

## FACTORS AFFECTING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN GOVERNMENT PREPRIMARY SCHOOLS OF HADIYA ZONE, CENTRAL ETHIOPIA REGIONAL STATE

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### ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was assessing factors affecting early childhood education policy implementation in government preprimary schools of Hadiya Zone, Central Ethiopia Regional State. To achieve this purpose, qualitative method; particularly, phenomenological design was employed. From a total of 18 Hadiya Zone government administrative structures 6 were selected by using purposive sampling method. Those sampled government administrative areas, by using purposive sampling techniques six preschool teachers were sampled and participated in interviewing process. Accordingly, the results of the study have revealed that the awareness status of parents, primary school principals, management bodies, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in Hadiya Zone preprimary schools was found low. Lack of instructional materials, lack of school indoor and out materials, teachers' skill and awareness gaps, parental engagement gaps, family educational income background are major factors that affects the implementation of early childhood education preprimary school. Furthermore, lack of early childhood education professionals, low stakeholders' participation and support, lack of standard curriculum and lack of adequate budget and monitoring system of the program were the challenges identified in the study. Finally, it was concluded that even though the government ECCE programs were expanded to address the need of children from disadvantaged groups, they were serving these children with low status and lots of limitations. Thus, it is recommended that the government should give much emphasis for updating trainings programs, providing safe learning environment, allocating sufficient budget for the program, creating awareness for school stakeholders, and promoting family educational and economic capacity.

**Keywords:** Affect, Early Childhood, Education Factors, Implementation Policy

### INTRODUCTION

Early childhood care and education has become a central issue for governments in many countries (OECD, 2006). There is a growing body of evidence that children starting strong in their learning and well-being will have better outcomes when they grow older (OECD, 2012). It is one of the contemporary issues requiring close attention because of its critical role in laying the foundation for lifelong learning and development, and in closing the achievement gaps between the disadvantaged and advantaged (Marope & Kaga, 2015). The early years are a time of remarkable brain development that lays the foundation for later learning (UNESCO, 2006). Brain connections multiply exponentially in the first three years, and the potential for ensuring optimal development is very high up to age eight. It is imperative that this true window of opportunity is fully used and strengthened to ensure long-term benefits, not just for each individual child's development but also for the larger community (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2012).

Early childhood is a unique period of development that shapes the personality of the child. Studies in child psychology reveal that the development of intelligence, affectivity and social relations occur very rapidly in the early years of a person's life (Evans & Gruba 2000). The early years of child development are very important not only because they lay the basis for human development, but also because any experiences a child is exposed to during this time have a lasting influence in adulthood. As such a person's future potential is better exploited when proper attention, care and support are accorded as early as possible in one's life.

The Ethiopia Education and Training Policy also stated that the pre-primary education helps the children to get ready for primary school and the program takes three years. The education programs given to these levels would enable children to express their feelings, investigate their environment and learn numbers (Moe, 1994). Similarly, The Education Sector Development Plan IV (ESDP IV) (2010) put early childhood care and education as one of the priorities for the education sector due to its potential inputs to the overall improvement of the quality of education and reduction of dropouts and repetition rates in the later stages of primary schooling (P.15).

However, implementation of the programs was weak and there were also wide variations among countries. For example, in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) region the overall enrollment rate for preschool in 1999 was 16.3 percent. Compared with other countries, SSA lags countries in other parts of the world in preschool coverage. In this same year, the average preschool GER of countries in the Middle East was 28.8 percent, Asia's GER 36.5 percent, in both Eastern Europe and Central Asia 59.5 percent and Latin America and the Caribbean 62.8 percent (Jaramillo & Mingat, 2008, p.54). Similarly, Sudan had a preschool GER of 22 percent in 1999, while Ethiopia's was only 1.7 percent (p.51). Five years ago, in 2009, the Ethiopian GER for kindergarten was only 4.2 percent (Moe, 2009). Nowadays, the preschool enrolments in Ethiopia reach 26 percent (Moe, 2013). This achievement was mainly through various interventions.

The Ministry of Education (Moe), (2013), categorized pre-primary education into kindergartens, "O" class and child-to-child programs. The above achievement was due to the establishment of "O" class in the premises of the primary schools, particularly in rural areas. Although the quality of these interventions is beyond the scope of this study, it has created tremendous access to the pre-primary school age population of the country.

In Hadiya zone, there were a government owned preprimary schools in each local administration kebeles and in each preprimary schools there were a qualified teachers at least in certificate level. Despite these all, as a teacher and head of education office in two of Hadiya zone government districts still the implementation of early childhood program was affected by various factors. Thus, the study was conducted on factors affecting the implementation of early childhood education in sampled Hadiya zone districts and town administrations.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The early childhood years set the foundations for life. This period of development is worth studying due to various factors. Among the widely accepted factors UNESCO (2006) stated the most salient five. First, it sets the foundation for life. Scholars underscored the poor adjustments made by individuals to their environments are due to lack of proper stimulation and support during the early years. Second, it is a period of rapid brain development that lays the foundation for later learning (Curtis & O'Hagan, 2003). Scientific studies revealed that the parts of the brain and neurological pathways that influence health, learning, and behavior are all substantially influenced by proper sensory stimuli at early ages (Young & Mustard as cited in Garcia, Pence, & Evans, 2008, p.73-74). Third, it contributes to the EFA and MDG goals. Fourth, it provides essential support for working parents, particularly mothers, and finally, investment in ECCE yields very high economic returns, offsetting disadvantage and inequality, especially for children from poor families.

Regarding the study area, in geographical setting Hadiya Zone is in Central Ethiopia Regional State with some facilities in teaching-learning inputs and adequate numbers of teachers trained for the preprimary level than other peripheral areas in the country. However, in one of pre-primary education performance indicator, quality and internal efficiency Hadya zone is low and did not show significant change and it needs further supportive supervision (SNNPRS, 2021/2022 education bureau annual statistical abstract). Hence giving due attention and emphases on the effective practice to programs like pre-primary education is important for their significant influence for the education system entirely.

The problem about the factors affecting the implementation of ECCE policy, in towns, faith-based organizations and in private kindergartens have been studied in different areas of CERS, in Hadiyza zone as well as in various regions of the country. However, the reason why it needs further study is to add the focus in PPS attached with government primary schools or "O" class in rural and urban of the study area. Thus, from the above perspectives, the study was guided by the following research questions.

### **BASIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How do preprimary teachers and parents establish a relation to implement the preschool curriculum?
2. Do preschool teachers employ teaching methodologies appropriate to children age, developmental level and local context?
3. Is preschools are equipped with all necessary facilities, equipment's and materials?

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Pre-primary education is an area which needs special attention. To address this essential area the researcher set out the following general and specific objectives of the study.

#### **General objective of the study**

The general objective of this study is to assessing factors affecting early childhood education policy implementation in government preprimary schools of Hadiya Zone, Central Ethiopia Regional State.

#### **Specific objectives of the study**

In line with above general objective and research questions, the specific objectives of this study were:

1. Assess the manner of relationship among preprimary teachers and parents that important to implement the preschool curriculum.
2. Assess the relevant preschool teaching methodologies implemented by preschool teacher.
3. Examine the manner of preschool facilities, equipment and materials that are necessary in preschool level.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Physical Environment**

The Physical environment of pre-primary school needs to be safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences for promoting children's learning and development. Appropriate designing and locating the premises for the operation of a service is necessary.

A well-designed and richly decorated learning environment not only creates a relaxed and pleasurable atmosphere, but also promotes effective learning for children. Teachers should pay attention to properly setting up the classroom with the help of a comprehensive and detailed plan of how the classroom can best be arranged. These arrangements aim at providing an environment with adequate space for free movement and easy access to toys and learning materials and serve the purpose of stimulating children to learn. The kindergarten classroom should be organized into interest areas or centers filled with a variety of materials and equipment including blocks, dramatic play supplies, science activities, books, art supplies and more.

Children must have time to experiment with measuring, counting, pouring, and making predictions using sand and water areas. Paper, scissors, markers, puzzles, and other hands-on materials that foster children's thinking and problem-solving skills should be readily available. Books, printed words, and samples of children's writing should be in every area of the room (NAEYC, 1997).

#### **Learning Environment**

It is a learning center where children to play, experiment and create their pace. This environment helps children to develop problem solving skills by trying different ways of doing things. They expand and refine their language as they talk with and listen to other children. Learning environment is also a place where children learn about their peers as they try out different roles and adjust to work together.

Learning environment is a center where Children interact through emotional and social aspects. This environment helps children to engage intellectually and socially build positive relationships with others and develop friendship & regulate their behavior.

Learning environment enhance children's willingness to take risk and make decision confidently. This encourages children to create a suitable, Healthy and respected environment and to build appropriate social behavior & correct use of language and to facilitate Positive interaction between children and teachers. When the learning environment is convenient to children they can talk through conflicts and express their feeling. They can use the guidance to foster children's self-regulation appropriate social interaction & social competence (HKSAR, 2006).

#### **Teaching Learning Materials**

Montessori defends the idea that children should be enabled to learn on their own in a set environment where they choose their own materials. The learning environment is set by the teacher in organizing the materials from simple to complex. Teachers should be good observers and only intervene when the child requires guidance.

Children to understand the order, harmony and beauty of the nature and they should be please with it. The rules of the nature form the basis of science and art fields. That is why; learning the rules of the nature is the foundation of science (Montessori, 1966).

In this approach, it is crucial that the child makes mistakes by searching and trying and then, realized his own mistake and corrects it himself. If the children are not able to realize their mistake, this shows that they are not developed enough. When the time comes, the child realized their mistake and corrects it (Temel, 1994).

Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities, and resources must be suitable for the purpose. Premises, furniture, and equipment need to be safe, clean, and well maintained.

To make environment is complete, encourages competence, independent exploration and learning through play. Outdoor and indoor spaces are designed and organized to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments. Resources, materials, and equipment are sufficient in number and organized in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program.

Therefore, teaching and learning materials, should be convenience to children in variance aspects such as: they must be relevance to preschool's curriculum policy and program based on the standards and recreational needs of children, Materials encourage understanding of children, hence they have important contributions to multi-cultural societies of diverse cultural, linguistic groups and people with disabilities and minority groups and help to create respectful relations with others.

Materials motivate children and educators to examine their own attitudes and behavior to comprehend their duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges in society and they must be appropriate to children's age, emotional, intellectual, social, and cultural development.

Hence children have opportunities to find, use, evaluate and present information to develop the critical capacities and make discerning choices, hence, they are prepared for exercising their freedom of access, with discrimination, as informed and skilled adults. The material's representativeness must be range in views of all issues (State of South Australia, 2004).

Children must choose and use their materials properly. They practiced different tasks with the materials. At the end of time, the child puts the materials back into their places. This behavior becomes habitual after repeating it constantly. Some materials are worked with on a special carpet. It is the child's responsibility to carry these materials to the carpet and back to their shelves after the activity. The child is guided towards that behavior. The child actively learns as he uses these materials. Prepared information is not permanent and efficient in a child's mind.

Materials are meaningful for the child in different aspect: the challenge or the mistake the child experience through exploring should be a part of the material, the shape and usage of the materials should be ordered from simple to complex, Materials should prepare the child for the next learning; Materials provide not the concrete shape of an idea but its abstract form and they are prepared for the child's individual learning (Morrison, 1988).

According (Calvert, 1986) the materials in the classroom must be natural and reliable. Hence children will complete the task with the materials they have chosen; without interference of adult; after completion of tasks the materials will be put back into their places according to class order. This will develop responsibility and personal discipline.

### **Teaching and Learning Methodology**

Learning and teaching strategies in early childhood education must be Child center. Hence children's active participation is pivotal to the effectiveness of learning. In this strategy teachers have no dominant role in the learning activities, but engage in various roles such as that of facilitator, information provider, learning assessor, etc.

No matter which learning and teaching strategy is adopted, play is an indispensable and important tool for facilitating children's learning. It helps children know their surroundings and experience the joy of co-operating and sharing with others. Through play, children can develop their physical, intellectual, social, creative, and thinking abilities.

Play is also considered to be the best activity for promoting children's physical and mental development. Suitable play not only enables children to express their emotions and gain pleasurable experience, but also promotes their learning and growth. Therefore, play and children's development are interrelated. Teachers must make good use of play as a major element for constructing the curriculum (HKSAR, 2006).

### **Curriculum in pre-primary education**

"Curriculum is defined as all planned and unplanned interactions, experience, transitions and routines that occur within an environment designed to foster children's holistic development" (MOE; 2012:11 Singapore). Curriculum

comprises the update framework, an educator's guide, and teaching and learning resource to support the teachers in nurturing and developing children's knowledge, skills, and disposition.

NAEYC defines curriculum as "...the goals for the knowledge and skills to be acquired by children and the plans for learning experiences through which such knowledge and skills will be achieved" (NAEYC, 2003). A high-quality early education program recognizes and understands how children's goals for learning are framed within the context of learning standards and aligns planning of activities and design of environment to stimulate children's learning across content areas (social-emotional, language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, physical development and health and fine arts). In high quality programs, instructors place as much emphasis on the process of learning as they do on the content and capitalize on children's natural curiosity to promote language, thinking and problem-solving. Effective early education programs provide a wide variety of planned experiences within an intentionally designed environment that enable children to learn through interaction, exploration, manipulation, and self-discovery. Research clearly demonstrates that children learn more in programs where there is a well-planned and implemented curriculum (Landry 2007). Therefore, it is essential for every early childhood setting – school, center, and family child-care faith-based programs – to have a high-quality curriculum which incorporates thoughtful planning and design.

### **Health and Nutrition**

A child's overall wellness, including adequate nutrition, social emotional wellbeing, and physical activity are all parts of a comprehensive early education program and directly affect social, emotional, and cognitive development. Some activities that enhance children's health include addressing individual health issues, modeling healthy food choices, and eating patterns, promoting physical activity, and increasing the families' knowledge of and children's access to preventive health care. The goal of the early education program is to help staff, children, and families understand how nutrition, physical activity, and health impact a child's readiness to learn. Ideally, healthy habits are established in early childhood and carried through later in life.

As scholars show that health and nutrition have a major effect on children's chances of enrolling in school. The main reason of this is when children are affected by ill-health; the disease may lead to serious physical or mental disabilities. Such conditions typically affect children's educational opportunities to a greater extent in low-income countries than in high-income countries (DFID, 2001).

### **Collaborative partnerships with parents and communities**

According to children's right convention (CRC) both parents have the main responsibility to bring up their child and should always consider what is best for children, while the Government is expected to help parents care for their children properly. Beside to this Schools should help children develop their skills and personalities fully, teach them about their own and other people's rights, and prepare them for adult life. Personal and social development programs in schools as well as drama, music and art help raise awareness of the message to respect other cultures and to respect each other. (Art.18 &29) Children's learning and development are mainly influenced by family, school, and society. Under the major foundation of understanding and respecting children, appropriate co-ordination among the three parties will enable children to develop their potential and lead them to a healthy life. By developing good learning habits and interest in learning, children will be well prepared for lifelong learning.

### **Assessment in pre-primary education**

Assessment is the process of collecting and documenting information on individual student learning. The purpose of assessment is to inform teaching and improve learning. Hence, assessment of learning and assessment for learning are integral parts of the teaching and learning process in the kindergarten classroom. Learning is active in the kindergarten classroom. Therefore, assessing the process of learning is critical and it should occur while the learning is happening rather than assessing the final product. Ongoing assessment informs the approach needed to design and deliver developmentally appropriate instructional activities. Assessment should be frequent, well planned, and well organized so that teachers are able to assist each child in progressing towards meeting the kindergarten curriculum outcomes.

In assessing kindergarten children the considered basic principles are using consistently with the purpose for which the instrument was designed, apply for appropriate age, Collect information on a range of indicators of a child's development, Being naturalistic or authentic is important, Be culturally and linguistically sensitive, Accommodate children with disabilities, Collect information from more than one source, Provide information that schools can be confident about, Have a data collection process that is realistic for schools and school systems.

Contrarily Kindergarten assessments should not be used to make high-stakes decisions. To do so it is advisable to use the Scores on standardized assessments that should be complemented with information from instructional assessments, teacher observations, parent input, and any other data that is relevant when making decisions about whether an



individual child should be retained in kindergarten. Pencil-and-paper standardized tests are not appropriate for children in kindergarten; Assessment should not be used for a purpose other than for what they were designed (Scott and Niemeyer, 2001).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Design**

The main purpose of this study was to assess the factors that affects the implementation of early childhood education in Hadiya Zone sampled government preprimary schools. To investigate the factors that hinders the implementation of early grade learners the researcher used qualitative research method, particularly, phenomenological research design.

### **Data Collection Tools**

Since the study required the necessity of generating rich and meaningful information based on participants' perceptions, the researcher investigated the problem with qualitative research approach. The qualitative method focused on taking people's subjective experiences seriously by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell us. This world view makes use of qualitative research techniques to collect and analyses information (Ary et al., 2010). It tried to engage in an open-ended, inductive exploration made possible by basic qualitative studies (Joubish et al., 2011; Ary et al., 2010).

One-on-one interviews were administered inside the preprimary settings with the consent of the institutions to understand the experiences of study participants from the context. The data collected were transcribed, coded, categorized under recurring themes and interpreted.

### **Sample and sampling Techniques**

Hadiya Zone in Central Ethiopia Regional State is constituted 18 government administrative structures; form these the researcher selected 6 (two rural districts and two town administration structures). Besides this, the number of pre-primary schools found in this zone is 586. Of this, private pre-primary schools are 127 (21.6%) and government owned preprimary schools are 459 (78.3%). Besides this, the number of pre-primary school learners found in this zone are M= 52,082, F=50604 T= 102,686. The preprimary teachers found in this zone are M=141 (27.3%) F=375 (72.6%) T=516. From the total of preprimary schools, the researcher purposefully selected six experienced preschool teachers and six preschools' kindergartens. The study site has relatively large number of children, access of pre-primary schools, low economic background of the parent and the community. Particularly the study sites were selected purposively because all are government preschools, and due to the researcher has worked for many years in that operational area and close work relationship with preschools and it is believed that data collection could be easy.

### **Data collection procedures**

Data from semi-structured interview were gathered with informed consent of participation. Each of the participants was personally contacted and discussions were held on the purpose of the study to make sure that the participants are willing to involve in the study. They were told that the information obtained keep confidential. All interviews were held on with the agreement of the participants at any time they feel comfortable. The work of intervening was done by face-to-face discussions with preprimary schoolteachers.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is an essential part of qualitative research that constitutes an essential component in data gathering and in relating the research findings to concepts. As clearly described by Merriam (1998) data analysis is the making sense out of the data. It involves data combining, reducing, and interpreting what participants responded, and what the researcher observed and read to make meaning. In qualitative research, data collection and analysis are a simultaneous activity (Merriam, 1998). As a result, the researcher also followed the data analysis and coding procedures that is suggested by Creswell (2009) and Esterberg (2002) because in qualitative research, coding is an integral part of the analysis, involving separating, sorting the data, making sense of it and categorizing it in various ways. Specifically, Esterberg (2002) suggests that open coding is a process where "you work intensively with your data, line by line, identifying themes and categories that seem of interest" (p.158). Accordingly, the transcribed data were searched entirely reading line by line for the regularity, patterns and topics in transcribed data underlining words and phrases. In general, the process of analysis was basically inductive in nature proceeding from interviews and then, transcriptions to the general including codes and themes. Therefore, a final list of three major themes and several subthemes were emerged.

### **Ethical Considerations**

A consent form was provided and permission from participants and concerned administrators who have responsibilities in different administrative levels was asked and the researcher allowed carrying out data gathering process. Before formal data gathering program was carried out objectives and significance of the study were informed for all participants. Before the interviews were carried out the informants were informed about the purpose of the research, confidentiality of the information as it is necessary, the use of video and tape-recorder. Accordingly, they made cooperation with the researcher to provide all necessary information because the researcher created close intimacy for a long time with repeatedly journeys and spending teatime with them. To keep privacy and confidentiality are extremely important for human participants, because qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal. So, identities of all individuals' participants in this study remained confidential and were filed through pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participants.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Theme 1- The lack of appropriate relationship between teacher and parents**

It was indicated in the ECCE policy guideline that teacher and parents should regularly share information on the child's learning in regular Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings should be held within the year; information about the home environment of children should be made available to the teacher; and there should be collaboration among community-school (MoE, MoH and MoWA, 2010). To find out the situation of the parent-teachers relationship to assist children's learning; PPS teachers were asked to respond to the existence of parent-PPT's partnerships to contribute children's learning in the studied zone. Concerning communication between teachers and parents to discuss in the progress of children, most respondents were answered that, it was not appropriate and ample to understand about the learning fashion of their children.

Regarding this issue, teacher from school 5 described,

*".... continuously orally and by writing letter I am calling parents to communicate their child's learning issues. However, still except a few parents, majority of parents were didn't have a willingness to come school and they have no care about their children learning problems and who teaches their children. Because of this I didn't expect parents for any kind of learning challenges as well as decisions." (PPT 5)*

Parents have an undeniable role and responsibilities in following routine activities of children, motivating children to education and correcting the children's wrong actions through series follow-up and advising. Besides this, in schools the children daily academic progress and failure greatly determined by active participation of parents in school. In this concern the respondents from school 4 indicated:

*"As PPT, I know the learner's behavior and activity only in school environment. But I didn't see the learners any activity and behavior out of school environment. So, the parents should communicate with me to introduce about home environment and to know his/her children learning manner. But when I called parents various times only few similar faces (three or four) parents are coming to school repeatedly. In my opinion parents send their children to school like to get rest from their disturbance and crying." (PPT, 4)*

According to Moe (2010) roles and responsibilities in bringing upon children, and on improving practical nurturing skills of parents and caregivers, because most parents are not fully aware of their crucial role in their children's development and/or lack basic parental competencies, parental education will cover all aspects of child-rearing and development as well as the role of parents in fostering the realization of children's full potential.

Parents are the first caregivers of their children. This shows that all other caregivers and teachers need to work closely with them. Therefore, parents need to be involved actively in deciding what activities and services should be delivered in the pre-school. They can support preschool centers by sending their children to the centers, assisting in the provision of learning materials, coordinating, and supervising the teaching learning process in the preschool centers, raising funds for the running of the school etc. (Moe, 2016)

Therefore, based on the interview results, it could be rational to accomplish that the practice of working closely with parents and the community was founded to be very low. Accordingly, the ECCE policy had been poorly implemented in working with collaboration of parents and other community members.

#### **Theme-2: Lack of preschool environment facilities for early grade learners**

Concerning this theme, the ECCE policy guideline stated that preprimary schools should be physically safe and free from garbage sites; should have adequate latrine service; should have adequate water supply; should have adequate

space in the classroom; and adequate size of the school compound (MoE, MoH and MoWA, 2010). As well, SNNPRS Education Bureau (2012), states learning by playing needs to be the main medium of instruction in preprimary and suggests an adequate and safe area to enhance the development of all children.

About this, experienced PPT were interviewed whether the fundamental facilities are available or not in PPS. A participant from school 3 reflected that,

*"...As you see in your eye nothing is adequate and well prepared for children to learn. We really have a lot of problems. In our school case the learning rooms are not smart and out-door environment is full of garbage. All the design and building were deliberately accomplished for primary school. In our school the farm part is rented for farmers to fulfill stationary materials. For PPE children there is no water and adequate latrine service." (PPT, 3).*

On the other hand, when the experienced teachers were asked about the adequacy of out-door and indoor space environments, teachers from school 2 replied in rolling their eyes by explained that,

*"...As a teacher of PPS, I know that the outdoor and indoor space is inadequate for the children's learning by playing, and for free movement. Initially the school was not built for the purpose of PP, and there were not enough spaces to cover with fence entirely. Besides this, no facilities like enough water, clear latrine, feeding and rest room and very narrow and non-ventilated classroom." (PPT, 2)*

The findings revealed the PPT's experiences about PPS facilities like school physical environments (in-door and out-door), learning materials and equipment are very poor and it needs cooperation and commitment of school stakeholders. PPT from school 2 indicated the challenges faced him during classroom teaching is narrow classroom, unsafe gateways, not suitable desks, lack of textbooks and teacher guides. PPT's 6 reported:

*"When I was employed as a teacher in this school, for a single day I am not happy in my work. Always I fill sad due to a problem of unsafe school internal and external physical conditions. Most of the time, I informed to school principal to modify the gateways, playing places, toilet, desk and the like. But still now I didn't see any change." (PPT, 6)*

**In addition to this, the PPT from school 5 reported:**

*As I reported various times to district education office, it is clearly known that in our school case the learning rooms are not smart and out-door environment is full of garbage. All the school preparation and design and annual budget were planned to the implementation of primary schools' activities. No preparation and plan were designed to practice the program of PPE purposely (PPT, 5).*

2 out of 6 teachers also reported that their school classroom door, window, sitting desks and passageways are not comfortable for children. In addition to this, one teacher from school 1 informed that, I teach my students in classroom as well as out of classroom without any preparation and facility only by talking orally. *Teachers 4 revealed:*

*Starting from the very beginning I had been told to school management bodies my misery and unsuitable condition to adjust the classroom and out of classroom situation that to make attractive for children. But no attempts were made to improve the work of preprimary program progress and development. (PPT,4)*

As it was clearly explained by respondent above, the preprimary physical as well as classroom learning environment, teaching learning materials and equipment are not attractive and conducive for children education, health, and free movement. Besides, Tovey (2007) revealed that the outdoor and indoor space and playgrounds can provide many play possibilities for PPS.

Children need space where they can play with others but also smaller, quiet spaces for their own solitary activity, providing opportunities for autonomy and independence but also a secure base to which they can return or retreat, as and when necessary. Therefore, it would be possible to generalize that the EECE policy implementation has resulted in creating spaces free from garbage sites.



However, it has a very low implementation in almost all the studied area regarding providing enough indoor and outdoor space, adequate latrine service, and enough water supplies. Besides, its safety conditions were found to be very inadequate that would limit children's possibilities for play and expose them to hazard as well as fright.

### **Theme-3 Poor teaching methodologies in preprimary schools**

It was stated in the ECCE policy guideline that teaching-learning methods should be child-centered approach; should facilitating a group setting to help children share experience; should supporting and encouraging children effort in the process of learning; should be mainly play-based teaching approach; and utilization of different teaching aids in the classroom (MoE, MoH and MoWA, 2010). To check out and analyze the policy implementation regarding these matters, a researcher led interviews with experienced PPT's. Regarding the above issue, participant from school 3 explicated:

*"I used a teacher centered or lecture methods in indoor and out-door teaching environment. This is because of the unmanageable class size, narrowness of classroom, lack of teaching materials and no playing area in the school. Always children asked me to play ball, sport, and cultural games. However, I didn't allow them to learn in play. But still the school compound is covered by grass and the other part is farmland." (PPT, 3).*

### **In addition to this, the PPT from school 4 explains,**

*As a teacher of this level, I know the teaching method which fits for the level in a good manner. But always I teach children in lecture method; to form a group discussion in the classroom the class is very narrow and not safe. Besides this, no appropriate playing fields, and materials. Therefore, always I worried about the unsuccessfulness of the program in our school. (PPT, 4)*

The interview response indicated that the main challenge hindered PPT to apply the ECCE guideline in regarding to teaching methodology is lack of facilities in the school. Concerning this idea, participant from school 1 elucidated that,

*I have sufficient awareness and training in PPE teaching-learning methodology. But the school nature is not encouraging me to practice the right teaching methodology. As teacher of this level, I see and precede the PP program like a primary education teaching method. Still, I didn't attempt to apply child-centered teaching approach. This is because in this PPS no suitable and safe condition. (TTP 1)*

Several studies, for example, Paciorek and Munro (1999) have shown that in implementing the PPS curriculum, methods underlining child-directed activities are more effective than that teacher-directed instruction. Education in PPE is not about imparting facts rather it is about listening, guiding, and helping each child to make sense of the real world.

Generally, actual information does not confirm the kind of experiences needed for young children in a world of continuous change. Children need to have a foundation on how to understand concepts, apply skills, solve problems, work cooperatively, and take responsibility for their learning. Thus, based on the information obtained, it would be imaginable to settle that the more dependence on the teacher-centered methods influences the proper implementation of the curriculum as stated in the PPS that have an unnecessary effect on the overall development of the child.

## **DISCUSSION**

The outcomes of this study was not converging with MoE ECCE policy framework and strategic operational plan for ECCE and various studies conducted Ethiopian researchers like Gebre Egziabher, 2014, Fekede 2021, Misahun 2020, Mamo and kenea 2014 all studies almost all indicated that early childhood period is a bridge between a formal primary school and preschool which lays a base for future development of children, it helps to provide appropriate education and care service for young children as it has a long lasting positive consequences in the later development and this program helps to shape children at early age to make them socially responsible citizen and promotes economic rate by reducing mortality rate, childhood illness, school repetition and dropout. Besides this, the above mentioned studies indicated that the major problems identified in all study were inadequacy of indoor and outdoor materials and equipment, lack of trained teachers, inadequate facility and lack of monitoring. Besides this, the real implementation of preprimary education was hindered by lack active participation of parents and community representatives. Due to the above-mentioned reason implementation of pre-primary education program was weak since it was not aligned with the pre-primary education standard as intended. In addition to this, teachers /personnel

were both limited in number and not qualified for the required level; inadequate provisions and lack of financial support; too little parent-schools partnership, and insubstantial roles of administration bodies. Therefore, as it was described in previous various studies preschool education teachers were suffered due to lack of relevant educational materials, unsuitable school facilities, teachers training problem, school budgetary problem, lack of independent school management, poor parental and community involvement system, very poor preschool teachers and parents relation, narrow classroom nature, poor assessment system are the major problem that hinders the preschool teachers performance in early grade level. Hence, to realize the implementation of early childhood care and education the concerned government and non-government structures should facilitate the school environment with safe conditions, should fulfill educational materials, trained sufficient number teachers for the level, adjust the appropriate assessment technique for the level, encourage the parents to participate in their children's education system, facilitate water supply service and latrine service system, and teaching methodologies to implement the early childhood education system in the studied area.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

The finding of this study show that the today's government preschools program was affected by lacks attention from governmental representatives, parents, community representatives, school principals, school management bodies, and non-governmental organizations. As various studies confirmed that today's preschools faced huge hindering factors in the implementation process. The major once are inappropriate school facilities (the nature of classrooms, outdoor school environment, water supply service, latrine service and school pedagogical centers), preschool shortage of school budget for the program, lack of educational materials for the students and classroom teacher's irrelevant assessment techniques and system. Besides this, learning materials were other necessary item in implementing policy set. Concerning learning materials were developmental play equipment, textbook and teaching learning materials were inadequate in all studied area. Another necessary thing to implement policy was participation of the active parents and preschool teacher's relation. From this point of views in the analysis the participation and teachers' parents' relationship not sufficient and did not share information regularly on child progress.

### CONCLUSION

The current study was focused in assessing the factors that affects the implementation of early childhood education in preprimary of Hadiya zone, Central Ethiopia Regional State through in-depth interview using a phenomenological design. The researcher found that the experienced PPTs are still in continuous problems that hinder the appropriate implementation of the program. Though the policy contained the useful approaches to make service available to all children, but there is high gap among rural and urban areas regarding access to the program and it fails to address the quality part. Regarding the school facilities, in all studied area PPS are not administered exclusively (independently); all of them encountered a high shortage of educational inputs, (teaching materials and equipment) inadequate curriculum materials, unsafe indoor and out-door environment, irrelevant teaching methodology and assessment, inactive parent-teacher relationship in all studied PPSs hindered the implementation of ECCE policy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the problem for PPE program is lack of facilities such as improper in-door and out-door learning environment, inappropriate curriculum materials, and irrelevant teaching methodology, problem of assessment technique, insignificant parent participation. Therefore, to solve the problems and the achieve the nationally intended goal in regarding to ECCE policy implementation, Hadiya zone education department by working in cooperation with upper and lower government and non-government responsible stakeholders. In addition to this, parents and community representatives should give a special emphasis to implement the ECCE policy in the studied area.

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