they should train parents in less than six months - and, when that has been done, the parents are also recognised - and given certificate of recognition... that has really helped to create enthusiasm and they generate a keen interest in their children[’s] learning process ”**

PST Staff Member

---

**“ Sometimes you ask them, ‘come for a meeting,’ only two to three parents that would be just coming - out of maybe thirty parents... so it’s really a very big challenge. I don’t know if it’s work that is making them that way, different type of work, maybe... they have a lot of work, or they are not really interested in [education]. ”**

PST Staff Member

**“ one thing that I see that is really a problem for us it’s the parent’s involvement. You see, if parents could [be] involved in their children’s education right from there, things could have been nice or could be very nice but we have problems with parents who really doesn’t. Because as Perivoli we have a manual for parents, parent workshops but the attendance is very, very low. ”**

PST Staff Member

**“ ... parents have not really got into understand that children needs to be introduced to education at an early stage. So, it becomes difficult because, then, they feel that it’s just somewhere where they would drop the children because they are busy with something else... kind of book a day care - and so, because of that, they don’t follow what is happening to the child - what are the children actually learning in school ”**

PST Staff Member

However, whilst the aim and purpose of parental involvement in children’s learning was commonly described, the ‘on the ground’ reality of engaging parents and caregivers was reported as much more challenging. This was in relation to parental participation in the modules, and more broadly by Educators in the difficulties of instilling parental interest in children’s learning. Participants emphasised the small percentage of parents or family members who attend meetings at their local centre. They reflected upon the challenges, suggesting that a lack of time for, or interest in, their children’s education could contribute:

Beyond supporting their children to complete homework, or being tasked with saving waste materials, the majority of parents reported not being aware they could be more directly involved with their children’s learning through completing the PST programme modules or attending workshops:

---

**“ there’s never been a day that we would be invited to a workshop like that...I’ve never heard about parents being taught ”**

Parent

---

**“ when we’re using eggs in the house or when we’ve been drinking cold drinks or milk, I’m cleaning the stuff and I’ll put it in the house...and when the teacher is asking the children to bring these things along, that’s when I’m sending them to school ”**

Parent

**“ when they go on holiday teacher is always giving us certain activities to do during the holiday like for instance making a collecting list – is that part of waste material, okay? And also collecting this crops...in term of using them to count, counting things or to build certain things. ”**

Parent

---

Whilst some parents talked about being engaged in regularly collecting waste materials, Educators stated that many parents were not fully committed to the task, and some did not understand the true value of the materials:

---

**“ they [parents] are willing to bring, they bring the stuff to the school without really much understanding of how useful the materials are ”** Educator

**“ it is not that easy but if you talk to the parents at least one or two parents can bring you the waste materials, not all. That is the difficulty that we face now with the waste material ”** Educator

**“ should the materials be left at the house they will just throw them away because they lack understanding of how useful that can be in terms of making children’s toys... it’s not difficult to bring the waste material but to make the parents understand the importance of this, it’s a bit difficult...they don’t know how she was going to make use of it ”** Educator

---

In relation to parental involvement in children’s education more broadly, many participants felt that families were not more involved due to their own experiences. These included a lack of opportunity, lack of accessible or local

provision, limited levels of literacy themselves, or the need to prioritise work. Consequently, many parents, caregivers and family members would not have had the opportunity to go to school:

---

**“ there is zero parental involvement, probably just one or two parents that will really show interest. If you give homework, nothing comes back. As she said, most of the kids stay with their grandparents, and then the granny cannot read, so they cannot help with the homework. So, it’s challenging. ”** Community Member

**“ Some of the people in the community, like myself, they don’t know how to read and write because schools were all so far. Also, the parents did not see the importance of education. With these ECDCs that are within the communities, the parents can easily see why education is important...when I was young – that’s why I did not even go further with my studies – because [my] parents would send me to go and look after cattle because they didn’t see the importance of education. These ECD centres were nowhere to be seen. ”** Community Member

---

In addition to low levels of parental education, participants also considered the context of poverty in many communities, and the impact of large households which require care, with domestic duties usually falling to daughters:

---

**“ there’s almost a vested interest against education particularly in poor communities...mothers that have not had any education themselves, particularly those with large numbers of children, they almost want to hold on to their children, particularly their daughters...they don’t want them to go and if a girl is educated she’s more likely to leave, so there is a sort of inherent difficulty and almost conflict going on there ”** PST Staff Member

---

Many participants reflected on why it was so challenging to engage family members in their children's education at the Centres. Some participants talked about parents' sending an older sibling on their behalf, or a maid from the household which was felt to be a positive first step. Other participants considered whether teachers were reluctant to contact parents or not sufficiently persistent in their efforts.

---

**“ but I think like teachers... I don't know if it's they are scared of the parent or because they try once and then they give up, but they will try calling the parents, the parents don't come...some teachers are not having smartphones, and then with the module itself, I have to send it through the phone on WhatsApp, and so some, they are not having it yet. ”** PST Staff Member

**“ A few parents that are willing to come around and do - some of them would send a maid or a brother - or an older sibling - but, at the end of the day, we still kind of started the communication between the people at home and the school. ”** PST Staff Member

---

PST Staff Members suggested ideas which they felt have encouraged parental participation by providing simple food at the meetings, seeking introductions from other professionals who have established relationships in the community, or moving the responsibility for engagement from Educarers to PST Trainers:

---

**“ Yes the parents...what we have seen, what brings parents is food...if you say, okay, we're gonna have maybe bread in or something simple they will come...but it's also a slow process...I thought it was only this region that Parent workshops are very low. But when I'm talking to others, they are also struggling with the same thing. ”** PST Staff Member

**“ the social workers they have more experience working in the community than just us going for the first time...a social**

**worker who they already know ...it's easier to get the caregivers together because the social workers as well they work in the nursery school or the early years centres ”** PST Staff Member

**“ I think maybe especially the parental workshop, maybe if they could take it away from the teacher and give them to the trainers, perhaps it would be better, so we can just also involve the parent themselves in a specific, different way, that we train parents, and this and this, I think it would do well with everything. ”** PST Staff Member

---

## 6.7 Disruption by Public Health Emergencies

The Covid19 pandemic had significant impact on society broadly and more acutely in relation to the provision and delivery of education. Many ECDCs in the regions closed during the global pandemic and some Educarers attempted to deliver learning via alternative formats. Participants talked about the challenges they experienced in delivering early years education to children during the pandemic. At a national level these difficulties included the closure of ECDCs during periods of social lockdown, ensuring children having access to safe, adequately sized physical spaces for care and learning, and keeping children and their families socially distanced. Participants also described the specific challenges they experienced in relation to the delivery of the PST model in practice, namely the ongoing collection of waste materials to support teaching and the implementation of consistent hygiene practices at centres, during the time of imposed social distancing.

Participants reported the ways in which the covid19 pandemic forced their centres to close due to the public health emergency, leaving them with no income. When permitted by the government to resume, ECDCs were expected to adopt innovative ways of teaching and learning that kept children safe, socially distanced and curbed the further spread of Covid19:



---

**“ During the time of COVID-19 the schools were closed ”** Parent

**“ The majority of parents withdrew their kids from the ECD centres ”**

Community Member

**“ We cannot work because our work is practical...but after the lockdown and school had opened so they would still continue their activities ”** Educarer

---

Once ECDs were able to re-open, and children resumed provision, participants talked about how the disruption to provision had negatively impacted children’s education. The longer-term impact of the pandemic was described by many participants in relation to the impact the cessation of education had upon children’s attainment and progression. Not only in relation to their literacy and numeracy, but also due to the lack of focus and daily structure. One Educarer describes how children left education, either due to frustration with having to remain indoors, or leaving education due to pregnancies:

---

**“ what I notice that the kids from my house is that some kids are unable to read properly...there are some that are unable to give us the alphabet...they are unable to give us the phonics. Kids are also, the kids’ education has gone backwards, so kids also they were staying at home more, like the ones at the high school now, so most of the girls they dropped out, most of the boys also dropped out. The boys maybe were involved in something bad, and they would be chased out of the school for example, you know, that frustration of the... violence now, you have to be indoors and all that, caused the kids to lash out should I say, and some kids did things that they were not supposed to do, some girls they dropped out because they are expecting, just because you were staying at home...the coronavirus really had a very bad impact on all of us. ”** Educarer

---

A large number of household incomes ceased during the pandemic and centres were unable to pay their staff. Participants also shared that many parents and caregivers remaining unable to pay their child(ren)’s tuition fees, meaning many Educarers resumed work, but with no income.

---

**“ [we] haven’t been paid. It’s kind of no work, no pay. Yes, and it’s difficult. It was very difficult for all of us. ”** PST Staff

---

However, when ECDs did reopen, participants talked about the reduction in class sizes due to social distancing measures and the limited capacity of ECDs meant that children often attended on alternate days:

---

**“ ...regarding the regulations of COVID... maybe one day today, next day off and so on so most kids will stay because their sisters and their brothers are at home unless really this person doesn’t have anybody at home. So there was quite a reduction of children in kindergartens ”** PST Staff Member

**“ ... there were fewer kids and they were spaced one metre distance ... You cannot also put...more kids ... If the child is just coughing, the child doesn’t come, and also parents were not allowed to come inside the centre - only has to stand outside for them to pick up the child. ”** PST Staff Member

---

Participants shared the ways in which Educarers’ roles had to adapt to prioritise children’s care over their educational development, and that the public health emergency meant some aspects of the PST model were not realistic or feasible during this time:

---

**“ ...they were so scared that much of their attention was geared towards the children, taking care of them so that they don’t touch one another... ”** Educarer

---

**“ we could still not do much on what we do on Perivoli, because when we teach, we sit down, but this time it’s the child who sit far from the other one, one metre distance ”**

PST Staff Member

Participants also discussed the ways in which the pandemic had a lasting impact, in terms of a delay in children returning to early years provision, and therefore Educarers being required to return to their centre-based roles:

**“ Many schools closed down and then they took them a long time to reopen again and for us, sometimes when you come there, well, there are no kids. Okay, the building is there, the teacher is available, but there are no kids or the teacher is not there. I mean, you know, COVID [laugh] it’s a problem thing that one. So it’s only now that you see some teachers are coming back ”** PST Staff Member

Some highlighted the financial impact of the pandemic, and explained how parents’ payments of children’s early years’ fees have still not returned to pre-pandemic levels and regularity leaving lasting impact in the sector:

**“ the parents couldn’t pay the school fees although they wanted their children back and so because they couldn’t pay because some of them lost their jobs but all the same they took the kids, the children, yet the payment was not consistent up to now it is not up to the level that it used to be. So, they don’t pay regularly. ”** Educarer

In relation to maintaining children’s education, some participants talked about their experiences of alternative arrangements for home-based learning during the pandemic. Whilst some described the use of Whats App as a communication tool for the dissemination of home-learning instructions:

**“ They are doing on the WhatsApp...give this one to the parent - ‘Tell the kids how to colour.’ ‘Tell the kids how to do ‘What, what, what ’ ”** Parent

**“ During the registration periods, the teachers used to ask us for our cell phone numbers. We used to engage with them during that time through cell phones. ”** Community Member

However, because many individuals do not have smart phones, and due to limited internet connectivity, some participants recounted their concerns during the pandemic about the transfer of the virus via the shared handling of physical workbooks from the ECDCs to family homes

**“ They have to come and get the booklets. Whereby the majority of other teachers felt like the booklets will come back again with the virus, COVID, so handling it, it would be like you are putting yourself at risk. That was how it was at my school. So, these booklets will go to the parents, but coming back, you will just dump them there. So, the kids, really... I don’t know. Some parents did not really do anything, so a lot of kids were affected in [some] degree. ”** Community Member

Participants explained that the model did not continue during the pandemic (2020) until the virus began to lift. Once it did, some Educarers talked about continuing their learning on the programme, albeit at a slower pace, and focused on attending PST Support Groups. However, due to the applied nature of the model, many Educarers were ‘lost’ from the PST TTP, as they were no longer employed by ECDCs:

---

**“ Then we also lost our teachers, because if you are no more at school, which means that you cannot be part of Perivoli again. ”**

PST Staff Member

**“ It’s taken a while I think to pick up the pace and equally, a lot of the teachers sort of disappeared because they couldn’t afford to continue and they sort of slid away ”**

PST Staff Member

---

In relation to the PST model’s key principle of reusing and recycling locally available waste materials, many participants described how they would no longer collect items for the centres to use during the time of the pandemic. This was reported as impacting the children in that they were not able to visualise the activities as they usually would during learning through play:

---

**“ The use of waste materials was reduced so much because we used to tell the kids that if you pick anything you will die, so they did not pick any waste materials. We had so much fear of picking those materials. We never knew who had touched the materials. ”**

Community Member

**“ about the taking of waste materials, we stopped because we were told you know, you get the virus, you could catch the virus from picking waste material, so we stopped during that time. It was a negative impact on the child because they were not seeing the materials that were supposed to see when the teacher is teaching them during their play. ”**

Parent

**“ During that time it really affected our children’s learning because during that time we didn’t really use the approach of Perivoli because we were not collecting the waste materials from anywhere, because we never know who touched that material or those objects that were just lying around ”**

Parent

---

Some talked about the ways that their PST practice was adapted to ensure cleanliness. Some participants talked about their continued use of waste materials, but

only those their family had provided, and only for their individual use in the classroom:

---

**“ No, no – you cannot go – we didn’t collect that small things, because you don’t know who was using that cutting [who] is touch that cuttings, and then you pick up, you bring to the kindergarten – ‘what will happen?’ – you don’t know. You cannot collect - that time. ”**

Parent

**“ it was hygiene, songs and then making sure that each kid has its own material that they don’t share. The teachers, if they have to make material, they have to make material for each and every child, including the parents, although they can buy or create material and bring in the class, but it would be only specific for that child ”**

PST Staff Member

**“ It was really difficult because some parents didn’t allow the materials for the kids because of touching ”**

Educator

---

More generally, not specific to the PST model, participants described an increase in hygiene practices within early years’ provision. Participants talked about donating soap to the ECDCs. Some referred to how the PST model supported ECDCs to build ‘tippy taps’ for children to regularly wash their hands without touching surfaces:

---

**“ ...the school still ask us to bring soaps so that the children can be washing their hands now and then ”**

Parent

**“ ...when we see that a child is having terrible flu, like the child is sneezing too much or coughing too much...we make them wash their hands with soap and water. ”**

Educator

**“ ...she installed a tap so that the children could wash their hands before and after eating or going to the bathroom...Even the parents and the others, when they come, they were expected to also wash their hands before entering the centre ”**

Parent



## 6.8 Contexts of Care and Welfare

The PST TTP model was developed to empower local nursery school teachers, particularly in remote areas, who had children to care and educate but with very little available resources. Whilst Perivoli began with attempts at improving centre infrastructure and sanitation, participants described how the programme evolved to focus upon building local capacity and skills in the community through empowerment of local people. Participants talked about how the PST approach was beneficial to communities that had little money or resources due to its focus upon training and the use of locally available waste materials. Furthermore, the association with the PST model was identified as a strength by which community-led applications for resources and funding were thought to be more successful:

---

**“... we started by actually helping existing schools to build infrastructure, lavatories and fences and toys and this and that, but that didn't really work for various reasons”** PST Staff Member

**“Looking at the ways in the context of Perivoli, I feel like, especially on the poverty, for me, it doesn't only mean food and so on. Sometimes it's also material-wise. Sometimes, kids go to school, they need these materials. So with the community, if we could work together, parent and teacher and us, just to create materials out of waste material, I believe, with poverty, it's going to help us a lot. We don't need to go buy things, we don't need to have money for our children to be educated or for them to know what we want to teach us, so it is really going to help us to educate the community from home to school is going to help us, 100%”** PST Staff Member

**“Since the school is registered under Perivoli, it's making it easier for the school to get donations, to write donations, to write letters of donations so they can get donations from different companies. For example, teachers are writing letters to different companies so they can get donations of toys that are brought to the school.”** Community Member

---

The PST model, and in fact, broadly, early years' care and education was described as being delivered within a challenging context of practice. Many participants described the significance of the environments they worked in, and talked about the difficulties they faced in teaching delivery in remote communities, and communities with high levels of poverty.

---

**“In towns there tend[s] to be more wealth and therefore the nursery school teachers tend to be paid by the parents more willingly and they have more money, more resource, sometimes they're in better quality buildings, sometimes they're in churches, you know, whereas in rural communities they are just in makeshift stick buildings often or indeed no building at all, they're sitting round a tree stump or a tree and so clearly, you know, there's bigger challenges I suppose where they are really very poor”** PST Staff Member

**“...a lot of people live beneath the level of poverty, less than \$2 a day and therefore they simply don't have the bandwidth to think about their children's education – just getting food on the table and you know, getting shelter is a priority and education comes far down the list”** PST Staff Member

---

In relation to the infrastructure of ECDCs, many participants described centres which had been made from corrugated iron sheets leaving little space to allow children to move freely during teaching activities. Some of the structures in informal settlements also became very hot due to the climate which meant activities needed to be moved outside later in the morning, or children would be sent home before 11am:

---

**“...they were teaching outside when it's not that cold ...or if they are inside then one can't sit there far from each other because of the distance”** Parent

**“where we are now it's very hot, the kids only come in the morning and before 11 they have to leave because is very hot”** Parent

**“ some teachers the places are very small where the kids are sitting and it’s very hot there ”** Community Member

---

A number of participants reported the process of collecting data on behalf of the PST with a view to understanding levels of children’s attendance, facilities, and general welfare. Participants also talked about the broader focus that the PST approach gives to ensuring children’s welfare and care, where Educators are encouraged to undertake home visits if worries arise, and community members facilitate children’s packed lunches:

---

**“ We have an app on our phones that we use to collect data. We register all the kids. Every teacher has kids under her or him, so we go to schools and find out how many kids are in that class, how many girls and how many boys, and also we mark them according to how many days are they coming to school. On top of that we also look at is there toilets at the school, is there water, and how many did drop out maybe from last month to this month? Are they being fed, are they getting food or is the school providing food for them? ”**

PST Staff Member

**“ Also try to investigate their circumstances at home, whether the area that they are living in is clean, so that if, you know, the kids will tell you that no, there’s a dumpster in front of our house and we are playing in that dumpster. And then as a teacher if you hear something like that, you educate the child that no, it is not nice to play there, and so forth. And if the child continues playing there...tell the parents that, the child is playing in the dumpster... please just look after him... ”** Educator

**“ we also encourage the teachers to do home visits especially when you see the child is not doing well ”** PST Staff Member

**“ We are also involved by making sure that our children have got meals that they need to take along to the school, otherwise they go to school without meals’ ”**

Community Member

---

Children’s welfare was discussed by many participants in relation to worries about their safety. This was both within the classroom and in relation to collecting waste materials for the construction of toys and educational activities. Many participants highlighted the challenges they experienced when collecting waste materials from the side of the roads, be it in relation to the danger of snakes or spiders, the potential for injuries or infections from handling dirty materials, or children becoming ill from eating food left in containers. Some participants explained the ways that Educators are trained to clean materials and dispose of any hazardous waste:

---

**“ As a parent, my role is to ensure that the schools around you are safe because where are staying, there are a lot of snakes so we ensure the safety of the kids. We always go there to ensure that the surrounding places are always clean. ”** Community Member

**“ [!] worry about the safety of the children...It can be maybe a snake hidden under there or a spider so the child can also be in danger. Also, sometimes maybe they can find food that is underneath that carton so they might also start eating that food. ”** Community Member

**“ when they are picking these materials, they can be exposed to infections. You never know what they will find when they pick these materials at the dumping sites and how dangerous it can be. They can step on broken bottles and then they can also be injured ”** Community Member

**“ when we train the teachers and the caregivers to bring some of the used resources in the classroom, we’re training them to bring them in class but also how they can properly dispose of them and make sure that they are not a hazard ”**

PST Staff Member

---

In relation to teaching practice, some participants reported the way that the PST model has helped reduce the use of physical punishment in the classrooms, by giving Educators the skills and knowledge they need to manage classrooms with activities:

---

**“Perivoli has trained us, and we impart them to teachers, and it’s really helping, especially the discipline. No more teachers that are beating the kids because they are naughty. They are disciplining them with activities. I enjoy actually passing those information to them, knowing that our community is becoming a better one, especially in education.”** PST Staff Member

---

---

**“before she turned five, she was just there in the community and she was with one person, with another person, and I was concerned about the safety of the child because these things are not safe. That’s why I decided to bring the child to the centre and also when the children start school they need to have been exposed to a centre.”** Parent

---

**“If a child have no-one to take care of him or her, the child is being brought to the centre and the children are being prepared for school and they are not wandering around the streets, but they are being brought in the centre. I only see it is really good, the centre, to have the children staying in a space learning instead of wandering around”** Parent

---

Within the centres, the safety and welfare of children was discussed in terms of the ‘safe’ spaces the centres facilitated for children, and the importance of children being engaged with early years’ learning:



# 7. Discussion

The Perivoli Schools Trust (PST) Teacher Training Programme (TTP) was established in Namibia in 2012. Over the last thirteen years its implementation has extended to all of the country's fourteen regions, now having reached more than 8,300 Educарers in over 2,700 ECDCs. Aside from its popularity, little was known about the Educарer training programme, and how the communities in which it exists perceive and experience it. This is the first study to explore and understand the Perivoli Schools Trust TTP in Namibia. It aimed to investigate the impact of the PST TTP on the lives and wellbeing of children, parents, Educарers, Trainers, their families, and the wider communities. It employed qualitative methods and engaged with 86 individual adult participants in three regions of Namibia. The methods comprised of semi-structured interviews with parents and caregivers, Educарers, Perivoli Staff individuals, and talking circles with members of the community (including Primary School Teachers and ECD sector representatives). These methods were complemented by observations of class-based practice, observations of Educарer training, a programme graduation ceremony, and research team engagement with children at the centres, through creative workshops rooted in the principles of the PST approach.

The findings highlight positive and impactful experiences of the PST TTP across nearly all participant groups within the study, whether participants had been trained by the programme, were a trainer for the programme, were a member of PST staff, were parents and caregivers of children who were attending a centre where the approach was used, or members of the community. Noteworthy, were the thoughts and opinions offered by members of the community (which included roles of Education Officers, community leaders, and Primary School Teachers). These participants shared their observations about children who had engaged with the PST approach in early years' provision tending to be more advanced in their literacy and numeracy, and social and cognitive skills, and were felt to be better prepared to engage with pre-primary and primary class-based learning. A small group of participants, specifically

parents and caregivers, were not familiar with the PST approach, nor its guiding principles. As such these participants were typically not able to articulate their views and opinions - beyond sharing their individual experiences of gathering waste materials for constructing educational resources at the ECDC their child(ren) attended.

Findings indicate that the PST TTP is a comprehensive and innovative programme which complements other programmes which offer Educарer training and qualifications in Namibia (provided through charities, government, or higher institutions of learning, see s.3.5). At 2-years in duration, the PST TTP is substantially longer than other non-accredited Educарer training programmes in Namibia, but shorter in duration than ECD qualifications offered by institutions of higher education such as a Diploma in Early Childhood Education [3 years] or Bachelor of Education [4 years]. The PST TTP differs from other programmes in the sector, in that the learner must be working with children at an ECDC or kindergarten. This requirement is essential due to the programme's focus on in-service training for Educарers which develops and applies their skills 'in practice'. As such, Educарers are visited by Perivoli Trainers who observe and support learners on the ground, 'in action' at centre-based provision. The principles and modular content of the PST TTP can be applied by Educарers as either a standalone approach, or more broadly, in combination with knowledge that Educарers have acquired from other sources of training (e.g. the MGEPEWS's ECD Basic Curriculum 12-week course, which is provided to Educарers at ECDCs formally registered with the Ministry).

Compared to other Educарer training and qualifications in Namibia, findings suggest that the PST TTP is unique in nature, as its guiding principles pioneer ways for ECD provision to contribute to national (and global) environmental and sustainability agendas. The PST approach invites Educарers, parents and caregivers to collect waste materials from households and public spaces for the purpose of



constructing educational resources. This aligns with the 'Environmental Sustainability' pillar of Namibia's 5th National Development Plan (2017), not simply through the programme's inclusion of contemporary modular content on green education and children's interconnected relationship with their environments, but more fundamentally through the programme's design. The PST TTP foregrounds the philosophy of 'reuse and repurpose', which helps achieve the policy objectives within Namibia's National Solid Waste Management Strategy (2017). This keeps materials 'in use' for as long as possible with the purpose of reducing levels of waste pollution and dumping within communities. With this approach, the PST approach offers ECD provision a cost-free, sustainable, and accessible pathway, through which waste materials can be easily obtained and repurposed for the benefit of children's education within their formative years. The importance of the PST approach, both its practical application which guides Educators in the 'how' of teaching practice, and its creative and innovative use of waste materials, both of which were

celebrated components of programme, and emphasised within the findings.

The PST approach holds particular value in contexts where resources are scarce, levels of poverty within the community are high, and provision of ECD services are limited. The PST approach holds significant applicability for early years provision and programming in Namibia due to the country's large size, extensive rurality, skewed resource distribution (particularly in rural areas), where extreme levels of inequality and poverty exist (World Bank, 2024; Namibia Statistics Agency, 2018) (see. S.3.1 & 3.4). As such, the PST approach offers the sector a 'road map' for strengthening and expansion of Educator training (through a variety of providers) to mobilise and transform the country's ECD workforce as set out in Namibia's 5th National Development Plan 2017-2022 (Republic of Namibia, 2017). The PST TTP can contribute to ensuring the ECD national workforce all hold the professional and academic skills required to equip them for preparing children cognitively and socially, ready for

formal schooling (Ngololo et al., 2024). The PST model creates large regional (and national) 'communities of practice' where Educators are connected with one another, can share knowledge, give and receive peer support, and find shared-solutions to challenges which may arise in their educate practice. The creation of these 'networks' is acknowledged as a core principle of the PST TTP structure and a strength of the programme which occurs during the 'maintenance phase'. Findings suggest that there is growing desire and regional interest in expanded the PST networks, to build upon and encourage a greater sense of community 'ownership' with the purpose of more formally embedding collaborations and alliances with local stakeholders.

Whilst the PST TTP directly impacts on children's learning and development and contributes to national educational and environmental strategies, the study's findings also suggest that the programme benefits the wider communities where it has presence. In particular, findings indicate how the programme mobilises the individual and collective capacities of the neighbourhoods in which the approach exists, not only in supporting Educators to gain skills, but training Perivoli Trainers for programme delivery, and providing opportunities for coordinators who manage delivery of the model at regional level. Notably, the PST approach emphasises the delivery of training, as opposed to funding resources and infrastructure for early years' provision. This approach was recognised as empowering people through professional skills development and creating local opportunities for paid work which does not require relocation to urbanised areas. Findings also underscore the ways in which the PST values and celebrates individual and collective achievements. More widely, the PST TTP demonstrates the value of Educators to the community, activating the next generation's interests in, and aspirations for, early years education.

Findings suggest that children who have engaged with the PST approach are often better prepared for engaging with pre-primary and primary education. Parents, caregivers, Educators, and Community Members (including Primary School Teachers) perceived the PST approach to positively support children's development, increasing the rate at which they learn, compared to children who attend ECDCs where the PST approach is not applied. Despite a high (around 90%) primary education enrolment rate for children beginning school (aged 7), literature suggests that around 20% of children in Namibia fail their first year of school, either needing

to repeat or dropping out of education altogether (Liswaniso, 2023). As such, this study indicates that the PST approach has the potential to increase children's readiness for, and engagement with, learning in pre-primary and primary education. In fact, beyond early years' provision, the PST approach is gathering attention and momentum amongst teaching professionals, with its reputation becoming established. This raises a question as to whether the PST approach could be formally embedded into approaches within pre-primary and primary education, to reduce the rates of attrition in Grade 1, and promoting a smooth transition for children from early years' learning into class-based education. Such application of the PST approach in Grade 1 settings would align with the Integrated Early Childhood Development Service Delivery: A Framework for Action which in relation to stimulation for early learning, calls for additional support and training of Grade 1 teachers, (MGESW, 2017).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, findings of the study illustrate challenges related to the PST TTP's ability to engage parents and family members in their children's early learning. Whilst the PST TTP embeds parent and caregiver involvement (broadly, and embedded within parent-focused workshops), beyond gathering waste materials for use in the ECDCs most parents and caregivers did not typically engage with their child(ren)'s learning, nor understand the PST approach. In fact, on a practical level, findings indicate that Educators in the six centres sampled, experienced considerable struggles in engaging family members in children's learning both in school and home settings. Whilst parental involvement is cited in Namibia's National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (MGEPSW, 2007), as both a guiding principle of provision and specified in relation to parental education through structured modules, it continues to raise challenges for ECD programming. This is perhaps not unexpected, because prior to Namibia's independence (1990) parental participation in their children's academic development was not promoted under the apartheid-led colonial government (Chavez, 2016). Findings of this study strongly align with Nauyoma et al.'s (2022) research into parental involvement in Early Childhood Development in Rundu Circuit, Namibia. Nauyoma et al., report that parent and caregivers' lack of time, lack of interest in their children's education, low educational levels, and living in poverty, were some of the contributing factors which raised challenges for parental involvement.

# 8. Conclusion & Recommendations

## The findings suggest several key recommendations:

**8.1** The Perivoli Schools Trust Teacher Training Programme (PST TTP) is a comprehensive 2-year programme for Educarers consisting of 16 modules. Findings suggest that its innovative and creative approach is unique, characterised by the way it models the application of knowledge in early child care and education provision. The programme provides extensive in-programme and post-certificate learning support to Educarers. Alongside modular learning, the PST approach establishes 'communities' of early years' practitioners, mobilising networks for peer-support at a regional level following graduation.

- ▶ It is recommended that the PST modules are reviewed and aligned to the MGESW's 'National Unit Standards for Educarers in Namibia' which is registered at level 4 on Namibia's National Qualification Framework (NQF level 4)
- ▶ Consequently, it is recommended that the PST modules are integrated in the MGESW's 'Curriculum Framework for Children in Namibia' with a view to accreditation.

**8.2** A guiding principle of the PST approach is the sustainable use of waste materials to construct educational resources for early years' learning. This principle foregrounds the importance of play-based learning for children aged 0-6 years old, whilst simultaneously promoting a broader ethos of recycling and waste minimisation which keeps materials 'in use' as long as possible aligned with Namibia's National Solid Waste Management Strategy (2017). Findings suggest that the sustainable use of waste materials for the construction of educational resources offers Educarers and ECDCs a cost-free, widely accessible, environmentally sustainable route which promotes play-based learning.

- ▶ It is recommended that the principle of using locally available materials in the development of educational activities be expanded and endorsed at a national level for all early years' education provision, under the MGESW's 'Curriculum Framework for Children in Namibia'.

**8.3** The inclusion of environmental education is an asset of the PST TTP. The TTP supports Educarers to deliver activities which can develop children's understandings of, and love for, the environment during their formative years. The PST approach promotes the fundamental interdependence between human flourishing and nature from a child's early age. Whilst there is potential for the PST to build upon and expand their modular content in relation to environmental issues, all Educarers should be equipped to deliver practical activities for children in relation to the environment, their wellbeing and physical development.

- ▶ It is recommended that principles of and content on 'green' or environmental education be formally embedded in the 'Curriculum Framework for Children in Namibia' through the National Unit Standards for Educarers.
- ▶ It is recommended that the PST expand existing modular content which has the potential to improve children's health and educational outcomes whilst protecting the natural environment. Dissemination of new modules should be achieved by leveraging the PST's existing large-scale national network of Educarers.

**8.4** Educarers, Primary School Teachers and Community Members recognise an increase in the rate of children’s development when they have had opportunity to learn through play during PST activities, compared to children who have not had the opportunity to attend ECDCs where PST activities are employed. Educarers’ and Community Members’ (which included Primary School Teachers) views report that children who received provision from Perivoli trained Educarers appeared more advanced in their learning, and as such, were perceived to be better prepared for learning in pre-primary and primary school settings.

- ▶ It is recommended that the principles of the PST approach be adopted by teachers in pre-primary and primary level educational settings, to promote a smooth and natural transition for children from early years’ learning into class-based education under MGESW’s Integrated Early Childhood Development Framework (IECDF) in Namibia.

**8.5** The PST model mobilises the capacities of individuals and communities. The PST provides local, accessible opportunities for training to Educarers working at ECDCs, and for individuals for contractual work as Perivoli Staff (e.g. Trainers, Regional Coordinators). Whilst Educarers’ achievements are celebrated and recognised by way of Perivoli certificates awarded at graduation ceremonies in the community, Trainers’ skills by comparison, are not currently acknowledged or commended either within the organisation or beyond. Findings of the study suggest that not taking into account the value of the skills and expertise of Perivoli trainers, has potential to weaken commitment to the programme, and beyond the programme limits access to opportunities for career development in the sector.

- ▶ It is recommended that Trainers’ expertise in early years’ care and education practice is recognised and commended by way of a Perivoli Certificate, awarded upon completion of their pre-service training.
- ▶ It is recommended that Trainers’ contributions to the PST TTP be celebrated at Perivoli graduation ceremonies, aligned with their cohort’s successful completion of the modular content.

**8.6** The PST approach embeds parent and caregiver involvement in children’s education directly through the facilitation of Perivoli Parent Support Programme workshops, and indirectly through the request for bringing waste materials from home and community settings to the ECDCs for educational resource development. Findings suggest that whilst the concept of parental and family involvement holds value in a professional and community context, on a practical level Educarers experience challenges in successfully engaging family members in ECDC-based activities which focus upon their child(ren)’s learning. These challenges could be countered by involving community elders and leaders, retired teachers, School Board members, Community Development Officers, or Social Workers in the facilitation of parent and family member workshops.

- ▶ It is recommended that Trainers collaborate with community leaders, educarers, and or local professionals to scaffold relationships with parents/ caregivers so as to develop a credible environment, rooted in local ways of doing and knowing to carefully explore perceptions about the role of family participation in children’s education and learning.
- ▶ It is recommended that responsibility for engaging parents and family members, and the delivery of the ‘Perivoli Parent Support Programme Workshops’ be held by Perivoli Trainers and facilitated in community spaces.

**8.7** Whilst the PST TTP is an established, well-regarded and effective Educarer training programme which benefits individuals and local communities, the financing and ownership of the programme by a UK-based charity is not infinitely maintainable. Findings of the study suggest that the longevity and permanence of the PST TTP could be enhanced if embedded into national curriculum and support systems in the education sector to ensure collaboration with local stakeholders.

- ▶ It is recommended that the PST explores ways to engage community leaders, elders, education and social work professionals, and community groups, to develop collaborations and alliances with local stakeholders.
- ▶ It is recommended that the PST seeks ways to formalise community and organisational alliances at regional and national levels in relation to delivery of the programme, to empower local stakeholders and create a sense of community ‘ownership’.

# 9. Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Whilst this qualitative study gathered rich knowledge through peoples lived experiences (n=86), the methods are limited in that they rely upon individuals' abilities to accurately and honestly recall and share their thoughts, feelings and opinions. Qualitative methods can have potential for bias to emerge within the data interpretation process, particularly so when working across different cultural, institutional and global contexts. As such all members of the research team worked collaborative and reflexively in relation to the analysis of the data. In the northern region, it is acknowledged that the use of a translator (from outside the research team) during the interviews and talking circles had potential to introduce an additional layer of subjectivity in relation to understanding meaning within participants' responses. However, through member checking, the findings of the

study were shared with the participants for their review and feedback, ensuring that the results reflect their experiences and views.

Due to the time and financial parameters of the study, and the extensive size of Namibia, the study was conducted in three of Namibia's fourteen regions. Findings are therefore limited to the experiences shared by individuals in six ECDCs sampled, in three regions of the country. Whilst the purpose of qualitative data is not to generalise findings to a larger population, findings can offer transferability to other regions within Namibia of similar socio-economic status, and other countries in Africa, where the PST approach is used with children aged 0-4 years.

# 10. Implications for Future Research

This study has generated in-depth and powerful qualitative understandings in relation to the individual and collective experiences of the PST approach by gathering and amplifying voices and lived experiences of people from six communities, within three of Namibia's regions. Whilst this study was not a formal evaluation of the PST model in Namibia, it does provide a preliminary evidence base which contributes understanding towards the strengthening and expansion of existing ECD provision and programming. Future research could include a more substantive study, or a formal

evaluation of the PST model to include the modular content and a quantitative analysis of the programme's digital data. Moreover, studies which extend the sample to all fourteen regions of Namibia, or which consist of a comparative component which investigates the ways in which the PST model and approach are delivered beyond Namibia, in other African countries (i.e. Botswana, Zambia, Lesotho, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia) would be a welcome addition.





higher population concentration. The capital of Kavango is Nkurenkuru (pop. 618).

Kavango West has the highest incidence rate of multidimensional poverty (across the dimensions of education, living standards and health) out of all fourteen regions in Namibia at 80% (NSA, 2021). The region has a low annual budgetary allocation of N\$178,381/ £8,383 for development programme expenditure for 2021-22 (RON, 2021).

In the region only 20% of children aged 0-4 years old (3,136) attend ECD provision [nationally ranging from 9-38%] (NSA, 2016). The most common reason for children aged 4-5 years to not attend ECD provision is distance to the provision (48%), followed by financial constraints (24%) (NSA, 2016). Kavango West has the lowest literacy rate in the country for children aged 15 years and above (76%) significantly lower than the national average of 89% (NSA, 2016). As a whole region, Kavango (East and West) has the second largest number of children (1558) aged 0-4 years old receiving a social welfare grant (which equates to 12% of the national allocation) (MGECW, 2015).

---

**Otjozondjupa** is a region in central-north Namibia. The region is known for cattle farming and associated industries. In the east Otjozondjupa borders the north-west district of Botswana (bordering more domestic regions than any other region in the country). The population of Otjozondjupa is 143,903. The region is best known for mining, (contributing 20% of the town's economy) tourism, private game farms and nature reserves (including Etosha National Park). The capital of the region is Otjiwarongo which has 28,000 inhabitants and about 15 schools, and is the largest business centre for the Otjozondjupa region with well-developed infrastructure, and good links to Namibia's capital Windhoek (which is 40km south) via the Transnamib railway. The San and Damaras were the first settlers and continue to have a strong presence in the region.

The multidimensional poverty incidence rate (across the dimensions of education, living standards and health) in Otjozondjupa is 41% (NSA, 2021), reflective of the national average in Namibia at 43%. However, the depth of poverty in

Namibia is acknowledged as highest amongst the populations whose main spoken language is Khoisan such as the San and Damaras. The region has a high annual budgetary allocation of N\$549,676/ £25,834 for development programme expenditure for 2021-22 (RON, 2021).

In the region only 18% of children aged 0-4 years old (5163) attend ECD provision (NSA, 2016). The two most common reasons for children not to attend ECD provision in Otjozondjupa is distance to provision (36%) and financial constraints (31%) (NSA, 2016). In Otjozondjupa 83% of children aged 15 and above are literate (NSA, 2016). In 2015, 578 children aged 0-4 years old received child welfare grant (18% of the national allocation).

---

**//Karas** is a region in the southern most region of Namibia, the largest and least densely populated region in the country. The region borders the Atlantic to the west and South Africa to the east. The population is around 77,000. The region has three towns, and five self-governing villages. The region is predominantly a small stock farming area, mostly sheep or goats, with some game farming and irrigation farming along the Naute Dam and the Orange River. The region is best known for diamond mining and tourism alongside farming. The town of Keetmanshoop is the main urban centre (//Kharas Regional Council, 2021).

//Karas has the second lowest incidence rate of multidimensional poverty (across the dimensions of education, living standards and health) out of all fourteen regions in Namibia at 20% (NSA, 2021). The region has an average annual budgetary allocation of N\$383,586/ £18,028.54 for development programme expenditure for 2021-22 (RON, 2021). Only 20% of children aged 0-4 years old (3136) attend ECD provision (NSA, 2016). The most common reason for children not to attend ECD provision in //Karas are due to financial constraints (47%) and also the distance to the provision (27%) (NSA, 2016). The region has one of the highest rates of literacy for children aged 15 years and above (96%) only second to Khomas which hosts the capital city of Windhoek. //Karas has the lowest number of children (376) aged 0-4 years old receiving social welfare grants (representing 3% of the national total) (MGECW, 2015).

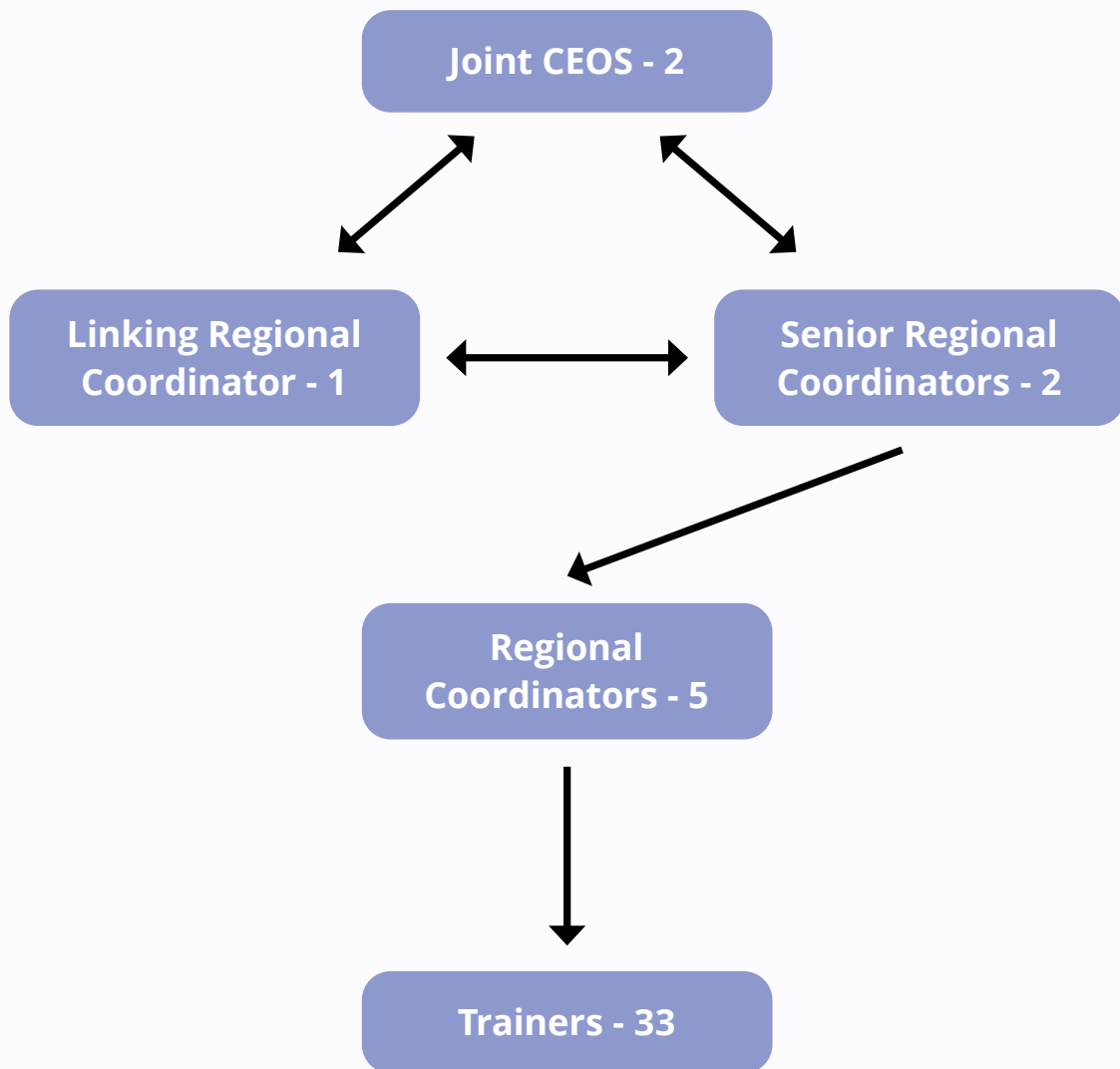
# Appendix B

## Participant Characteristics by Region

Region 1- Otjozondjupa	
Parents and carers	Inc. Grandparents 3 n=11
Educарers	n=3
Community talking circle	<b>Roles:</b> teachers, retired teachers, parents, school board members, preprimary Education Officer involved in curriculum development n=13
PST staff	n=3
Region 2 - //Karas	
Parents and carers	n=10
Educарers	n=2
Community talking circle	<b>Roles:</b> community members, youth representative, ECD student, Community Development Officer, government officials, journalist n=7
PST staff	n=2
Region 3 Kavango West	
Parents and carers	n=10
Educарers	n=4
Community talking circle	<b>Roles:</b> school board member, teachers (current and retired) retired nurse, farmer, headmen, street vendor, unemployed students and parents in voluntary roles e.g. cleaning the environment and bringing water to the ECDCs n=12
PST staff	n=1
Online Interviews	
PST staff	n=8

# Appendix C

## The Perivoli Schools Trust Organogram - Namibia



**Note: Senior Regional Coordinators and Regional Coordinators also play the role of a Trainer**

# Appendix D

## The Perivoli Schools Trust - Modules

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- This module introduces the Perivoli Schools Trust and the Nursery School Teachers' Training Program to Educarers and for the most part covers "the what, How, when and where" the program will be run.

### 2. PLANNING

- This module introduces the Educarers to the concept of planning their work, classroom and the whole nursery school activities.

### 3. COMMUNICATION AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- This module focuses on involvement of Parents in enhancing a child's learning process thereby completing the triangular cycle of Teacher-learner-parent relationship.

### 4. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

- This module hinges more on how 'language' can be used to amplify 'communication' by enhancing a child's phonetics, audibility and activities that can support the process of learning language in a fun way (through play).

### 5. PERCEPTUAL SKILLS: 1. AUDITORY

- This module supports and provides Educarers with ways and games to develop skills and activities that can be used in the classroom to help children develop their Auditory Skills.

### 6. PERCEPTUAL SKILLS: 2. VISUAL

- This module helps Educarers develop and implement fun activities to help children enhance their visual skills.

### 7. BODY IMAGE, SPACE AND MOVEMENT

- As a process of developing self-awareness, language, gross and fine motor skills, this module introduces play activities that amplify the use of locally made resources in classroom and beyond.

### 8. INCLUSION & CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- This module focuses on how classes (schools) can be used as a tool for enhancing equality in offering quality education regardless of background and techniques needed for Educarers to employ.

### 9. ACTIVITY AREAS

- This module is a summation of all necessary resources and activities areas needed for a learner to learn through PLAY

### 10. DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE LEARNING

- This module focuses on how an Educarer can, appropriately, create a conducive environment to allocate and customise the content for learning.

### 11. PERSONAL HYGIENE

- This module focuses on the essence of creating and how to create a healthy environment for learners.

### 12. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- This module focuses on equipping learners/ children with knowledge about 'the world around them'.

### 13. SAFETY AND WELLNESS

- This module focuses on providing safety measures for/to learners and how they can, assertively, cope with threatening encounters.

### 14. PREPARING FOR SCHOOL 1

- This module focuses on assessing and preparing learners in readiness for primary school

### 15. GENDER AND INCLUSION

- This module aims to provide a conducive environment for learners to understand themselves and their rights.

### 16. PREPARING FOR SCHOOL 2

- This is a continuation of module 14 in preparing learners for primary school.

# Appendix E

## The Perivoli Schools Trust - Digital Backbone

A key feature of the Perivoli School Trust Teacher Training Programme (PSTTTP) is its digital backbone which allows for the programme to be scaled rapidly across multiple geographies.

The digitalisation was implemented in 2018 and entails each of the Perivoli Trainers being issued with a tablet computer through which to record and upload data to the Perivoli Schools Trust (PST) Database through a PST App about their interactions with teachers and children.

The digitalisation of the program has multiple benefits, including: (1) facilitating the tracking of progress, on a trainer by trainer, and teacher by teacher basis; (2) the reconciliation of the amounts invoiced by the trainers month by month against what the Database records as having been their activities in a given month; (3) the implementation of a measurement and evaluation tool known as IDELA, which was created by Save The Children's Fund for the purposes of assessing progress by learners in Early Childhood Development (ECD) settings; and (4) the implementation of an incentivisation programme for the Perivoli Trainers aimed to encourage the delivery of excellence.

The incentivisation programme works such that trainers are set seven Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) upon which they are measured. These include ensuring that teacher drop-out rates do not exceed 20%; classroom visits take place at least every three months for each teacher; classroom activity "corners" are set up on a timely rate; all teacher and parent consents are obtained; there are zero data entry errors through the App; and a geolocation feature is satisfied (which requires that class visits take place at the school in question).

Trainers are awarded bonuses on a six-monthly basis assuming they meet all seven KPIs; Regional Coordinator's six-monthly bonuses depend on each of the trainers in their teams qualifying for their bonus; and Senior Regional Coordinators bonuses depend on all of the Regional Coordinators that report to them also being eligible for the bonus. This approach is designed to create a pyramid of inter-dependency and support.

**(Alexandroff, 2025).**

# References

Adeniyi, O., & Folarin, O. (2025). Industrialization, Finance, and Urbanization in Africa. *Journal of African Development*, 26(1), 137-164

African Union, (2025). Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2026-2035: a framework for action. Available at: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44940-doc-AU\\_CESA-2026-2035\\_Strategy\\_ENGLISH.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44940-doc-AU_CESA-2026-2035_Strategy_ENGLISH.pdf) [Accessed: 3 July 2025].

African Union, (1990). African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Addis Ababa: Ethiopia. Available at: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36804-treaty-african\\_charter\\_on\\_rights\\_welfare\\_of\\_the\\_child.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36804-treaty-african_charter_on_rights_welfare_of_the_child.pdf) [Accessed: 3 July 2025]

Akinsemolu, AA. and Onyeaka, H. (2025) The Role of Green Education in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: a review. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy*. Vol. 210, 115-239.

Alexandroff, J. (2025) *The Perivoli Schools Trust Digital Backbone*. Unpublished.

Biraimah, K. L. (2016). Moving Beyond a Destructive past to a Decolonised and Inclusive Future: the role of ubuntu-style education in providing culturally relevant pedagogy for Namibia. *International Review of Education*. Vol 62. 45-62.

Braun, v. Clarke, V. Hayfield, N. Davey, L. and Jenkinson, E. (2022) Doing Reflexive Thematic Analysis' In Bager-Charleson, S. and McBeath, A. (Eds) 'Supporting Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research'. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chavez, A. (2016). Rights in Education and Self-Identity: Education and Language of Instruction in Namibia. *International Education Studies*, 9(3), 189-196.

Daniels, O. (2024). Namibian Sun. Programme Launched to Boost Early Childhood Development. Available at: <https://www.namibiansun.com/education/programme-launched-to-boost-early-childhood-development2024-09-17> [Accessed: 4 March 2025].

DAPP, Development Aid from People-to-People Namibia (2018) POF Teacher Training. Available at: <https://dapp-namibia.org/our-projects/education/pof-teacher-training> [Accessed: 7 March 2025].

DNA Economics (2019) *The Cost of Inaction: ECD in Namibia*. InterTeam Namibia.

Government of the Republic of Namibia (2012) Namibian Standards for Early Childhood Development Centres. Available at: <https://www.rightstart.com.na/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Namibia-Standarts-for-Early-Childhood-Development-Center-Ministry-of-Gender-and-Child-Welfare.pdf> [Accessed: 4 March 2025].

Haraseb, V. (2011). *Early childhood education for the San in Namibia: The Working Group of Indigenous Minorities Development Program. Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 5(2), 135-141. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.unam.edu.na/doi/full/10.1080/15595692.2011.559805> [Accessed: 3 July 2025]

Headstart Montessori Teacher Training College (2025) Programmes. Available at: <https://www.headstart.com.na/programmes/> [Accessed: 7 March 2025].

Hudson, K. N., & Willoughby, M. T. (2021). The Multiple Benefits of Motor Competence Skills in Early Childhood. Research Brief. RTI Press Publication No. RB-0027-2108. *RTI International*.

IMU The International University of Management. Postgraduate Diploma in Education (2025) Available at <https://ium.edu.na/postgraduate-diploma-in-education/> [Accessed: 7 March 2025].

International Training College – Lingua (2025) Early Childhood Development. Available at: <https://www.collegelingua.com/index.php/faculties/faculty-of-education/programmes/early-childhood-development> [Accessed: 7 March 2025].

Kamara, E.; Kasanda, C.; Van Rooy, G. (2018). Provision of Integrated Early Childhood Development in Namibia: Are We on the Right Track? *Educ. Sciences*. 8 (3), p117.

Kössler, R. (2011). Book Review: A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990. *Sage Journals*. Vol. 46 (2), pp147-151.

Liswaniso, B. (2023). 'Failing to progress' or not being supported to make progress? Examining variability in reading. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 13(1), 1-13.

- Matengu, M. Cleghorn, A., and Korkeamaki, RL. (2018). Keeping the National Standard? Contextual dilemmas of educational marginalization in Namibia. *International Journal of Educational Development*. (62), pp128-135. Available at <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.unam.edu.na/science/article/pii/S0738059316301778>. [Accessed: 3 July 2025]
- Ministry of Gender Equality Poverty Eradication and Child Welfare (2007) National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy: Namibia. Available at: [https://mgepesw.gov.na/archive/-/downloads/-/document\\_library/53FAEAFEE5nn/view\\_file/1461642](https://mgepesw.gov.na/archive/-/downloads/-/document_library/53FAEAFEE5nn/view_file/1461642) [Accessed: 4 March 2025].
- Ministry of Environment and Tourism (2017). *National Solid Waste Management Strategy*. Department of Environmental Affairs. Windhoek: Namibia.
- Ministry of Gender Equality and Children Welfare (2017). *Towards Integrated Early Childhood Development Service Delivery in Namibia: a framework for action (2017-2022)*. Directorate of Community and Early Childhood Development. Windhoek: Namibia.
- Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (2013) *Curriculum Framework for Children in Namibia Aged 3 and 4 Years*. Directorate of Community and Early Childhood Development. Windhoek: Namibia.
- Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (2007) *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy*. Namibia.
- NAMCOL (Namibian College of Open Learning). Tertiary Programmes Prospectus. Available at: <https://www.namcol.edu.na/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Prospectus-edited-2021-TP.pdf>
- Namibian Economist (2025). Namibia Downgraded to Lower-Middle Income Status by the World Bank. Available at: <https://economist.com.na/98757/markets/namibia-downgraded-to-lower-middle-income-status-by-the-world-bank/> [Accessed: 4 July 2025].
- Namibian Statistics Agency (2024). *Namibia 2023 Population and Housing Census: Preliminary results*. Available at: [https://nsa.org.na/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Preliminary-Report-2023-Population-and-Housing-Census\\_compressed.pdf](https://nsa.org.na/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Preliminary-Report-2023-Population-and-Housing-Census_compressed.pdf) [Accessed: 7 July 2025].
- Namibia Statistics Agency (2018). *Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NHIES) 2015/16 Report*. Available at: [https://cms.my.na/assets/documents/NHIES\\_2015-16.pdf](https://cms.my.na/assets/documents/NHIES_2015-16.pdf) [Accessed: 3 July 2025].
- National Planning Commission. (2004). *Namibia Vision 2030: Policy Framework for Long Term National Development*. Windhoek, Namibia. Retrieved from [https://www.npc.gov.na/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/vision\\_2030.pdf](https://www.npc.gov.na/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/vision_2030.pdf)
- Nauyoma, O.S., Ngatjiisue, D., Siyave, T.N., and Kamunima, P.M. (2022). An Analysis of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Rundu Circuit. *International Journal of Research Publications*. 114(1), 89-100.
- Ngololo, E., Kasanda, C., & Van Rooy, G. (2024). (In) capacity to early learning provisioning in Namibia. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 32(2), 420-437. Available at: <https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.unam.edu.na/author/Ngololo%2C+Elizabeth> [Accessed: 3 July 2025]
- O'Neill, A. (2025). Urbanisation in Namibia from 2013 to 2023. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/455894/urbanization-in-namibia/> [Accessed: 3 July 2025].
- Penn, H. (2008) *Working on the Impossible: early childhood policies in Namibia*. *Childhood*. 15(3), pp379-395.
- Perivoli Schools Trust: a nursery school teacher training programme (2025). *Progress*. Available at: <https://perivolischools.com/progress/> [Accessed: 10 March 2025].
- Rautenbach, J. V., Maistry, S. M., & Shokane, A. L. (Eds.). (2023). *Introduction to social work (2nd ed.)*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Republic of Namibia (2017) *National Development Plan (NDP5 2017/8 to 2021/22)*. Office of the President. Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Office of the Prime Minister, Republic of Namibia. Available at: <https://www.npc.gov.na/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NDP5.pdf> [Accessed: 7 July 2025]
- Republic of Namibia (2018). *Towards Maximising the Demographic Dividend in Namibia*. Demographic Dividend Study Report. Available at: <https://www.npc.gov.na/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Namibia-Demographic-Dividend-Study-Report-2018.pdf> [Accessed: 4 March 2025].
- Republic of Namibia (2020). *Toward Integrated Early Childhood Development Service Delivery in Namibia* REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA A Framework for Action: Updated 2020 – 2022. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/namibia/media/1606/file> [Accessed: 3 July 2025].
- Republic of Namibia (Ministry of Environment and Tourism (2017) *Namibia's National Solid Waste*

Management Strategy. Available at: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/nam193634.pdf> [Accessed: 3rd June 2025].

Republic of Namibia (2013) Demographic and Health Survey. Ministry of Health and Social Services: Namibia Statistics Agency

Republic of Namibia. (2017). *Development of a Comprehensive Human Resources Development Plan and Implementation Strategy for the Namibian Basic Education Sector*. Windhoek: Ministry of Education Arts and Culture.

Right Start (2020) Make a Child's First Steps the Right Steps – Integrated Early Childhood Development Namibia. Available at <https://www.rightstart.com.na/about-us/> [Accessed: 3 July 2025]

Roger Federer Foundation (2024) School Readiness Initiative in Namibia. Available at: <https://rogerfedererfoundation.org/what-we-do/school-readiness-strategy/namibia-school-readiness-intiative> [Accessed: 4 March 2025].

Schenck, R. (Ed.), Mbedzi, P., Qalinge, L., Schultz, P., Sekudu, J., & Sesoko, M. (2015). *Introduction to social work*. Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

SPC (Sunshine Private College) 2025. Programmes for 2025 Entry. Available at: <https://www.sunshine.edu.na/courses.php> [Accessed: 7 March 2025].

Super Sema (2025) Welcome to the World of Super Sema. Available at: <https://www.supersema.com/> [Accessed: 27 May 2025].

Sutapa, P., Pratama, K. W., Rosly, M. M., Ali, S. K. S., & Karakauki, M. (2021). Improving Motor Skills in Early Childhood through Goal-Oriented Play Activity. *Children*, 8(11), 994

Taguette (2025) 'About Taguette'. Available at <https://www.taguette.org/about.html> [Accessed: 18 March 2025].

The International University of Management (IUM). Postgraduate Diploma in Education (2025) Available at <https://ium.edu.na/postgraduate-diploma-in-education/> [Accessed: 7 March 2025].

Unicef & Republic of Namibia (2017). Telling the Story: Integrated Early Childhood Development. Available at: <https://www.rightstart.com.na/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ECD-Telling-the-Story.pdf> [Accessed: 4 March 2025].

UNICEF Namibia (2024) Transforming Education Through Increased Investments in Early Learning and Equitable Financing 2023/2024. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/13006/file/Namibia-Education-Budget-Brief-2023-24.pdf> [Accessed: 27 May 2025].

Unicef, and United Nations Children's Fund/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2007). A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education. Available at: A Human rights-based approach to Education for All: a framework for the realization of children's right to education and rights within education; 2007 [Accessed: 26 March 2025].

Wallace, M. (2014). *History of Namibia: from the beginning to 1990*. Oxford University Press.

Willoughby, M., & Hudson, K. (2021). Current issues in the conceptualization and measurement of executive function skills. In T. Limpo & T. Olive (Eds.), *Executive functions and writing* (pp. 17–37). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198863564.003.0002>

Zastrow, C. (2021). *Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare: Empowering People*. (13th ed.). Cengage Learning.

## Citing this Report

Sharley, V., Ananias, J., Ngololo, E., and Leonard, E., (2025). *Executive Summary: The Perivoli Schools Trust Early Child Care and Education Model: exploring lived experiences and wider social impacts in Namibia*. University of Bristol and University of Namibia (UNAM).



## Funding

This research was funded by the Perivoli Foundation between 2022 and 2025. The Perivoli Foundation is a UK charity established in 2019. For more information see: [perivolifoundation.com](https://perivolifoundation.com).

Funding was received through the Perivoli Africa Research Centre (PARC) at the University of Bristol. PARC aims to advance a rebalancing of the global science and research ecosystem by envisioning, modelling and championing a transformative mode of global North-Africa research collaborations.



