A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT INHIBIT THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN MUTARE DISTRICT- ZIMBABWE

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to critically identify and analyse challenges faced by Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers in Mutare District Schools during the instruction process. The overarching research question that guided the study was: How do teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD students overcome the challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the ECD Curriculum? The constructivist and interpretivists approaches were the two philosophies that directed this study. I employed the purposive sampling technique to select fifty-seven (57) participants from the ECD user-systems. The major findings from this study supported the conclusions drawn from the six themes and subthemes that emerged from the participants. Analysis and presentation of data were done through the six themes that emerged from the specific research questions. To improve the trustworthiness of the results of this study, there was triangulation of sources of data. The results of this study showed that in Mutare district there was great shortage of human and material resources in most ECD centres. There was need for the MOPSE to in-service teachers/para-professional teachers to have a coordinated plan for the training of para-professionals to ensure an even platform for students on their entry into formal education. The study recommended that schools should staff develop teachers particularly on how to overcome challenges experienced by ECD user-systems in their centres.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first acknowledgement goes to my Almighty God who gave me life. Without life, it would not have been possible to complete this study. With God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10: 27). The results of this thesis are from the collaboration with my expert in research work, hardworking and dedicated supervisor, Doctor Lewis Madhlangobe. From the bottom of my heart, I sincerely thank him for the vibrant lectures and demonstrations on how to present myself at research conferences, which was brilliant. It was through Doctor Lewis that I was able to structure all the five Chapters. I really acknowledge him for providing encouragement, guidance in research work, thoroughness and his expertise throughout the whole process of writing this thesis. In-fact, Doctor Lewis Madhlangobe, you are the corner-stone of the success of this thesis. So I say to you this work is ours. I want to acknowledge the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) Higher Degrees Directorate for all the mentoring, wonderful guidance, constructive suggestions and criticisms. In-fact, you were cruel in-order to be kind. I want to admit that it was through the workshops from which I acquired skills in research writing and presentations. The Vice Chancellor, Professor Primrose Kurasha, was the eye opener to the success of this study. It was through you the Vice Chancellor, who opened doors and encouraged me towards the attainment of a Doctoral Degree. I had to work hard to beat the targeted date that you set for me. I also want to acknowledge a very instrumental board of the Higher Degrees Directorate, namely: Doctor A. Chikasha, Professor B. Chisaka; Doctor M. Khosa, Doctor Dube, Professor J. Kurasha; Professor Nyaruwata and other members that I have not mentioned their contribution is acknowledged. I sincerely acknowledge your
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DEDICATION

I dedicate the results of this work to memory of my late Parents, Winfrida and Benjamin Chiparange, for the support and Encouragement they gave me to further my studies and attain a Doctoral Degree before they were led to rest in 2005 and 2009, respectively. I believe their spirits guided me during the learning process. I also devote this Work to my only two children, Nomsa and Kumbirai, my two brothers Bernard and Tafadzwa and my five young sisters. I do not forget my late Youngest sister, Sekai Chiparange, the results of this study is dedicated to your spirit.
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<td>Arid and Semi Arid Lands</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early childhood Development</td>
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<td>ECDA</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development Class A</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECDB</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development Class B</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECEC</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
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<td>DAP</td>
<td>Developmental Appropriate Practice</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>The Division for Early Childhood</td>
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<td>DEO-ECD</td>
<td>District Education Officer Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Development Product</td>
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<td>HCW</td>
<td>Health and Care Welfare</td>
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<td>NAEYC</td>
<td>The National Association for the Education of Young Children</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>PCIET</td>
<td>Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training</td>
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<td>PED</td>
<td>Provisional Education Dir</td>
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<td>PILES</td>
<td>Physical, Intellectual, language, Emotional, Social Needs</td>
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<td>PISA</td>
<td>Program of International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>Primary Teacher Lower</td>
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<td>The Structural Adjustment</td>
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<td>SDC</td>
<td>School Development Committee</td>
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<td>TIC</td>
<td>Teacher-In-Charge</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Education Fund
WHO   World Health Organisation
ZINECDA  The Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Actors
ZOU  Zimbabwe Open University
ZPD  The Zone of Proximal Development
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The study focuses on factors that inhibit the effective implementation of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme in Mutare District in Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe. The essence of Chapter 1 is to introduce the theme of the thesis. The introduction presents the global, continental and regional perspectives of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and the local background to the study. The Chapter outlines the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study. Other aspects that are included in Chapter 1 include the overarching research question that later develops the specific research questions guiding the study. It further discusses the significance of the study which states the theoretical and practical contributions to various stakeholders in the development of the ECD programme from a global perspective. The chapter outlines the assumptions and delimitations that draw studying boundaries regarding sample, geographical coverage and topic to be addressed. The limitations that might affect the trustworthiness of the research findings are explained and the organisation of the thesis. The key terms found in this study are operationally defined and the chapter summary wraps up the Chapter

1.2 Global Views on Early Childhood Development Provision and Opportunity

Early childhood development is defined as “a set of concepts, principles, and facts that explain, describe and account for the processes involved in change from
immature to mature status and functioning” (Katz, 1996, p. 137). Development is generally divided into three broad categories: physical development, cognitive development, and social emotional development (Berk, 2000). Physical development addresses any change in the body, including how children grow, how they move, and how they perceive their environment (Dyanda, 2005; Morrison, 2004; Santrock, 2002). Cognitive development pertains to the mental processes, for example, language, memory, problem solving, that children use to acquire and use knowledge. Emotional and social development addresses how children handle relationships with others, as well as understand their own feelings (Bruce, Meggit and Greiner, 2011; Chin, 2000). It is important for the ECD teacher to understand skills that should be imparted to children so that the promotion of the national policy of a holistic approach is adhered to. It is fundamental to critically assess the three age categories that ECD pupils sail through from 3-5 year age groups. This is a critical age category for this current study because it is the focal point where this current study rests. Bredekamp and Copple (1997), this period of development is characterized by rapid the activities leading to developments such as jumping, hopping, skipping, refined movement of small muscles for object manipulation, major increases in vocabulary and use of language, abstract representation of mental constructs, and the development of relationships with other young children (Bruce, 2010; Santrock, 2002). Gross and fine motor development is characterized by children's ability to perform controlled movements and sequence motor skills. Greater reasoning, problem solving, and assimilation also characterize children's cognitive development at this stage (Santrock, 2002; Piaget, 1980). During the primary years, children's vocabulary increases at a rapid pace. This implied that they are important and influential because the levels of development permeate into the next age level,
taking the likes of the Cognitivist Jean Piaget (1980). This calls for the engagement of competent and qualified caregivers who had the knowledge of child development.

The current trends in ECD show some gapping disparities among countries. Officially, low-cost options for early childhood exist, and are adapted to the needs of children (Brostrom, 1998; Wood and Attfield, 1996). This implied that their implementation depends more on creating adequate political and social than any other factor. Many countries have been going through a period of rapid population growth, increased urbanisation, social disparities, great numbers of out-of-school children and the alarming effects of HIV and AIDS (Brostrom, 1998; Wood & Attfield, 1996). UNESCO’s (2005) actions have addressed the issues of early childhood care and education by strengthening national and regional capacities in the areas of research, training, programming and information to enable early childhood professional to design appropriate solutions to the national needs in early childhood (Fagerli, Lillemyr and Sobstad, 2000). The global and continental perspectives, research studies revealed that countries are seeking to strengthen ECD programmes- in particular those that are community-based (Kamerman, 2006).

There is need to improve their quality and content as well as training of all those involved in ECD activities.

They also want to ensure that these programmes cover children between 0-6 years and not just those between 3-6 years (Brostrom, 1998; Kamerman, 2006). In each country, a number of resource persons and institutions exist in the area of ECD, service provision and materials production. As was noted earlier, children in the 6-9 year age range are assured of by the various ECD constitutions from different continents. The problem of ECD provision globally, continentally, regionally and
locally is one of the challenges regarding access and equity (Suzuki, 2001). From a regional point of view, most of ECD provision is fee-based. This implied that the financial burden for ECD falls disproportionately on the poor from continental, regional or local areas. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is in itself an example of human culture and for this reason could be defined as both the aim and content for early childhood care and education (Brostrom, 1998; Fagerli, Lillemyr & Sobstad, 2000). The global village (McLuhan, 1964) is a reality today and it helps in building a ‘global society’. This implies that children and their educators around the world are more than ever able to share a common, global view on many important matters in culture and society. They are also able to share the challenges they experience and to think of strategies that alleviated effective implementation of the ECD curriculum.

Due to colonialisatiom of African countries, White children had access to ECD services of considerably high quality than African children. In poverty-stricken rural and informal areas, ECD provision for African children from birth- 6 year old was far lower than in urban areas, both in terms of quality and quantity (Steiner-Khamisi’ 2004; Lewis, 2002). ECD services of much higher quality than poor or rural children. Children on farms are more likely to suffer exclusion from early childhood development due to stunted physical growth and lag in emotional and cognitive development of children of the same age (Lewis, 2002). Further, traces of colonialism racial discrimination can be seen in the limited access of children with special needs to ECD services. They are, for the most part, not provided for either in the mainstream or within specialised services (Steiner-Khamisi, 2004). This is
despite the fact that early identification and early intervention are imperative for the optimal development of many of these children.

1.3 Historical Background of Early Childhood Development in Zimbabwe.

In the last decade, the boundaries defining the teaching profession in primary schools, in Zimbabwe in particular, have widened dramatically to include roles traditionally ascribed to parents (Sadker and Sadker, 2005; Mawere, 2011). The roles were a health specialist, the curriculum designer, curriculum manager, family counsellor and curriculum implementer. The change has also increased the depth of the meaning and significance of teaching-learning within the school system, which was facilitated through the introduction of Early Childhood Development (ECD). The main thrust was to embrace what was formerly a constitutional right for only the rich and white Zimbabweans. Viewing education of the children from this new context suggests challenges that may provide sufficient confusion to the teaching profession that involves more expectations regarding:

a) What teachers of Early Childhood Education should know;
b) What they should be able to do;
c) How they should teach.

One challenge teachers in Zimbabwean schools have to deal with involves understanding and implementing the ECD curriculum in ways that satisfy identified standards for the quality of educating infant children from a global, regional and local perspectives (Faber, 1998; Hart, 1999; Hyde and Kabiru, 2003). The standards
are guidelines for good practice and the curriculum should be grounded in a strong theoretical framework for delivering high quality educational experiences to young children (Hyde and Kabiru, 2003). According to research studies the ECD curriculum should do the following:

a) Articulates the optimal relationships between and among families, the community and the school;

b) Identifies expected learning outcomes for young children;

c) Defines supportive learning environments;

d) Links indicators within the expectations within the expectations document to the core curriculum context standards;

e) Provides guidance on the assessment of young children;

f) Provides example of both preschool teaching practices and learning outcomes within each domain and

g) Provides specific developmentally appropriate practices with the learning environment (Berger, 2000; Lancet, 2007).

Research findings on teachers’ responsibilities suggests that, apart from the traditional roles that teachers have always assumed, currently, ECD teachers are expected to serve as curriculum specialists, diagnosticians, health care providers, family counsellors, adult educators and programme managers (Van Lee, 2005; Hyde and Kabiru, 2003). With these expectations, as a researcher and instructional practitioner, I wonder whether the ECD teachers accomplish their introduced duties fairly in order to develop skills in pupils holistically and still manage to meet the requirements of the ECD national curriculum. One question that this study answered was: To what extent does the ECD teachers’ preparation programme in Zimbabwe
account for skills that ensure that newly qualified teachers become effective implementers of the ECD curriculum? It is expected that teachers should be aware that ECD programme accounts for skills that ensure the ECD pupils will arrive at the next school level ready to succeed.

Jansen (1999) cited in Addison (2000) suggests that the ECD curriculum should be viewed as something that teachers do with the ECD children and not to be understood as something that teachers do to their ECD students (Cooper and Warden, 1994; Drew and Rankin, 2004). This reflection from Jansen (1999) and other researchers suggest that ECD teachers should fully understand that Piaget’s constructivist principles and cognitive standards of educating children in the 0-8 age group are strictly met in order to ensure that programmes are effectively implemented (Morrison, 1997; Faber, 1998; Noddings, 2002). Elements that this study attempted to understand included these concerns: (a) how does teacher inadequacy of preparation influence challenges related to curriculum implementation? (b) How do teachers use acquired skills to effectively overcome factors/challenges that inhibit the effective teaching-learning processes at ECD level to ensure effective programme implementation?

In this highly politicised environment of schools and childcare, ECD educators are faced with challenges of defining what to teach, when to teach it, and why it is important to teach it; all against enormous barriers related to lack of developed skills and attitudes (Dyanda, 2005; Dyanda, Makoni, Mudukuti and Kuyanama, 2006).
1.4 The Beginnings of ECD in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, the ECD programme is a post-independence initiative that was introduced to correct the colonial imbalances related to unequal opportunities. It was meant to develop an even-start and manpower through education and to empower all students regardless of colour, social status and religious orientation (Dyanda et al., 2005; Zvobgo, 1994). This was done in order to promote all children to acquire skills that allow them equal opportunities for registering, participating and learning effectively when they enter the mainstream school systems (No Child Left Behind, 2001). In the Zimbabwean context, the education Statutory Instruments (SI) of 1973 and 1999 were designed to discriminate against Native Black Children while at the same time providing their white counterparts with increased advantages for success (Zvobgo, 1994; Leer, 2008). Similar to the Head-Start—an American Education Policy, the Zimbabwean Education for All Act (1983) ensures that when pupils start school, each pupil should be equipped with skills, knowledge and attitudes that allow them to start their education projects with enough cognitive and motor skills or tools to participate equally in education as everyone else in the same age group (No Child Left Behind, 2001). However, the Zimbabwean version of the policy context only emphasises access to education and participation, but is silent on how it ensures even-start and the completions of each level especially those at ECD level. Therefore, there is a very big gap that needed to be filled by this study by critically analysing the factors that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD programme.

In Zimbabwe, ECD officially existed since time immemorial and it was referred to as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (Morris, 2001). For the current alternative of ECEC now called the ECD, the planners and teachers, regardless of
their views and knowledge on, child development programmes, still face challenges in designing and implementing the curriculum, especially when people consider the teacher preparation programme culture (Nziramasanga Commission, 1999; Morrison, 2001). Therefore, because children who normally leave home to start formal education are now entering mainstream education through ECD programmes, it is important that child preparation and care principles are introduced into the teacher training standards and expected skills in schools’ systems in order to connect to national education, from birth to school going ages (Stebbing, 1990; Morrison, 1990; Morrison, 2001).

According to Pherson (1980) in Zvobgo (1986), Zimbabwe native educators need to create a provision for pre-school educators in order to ensure an even teaching platform and that all children are prepared sufficiently during instructional periods. During the colonial (Africa) era, and Zimbabwe in particular, education was used as a tool for discrimination through the strategic educational policies that ensured negative impact on the education of native ECD age group (Morrison, 2001; Tassoni & Beith, 2005). Formerly, the white children were taught reading, writing and arithmetic to prepare them for formal school. The native Africans in pre-independent Zimbabwe were exposed to unguided play activities in the school grounds. These activities were meant to help children to pass away non-productive-time while children waited for their parents to return from work activities (UNICEF, 1984; UNICEF, 1989; Zvobgo, 1994).

Soon after independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean government transformed the education policies, first by making education accessible to all children regardless of race, tribe, colour and religious inclinations (The Education Policy, 1987;
Nziramasanga, 1999). Later, amendments to the 1987 Education Act extended the right of education to include the introduction of ECD education to native Zimbabweans (Zvobgo, 1994). Because of the power of the 1987 Education Act, post independent Zimbabwe experienced the mushrooming of countless ECD centres, higher enrolments in primary schools, especially those in rural areas (Kaseke, 1990). For example, soon after the introduction of the policy of Education for All, 4000 ECD centres were registered during the first five-year development plan of 1980-85 in Zimbabwe (Kaseke, 1990). The rapid expansion in the demand for education resulted in the instruction in the ECD centres being manned by teachers who did not have the necessary professional experience, training and or professional supervision assistance (UNICEF, 1985). Consequently, it is apparent that ECD teachers may not find it easy to execute their instructional duties due to inadequate skills that should be in line with the national policy of developing the whole child. This also reflected that lack of qualified personnel suggested that teachers providing instruction:

1. May be providing under-quality education to ECD students especially in these days of standards guided education for quality assurance at every level;
2. Face challenges related to the effective implementation of the curriculum; and
3. Ensure instructional access only to students attending the few ECD centres that receive adequate even-start skills by the time they graduate from ECD centres.

In the current study I hypothesised that employing untrained para-professionals and at the same time failing to provide them with necessary tools and resources creates problems related to expected standards for programme implementation. In the face of this background, a few questions that oriented this study included:
a) What challenges do ECD instructors and their leaders encounter during implementation of the expected ECD instructional standards?

b) How do ECD centres overcome challenges related to lack of resources and other factors?

c) How do the ECD care-givers know their strategies work?

The answers to these questions helped me as a researcher to accept that staffing the ECD centres with properly qualified teachers would ensure that curriculum implementers in Zimbabwe had to be adequately prepared to ensure that all children were allowed access to even start opportunities when they start school in the mainstream of the Zimbabwean education system. From the Zimbabwean context there was a dearth of literature to demonstrate whether there shall be an even access to formal education when children complete the ECD levels. Hence, for the current study, I will critically analysed the factors and challenges that were experienced by the ECD teachers in Mutare Urban Circuit Schools. The data used the data that was generated, the researcher had the opportunity to describe and analyse how ECD centres that succeeded in effective implementation performed.

1.5 The power of the ECD Education Act of 2004

One key aspect of the background to the problem, as faced by ECD curriculum implementers is the Education ACT of 2004 on which all teaching approaches of the programme implementation balances. The 2004 policy framework stresses three aims that guided the improvement of the ECD education, specifically to:
a) Officially place the ECD programme under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE), thus increasing equity and access probability;

b) Provide empowerment guidelines for establishing, registration, implementing the curriculum and defining structures for payment of allowances to teachers and supervisors. These recommendations call for increased access to ECD and Care for all children, and finally

c) Provide clear operational details for ECD centres. The 2004 Education Act legally ensures that nursery school children are not supposed to be exposed to the formal schools’ curriculum but, to the total development of the student socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically from a holistic perspective.

The general framework of Circular No. 12 of 2005 shows that the Government of Zimbabwe identified strategic plans for describing standards for clarifying how the ECD instructional processes should operate and with what results. From 2006 to 2010, the first phase of ECD programme was implemented, whereby ECD classes were first established to cater for children in the 4-5 age group range. The second most recent and current, phase ran from 2010 to 2014 and the phase included the establishment of the ECD classes for children ranging from 3-4 years. The integration of ECD into the formal primary school system calls for the need to ensure that teachers providing instruction to ECD pupils are properly qualified to achieve the standards guiding ECD instruction and learning (Dyanda et al., 2006). For example, to ensure that implementation of ECD programmes succeeds; Marymount Teachers’ College, Masvingo Teachers’ College and Seke Teachers’ College were mandated to initiate ECD courses for interested teachers. However, the completion of the first phase, and the current rapid expansion in the establishment of
both rural and urban ECD centres motivated the researcher to carry out a study that identified factors that inhibit effective implementation of the programme. It also described how some centres successfully managed to override challenges faced by ECD teachers during the implementation of the curriculum. In this study, ‘override’ refers to the term that is used to describe procedures that were applied to counteract problems faced during the normal operation by ECD teachers as they attempted to provide effective instruction.

One question that this research answered was: What changes have taken place in the teachers’ training colleges to ensure that ECD instructors graduate with adequate skills, knowledge and attitudes that ensure even start for all children? The findings to this question would add more literature about the research problem in the Zimbabwean context. The following paragraphs cover the global challenges that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD curriculum.

1.6 Global Challenges Inhibiting Effective Implementation of the ECD Programmes

This section covers the global, continental, interregional, regional and national challenges experienced by ECD user systems regarding access and equity. This part attempts to unearth and addressed the guiding specific research questions orienting this current study (Chapter 1:10.2). It covered the common challenges that were experienced during the implementation processes from global perspectives, how internal/external factors militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum, how parental involvement enhance effective implementation of the curriculum, quality issues in ECD programme
and the benefits and challenges in management of institutional documents. The broad research question revealed how teachers who succeeded in providing instruction to ECD pupils overcome the challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the early childhood education curriculum. This section discussed some of the strategies used to show how some institutions overcome the challenges for effective implementation.

More than 200 million children under the age of five in the developing world are at risk of not reaching their full development potential because they suffer from the negative consequences of poverty, nutritional deficiencies and inadequate learning opportunities (Lancet, 2007). In addition, 165 million children (one in four) are stunted, with 90 percent of those children living in Africa and Asia (UNICEF, 2012; Yip, 2002).

There is now an expanding body of literature on determining the influence of early development on the chances of success later in life. Fukkink and Lont, (2007) studied the chances of success of young children and the researchers revealed that the first 1,000 days from conception to age two are increasingly being recognized as critical to the development of neural pathways that lead to linguistic, cognitive and socio-emotional capacities that are also predictors of labour market outcomes later in life. In one of the study’s results on challenges faced by early childhood, it was revealed by Copple and Bredekamp, (2009) that poverty; malnutrition and lack of proper interaction in early childhood can exact large costs on individuals, their communities and society more generally. This marks the scale of the early childhood problems that would later impact negatively on both the learner and the teachers. This would also create gaps to find out if such factors are also prevalent
and affect both the learners and teachers from the Zimbabwean context. This current study would address such cases and add more literature continentally and nationally. Research studies established that the effects are cumulative and the absence of appropriate childcare and education in the three to five age ranges can intensify the poor outcomes expected from children who suffer from inadequate nurturing during the critical first 1,000 days (Yazer, 2007; Fukkink and Lont, 2007).

Despite the growing importance of Early Childhood Education, there are number of challenges that have continued to pull down its effective implementation from a global, interregional, regional and national context. According to Van Leer (2005), such challenges include inadequate teaching and learning resources, socio-economic factor, high teacher /child ratio with poor remunerations, financial constraint. Research studies established that in Kenya many ECD centers lack adequate teaching and learning resource and facilities suitable for early childhood development education in their learning environment (Ackerman, 2006; Easton, 2004; Sammons, 2010). These include lack of properly ventilated classrooms, furniture that is suitable for children, kitchen, safe clean water, play grounds, toilets and play material (International Association for the Education of Young Children, 2014). These shortages affect implementation of ECD curriculum negatively as creation of a sustainable learning environment helps deprived children to improve their acquisition of skills and later academic performance when they join the formal sectors (Offenheiser and Holcombe, 2003). The research findings by Easton (2004) automatically imply that teachers do not have adequate teaching and learning resources to enable them to implement ECDE Curriculum effectively. A gap that has being created is to find out how teachers from various regions overcome the
challenges of inadequate teaching and learning resources. The findings by Easton (2004) only establish the factors that inhibit effective implementation. There was room for this current study to establish appropriate strategies that ECD teachers can use to overcome the experienced challenges. It was the purpose of this current study to cover the gap in literature from a national perspective.

Matimba (2014) is of the view that lack of instructional materials such as syllabi and text books to use during teaching/learning process negatively affects effective teaching. In a similar study by Najumba (2013) asserts that ineffective funding and budgetary cutbacks is visible in the erosions of standards of teaching. It is argued that there are certain home background conditions that affect both the learners and the practitioner’s achievement. This indicated that children who lack the provision of reading material perform poorly at school although they are taught by a qualified teacher.

Research carried out by Becker and Epstein (1982) reveals that challenges encountered in the implementation of ECD programmes continue to negatively affect the fertile field (Mohiuddin, 2008) identified the challenges through observation made during visits to primary schools. The challenges were a lack of vertical integration and continuity in planning, the placement of inexperienced teachers in ECD classes the, over-crowded classes with disproportional teacher/pupil ratio, the engagement of persons untrained to teach in these situations. Mohiuddin (20008) asserts that in most schools, the number of children is so high that it becomes very difficult for teachers to maintain a one to one relationship with children.
In one of the studies carried by Eckeman and White (1999), argue for material resources that when they remarked that children learn through play and their play is more cognitively mature in the presence of learning material resources and peers (Fernandez, 2014; Young, 2002). It follows, therefore, that in the absence of these resources, ECD is bound to face challenges in the effective implementation of the curriculum. The gaps created here of lack of learning materials would be filled by the findings of this study from a Zimbabwean context. Mpofu (2001) in one of his studies points out that the lack of documentation of African practices has resulted in the dominance of Western ideas through the importation of their assessment tools and models (Kaputa, 2012; Mpofu, 1999). It was likely that a lot had been occurring in Zimbabwe which may be of benefit to the teaching of ECD children but had escaped the attention of the researcher due to lack of documentation.

The literature and the policy circulars have shown that the current ECD programme was based on the foreign model. There is evidence that the model was evaluated theoretically, but the researcher took a critical analysis on how lack of documentation affects effective implementation of the programme regarding the situation on the ground. This reflected that teachers have nowhere to refer for academic guidance. This study therefore, is significant in the sense that it started an empirical study on how ECD teachers who succeeded in implementing the curriculum are currently applying it. The answers to this broad research question (Chapter 1.10.1) filled the gap in literature since there is a dearth of literature from a Zimbabwean context on the pedagogical approaches to overcome challenges experienced by the user-systems.
Chin (2000) carried a study with young children and revealed that malnutrition and ill-health are external factors associated with the socio-economic factors. These factors could significantly damage the cognitive processing ability of children. Children whose processing capacity is impacted by ill-health and malnutrition may require more hours of instruction for them learn various skills (Howes, James and Ritchie, 2003). As such, the implementation of early childhood education may prove to be critical challenges, especially with low income countries (Offenheiser, and Holcombe, 2003). The socio-economic differences have proved to be a global challenge affecting effective implementation of ECDE and also cutting across regions, with some being labeled ‘marginalized’ or Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) (Burchinal, Cryer and Clifford, 2002; Ermisch, 2008). Regional disparities influence significant role in facilitating access to early childhood care and education, where enrollment levels in rural and marginalized areas are low in comparison to those in the urban areas (Offenheiser, and Holcombe, 2003). Children from the marginalised, communities in rural ASAL suffer from lack of access to early childhood education.

One typical example is the nomadic Maasai community, which is one of the communities experiencing the least access to early childhood education and care because of their nomadic way of life and regional disparities (Easton, 2004; Hill, 2014; Myers, 1992). These findings do not make Zimbabwe an exception, because the country is also experiencing socio-economic hardships that affect the effective learning/teaching of the ECD programme. Delvin, Kift and Nelson (2012) also add that ineffectiveness on the part of the pupil or teacher was higher from families of low socio status no matter which particular factor are used to measure socio-
economic status. There is evidence by Delvin and Nelson, (2012) that a teacher working under these conditions experienced challenges during implementation process. This background opens the gap that this current study covers on how malnutrition and ill-health affects effective learning/teaching. Added information would also contribute and augmented existing knowledge on the Zimbabwean situation which stands out as one of the countries in Africa with an ECD programme.

According to Mavhundutse (2014) argued that for effective teaching and learning to take place, teachers need to possess some sufficient degree of experience. Mavhundutse (2014) is of the opinion that experience is one of the major factors contributing to effective implementation of the ECD programme. From Mavhundutse (2014) his studies showed interest that there is evidence to conclude that experience is one of the factors that inhibit effective implementation from global perspectives. On the contrary, Department of Education (2012) found out that those teachers who were recently trained and were less experienced are more effective than the more experienced. This implied that their approach to overcome challenges is quite different. These findings have created a wider gap to make a comparative argument on who performs better between the two and understand how they override challenges that inhibit the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. It was the purpose of this study to find out challenges experienced by teachers of different experiences and academic standards.

One of the challenges was noted from continental perspectives by various researchers, there were numerous evidence that it can lead to ineffective implementation of early childhood education by the practitioners (Cooper and
Warden, 1993; Goldstein, 2009). At macro level, Kenya has suffered from the heavy debt burden following its pursuit on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund fiscal policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) (Dodge and Colker, 1992). According to Cooper and Warden (1993) debt-servicing programs is partly responsible for significant reduction in government funding for subsidized education, health care and school related expenses (Najumba, 2013). That brought a question to want to divulge the support services from the government of Zimbabwe. Research studies by Kilbride and Kilbride (1990) from various regions confirm that families bear more responsibilities in implementation of early childhood education programmes (Kilbride and Kilbride, 1990; Matimba, 2014). That gave the researcher the opportunity to critically analyse how financial constraints inhibited effective implementation of the ECD curriculum, particularly in Zimbabwe. Data generated would add more literature to the existing board of knowledge on financial constraints as a factor that inhibits effective implementation by the user-systems.

The teacher child ratio has been a subject of much attention among researchers in relation to the factors facing the teaching and learning process. Research shows that teacher child ratio had continued to grow. On average, teacher child ratio for both 3-5 years old children and 6-8 years olds still remains critical (Perez-Johnson and Maynard, 2007). Holcombe’s (2003), study on teachers’ perception regarding pupils’ enrolment showed that teachers were not comfortable with the increasing number of children in their classes they handle. Dodge and Colker (1992) cited in the Dakar Framework for Action, (2000). carried a similar study and revealed that in addition to these high ratios, ECD teachers are poorly remunerated and they are under the mercy of their parents. The researcher is aware that a similar cry was been
raised by teachers in Zimbabwe to the same effect. Current research established that teachers’ failure to effectively implement the ECD curriculum was due to large enrolment and underfunding these high ratios. The issue of large classes is a national problem; therefore, it is a gap to be filled by this study to find out how it inhibits effective teaching and learning. There would be need to establish how other countries overcome the problem of large classes. However, Zimbabwe is also included in an international worldview because there is evidence to the effects of large classes done by various researchers in the field of education. The findings of this study would contribute to knowledge on the Zimbabwean situation which stands out as one of the countries in Africa with ECD programme.

Many early childhood development experts believed that knowledge of child development theory should guide educational practices of children from birth to 8 years of age (Katz, 1996). Theories are useful in helping researchers and teachers to guide their observations. It was from this point of view that practices for supporting the development of children from birth to 8 years of age originated. Developmentally appropriate practices are a set of guidelines for providing high quality early care and education experiences (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997; Goldstein, 1997). This implied that teachers should be skilled with various skills that would enable them to impart skills to ECD pupils accordingly and helped them to unlock various challenges experienced during instructional periods. The question that is in the researcher’s mind was, “Do teachers have adequate skills to overcome challenges that inhibit an effective implementation of the ECD programme, considering the professional achievement the of ECD personnel in the Zimbabwean context? What changes have been Teacher Training Colleges, Universities made to
improve the professional achievement of ECD staff? The intention of this case study was to yield a detailed thick description of current practice. The current study would fill gaps with information which would both act as a basis for any researcher who may want to implement successful strategies to overcome challenges from global perspectives, which incorporate African epistemologies an important aspect which has been ignored to establish whether ECD classes are manned by professional teachers or not.

The key challenges facing Early Childhood Education in Kenya are underlying issues like the lack of a proper government policy framework on ECDE which continues to hinder every good gain that is realised through effective development of early childhood programme. There was a need to build more realistic policy provision in order to safeguard the integral development of the Early Childhood Education in Kenya.

Time management was identified by Delvin, Kift and Nelson, (2012) as a factor that contributed to ineffective teaching and learning. The researchers’ studies showed that it was important for teachers to manage their time and cover the whole syllabus so that pupils gain adequate content/skills (Delvin, Kift and Nelson, 2012). That implied that if schools did not manage their time wisely, they would be at a disadvantage in terms of effectiveness. The most important resource which schools should effectively use is time.

From an international perspective, ECD education has not been a priority. Research studies by Burchinal, Cryer and Clifford’s (2002) studies to establish the support services provided by different states of the world established that very few countries
considered ECD education a priority despite all the evidence on the benefits of ECD. The results reflected that no country in the developing world could boast of comprehensive programme that reached all children, and unfortunately many fall far short. Hence, Zimbabwe was not an exception to this finding until the attainment of independence in 1980. Programme catering to the very young are typically operated at small scale and usually through external donors or NGOs, but these too remain limited. For example, a recent study found that the World Bank made only $2.1 billion of investments in ECD in the last 10 years, equivalent to just a little over 3 percent of the overall portfolio of the human development network, which totals some $60 billion (Sayre, 2013). Since the ECD programme was considered any other business, its inception has created some challenges regarding implementation, hence, was the purpose of the current study to add more literature.

Litjens and Taguma’s (2010) current studies on pedagogical approaches revealed that there was strong evidence that, enriched stimulating environments and high-quality pedagogy leads to both learning outcomes. It is argued that more specialised staff education and training on ECD are strongly associated with stable, sensible and stimulating interactions (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Other elements the research identified were high staff quality that included the content (curriculum) knowledge and their ability to create a multidisciplinary learning environment (Burchinal, Cryer and Clifford, 2002). It was the intention of this study to review some of the attributes stated since they affect effective implementation of the ECD programme in all walks of life. There are various studies showing that, generally, a higher level of education is associated with higher pedagogic quality in ECD settings. One study found out that preschool teachers with Bachelor’s Degrees were the most effective
practitioners (Howes et al., 2003). Their effectiveness was measured within the classroom based on stimulation, responsiveness and engagement of the children in learning activities (Howes et al., 2003; Najumba, 2013). This reflects that the achievement of high quality pedagogy enabled the ECD user-system to reduce some of the challenges experienced by teachers during the implementation process.

Guffey (2013) noted that the school climate had an impact on the effectiveness of teachers in the school. The researcher argued that the way an individual in an organisation performs is determined by the organisational setting, in this case its climate. In a school where there is no bridge between school leadership and teachers, the climate is conducive for effective teaching and learning. In a school where there was dialogue between the head, teachers and pupils a healthy school climate prevails (Guffey, 2013; Hill, 2014). This implied that if schools do not consider communication as a factor that inhibits effective among the staff, teachers would face challenges. It is the objective of this study to establish internal factors that might affect effective implementation.

There were studies by OECD (2006) that revealed patterns of parental, family and community engagement in ECEC that differ from country to country. Several formal and informal mechanisms are used to foster full participatory and managerial engagement. Some of the challenges to active engagement of parents include cultural, attitudinal and linguistic barriers (Barbarin et al., 2008; OECD, 2006). It was the intent of this current study to find out challenges that teachers experience in engaging parents. Responses to these concerns would add more knowledge from a Zimbabwe context.
1.7 How to Overcome Challenges that ECD Teachers Experience from Global Perspectives

The following section covered how the ECD user-system overcomes some of the challenges experienced globally, internationally, regionally and nationally. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) describes specific educational practices to which those working with young children should adhere (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997). These include: a) creating a caring community of learners; b) teaching to enhance development and learning; c) creating appropriate curriculum; d) assessing children's learning, development and establishing relationships with families.

The subsequent paragraphs provided an overview of each of these practices, empirical support for the practice, and some challenges educators face in implementing the practice in the current educational context. According to Bredekamp and Copple, (1997) there is need to create a caring community of learners in which children spend time. This involved both the physical and social environment and how they impacted children's development. Specific variables in early care and education settings that influence how children grow and learn include low staff/child ratios, positive social interactions between children and adults, appropriate classroom arrangements, and safe and healthy practices. According to Kontos and colleagues (2002:240), there is evidence that “the presence of these specific variables in early care and education settings are those where children are more likely to thrive, as determined by their attachment to the teacher, their peer relations, and their verbal ability”
Quality measures are available that evaluate the physical and social environments in which children from birth to 8 years spend time. Evidence of studies that have examined the community of learners has found disturbing results in some cases. A study by Kentucky's (2005) concurs with Grisham-Brown and colleagues (2005) on quality measures that found out that young children from low social-economic backgrounds and those of minority status were more likely to participate in low quality early care and education programs than their counterparts. Similarly, a study of primary school by Buchanan and colleagues (1998) found that those classrooms most likely to use developmentally inappropriate practices were those serving the largest number of children who receive free lunch. Incidentally, these same classrooms had larger class sizes than their counterparts who were engaged in developmentally appropriate practices. That brought a question that should be addressed from a national context that, “What educational policy militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?” The findings of this study would give the opportunity to the researcher to examine the requirements of the educational policy and the implementation on the ground. The findings of this study would add literature to the existing body of knowledge from a national context.

Research studies establish that, in order to overcome challenges, teaching practices for young children should include opportunities for choice, hands-on learning, and promotion of collaboration between children, use of a variety of teaching strategies, individualization, and self-regulation (Brede-kamp and Copple, 1997; Buchanan et al., 1998; Bruce, Meggit and Grenier, 2011). There is evidence that these practices supported the development of young children. Kontos and colleagues (2002) found that preschool aged children experience more complex interactions with peers when
engaged in creative activities than other types of activities, for instance, language arts or gross motor. In Kontos, et al., (2002) the creative activities were those that were open ended without a finished product expected. McCormick and colleagues (2003) evaluated the 25 top-performing primary programmes in Kentucky and found that one variable that differentiated those classrooms from the lowest performing classrooms was the provision of choice in the selection of materials and activities. This study supported that the use of developmentally appropriate practices in primary classrooms positively impacts child outcomes.

A challenge in defining developmentally appropriate teaching strategies has been the emphasis on child-centred approaches. Whereas child-centred approaches originate from constructivist theory, didactic or teacher-directed instruction originates from a behaviourist perspective (Stipek, 2004; Santrock, 2002). Because of the theoretical orientation from which child-centred practices derive, some have viewed them as synonymous with developmentally appropriate practices. However, Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1995) indicate that developmentally appropriate teaching strategies, in fact, fall along a continuum from those that are non-directive (acknowledgement) to those that are directive (direct instruction). Stipek (2004) found that teachers serving large numbers of low achieving children were more likely to use direct instruction than child-centred instructional techniques. Grisham-Brown, Hemmeter, and Petti-Frontczak (2005) argue that in blended programmes where teachers encounter groups of children with wide ability levels, it is appropriate for teachers to employ the full continuum of teaching behaviours. This view is certainly in keeping with the ideas of response to intervention, as set forth by Petti-Frontczak and colleagues (2008) whereby children's needs are addressed using more intentional, direct
instruction. By using the full continuum of optional teaching strategies, those working with young children are, in fact, addressing the individualisation of ideas associated with developmentally appropriate practice, hence, are in a position to show how successful ECD teachers overcome challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum.

According to Pretti-Frontczak and colleagues (2007) in their study to reveal how successful teachers do to overcome challenges experienced by ECD teachers, identified four parts to construct an appropriate curriculum framework. These parts includes: 1) assessment for gathering information about children; 2) scope and sequence or the developmental/content areas that would be addressed; 3) activities and instruction or the contexts and strategies for teaching; and 4) progress monitoring or methods for determining the success of the instruction. Bredekamp and Copple (1997) indicate that developmentally appropriate curricula should address all areas of the children's development and all content areas, bearing in mind the child's age and considering children's cultural, linguistic, and ability differences. Grisham-Brown and colleagues (2005) indicate that collaboration between educators, families, and other support personnel is essential for implementing a high quality curriculum for children in blended classrooms. There was evidence to show that it is possible to overcome challenges provided both learning resources and human resources are available at learning centres.

One key issue that enabled shaping of the curriculum design was the development of learning standards. Although states have had learning standards for kindergarten programme since the early 1990s, early learning standards for children five and under were only developed in the mid-2000s (Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow,
As of 2008, over 40 states and the District of Columbia have developed pre-kindergarten standards, many across all areas of development (Neuman and Roskos, 2005). The guiding standards for the programme served children from birth to 8 years of age had challenged those who wanted to ensure the implementation of developmentally appropriate practice during a standards-based climate that emphasizes accountability. In the late 2000s, leading researchers in early childhood education were beginning to provide guidance for ensuring that the needs of young children are appropriately addressed within this context. Goldstein (2007: 51) found in a qualitative study that kindergarten teachers could address content standards in a developmentally appropriate manner by “recognising and building on the curriculum stability in kindergarten and employed instructional approaches that accommodated the children's developmental needs”. Grisham-Brown (2008) and Gronlund (2006) have proposed that curriculum driven by early learning standards can be appropriate, if standards are addressed at different levels, depending on the needs of the children. In agreement with Grisham-Brown (2008) and Gronlund (2000) the positive application of their research studies would reflect how ECD teachers could overcome challenges for effective implementation. The gap that was created was to establish how successful ECD teachers overcame challenges that inhibited effective implementation of the curriculum.

In order to successfully overcome challenges faced by ECD user-systems, it was important to understand specific guidelines regarding children's development. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) advocate the use of authentic assessment practices as the primary approach for assessing young children (Division for Early
Childhood, 2007; National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 2003). Authentic assessment strategies involve documenting the learning and development of children during real-life activities and routines by familiar adults (Losardo and Notari-Syverson, 2001; Neisworth and Bagnato, 2004). Research studies by Losardo and Notari-Syverson (2001) showed that many teachers preferred authentic assessment approaches over more traditional assessment methods and there are positive relationships between the use of authentic assessment practices, other classroom practices, and child outcomes.

Appropriate assessment practices for young children have been compromised by the accountability climate in education in the early 2000s. Early childhood leaders have advocated the use of authentic assessment approaches for accountability purposes, indicating that these methods are more appropriate for young children (Meisels et al., 2003; Neisworth and Bagnato, 2004; Grisham-Brown, 2008). Emerging research shows that authentic assessment approaches, used for accountability purposes, can yield technically adequate assessment data thereby not compromising the results of high-stakes assessment.

Current studies reveal that Indicators of active family involvement in programs serving young children should involve collaboration and communication. Bredekamp and Copple (1997) indicated that programme should collaborate with families as they design early experiences for their children using two-way communication strategies (Chingo and West, 2010; Hill 2014). Unlike other practices in early childhood education, family involvement has been an enduring value that few have challenged (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Delvin, Kift
and Nelson, 2012) primarily because of the positive benefits on children's development. For example, family literacy practices have been positively linked to children's ability to read successfully (Gambrell and Mazzoni, 1999; Najumba, 2013). Grisham-Brown and colleagues (2005) provide specific examples of how to involve families in child assessment, selection of children's priorities, and curriculum development. Bailey (2002: 290) argues that there should be a shift from emphasis on critical periods to critical experiences. Bailey questions that: “What are the experiences that are absolutely necessary for all children to maximize school success, mental health, and social development?” Clearly the practices that early childhood educators implement with children from birth to 8 years have the greatest impact on child outcomes. Knowledge of those practices and the underlying theoretical orientation that supported them is essential in order for young children to receive “critical experiences.” These practices could only be achieved by teachers who had the knowledge about how instrumental is parental involvement in the learning of their children.

The World Bank’s (2006) research studies revealed that ECD interventions are effective and show that there are large gains in investing in early childhood development. For example, estimates place the gains from the elimination of malnutrition at 1 to 2 percentage points of gross domestic product (GDP) annually (World Bank, 2006). Analysis of results from OECD’s 2009 Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) reveals that school systems that have a 10 percentage-point advantage in the proportion of students who have attended pre-primary school score an average of 12 points higher in the PISA reading assessment (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2011). Also, a simulation model of the potential
The long-term economic effects of increasing preschool enrolment to 25 percent or 50 percent in every low-income and middle-income country showed a benefit-to-cost ratio ranging from 6.4 to 17.6, depending on the preschool enrolment rate and the discount rate used (Lancet, 2011).

Indeed, poor and neglected children benefit disproportionately from early childhood development programmes, making these interventions among the more compelling policy tools for fighting poverty and reducing inequality (Yazer, 2002; Yip, 2002). ECD programmes are comprised of a range of interventions that aimed for a healthy pregnancy; proper nutrition with exclusive breast feeding through six months of age. There is need for adequate micro-nutrient content in diet; regular growth monitoring and immunization and improving the parenting skills of caregivers (Yazer, 2002).

The following are important inputs into the development of healthy and productive children and adults, but unfortunately these issues are often not addressed effectively. Yet, they are factors that might inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum globally. The issue of maternal under nutrition affects 10 to 19 percent of women in most developing countries (Lancet, 2011; Yazer, 2007), and 16 percent of births are low birth weight (27 percent in South Asia). Maternal depression also affects the quality of care giving and compromises early child development. This epistemology which guides the assessment on good health would have a bearing on the child’s future education. From the researcher’s analytical point of view, children from such a background would as well present learning challenges at school. This implied that teachers would have to prepare remedial work right from an early age between 3-5 years. It was the purpose of this study to fill the gap and
add literature on the effects of malnutrition to ECD children from Zimbabwean situation.

Child Care and Parenting Practices are other issues that have negative influence on the implementation of the ECD curriculum. The home environment, including parent-child interactions and exposure to stressful experiences, influences the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children (Goldstein, 2007; Grisham-Brown, 2008). For instance, only 39 percent of infants aged zero to six months in low and middle-income countries are exclusively breast-fed, despite strong evidence on its benefits (Lancet, 2011). Also, in half of the 38 countries for which UNICEF collects data, mothers engage in activities that promote learning with less that 40 percent of children under the age of six. Societal violence and conflict are also detrimental to a child’s development, a fact well known to around 300 million children under the age of four that live in conflict-affected states (Lancet, 2011; Yip, 2002, Yazer, 2007).

Participation in good quality pre-primary programme has been shown to have beneficial effects on the cognitive development of children and their longevity in the school system (Jeffries 2003; Najumba, 2013). Yet despite gains, enrolment remains woefully inadequate in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, national averages usually hide significant inequalities across socio-economic groups in access and almost certainly in quality. In all regions, except South Asia, there is a strong income gradient for the proportion of 3 and 4 year olds attending preschool (Lawler (1991) cited by Jeffries (2003). The question that still stands is: What challenges are faced by ECD teachers under the diverse socio-economic status of the children.
1.8 Statement of the Problem

Although significant theoretical educational changes have been introduced to equalise the educational opportunities in the ECD, a number of critical issues still needed to be initiated in order to make ECD education in Zimbabwe accessible to all its citizens. The gap that existed between the education department policy development and ECD instruction is still wide due to flawed assumptions by policy makers; especially regarding what really goes on in ECD classrooms and the quality of instruction teachers provided in those classrooms (Circular no. 12 of 2004-2005). Does Zimbabwe have enough qualified ECD teachers, resource materials and infrastructure that enabled the ECD user system to effectively benefit from teachers who are able to prepare the child’s mind for more orderly and structured learning in order for them to be ready for formal learning? Consequently, lack of properly trained ECD personnel has resulted in the students’ failure to effectively participate in the formal learning grades because they may not have been provided with essential rich pre-school education background to get them ready for even start at formal level of education. It is therefore, against this background that the researcher, set out critically analyse the factors/challenges that inhibited the effective implementation of the ECD programme in Mutare District Schools.

1.9 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to critically identify and analyse factors/challenges faced by ECD teachers in Mutare District Schools during the process of implementing the Early Childhood Curriculum, to support the national
curriculum policy of developing the whole child. The main thrust was to enable teachers to employ appropriate strategies to overcome challenges experienced by the ECD user-systems (teachers, heads, SDC, DEO).

1.10 Research Questions Orienting the Thesis

The following paragraphs addressed the research questions orienting the study. This included the broad research question and specific research questions that were extracted from both the broad question and the research title of this study.

1.10.1 Broad Research Question

The overarching research question that guided the current study was: How do teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD pupils overcome the challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum?

1.10.2 Specific Research Questions

The following five questions broken down from the broad research question above helped to provide specific guidance to the data generation processes, analysis strategies and organisation of the data generated through questionnaires, interviews, observations, analysis of institutional artefacts and documents. The interview questions were developed from the following specific research questions including:
1.10.2.1. What specific challenges do participants experience when implementing the ECD Programme in Mutare District?

1.10.2.2 How do internal/external factors militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District?

1.10.2.3 How does parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of ECD programme in Mutare District?

1.10.2.4 What quality indicators do ECD teachers use to measure the effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum?

1.10.2.5 How do institutional documents used by the ECD teacher enhance the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District?

1.11 Significance of the Study

The results from this qualitative study will provide information that would help ECD teachers and heads of schools to develop a clear picture of the factors/challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD programme. The study should also inform how other successful ECD centres in Mutare District Schools overcame specific challenges related to programme implementation. The findings of this research study would reveal how best ECD pupils should be taught and also suggest ways for aligning instructional processes with the government policy of developing the child holistically. Teachers need information on what they should do when faced with learning/teaching problems which inhibit effective implementation. Some ECD para-professionals divulged that they really faced challenges on appropriate teaching strategy for the ECD classes. This made the findings of this current study
appropriate to fill the gap as documented and disseminated what schools have done. The strategy used to overcome challenges, how successful teachers overcome challenges provides a basis for further research. The findings highlighted the importance of this study. This assists the ECD user-system so as to improve their academic performance in all subjects. Therefore, the ECD pupils would be exposed to an even platform in the way of preparation for formal learning.

The need for an assessment with various records would contribute to the development of viable interventions for ECD children. Currently, literature was silent on how teachers accomplished a successful implementation of the curriculum. I acknowledged that if learners are not properly nurtured from the beginning this will affect them in the formal school and this would contradict with the national policy of developing a holistic child.

The study would provide information that would motivate the stakeholders like parents, potential business people, NGOs or the government to find a common ground for supporting the ECD programme in Mutare District. Currently, there was little information available on how some ECD centres overcome challenges related to the programme in schools. The findings that shall be drawn from this study would therefore, not only provide the potential to offer information to policy makers that provides an insight into challenges faced by the ECD teachers during the implementation of the ECD curriculum, but would provide information for enhancing teachers’ performance. Teaching strategies and ECD staff development hopefully would benefit from research findings on how the impact of the challenges will be reduced in order to implement the curriculum successfully. This would help
the user system to effectively improve their approaches to teaching for the benefit of the ECD child.

The study contributed to the literature on challenges experienced by the ECD centres. The findings of this research were a vital base for the development of models on identifying children’s challenges faced by teachers, heads of schools, SDC, MOPSE and develop interventions. Researchers who would read this study would hopefully be in a position to identify gaps in this research study and be able to conduct further studies and develop theories on challenges faced by ECD centres in curriculum implementation.

1.12. Assumptions of the Study

This study identified and critically analysed challenges experienced by ECD teachers to effectively implement the curriculum to meet the expected standards for implementation of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum (ECEC). When data was generated in different schools the researcher had the following assumptions.

1. The Early Childhood Education teachers in Mutare District Schools were genuinely experiencing programme implementation problems related to the ECD curriculum. These challenges were experienced by both private and public sectors.

2. All ECD centres have official documents should yield valuable information on how instrumental they are to both the learner and the teacher.

3. All volunteering participants would provide me with accurate and honest responses to interview questions.
4. The ECD leaders and their teachers acted and performed their duties in an honest manner during the lesson observation data generation stages.

5. Relevant institutional documents related to how instructors and leaders implemented the programme were made available to the researcher whenever they were mentioned during interviews and observations. This was important for this study because documents and institutional artefacts provided me with historical descriptions regarding the way the phenomenon under study has evolved over the past years and

6. Permission to carry out the study would be granted on time without any bureaucratic delays by responsible authorities. All this would allow for sufficient data generation time and analysis including lesson observations during instructional periods.

1.13. Delimitations of the Study

The study was confined to Mutare District in Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe. I conducted the study with one of the seven school districts in and around Mutare District. The District includes five education circuits in and around Mutare. For this study, I delimited my study to Mutare Urban Circuit because it included ECD centres that had the characteristics that had the potential to provide answers to both the research broad question and the specific research questions that guided the study. Mutare Urban Circuit has urban, peri-urban, private and rural ECD settings where ECD curriculum is being successfully implemented using a uniform syllabus.

For this study, I delimited the focus of my study to understanding the challenges related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum and find out how some of the
ECD centres who succeeded to overcome challenges for effective implementation of the programme accomplished. Specifically, I only considered ECD schools that provided services to ECD pupils within the 3-4 year age-range (ECDA) and 4-5 years (ECDB). These are crucial groups that are important for equipping skills that they need to enhance an even-start mainstream education. Data for this current study were generated primarily through a qualitative case study involving interviews, questionnaires with open-ended questions and institutional artefacts and documents.

1.14 Limitations of the Study

All research suffers from limitations (Patton, 2002; Marshall and Rossman, 2009) because of the uniqueness of its characteristics. Therefore, the current study on the analysis of factors that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD may not be unique. There were limitations relating to both operational and methodological points of views. The study was based on voluntary co-operative; therefore, shortage in it would have weakened the study. The time that was spent in ECD centres, DEO-ECD, NGOs representative, SDCs and lecturers was inadequate to understand fully the dynamics, relationships and contradictions with institutions, especially, given the number of issues that were analysed. Similar to Marshall and Rossman (2009) and Patton (2001) are proponents of case study methods suggest that researchers should immerse themselves in the institutions in which research is being undertaken. Furthermore, the findings were specific due to social contexts in this study, namely the Private ECD centres, Public both rural and urban centres in Mutare District. Some characteristics that occurred in one school did not occur in another school during the visits made by the researcher. However, while these puzzling circumstances were likely to thwart the understanding of the results of this study,
these were overcome and controlled by thoroughly observing what was raised on trustworthiness of the research paradigm and design. It was also difficult to ascertain whether what was recorded during direct lesson observation was without a doubt, because teachers have a tendency to prepare and rehearse very thoroughly with pupils before the lesson in order to give an impression of effectiveness. These ECD centres were staffed with instructors who lacked detail of the Zimbabwe education system, particularly as it relates to the ECD programme. As a result, I resorted to the available data gathered over the decades to complement any information shortfall.

There were inaccurate responses from the participants because some of the para-professionals failed to comprehend some of the items on the questionnaire during the preliminary study I conducted in some selected ECD centres in Mutare District. However, there was need to give simple and well structured questions and if there was any need, I simplified through explanations so that they would attempt all items that were included in the questionnaire. Due to failure of some of the selected sample participants from the care-givers from Independent/Private sectors to answer with frankness, data generated might not accurately reflect the opinions of all members of the included population. However, I explained the value of this study and I also stated why they were purposefully selected to participate in the study. This was done in order to minimise any possible negative attitudes towards providing truthful information by the participants. I also provided assurance that data generated would be used solely for writing this dissertation and any other future publications as I guaranteed anonymity. However, still, some of the participants returned questionnaires with some items not fully completed. To reduce the impact of this limitation, I had to initiate specific follow-ups by administering the questionnaires
personally, making sure that all questions were completed by all participants but to their own accord. The other limitation was that some heads of schools were hesitant to take part in the study by changing appointment dates. This prolonged the data generation period resulting in the use of more resources. The qualitative- case study generated messy and large amount of data which needed to be organised so as to generate themes and categories. This was quite industrious and needed a strong hardworking researcher. This limitation was resolved when the researcher adopted the ideas of Marshall and Rossman (2007) of organising data for presentation and analysis.

1.15. Definition of Special Terms and Expressions

- **Early Childhood Development** involves the processes and experiences through which ECD children go through from birth to 8 years and these include physical, emotional, skills, social and mental developments (Santrock, 2002).

- **Early Childhood Education** consists of activities or experiences that are intended to effect development changes in children prior to their entry into formal school. It is the education from birth to eight years, categorized as 3-4 years known as ECD Class A and 4-5 years known as ECD Class B (Morrison; 2010).

- **Early Childhood Curriculum** is the content and all the chances for learning and development that are provided to young children, the way the classroom is set up and when and how the activities are done, the part played by the teacher in facilitating learning and the level that parents are involved (Smith, 1994; Bruce et al., 2010)
 Successful Curriculum Implementation, in this study it refers to using developmentally appropriate instructional practice to expose ECD children to various learning experiences provided to ECD children to achieve curriculum goals.

 Para-Professional is a job title given to persons in various occupational fields such as education or health, who are trained to assist professionals but do not have professional qualifications. These teachers may lack knowledge on how to give developmentally appropriate content (1999).

 Overcome, in this study the term is used to describe procedures that were applied to counteract problems faced during the normal operation by ECD teachers as they attempt to provide effective instruction.

 Colonial Era is a period of control of a state or country by some settlers where there were unequal relationships between the settlers’ power and the colony and often between the colonists and the indigenous people.

 School readiness is a situation where a child must demonstrate adequate social skills, emotional, physical, intellectual, oral language, pre-reading skills and general knowledge (Gibson, 1976).

 ECD stakeholders define individuals, organisations, institutions and government sectors working with ECD children.

 Circuit in this study is referred to as an officially fixed and divided land within a district.

 Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources. In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methods in studying the same phenomenon (Punch, 2002, Patton, 2002).
Developmentally Appropriate Practice is an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young children develop, learn and in what is known about effective early education. Its framework is designed to promote young children’s optimal learning and development (Bruce, 2010; Bruce, Meggit and Greiner, 2011).

Staff is the term that is usually used to refer to those who work directly with children in the ECD field. They are also referred to as professionals, teachers, caregivers or practitioner.

Play is an assimilation learning process meaning that children are able to assimilate a variety of roles and use play materials to represent real-life contexts such as building or relating to others (Tassoni and Beith, 2002).

Play areas in line with the ECD teaching contexts, these are special areas of learning in ECD language.

Zone of proximal Development (ZPD) defines the point at which the child’s learning knowledge reaches its upper limit and then the teacher is expected to extend that zone of proximal development. This is where real learning starts and the teachers will be credited with effective teaching methods (Santrock, 2002).

Standards are guide lines given for good practice.

Policy is very much like a decision and we make implement or carry out a policy just as we do with decisions.

Procedures specific methods employed to express policies in action in day to day operations of the organisation.

A pilot study is a standard scientific tool for research, allowing researchers to conduct a preliminary analysis before committing to a full-blown study. This is usually done to test the feasibility of methods and research instruments. (Marshall and Rossman, 2006)
**Assessment** refers to systematic process of gathering educational relevant information to make a decision about the provision of special service

**Epistemology** refers to knowledge, nature, forms and how it can be acquired and community to other human being

1.16 Organisation of the Thesis

The study was systematized into five Chapters. These Chapters are thematic in the sense that they indicate what is being covered. The Chapters are in the following order.

**Chapter 1: Introduction to the Thesis**

**Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature**

**Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design**

**Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis, Discussion and Interpretation**

**Chapter 5: Thesis Summary, Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations**

1.17 Chapter Summary

This chapter indicated that the introduction of this current study enclosed very vital subsections that fulfilled specific explicit functions. In chapter one I provided the introductory background to the study that has established global perspectives of ECD provision and opportunity. It further discussed the historical background of early childhood development in Zimbabwe. The chapter looked into the global, continental, international, regional and national challenges inhibiting effective implementation of the ECD experienced by the user-system. The chapter
investigated what other researchers have done, how they have done it and what findings they have come up with regarding challenges and what strategies they used to overcome the problems. The statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and research questions was outlined. The Chapter also discussed assumptions, delimitations and limitations of the study. The key terms were operationally defined. The chapter demonstrated the organisation of the thesis and the chapter summary wrapped up Chapter 1. The following chapter 2 focuses on review of related literature to the study problem.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify and analyse factors/challenges that inhibited effective implementation of ECD curriculum. The educational gap that exists between the education policy developers and ECD teachers was still wide due to flawed assumptions by policy-makers especially regarding the pedagogical approaches in ECD department and the quality of instruction teachers provided in the learning processes. My worry as a researcher was to establish whether Zimbabwe had enough qualified ECD teachers, resource materials and infrastructure that would enable the ECD user system to effectively benefit from teachers who are able to prepare the child’s mind for more orderly and structured learning ready for formal learning. The overarching research question that guided the current study was: How do teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD children overcome challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum?

Chapter 1 provided the background information to the problem on which the significance of this thesis’ purposeful rests. Chapter 2 reviews related literature and in the process I established the gaps that would need to be filled by this the results of this study. In this Chapter, I started by reviewing the historical perspectives of ECD in Zimbabwe starting with the pre-independence historical context of ECD in Zimbabwe. A brief definition of the concept of early childhood development would
be discussed. The modern theories of Early Childhood Education development are discussed through two thematic groupings, including the theories related to Cognitive Development such as the Piaget’s Developmental Instructional Theory, Vygotsky’s Socio-cultural Cognitive Development Theory and other theories guiding the teaching strategies at ECD level. Other theories like the Froebel and Comenius’ Theories were also discussed in the context of the effective implementation of ECD curriculum.

2.2 The Historical Context of Early Childhood Education (ECD) in Zimbabwe

The review of related literature commenced from the pre-independence history of ECD and the post-independence from the Zimbabwean context.

2.2.1 Pre-Independence History of ECD in Zimbabwe

According to the Dual System Education Act of 1973, ECD educational facilities such as playgrounds, pre-schools, crèches and nursery schools were supposed to be provided only for the children of parents with European origin. From this context, it is clear that the educational interests of the native black children were not included in the provisions of the Education Act of 1973. The implications of policy making designed with a discriminatory tone reveals that native groups were not allowed access to knowledge, skills development and adult leadership that would ensure them an even start at the time of attending school (Isaacs, 2012). The interpretation that this study makes of the policy implementation and design processes is that when it comes to education in its totality, native Zimbabwean children were neglected left behind in diverse ways regarding education at an early childhood stage.
Children from Black native families started school at a disadvantage in terms of the early skills, expected behaviour and health standards. Because the policy completely excluded them it implied that all of the native children were never assessed for school readiness. This study examined the current implementation of the ECD programme to understand how they become ready for school. The study also evaluated three interventions for improving their school readiness during implementation processes. In order to prepare children’s readiness, the teachers should provide education that develop the children holistically and aspects to be developed covers the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual developments.

The few Municipal preschool centres that provided an ECD education curriculum that had a few suggestions of international standards of education at ECD were only found in the cities, specifically in the western suburbs or in down-town areas. The other few highly inclusive preschools run by churches only catered for reduced pupils numbers; hence, their impact on providing effective even-start programmes to the general population of the ECD children demanding education was limited. Two legislative instruments governed the provision of ECD education before independence included the Nursery School Regulations of 1973 administered by the Department of Native Education; and the Child Protection and Adoption of Regulations of 1972, administered by the Social Welfare. This clearly indicated that there was never a time when the white community integrated with the native community since they were guided by the two Regulatory Acts which actually promoted discriminatory educational practices in schools. With this current study, there is still need to reveal how the Child Protection and Adoption of Regulations of
1972 influenced the education of the young children as it is still administered by the Social Welfare.

### 2.2.2 Post-Independence ECD History in Zimbabwe

At Independence in 1980, as Zvobgo (1986:76) observed:

The manifesto of the ruling party in Zimbabwe outlined six (6) cardinal principles which would guide education in an independent Zimbabwe. One of the principles is that, “Education is a basic right of every citizen and therefore, pre-schooling should be considered an area of concern.”

The manifesto led to the establishment of community based preschool education in rural, urban, peri-urban, farm, resettlement and mine areas. In 1981, an inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Zimbabwe showed that there were over 1000 pre-school centres in the country, 582 of which were situated in the rural areas and 418 in urban areas (Van Leer, 2008; UNICEF, 1997). Research studies reveal that many children between the ages of three and six years benefited from the introduction of the post-independence pre-schools in Zimbabwe. ECD became one of the Zimbabwean government’s critical priority areas within the national development programme. In 1982, ECD programmes were temporarily placed under the Ministry of Community Development and Women’s Affairs (MCDWA), Health and Child Welfare (HCW). This implied that ECD programmes became a shared responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Community Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) and Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MHCW). This administrative structure was initiated because the government wanted the
commencement of rural community based programmes in rural, urban, farms, resettlement and mine areas/locations.

The rationale for organising and planning ECD programmes in this way was prompted by the need for joint efforts in helping the development of the ECD centres in the rural areas, private and in the public sectors to learn effectively. For instance, local communities employed ECD teachers and they were also responsible for paying their allowances and the MHCW promoted the health of the development of the children of the ages 0-5 years through free immunisation of the childhood killer diseases. The post independent period saw of mushrooming of ECD centres especially in rural areas. Kaseke (1990) and UNICEF (1985) agree that over 4000 centres were opened and registered during the first 5 year development plan. UNICEF (1985) further outlines that the MCDWA started the rural community based ECD centres. The responsibilities for running the centres were mainly carried by the local community. This resulted in most centres being manned by untrained personnel. From independence in (1980–1988) the responsibility of ECD centres was allocated to the MCDWA (UNICEF, 1996).

In 1988, the ECD programme was transferred to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE), (Van Leer, 2008). This transfer was going to be more effective than when it was in the MCDWA. The ECD programme would be manned by the appropriate Ministry that deals with curriculum implementation and deploy skilled personnel who had the appropriate knowledge and could interpret the syllabus effectively. This would reduce the number of people from the community rather than employing any literate women from the community. It then became a
shared responsibility of MOPSE, the local communities and the MLSW. The ECD teachers were only trained at three church run institutions namely, St Gabriel, St Nicholas and St Pius (UNICEF, 2000). The programme was certified by MOPSE but not affiliated to the University of Zimbabwe. This transfer was going to be effective because it would be an advantage to all ECD institutions whether private, public, urban or rural area because they had the opportunity to start using a uniform curriculum designed by the MOPSE. The uniform regulations governing ECD education after the independence of Zimbabwe are being implemented on the basis of rural and urban differences rather than on racial discrimination.

This positive shift provided an opportunity to understand how teachers from both rural and urban areas, who succeed in providing instruction, overcome challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the ECD curriculum. An official syllabus for training para-professional ECD teachers was produced by MOPSE in 1998. The main thrust was to standardise the scope and content of their training. Currently, all Teachers’ Colleges that train primary school teachers in Zimbabwe through UNICEF support have embarked on the training of para-professionals.

In 1999, a Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (Nziramasanga Commission) was set up. This commission recommended increased access to ECEC now called ECD pursuant to attainment of this goal; a policy was instituted by MoPSE as indicated in the Secretary’s Circular Number 14/2004. It directed all primary schools to attach two ECD classes, ‘ECDA’ and ‘ECDB’ in accordance with the policy decision. In order to promote the quality of education, ECD specialists are now being trained in Teachers’ Colleges that train primary
schools have managed to attach an ECDA class and ECDB class in their main stream so that all children go through an ECD programme before entry into Grade currently, ECD is part of formal education system and has been fully integrated into the education system. More so, ECD trained personnel are now paid by the Government, thus, lessening the community's burden.

In the background of this history of ECD in Zimbabwe, one question that this study needed to answer was: Do Zimbabwe pre-schools have enough trained professional teachers, trained supervisors, enough teaching resources and appropriate ECD classrooms in both public and independent centres? Answers to this question would definitely add more information to the current body of literature regarding the Zimbabwe ECD status of personnel, learning material and availability of infrastructure, regardless of its geographical area.

2.2.3 The Impact of the Child Protection and Adoption of Regulations of 1972 in Curriculum Implementation at ECD Level

The Nursery School Regulations of 1973 allowed only the white community to establish nursery schools for the children aged 3-6 years in selected areas. Besides, the white community had the financial resources and legal freedom to provide early childhood education to the groups that they chose to and in the majority of cases they selected only areas with natives who tended to sympathise with colonial projects of the white community. From their own prerogative, they also chose to provide ECD education services to areas where they captured children from the native groups as provided for by the policy guidelines regarding the quality of education standards established by the law (UNICEF, 1985). According to the law,
practising teachers in pres-schools located in the whites’ areas had to be only white, including in those church run schools/centres that were inclusive to the native blacks (UNICEF, 1985). In those pre-schools, the only native black personnel that were employed in the institutions were cleaners, security guards, messengers, cooks and caretakers of the schools (UNICEF, 1985). The implication of this policy statement and how it was allowed to play out in the actual practice were that the native children would only see their future as adults through those that looked like them in the pre-schools as role models. This would help them to view their expected achievement standards for positions of:

(a) Providers of clean environments, especially for the white community because mostly black people were employed in the pre-schools to clean, while they were being supervised by white people.
(b) Caretakers of the interests of the white people, as the children went about their school activities, they could see their own people (native blacks) acting as servants to the interests of the whites who were in white and blue collar jobs
(c) Providers of security to the white people and their children most people who provided security to the schools were commonly known as guards and these were always blacks
(d) Messengers who should always run around to provide the white community with information for administering the organizations as they observed these behaviours through the Blacks
(e) Providers of cooking services to the white community even to this day, no white people carry out these duties except in developed countries.
ECD children from the white community were exposed to skills focussing on acquiring skills that would transition them to the diverse mainstreams including basic learning and developmental skills that prepared them for formal learning. They were taught basic reading, writing and arithmetic behaviours although the act did not permit that. The nursery schools to which most white children were registered prepared the children more for formal schooling than did the crèches that were designed for the native black children (UNICEF, 2000; Van Leer, 2008). The crèches and playgrounds which catered for the native Black children functioned as waiting rooms for children while parents went to work (Van Leer, 2008). During the colonial era, the Child Protection and Adoption Regulations of 1972 regulated the registration of crèches but the way they did was in favour of the white communities throughout the country. According to the Education Act of 1973, crèches focussed on custodial and health care for the children would require a winding process to secure licenses to operate. Personnel from the health sector like nurses were preferred as staff especially for crèches (UNESCO, 2000). The winding process was meant to deliberately delay the ECD implementation processes because it meant that lack of the licences would not warrant the programme to start operating. Initially, the Education Act of 1973 excluded children of African descent, hence wanted to unhurriedly implement the native children’s learning programme, especially on custodial and health care provisions. The winding processes were also negatively influenced by the political government during the colonial era, which needed all quality services to be provided to their advantages.
2.3 How Does the Zimbabwean ECD Philosophy Address the Teaching and Learning of Young Children?

The related literature in this section gave an account of the Zimbabwean ECD philosophy on the teaching and learning of young children. Manjengwa (1994) postulates that, “before the independence [of Zimbabwe] in 1980, educationists, such as Joke Childs, Joanna Moyo and McD Partridge introduced child-centred education in ECD with a focus on the play-way method, through a play centre established at Hope Fountain” (Manjengwa, 1994, p. 27). The established graduates would, therefore, enter the primary school with polished basic learning skills such as pre-reading, pre-writing, gross motor and fine motor skills (UNICEF, 2008). This implied that their ideas had an impact on how pre-school teachers operate in the play room. Manjengwa (1994) further states McD Partridge’s philosophy, which was:

For work in schools they must train not teachers but the right kind of human being, the right teacher who would follow the expected standards of educating this [ECD] special group of children. They should stop teaching and let the children learn. You must be a man yourself in order to educate men (Manjengwa, 1994, p. 29).

McD Partridge (cited in Manjengwa (1994, p.30) believes in “child-centred education and discovery learning, and his vision is to train an effective infant teacher who would teach using modern methods in a modern college.” Her philosophy emphasises that children must be taught to learn how to learn. The gap that has been created by these authors is that they are all silent on how the ECD curriculum should be constructed with a purpose of orienting behaviour in pupils. It was the purpose of this current study to probe how the ECD instructors
achieve such behaviours during the implementation processes, in support of the national ECD policy of developing the whole child.

2.4 The quality issues on education, qualification, and professional development of ECD teachers

This section addressed quality issues, why qualification, education and professional development of ECD teachers matter. The quality of something is a judgement on the degree of overall excellence. Since it is a judgement; a person often uses his/ her own criteria to make the judgement. This is not much use if we wish to discuss "quality of learning environment" sensibly. Everyone needs to agree on the criteria. After such an agreement, then all are able to use the accepted criteria to evaluate learning situations. Research studies suggested or identified three major areas when one wanted to attain quality in ECD learning and these were: pupil characteristics, content characteristics and the teacher characteristics (Fives, 2003). However, numerous questions arise. For instance, how many Early Childhood centres meet this criterion? Secondly, were people who run such institutions even aware of such requirements? These questions when addressed would add new knowledge to the existing board of related literature. ECD qualifications indicated the recognised level and types of knowledge, skills and competencies the staff have received.

2.5 The Impact of Gender Inequalities in ECD centres

The inclusion of men in ECD programmes gained considerable attention over the years. This interest is due to three trends namely: the lack of a man in the lives of many young children, the dearth of men in the ECD field and an increased interest in
father involvement in early childhood programs (Wardle, 2004). While everyone agrees with the need to get men involvement in the lives of the young children, solutions to this dilemma are few. According to the National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2002), 97% of teachers in preschools programmes are women, the same figure was reported in the centre for the child workforce for study (2002). According to the National Education Association for Elementary Teachers (NEAET), only 13% of elementary school teachers were men and these men mostly teach in Grades 5 to 6 (Cunning and Dorsey, 2004). ECD education staffing remains one of the most gender affected of all occupations. In trying to solve the problem. There is no empirical evidence that could be relied upon. It was the purpose of this study to add new knowledge to the existing board of literature from an inter-regional and national perspectives because that scenario generated a number of questions such as:

a) Do ECD centres provide positive role models for girls and boys?

b) Do ECD centres respond to concerns of fathers and mothers?

c) Has ECD centres inclusive and diverse as they should be?

The answers to the above questions when responded would add new knowledge to the existing body of related literature from a national context. As Sanders (2002), accurately pointed out that they (men) enter a zone of difference when they take early childhood classes and when they are hired to work with young children. This cultural conflict can result in men experiencing a sense of difference and isolation on a daily basis. Research findings reviewed that ECD is an overwhelmingly female dominated (Dorsy, 2004; Neugebauer, 1999). This belief was because in most cultures, women were charged with the responsibility of raising children, both in the
home and in collective approaches (Wardle, 2004). According to Mukuna (2008), his studies established that some female teachers were considered to be very active while men were not. In support of the above view, Mukuna (2008) states that ECD programmes are used to working with mothers and not fathers. It has been established that women were more comfortable to working with as compared to male teachers. Due to the educational needs that were needed to achieve social competence, an ECD school had to provide an atmosphere for holistic development of the child, taking the likes of Wardle (2004). The ECD teachers are expected to continue providing warmth, tender touches, instruct children and symbolise authority, strength and security (Dorsey, 2008). However, due to the feminisation of the pre-school profession, there was great imbalance leading to concerns and call for male participation. According to research studies on the attributes of the male figure in the ECD education Mac Naughton and Newman (2001) discovered that women were also said to be nurturing than men and were viewed as the most suitable for basic education.

Bradley (1989) adds that, teaching of young children was seen as a natural part of motherhood. Many educators, as well as the public, shared these beliefs. It was therefore, feared in Kenya that boys were likely to lack the experiences of men who were caring and nurturing and would learn early in life that children caring is not for men (Mukura, 2008; Sanders, 2002). In other developing countries research studies by Sanders (2002) reflected today that, there was an increase in men training in diploma and degree programmes in ECDE. It was noted by Mac Naughton and Newman, (2001) that the soci-economic orientation, political and economic structures entrenched gender roles. The studies carried by Yelland and Grieshuba, (1998)
stated that the community was uneasy and suspicious about men who choose to work with young children in preference to entering higher status and better paid occupations. The society referred to them as men who have not got their gender right. According to Gold and Reis, (1982) cited in Lamb (2000) stated that male and female teachers differ in their characters.

The background on gender inequality reviewed different challenges experienced by ECD teachers. The current studies stipulated that, the absence of men in ECD centres also meant that young children may be missing out on any substantial contact with male role models. These views reflected several challenges experienced by ECD teachers.

2.6 The status of Early Childhood Development in Zimbabwe

This section briefly stated and described the ECD policy and its requirements and also stated the minimum standards expected from the Zimbabwean context. Zimbabwe, in its endeavour to fully implement the recommendations of the 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (PCIET), the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education introduced a number of policy guidelines that specifically addressed early childhood development requirements. These included:

a) Secretary's Circular 14 of 2004 on policy guidelines for the implementation of the 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training;

b) Director's Circular number 12 of 2005 on the provision of Early Childhood Development in Primary Schools;
c) Principal Directors Circular number 26 of 2011 on strategies on curb the mushrooming of unregistered ECD Centres.

The objectives of the above-listed policy inventions largely achieved in terms of the creation of ECD A and ECD B classes at primary schools (Dyanda, 2005; Dyanda et al., 2006). However, research findings established that the enrolment statistics showed that more still needed to be done in order to provide universal access to the full nine-year primary curriculum (Mawere, 2011). It was the objective of this study investigated the current status of ECD from the private and public centres in both rural and urban set ups. Any information regarding equity and access would add more literature from the Zimbabwean context. Research studies showed that the boundaries defining the teaching profession in primary schools have widened dramatically to include roles traditionally ascribed to parents (Sadker and Sadker, 2005; Mawere, 2011) and Zimbabwe was also included. Research studies by various scholars state that teacher’s responsibilities suggest that apart from the traditional roles that teachers have always assumed. The ECD teachers were expected by the demands of the syllabus to serve as curriculum specialists, diagnosticians, health care providers, family counsellors, adult educators and programme managers (Van Leer, 2005; Hyde and Kabiru, 2003). With these expectations, as a researcher and instructional practioner, I wondered whether the ECD centres could teach those newly introduced duties fairly in order to develop skills in pupils holistically and still manage to meet the requirements of the ECD national curriculum. That implies that the change also increased the depth of meaning and significance of teaching-learning within the school system, which was facilitated through the introduction of ECD. The main thrust was to embrace what
was formerly a constitutional right for only the white Zimbabweans (Kaseke, 1990; UNICEF, 1985). Viewing the education of the children from this new context suggested challenges that may provide bad confusion to the teaching profession that involves more expectations regarding the following aspects:

1) What teachers of ECD should know,
2) What they should be able to do and
3) How they should teach

One challenge teachers in Zimbabwean schools have to deal involves understanding and the implementation of the ECD curriculum in ways that satisfy un identified standards for the quality of educating infant children from global, regional and national perspectives (Hart, 1999; Hyde and Kabiru, 2003). In this context, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) restructured the primary education delivery system, with a major focus on strengthening its foundation through the Infant School Education Module. It was acknowledged that several constraints are affected the implementation of this policy, including limited school infrastructure, equipment, learning materials, and staffing of structured, quality early childhood education programmes for the realization of an individual's full development potential (Dyanda et al., 2005).

In this section it was important to briefly explain what the ECD policy stipulated regarding the introduction of the programme in Zimbabwe. The Secretary's Circular number 14 of 2004 stated that starting in 2005; all primary schools were required to offer at least one early childhood education and care class to 4- to 5-year-olds. This group of children would proceed to Grade One. The Directors' Circular number 48
of 2007 described how ECD programs in schools should be implemented. The circular states the following:

1) All ECD centres established outside school premises should be attached to a school nearest to them for professional and administrative assistance
2) There shall be locally produced teaching and learning materials
3) Centres should maintain a written outline of daily activities
4) All ECD centres shall have and use national ECD syllabus
5) All ECD centres shall have planned feeding schemes; the local community could be mobilized to assist in providing food and feeding the children.

A Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005 outlines the minimum standards of the ECD centres as follows:

a) Children should attend ECD at least 2 years, from 3-6 years old
b) There should be two classes of ECD—ECD A and ECD B
c) There should have enough indoor toys and outdoor play space
d) There should be an ECD classroom at the end of the other classes
e) They should have furniture suitable for their age
f) They should have hand-washing basins
g) They should have sanitary facilities suitable for their age
h) They should have a first aid kit to attend to minor injuries
i) They should be under the supervision of caring caregivers, with a teacher-to-pupil ratio of 1:20
j) The teachers should be trained by recognised institutions.
These are the minimum standards set by the government. The concern of this current study is to critically examine the situation on the ground regarding the implementation of the above policy standards in ECD centres? Through the preliminary study carried by the research in Mutare District reflected that the reality was that government ECD centres attended by the majority of children do not meet these standards. Results from the pilot study that the researcher carried out with a small sample established that very few private ECD centres implemented most of the expected standards. This implied that there were few parents who could afford to enrol their children to such high-quality ECD centre because they were very expensive.

The Infant School Education Module (ISEM) is a government strategy for providing equal opportunity for all children to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Through this new structure, every child would have access to a holistic four-year programme of ECD A; ECDB, Grade 1, and Grade 2. By missing out on ECD A and or B exposure, a learner would already be disadvantaged by the grade 7 Ordinary Level and Advanced Level public examinations and would thus have limited Higher and Tertiary Education opportunities (Dyanda, 2005; Dyanda et al., 2005; UNICEF, 2004). The impact of this situation on the national human capital resource base would subsequently affect the national socio-economic development.

This policy strategy effectively means that it is not optional for learners to attend either ECD A or ECD B, the full two years are part of the nine-year primary school Education Curriculum. Therefore, from January 2014, every Zimbabwean child was been expected to receive two years of structured, quality preschool learning through attendance in an ECD A and ECDB facility of the primary school closest to his/her
home in preparation for grade one enrolment. The gap created was to find out whether all children received the two years of structured quality pre-school education? What was the situation like in the rural, urban and private centres? What challenges are experienced by the ECD user-system? It was the intent of this study to find out answers to these concerns and the information regarding equity and access. Continuous assessment would now be the hallmark of learner assessment tools from ECDA to Advanced Level. Each learner's readiness to proceed from one level to the next would be determined through continuous, standardized assessment. From the pilot study carried with some ECD centres in Mutare District through interviews, the findings depicted that most ECD teachers were facing challenges in preparing records for assessment purposes.

The Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Actors (ZINECDA) was established in 2012 to champion the needs of actors involved in early childhood programming. ZINECDA was working together to influence policies programmes and practices related to ECD. ZINECDA provided a platform for state and non-state actors to meet for a common cause, share information, and learn from each other, keeping the child at the centre of all its endeavours. This was a very instrumental organisation in Zimbabwe because it is trying to share the burden or challenges that all ECD centres are experiencing nationally.

In summary, from a global perspectives, international, regional and national level there were various challenges faced by ECD centres. The background revealed several challenges that were common and these were: lack of qualified teachers; shortage of appropriate learning materials; poor infrastructure; crowded classes and no support from the government. A summary of these challenges calls for this
current study to critically analyse them and unearth how different ECD centres override some specific challenges in support of the national policy of developing the whole child. It was through this current study to identify and analysis how successful teachers implement the curriculum effectively.

2.7 Learning Challenges Faced in Early Childhood Development

The early childhood period is a tumultuous time in which the little learner is growing and developing new skills constantly. From the major movement milestones of the first year that lead to the ability to explore the world independently to the rapid language development of toddler-hood and beyond to the more sophisticated skill refinement of the preschool and early elementary time, the child would face age-based learning challenges as they moves through each stage.

During the child's first year, he would face a variety of challenges that primarily include meeting new movement goals. According to the American Academy of Paediatrics’ Healthy Children website, by 7 months of the child, should have the ability to roll from both back to front and front to back, sit (possibly without support) and move objects from one hand to the other. By 12 months, the child can crawl, possibly stand alone or walk and use a pincer grasp. While developing these skills is a challenge enough for the infant, these basic motor abilities could aid learning in other areas. The inability to crawl or move from place to place will limit the child's ability to explore his environment and engage with new objects and experiences (Morrison, 2002; Santrock, 2002).
The preschool periods usher in a time of skill refinement and growing cognitive development. As the preschooler or early grade scholar develops more sophisticated physical and emotional regulation abilities, they build mental skills that would serve them ready to become pupils (Bruce 2010; Bruce and Meggit, 2003; Piaget, 1978). Consequently, one of the primary challenges that children and parents face during this time understands the learning process. Keep in mind that different children often learn in different ways. This makes finding the right approach to learning that meshes with the child's style key to making it through these years. The PBS Parents website suggests that adults give young children choices to help them build decision-making skills, nurture creativity by giving them a variety of materials and experiences to explore, and provide praise to help children overcome learning challenges.

Beyond the typical day-to-day challenges that the young child may face when learning new tasks, some kids may encounter more additional types of issues. It was perfectly normal for one child to progress on a slightly different path than another, as developmental milestones aren't set in stone. There is often a window of development in which it was acceptable for a child to meet new learning challenges. Some infants walk at 12 months, while other would not until month 15. That said, if you notice that the child was completely missing certain marks or it seemed that they were falling far behind, consult her paediatrician.

2.8 Strategies to overcome the factors that inhibit effective implementation.

The importance of the family-teacher relationship should not be taken for granted, hence has a great influence on the education of children. Parental involvement is
often the relationship that developed between the parents and the teachers are either negative or positive (Gonzalez-Mena, 2000). On the teacher’s side of relationships Ellen Gainsay (1989) notes that in the teacher’s opinion parents are often spoken of negatively. On the parent’s side of the relationship, many parents enter school assuming that teachers would ignore their concerns and alienate them from the classroom (Ellen Gainsay 1989; Hildebrand, Phenice, Gary & Hines, 2000).

This paragraph focused on four aspects, including why the family-teacher relationship was vital, barriers to a better relationship that requires attention, valuable methods of communication and how teachers could embrace differences among families (Farguhar, 2004; Halford, 1999). The studies carried by Gonzalez-Mena (2000) and Galensky (1989) revealed the importance of the family-teacher relationships and its complexity. That relationship aspect included many different areas such as:

- Teacher’s relationship with the children;
- The teacher’s relationship with the children’s families;
- The teacher’s relationship with colleagues and finally;
- The teacher’s relationship with the community.

By involving all the above components we create a rich learning environment for both the learners and the teachers. In this particular research, apart from the learners and teachers, the relationship was needed most to serve as models for the ECD pupils to create positive relationships with other people. In support of the above components, family-teacher relationships are essential for learning about the children from an additional and valuable source, promoting children’ emotional
health, and helping children deal with difficult problems that may have lifelong consequences (Excell and Linington, 2011). Research studies by Excell and Linington (2011) revealed that both families and teachers had unique knowledge about children. The question that was driven at this moment is: How would the teachers and families see the ‘whole child’ if they never hear the unique perspective that only the other can provide? Carew et al., 1980 cited in Katz (2001) defines the distinctions between the mother and the teacher that are beneficial for the child. An example to support the claim was that the parent unconditionally loves the child as an individual, but the teacher gets a chance to review the child in terms of the whole group (Chamberlain, 2005; Coleman, 1997; Cole, 2004). Despite recent advances in the area, there was still insufficient awareness of the importance of brain development in the early years of life on future well-being and of the benefits of ECD interventions. Those who work in this area take the science and the evaluation evidence for granted. Yet, awareness among crucial actors in developing countries—policymakers, the parents and the teachers could not be taken for granted. This was lack of knowledge gaps that this current study would establish and add literature.

At the same time much of the evaluation evidence from small programmes attests to the efficacy of interventions, they do not yet know whether large scale programmes were as effective. The early evidence came primarily from small pilots (involving about 10 to 120 children) from developed countries. While there is now considerable evidence from developing countries as well, such programmes tended to be boutique operations and therefore, questions regarding their scalability and cost-effectiveness.

There are also significant gaps in our knowledge as to what specific intervention design works in which context in terms of both the demand for and the provision of
the services by the ministry of education. These knowledge gaps include the need for more evidence on:

a) the best delivery mode focusing on the ECD centres, family or community based,

b) the delivery agents – community health workers, mothers selected by the community, teachers,

c) whether or not the ECD programmes should be universal or targeted, national or local,

d) the frequency and duration of interventions, of training for the delivery agents and of supervision,

e) the relative value of nutritional versus simulative interventions and the benefits from the delivery of an integrated package of services versus sector specific services that are coordinated at the point of delivery,

f) the most effective curricula and material to be used,

g) The relative effectiveness of methods for stimulating demand – information via individual contact, group sessions, media, and conditional cash transfers. In all these design questions, cost-effectiveness is a concern and leads to the need to explore the possibility of building on an existing infrastructure. There is also a need for more evidence on the kinds of standards, training and supervision that are conducive to Safeguarding the quality of the intervention at scale.

On the issue of fiscal constraints, was it reasonable to expect countries to put money into ECD when problems persist in terms of both access and poor learning outcomes in primary schools and beyond? (The Dakar Framework for action, 2000). Even though school readiness and teacher quality may be the most important determinants of learning outcomes in primary schools, resource allocation shifts are not easy to
make for policy makers. In addition, as discussed above, we do not yet have good answers to the questions around the cost implications of high quality design at scale. Therefore, a gap was created because there is a dearth of literature on how and whether the policy makers should provide resource allocations to ECD learning centres. Therefore, if the government fail to provide the learning resources to its people, the questions still stand on whom, how, what and when learning materials should be availed to ECD learning institutions. It was the aim of this current study to provide answers to what should be done to enhance both the ECD child and the user systems to influence effective implementation of the ECD programme, particularly in Mutare District.

Research studies by Cox (2005) reflected that institutional coordination and political context are factors that should be addressed, because they have a bearing on how teachers and learners impart skills effectively. Successful interventions are multi-sectorial in nature (whether they are integrated from the outset or coordinated at the point of delivery) and neither governments nor donor institutions were structured to address well issues that require cross-sectorial cooperation. When programmes are housed in the Ministry of Education, they tend to focus on pre-primary concerns. When housed in the Ministry of Health, programmes ignore early motivation. This gap of lack of knowledge which institutional structure works best in different contexts, including how decentralization may affect choices about institutional set ups is a research issue that should be established by this current study.

There are deeper questions about the nature of the social contract in any country that shapes views about the role of government and the distribution of benefits across the different segments of the population. Some countries consider that the
responsibilities of the public sector start when children reach school age and view the issues around the development of children at a younger age to be the purview of families (Campbell, et al.; 2002). In many countries, policies that benefit children get short shrift because children do not have political voice and their parents are imperfect agents for their children’s needs. The gap that was been created was for this current study to revealed the following aspects from a Zimbabwean perspective:

1) Make comparison among countries on how they value ECD learning;
2) The study has the opportunity to find out the effects of inadequate political support and finally
3) Whether the legislative framework for early year interventions is lacking and that there is limited public spending on programmes that benefit the young.

On one of the research studies carried by Levy and Schady (2013) provides the example that, public spending on social pensions in Brazil is about 1.2 percent of GDP whereas transfers for Bolsa Familia which targets poor children are only 0.4 percent of GDP. In Turkey, only 6.5 percent of central government funds are directed to children ages zero to 6, while the population above 44 receives a per capita transfer of at least 2.5 times as large as children today (World Bank, 2010). These results will also give the researcher a platform to look into the Zimbabwean situation regarding how it services its people, particularly the ECD education.

Addressing the constraints to scaling up ECD requires action across a range of areas, including more research and access to know how, global and country level of support, leveraging the private sector, and regular monitoring of both public and the private sectors. The non-state sector already plays a dominant role in providing
early childhood care, education and healthcare services in many countries. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is that the public sector typically lacks the capacity to ensure quality in the provision of services and research evidence shows that poor quality child care and education services are not just ineffective; they can be detrimental (Lancet, 2011). The challenge is all the greater given that going to scale would require large numbers of providers and we know that regulation works better and is less costly in markets with fewer actors. On the opportunity side of the ledger, there is scope for expanding the engagement of the organised private sector. The private sector can contribute by providing universal access for its own workforce, through for-profit investments, and in the context of corporate social responsibility activities. Public-private partnerships can span the range of activities, including providing educational material for home-based parenting programmes; developing and delivering parent education content through media or through the distribution chains of some consumer goods or even financial products; training pre-school teachers; and providing microfinance for home or centre-based childcare centre. Innovative financing mechanisms, such as those in the social impact investing arena, may provide necessary financing, important demonstration effects and quality assurance for struggling public systems. Such innovations are expanding in the United States, paving the way for middle and low-income countries to follow.

2.9 Early Learning has the Greatest Impact on Children’s Outcomes.

There is now a compelling body of evidence demonstrating that what happens in the early years of a child’s life has a lasting effect on learning and development (Campbell et al., 2002). Much of the recent debate has centred on the economic
return that investing in children’s early years can bring in terms of later employability and social outcomes (OECD, 2006). In particular, this interest has often centred on the most vulnerable children and families in society with low socio-economic status, those from Aboriginal communities and those children with disabilities. Children at risk were from educational failure have now become a significant focus for early childhood service provision. Research has shown that high quality centre-based intervention programs that focus on the cognitive achievements of children can have lasting benefits (Barnett, 1995; Lynch, 2004). Early learning is essential for all children because those children had different strengths, abilities and interests and benefit from a range of experiences and opportunities for learning. Contemporary evidence shows that the best outcomes for children occur when there is an integrated approach to teaching and learning (Sylva, Siraj-Blachford and Taggart, 2003; Hamre, Pianta, Mashburn and Downer, 2009; Sylva, et al., 2007). Ensuring the benefits of learning experiences in early childhood education programmes, however, can prove challenging given the complex and interrelated factors involved in providing high quality early childhood learning experiences (Sylva, Siraj-Blachford and Taggart, 2003; Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999; Sylva, et al., 2007; Hamre and Pianta, 2005). The benefits extend not only to children’s cognitive development, but also to social and emotional development from a very young age (Davis, 2004). These approaches are best supported by early childhood professionals who understand children’s early capacity for learning, the role of play in learning, and the role of educators in planning for interactions that extend children’s learning. A lay definition of play is often described as child-directed, activity, and without rules. This ideology is based on the notion of play as an exploratory process rather than a focused activity to achieve any particular learning
outcome or cognitive concept (Broadhead, 2006; Jones and Reynolds, 1992). Yet early childhood professionals conceive play more broadly, as a process through which children construct ideas about the world.

Through play, children learn about relationships, gender, race, fairness, unfairness, friendship and exclusion (Grieshaber and McCardle, 2010). In play, children experiment and develop knowledge and skills in language, literacy, numeracy and science in everyday encounters (Goouch, 2008; Samuelsson and Johansson, 2006; Van Oers, 2003). While play can be child-directed, research evidence shows that lower quality settings have the highest percentage of recorded time where staff are engaged in “monitoring” children’s play but not actually interacting in any direct or meaningful way (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2004).

2.10 Integrated teaching/learning approaches enable learning across multiple domains.

Teaching and learning does not simply focus on a child’s cognitive development, because the best outcomes are achieved for children when all aspects of their development are stimulated including social, physical, intellectual, emotional and creative abilities (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence, 1999; Sylva, Siraj-Blachford and Taggart, 2003). Learning needs to focus on the whole child and their development across multiple domains (Gardner, 1993). Children need to be equipped with the skills to participate fully and effectively in a multicultural society and understand the particular skills and values that active citizens need (Katz, 2003).
Understanding that everyday activities and social interactions are the foundation to cognitive, social and emotional development requires conscious and reflective practice from early childhood professionals (Katz, 2003). This applies not only to formal early education and care settings; understanding the role of play in learning has relevance across the entire early childhood care and education field, including playgroups, parenting groups, specialist children’s services, hospital play programs, maternal and child health services and Aboriginal family support programs (Kinsella, 2009). While different delivery models and varied professional, policy, theoretical and philosophical backgrounds have often seen early childhood services develop independently, common to all early childhood professionals is the agreed principle to work together to achieve the best outcomes for all children across the continuum from birth to eight years (Katz, 2003; Mogharreban and Bruns, 2009).

2.11 How can we achieve best practice?

The most successful approaches in early learning are built on children’s interests and their curiosity to make sense of the world around them. In order for children to have a strong sense of identity, to feel connected to their world, to have a strong sense of wellbeing and to be confident and effective communicators, early childhood professionals need to take an active role in children’s learning. Learning needs to engage and motivate children on an ongoing basis (Siraj-Blatchford, 2007). For learning to be engaging and relevant, successful integrated approaches to learning and teaching should support and build on children’s skills and interests. The work of Vygotsky (1978 and Gardner (1993) emphasises learning as an interactive process with its basis stemming from children’s interests. According to Fleer and Raban, (2007) study provides a range of examples of how everyday experiences can be used
to develop literacy and numeracy concepts based on children’s own interests and experiences. This particular resource identified the importance of engaging with even the youngest of infants and providing stimulating, meaningful and culturally relevant and responsive interactions. Extended interactions with infants in everyday activities prove essential for children to engage in learning (Hutchins and Sims, 1999). Research invariably shows that the experiences in the very early years have a powerful influence on later outcomes (Barnett, 1995; Hutchins, 1995; Katz, 2003; OECD, 2006).

Research studies by Jones and Reynolds (1992) concur with Tregenza (2006), that while early childhood professionals absolutely need to use children’s interest and previous knowledge as a foundation for their pedagogical focus, considerable time needs to be devoted to broadening and deepening children’s knowledge, skills, concepts and experience to take them beyond what they already know and can do. Integrated teaching and learning approaches are most effective when they are interactive, physical, and concrete and involve people, materials and the environment. Young children need practical, hands on learning experiences based on their interests and individual developmental level. Like adults, children learn from their mistakes as well as their successes. According to Walsh, McGuiness, Trew, Rafferty and Sheehey, (2006), When early childhood professionals create a culture for this to happen, children’s thinking and learning is enhanced (Walsh et al., 2006).

Effective early childhood professionals establish a learning culture where children have the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities which explore the same concepts in a variety of meaningful and engaging ways (Dockett and Perry, 2009). For example, research on mathematical learning highlights the integral role
child-directed, guided play and adult-led learning have in concept and skill development across multiple learning domains (Dockett and Perry, 2009; Thomas, Warren and deVries, 2009; Lee, 2009; Hunting, 2009). Dockett and Perry (2009) found that the early childhood professionals with the greatest ability to use play to develop mathematical concepts were also best able to support and extend learning arising from thoughtful and well planned learning experiences. Importantly, these experiences should be planned for children of all ages, because infants have been shown to be equipped with a number sense and a disposition to interpret the world in a quantitative way (Wynn, 1998).

The Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study in the UK found that the most effective early learning environments had a balanced focus on communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world (including sciences and maths) whereas less effective environments spent almost all of their time focusing on children’s physical and creative development (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2004). This reflects the importance of intentional teaching and a range of learning experiences in early childhood education. Where children’s arts education is supported by appropriate resources and attentive dialogue with an early childhood professional, children’s narrative abilities and conceptual skills can be extended (Wright, 2003).

In relation to learning activities, children in high quality environments participate more in reading, writing and listening, and adult scaffolded activities (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2004). The most successful environments in the EPPE study spent time exploring scientific aspects of the environment and games that involved the deliberate development of number and mathematical concepts, guided by individual
children’s interests. High quality environments have small group activities linked to particular skill acquisition or concept development, where the early childhood professional teaches language, science or numeracy concepts in an activity chosen by the children. The low quality environments are dominated by activities with little or no adult direction, and where children spend more time wandering around or watching others (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2004).

The principle of integrated teaching and learning approach highlights the importance of a balanced curriculum. In a study of early primary classrooms in the UK using either a teacher-directed curriculum or enriched curriculum – an integrated approach of differentiated learning activities, play and developmentally appropriate based practice (Walsh et al., 2006). children in the conducive curriculum classrooms performed better than their traditionally educated peers (teacher-directed) in all cognitive, affective and learning disposition domains (concentration, confidence, independence, multiple skill acquisition, higher order thinking skills, wellbeing, social interaction and respect). The study found that children with the highest scores were in classes where there was a high level of child-adult interaction, activity differentiation and an ethos of individuality. Importantly, the study found that it was not just a matter of adding more play into children’s daily activities: the highest scoring environments were those where there was a balance of play, practical and written tasks and an equal balance of child- and teacher-initiated learning activities aimed at a range of different levels and abilities (Walsh et al., 2006).

2.12 How do ECD teachers overcome challenges related to the use of thematic and integrated approaches?
Research indicates that while early childhood professionals absolutely need to use children’s interest and previous knowledge as a foundation for their pedagogical focus, considerable time needs to be devoted to broadening and deepening children’s knowledge, skills, concepts and experience to take them beyond what they already know and can do (Katz, 2003; OECD, 2006; Jones and Reynolds, 1992; Tregenza, 2006). Integrated teaching and learning approaches are most effective when they are interactive, physical, and concrete and involve people, materials and the environment. Young children need practical, hands on learning experiences based on their interests and individual developmental level. Like adults, children learn from their mistakes as well as their successes. When early childhood professionals create a culture for this to happen, children’s thinking and learning is enhanced (Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness, Trew, Rafferty and Sheehy, 2006).

2.13 Learning Experiences, Differentiated to fit the Individual Needs of Each Child Have the Most Positive Outcome.

Learner-centred practice allows children to explore and experience the world around them in a way that best suits their individual interests and learning style (Dewey, 1915). Learning environments which typify this philosophy look at the whole child rather than compartmentalising learning into discrete and often unrelated experiences. A differentiated environment provides for each child’s abilities, culture, perspectives, strengths, interests and learning styles (Arthur et al., 2008). A differentiated learning environment encourages children to co-construct their understanding collaboratively and allows children to explore their own hypotheses about what might work.
Success of this type of approach is seen in the work of early childhood professionals in the Italian town of Reggio Emilia. Children and professionals alike pose problems, ask questions, make suggestions, add complexity to tasks, and provide information, materials and assistance as needed to enable both children and adults to consolidate learning and move to the next level of understanding (Vygotsky, 1978; Edwards et al., 1998; Walsh et al., 2006). A differentiated curriculum attempts to blend experiences across home life and the experience in the early childhood setting so that children can internalise their learning across multiple domains in meaningful ways as they increasingly develop their sense of self and the world around them. Multimodal, differentiated learning environments that respect children’s views are of paramount importance in improving the long-term learning and development outcomes (Katz, 2003). The next paragraphs discussed how early childhood professionals use integrated approaches to children’s learning and take an active role in extending learning.

2.14: Early Childhood Professionals Use Integrated Approaches To Children’s Learning And Take An Active Role In Extending Learning.

Effective early childhood professionals establish a learning culture where children have the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities which explore the same concepts in a variety of meaningful and engaging ways (Dockett and Perry, 2009). For example, research on mathematical learning highlights the integral role child-directed, guided play and adult-led learning have in concept and skill development across multiple learning domains (Dockett and Perry, 2009; Thomas, Warren and deVries, 2009; Lee, 2009; Hunting, 2009). Dockett and Perry (2009) found that the early childhood professionals with the greatest ability to use play to develop
mathematical concepts were also best able to support and extend learning arising from thoughtful and well planned learning experiences. Importantly, these experiences should be planned for children of all ages, because infants have been shown to be equipped with a number sense and a disposition to interpret the world in a quantitative way (Wynn, 1998). The Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study in the UK found that the most effective early learning environments had a balanced focus on communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world (including sciences and mathematics) whereas less effective environments spent almost all of their time focusing on children’s physical and creative development (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2004). This reflects the importance of intentional teaching and learning experiences in early childhood education. Where children’s arts education is supported by appropriate resources and attentive dialogue with an early childhood professional, children’s narrative abilities and conceptual skills can be extended (Wright, 2003).

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2.15. The Importance of Early Childhood Development

Chikutuma and Musiyiwa (2012, p. 8) defines early childhood development as a “comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to
eight years of age and the purpose of ECD is to protect children’s rights so that they
develop to their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential”. Community-based services that meet the needs of infants and young children are
fundamental to ECD and their implementation should include attention to health, nutrition, education, water, environmental sanitation in homes and communities (Morrison, 2002; 1995). Research has shown that half of a person’s intelligence potential is developed by age four and that early childhood intervention may impose lasting effect on intellectual capacity, personality and social behaviour (Morrison, 2002; Noddings, 2007). Therefore, in the light of globalisation imposition of ECD curriculum poses a risk to communities that rush to adopt curriculum from other countries, without adapting the curriculum to suit their local cultures and traditions. In Rhodesia, later Zimbabwe, it was all too easy to adopt curriculum and guidelines that suited the white communities, but adopted the one that developed black communities that were prepared for sub-servant roles. While many effective practices can indeed be shared, education experts caution that countries need to ensure that they cherish and promote their unique individual cultures. For example, up until recently, literature reveals that New Zealand and South Korea, for example, both make great effort to promote and accentuate local cultures along the ECD curriculum. In some places, such as Northern Ireland, this can form an important facet of the transition from past conflict or civil strife, by promoting greater respect of contrasting views and cultures in a society. However, Evans (2002) suggests that “investment in the ECD stage gives social and economic benefits to the country” (p.76). Weikart (2000) in support endorses that “--- ECD programmes facilitate the smooth transition of learners into formal schools” (Chikutuma and Musiyiwa (2012, pp. 9-10).

Integrated programmes that target children in their very early years are therefore, critical for mental and psychosocial development. Failure to invest in ECD may result in development delays and the promotion of disability as well to inhibit the optimal development and performance of children throughout their lives (Seefeldt & Bourbour, 1986; Tassoni and Beith, 2005). Seefeldt and Bourbour (1986) refer to ECD as the most and rapid period of development in human life. From the years of conception through birth to eight years, the critical period was a complete healthy cognitive, emotional and physical growth of children. The rapid development of children’s brain begins in the pre-natal stage and continues after birth. Although cell formation is virtually complete before birth, a new born baby has about 100 billion brain cells-brain maturation and important neural pathways and connections that progressively continue to develop after birth in early childhood (Schiller, 2001). Therefore, early childhood is a period in development where the socio-cultural environment imposes an important impact that determines how the brain and central nervous systems grow and develop in the child.

As Schiller (2001) suggests that during the first three years of life a child’s experiences would forge experiences and relationships that have deep and lasting impact on how their brain and knowledge develops. The richer the environment, the greater the number of interconnections made. The larger the number of interconnections, the faster and more meaningful learning would be. Interactions (relationships) also shape children’s brains. During the first year of life, trust develops. Trust is the foundation for all relationships. The more loving and responsive the caregiver is, the greater the foundation for later social interaction. Experiences and interactions shape children’s brains and design the neutral
architecture that would influence how the children handle all future experiences. If an infant gets too little stimulation, affection, language, and human contact, the development of the brain that depends on those experiences would be deterred or will fail to progress. World Bank/Consultative Group (2000:1-2) adds that environment affects not only the number of brain cells and the number of connections among them but also the way these connections are wired to make connections between knowledge maps. The process of eliminating excess neurons and synapses from the dense, immature brain continues well into adolescence is most dramatic in the early years of life and it is guided to a large extent by the child’s sensory experience with the outside world (Bruce, 2010; Tassoni and Hucker, 2005). Scientific evidence suggests that if the brain does not receive the appropriate stimulation during the critical period, it is very difficult for the brain to rewire itself at a later time. Morrison (2004) postulates that inadequate nutrition before birth and in the first years of life could seriously interfere with the brain development and lead to such neurological and behavioural disorders as learning disabilities and mental retardation. The implications of these research findings are that there is need for ECD programmes that cater for quality parenting skills and child care provision. However, from the described pre-colonial policy and implementation strategies, native Zimbabwean children were not allowed access to quality education programmes that promoted total development in the children. There is considerable research evidence showing that infants exposed to quality nutrition and adequate psychosocial stimulation had measurably better brain function at twelve years of age than those raised in a less stimulating environment (Sadker and Sadker, 2005; Tassoni and Hucker, 2005). Early stress can affect brain function, learning and memory adversely and permanently. However, new research
provides a scientific basis for the obvious fact that children who experience extreme stress in their earliest years are at greater risk of developing a variety of cognitive, behavioural and emotional difficulties later in life, thus, emphasising the importance of ECD programmes.

2.16 How does parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of ECD programme?

Education policies at the federal, state, and local levels in the United States place increasing emphasis on the role of parent involvement in early childhood programmes. This is exemplified at the federal level by the Family Engagement in Education Act of (2011), which states that positive benefits for children, youth, families, and schools are maximised through effective family engagement that was continuous across a child’s life from birth through young adulthood. (Family Engagement in Education Act of 2011, Section 3). Similarly, the Illinois State Board of Education (2002, 2011) recognises parent involvement as a key component of successful early childhood education programmes. This trend is due, in part, to a growing body of research on the positive impact of parent involvement on children’s brain development school readiness and overall early development (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000).

Despite the emphasis on the value of parent involvement, different understanding exists on what it meant for parents to be involved in a child’s development and education. The understanding of parental involvement is the foundation of education policies (Dail and Payne, 2010; Zellman and Perlman, 2006). The parents influence what is considered best practice in educational programs and ultimately affect child
and family outcomes. Parents and programmes personnel may find the variety of definitions and expectations to be confusing.

Parent involvement is conceptualised in a variety of ways by an array of national, state, professional, and scholarly sources. For example, in an urban kindergarten, parents of children with speech and reading challenges practice linking specific phonemes to physical motions to reinforce classroom activities (Kindergartner, 2010). A Head Start programmes launches an initiative to increase father involvement in the classroom (Palm and Fagan, 2008). The Illinois State Board of Education (2011) sets standards for preschool programmes that encourage family/school partnerships where families are invested decision-makers in their child’s education. Parental involvement refers to the formal and informal relations that parents have with Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services. The engagement can take a variety of forms and meanings, depending on the education stage of the child concerned. Literature often uses the terms family-school partnership, parental involvement, family involvement and parental engagement, interchangeably.

Community engagement refers to the connections between the ECEC services and all forms of input and contribution by community services to ECEC (Litjens & Taguma, 2010). Community can be defined as people from the same neighbourhood in a narrow sense or the whole community, including NGOs in a broader sense. Children spend a largest part of their young life in their direct home environment interacting with their parents, siblings, other family members and neighbours (Creswell, 2009; Dail and Payne, 2010). Parents’ willingness to delegate part of their care for their children to ECEC does not mean that the importance of the parents’
role has diminished. It is still widely acknowledged that parental behaviour in the child’s first five years is critical for the development of important academic and social skills and abilities (Palm and Fagan, 2008; O’ Donnell, 2008).

The current challenge for ECD services is to enhance the crucial role of parents in young children’s development and involve them in the services as much as possible (OECD, 2006). The continuity of children’s experience across environment is greatly enhanced when parents and staff members exchange information regularly and adopt consistent approaches to socialisation, daily routines, child development and learning (OECD, 2006). When done well, it can improve the quality of the centre, parenting at home and the home learning environment. Families with low socio-economic status (SES) could particularly struggle to provide appropriate care and enrichment for children due to lack of resources to do so (Barbarian et al., 2008; Boyce et al., 2010; Ermisch, 2008). Young children development does not exclusively depend on the input of parents and ECEC centres (early education, day care). Children grow up in a neighbourhood and are part of the community (Bruce et al., 2011; Edwards et al., 2008). Therefore, it is important that different ECD services, day care, health services, out of school services, work together and create a ‘continuum of services’ that is reassuring for parents and can meet the needs of young children.

Community involvement in ECD is important not only for providing expanded services and referrals where necessary, but also as a space for partnership and the participation of parents (Deforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Edwards et al., 2008). Patterns of parental involvement in ECD vary from country to country. Several formal and informal mechanisms are used to foster full participation and managerial
engagement. Some of the challenges to active engagement of parents include cultural, attitudinal and linguistic barriers (Deforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Edwards et al., 2008). It is particularly difficult to ensure equitable representation and participation across families from diverse background.

2.17 Why does the involvement of parents and community in ECD centres matter?

The involvement of parents in young children’s education is a fundamental right and obligation. Both the OECD (2006) and UNICEF (2008) argue that ECD services should recognise mothers and fathers’ rights to be informed or to comment and that made the participation the key dimension concerning their child. Research shows that there is a substantial need and demand for a parental component in ECD services (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Research also demonstrates that parental engagement in ECD services enhance children’s achievement and adaptation (Blok et al., 2006; Deforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Edwards et al., 2008; Harris and Goodall, 2006; Powell et al., 2010).

The examples of successful ECD services that promote parental engagement for example, Early Head Start, The Perry Preschool and the Chicago Parent Centres from the United States offer evidence that parental participation matters (Harries and Goodall, 2006). The federally funded Chicago Parent Centre’s programme in the USA has been cited as evidence that parent participation has a major impact on the academic success and social development and that it is an effective strategy of reducing dropout rate. Each year that parents took part in the programme increased the chances by 16% that their children would complete high school. For students
whose parents were involved for the whole 6 years of the project, more than 80% graduated from high school, compared with 38% of students whose parents did not participate (Reynolds and Clements, 2005). This study would also reveal whether Zimbabwe as a developing country has such ECD centres that promote parental engagement and literature would fill the gap from the national context.

The involvement of wider community services, for example, health or social services and sport organisations or community members in ECD play an important role in the development of young children (Reynolds and Clements, 2005). Community support of the ECD is considered as one of the characteristics common to high quality ECD centres (Henderson et al., 2002). The role of the community in the learning of young children is recognised, the better the chances children have of achieving at school and in life in general (Catton, 2000). If the connection between schools and the community is strong, it is easier for children to develop the skills needed to be successful socially, emotionally, physically and academically (Edwards et al., 2008; Oakes and Lipton, 2007; OECD, 2006).

Families with different socio-economic backgrounds (defined by factors such as parental education, income and occupation) have different capacities to provide their children with nutritious and healthy life style, provide for quality child care and invest in other learning resources, for example, books and visits to museums (Duncan et al., 1998; Bradley et al., 1989). Family’s socio-economic background is, therefore, powerfully associated with children’s educational development. in the child’s environment which encompass the family, the neighbourhood and risk factors have a negative effect on the child’s development of intellectual skills,
school achievement, socio-emotional competence, social adjustment and health (Hack and Farrah, 2009).

Reviews by Deforges and Abouchaar (2003) and Harris and Goodall, (2006) indicate that the most effective approach to boost children’s latter achievement and adjustment is the support of parents to actively engage in children’s learning activities at home. The home learning environment (HLE) is one of the most powerful influences upon children’s development (Belsky et al., 2002; Melhuish, 2010). The support it includes such activities as reading to children, singing songs and nursery rhymes, going to the library and playing with numbers. An Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study of England has shown the importance of parent-child activities for parents and children to engage in together are likely to be most beneficial for young children (Edwards et al., 2008; Oakes and Lipton, 2007; Sylva et al., 2004). There are several ways in which ECD services can help enhance the HLE, including providing activities and materials for parents and children to do together. The ECD teachers and staff can also encourage parental engagement in early childhood learning by providing them with resources and activities that further the work that is being addressed within the classroom (Halgunselth and Peterson, 2009). This helps families feel more connected to their children as well as to the programme.

A survey on parental needs shows that parents in Korea utilise media and the on-line community to obtain and share information about child rearing and ECD education. In contrast, parents in Japan regard neighbourhoods and grandparents as main sources for child relevant information. The Japanese parents frequently use child welfare centres to meet other parents and also visit local public health centres to
consult issues of child care and support (Hwang, Nam and Suh, 2010). The question that came into the researcher’s mind is that: How do Zimbabwe schools meet their parents? Therefore, answers to this question would get information to fill the gap in literature. It is important for ECD user systems to communicate with parents about programme goals and the best way to achieve them since parents can have misconceptions, such as school readiness (Bodrova et al., 2004). They conceive readiness largely in terms of the ability to name objects, letters or numbers and will not recognise the importance of inferential skills. In Sweden, for instance, parents are found to demand that ECD focus on both play and learning oriented activities (Sherridan et al., 2009).

2.18 What quality indicators do ECD teachers have to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum?

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is very important in our endeavour to meet the targets for Education For All (EFA) which are: quality early childhood education and care, free and compulsory primary education, life skills and training for youth, adult literacy, girls education and relevant basic education (NIEER, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). As reflected here, Early Childhood Development is a foundation on which the education for all and especially basic education should be founded. This section addresses quality issues, why qualification, education and professional development of ECD teachers matter.

The quality of something is a judgement on the degree of overall excellence. Since it is a judgement; a person often uses his/ her own criteria to make the judgement. This was not much of use if teachers wished to discuss "quality of learning
environment” sensibly. Everyone needs to agree on the criteria. After such an agreement, then all are able to use the accepted criteria to evaluate learning situations. Research studies by Fives (2003) suggests identified three major areas when one to attain quality in ECD learning namely: pupil characteristics, content characteristics and to some extent, the teacher characteristics. These are the ideals. However, numerous questions arise. For instance, how many Early Childhood centres meet this criterion? Secondly, are people who run such institutions even aware of such requirements? These questions when addressed would fill the gap in related literature. ECD qualifications indicate the recognised level and types of knowledge, skills and competencies among the staff. Formal education in ECD refers to the level and types of education at ECD staff purse to acquire such knowledge, skills and competencies to work in the sector to update or enhance their practices, it is refered to as In service training, continuous education or professional training (Mitchell and Taguma, 2003; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000).

Recent social changes have challenged traditional views on (early) education and the purpose of (early) education, these have important consequences for what is expected of those who work with young children (National Reserach Council, 2000). Education systems need to outcomes. There is need to have specific knowledge, skills and competence are expected of ECD practitioners. There is a general consensus, supported by research, that well educated, well trained professionals are the key factor in providing high quality ECD with the most favourable cognitive and social outcomes for children (Perez- Johnson & Maynard, 2007).

Research shows that the behaviour of those who work in ECEC matters and that this is related to their education and training (Litjiens & Taguma, 2010). The
Qualifications, education and training of ECD staff are, therefore, an important policy issue (Morgan, Farkas and Wu, 2011; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). In spite of the consensus on the importance of well trained staff, governments often fear the funding consequences of raising staff qualifications. Higher qualification can be followed by increased wage demands, which in turn, contribute significantly to the cost of service (Fernandez, 2014; Najumba, 2013). Although, the evidence is strong that improved training and qualification level raise the quality of interaction and pedagogy in ECD services and similar evidence exists in favour of staff qualification-gifts often chose not to invest in raising qualifications or funding staff training (Ackerman, 2006; Burchinal et al., 2002). The qualifications might seriously affect ECEC quality and with this, child development outcomes, since staff are not optimally trained or educated to stimulate ECD learning and development. Although research emphasises the high relevance of adequate staff initial education and continuous professional development opportunities, however, large differences occur between countries in terms of what qualifications are being asked of ECEC practitioners.

Opportunities to participate in professional development and in-service training also vary greatly across countries to a specialised Bachelor’s degree or even Master’s degree and professional development (Fives, 2003; OECD, 2006). According to research studies by OECD (2006) who informed that there was a difference between the qualifications required to work with very young children (3-5 years). In countries with an integrated system where all young children attend the same centres, all practitioners usually have to meet the same requirements in terms of education and training (Eurydice, 2001; OECD, 2006). This encourages continuous child
development throughout the ECD years and ensures greater levels of professionalism of staff working with both young and older children (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000).

2.19 Background Information and National Standards for Assessment

There are many reasons why children undergo assessment; among these was the desire to know how well children are learning, if they are making progress and meeting proficiency benchmarks, and if they are being taught effectively. Data from assessment provides valuable information for planning whole-group and individualised instruction, for determining programme quality, and for communicating with others. Assessment practices encompass a range of instruments and techniques including structured one-on-one child assessments, standardized assessments, portfolios, rating scales, and observation. Comprehensive assessment is based on information from multiple sources, including measures that provide different types of information.

The term “national standards” refers to the principles that guide practice to promote quality in education. In early childhood education, standards are outlined by two key organisations which were: The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children. Both NAEYC and DEC recognise assessment as a central component of early childhood programs and prescribe its use for a variety of purposes. NAEYC recommends that assessment be used for decision-making regarding teaching and learning, identifying children’s needs, and improving education and intervention programs (NAEYC, 2005). Likewise, DEC recommends
that assessment provide information that is useful for intervention (Sandall, McLean and Smith, 2000). The National Education Goals Panel describes the use of assessment to support learning and instruction and to identify children in need of additional supports or services (Scott-Little, Kagan and Clifford, 2003). Teachers are expected to use assessment results to adapt and individualize curricula and teaching approaches and to communicate with families (NAEYC, 2005; Sandall, McLean and Smith, 2000). Screening plays an important role in the assessment process, as it can be used to determine which children need further assessment and in what domains of development and learning (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2005).

It is recommended that teachers use both formal and informal screening and assessment approaches to systematically evaluate children’s growth across all domains of development and learning within natural contexts, including the early childhood classroom (Bordignon and Lam, 2004; NAEYC, 2005). DEO recommends that professionals and families collaborate to plan and implement assessment (Sandall, McLean and Smith, 2000). A variety of assessment tools and approaches, including rating scales, checklists, norm-referenced tests, portfolios, and observations, can be used to learn more about the child’s strengths and challenges. Assessments must be culturally, linguistically, and individually appropriate and should address all children’s development, progress, strengths, and needs (NAEYC, 2005; Sandall, McLean and Smith, 2000). NAEYC recommends that the assessment process take into account factors that may influence children’s performance, such as hunger or lack of sleep. Screening measures should be used to identify children who require further
evaluation to determine whether they are in need of additional support or early intervention (NAEYC, 2005). Additionally, teachers and other staff must be knowledgeable about the assessments they administer and should be able to connect assessment results with classroom practices (NAEYC, 2005). Results of assessment should be incorporated into the curriculum and used to individualize instruction.

When teachers observe children in the classroom, they are afforded unique opportunities to understand how to enhance classroom routines and instructional practices. Gathering student observation data provides teachers with opportunities to reflect on the classroom environment, curriculum, and teaching strategies and to determine which aspects of the classroom experience are working well for the children and which aspects might be adapted to better meet children’s needs. For example, if the teacher notices, through whole class observations, that many children seem to struggle with self-management during free time she may decide to teach specific routines to help children. These routines may be as simple as a guideline that you must wear goggles in woodworking and there are only two pairs of goggles provided to limit the number of children in woodworking to two. Through systematic observation of the whole class the teacher becomes aware of patterns of needs and can respond appropriately. While formal assessment methods are required for determining serious learning delays or disabilities, systematic observation is a promising method for screening children to recognize and respond to their needs. Observation allows teachers to record information about all areas of development and to identify areas of strength as well as areas of need. Additionally, because observation occurs in natural contexts and is meaningfully connected to the routines, activities, and curriculum of the classroom, teachers can identify children’s interests
in order to adapt curriculum and incorporate skill building into activities that are of interest to the child.

2.20 Why do qualification, education and professional development matter in teaching ECD pupils?

The section justified why qualification, education and professional development matter for effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. The training and education of ECD staff affects the quality of service and outcomes primarily through the knowledge, skills and competencies that are transmitted and encouraged by practitioners (Early, 2007; Eliot, 2006). It is important that staff believe in their ability to organise and execute the courses of action necessary to bring about desired results (Fives, 2003). Qualification can matter in terms of which skill sets and what knowledge are recognised as important for working with young children. Below are the skills and staff traits that research identified and these were important in facilitating high-quality service.

- Good understanding of child development and learning;
- Ability to develop children’s perspectives;
- Ability to praise, comfort, question and be responsive to children;
- Leadership skills, problem solving and development of targeted lesson plans, and
- Good vocabulary and ability to direct children’s actions (Fukkink and Lont, 2007; Howes et al., 2003).

However, it is not the qualification that has an impact on child outcomes but the ability of better qualified members to create a high quality pedagogic environment
that makes the difference (Eliot, 2006; Sheridan et al, 2009). There is strong
evidence that enriched environment and high quality pedagogy are fostered by
children qualified staff and better learning outcomes (Litjens and Taguma, 2010).
The key elements of high quality staff are the way staff involve children, stimulate
interactions and between children as well as staff scaffolding strategies such as
guiding the learners, modelling different behaviours and questioning the children.
Research studies reveal that more specialised staff education and training are
strongly associated with stable, sensitive and stimulating interactions (Shonkoff and
Phillips, 2000). Other elements of high quality pedagogic include staff’s content
(curriculum) knowledge their ability to create a multidisciplinary learning
environment. Studies that have addressed the question of whether high quality
qualifications lead to better pedagogical practice have yielded mixed results (Early,
2007; Eliot, 2006).

There are various studies showing a general higher level of education is associated
with higher pedagogic quality in ECD settings. One study found out that pre-school
teachers with Bachelor’ degrees were the most effective practitioners (Eliot, 2006).
Their effectiveness was measured within the classroom and based on stimulation,
responsiveness and engagement of the children in learning activities (Howes et al.,
2003). The results of the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study
from England have also shown that key factors for high quality ECD, were related to
staff with higher qualification staff with leadership skills and long serving, trained
staff working alongside and supporting less qualified staff, staff with a good
understanding of child development and learning (Siraj- Blatchford, 2010).
Research points out that it is not necessary that all staff are qualified, the staff could have a positive influence on those who work with them and who do not have the same qualifications (Burchinal, Cryer and Clifford, 2002; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). The EPPE study finds that the observed behaviour of lower qualified staff turned out to be positively influenced by working alongside highly trained staff (Sammons, 2010). Research studies revealed that, not only the level of education, but also the content of staff’s educational or training curriculum is important for the level of quality in ECD. Specialised education is associated with better child outcomes and improved staff competences to provide suitable pedagogical learning opportunities (Cryer and Clifford, 2002; Sammons, 2010). Specialisation can refer to any education or training focussing on ECD education, child development and beyond general educational attachment (Litjeins and Taguma, 2010; Sammons, 2010).

The practitioners’ ability to create a rich, stimulating environments in ECD is jeopardised when staff have inadequate, insufficient or incorrect content and pedagogical knowledge (NIEER, 2004; Sammons, 2010). When trained on matters related to ECD and care, staff can better develop a child’s perspective (Sammer, et al., 2010) are better able to integrate playing and learning into practice (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008) have increased ability to solve problems and develop targeted lesson plans and have an improved vocabulary which stimulates early literacy development (NIEER, 2004). Additionally, staff with higher education and specialised training engage in positive teacher-child interactions including praising, comforting, questioning and being responsive to children (Howes et al., 2003). However, specialised education and training does not guarantee effectiveness (Hyson, et al., 2009).
The quality of the education and training programme may be a more critical factor in the ability of staff to stimulate children’s development and learning. There is a strong need for staff preparation and there is a call for greater consistency across initial professional preparation programmes to enhance quality (Eliot, 2006). Research shows that in order for staff to maintain their professional quality they need to engage in on-going professional development. A well trained practitioner does not only have a good initial level of education but makes sure the effects of initial education do not fade away (Fukkink and Lont, 2007; Mitchell and Cubey, 2003). Therefore, ongoing professional development has the potential to fill in the knowledge and skills that staff may be lacking or require updating due to changes in particular knowledge fields. This is especially crucial in ECD where new programmes are being developed continuously. The body of research on what works is growing, the discussions on quality in ECD are ongoing and focus has changed to developmental perspectives.

2.21 Global Challenges Inhibiting Effective Implementation of the ECD Programme.

The section covered the global, continental, interregional, regional and national challenges experienced by ECD user systems regarding access and equity. This part attempted to unearth and addressed aspects of the guiding specific research questions orienting this study (Chapter 1:10) It covers the common challenges that were experienced during implementation processes from global perspectives, how internal/external factors militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum, how parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of the curriculum, quality issues in ECD programme
and the benefits and challenges in management of institutional documents. The broad research question revealed how teachers who succeeded in providing instruction to ECD pupils overcame the challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the early childhood education curriculum. This section discussed out some of the strategies used to show how some institutions overcome the challenges for effective implementation.

More than 200 million children under the age of five in the developing world are at risk of not reaching their full development potential because they suffer from the negative consequences of poverty, nutritional deficiencies and inadequate learning opportunities (Lancet, 2007). In addition, 165 million children (one in four) are stunted, with 90 percent of those children living in Africa and Asia (UNICEF et al., 2012; Yip, 2002). There is now an expanding body of literature on the determining influence of early development on the chances of success later in life. Fukkink & Lont, (2007) studied on the chances of success of young children and the researchers revealed that the first 1,000 days from conception to age two are increasingly being recognized as critical to the development of neural pathways that lead to linguistic, cognitive and socio-emotional capacities that are also predictors of labour market outcomes later in life. In one of the study’s results on challenges faced by early childhood children, it was revealed by Copple and Bredekamp, (2009) that poverty; malnutrition and lack of proper interaction in early childhood can exact large costs on individuals, their communities and society more generally. This marks the scale of the early childhood problems that would later impact negatively on both the learner and the teachers. The study created gaps to find out if such factors are also prevalent and affect both the learners and teachers from Zimbabwean context. The
study would address such cases and add more literature continentally and nationally. Research studies established that the effects are cumulative and the absence of appropriate childcare and education in the three to five age ranges can intensify further the poor outcomes expected for children who suffer from inadequate nurturing during the critical first 1,000 days (Yazer, 2007; Fulkink and Lont, 2007).

Despite the growing importance of early childhood education, there are a number of challenges that have continued to inhibit effective implementation from a global, interregional, regional and national context. According to Van de Linde (2005), such challenges include inadequate teaching and learning resources, socio-economic factor, high teacher/child ratio with poor remunerations, financial constraint. Research studies established that in Kenya many ECD centers lack adequate teaching and learning resource and facilities suitable for early childhood development education in their learning environment (Ackerman, 2006; Easton, 2004; Sammons, 2010).

These include lack of properly ventilated classrooms, furniture that is age appropriate for children, kitchen, safe clean water, play ground, toilets and play material (International Association for the Education of Young Children, 2014). This affects the implementation of ECD curriculum negatively as creation of a sustainable learning environment helps deprived children to improve their acquisition of skills and later academic performance when they join the formal sectors of the primary education (Offenheiser and Holcombe, 2003). The research findings by Easton (2004) automatically imply that teachers do not have adequate teaching and learning resources to enable them to implement ECDE Curriculum effectively. When the researcher found out how teachers from various regions
overcame the challenges of inadequate teaching and learning resources, new knowledge would be added to the existing board of knowledge. The findings by Easton (2004) establish the factors that inhibit the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. There is room for this current study to establish appropriate strategies that ECD teachers can use to overcome the experienced challenges. It is the purpose of this current study to cover the gap in literature from a national perspective.

Matimba (2014) is of the view that lack of instructional materials such as syllabi and text books to use during teaching/learning process negatively affects effective teaching. In a similar study by Najumba (2013) who asserts that ineffective funding and budgetary cutbacks is visible in the erosions of standards of teaching. It is argued that there are certain home background conditions that affect both the learners and the teachers’ achievements. This indicates that children who lack provision of reading material perform poorly at school although he/she is taught by a qualified teacher.

Research carried out elsewhere reveals that challenges encountered in the implementation of ECD programmes continue to negatively affect the fertile field (Mohiuddin, 2008). The challenges were lack of vertical integration and continuity in planning, placement of inexperienced teachers in ECD classes, over-crowded classes with a disproportional teacher/pupil ratio, persons untrained to teach in these situation. According to Mohiuddin (2008) in most schools, the number of children is so high that it becomes very difficult for teachers to maintain one to one relationships with children.
In one of the studies carried out by Eckeman and White (1999) argue for material resources when they remark that children learn through play and their play is more cognitively mature in the presence of learning material resources and peers (Fernandez, 2014; Young, 2002). It follows therefore, that in the absence of these resources, ECD is bound to face challenges in the effective implementation of the curriculum. The gaps created here of lack of learning materials would be filled by the findings of this study from a Zimbabwean context.

Mpofu (2001), in one of the studies, points out that the lack of documentation of African practices has resulted in the dominance of Western ideas through the importation of their assessment tools and models (Kaputa, 2012; Mpofu, 1999). It was likely that a lot might be occurring in Zimbabwe which may be of benefit to the teaching of ECD children but has escaped the attention of the researcher due to lack of documentation. The literature and the policy circulars have shown that the current ECD programme was based on a foreign model. There was evidence that the model was evaluated theoretically, but the researcher analysed how a lack of documentation affects the effective implementation of the programme regarding the situation on the ground. This reflected that teachers have nowhere to refer for academic guidance. This study therefore, is significant in the sense that it starts an empirical study on how ECD teachers who succeed in implementing the curriculum are currently applying it. The answers to this broad research question (Chapter 1:10) will fill the gap in literature since there is a dearth of literature from a Zimbabwean context on the pedagogical approaches to overcome challenges experienced by the user-systems.
Chin (2000) in a study of young children revealed that malnutrition and ill-health are external factors associated with the socio-economic factor. These factors can significantly damage the cognitive processing ability of children. Children whose processing capacity is impacted by ill-health and malnutrition may require more hours of instruction to learn various skills (Howes, James and Ritchie, 2003). As such, the implementation of early childhood education may prove to be critical challenges, especially with low income countries (Van de Leer, 2005). The socio-economic differences proved to be a global challenge affecting effective implementation of ECDE and also cutting across regions, with some being labeled ‘marginalized’ or Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) (Burchinal, et al., 2002; Ermisch, 2008). Regional disparities have significant roles in facilitating access to early childhood care and education, where enrollment levels in rural and marginalized areas are low in comparison to those in the urban areas (Offenheiser, and Holcombe, 2003). Children from the marginalised communities in rural ASAL suffer from lack of access to early childhood education. One typical example is nomadic Maasai community, which is one of the communities experiencing the least access to early childhood education and care because of way of life and regional disparities (Easton, 2004; Hill, 2014; Myers, 1992).

These findings do not make Zimbabwe an exception, because the country is also experiencing socio-economic hardships that also affect effective learning/teaching of the ECD programme. Delvin, et al., (2012) also add that ineffectiveness on the part of the pupil or teacher are higher from families of low socio status no matter which particular factor are used to measure socio-economic status. The was evidence was that a teacher working under these conditions experience challenges during
implementation process. This background opens the gap that this current study covered on how malnutrition and ill-health affects effective learning/teaching. Added information would also contribute and augment existing knowledge on the Zimbabwean situation which stands out as one of the countries in Africa with an ECD programme.

The findings the research studies revealed that for effective teaching and learning to take place, teachers need to possess some sufficient degree of experience. Mavhundutse (2014) is of the opinion that experience is one of the major factors contributing towards effective implementation of the ECD programme. Therefore, experience was one of the factors that inhibit effective implementation from global perspectives. On the contrary, Department of Education (2012) found out that those teachers who had been recently trained and less experienced are more effective than the more experienced. These views have created a wider gap to make a comparative argument on who performs better between the two and understand how they override challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. It is the purpose of this study to find out challenges experienced by teachers of different experiences and academic standards.

A financial constraint was one of the challenges noted from continental perspectives by various researchers, there were numerous evidence that it can lead to ineffective implementation of early childhood education by the practitioners (Cooper and Warden, 1993; Goldstein, 2009). At macro level, Kenya has suffered from the heavy debt burden following its pursuit on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund fiscal policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) (Dodge and Colker, 1992). It is reported that these debt-servicing programmes is partly
responsible for significant reduction in government funding for subsidized education, health care and school related expenses (Najumba, 2013). Research studies from various regions confirm that families bear more responsibilities in implementation of early childhood education programmes than schools (Kilbride and Kilbride, 1990; Matimba, 2014). The financial constraints are critically affecting all walks of life globally, regionally; internationally, nationally and lack of finance has a negative bearing on teaching/learning. This gave the researcher the opportunity to critically analyse how financial constraints inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum, particularly in Zimbabwe. Data generated would add more literature to the existing board of knowledge on financial constraints as a factor that inhibits effective implementation by the user-systems.

Teacher-child ratio has been a subject of much attention among researchers as a factor facing teaching and learning process. Early childhood development education has not been left out. Research shows that teacher child ratio has continued to grow. On average, the teacher-child ratio for both 3-5 years old children and 6-8 years olds still remains critical (Perez-Johnson and Maynard, 2007). According to Holcombe, (2003), a study on teachers’ perception regarding pupils’ enrolment showed that teachers were not comfortable with the increasing number of children in their classes they handle. Dodge and Colker (1992) cited in the Dakar Framework for Action, (2000) carried a similar study and revealed that in addition to these high ratios, ECD teachers are poorly remunerated and they are under the mercy of parents. The researcher is aware that a similar cry has been raised by teachers in Zimbabwe to the same effect. Current research established that teachers’ failure to effectively implement the ECD curriculum was due to large enrolment and underfunding these
high ratios. The issue of large classes is a national problem, and it is a gap to be filled by this current study to find out how it inhibits effective teaching and learning. There would be need to establish how other countries overcome the problem of large classes. However, Zimbabwe is also inclusive in an international worldview because there was evidence to the effects of large classes done by various researchers in the field of education. The findings of this study would contribute knowledge on the Zimbabwean situation which stands out as one of the countries in Africa with ECD programme.

Many early childhood development experts believe that the knowledge of child development theory should guide educational practices of children from birth to 8 years of age (Katz, 1996). Katz (1996: 141) questions “if we do not know enough about the relationship between early experience and the ultimate competencies necessary for effective participation in democratic processes, how we can design effective educational practice?” Theories are useful in helping researchers and teachers guide their observations (Stott and Bowman, 1996). It was from this point of view that practices for supporting the development of children from birth to 8 years of age originated. Developmentally appropriate practices are a set of standards for providing high quality early care and education experiences (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997; Goldstein, 1997). This implied that teachers should be skilled with various skills that will enable them to impart skills to ECD pupils accordingly and help them to unlock various challenges experienced during instructional periods. The question that was in the researcher’s mind was, “Do teachers have adequate skills to overcome challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD programme, considering the professional achievements of ECD user-system in the
Zimbabwean context? What changes have Teacher Training Colleges and Universities made to improve the professional achievement of ECD staff? The intent of this case study was to yield detail thick description of current practice. The current study would fill gaps with information which will both act as a basis for any researchers who wanted to carry out successful strategies employed to overcome challenges from global perspectives, which incorporated African epistemologies an important aspects which have been ignored to establish whether ECD classes are manned by professional teachers or not.

The key challenges facing Early Childhood Education in Kenya are underlying issues like the lack of proper government policy framework on ECDE, which continue to hinder every good gain that could be realised through effective development of early childhood programme. Thus, there is need to build more realistic policy provisions in order to safeguard the integral development of the Early Childhood Education in Kenya.

Time management is raised as a factor that contributes towards ineffective teaching and learning. According to Delvin et al., (2012) it was important for teachers to manage their time and cover the whole syllabus so that pupils gain adequate content/skills. This implied that if schools did not manage their time wisely were at a disadvantage regarding the effectiveness in teaching and learning. The most important resource which schools should effectively use was time.

From an international perspective ECD has not been a priority. Despite, all the evidence on the benefits of ECD, no country in the developing world can boast of comprehensive programmes that reach all children and unfortunately many were not
included. Hence, Zimbabwe is not an exception to this finding until the attainment of independence in 1980. The programmes catering to the very young are typically operated at small scale and usually through external donors or NGOs, but these too remained limited. For example, a recent study by Sayre (2013) found that the World Bank made only $2.1 billion of investments in ECD in the last 10 years, equivalent to just a little over 3 percent of the overall portfolio of the human development network, which totals some $60 billion (Sayre, 2013). Since the ECD programmes were considered any other business, its inception created some challenges regarding implementation, hence, is the purpose of this current study to add more literature on how and where the ECD programme is ranked from a national perspective.

Current studies revealed that there is strong evidence that enriched stimulating environments and high-quality pedagogy leads to learning outcomes (Litjens and Taguma, 2010). It is argued that more specialised staff education and training on ECD are strongly associated with stable, sensible and stimulating interactions (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). The other elements of high staff quality included curriculum knowledge and the ability to create a multidisciplinary learning environment (Burchinal, et al., 2002). It was the intent of this study to review some of the attributes stated since they affected effective implementation of the ECD programme in all walks of life. There are studies showing that, generally, a higher level of education is associated with higher pedagogic quality in ECD settings (Litjens and Taguma, 2010). One study found out that preschool teachers with Bachelor’s Degrees were the most effective practitioners. Their effectiveness was measured within the classroom based on stimulation, responsiveness and engagement of the children in learning activities (Howes et al., 2003; Najumba,
2013). This reflects that the achievement of high quality pedagogy enabled the ECD user-system to reduce some of the challenges experienced by teachers during the implementation process.

It was noted by studies that the school climate contributed towards school effectiveness. Guffey (2013) notes that school climate has an impact on the effectiveness of teachers in the school. It can be argued that the way an individual in an organisation performs is determined by the organisational setting, in this case its climate. In a school where there is no bridge between school leadership and teachers, the climate is conducive for effective teaching and learning. Where there is dialogue between the head, teachers and pupils a healthy school climate prevails (Guffey, 2013; Hill, 2014). This implies that if schools do not consider communication as a factor that inhibited effectiveness among the ECD teachers. It was the objective of this study to establish internal factors that might affect effective implementation.

In 2014 Hill’s study on community engagement revealed patterns of parental, family and community engagement in ECEC that they differ from country to country. Several formal and informal mechanisms were used to foster full participatory and managerial engagement. Some of the challenges to active engagement of parents include cultural, attitudinal and linguistic barriers (Barbarin et al., 2008; OECD, 2006). It is the intent of this current study to find out challenges that teachers experience in engaging parents. Responses to these concerns will add more knowledge from a Zimbabwe context.
2.22 How to Overcome Challenges that ECD Teachers Experience from Global Perspectives

This section covered how the ECD user-system overcomes some of the challenges experienced globally, internationally, regionally and nationally. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) describes specific educational practices to which those working with young children should adhere (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997). These practices included: a) creating a caring community of learners; b) teaching to enhance development and learning; c) creating appropriate curriculum; d) assessing children's learning and development; and establishing relationships with families. The following section provides an overview of each of these practices, empirical support for the practice, and some challenges educators face in implementing the practice in the current educational context.

According to Bredekamp and Copple, (1997) there is need to create a caring community of learners in which children spend time. This involved both the physical and social environments and their influence impact children's development. Specific variables in early care and education settings that influence how children grow and learn include low staff/child ratios, positive social interactions between children and between children and adults, appropriate classroom arrangements, and safe and healthy practices. According to Kontos and colleagues (2002:240), there is evidence that the presence of these specific variables in early care and education settings are “those where children are more likely to thrive, as determined by their attachment to the teacher, their peer relations, and their verbal ability”
Quality measures are available that evaluate the physical and social environments in which children from birth to 8 spend time. Evidence of studies that have examined the community of learners has found disturbing results in some cases. In a study of Kentucky's (2005) concurs with Grisham-Brown and colleagues (2005) on quality measures, found that young children from low social-economic backgrounds and those of minority status were more likely to participate in low quality early care and education programs than their counterparts. Similarly, a study of primary classrooms by Buchanan and colleagues (1998) found that those classrooms most likely to use developmentally inappropriate practices were those serving the largest number of children who receive free lunch. Incidentally, these same classrooms had larger class sizes than their counterparts who were engaged in developmentally appropriate practices. This brings a question that should be addressed from a national context that, “What educational policy militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum? The findings of this study would give the opportunity to the researcher to examine the requirements of the educational policy and the implementation on the ground. The findings of this study would add literature to the existing body of knowledge from a national context.

Research studies establish that, in order to overcome challenges, teaching practice for young children should include opportunities for choice, hands-on learning, and promotion of collaboration between children, use of a variety of teaching strategies, individualization, and self-regulation (Brede-kamp and Copple, 1997; Buchanan et al., 1998; Bruce et al., 2011). There is evidence that these practices support the development of young children. In Kontos and colleagues (2002) found that preschool children experience more complex interactions with peers when engaged
In creative activities than other types of activities, for instance, language arts or gross motor. In Kontos, et al., (2002) the creative activities were those that were open ended without a finished product expected. McCormick and colleagues (2003) evaluated 25 top-performing primary programmes in Kentucky and found that one variable that differentiated those classrooms from the lowest performing class was the provision of choice in selection of materials and activities. This study supports that the use of developmentally appropriate practices in primary classrooms positively impacts child outcomes.

A challenge in defining developmentally appropriate teaching strategies has been the emphasis on child-centred approaches. Whereas child-centred approaches originate from constructivist theory, didactic or teacher-directed instruction originates from a behaviourist perspective (Stipek, 2004; Santrock, 2002). Because of the theoretical orientation from which child-centred practices derive, some have viewed them as synonymous with developmentally appropriate practices. However, Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1995) indicate that developmentally appropriate teaching strategies, in fact, fall along a continuum from those that are non-directive (acknowledgement) to those that are directive (direct instruction). Stipek (2004) found that teachers serving large numbers of low achieving children were more likely to use direct instruction than child-centred instructional techniques. Grisham-Brown et al., (2005) argue that in blended programmes where teachers encounter groups of children with wide ability levels, it is appropriate for teachers to employ the full continuum of teaching behaviours. By using the full continuum of optional teaching strategies, those working with young children are, in fact, addressing the individualisation ideas associated with developmentally appropriate practice. Hence, were in the position to
show how successful ECD teachers overcome challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum

According to Pretti-Frontczak and colleagues (2007) in their study to reveal how successful teachers do to overcome challenges experienced by ECD teachers, identified four parts to construct an appropriate curriculum framework. These parts include: 1) assessment for gathering information about children; 2) scope and sequence or the developmental/content areas that will be addressed; 3) activities and instruction or the contexts and strategies for teaching; and 4) progress monitoring or methods for determining success of the instruction. Bredekamp and Copple (1997) indicate that developmentally appropriate curricula should address all areas of the children's development and all content areas, bearing in mind the child's age and considering children's cultural, linguistic, and ability differences. Grisham-Brown and colleagues (2005) indicate that collaboration between educators, families, and other support personnel is essential for implementing a high quality curriculum for children in blended classrooms. There is evidence to show that it is possible to overcome challenges provided both learning resources and human resources are available to learning centres.

One key issue shaping curriculum design is the development of learning standards. Although, in the United States have had learning standards for kindergarten programmes since the early 1990s, early learning standards for children five and under were only developed in the mid-2000s (Scott et al., 2006). As of 2008, over 40 states and the District of Columbia have developed pre-kindergarten standards, many across all areas of development (Neuman and Roskos, 2005). The arrival of standards into programs serving children from birth to 8 years of age has challenged
those who want to ensure the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices during a standards-based climate that emphasizes accountability. In the late 2000s, leading researchers in early childhood education were beginning to provide guidance for ensuring that the needs of young children are appropriately addressed within this context. Goldstein (2007: 51) found in a qualitative study, that kindergarten teachers could address content standards in a developmentally appropriate manner by “recognising and building on the curricular stability in kindergarten, employing instructional approaches that accommodating the children's developmental needs, setting limits, acquiescing to demands for developmentally inappropriate practices and materials, engaging in proactive education and outreach, accepting additional responsibilities, and making concessions” . Grisham-Brown (2008) and Gronlund (2006) have proposed that curricula driven by early learning standards can be appropriate, if standards are addressed at different levels, depending on the needs of the children. In agreement with Grisham-Brown (2008) and Gronlund (2000) the positive application of their research studies would reflect how ECD teachers can override challenges for effective implementation. The gap that has been created is to establish how successful ECD teachers overcome challenges that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD curriculum.

In order to successfully overcome challenges faced by ECD user-systems, it is important to understand specific guidelines regarding children's development. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) advocate the use of authentic assessment practices as the primary approach for assessing young children (Division for Early Childhood, 2007; National Association for the Education of Young Children and
National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 2003). Authentic assessment strategies involve documenting learning and development of children during real-life activities and routines by familiar adults (Losardo and Notari-Syverson, 2001; Neisworth and Bagnato, 2004). Research has shown that many teachers prefer authentic assessment approaches over more traditional assessment methods and there are positive relationships between the use of authentic assessment practices, other classroom practices, and child outcomes (Bagnato, 2005; Meisels et al., 2003).

Appropriate assessment practices for young children have been compromised by the accountability climate in education in the early 2000s. Early childhood leaders have advocated the use of authentic assessment approaches for accountability purposes, indicating that these methods are more appropriate for young children (Meisels et al., 2003; Neisworth and Bagnato, 2004; Grisham-Brown, 2008). Emerging research shows that authentic assessment approaches, used for accountability purposes, can yield technically adequate assessment data.

Current studies reveal that Indicators of active family involvement in programs serving young children should involve collaboration and communication. Bredekamp and Copple (1997) indicate that programs should collaborate with families as they design early experiences for their children using two-way communication strategies (Chingo and West, 2010; Hill 2014). Unlike other practices in early childhood education, family involvement has been an enduring value that few have challenged (Hoover et al., 1995; Delvin et al., 2012) primarily because of the positive benefits on children's development. For example, family literacy practices have been positively linked to children's ability to read.
successfully (Gambrell and Mazzoni, 1999; Najumba, 2013). Grisham-Brown and colleagues (2005) provide specific examples of how to involve families in child assessment, selection of children's priorities, and curriculum development. Bailey (2002: 290) argues that there should be a shift from emphasis on critical periods to critical experiences. Bailey questions: “What are the experiences that are absolutely necessary for all children to maximize school success, mental health, and social development?” Clearly, the practices that early childhood educators implement with children from birth to 8 have the greatest impact on child outcomes. The knowledge of those practices and the underlying theoretical orientation that supports them are essential in order for young children to receive “critical experiences.” These practices can only be achieved by teachers who have the knowledge about how instrumental is parental involvement in the learning of their children.

Research studies reveal that ECD interventions are effective and show that there are large gains in investing in early childhood development. For example, estimates place the gains from the elimination of malnutrition at 1 to 2 percentage points of gross domestic product (GDP) annually (World Bank, 2006). Analysis of results from OECD’s 2009 Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) reveals that school systems that have a 10 percentage-point advantage in the proportion of students who have attended pre-primary school score an average of 12 points higher in the PISA reading assessment (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2011). Also, a simulation model of the potential long-term economic effects of increasing preschool enrolment to 25 percent or 50 percent in every low-income and middle-income country showed a benefit-to-cost ratio ranging from 6.4 to 17.6, depending on the preschool enrolment rate and the discount rate used (Lancet, 2011).
Indeed, poor and neglected children benefit disproportionately from early childhood development programmes, making these interventions among the more compelling policy tools for fighting poverty and reducing inequality (Yazer, 2002; Yip, 2002). ECD programs are comprised of a range of interventions that aim for: a healthy pregnancy; proper nutrition with exclusive breast feeding through six months of age and adequate micronutrient content in diet; regular growth monitoring and immunization; frequent and structured interactions with a caring adult; and improving the parenting skills of caregivers. The following are important inputs into the development of healthy and productive children and adults, but unfortunately these issues are often not addressed effectively, yet they are factors that might inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum globally. The matter of maternal under nutrition affects 10 to 19 percent of women in most developing countries (Lancet, 2011; Yazer, 2007), and 16 percent of births are low birth weight (27 percent in South Asia).

Malnutrition during pregnancy is linked to low birth weight and impaired physical development in children, with possible links also to the development of their social and cognitive skills (Goldstein, 2007). Maternal depression also affects the quality of care giving and compromises early child development. This epistemology which guides the assessment on good health would have a bearing on the child’s future education. From the researcher’s an analytical point of view, children from such a background would as well present learning challenges at school. This implied that teachers would have to prepare remedial work right from an early age between 3-5 years. It is the purpose of this study to fill the gap and add literature on the effects of malnutrition to ECD children from Zimbabwean situation.
Child care and parenting practices are other issues that have negative influence on the implementation of the ECD curriculum. The home environment, including parent-child interactions and exposure to stressful experiences, influences the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children (Goldstein, 2007; Grisham-Brown, 2008; Lancet, 2011). For instance, only 39 percent of infants aged zero to six months in low and middle-income countries are exclusively breast-fed, despite strong evidence on its benefits (Lancet, 2011). Also, in half of the 38 countries for which UNICEF collects data, mothers engage in activities that promote learning with less that 40 percent of children under the age of six. Societal violence and conflict are also detrimental to a child’s development, a fact well known to around 300 million children under the age of four that live in conflict-affected states (Yip, 2002, Yazer, 2007).

Participation in good quality pre-primary programmes has been shown to have beneficial effects on the cognitive development of children and their longevity in the school system (Jeffries 2003; Najumba, 2013). Yet despite gains, enrolment remains woefully inadequate in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, national averages usually hide significant inequalities across socio-economic groups in access and almost certainly in quality. In all regions, except South Asia, there is a strong income gradient for the proportion of 3 and 4 year olds attending preschool (Lawler (1991) cited by Jeffries (2003). The question that still stood was: What challenges are faced by ECD teachers under the diverse socio-economic status of the children. How do teachers overcome such challenges?
2.23 What Is Early Learning?

A kindergarten is usually seen as the beginning of formal education, and it is fully integrated into the elementary school system. A kindergarten is public education and subject to the USA law therefore, kindergarten teachers must be properly licensed and certified), though it is not mandatory in every state. Children enter kindergarten during ages five to six, and many states do not begin mandating education until age seven. Though kindergarten is more formal, it still qualifies as early childhood education because students are less than eight years old. They are still developing at a rapid pace, and kindergarten is important to easing their transition into elementary school.

Kindergarten focuses heavily on social development and peer-to-peer interactions, though there is greater emphasis on fundamental academics than there is in preschool. In preschool children learn how to count, but in kindergarten they begin learning about adding and subtracting. They learned colours, and now learn how to blend those colors to make new ones (Jordan, Glutting and Ramineni, (2010). And whereas in preschool they learned the alphabet, kindergarten teaches them how to spell and string basic words into simple sentences. Basically, kindergarten lays the groundwork for their formal education by introducing new concepts that develop into the different academic subjects they will learn throughout the rest of their educational career.
2.24 How do ECD Teachers Work with Young Children?

When deciding if early childhood education was the right career choice, the first and most important question to ask yourself is: Do I like working with children? If he could not answer yes, then this career may not be best for him. Working with children requires patience, dedication and sensitivity. Trying to keep up with them can be exhausting, but if the teacher up to the challenge, it can also be extremely rewarding. Young children are not like other students. Their needs are unique and the teacher must be aware of this. It was important to understand that you could be one of the first adults a young child has interacted with outside of his or her own family. The separation from their parents in the beginning can be difficult, and a teacher must help them through this transition. A child can become very attached to you as a “substitute” for their parents, or they may shun the teacher completely (Daly, 2004; Nurse, 2007). Great teachers are adaptable to the emotional reactions of their students. And when it comes to the pupil’s interactions with other children, this can be one of the first times they interact with children of their age (Shuler, 2012). A teacher’s role often becomes that of mediator when children have problems sharing or learning how to get along.

Furthermore, teachers in early education need to be creative and adaptive. They must think outside their own mature perspective and be able to place themselves in their students’ shoes (Bruce, 2004; Hildebrand and Phenice, 2000). What motivates a very young child? How does the teacher hold a toddler’s interest? How does the teacher make learning fun? These are all questions the teacher would have to ask him/herself. Lessons in early education classrooms must be hands-on. They involve arts and crafts, storytelling, exercise, educational games and more. The teacher
needed to be fast on your feet and highly adaptable to continuously come up with new ways to guide children through their early learning stages.

During the first few years of life, a child learns a lot about themselves and the world around them, and parents are their first teachers. Parents teach them how to speak, how to walk, how to feed themselves. They teach them the alphabet, shapes and colors, and even how to count and spell very simple words (National Research Council, 2008). But for healthy development, children need active stimulation and interaction with others. This is where early childhood education is the most beneficial. It is in these classrooms where children apply what their parents have taught them to a practical setting and have their first interactions with people outside of their family (Woodcock and Southern, 2009). Beginning with children as young as two, teachers guide them through an important transition and oversee their adjustment. Early childhood education focuses on “learning through play” by providing a hands-on, interactive atmosphere where children learn about themselves through playing with other children. As a teacher of young children, he/she should become somewhat of a surrogate parent, their first source of guidance in playing with others and forming friendships. The teacher should teach children how to share, how to take turns, how to have manners--lessons that stay with them and evolve with each crucial phase of their life (Steele, 2004; Perez-Johnson and Maynard, 2007).

Young children have more physical demands than older students. Many preschools incorporate a nap time into their schedule or are on half-day schedules to accommodate a child’s exhaustion after a long morning of playing and learning (Perez-Johnson and Maynard, 2007). Bruce et al., (2011) noted that snack time is also built into these schedules, which serve as a great opportunity to teach your
students table manners. Teaching young children requires nothing short of complete
devotion and perseverance. It can be a daunting task, but to a truly committed
teacher, it is worth the effort (Fabian and Mould, 2009; Johnston and Rogers, 2003).

There is much debate over what is covered by an ideal preschool curriculum, but in
actuality, early childhood is a period of such tremendous growth and curiosity that it
is hard to decide exactly what, and when, a child needs to learn (Fuchs, Fuchs and
Compton ; Gonzalez-Mena, 2000). The preschool curriculum establishes the teacher
as a guide, allowing children to discover for themselves while the teacher leads them
through the process. Much research goes into preschool curricula, and organizations
such as the National Institute for Early Education Research and the National
Association for the Education of Young Children strive to preserve and advance the
education of some of our country’s youngest students, as well as increase awareness
about the importance of early childhood education (Hildebrand, Phenice, Gary and
Hines, 2000).

2.25 How do institutional classroom documents used by the ECD teachers
augment the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?

In section addressed assessment used in early childhood education. The section
covered the purpose of documents, assessment and challenges experienced by the
ECD teachers. Knowing what is documentation is the first stage of understanding
the process (Katz and Chard, 2002). Research studies explains that documentation
typically includes samples of a child’s work at several stages of completion,
photographs showing work in progress, comments written by the teacher or other
adults working with the children (Katz and Chard, 2002). An effective piece of
documentation tells the story and the purpose of an event, experience or development. It was the products that drew others into the experience, evidence or artefacts that described a situation and tell a story (Reed’ 2005). When the teacher used the documents effectively, consistently and thoughtfully the documentation could also drive curriculum and collaboration in the ECD classroom setting (Kroeger and Cardy, 2006). The format that documentation takes can be as varied as the creator’s mind permits, because documentation should provide evidence of the process with purpose. Whatever the format, it should fully explain the process, highlighting various aspects of the experience or event (Brown-DePaul and Keyes, Seatti, 2001). A variety of experience and topics are appropriate to document, but documentation should always tell a story. The possible topics recommend by Oker and Wroght (2001) are as follows:

- Individual child growth and development;
- Expected behaviour;
- Curriculum ideas or events;
- Curriculum projects;
- Families and relationships;
- Question and answers of children, teachers and families about such topics as classroom routine.

There are several important reasons for using a document in ECD. The four reasons include showing developmental progress, showing accountability, extending the learning and making learning visible. This implied that the teacher is a researcher first, collecting as much information as possible to paint a picture of progress and outcomes (Kroeger and Cardy, 2006).
Documenting individual growth requires a great deal of research, as the teacher must observe each child in a variety of areas of development such as social, emotional, cognitive, language and motor over a substantial length of time (Wurm, 2005; Reed and Bergmann, 2005). There is evidence that teachers face challenges on creating documentation that tells an accurate story about each child due to large classes. One other reason for documentation is accountability. Teachers of young children are accountable to administrators, families, community members and others and help to provide evidence of children’s learning. Research reveal that documentation can improve relationships, teaching and learning. The use of this tool helps educators to get to know and understand children and it allows them to reflect on effectiveness of teaching practices (Kroeger and Cardy, 2006). One question that might come in my mind is, do Zimbabwe ECD teachers prepare the documents effectively in support of the holistic educational ECD policy. It is the intention of this study to fill the gap from the Zimbabwe context. One other use of documents is to help the teacher and children negotiate a curriculum that is based on the children’s interest (Shores and Grace, 2005). When expected to provide evidence that children are meeting learning standards documentation is a natural way to make teach visible (Katz and Chard, 2000). According to Helm, Beneke and Steinheimer (1998:24), call this idea, “windows on learning”-meaning that documentation offers an insight into children’s development and learning. This implied that when teachers document children’s learning in a variety of ways, they can be more confident about the value of their teaching because they have somewhere to refer to.

The documentation process was best done in collaboration with other teachers, parents and in some cases with the children. The information and product become
richer when two or more teachers, children and parents work together to understand
an event (Helm at el., 1998; Reed and Bergmann, 2005). Collaboration also helps
build a classroom community which is important because it engages teachers,
parents and children in thinking about the process of learning (Wurm, 2005). In
addition, Shores and Grace (2005), when two or more people discuss an event, each
brings a different perspective and a new level of depth.

Conclusively, documentation can be a rewarding process when educators understand
the value associated with collecting evidence and producing a summary. To become
a documenter, one must first understand what to observe and what to do with the
information collected. It takes time and practice to learn which experiences support
effective documentation and how to collect artefacts and evidence (Oken-Wright,
2001). As documenters learn why the information is important, they begin to
understand the value of documentation for different audiences and come to
recognise why certain aspects of child development are important to access (Kroeer
and Cardy, 2006).

2.26 Records keeping are essential documents in Early Childhood Development

Oken-Wright, (2001) define records as documented proof of transaction. In schools
teachers consistently document learner’s progress to ensure that teachers will have
evidence of year long learner. Oken-Wright, (2001) went further to say the evidence
becomes vitally important for communication with learners, parents and
administrators. Recording keeping is critical in ensuring quality in classroom
assessment (Northern Canadian Protocol in Basic Education, 2006). The authors
went further to say that, the records that teachers and learners keep are evidence that support decisions that are made about learners’ learning.

According to Heaney (1999) the information that is recorded may take a variety of formats. Those may include, an schedule, a record of children’s reading, comments on children work books that identify areas for improvement and the recording of results from test given. This information provided a valuable resource for the teacher when considering and reporting each child’s progress. When these records are maintained effectively, they help schools furnish parents with reports about the progress and achievement. In Zimbabwe there are several types of records namely: Progress Record book, social record, anecdotal, physical record book, emotional, health record and environmental record book. My worry as a researcher was on effective implementation considering the requirements of the national ECD policy of developing the child holistically. This study would fill the gap in literature from the Zimbabwean context. Alousa (2003) identified record keeping as a cardinal problem of continuous implementation, as records have to be accurately and meticulously kept over a long period of time, in a form that would enhance easy retrieval, if assessment techniques are to be effective.

Research studies by Oken-Wright, (2001) on records management reveal that primary school in England and in Greece have reported that teachers’ records tend to emphasise the quantity of learner’s work rather than its quality. was this the situation in Zimbabwe? It was the intention of this study to investigate if ECD teachers in Mutare experience challenges emanating from record keeping. Burke (1990:20) defines competence as the ability to perform activities within an occupational area to level of performance expected in employment. Charton (1996:360) also interprets
“competence as the exhibition of specific behaviour and attitudes being demonstrated and distinguishable from the potential to perform”. This clearly demonstrated that teachers need to be competent in order to perform their duties effectively and efficiently. The challenge of incompetent teachers is one of the factors that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. It was the purpose of this study to find out whether lack of incompetence affects learning among ECD pupils in Mutare District. The gap created would give the researcher opportunity to add more relevant literature from the Zimbabwean situation since literature is silent on how incompetent ECD teachers overcome challenges experienced.

### 2.27 Curriculum Standards in Early Childhood Development

Curriculum standards define what children should know and be able to do in a particular content area. Standards provide guidance to teachers and inform their instruction. Teachers can use these curriculum standards to assess what concepts need strengthening or retouching, or to identify when a new strategy is needed. Standards are organized by grade level to better define what children should know and be able to do at each grade level, and to facilitate developmentally appropriate teaching. When faced with high-stakes testing, teachers often feel pressured to teach material to pupils before they are ready to learn it, or in ways that are not age appropriate. Teacher training, discussions with colleagues, and networking can enable teachers to carefully reflect about each step along the way to mastery. Standards should provide enough information to help with assessment of student mastery. Below are functions of assessment to both pupils and teachers.
• Identify current knowledge and skills of students;
• Address and plan for the strengths and needs of students;
• Evaluate student growth over time;
• Promote student motivation and objectivity;
• Evaluate program effectiveness;
• Enlighten parents of student progress;
• Promote parent advocates;

Early childhood assessment is composed of three essential documents, these included interrelated components namely, documentation, evaluation and communication with family. Early childhood educators have historically valued and promoted child observation and program assessment as being important for high quality programs for children. Assessment is the process of gathering information about students in order to make decisions about their education. To get a well-rounded picture of the student’s understanding and progress, the strategies used for assessment must be comprehensive. Unique talents, interests, knowledge, skills, and progress are documented by observing, collecting, and reviewing children’s work over time. Teachers recognise that uneven development is normal and expected, allowing them to assess children fairly. Assessment must involve observing children regularly and collecting samples of their work. The physical products created can become part of a student portfolio, providing many examples of children’s thinking over time.

In documentation, emphasis is placed on discovering what a child already knows and is able to do. Acknowledging student understanding promotes the child’s sense
of competence and provides teachers with clues about what and how to teach. It gives a much more accurate picture than assessing them in a contrived setting. For example, asking a child to write an answer to a mathematics problem may not show whether or not the child has problem solving skills or can add digits. The child may not understand the meaning of the problem, may have stayed up too late, or may be coming down with the flu. In contrast, daily observation as the child solves many kinds of problems enables the teacher to discover what he understands about addition and problem solving as well as other mathematical concepts.

Evaluation is the next step in assessment and it is comparing the gathered information of each student to the standard. This step enables teachers to guide instruction, evaluate teaching strategies, track student progress, and identify students with special needs that require additional interventions or services. Although standards are designed to provide consistent expectations for all children, instruction must be moulded to fit each child’s individual strengths and needs. The insights gained from early assessment can serve as the basis for instruction. As teachers observe students at work, they can modify the learning experiences offered to meet the individual needs of their students.

2.28 How do teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD pupils overcome the challenges for effective implementation of the curriculum?

In this section the emphasis was on how ECD teachers who succeeded in providing instruction overcame challenges for effective implementation of the ECD programme. The following paragraphs provide related literature that addresses both internal and external factors that promote effective implementation of the
curriculum. These forces included the availability of resources, pupils’ skills and behaviours, classroom environment and the development and use of teaching and learning materials factors. Effective teaching is considered a mystery by some authors (Goldhaber, 2002). Porter and Brophy (1988) in their study on the synthesis of research on good teaching identified that effective teachers are clear about their instructional goals, are knowledgeable about the content, communicate well, monitor students understanding, and are thoughtful and respectful about the teaching practices. The ECD centres face a number of challenges as they begin their role as an academic teacher. Research studies reveal that each centre may reveal a unique combination of challenges, but they fall under some general categories (Chingos and West, 2010; Copple and Bredekamp, 2009). Some of the categories were explored, with some suggestions for overcoming them. The categories are as follows:

2.28.1 The availability of Resources

The availability of resources in an ECD centre varies widely, therefore it is helpful to ask about teaching resources that are of importance to the style of teaching and these may include technology, space, model, library materials, support for writing skills, and how to order needed learning materials (Morrison, 2004, Morrow, 2004). Successful teachers would look for teaching support in the form of grants, equipment, mentoring and professional development activities. If the ECD campus does not provide them, there may be community, professional or governmental organisational or association that may help (Harrison, et al., 2007; Wickett, 2009). The main thrust is implementing the curriculum effectively. Being an accomplished instructor can be a bit like being a scavenger, collecting materials over a lifetime of teaching to develop a comprehensive set of teaching support materials.
2.28.2 Pupils’ skills and behaviours

ECD teachers face pupils with a wide range of skills, abilities and experiences. Being aware of the range of and how to support students to help them each learn is a characteristic of an accomplished instructor. There were external support on each centre in the form of writing materials, mathematics and computer skills. According to Bruce, (2010; 2011) successful ECD teachers address the diverse needs of their pupils by becoming aware of the needs, locating resources to support students and making referrals and teaching those skills that are critical to children success.

Most appropriate pupil behaviour is addressed in the form of policies outlined in the course syllabus. If challenges arise, it was most effective to address them quickly and directly (Mavhundutse, 2014). The issues may include rudeness, disrespect, attendance, interruptions or inattentiveness among others. Sprinkle (2009) studied students’ perceptions of effective teaching and found out those pupils considered effective teachers as those who employ a variety of teaching styles and made real world applications. Effective teachers exhibit humour, enthusiasm, compassion, empathy and are interested in and concerned for students’ outside world (Department of Education, Sport and Culture, 2012). The socio-economic backgrounds of the students play a major impact on their performance at school. Literature argues that material factors such as income play a part in determining levels of education (Dacey and Travers, 2004). The lower social classes may lack the money to provide their children with some educational opportunities as middle and upper class parents. This then means that some pupils from low status families fail to perform effectively despite the fact that schools are adequately equipped with resources (Hill, 2014). Caro (2009) is also of the opinion that some pupils do not
perform well as a result of being constantly send home to collect fees. As a result these students cannot be in the position to do well, although schools have relevant and adequate resources to be utilised for the successful accomplishment of targeted goals and objectives (Pietizak, Duncan and Korcustea, 2008).

2.28.3 Classroom environment

Some classes have more enrolled pupils than others; others are awkwardly arranged for the style of teaching planned. The school climate contributes towards school effectiveness. Guffery (2013) notes that school climate has an impact on the effectiveness of teachers in the school. Sawchuck (2011) and Hill (3014) concur that the way an individual or a person in an organisation performs is determined by the organisational setting, in this case its climate. In a school where there is no bridge between school leadership and teachers, the climate is conducive for effective teaching and learning. Where there is dialogue, between the head, teachers and pupils a healthy school climate prevails. Schools where communication is considered as the lifeblood of the organisation breed an effective teaching and learning environment (Pietrzak, Duncan and Korcuska, 2008).

2.28.4 Development and use of teaching and learning materials

Teaching and learning materials refer to a spectrum of educational materials that teachers and pupils use in the classroom to support specific learning objectives. They are essential components in the education process as they influence quality learning (Bruce, 2004; Morison, 2004. All learners, despite their differences, are assisted to develop concepts, practice and refine skills, acquire knowledge and even
change their value systems and attitudes through the use of teaching and learning materials (Pelo, 2008; Santrock, 2002). Matimba (2014) is of the view that a lack of instructional materials such as syllabi and textbooks to use during teaching/learning process negatively affect effective teaching. Najumba (2013) asserts that ineffective funding and budgetary cutbacks is visible in the erosions of standards of teaching. It results in declining library standards scarcity of new references books and journals. It is argued there are certain home conditions that affect pupils’ school achievements. Children who lack the provision of reading materials perform poorly in school. A pupil who does not have his background which has resources like books sometimes perform poorly at school although she/he is taught by qualified teachers (Goldhaber, 2002; Caro, 2009; Najumba, 2013). Fuhrman et al., (2010) carried out a study on effective teaching and found out that effective teachers exhibit passion for their subjects, are knowledgeable about the care for students, use a variety of teaching strategies and help pupils to appreciate the relevance of information to their own context. Pietrzak, Duncan and Korcuska (2008) found effective teachers to possess a degree of knowledge, effective delivery style, organisation and known for the amount of assigned homework. Chingo and West (2010) are of the view that the level of education and occupational positions of parents are important determinants of pupils’ achievements. Some pupils from lowly educated parents do not perform well at school because they lack motivation and parental support to an extent that even if teachers are qualified still those pupils fail (Fernandez, 2014).

Delving, Kift and Nelson (2012) also add that ineffectiveness on the part of pupils is higher from families of low socio-economic status no-matter which particular factors are used to measure socio-economic status. This should indicate that inadequate
materials such as textbooks within the home background and lowly educated parents should not be regarded as a total effect in pupils; poor performance in rural primary schools (Delvin et al., 2012). The diverse individual aptitude of pupils should be taken into consideration. Within the poor background may be born an intelligent child. In addition, it is not always only the performers from low income families who tend to be ineffective as far as academic achievement is concerned. Some children from rich families may also perform academically poor due to other factors though poor performers among children from well to do families are rare (Butts, 2010; Delvin et al., 2012).

2.28.5 Time management is raised as both the internal and external

Time management is raised as both the internal and external factor that contributes towards ineffective or effective teaching. Some students are always out on sports. All play no work negatively impacts on school performance. It was important for teachers to manage their time and cover the whole syllabus so that pupils gain adequate content. Schools that are efficient in terms of time management are at an advantage in terms of how well resources were utilised to produce outputs (Najumba, 2013). The most vital resource which schools should effectively use is time (Delvin, Kift and Nelson, 2012).

Najumba (2013), in his studies of school achievement, discovered that schools which are well equipped with relevant educational facilities which comprise institutional materials such as textbooks, libraries and even laboratories do much better in standardised examinations such as Grade 7 than those which do not have resources. Major internal factors that influence teacher effectiveness towards
teaching in ECD schools are the availability of instructional materials such as charts, textbooks and syllabi. However, pupils could fail if teachers lack didactical and pedagogical skills and if those resources are not used by the teacher.

2.29 How ECD teachers establish effective relationships with colleagues, parents and learners to enhance curriculum implementation?

Teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD pupils can overcome the challenges related to the expected standards for effective implementation of the ECD curriculum by creating effective relationships with such people as colleagues, parents and the learners. This section described how ECD teachers establish good relationship with colleagues, parents and learners so as to enhance effective implementation of the curriculum. Fabian and Mould, 2009 and Seefeldt and Bourbour, 1986 concur that an effective childcare team is one that works cohesively towards identified, common goals and targets while maintaining a child focus in the context of legislative standards. Given that the provision for young children is rarely a lone task, child care provision is reliant upon the ability of each individual member of staff to build effective relationship with colleagues. Teamwork is the collaborative working of people that share strengths, balance weaknesses, share direction and build a vision, a staff team works inclusively and together to that end (Cole, 2004, Owen, 2005; Sloane, 2007). This implies that with such team spirit, the ECD user systems would be in a position to override some of the challenges they might experience during the instructional periods.

Research studies by Woodcook and Southern (2009) parental involvement revealed that, for some time now there has been an increased recognition that practitioners
and parents/carers should be working in partnerships for the good of the child and the family unit. This continued recognition of the need to establish and maintain healthy relationships between those whose words, thoughts and actions can determine the quality of a young child’s life was still welcomed (Fabian and Mould, 2009; Sloane, 2007). Partnership work obviously involves communication they send messages to others about their knowledge, thoughts, understanding and approachability. Daly et al, (2004:191) warn that, “How you behave can hinder communication, as people are liable to judge you on the way you behave”. They further pointed out that; there are three general categories for style of communication namely: aggressive, assertive, passive. It is hoped that those involved in discussions can adopt an assertive approach based upon openness and honesty, thus enabling the speaker to clearly and confidently communicate their opinions and needs to the listener. Miller et al., (2005:46) remind us that, “partnership practice tends to be formulated by professional but rarely by parents themselves” According to May and Nurse (2007: 85) “one of our responsibilities as early years’ professionals is not to judge but to build trusting relationships so that we can offer advice and sensitivity, when parents are struggling and are prepared to accept it.”

In conclusion, Harrison et al; (2003:14) who cite White and Grove (2000) as they note that there are four elements essential within a professional partnership, these being respect, reciprocity, realism and risk-taking. It could be argued that such elements underpin all forms of collaborative practice and should shine like a beacon during the work undertaken by both parents and practitioners. The main purpose was
to join together to enhance the quality of life for all of those touched by the need for help and encouragement (Bruce, 2004; Bruce, Meggit et al., 2011; Nurse, 2007).

The early year’s field is an area of continuous development. The key to a child’s learning is to provide a learning environment that would allow the child to become secure and happy within the context in which they are living and developing (Wickett, 2009). As a result, there is need to consider Maslow’s (1968) hierarchy of human needs indicates how and why practitioners should aim to provide an environment that would offer young children warmth, security and a high level of care in meeting their basic needs, such as food, drink, clean and dry clothing (Bruce, 2004; Goldschmied and Jackson, 2004; Wickett, 2009). It was the responsibility of the early years teacher to make contact with the parents and reassure the child, supporting them as they become aware of their new surroundings (Goldstein, 2008; Reddy, 2008; Woodcock and Southern, 2009). According to Maslow (1954), if young children are to develop and progress in all other areas then it was critical that their basic needs are met first. Maslow’s theory underpins the overall aim of what early years settings should be seeking to achieve within their childhood learning period (Santrock, 2002; Wickett, 2009). According to Claxton and Carr, (2004) it was the responsibility of the ECD teachers to make contact and reassure the child, supporting them as they become aware of their new surroundings.

Experts in the field of ECD have long been secure in the knowledge that children’s learning is enhanced and consolidated through play (Dyanda, 2005). Claxton and Carr (2004) with reference to Dweck (1999), go as far as to suggest that what was clear was that early children centres and schools do change children’s learning orientation for better or worse. There is always a learning curriculum and it can steer
pupils towards or away from developing the attributes of effective learning. If we are to agree with Claxton and Carr (2004), then the play environment for young children would have a huge impact on their learning and interests. As skilled practitioners it is the role of teachers to offer children as many opportunities as our setting permits to push out the boundaries of opportunity and to discover the breath of learning much as we can (Bruce, 2004; Davies, 2003). Moyle (1989:9) suggests that, “play at its best in educational situations, provides not only a real medium for learning but enables discerning and knowledgeable adults to learn more about children and their needs.” As an researcher, one should adopt the use of observation to question how the children are accessing and exploring these opportunities and resources and can identify what learning is taking place and in turn offer an opportunity for children to extend their learning by developing further opportunities or resources, hence, facilitating the play (Bruce, 2004; Bruce et al., 2011). Research studies reveal that regular use of observations carried out at various times of the day in different situations will provide us with a wealth of information about individual children (Bruce, 2004). As this observation-based knowledge regarding the way individual children learn is gained, what ECD teachers should do is to facilitate this learning by offering the appropriate stimuli.

Maria Montessori in her studies suggested that a young child’s nursery environment should be one of silence (Bruce, 2004; Bruce et al., 2011; Laar, 1997; Morrison, 2004). She was not advocating that children should be seen and not heard but those young children who are concentrating and focussed on their play, are frequently quiet because they are absorbed in their activity. The key point to take away from this is that Montessori demonstrated that the learning environment should evolve in
genuine response to the children’s interests and needs. Bruce (2007: 135) makes reference to the importance of child initiated, free flow play but also suggest that many group settings offer sessions in which children are guided in their play with pre-structured adult-led outcomes. While there is need to guide the children during play, over-structured, planned activities with specific aims, objectives and learning intensions for children to achieve, do not always enhance a child’s learning (Nurse, 2007; Woodcock and Southern, 2009).

2.30 Modern Theories Guiding ECD Programme Implementation

There are several theories that help educationists and researchers understand how children learn and develop in ECD. A deeper understanding of what such theories point at would help this study understand how instruction, and in the context of this study, how programme implementers may need to and operationalised the programme to ensure effective achievement of the ECD curriculum goals. In this section, I referred only to those theories that related to ECD programme implementation. Such theories may be divided into cognitivists such as the Piagetian Constructivist Instructional Theory, Vygotskian Socio-cultural Constructivist Theory, the Froebel’s Constructivist Theory, Comenius’ Constructivist Theory and Montessori’s Constructivist Theory. On the basis of these theories, John Dewey the father of Pragmatism and Steiner’s philosophical ideas are used as a foundation on which teaching-learning processes in ECD are grounded. All these theories emphasised the child-centred teaching approaches and learning by doing.
2.31 Theories of Cognitive Development

The theories of cognitive development describe how children’s cognitive develops and some of them are developmentalist such as: The Piaget Instructional Theory, unlike Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Cognitive Development Theory and the Froebel’s Theory that were referred to in this study.

2.31.1. The Philosophy of John Dewey (1859-1952)

Dewey’s theory rests on the philosophy of pragmatism or practicality as applied in many educational institutions (Noddings, 2007). Pragmatism is a philosophy concerned with children learning in a practical way. According to Akinpelu (1981), Dewey’s emphasis was on the child and the related interests rather than on the subject matter. He believed that teachers can use pupils’ interests and activities as a context of teaching concepts and skills. Dewey’s ideas proposed a child–centred curriculum based on students’ previous experiences. In the same vein, Rousseau (1712-1778); Comenius, (1592-1670); Froebel (1592-1670) and Montessori, (1870-1952) commonly agree that when teaching-learning consider children’s interests, it becomes effective. In his own philosophy of education, Dewey embraces the belief that students use their interests and preferred play activities as contexts for developing learning concepts and skills. Therefore, the ECD teacher should not isolate community content from ECD curriculum since children have different cultural values from the societies that children came from and where they interact using skills gained from attending ECD education.
2.31.2 The Piagetian Instructional Theory (1896-1980)

Piaget, (1896-1980) is a major contributor to understanding how children develop cognitively, and for the purposes of this study, this theory broadly informs how ECD children should be instructed. Piaget’s Constructivist Theory suggests that child play patterns and age are directly related to environmental factors that help children create their own knowledge as they interact with their social and physical environment contexts during play. This helps to activate and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes at ECD level (Tassoni and Hucker, 2005). In fact, Tassoni and Hucker (2005) concur with Seefeldt and Bourbour (1986), who both accept that children create their own knowledge as they interact with their social and physical environment. According to Piaget (1978), play is viewed as assimilation in which reality is assimilated to the child’s existing brain schemas or views of the world (Tassoni & Beith, 2002). Play as an assimilation learning process means that children are able to assimilate a variety of roles and use play materials to represent real-life contexts such as building or relating to others. When cited in Morrison (2001), Piaget reports that children pass through four stages of development that are associated with the type of play. They naturally engage including the sensory motor stage experienced during the period (0-2) years; the pre-operational stage that they go through during the (2-4) years block period, the concrete operational stage (5-7) years and the formal operational stage (8-12) years.

Piaget (1978) identifies the pre-operational stage as a vital stage on which all other stages of sensory motor development rest and this is the same stage which is the crucial concern of this study, and it involves children engaging in symbolic play. However, the question that Piaget (1980) does not answer through his exposition of
these important stages is: How do ECD teachers use the knowledge from the discoveries by Piaget to effectively implement the ECD curriculum? This study is designed to describe how schools that have been known to effectively implement ECD programmes take advantage of the knowledge gained from these stages of child development as espoused by Piaget, (1978). This study investigates how instructors apply Piaget’s Cognitive Constructivist Theory to help their pupils create new knowledge as they interact with their social and physical environment in the Zimbabwean ECD educational curriculum. Ideas suggested by Piaget continue to be valued in ECD, and are seen as a breakthrough to the way educators should understand how children think and learn new ideas. For example, Piaget (1978) also developed a clinical method of interviewing used in studying children’s intellectual development (Morrison, 2001). The aim of the experimental questioning technique by Piaget (1978) was to understand reasoning processes underlying their right answers, but especially how their wrong answers were created. During the experiment with the questioning techniques, Piaget concluded that one reason why ECD learners failed to make powerful answer construction was that teachers used manipulative and vocabulary that did not guide processes of the children in ways that helped to make connections with previously learned knowledge. In this context, according to recent literature on how children are motivated to learn, Chikutuma and Musiyiwa (2010, p.119) say, “Motivation in education can have several effects on how children learn, lead to increased efforts, energy and lead to improved performance.” From these ideas how then do ECD teachers make use of questioning techniques and procedures to promote or provoke effective learning among ECD children? Piaget’s (1896-1980) work is still valued as a guiding principle in ECD
and is seen as a breaking ground for the way ECD teachers understand how ECD children think, process information and learn.

For one part, this study investigated how teachers apply Piaget’s guidelines to inform their instructional methods in order to overcome challenges related to curriculum implementation; and how they enhance effective teaching strategies during implementation of the ECD curriculum? One of the significances of this study was to add new knowledge to the existing body of literature on the ideas related to how ECD teachers use psychological constructivism ideas to override challenges related to ECD Educational programme implementation in the Zimbabwean context. There is not much documented literature on how ECD teachers overcome inhibiting factors to effective implementation of the programme from the Zimbabwean contexts.

2.31.3 Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Cognitive Development Theory

Similar to Piaget’s Psychological Constructivist beliefs, Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) also believed that children actively construct their knowledge. The socio-cultural cognitive theory emphasises developmental analysis; the role of language and socio-cultural interactions in the way children develop and make sense of new concepts (Madhlangobe, Chikasha, Mafa and Kurasha, 2014). According to the recent literature, (Madhlangobe, et al., 2014) the three points of focus that captured Vygotsky’s (1978) views included that:

1) The child’s cognitive skills can be understood only when they are developmentally analysed and interpreted. This view embraces Piaget’s developmental stages in that
it accepts that ECD children develop or exhibit age related skills that need to be assisted through age related socio-cultural teaching approaches that include grouping, use of relevant language and developmentally related activities.

2) Cognitive skills are mediated by words, language and forms of discourse, which serve as psychological tools for facilitating and transforming mental activity. In other words culture and social contexts play an important role in the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum.

3) Cognitive skills have their origins in social relations and are embedded in a Socio-Cultural backdrop (Smith, 2002; Santrock, 2002; Madhlangobe et al., 2014).

For Vygotsky, taking a developmental approach meant that ECD teachers should examine the origins of child’s learning processes and then relate to the transformations from earlier-to-later levels of development (Santrock, 2002). For instance, a particular mental act cannot be viewed accurately if isolated from its context, but should be viewed as developmental learning progress gradually attained in relation to other facets of learning processes that the child has gone through to achieve what is called learning. This is defined by Madhlangobe et al., (2014) as changes in attitudes, skills and ways of performing tasks. Regarding Vygotsky’s second argument to understand cognitive development, it is necessary to examine the tools that mediate and shape the cognitive functions of young children, especially ECD groups. Vygotsky (1978) came to believe that language as a cultural variable for learning is the most important and used of the learning tools that are available to the child. Therefore, the fact that the teachers in ECD contexts can manipulate these variables for the benefit of the child means that there is need to understand the skills and relate them to how teachers operate in the classroom.
Additionally, it is crucial to be able to empower supervisors of ECD teachers to know and focus on the instructional skills that impact ECD learning processes in positive ways (Gibson, 1976; Santrock, 2002). For example, similar to the beliefs guiding this study, Vygotsky (1978) argues that, in early childhood education, language begins to be used as a tool that helps the child understand things, respond to instructions, share ideas, question others, plan activities and solve problems (Madhlangobe et al., 2014; Santrock, 2000).

Similar to Vygotsky, (1978), Piaget, (1980) also portrays the argument that child development is inseparable from social and cultural contexts as learning activities. According to Vygotsky (1978) the development of memory or new knowledge, attention and reasoning involve learning to use the intentions of society, such as language, mathematical systems and memory strategies (Santrock, 2002). These reflections might imply that, in one culture, children may learn to count using a computer; in another, it might consist of counting of one’s fingers or using beads although in both contexts children would arrive at the same levels of knowing (Bruce and Meggit, 2010). Vygotsky’s (1978) theory has stimulated interest in the view that knowledge is cognitively situated and collaboratively created (Kozulin, 2000; Santrock, 2002), that is, the view that knowledge construction tools are distributed among people, communities and environments in which people live--including objects, artefacts, and books. This suggests that knowing can best be advanced through interaction with others and using culturally acceptable standards for operating learning tools in co-operative ways and activities.
2.31.4 Basing Teaching Strategies on Vygotsky’s Theory

According to Santrock (2002)’s version of understanding of Vygotsky’s constructivist theory, the following are some of the strategies that ECD teachers may incorporate into their classroom instructional guiding principles. These included using the Child’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), using more-skilled peers as teachers, monitor and encourage children to use of private speech, understanding the Child’s Zone of Proximal Disposition and placing instruction in a meaningful context.

2.31.5. Using the Child’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Teaching should begin from the zone’s upper limit, where the ECD child is cognitively able to reach the first step of the ladder to access the next level towards the goal, only to help children move to a higher level of skills and knowledge. In this context, the ECD teacher may watch and appreciate the children practising and then in the process the teacher would offer support or systematic interventions whenever the child shows signs of struggling. In social constructivism, this is called scaffolding learning the experiences of the child (Vygotsky, 1980). In this case, the teacher’s intervention skills are used as a scaffold by the learner to access the next level of knowing.

2.31.6. Use more-skilled peers as teachers

Similar to the first stage of learning through teacher interventions, when children are grouped according to their learning abilities by the teacher, they use their more-
skilled peers as cognitive scaffolding units for learning purposes that allow them to access knowledge from the next level of learning (Bruce and Meggit, 2005; Santrock, 2002). This approach is based on the philosophy that other children, when using their play-way method, they can share small tips with their peers and such experiences that will lead to the much desired learning achievement moments. According to constructivism, it is not only adults that Vygotsky’s (1978) theory believes are important in helping children learn important skills but also the other more-skilled peers are critical teaching-learning tools to all the children in a classroom.

2.31.7 Monitor and encourage children to use of private speech

Similar to Piaget’s psychological constructivism, teachers should be aware of the developmental change from externally talking to one when solving a problem during the pre-school years, to privately talking to oneself in the elementary school years (Santrock, 2002). In ECD teaching, the instructor should encourage children to internalise and self-regulate their talk while at the same time listening to others when they think-aloud. There are a number of advantages that accrue to the learning processes of the child, including that they can listen to others and themselves for interventions that would benefit them. During talking to others, they will expose their upper-limit of their ZPD and then others would be able to visualise where their colleagues need help. This would also allow interventions to come in at the best opportune moments.
2.31.8. Understanding the Child’s Zone of Proximal Disposition

Constructivists, especially Piaget and Vygotsky, do not believe that the formal standardised tests are the best way to assess children’s learning outcomes. However, Vygotsky (1978) argues that, assessment should focus on determining the child’s zone of proximal development (ZPD) which defines the point at which the child’s knowledge reaches its upper limit and then help to extend that ZPD. This is the point at which real learning starts and the teachers would be credited with effective teaching methods. The question that teaching from the ZPD tries to answer is: What does the child know already, that needs to be used as the child’s upper zone of learning comfort? A skilled learning helper or instructor presents the child with the tasks of varying difficulty to determine the best level at which to begin instruction or to help the child make comfortable connections (Santrock, 2002). The ZPD is a measure of learning potential although the child’s intelligent quotient (IQ) is a measure of the learning potential which emphasises that learning is interpersonal.

2.31.9. Place Instruction in a Meaningful Context

In education today, there is an increase in emphasis on moving from abstract presentations of information or learning material to providing students with opportunities to experience learning in meaningful real-world settings. According to literature, this is another constructivist lens of teaching which encourages real-world ways of knowing. That is, instead of teaching children to memorise maths formulas, students work on mathematics problems with real world implications (Santrock, 2002).
2.31.10. Transforming the Classroom to Constructivist Environments with Vygotskian Ideas

Understanding or knowing where the child’s upper limit of the zone of proximal disposition (ZPD) for a particular student is located, is a key element of instruction in the implementation of the ECD programme. In this context, once the ZPD is located, scaffolding becomes a tool that may be used to improve children’s learning power. The instructor asks questions, responds to pupils’ queries and builds on the ideas that ECD children generate. In other words the teacher creates a learning environment in which ECD children generate new knowledge, use the information to help other children in the same age group to learn and to make conclusions. The findings of this study would add to literature on how ECD teachers successfully plan developmentally appropriate content in support of the Zimbabwe ECD policy of developing the whole child.

2.32. The Froebel Theory (1782-1882)

Froebel (1782 – 1882) developed a system for the education of the young children. His theory contributed immensely in areas of instruction, curriculum development, methodology and teacher training. Froebel believes that ECD children:

a. Learn better in learning communities in which parents are welcome to join their children to create natural learning context;

b. Gain knowledge by learning both outdoors as well as indoors. To Froebel, movement, games and the study of natural sciences in the garden is important for creation of new knowledge;
c. Play, sing and recite rhymes in the educational context are valuable in the creation of new knowledge;

d. Love arts and crafts related to oral literature as well as mathematical understanding and these should be encouraged as teaching approaches and

e. Should have freedom of movement, choice of clothes that are easy to move about in; and sensible food that is not too rich.

Symbolic integrationist behaviour has the teaching power to encourage children to be creative through drawing, making collages, modelling with clay, and using special wooden blocks, which he called the “gift appreciated songs, movements and the crafts as child occupations that allow children to use the gifts and occupations as they wished, without having to do tasks of the kind that adults usually asked of them” (Morrison, 2010: 79). From Froebel’s view, constant movement is important for ECD children because it allows what is now called free-flow play classrooms. In modern ECD classrooms, Froebel’s ideas are reflected in today’s approach to the implementations of ECD programmes including, the uses of outdoor and indoor play activities (Bruce and Meggit, 2005).

In other words, effective ECD instruction requires teachers who understand the concept of developing child centred curriculum for the young children based on the children’s experiences as popularised by Rousseau and Comenius (1592 –1670) and further popularised by Morrison (2001). A teacher can teach children the concepts examples of shape, size, colour, counting and measurement. These basic concepts will serve as a foundation when children enter formal school. As one of the founding fathers of Constructivist teaching-learning, Froebel emphasises the expressive arts,
mathematics, literature, the natural sciences, creativity and aesthetic developing objects (Morrison, 2001). Through learning expressive arts for example, ECD children are encouraged to draw, make collage and model with clay. Exposing the ECD children to expressive arts enhances the development of the fine motor skills, socialisation, creative and emotional development in ECD children. From these expressions by Froebel, in this study, I concluded that effective implementation of the ECD programme in Zimbabwe may lead to the development of the whole child. However, this study intended to understand how schools that succeed with implementation of instructional strategies that help to develop the whole child do it.

One question that this study intended to ask was whether the child-centred play-way-method is widely used in ECD centres that succeed with ECD children in Mutare School District. During the preliminary study, to test the trustworthiness of the data generating instruments, the questions that emerged from the reflections of this theory in relation to the purpose of the study were:

a) What factors/challenges inhibited creativity of both the pupils and the teachers?

b) How do teachers implement the strategies to promote the holistic developmental approach with ECD children in order to overcome the challenges?

c) How do the philosophical ideals from Froebel Theory influence instructional processes to achieve effective implementation of the ECD programme in Mutare?

Answers to these questions helped this study to close those gaps in current literature.
2.33. The Steiner Philosophy (1861-1925)

According to Tassoni and Hucker (2005), Steiner’s philosophy is based on the philosophy that childhood is a special but separate period of life in which all learning for the future is developed and engraved in the human brain. In the true spirit of the Steiner’s Theory of human development, imaginative play in children develops and lays foundations for all aspects of the child, including physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and social development (Bruce, et al., 2010). Ideas from Steiner’s Theory may be used to shape and make enormous contributions to ECD instructors so that they are equipped with skills that prepare all students for an even-start. This would be achieved through improved teaching methods, community involvement, action research, prepared environment, curriculum alignment and child diet (Bruce et al., 2010). Therefore, understanding how ECD children learn calls for careful research, planning, content ordering and systematic review of activities while considering child temperament (Morrison, 2001). Consequently, it was the purpose of this research to investigate the challenges ECD teachers experience relating to planning, selection of developmentally appropriate content the methodology they apply to individual pupils. Answers to these questions would definitely add more literature on how instructors overrule challenges experienced during the implementation processes in Zimbabwean context.

2.36. Legal Frameworks Supporting ECD in Zimbabwe

Since ECD has become a legally obligatory education stage that needs attention, the Zimbabwean government has instituted legislative tools that govern implementation of ECD education programmes and administering of ECD centres. The ECD
teachers should be able to understand if the regulations stipulated are sensitive to the ECD learners’ needs, and regulation curriculum implementation including monitoring and evaluation of ECD centres. Some of the legal instruments include:

(a) The 1996 Education Act of Zimbabwe

(b) Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005 and

(c) The Director’s circular number 12 of 2004.

The implications of the Acts are that the nursery schools need to be registered and the curriculum should be developed which aims at developing the diverse skills in children socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. It implied that the nursery school children need not be taught skills related to reading and writing. Hence, the ECD manager and teacher should be familiar with these administrative circulars for the purpose of implementing the ECD curriculum effectively. The circular gives guidelines on the provision of ECD in primary schools which are expected to provide quality programmes aimed at ensuring that children grow up healthy, should be nourished and protected from harm. ECD children should benefit from these programmes provided before formal learning in the primary schools. Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005 stipulates the guidelines on how ECD centres should operate including that:

1) No child may attend an Early Childhood Development centre before he/she attains the age of 3 years.

2) The daily Early Childhood Development centre sessions shall not be less than three hours and not more than five hours in duration.
3) The ECD development centre curriculum shall be appropriate to the physical, mental and social development of children below the school age and shall not include instruction in reading, writing or number work, nor in any other activity which, in the opinion of the secretary, is more properly a part of the curriculum of a school as defined in Section 27 of the Education Act (Chapter 25:04).

For effective implementation of the ECD programme the centres shall provide the following:

a) Total indoor playing space to allow for at least 2.25 square metres for each child and of such playing space at least 1.75 square metres for each child or 42 square metres total clear space in one room;

b) ECD centres with enrolments in excess of 72 children, flush water closets or squat-hole toilets shall be provided in the ration of one for every 12 children and

c) There shall be one teacher to a minimum enrolment of 20 children to each centre.

This related review of information is crucial to the administrators/managers since they need to be equipped with accurate and appropriate guidelines on the requirements needed by the user system for effective implementation of the ECD programme. However, the questions that occupy the researcher’s mind were to establish the extent to which the supervisors/managers attain to ensure that the Education Act of 1996 standards is effectively implemented. In the field of ECD, it is difficult to find empirical works on how successful ECD instructors overcome challenges related to the programme experienced in the Zimbabwe context. From the Zimbabwean perspective, there is not much literature guiding how the challenges experienced by ECD instructors are accomplished. Therefore, when all the research
questions guiding this study are answered, I believe more literature may be added to an area that has not received much empirical attention.

2.35. The Implications of the Nziramasanga Commission to ECD Contexts.

The 1999 Nziramasanga Commission of inquiry into Education and Training has some implications for the implementation of ECD programmes. The Commission recommended that the operations of the ECD centres and programmes should be regulated by the provisions of the Education Act of 1996 that made sure that all ECD centres were attached to the nearest primary school for management and supervision. The ECD centres or classes were expected to operate on a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20 and such classes were supposed to be manned by qualified ECD teachers who would have graduated from primary Teacher Training Colleges of Education. The Commission also recommended that it is important that all teaching/learning is informal at this stage of their development and children should learn through play, hence the importance of play centres. However, my worry as a researcher is how the supervision or management is done to ensure that the Education Act of 1996 standards is met. Has Zimbabwe trained enough ECD teachers who graduate with adequate knowledge and skills? However, there is not much statistical information on the status of the trained ECD teachers who have graduated since its inception in most Colleges of Education in Zimbabwe. It is the purpose of this study to critically analyse the factors/challenges that have to do with lack of personnel at ECD centres and to tap into their experiences and let the caregivers explain how they overcome the challenges for effective implementation.
2. 36. The Current Status of ECD in Zimbabwe

The recent history of ECD in Zimbabwe reveals that in 2004 the provision of two year pre-primary education also referred to as the ECDA and ECDB in Zimbabwe is a policy directed at all primary schools in order to set up at least two ECD classes for children in the 3-5 years age group. The basis for the formation of the 2004 policy is a recommendation of the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and training undertaken in 1999. According to the Nziramasanga Commission (1999), many children in the rural and poor communities have limited access to ECD services. The main purpose of the 2004 policy framework, which emerged from the Nziramasanga Commission (1999), is to make official how the ECD programme operates under the MOPSE. The National Early Childhood Development (NECD) programme is directly addressed in the context of pre-school education in the rural areas where children have limited access to pre-school services. In 2004, a national review of the education system recommended that ECD be integrated into the mainstream of education structures rather than running parallel. This has implications to playing space, sanitation, classrooms and water.

However, currently, most primary schools have no classrooms for the ECD children. In most provinces of Zimbabwe, a critical deficit of trained teachers with ECD qualifications has been discovered. Overall, the ECDA and ECDB classes have been manned by untrained staff (para-professionals) and this practice militates against attainment of quality education. Currently, the country is in the process of training of these para-professionals so that they provide quality care and education to the children. The analysis of health and nutrition by UNICEF (2005) reveals that many ECD centres in primary schools do not give food to children in school. In fact,
children bring their one meal from home and in some cases the children are not able to bring food from home, especially those from economically disadvantaged families. There is a continuous process of community engagement, activism and lobbying so that the community learns the importance of early education, balanced diets and healthy children. The information was crucial to this study because it helps me as a researcher to understand how collaboration between the local community and the schools are assisting each other to implement the ECD programmes. The study would also examine types of factors that inhibit the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum by both the pupils and the user system in Mutare District ECD schools. Therefore, answers to these questions would add more literature to the body of existing knowledge on parent-child-teacher involvement.

2.37. The Structure of Early Childhood Curriculum in Zimbabwe

The Early Childhood Education curriculum includes:

- The content and all the possibilities for learning and development that are experienced by children in early childhood development programmes;
- The way the ECD classroom is set in addition to how and when the classroom activities conducted on a daily basis which influences the learning outcomes of ECD children;
- The role played by the ECD teacher in creating a learning setting, that includes leading and getting involved in what ECD children do—this refers to the important fact that there is need to pay attention to teachers as instructional providers and;
More recently, theorists on culturally responsive teaching (CRT) commonly agree that curriculum refers to how teachers and leaders involve parents in the learning activities of their children (Smith, 1994).

By definition, therefore, curriculum refers to everything that an ECD child experiences in a school context while learning or socialising with other students and teachers within an ECD setting. The curriculum, as defined by Smith (1994), guides ECD instructors during the planning and executing learning activities in a school context. Some questions that teachers need to answer during planning include:

a. How to create an environment that is conducive to effective teaching-learning?

b. What teaching media is needed to model, demonstrate and or illustrate a given concept?

c. How to group my students so that their social interaction during the lesson helps them to effectively share ideas that help them create new knowledge?

d. How to involve parents in the teaching/learning of their children?

In caring classroom environments which is a prerequisite for ECD learning environments, learners should not view any part of the day as different from the other (Noddings, 2002). The time for indoor activities should be designed to be similar to all other times in a similar day including times for the snack or restroom routines (Noddings 2002; Blenkin and Kelly, 1987; Kelly, 1982). According to Bass (1997) cited in Madhlangobe (2009), teachers from diverse ethnic groups, for instance, use teaching styles and ways of understanding that may be different from their own. In the context of this study, ECD teachers need to identify diversity and embrace it in their classes and lessons as a way for accepting, tolerating and
respecting each and every student’s needs (Noddings 2002; Gay, 1996). A clear understanding of a student’s cultural background would help minimise challenges or clashes that may deter the smooth transfer of knowledge during instruction (Madhlangobe, 2009). However, the question that arises at this stage of review of related literature is: How does the structure of the ECD curriculum influence effective implementation?

Bruce and Meggatti (2005) identify three parts of the curriculum that include the child, the content and the context. When implementing the curriculum, the ECD instructor has to ensure balance among those three variables, since failure to strike a balance may lead to production of under-quality curriculum outputs. To ensure that the three aspects of the curriculum are balanced, this may involve making play or active learning central to the child’s learning aimed at developing the whole child. Balancing also involves ensuring that teachers are equipped with skills for creating highly collaborative classroom learning environments that promote active learning through use of using all senses (Beaty, 2005; 1991; Grobler, 1987).

Allowing the children to use all their five senses, promotes children to experiment and explore the world around them through a motivating learning environment. Creating a positive environment means that teachers ensure that the ECD children are exposed to a world within their level of development, hence, the environment will make children learn from known to unknown. Similar to Pestalozzi and Montessori’s philosophy of child development and child centred curriculum design, that the curriculum should be systematically designed to meet the specific needs per child, context and content (Bruce and Meggit, 2005; Jeffries, 2003). This implies
that all framework characteristics of an ECD curriculum should be integrated into
the classroom to strike a balance on child development and the use of the senses.

2.38 The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Learning Context

The first twenty years of a child's life are spent in the creation of a child's first "sense of self"; most children are able to differentiate between themselves and others by their second year (Anning and Cullen, 2004). The age range is the crucial part of the child's ability to determine how they should function in relation to other people (Anning and Cullen, 2004; Tassoni, 2000). The implication that early care must emphasise links to family, home culture, and home language by uniquely caring for each child, which is known as the key worker system (Jeffries, 2003; Tassoni, 2000). Parents can be seen as a child's first teacher and therefore, an integral part of the early learning process.

According to Bruce, Meggit and Greiner (2005), the context of the curriculum is people, culture, diversity, identity/gender, special educational needs, access, materials, physical environment, outdoors, indoors places and events. In these contexts, the ECD teachers have a crucial role to play in order to create access so that children are helped to develop and learn how learning builds on the social relationships, family and cultural experiences (Daly, Byers and Taylor, 2006). Early childhood education focuses on children's learning through play, based on the research and philosophy of Jean Piaget (1978). This belief is centred on the "power of play". Play meets the physical, intellectual, language, emotional and social needs (PILES) of children. Tassoni (2000:57) suggests that “some play opportunities would develop specific individual areas of development, but many would develop
several areas”. The development of skills in different areas of play would be facilitated by the child's interests. Therefore, it is important practitioners promote children’s development through play by using various types of play on a daily basis in order to enhance PILES. Therefore, the context of the curriculum is made up of the teacher and provision of a conducive learning environment to the learner. That is, they give children access to manipulate the curriculum so as to enhance success in the implementation of the ECD curriculum. The teacher is a designer of experiences and activities. Froebel in Tassoni and Hucker, (2005) further says that in order to help development in children, teachers need to provide the right environment and activities. According to Tassoni and Beith (2005) the term environment is an all encompassing one covering not only what we can see, hear, touch and smell, but covers also the atmosphere that prevails within the ECD centre. This means that the ECD teacher as well as environment is safe and pleasant. He/she also needs to make sure that ECD children and their families feel welcome when they come to the ECD centre. Beith and Tassoni (2005) further, go on to say that a teacher should provide children with a positive environment in all aspects of a child’s experiences (Kamerman, 2006; Lorton and Walley, 1979).

2.39. The Early Childhood Development Curriculum Content

The content of the curriculum, according to Bruce and Meggati (2005), is about what the child already knows, what the child will need to know about (child’s interests) and society’s expectations as far as content which enables the child to participate and contribute actively to the community. According to Bruce and Meggit (2005), the teacher during instructional processes, should consider the ECD children’s prior experiences as advocated for by Piaget (1896 – 1980). The content
is drawn from what the children already know and then develop to what they do not know. This was concluded by the constructivist theorists such as (Smith, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget; 1978; Freire, 1995). For example, according to Vygotsky, (1978) the child’s learning processes and content should start from already known experiences and should then be developed towards what is outside the child’s experiences. However, as Piaget, (1978) expresses the content of such a curriculum, the teacher should use developmentally related manipulative activities. The main thrust was to ensure that the ECD child systematically grows new knowledge and make related connections with what they already know.

Developing knowledge from the gradient of known to the unknown has the natural power to motivate ECD children even senior learners for that matter, since the learners would be involved in activities for creating new knowledge. Comenius (1592-1670) in Akinpelu (1981) also says that when teachers prepare content that they will present to their ECD children, they should consider the developmental levels of the child in an attempt to individualise content planning the instructional activities. Also Rousseau (1712-1780) adds that no new learning tasks should be presented to ECD children until the children efficiently demonstrate that they are ready for the matter. Therefore, ECD content learning material needs to be child-centred as advocated for by Constructivist Theorists and researchers (Froebel, (1592-1620); Rousseau (1712-1780) and Montessori (1870-1952).

The content of child-centred material is systematically designed to meet the age related specific needs of each child or group of children as guided by Akinpelu (1981) who states that the curriculum and teaching method should be governed to a large extent, by the nature of the child rather than by some pre-conceived plan or
blue print, such as syllabus and scheme of work. This may expose children to less or more challenging activities or content. To the constructivists, ECD instruction must fit the child’s level of understanding and stages of development (Morrison, 2004; Piaget, 1980; Froebel, 1630). Vygotsky (1978) suggests that in ECD, play must be included effectively when planning content for all ECD children since play helps children make sense of what they learn in joyous contexts. In the same contexts, play also helps to make ECD children eager to learn through involving the children in active learning.

The content or learning experiences must be selected from the cultures of ECD children so that they use learned values and concepts to add more knowledge to the expected behaviour and values approved by their culture and society (Freire, 1995). Every culture dictates what children should learn and how they should behave (Bruce and Meggit, 2005). For example, in Zimbabwe, ECD instructors are expected to provide learning experiences in the children’s native language as a medium of communication during instruction (Ministry of Education Minute Circular No. 12 of 2004). Using instruction in their own native language would make ECD learners understand concepts taught or learnt within the acceptable cultural standards as they move in and out of play areas while interacting with their social environment. Quality ECD curriculum content enhances success in the implementation of the ECD programme.
2. 40. The Power of Developmentally Appropriate Practices in ECD Learning

A top priority for ECD educators is to teach children to read. Research study on the benefits of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) conducted by Shipley, (2014: 25) reviews that:

Using developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) while incorporating foundational concepts into lessons help teachers differentiate instruction, engage students in the learning process and achievement of all children while students are treated as unique individuals, all practices should be appropriate to the child’s age and developmental stage and build on previously taught concepts.

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore teachers’ experiences as they implement DAP in their instructional strategies. It examined factors that inhibited the effective implementation of the curriculum. Pelo (2008) reviews ECD as being very popular and is being highly acknowledged and recognised by educational institutions and important government figures. Review from statistical studies by U.S. Department of Education, Health and Human Services (2011), results indicated that a significant amount of money has been put into early education because of the positive effects the programmes are having on students’ future success in school (Beaty, 2009; Fisher, 2008).

However, this review of related literature leaves the Government of Zimbabwe with no exception as it has to shoulder the same responsibility of investing amounts of money in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The main thrust would be to promote the effective implementation of the curriculum by the user systems. A question that still stands at this juncture is: To what extent do the Ministry of
Primary and Secondary Education and other external stakeholders’ involvement enhance the effective implementation of the ECD programme, in order to support the National policy of developing the whole child? Practices in an early childhood classroom should be appropriate to the child's age and developmental stage. In 2001, approximately 12 million children between birth and age six were receiving educational services by someone other than their parent (McDonald, 2009). This statistical data shows how powerful ECD and the implementation of DAP in the early years are significant. Eggen and Kauchak (2007) push for DAP that incorporates the physical, social, emotional and cultural development of the whole child with diverse populations in relation to literacy instruction. In this study, literacy was the core and foundation level of teaching, it allowed ECD children to build on basic skills which start in early childhood classroom. However, my worries as a researcher at this stage of review of related literature have both positive and negative effects on how effective the ECD centres are in Mutare District, regarding curriculum implementation using the DAP strategy. The uncertainties are as follows:

a) How do ECD teachers plan effective instructions?

b) How do the ECD centres enhanced on developmental stages of children?

c) How do the ECD instructors identify the interests of the children?

d) How do the instructors allow the ECD pupils to engage in the learning and problem solving process? (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 34-37).

Answers to these queries would add more literature to the existing body of knowledge and cover the gap of literature on how successful ECD centres overcome factors/challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the DAP into the classroom instructions. Beaty (2009) concurs with Goldstein (2008) that a teacher
who implements DAP into her/his teaching employs a busy classroom where students are self engaged, interacting physically with objects and people, mentally processing and constructing knowledge that builds on previous learning (Van Tassel-Baska and Stambaugh, 2005). This implies that a DAP classroom has direct-hands-on interaction, full of learning materials, activities and interactions that lead to different kinds of knowledge that ECD children should acquire during the early years.

The gap that exists at this juncture requires the ability of the ECD instructor to select the appropriate teaching strategies, since this theory is quite silent on the pedagogical procedures. Although, the theory provides the researcher with the benefits of DAP as a learning strategy to the learners and gives recommendations for implementation and theories about what a classroom should look like, however, there is a dearth of literature on how teachers can overcome the barriers they face in the classroom when incorporating DAP. Consequently, it was the purpose of this study to close this gap in literature and this was achieved after aggregating the answers from the sub-problem questions and the application of constructivism and the grounded theoretical frameworks guiding this study.

2.41. The Early Childhood Development Play Areas and their Importance

The researcher agrees with the definition of ECD curriculum adopted for this study and found out that play-areas is another aspect of the ECD Curriculum content. In line with the requirements of the ECD teaching contexts, ECD centres should provide for diverse special areas of learning which are referred to as play-areas in ECD language. If developed according to the true spirit of the ECD teaching-
learning philosophies, the play areas should create conceptual interlinks that lead to the total development of the ECD child (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, Stebbing (1999), suggests that the play areas should include the following areas—(block play area, the science and discovery area; the drama play area, the music and free body movement play area; the book play area, the art and craft play area and the outdoor/indoor play areas). By logical deduction, therefore, a play area is a teacher created space within the classroom where the teacher provides a wide range of planned learning activities or experiences that are aimed at helping the ECD child to learn (Tassoni, 2000; Tassoni and Hucker, 2005; Grobler, 1996). Hildebrand (1986) describes play areas as areas of larger playroom which are partially enclosed perhaps by low storage shelves and contain the needed materials and equipment for a certain type of (play) activity. Play areas viewed along this definition imply that ECD instructors should set up the classroom to provide developmentally appropriate learning environments, play materials that connect with the themes of the play activities and labels that motivate ECD children to view each area as a zone for developing certain skills (Bruce, 2010; Faber and Van Staden, 1997).

Each play area, when appropriately developed by the instructor, should have storage space available within the space for the materials and equipment that the ECD children may use only within the area. For example, the puzzles that are best used on the table, the appropriate storage should be near the table for easier accessibility. Current literature in the area of play has bought the fact that children learn more efficiently and gain more knowledge through play-based activities, such as dramatic play, art, and social games. The theory of play stems from children's natural curiosity and imagination, allowing topic lessons to occur. Key issues of play are
having a healthy and safe environment, having plenty of space, correct supervision, quality of care/environment, the attitudes of the practitioner and their cultural awareness as well as a good knowledge of the early years foundation stage (Fisher, 2008; Smith, 2014).

2.41.1 The benefits of a block play area to an ECD child

Block plays are activities where children are involved in manipulative play. During the learning process, children manipulate and handle play materials that encourage them to be creative. Froebel (1782-1882) suggests that children should be allowed to be independent or take collaborative decision makers. Once they move into a block play area so that they may devise their own ways of using space while building the blocks, interlocking toys and puzzles at the same time developing, for example, their physical, mental, social and creative skills (Bruce, 2010; Noddings, 2002; UNESCO, 2010). Bruce (2010) further discovers that physical development is enhanced through finger and hand control and eye-hand coordination (Morrison, 2002; Stebbing 1999).

To the cognitive developmental theorists, like Froebel (1782-1882) and Piaget (1896-1980), they discover that creative skills are developed in symbolic play especially when ECD children pretend to play certain roles using relevant blocks. That exposure shows that ECD teachers who use the approach value symbolic behaviour development and they may even encourage that form of free play within every child to increase their social skills. The big question is: How do ECD teachers in Mutare District appreciate and make children to understand that they can make one thing stand for another?
The science and discovery area helps the children learn about the world around them and discover new things and vocabulary related to scientific world about their environment since children are curious and inquisitive by nature (Dyanda and Musara, 2000; UNICEF, 2000). The implication of this view is that the ECD teacher should introduce carefully planned environments to develop child interaction in a holistic way. Naturalists Theorists and Philosophers, like Rousseau (1712-1778) and Comenius (1592-1670), observe that ECD teachers should involve children in play activities that provide room for the use of all senses hence, realising the national policy of developing the whole child.

2.41.2 The Significance of Drama Play Areas at ECD centre

The drama play area is where children are involved in symbolic behaviour. The pupils play with toys representing things from a variety of places such as the home, the clinic, the shops (Morrison, 2004; Stebbing, 1999). In the ECD drama play areas, teachers should create a variety of play materials that include dress up clothes, small chairs and tables for the home area, imitations of different medicines for the clinic. These will help to develop responsible behaviours and real life organisational skills. From cognitivists’ perspective, children who are exposed to and involved in pretend or imaginative play, gain skills of relating well to their context and the environment (Bruce, 2010; Clark, 2010). When exposed to the drama play areas, ECD children may role play such behaviours as shop-keeping, teaching, parenting or nursing and even role-plays responses to these same roles all of which will help to develop their social, emotional, language and creative skills (Piaget, 1978). The ability to create such a learning environment requires ECD teachers who are fully committed to creating teaching media like toys and other materials that support, active learning,
encourage and extend imaginative roles in life of the child (Bruce, 2010; Smith, 1994). The literature only pointed at the ideal Cognitive and Constructivist ECD teacher but the literature is soundless on how effective teachers implement the ECD curriculum. The study set out to identify and describe behaviours of effective ECD teachers.

2.41.3 The importance of the Art and Craft Play Area to an ECD child

According to Stebbing (1999) the art and craft play areas are a creative approach by teachers to ensure the area where children manipulate materials from the environment. The teachers should provide substances to pupils to mould draw or paint articles and/or re-arrange things of their own choice. Stebbing (1999), like Froebel (1752-1882), encourages the art and craft play area in ECD curriculum. The teacher discovered that art and craft help to improve the students’ manipulative skills, handling tools and materials in preparation for the formal writing. There are a variety of materials that ECD children can play with such as straws, powder paints, crayons, paper-mache dough and brushes. A play area that is created using principles guided by the constructivist learning theories ensures that the process that matters does involve not finished products, but helps to illustrate how children think and how they relate to things and other people around them (Vygotsky, 1978). The ECD teachers and instructional curriculum designers should embrace the philosophy and that emphasis should not be placed on rote learning but on learning by doing or experiential learning as advocated by Comenius (Bruce and Meggit, 2005; Shapiro and Nager, 1999; Akinpelu, 1981). Therefore, in this area, ECD students when exposed to an appropriate environment will continue to discover themselves in relation to others while at the same time developing their creativity, imagination and
eye-hand coordination. How do successful teachers in Mutare use similar spaces for teaching-learning purposes?

### 2.41.4 The benefits of the Book Play Area in ECD centres

The book play area is another powerful ECD skills development area which exposes ECD children to pictures, cards, newspapers, magazines and puzzles. The ECD teacher as a caregiver should know that if young children are exposed to books, they learn a language related to identifying written letters and even learn how to handle books properly and the sequence of left to right orientation is instilled in pupils. The cognitivists like (Comenius (1592-1670) ; Froebel’s (1782-1882); Piaget’s(1978) and Montessori’s (1870-1952) research findings show that when children are exposed to a systematic book play, they become prepared for reading, writing, mathematics and also help to promote listening skills and self discipline ( Daly, Byers & Taylor, 2006; Tassoni & Hucker, 2005). However, many parents want their children to be taught to read and write numbers and alphabet letters at ECD level of the age 3-6 years old, although they may not be aware that there is need to carry out many activities before children are ready to read and write to help prepare them to lay a foundation for formal learning.

### 2.41.5 The Significance of Music and Movement Play Areas

The music and movement play areas as part of the curriculum implementation tool is a deliberately created cognitive area where children enjoy singing, dance and movement. In this area pupils play with playing materials such as small drums, jingles, radio and triangles. For example, research studies by Froebel (1782-1882)
reflect that, children develop their vocabulary, listening skills, sense of rhythm, memory, imaginative and gross motor skills (Clark, 2010; Tassoni & Hucker, 2005; Seefeldt & Barbour, 1986).

### 2.41.6 The Outdoor and Indoor Area and its Influence to the ECD Curriculum

The outdoor play area is where children can be involved in free play or structured play on which they are encouraged to explore the use of their large and small muscles (Minet, 2005; Tassoni, 2010; Stebbing, 1999). Children would play on play ground surfaces, grass, an earth patch to dig in, a large drained sand pit, planted area with trees and swings, climbing frames, slides, see-saws and many others (Bruce and Meggit 2010; Click, 2000). The outdoor play is crucial to the development of children’s large, small muscles and gross motor skills. It is through outdoor activities that children are encouraged to play together and learn to share space and materials.

For the indoor space and environment, the ECD teacher needs to arrange furniture and play materials according to developmental ages of the children. For example, toddlers are highly mobile and they need larger spaces to allow them to play freely without knocking against tables, chairs, cupboards and other equipment. The role of the ECD teacher includes making decisions related to child security and is expected to choose non-toxic paint materials, colourful toys, and affordable toys. The ECD teacher should avoid too small materials for infants since they may endanger lives and health of small children through accidental swallowing (UNESCO, 2010; Faber and Van Leer, 1997). For the safety and control of children, it is also the responsibility of the ECD teacher to attend to issues like room temperature and
lighting. Effective teachers may work with parents to provide carpets or rugs so that children may not sit on cold floors.

2.41.7 The Sand and Water Play Area In Fostering Learning

The sand and water area is completely a hands-on experience that is open ended, therefore, should be a centre that is open like a block area or art area. The sand and water play areas are important in fostering learning in ECD children because there is room to learn about the world around them through their five senses. Research studies revealed that sand and water are effective medium for encouraging this kind of learning (Bruce and Meggit 2010; Click, 2000). A study conducted on the benefits of sand and water, by an early childhood specialist, Suzanne Gainsley, says that sensory play with sand and water provides food for the brain (Clark, 2010). This implies that the sand and water tables offer multiple possibilities for stimulating a pre-schooler’s social, emotional, physical and early academic skills.

Current literature by Bruce and Meggit 2010, p. 20), on the benefits of play areas review that:

Children will discover the concept of measurement and volume as they see that different sized cups hold different amounts of sand or water. Filling and emptying cups also introduce concepts related to more or less, empty or full, heavy and light as well as before and after. Working together promotes the use of spontaneous speech encourages pre-schoolers to ask questions, make requests, offer help or suggestions and discuss what each child notices as they work toward accomplishing a common goal.

From the above citation, it reviews that ECD teachers should recognise that even when pre-schoolers are doing something simply because it is fun; they are still
learning important concepts such as sharing or cause and effect. Furthermore, sand and water play require pre-schoolers to use multiple senses at once. However, the review of this related literature has only directed at the model behaviourist and constructivist ECD teacher, but there are missing elements in literature on how effective teachers implement the curriculum. Therefore, the purpose of this study was set out to identify and describe behaviours of effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. In addition, answers to the following questions during direct observations would add more literature to the body of existing knowledge.

1) How do the ECD play areas promote child development in terms of physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language, and creative skills?
2) What challenges do ECD care-givers face that militate against effective promotion of learning through specific play areas?
3) What strategies do ECD centres that succeed in providing instruction override challenges related to lack of inadequate play areas?
4) How big is the gap between/ among ECD care centres in rural sector, urban sector and private sector, regarding quality issues?

2.42. Benefits of planning, maintaining and organising the learning environments

It is essential to plan for play opportunities and learning experiences that help children to explore on, try and experience real-life within the play areas in the classrooms. Planning ensures that children will benefit from such learning experiences. Tassoni and Hucker (2005) urge that teachers should expose ECD children to both structured/ guided play activities and unstructured /free play
activities that should be planned by the teacher. It is during structured activities when the work is planned by teachers with a learning outcome and unstructured activities are ones where children use and choose their own ideas and themes (Atherton, 2011; Tassoni and Beith, 2005). Planned activities bring advantages both to the teachers and their ECD children including that they help focus teachers’ attention on how children attend to and execute specific concepts, skills or knowledge (Beaty, 2009; Minet, 2000). A syllabus is a descriptive document which outlines or summarises topics to be covered, how they will be covered and with which observable learning outcomes in the ECD curriculum. The syllabus ensures course quality since it is expected to focus on and is used to ensure consistency between schools and all the ECD teachers. The syllabus provides a road-map of course organisation and direction (Tassoni & Hucker, 2005; Click, 2000). Therefore, the schemes of work answer the teacher’s question: What is the going to do to achieve the set objectives in the syllabus? Through the schemes of work, the ECD teachers should be able to assess whether:

1) Activities planned are developmentally appropriate for each pupil;
2) Methods and play opportunities promote the national policy of developing the whole child and
3) Teachers create contexts in which they are able to measure the extent to which goals related to skills development are achieved.

However, when teachers plan for ECD children’s play opportunities and activities, they have to consider the following aspects:

a) Define the purpose of the play area and activities to be involved during play;
b) Observe the characteristics and behaviours of ECD children explore in the specific play areas.

c) Characterise the expected skills to be developed as well as the expected learning outcomes;

d) Believe that a selection of appropriate activities and materials is also a major determinant of achievement of expected learning standards; and

e) Every learning activity and outcome should be evaluated (Bruce and Meggit, 2005; Cooper and Warden, 1993).

Although, the above aspects are very instrumental to effective implementation of the ECD curriculum, my question still remains, whether ECD teachers are competent enough to cover the gap created between the policy making and programme implementation. As a result, answers generated from the participants during interviews, questionnaires and lesson observations would add more literature on challenges experienced and describe how some ECD care-givers overcome the challenges related to the programme implementation. Supporting this idea, Tassoni and Hucker (2005) reflect that the ECD curriculum should cater for children across a wide range of developmental levels, that is children who have advanced literacy and language skills on the other hand and these children with disabilities such as auditory impairment, speech and language disorder and mild mental handicap (UNICEF, 2011; Tassoni and Hucker, 2005; Lefrancois, 1988). Such children may require additional forms of support in order to ensure the individualised interventions that are needed for these groups of children. Therefore, the gap that this study intended to fill was. How can an integrated approach to meet the developmental needs of both normal and children with mild forms of disabilities be effectively implemented? The
related literature helped to unravel challenges caused by lack of user friendly infrastructure for the benefit of all ECD pupils. The ECD teachers are, therefore, advised to focus on for example, Gardener Theory of Intelligence cited in Cooper and Warden (1993: 241) which stresses that:

When dealing with matters of how young children learn, for example, children with musical intelligence should be catered for by providing the music and movement play area and those with mathematical intelligence are exposed to mathematics and science play area.

It was the purpose of this study to ensure that both formative and summative evaluation should be done by ECD instructors and the former should embrace all the aspects for effective implementation awhile the latter is concerned with whether the play areas and activities are serving intended purposes or not.

Cooper and Warden (1993, p. 242) state:

No matter what ECD centre ideas has been implemented, the teacher should continually evaluate concerns related to the use of the centres in the classroom and these are the difficulties faced, level of the centre, the age of students using the centre, the needs of the pupils and the interests of the students have to be evaluated.

Consequently, for successful implementation of the ECD programme teachers should plan and organise the learning environment. An ECD teacher should create a learning environment that enables the pupil to learn independently and the teacher becomes the facilitator (Vargas- Brown, 2005; Gibson, 1976; Seefeldt and Bourbour, 1986). As a facilitator, an ECD teacher should be able to set up the play areas that generate learning contexts that facilitate and encourage individual participation. The main
thrust is to promote a holistic approach that is in line with the ECD policy of curriculum development and implementation. The concept of development would be viewed through the way teachers approach holistic development of physical, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual of the ECD child. Morrison (2001) believes that children are capable of learning by themselves, especially when they are exposed to a conducive and strategically planned and prepared learning environment. This was in line with Rousseau’s (1712-1778) ideas that suggest that children should be exposed to conducive but enjoyable learning environments that motivate them to learn through experience (Feldman, 1996; Click, 2000). Do ECD schools in Zimbabwe also promote the freedom of choice of play in a prepared environment? The purpose of this study was to critically analyse factors that militate against the creation of an environment that effectively promotes the implementation of the ECD curriculum.

The arrangement and distribution of play areas in the classroom should be considered according to their link with one another (Tassoni and Hucker, 2005; Lorton and Walley, 1979; Stebbing, 1999). Tassoni and Hucker (2005) further suggest that the ECD centres such as dramatic play area and block play area, science and discovery areas should be built close to each other. This should be as suggested because pupils need to manipulate and handle play materials creatively, therefore, which meant that there was need for more space. For example, they would need much space around themselves while building the blocks, interlocking toys and puzzles at the same time. Messy activities such as art, craft and water play should be
separated from areas that need water and dirt protection, such as the book play area and music and movement (Cooper and Warden, 1993; Faber, 1998).

### 2.43. Developmental Checklists and Rating Scales to evaluate ECD pupils’ performance

A developmental checklist is a list of behaviours identifying what children may have achieved during teaching-learning situations (Morrison, 2001). The record enables the teacher to record and monitor developmental progress of an individual child or several children on a regular basis over a period of time. The teacher is able to study one area of development and assess children’s behaviour. However, the ECD teacher should make sure that the checklist includes the behaviours that are important in developing the whole child. The rating scale is a type of record that contains a list of behaviours that enable ECD teachers to record behaviours in real time (Morrison, 2001). A teacher should therefore, acquire skills to select a rating scale type that contains key descriptors and rating scale that is appropriate for what is being measured.

The developmental checklist is usually in the form of a questionnaire where the teacher only indicates skills and concepts mastered such as the physical gross motor skills such as cleaning up after eating meals picking toys without breaking them, sitting properly in a chair and giving specific achievement comments (Tassoni and Beith, 2005; Seefeldt and Bourbour, 1986). On the other hand, the rating scale may be presented in the form of numerical or ordered traits, for example, how often does the child cry (frequently/ sometimes)? Although, the developmental checklist record has advantages to support the development of the whole child, it has its limitations
which include giving no detail or supporting evidence. It narrows in focus, time consuming to create and makes ECD teachers feel that they have more information than they really do (Bruce, et al., 2010). However, the development checklist and rating scale are critical information providers since they support a holistic approach to understanding success in the implementation of the ECD curriculum.

The records discussed are critical in the development of the ECD curriculum, since they provide a history on pupils’ performance and enable the instructors to keep track of the child’s ability to acquire diverse skills. Tassoni and Beith (2005) advance several reasons why it is crucial for ECD instructors to keep records and carry out assessment on children. Some of the reasons why we observe and assess children and babies include reporting to parents and other professionals, resolving particular problems and seeing children as specials.

Records are a profile which inform the child’s individual educational plan and the above summarised reasons entail that the ECD teacher should have strong knowledge and content of the issues they are looking for in relation to the child’s development. However, the question that still stands is: Do ECD teachers have adequate knowledge and skills to teach ECD children so that they would start on an even platform? It is the purpose of this study to establish the capabilities of the caregivers. For example, Tassoni and Beith (2005) call for ECD teachers to be very observant and to objectively interpret what they observe in their ECD groups. This meant that poor interpretation may mean important issues being missed out. The tools discussed reflect that the starting point of planning is to consider the needs of children and the developmental stages of children. For example, similar to decades of literature show that, researchers have observed that children should be grouped
according to their developmental stages and this will also help the teacher to use developmentally appropriate instruction and content (Vygotsky, 1978; Morrison, 2001).

The ECD instructors should also observe and assess whether activities routines or strategies used by children have an impact in developing the whole child. For example, if the teacher intends to instil certain moral skills like sharing, the teacher will need to plan activities that ECD children need to work co-operatively with other children. Keeping records and carrying out assessment on children enables parents and other professionals become informed of their children progress and or problems encountered during instructional processes. Bruce et al., (2010) in their study only state the limitations of using the developmental and checklist records effectively, yet they are silent on the strategies that may be used by the ECD teachers to find solutions to the limitations. It was the purpose of this study to find out how ECD teachers override those factors that inhibit effective implementation of the programme, hence, there an opportunity to add literature to cover the gap.

2.44. The Impact of Stakeholders’ Involvement in ECD Curriculum Implementation

Research on stakeholder involvement in ECD curriculum implementation is not an area that has received much empirical attention on curriculum studies. As Lewis (2005:21) states, “despite all the policy frameworks that include opinion and organised interests as integral parts of the policy processes, there are few empirical studies including these determinants in their analysis”.
This is even more so in the policy where research on stakeholder involvement in policy implementation is very rare. In the field of ECD, it is difficult to find empirical studies on ECD curriculum implementation or studies that focus on stakeholder involvement from a Zimbabwe context. Successful implementation of any educational programme depends to a great extent on support by stakeholders. Posner (2002) observes that implementation implies the process of translating intentions into reality; therefore, a number of stakeholders such as parents, educational institutions and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) should collaborate with the government to service its people. The Zimbabwean government plays a crucial role to ensure success of the implementation of the ECD curriculum (UNICEF, 2000, 2005, 2009). There is very little evidence of literature show that the Government has initiated the implementation of the ECD curriculum directly, by providing Statutory Instruments that regulates services for the support of the ECD programmes in both rural and urban environment (Statutory Instruments 12 of 2005). However, the MOPSE in collaboration with Teachers’ Training Colleges are training para-professionals and in-servicing ECD teachers in their districts.

After the Zimbabwe government gained its independence in 1980, education was made a basic right for every child and it formulated policies that guided the registration procedures, how the ECD was going to be implemented and evaluated. In 2004, Secretary’s Circular Number 14 of 2004 requires the ECD classes to be attached to primary schools and the Director’s Circular Number 12 of 2005 explains the provision of ECD in primary schools. Although, the Zimbabwe Government was extensively involved from the initial stages in the development of ECD centres, it is silent on how clearly the ECD classes would be successfully moved from one stage
to the other. Currently, there are very limited studies carried to evaluate the extent to which the Zimbabwe Government has rendered support services towards the development of the ECD centres in either private, rural or urban areas. This literature has only pointed out on provision of guiding policies but there is a dearth of literature on how the curriculum would be implemented effectively.

Again, there is a gap in literature since there were no studies carried out from the Zimbabwean context to investigate how ECD centres who successfully overcome challenges should perform. The NGOs are an instrumental body that provide great assistance if the ECD centres are to be successfully managed. This board offers assistance in terms of curriculum implementation, effectiveness and to promote the children’s aspects of development and growth as a whole (UNICEF, 2000). In Zimbabwe, literature has indicated that some of the ECD centres have received assistance from the following organisations: UNICEF, UNESCO, Save the Children, KAPNEIK Trust, World Food Programmes and Christian Care (UNICEF, 2000). Bruce et al., (2010) note that most ECD centres receive support from UNICEF, in terms of health care and education and they also provide food. In Zimbabwe, UNICEF also helps in training Para-Professionals who usually teach the ECD pupils. Studies have shown that there is great assistance from different stakeholders, however, there are very few studies carried out by the NGOs to demonstrate how effective the curriculum should be implemented and how those teachers who succeeded in overcoming the challenges accomplished their success.

The educational institutions are another board that should intervene in the successful teaching of ECD curriculum in order to boost their implementation processes and such institutions are Universities, Colleges of Education, Primary and Secondary
Schools. My worry as a researcher was: To investigate whether the teachers graduate with relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes so that they will also impart skills during the implementation of the curriculum? However, there is not much literature and published research studies carried out in Zimbabwe of challenges experienced by Colleges of Education and Universities in relation to the training of the ECD programme. In this study, the questions that still needed to be addressed were:

(a) What changes have colleges of education brought to ensure that the student teachers graduate with knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the implementation of the ECD programme?

(b) How do educational institutions overcome factors/challenges that have to do with lack of teaching resources materials, lack of infrastructure?

(c) Are the primary school heads and TICs professionally equipped to provide and supervise the ECD programme implementation?

(d) How do the Heads and TICs override challenges that their schools experience in relation to sanitation, space and shortage of learning materials?

2.45. Gaps Found in the Review of Related Literature

Throughout the related literature I reviewed, there were gaps that relate to the need for answers to the research questions identified for this study. The purpose of this study was to close or attempt to fill those gaps. Although, reviewed literature attempted to answer some of the research questions, gaps that exist include that there was a gap between the national policy formulation and the user system. The gap was too wide due to flawed assumptions regarding the implementation of the ECD curriculum.
In the light of globalisation, it poses a risk to communities that rush to adopt curricula from other countries, without adapting them to suit their local cultures and traditions. Upon evaluation of the ECD curriculum, Zimbabwe is not an exception in ignoring its own culture, therefore, this study would make efforts to promote and draw attention to local cultures by establishing how successful ECD centres overcome specific inhibiting factors. There is shortage of literature to address ECD effective evaluation strategies that promote development of education from the Zimbabwe context. Again, there is very little empirical research carried in Zimbabwe or any documented literature, since the inception of the 2004 policy, which directed the attachment of two ECD classes to a primary school. From the Zimbabwean context, literature is soundless on empirical research carried to evaluate the competency of graduated ECD teachers from various Teachers’ Training Colleges. The main thrust of this study was to cover the gap in literature. There is very little literature to show the types of challenges experienced by private ECD centres in comparison to public urban and rural centres from a Zimbabwe context. This study provides comparative comprehensive information on types of challenges experienced by these sectors and how they overcome specific challenges.

Reviewed related literature on curriculum implementation provides no clear description of how leaders/supervisors help their schools to overcome specific inhibiting factors. In addition to this shortage in literature, there is also a dearth of information on ECD policy implementation and supervision strategies. By critically analysing the factors, this study would cover the gap in literature in providing effective strategies in supervision. The models of curriculum implementation reviewed in this Chapter seem focussed on goal achievement, but they do not say
how curriculum implementation should respond to the current demographic changes in today’s educational institutions.

2.46. Chapter Summary

Chapter II provided critical information offered by literature to answer the research questions identified for this study. The researcher started by analysing the historical perspectives of ECD in Zimbabwe. Attention was given to pre-independence history of ECD in Zimbabwe. The Chapter discussed the quality issues on education, qualification and professional development of ECD teachers. There was review of literature on how best teachers can achieve the best practice on integrated curriculum. The was review of what quality indicators ECD teachers have to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum. The Chapter reviewed literature on why qualification, education and professional development matter in teaching ECD pupils? This Chapter reviewed related literature on global challenges inhibiting effective implementation of the ECD programmes and how teachers overcome challenges from global perspectives. This Chapter also covered literature on how instrumental institutional documents were and the importance of record management and the curriculum. Modern theories of Early Childhood Education Development and these were the philosophy of John Dewey, the Piagetian Instructional theory, Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Cognitive Development theory. Finally, the Chapter established gaps related to this study’s failure to answer aspects of the research questions. The following Chapter 3 addresses the research methodology, research design, techniques applied in data generation and analysis for this thesis.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 identified the work of other researchers, psychologists in child development, cognitive theorists and other authorities concerning the sub-research questions, in an effort to address the broad research question of this study and in the process identified the gaps in literature as they relate to the research questions stated earlier in Chapter I: 10. In Chapter 3, I describe the research methodology used to generate data that I used to critically analyse factors that inhibit the effective implementation of the ECD programme and also describe how successful ECD centres overcome challenges related to curriculum implementation and other issues raised in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Therefore, Chapter 3 presents the philosophical and theoretical frameworks underpinning the methods used to carry out this study and they included the Interpretive/Grounded research tradition.

When research is guided by the Interpretivists/Grounded theories, this implies a subjective epistemology that aligns itself with the belief that reality is socially constructed (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Patton, 2002; Punch, 2009). This study adopted the Interpretivists research philosophy and qualitative research paradigm to generate data and its justifications were explained in this section. Other sections of Chapter 3 were organised as follows: the methods used to conduct the study including selection of participants from each participating school and purposive technique for selection of participants. The Chapter highlighted the suitability of the
data generation instruments and these were interviews, questionnaire, classroom lesson observations, and review of institutional artefacts and document analysis. In this chapter the researcher further described how data were presented, analysed, the techniques and strategies applied in the interpretation procedures. Finally, a chapter summary wrapped up this section of the thesis.

3.2. Research Philosophy Guiding the Research

The study was guided by the interpretivist philosophy and the grounded theory in generating data from the selected sample.

3.2.1 Interpretivism Philosophy

The interpretivist approach to research accepts that reality is relative and has multiple facets all depending on the context of the individual attaching meaning to that truth (Creswell, 2009; 1998; Schwandt, 1998). In qualitative research, Interpretivism as a research philosophy informs the type of data collection strategies and influences how data analysis approaches should be planned to meet the standards of qualitative research. Interpretivism as a research philosophy defines the approaches that are used to embrace the way people involved in a phenomenon under research give meaning to the data that they provide during data collection and interpretation processes (Patton, 2002). According to the interpretivist approach, there is always more than one reality to a given phenomenon and that there is also more than a single structured way of accessing such reality (Punch, 2009; Seale, 2002; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this study, Interpretivism, as a research philosophy, seamlessly fits into the type of data generated. The data generation
techniques that guided my data collection and interpretation to understand the reality of how participants achieve success in curriculum implementation, was achieved during the data interpretation stage (Smith, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that data that carries multiple meanings require multiple interpretations—through triangulation of data interpretation approaches, data sources. At times understanding of data depends on other variables like culture and the environment creating meaning. When I entered the field to generate data, I was guided by the foundational questions that grounded theorists use to guide their data generation and analysis approaches, including:

a) How have the participants in this ECD institutional setting constructed their reality?

b) What are the participants in these ECD institutions reported perceptions, “of truths”, expectations, beliefs, and world view?

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

The knowledge generated through interpretivist and triangulated approaches and context of these questions is perceived through socially constructed and subjective assumptions. This was achieved because those interpretations depended on the experiences of those who had lived close to the phenomenon under study (Neale, Thapa and Boyce, 2006; Hudson and Ozonne, 1988). However, I also weaved in my own experiences as a researcher and tutor for ECD teachers into the way I also viewed the data. Some of the data interpretation questions that I persistently asked in order to stay grounded in the participants’ meanings and interpretations of the phenomenon under study were:
1. Do you think I would be interpreting him correctly when I suggest that by acting this way; he would be trying to achieve this objective in the ECD curriculum with your students?

2. From your position as an ECD instructor, I observed you doing this, may you explain to me how that helped you to effectively implement and achieve the ECD educational goals?

3. I heard you saying this, and I quoted you, how did that help your students, or teachers to be effective in the way they each operate from their diverse positions?

The goal of approaching data analysis from the interpretivists’ philosophical perspective in this study was to understand and interpret human behaviour from multiple sources in order to stay grounded in the diversity of interpretation of a phenomenon from the participants’ perspective (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). During the data generation stage, the participants and I interdependently and mutually interacted with each other to create and construct an account of perceived reality. Gulati (2011) states that Interpretivism as a research philosophy empowers researchers to understanding motives, meaning, reasons and other subjective experiences that add value to the quality of data generated to respond to the research questions and outcomes.

3.2.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory as a research paradigm is closely tied to Interpretivism and is a systematic qualitative paradigm for doing research and involves the discovery of theory grounded in the lived experiences of the participants (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 2000). Grounded refers to theory generated on the basis of data; and is grounded in
the data. According to research literature, the question that researchers guided by the interpretivists/grounded theory attempted to answer was: “What theories emerge from systematic analysis and are grounded in the fieldwork so as to explain what has been described and was observed?”, (Madhlangobe, 2009:6). Interpretivism/Grounded theory as a research strategy was appropriate to this study because it gave voice to the participants in the research, representing them as accurately as possible through direct citations from the participants (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Rudestam and Newton (2007: 43) suggest that, “the theory argues that every person is a social construction, that people become persons through their interactions with society, using vehicles of language, communication and community”. Therefore, by embracing the interpretivists’ philosophy to research, I was guided in the generation of information from participants because I created focus group interviews. The groups were created to provide them with the opportunity to interact on topics related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum in the schools. From those interactions, it helped me to understand how they succeeded as ECD teachers to override factors that inhibited effective implementation of the programme.

3.3 Type of Study

There are three different research paradigms that researchers can apply and these are qualitative paradigm, quantitative paradigm and the pragmatist method. In this current study, I have adopted a qualitative paradigm that was used to critically analyse factors that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District.
3.3.1. Qualitative Paradigm

Research design is an aggregate definition of the plan and procedures for conducting a research that spans the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis and also involves the intersection of philosophical assumptions, strategies of inquiry and specific methods (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). As Punch (2009, p. 102) points out, “a research design is data collection and analysis plan that is used to influence gathering of information in a logical and coherent manner to address the problem under research.”

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 33),

During studies, researchers should make the point... to build a dense, well developed, integrated and comprehensive theory. A researcher should make use of any and every method at his or her disposal, keeping in mind that a true interplay of methods is necessary [in this case triangulation]. Most important, because our approach to theory building is one of emergence, we believe that unless the researcher is building on or continuing with his or her own previous studies, the researcher will not be able to enter into a project with a set of pre-established concepts or with a well structured design.

The implications of this reflection for this study, is that when generating data for this study, I needed to use a qualitative approach to influence the selection of the population, data collection approaches, instruments and analysis strategies. The qualitative study approach included interviewing people, analysing their responses, observing them and listening to their social interaction in order to obtain a thick description of the phenomenon under study (Punch, 2009; Patton, 2002). However, some questions that this study had to answer at this stage included the following:
a) How many times I was going to interview, observe and distribute questionnaires to participants?

b) Were there any other participants who had deeper insights into the phenomenon besides those identified at proposal writing stage?

c) How was I going to gain entry into the institutions where those individuals worked?

The strength of my relationships in the sector made it a viable option for data generation purposes through interviews. For example, in this study, similar to observations from decades of research literature, the historical bases at which the ECD was developed made it interesting because of the great interest the programme created within the ECD sector (Punch, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Schwartman, 1993; Prasad, 1997). The ECD process therefore, provided several variables of interest, which were related to either successful or failing curriculum implementation, making it attractive for this qualitative inquiry as suggested by expert researchers (Flick, 2009; Lincoln and Guba, 1994; Wolcott, 1990). The strength of studying ECD curriculum implementation processes is that it contributes to a deeper understanding of specific but often ignored aspects of ECD programme. In addition, understanding the way successful implementation of the ECD curriculum helps ensure higher stakeholder involvement in ECD issues. The use of a qualitative study to describe a given phenomenon as research methodology provided an in-depth representation of the relevant inputs from all the relevant role players and agencies in the ECD curriculum implementation.

Qualitative approaches to research focus on generating theory from social context. Responses to the persistent follow-up questions that I asked helped me to clarify what I had observed and listened to. I made sure that I kept myself grounded in the
realities of the participants’ lived experiences with the phenomenon in this case how teachers who succeeded in the implementation of the ECD curriculum accomplished it (Creswell, 2013; Madhlangobe, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2006). In addition, using a qualitative approach guided by the interpretivists/grounded philosophies to data generation and analysis for this study allowed for a thick description of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2006). My decision about data that was to be generated and methods for generating those data was guided by Wilson’s (1977) list of five relevant types of data employed to obtain meaningful structure, including:

a. The form and content of verbal interaction between participants;
b. The form and content of their verbal interaction with the researcher;
c. Non-verbal behaviours;
d. Patterns of actions and non-actions, and
e. Traces, archival records, artefacts and documents (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

To generate facts, opinions and insights, I used semi-structured interviews using a questionnaire that enabled me to explore many topics related to programme implementation from participants in diverse institutional settings (Creswell, 2007; Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

Although a grounded theory researcher develops a theory from examining many individuals who share in the same process, action, or interaction, the study participants were not likely to be located in the same place or interacting on so frequent, a basis that they develop shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and language (Creswell, 2007, p. 68).

For the current study, I was interested in generating data related to participants’ shared patterns on events occurring in their natural ECD settings. Therefore, my
approach involved triangulation of data collection methods including interviews, institutional document review, archival records and direct participant observation (Stake, 2006). For a qualitative study like the current one, any concept that was identified had to earn its way into the analysis, categories and themes that eventually emerged from the generated data (Madhlangobe, 2009). Surprisingly, little is known about ECD curriculum implementation in the educational institutions; therefore, it was appropriate for me to carry out this study in Mutare District ECD schools where I generated data from teachers, parents, lecturers, DEO-ECD, the SDC members and the school heads from selected sample.

3.3.2 A Multiple-Case Study Methodology

In this study I used a multiple-case study approach that falls under the interpretive qualitative research paradigm. A case study approach allowed me as the researcher to explore in-depth, a programme, events, activities, processes, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009). The main aim of this multiple case study was to provide a thorough explanation on an individual object that represented a particular domain curriculum implementation in education. Rudestam and Newton (2002) in Madhlangobe (2009), define a case study as a discovery-oriented approach to research, which offers a set of procedures for collecting data and building theory. For this study, I reviewed institutional artefacts related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum and pedagogical practices used to achieve the institutional goals what works; how do we know it works; and with what results (Madhlangobe and Gordon, 2012).
Baxter and Jack (2008) similarly state that the aim of a case study is to study the complexity of individual components within their own environment. Embracing this approach made this research approach appropriate for studying ECD educational organisations in the public, private and rural ECD sectors. This is because the approach helped to extract cultural knowledge, identify actions and instruments those participants utilised in their everyday life to achieve specific objectives and to evaluate that success (Babbie, 2003; Hesse-Bieber, 2006). Therefore, for this study, rather than completely being shaped before the study the design, like the concepts that I found out from the study was allowed to emerge during the research process particularly during the data analysis (Punch, 2009; Chisaka, 2005; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

In this study, institutionalized ECD is a contemporary phenomenon where pedagogy is not clearly and effectively defined by the user system in Zimbabwe. Therefore, there are greater chances that the process always accounted for a deficit in terms of implementation. As Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) say, there is always need to use an effective model that evaluates education, and such a model helps to define success or failure of a system. For this study, I adapted the model that Madhlangobe and Gordon, (2012) used to understand and describe the implementation of a leadership approach that succeeded within a multicultural educational context: (a) what works in ECD teaching? (b) With what instruments? (c) How do we know it works? (d) With what results? From that understanding, I embraced the use of a case study to ensure that I was able to pick up deeper insights into everyday actions and interactions about a social phenomenon or how the social structures operated (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Gulati, 2011).
3.4 Strategies Used to Select Participants

In this section of strategies used to select participants, I first selected the population of participating schools. I later explained the procedures used for selection of the study sample and I described how I selected participants from each institution. However, the section explained how I gained entry into the field.

3.4.1 Population of participating schools

MacMillan and Schumacher (1993, p. 164) define a population as the “overall target group from which a study group of elements or cases whether individuals, objects or events that conform a specific criteria and to which we intent to generalize the results of the research will be selected”. Although the results of this study were and are not generalised beyond this population (N57) because of the sample size and the type of study employed, this researcher used insights of the studied phenomenon by exploring how successful other ECD instructors override factors that inhibit effective programme implementation.

The ECD centres that participated as part of the population of schools included all ECD centres in Mutare Urban, both public and private added up to 177. Of these, there were 127 public primary ECD classes, in Mutare Urban District. There was an additional 50 private ECD centres also registered with the Municipality of Mutare Office and I included them in the overall population of participating ECD centres in Mutare Urban. Taking advice from Newton (2000), I used a purposeful selection approach to sample ten (10) schools identified from the same geographical zone and its educational boundaries. The ten ECD centres identified all shared similar
characteristics and a similar level for opportunity and potential for implementing the ECD curriculum. However, I purposefully used advice from education experts to identify 10 ECD centres that were known to be outstanding in performance and effective implementation of the ECD curriculum.

3.4.2 Procedure for Selection of the Study Sample

Guided by the interpretivists/Grounded Research Philosophy, I was looking for insights into the phenomenon as described by participants who had deep knowledge about the phenomenon. Purposive sampling procedure emerged as the most appropriate procedure for this study because, I was able to draw from the population, in a deliberate or targeted way that sample that effectively informed the research question guiding this study (Punch, 2009; Chisaka, 2005; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this context therefore, purposive sampling enabled me to identify participants based on selected criteria of knowledge, ability and richness of lived experiences with the phenomenon (Hesse-Bieber and Leavy, 2006; Berg, 2001). From the sample population of ten (10) ECD centres, I had to collect data from twenty (20) teachers, twenty (20) school heads/supervisors and ten (10) parents. To ensure that my selection of the ten (10) participating schools, I identified a committee of experts in the ECD education systems in Mutare and they involved one (1) Non-Governmental Organization representative whose institution works with ECD centres, four (4) ECD lecturers from Universities/Colleges in Manicaland and two (2) Education Officers (EO) from the participating Mutare Regional Office. I then handed one of the expert committee member an invitation letter to participate in the selection committee. Appendix 1 shows the invitation letter used to invite the expert panel committee members. I also used the standard nomination tool adapted from
Madhlangobe (2009) to identify the schools and to describe the characteristics that were used to score points for any two nominated schools by each expert.

Once the institutions had been identified, I sat down with my supervisor and one of his colleagues in the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) Higher Degrees Department in Bulawayo to seek their expert opinion on how to select the final schools. All selected institutions shared similar characteristics; and they were currently implementing the same ECD curriculum. From each of the schools, I ensured that the selection of specific participants, purposefully involved volunteers from the schools. They were known by the school leadership to be succeeding in order to identify a model that was currently succeeding and then use the information to make recommendations for practice and also include recommendations for further research. From this research context, I had the opportunity to listen to and compare the forms of problems experienced by both teachers in the rural, urban and private backgrounds, in addition to how they successfully unravel teaching/learning predicament in order to groom successful ECD students.

3.4.3 Participants from each institution

I generated data from a diverse group of participants who included teachers from the ten (10) ECD centres and administrators who supervised and led the implementation of the curriculum at each station. I also included ECD lecturers who were purposefully selected from the local Colleges of Education in Mutare-Zimbabwe and an Education Officer (EO) who participated in the study as expert advisor during selection of the participating schools to ensure that schools considered to be effective earn their way into the final sample of participating
institutions. The total study sample was composed of fifty-seven (57) purposefully selected participants from the field of study, which were public, private and rural ECD centres in Mutare Urban Circuit.

3.5. Gaining entry into the field

In order to generate data, I first negotiated entry into the research settings that included private schools, public schools, and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) by identifying the gatekeepers to learn of the procedures for requesting access to the desired sites and followed those procedures. I submitted the standard introductory letter from the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) Higher Degrees Directorate to both the MOPSE (see Appendix M) and the Town Clerk of the City of Mutare (Appendix O). From both institutions, the MOPSE, in the Provincial Education Director (PED) offices I was provided with an attachment letter that authorised permission to visit all the ECD centres in the province of study as indicated in Appendix N. Once permission to carry out the study had been approved by the MOPSE, I invited all participants through official letters shown in Appendices (M, N, and O). I then visited the schools of the volunteering participants and regularly had a chat and mixed with the participants at each school for a week before I started generating data. The record of gaining access to the schools was adopted from Gibbs’ (2007) guidelines for generating data in a case study.

3.6. Description of the selection process.

In this section, I described the selection process to come up with a study sample that constituted teachers, ECD Administrators and how lecturers were selected.
3.6.1 Selection of teachers

The selection of teachers from schools of study was done on the bases of the recommendations from the expert committee in the ECD education system in Mutare. From the sample of 10 ECD centres, only 2 teachers from each school were considered, on the following criteria: being an ECD teacher giving instruction to ECD-A or ECD-B students. This technique was applied to select teachers from both public and private ECD centres. All the 20 purposively selected participants from the ten (10) ECD centres were interviewed using the semi-structured interview guide questions while I was recording the responses from each of the 20 ECD teachers (Appendix A). The interviews were carried in the participants’ classrooms where they could speak freely without disturbing the smooth running of the school. Taking notes interferes with the flow of the conversation and it is difficult to pay attention to the non-verbal aspects of communication and remembering everything that is said and the way it is said (White, 2005; Yin, 2011). This has a limitation on my side as a researcher. Consequently, I made use of an audio recording device after permission was granted by each participating ECD teacher. The teachers also responded to questionnaires which had both closed and open-ended questions and I made sure that they were personally distributed. I used pseudonyms that were attached to each of the questionnaires for confidentiality and anonymity ethical issues. Institutional documents and artefacts were made available during lesson observations I carried from all the purposively selected twenty (20) ECD teachers.
3.6.2 Selection of ECD Administrators.

The ten schools which were nominated by the expert committee guaranteed inclusion of the administrators of the participating schools. There were two administrators from each participating school (Head/TIC) constituting 20, the PED and the DEO-ECD were also purposively selected because they were the expert advisors during selection of participants and one (1) Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) representative was also included by the expert selection committee because their institution works with ECD centres in Mutare District. The sample of the administrators added up to 23 participants. All the administrators were purposively selected because they supervised and gave guidance to the implementation of the curriculum at each station. All the administrators from each institution completed a questionnaire with both open and closed-ended questions (Appendix B and Appendix G). I settled on administering questionnaires because I wanted the participants to state their views or feelings privately without worrying about the possible reaction of the researcher.

3.6.3 Selection of ECD lecturers.

The selection of lecturers was also purposively done from the local Primary Teachers’ College and University and I selected four (4) lecturers to participate in the study. The selection was centred on those lecturers who train ECD student teachers to implement the ECD programme. I was also able to record the conversations and took photographs after a participant’s informed consent. Four (4) selected College and University lecturers were given questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions which were hand delivered by the researcher (Appendix
F). This subtheme was given one week and I personally did the collection of the questionnaires from each respondent and this gave me the opportunity to verify on unreciprocated items.

Through these procedures, I had an advantage of triangulating data generated from interviews, questionnaires, observations, institutional artefacts and document analysis, which enlightened the researcher to deeper insights in comparing and contrasting similarities and difference on types of internal and external factors that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD programme. The main thrust of this study was to find out how those ECD teachers who succeeded in overcoming specific challenges accomplished it.

3.7. Data Generation Procedures and Ensuring Saturation of Data

Rossman and Rallis (2003) observe that, generally, samples for qualitative studies are smaller than those used in quantitative studies due to the need to use in-depth instruments that generate wider data from individual participants until data saturation occurs. Data saturation is the situation in which data heard before begins to repeat itself during all data generation techniques used during qualitative case study (Glaser and Strauss, 1998). During each data generation process, I used the criterion of data sufficiency and saturation till it was time to stop the data collection and generation process. Saturation levels were reached because I interviewed and made several follow-up interviews, observations and review of institutional documents regarding implementation of the ECD curriculum in the same geographical area.
3.8. Research Instruments

The research instruments that I used to generate data included an interview guide, a questionnaire with open ended questions, classroom lesson observations, review of institutional artefacts and document analysis.

3.8.1 The Parallel Interviewing Technique

Manser (1985) explains an interview as a meeting with someone to discuss something for meaning. In this study, the researcher and the participants in the ECD education systems created conversation related to challenges related to curriculum implementation and how they participants overcame the challenges. For descriptive qualitative studies like this one, the interview was the most prominent data generation tool that allowed participants to describe the phenomenon under study (Punch, 2009). Similar to the studies by Marshall and Rossman (2006) and Punch (2009), in this study I regarded interviews as a reliable approach for accessing participants’ perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and their constructions of reality in relation to ECD curriculum implementation. In order to understand others, as a researcher I needed participants’ constructions of reality. I asked participants in such a way that they helped provide in-depth or thick descriptions of the problem in their own terms that addressed the context under study (Holjer, 2008; White, 2005; Borg and Gall, 1996; Jones, 1985). This was achievable because the participants were presumed to have deep experiences that enhanced in-depth understanding of challenges related to the ECD programme implementation. Instead of writing their responses, interviewees verbally volunteered their information during face-to-face conversations (Marshall and
Rossman, 2006; Wolcott, 1990). In this case, I had the opportunity to respond immediately to what participants said by tailoring both new and standard follow-up questions to the information the participant had provided (Madhlangobe, 2009). I also had the option to record non-verbal communication language, such as facial expressions or gestures because such data that addressed the study’s broad research question stated in Chapter 1.10 of this study.

Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995:74) define interviewing as ‘gaining access to what is inside a person’s head’. In this case, the purpose of interviewing was not to put information in someone’s mind but to generate the perspective of the person being interviewed. In support of Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995), the study by Stake (2005) also looks at an interview as a joint product of what interviewees and interviewer talk about together and how they talk with each other.

Another advantage of using interviews to generate data in this study was that, it provided me with the opportunity to offer further explanations on some research questions that might require clarification by the participants (Stake, 2005; Silverman, 1993). Interviewing as a data generating instrument was appropriate for this study because the strategy was highly flexible, which allowed this researcher to make necessary changes to the questions whenever the occasion demanded (Punch, 2009; Fontana and Frey, 1994)? For this study, the benefit of interviews as research instruments was the potential to improve the quality of data generated by allowing the researcher to follow the direction in which the study took her (Patton, 2002; McLeod, 1994; Babbie, 1992). For the purpose of this study, interview questions were conducted with ECD teachers, SDCs and Heads of Schools who constituted the study sample. I intended to understand the views of diverse participants regarding
their perceptions on the challenges experienced by ECD teachers during the processes of implementing the ECD curriculum in Mutare Urban Circuit, and how they would overcome them.

Patton (2002) identified three types of probes, namely: detailed oriented, elaboration and clarification probes. Following Patton’s (2002) advice, if a question needed more details, I employed the detailed probes technique by the use of follow-up questions. If I needed the participants to elaborate more on certain issues, I used the elaboration technique. There was a time when some questions were not clearly explained, however, I made use of clarification probes so that the participants gave more clarity to ambiguous answers. These techniques were only applicable during interviews conducted by the ECD teachers and Heads of schools. The main advantage of the interview over the questionnaire was that, I got responses from more of the participants in the sample selected and got fewer “don’t know” and unusable responses than would occur on a questionnaire with open-ended questions.

A few problems that were related to the use of this interview included that the level of interaction caused some of the participants to feel uneasy and others used avoiding techniques (Rudestam and Newton, 2007; Cohen and Manion, 1989). To ensure confidence, I visited the participants during their working hours and even participated as one of the teaching staff for a week before the actual data generation session. I ensured that I carried out face-to-face conversations with each volunteered participant to grow their confidence (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). Taking advice from Madhlangobe (2009), although problems may arise on conflict of time-tables, I ensured that during the interview stage of the data collection procedures, I adjusted my own time-table to fit the needs of the participants. This was done because I
needed them to answer the research questions. Following the suggestions from Madhlangobe (2009), in order to overcome the challenge of conflict of timetables, I contacted each school individually to collaboratively agree on the interview time slots so that I had no dates and times offered clashing.

3.8.2 Use of a Questionnaire Technique

In this study, I applied a questionnaire as a research instrument to solicit information and it was an appropriate technique in qualitative studies. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section ‘A’ constituted biographical data for the participants and Section B, solicited information on challenges and issues that militated against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum by the user system. Different questionnaires were used for each category of interviewees, namely the Education Officer, ECD instructors, the trainers and the SDCs and some of the questions were similar while others were specific to the individuals in the category. The questionnaire contained probes that enabled the study to gather facts about ECD policy implementation, perspectives and opinions on certain aspects of programme development and also strategies employed by the instructors to overcome challenges of a different nature related to the ECD programme.

The questionnaire that I used combined both closed-ended and mostly open ended questions to generate data from volunteering respondents for this study. The questions which were closed-ended permitted only certain responses related to the first section of the questions of bio-data and analysis of results to be carried out efficiently. The open-ended questions enabled me as a researcher to establish what respondents believed, knew, liked, disliked and thought about the problem under
investigation (Burch, 2005; Burton, 2000; Cohen and Manion, 1994; Chivore, 1991).

This approach provided a response format that gave respondents the freedom to provide answers related to the phenomenon. My duty as a researcher was to make interpretations of all the responses given, find categories and themes done with the interview data (Rudestam and Newton, 2007).

Open-ended questions were the most important questions in this qualitative-case study as guided by the interpretivists/Grounded research paradigm, since the questions allowed participants to offer important and unpredictable insights into human behaviour (Flick, 2009; Burch, 2005). The study gained from Cohen and Manion (1994)’s, advice that open-ended questionnaire should be flexible to allow respondents to give their contextual responses and issues under investigation. The open-ended form on the questionnaire made it an appropriate instrument in data generation. I also agreed with Manion and Cohen (1994) on flexibility, hence, may bring out situations on issues that were not anticipated when the questionnaire was designed.

Among its many advantages, for the purposes of this study, I chose the questionnaire technique because it was easier to construct, cheaper to administer since, there were no mailing costs. I personally administered the questionnaires to the participating schools within the district. Since the focus of the questions included factors that hindered the successful implementation of the ECD curriculum and how they would overcome them, participants had the opportunity to respond to the questions using their lived experiences with the phenomenon. To ensure that participants had a uniform understanding of the questions, I pilot tested the instrument. In this study, these limitations were resolved by triangulating sources of data generation methods.
This was achieved by augmenting data through the use of interviews, lesson observations and data generated from institutional artefacts and document analysis. Questionnaires have an assumption that respondents are literate, in this study, respondents were professional teachers and some of them were para-professionals who had also acquired Ordinary Level of education in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the challenge of illiteracy had been ruled out.

3.8.3 Classroom lesson observation technique

According to research literature, observations entail the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, present artefacts (objects) referred to in a social setting under study (Flick, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Barker, 1999). I used a direct observation technique that emphasises observing and recording actual behaviour, rather than reported or recalled behaviour by both the student and the ECD teachers. I chose the observational techniques because it helped me to generate individual first-hand data on programmes, processes, or behaviours being studied (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). My attendance into a classroom lesson observation enabled me to observe ECD students’ behaviours during teaching-learning processes on different subjects in a day in various areas of the facility. Similar to observations done by Schwartzman and Strauss (1973), I experienced that direct observations also allowed me to explore data in a holistic view and to generate data that also informed the interview questions. As a participant observer, using direct observations increased my understanding of participants within their natural settings, hence, requiring my commitment to adopt the perspective of the participants by actively sharing their day to day experiences (Creswell, 2009; Flick, 2009). My role as a participant observer allowed me to become immersed in the lives and activities of
the participants, hence, increasing my opportunity for asking interpretative-questions to data analysis that helped me clarify certain behaviours observed from the participants (Punch, 2009; Bogdan and Biklen, 1990). Classroom observations as a data generation tool were appropriate to the purposes of this study because they helped me as a researcher to discover reasons for some of the complex interactions in natural ECD social settings (Flick, 2009; Punch, 2009). Further, research literature reveals that even the research that uses in-depth interviews acknowledges observations as a strategy for generating data related to interviewee’s body language to complement spoken words (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Punch, 2009).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 201) “during lesson observations, the focus is on the self, the language, interaction patterns, communication feelings, voice intonations and critical incidents among other things.” This approach allowed me to learn about things the participants may be aware of but would be unwilling to discuss in an interview. These were conducted during the formative phase because I had the opportunity to determine whether or not the programme was being delivered and operated as planned. Such formative observations also provided valuable insights into the teaching styles of the ECD teachers and how they cover the materials notwithstanding the challenges that disturbed the smooth running of the programme. One limitation of direct observation was that I had no control over the situation and my presence as an observer could have changed the normal dynamic of the classroom interactions between students and their teacher. Borrowing from experiences by Marshall and Rossman (2006), immersion in the ECD lessons permitted me to hear, to see and began to experience reality as the participants did. Direct observation was paid dividends because I had the opportunity to spend
considerable time in selected ECD centres observing and learning about daily activities used to implement the curriculum.

3. 8.4 Reviewing of Institutional Artefacts and Document Analysis Technique

Like any other approaches in qualitative research, I also decided to use institutional artefacts and documents analysis as a complementary strategy to other methods. Flick, (2009) states that document analysis is a careful examination of documents and their content in order to draw conclusions about social circumstances. Organisations generally document themselves through a variety of records, and in this study, institutional artefacts and documents included classroom records and student’s artefacts that provided crucial historical background information and data on various aspects of the ECD implementing process prior to the current study. Sutton and Levison, (2001), explain that results from the review of artefacts help to increase trustworthiness based on consistency. The triangulation or integration of various artefacts and documents used by the ECD teachers supported the given point. The generated data helped to identify and describe factors that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. The study focused on reviewing of documents that informed the research questions including the content of draft syllabus, teachers’ resource books, timetables, curriculum policy documents, anecdotal record, developmental checklist record, exercise books and pupils’ text books at different stages of development. As part of triangulation, documents were analysed using document analysis checklist to check on what had been done up to date in the area of assessment to promote a holistic approach in ECD curriculum implementation.
3.9 A pilot Study

A pilot study is a standard scientific tool used by researcher to conduct a preliminary analysis before committing to a full-blown study (Marshall and Rossman, 2007; Punch, 2009). In order to test the feasibility, equipment and instruments I used a pilot study using a small scale in preparation of rehearsal of the larger research design (Seidel, 2010; Yin, 2011). A pilot study was carried with five schools to pre-test the instruments (interview guide, questionnaire and document analysis). I used the pre-test because it enabled the researcher to adjust the instruments and make amendments to data generation tools. This helped to enhance trustworthiness of the instruments. I requested the participants to answer all questions on the open-ended questionnaires and appointments were carried out with purposively selected schools in Mutare North consistence. I used the feedback from the piloting process to revise the questionnaire, interviews and the observation guiding tools (Punch, 2009). A pilot study was appropriate because it enabled further training on how the questionnaire was to be administered and on issues of clarity, relevance and adequacy of the responses (Patton, 2002; White, 2005). In order establish the trustworthiness of the research instruments by personally administering the same ten (10) schools who participated in this preliminary study. The researcher drafted the final draft of the questionnaire, the interviews, document analysis and direct guiding questions.
3.10 Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp 306-308), trustworthiness in research is important for evaluating its worth. The researchers further identified the aspects that contribute to trustworthiness in qualitative study, namely:

a) Credibility, confidence in the truth of the findings;
b) Transferability, showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts;
c) Dependability, showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated;
d) Conformability, a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of the study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation or interest.

In order to establish credibility, I prolonged engagement, which was spending enough time in the field to learn or understand the culture, social setting, or phenomenon of interest (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This involved spending enough time observing various aspects on the ECD centre, speaking with a range of people including students, caregivers or heads, and developing relationships and rapport with members of the culture. By prolonging engagement on the site, it helped me to enhance development of rapport and trust, hence, facilitated understanding and co-construction of meaning between researcher and members of the study area (Creswell, 2009). The advantages of prolonged engagement on the study area enabled me as an observer to become oriented to the situation and to appreciate the context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that member checking is when data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those groups
from whom the data were originally obtained (Morse, 1994). Therefore, I considered it to be the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. The positive aspects of member-checking are that the participant provided an opportunity to understand and assess what the participant intended to do through his or her actions. This aspect also gave participants opportunity to correct errors and challenges what were perceived as wrong interpretations. It provided the opportunity to volunteer additional information which may be stimulated by the playing back process and offer an opportunity to summarise preliminary findings. Member checking relies on the assumption that there is a fixed truth of reality that can be accounted for by a researcher and confirmed by a respondent. Then, the question of whose interpretation should stand becomes an issue. However, despite these limitations, this did not reduce the credibility of the research findings because trustworthiness (validity) was also confirmed through triangulation of various data collection sources, theoretical perspectives and instruments.

Marshall and Rossman (2007, p. 89) call this construct used to verify trustworthiness, “dependability, in which the researcher accounts for changing conditions in the phenomenon for study and changes in the design.” In this study, dependability was achieved through the thick and rich qualitative data that was generated from different sources using various methods. I achieved saturated description of the phenomenon by inviting my participants to review my analysis and interpretation to ensure grounding of my findings in the participants’ understanding (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). By designing a study in which multiple informants generate and interpret analysis, I was able to strengthen trustworthiness in this study.
3.10.1 Triangulation for Quality Enhancement

For this study, I adopted Denzin (1989, pp. 237-241) “systematic approach of triangulation which includes: data triangulation, triangulations of theories, data sources and methodological triangulation”. I also triangulated timelines for collecting data, instruments and analysis approaches as additional strategies for promoting the quality of this qualitative study. This was because I believed that a single method could never adequately shed light on such a broad phenomenon. Therefore, using multiple methods enhanced the facilitation of deeper understanding (Marshall and Rossman, 2009; Flick, 2009; Patton, 2006).

3.10.2 Data Triangulation

Flick (2009) refers data triangulation as the use of different data sources which should be distinguished from the use of different methods for producing data. In this study, I triangulated methods, sources of data, data analysis and data generation periods. Patton (2002) in Madhlangobe (2009) suggests that each kind of triangulation helps qualitative studies to verify and validate qualitative analysis in different ways. Multiple sources of data gathering methods were used in order to establish a convergence of facts that were generated from interviews, questionnaires, artefacts and institutional document analysis and classroom lesson observations. The combination of data generated from semi-structured interviews with data generated from observations focussed on subjective knowledge and experiences of the participants. During lesson observations, I focussed on practices and interactions between the students and the teacher during instructional periods. Denzin (1989) makes a distinction between time, space and persons and he further suggests
studying the phenomena at different dates, places and from different persons. He comes close to Denzin (1989) strategy of theoretical sampling. In both cases, the starting point is to involve purposively and systematically persons, study groups, local and temporal settings in the study. In this study, data generation was done in support of Denzin’s (1989) views where time, space and different participants from the ECD centres from urban sectors, rural and private sectors were taken cognisance.

3.10.3 Triangulation of Data Sources

In the triangulation of sources that examined the consistency of different data sources were examined from within the same method. For example, at different points in time, in public ECD centre versus private settings and comparing people with different view-points. In this study, I was able to use a variety of sources to generate data. From direct observation I was able to generate data from students and teacher interaction and this was most appropriate during lesson observations. In this study, triangulation of sources of data generation, was used as an approach for further grounding the knowledge obtained with qualitative methods and this does not mean to assess results but to extend and complete the possibilities of knowledge production (Creswell, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

3.10.4 Triangulation of Data Generation Periods

When data is generated over a period of time, there is need to ensure some degree of consistency and this was made through the generation of data within different periods of time. This approach to improve the degree of trustworthiness in qualitative data is referred to as triangulation of data collection periods.
Madhlangobe (2009) in his study, on leadership in culturally diverse schools, suggests that it is a way of checking for consistency of behaviours, speeches and beliefs identified through observations and interviews. In this study I checked for consistency from participants, particularly, the ECD teachers who were interviewed using the same question or concept after a determined period. I also used artefacts and institutional documents to check for historical consistency in methodological issues during curriculum implementation by the user system, especially the ECD teachers and the TIC.

3.10.5 Triangulation in Analysis of Data

In this approach, I had to bear in mind the different characteristics of the data generated with different methods and to apply a different approach to each of the data sets. In this study, interviews were done with teachers, heads of schools and the DEO-ECD. The observational data were analysed for teachers and their students’ behaviours and interactions, which were then compared to each other. This was only possible when I attended a lesson observation during instructional periods. I later looked for links on the level of the data sets. Using this approach adopted from Denzin (1989), I was able to analyse interview data first and then looked for patterns in them. Then I analysed data generated from questionnaires, classroom observations, institutional artefacts and document analysis. After systematic coding by name, time, place and content themes, I then analysed according to similarities and differences in response to different questions. Jenkins cited in Punch (2009), analysed qualitative data and quantitative data collected from questionnaires by emerging the two forms of data sets into one overall interpretation. In this study I also adopted Jenkins’s ideas.
In order to improve the degree of trustworthiness, I also used another approach to link the different sets of data in the process of the analysis as a whole, as suggested by Denzin (1989) cited in Flick (2009). In this study, this would mean, for instance, the interview I might have conducted with a participant (teachers, TIC) for what he/she saw as challenges on lack of resources during instructional activities and would have discussed how the teacher alleviated those particular challenges in order to promote the child’s development, in support of the national holistic policy approach among the ECD students. Then I looked at the observational data for activities of that interviewee and I noted if there were any situations in which she/he overrides challenges that had to do with lack of resources when implementing the ECD curriculum.

3.11 Ethical and Legal Considerations

There were quite a number of ethical and legal considerations that were honoured during the study. In order to safe-guard the rights of the participants and gain access, consent was sought three introductory letters from the Zimbabwe Open University Higher Degrees Directorate, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and thirdly, from the Municipality of Mutare. This was done so that I could be given permission to seek a participant’s consent before conducting the interviews or questionnaire. I vividly explained the basis of the study to all participants and I gave essential details about the procedures so that all the participants knew where they will take themselves into (Punch, 2009; Seidel, 2010). Later, each volunteered participant was kindly asked to sign the consent form after I had informed all participants of the purpose of the study. In this study the issues of confidentiality and anonymity were assured in the questionnaires and interviews carried out with all
participants (Creswell, 2009; Morgan, 2007). The researcher used pseudonyms to refer to the teachers, heads, schools, lecturers and SDC members. All participants who volunteered their data were guaranteed privacy and access was only given to my supervisor (Dr. Lewis Madhlangobe). However, the participants were advised that the data generated were only for the purpose of writing this thesis and publications related to this study.

All teachers who participated in this study were informed that they were significant to this study because they had the experience in working with the ECD students. Therefore, they were in unique positions to identify and describe challenges related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum. Every effort was made not to harm any individual or institution by abiding to Lid down ethical and legal considerations (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). During the study, I scheduled all data generation sessions in such a manner that they did not interfere with the smooth operation of the school processes. The participants were informed not to respond to any questions that they felt were uncomfortable to answer.

3.12 Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation Procedures

In a qualitative study, data were presented, analysed and interpreted to bring out meaning of the raw data that was generated through the interviews, questionnaire, direct lesson observation, document analysis and children’s artefacts. The chapter discussed how data were processed and furthermore, data were going to be analysed and presented.
3.12.1 Data Processing Techniques

Qualitative data process is not linear. As a result, when I did qualitative data process, I did not simply notice, collect, and think about information collected and then wrote a report (Punch, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2006), instead I interacted with participants to give meaning to my data (Punch, 2009; Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994). The process was recursive because one part called me back to a previous part, for instance, while I was busy generating data through the interview, I simultaneously started noticing new things to collect through observations. This method of data analysis boosted my confidence due to the fact that the methods used could contrast with one another (Rudestam and Newton, 2007; Cohen and Manion, 1980). For instance, the outcomes of a questionnaire corresponded to those of the observational study of the same phenomena and the more the researcher was confident about the findings (Punch, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

3.12.2 Data analysis and Presentation

Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p.145) define qualitative data analysis as, “working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable chunks, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and deciding what is not important to learn and decide what you will tell others.” Data analysis consists of examining, categorising, tabulating, recombing evidence to address the initial proposition of a study (Yin, 1994). Punch (2002) also describes data analysis as a process of resolving data into its constitutional components to reveal its characteristics. The simultaneous collection and analysis of data is an important feature of qualitative data (Thomas and Nelson, 2001). Data analysis also continued in an interactive
manner during the interview stage. Epistemologically, this study followed an interpretivist/constructivist view, which emphasises a subjective interrelationship between the researcher and the participant and the co-construction of meaning (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). Marshall and Rossman (2006) indentified grounded theory when it is underpinned by a constructivist paradigm. Grounded theory is a methodology that seeks to construct theory about important issues in people’s lives (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). Charmaz (2002: 667) view data and analysis as created from the shared experiences of the research and participants and the researcher’s relationship with participants. In this study, I adopted Marshall and Rossman’s (2006, pp. 156-157) ideas on data analysis procedures that fall into seven phases namely: (a) organising the data; (b) immersion in the data; (c) generating categories and themes; (d) coding the data; (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos; and (f) writing the report.

I noticed that each phase of data analysis entailed data reduction as the realms of generated data were brought into manageable chunks and interpretations (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Rudestam and Newton, 2007). As a researcher, I discovered that this approach brought meaning and insights to the words and acts of the participants in the study. I had noticed that the raw data had no meaning; therefore, I applied the interpretive act that brought meaning to those data and displayed that meaning to the reader through the written report. As Patton (2002, p. 432) advises, “Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings, no formula exists for that transformation, guidance, Yes, but No Recipe”. In qualitative data, analysis is inductive where critical themes emerged out of the data. In order to generate findings that transform raw data into new knowledge, a qualitative researcher must
engage in active and demanding analytic process throughout all phases of the research (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

a) Organising the data

In order to organise the data generated from interviews, questionnaire, institutional documents and direct observations, I kept a record of the types of data according to dates, names, times and places where, when and with whom they were generated. The data were arranged according to source of information. In this study, I organised the raw data generated through interviews with the ECD teachers, DEO-ECD, lecturers, SDC members and heads of schools corresponding with the research questions in (Chapter 1:10). The logging was done on each research instrument that I used to generate data. Immersion in the data, the researcher read, re-read and read through the data once more forced enabled me to become intimately familiar with the data (Punch, 2009; Rudestam and Newton, 2007).

b) Generating themes and categories

One other phase of data analysis I employed was to generate categories and identify salient themes, recurring ideas or language that linked people together (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Punch, 2009). Data analysis in qualitative research begins with the identification of themes emerging from raw data usually referred to as ‘open coding’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). For editing and immersion strategies, I actually generated the categories through prolonged engagement with the data. The process of category generation involved noticing patterns evident in the setting and those expressed by participants. As categories of meaning emerged I searched for those
that had internal convergence and external divergence taking the likes of Guba (1978). I identified the outstanding, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting and these helped me to address how successful ECD teachers overcome challenges during programme implementation. After generating categories and themes I then applied some coding scheme for those categories and themes taking the likes of Punch (2009). The next paragraph described how the researcher coded the data which was another strategy in qualitative data analysis.

C. Coding the data

The researcher read and re-read the data to get a meaning of the overall data and started to list broad themes that emerged from the raw data generated from interviews and questionnaires. The next stage in data analysis was coding the data. Therefore, I established detailed analysis with coding which was the process to analysis into ‘chunks’ before bringing meaning to those ‘chunks’ (Rallies (1998). Data were coded according to details of setting, types of situation observed during teacher’s instructions or while children were learning through play. I also coded data generated to reflect on ECD processes, events, strategies employed to overcome challenges and methods observed and social relationship (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Marshall and Rossman, 2006). In this study, codes took several forms, such as names of ECD schools/centres, tags or labels against pieces of data generated from different sources namely: ECD teachers/paraprofessionals, SDCs, lecturers and heads of schools. I also used abbreviations of key words, labels standing for schools visited, in this case the data generated from private ECD category, the public urban ECD category, the public rural, the Heads of schools, NGOs, DEO-ECD and lecturers category. The coding process enabled me to summarise by putting together
themes identified from the research instruments used to generate the primary data. Once the themes were identified, the researcher read and re-read through the raw data so that I would be intimately familiar with the data. Punch, (2009) concurs with Bogdan and Biklen (1992) that reading data several times is recommended before when beginning a coding scheme. This enabled the researcher to capture a range of concepts used by participants to be identified and to extend the analysis so that research questions could be better understood in terms of the grounded theory (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). The main thrust was to look for relationships among themes and salient features within the themes that existed and also subthemes were identified under each theme. The words, phrases or events that appeared to be similar were grouped into same category.

d) Offering Interpretations

After subthemes, themes and coding were developed, I later on began the process of interpretations of what I had learnt. This is what Marshall and Rossman (2006) call “telling the story” and this brought meaning and coherence to themes, patterns, categories, developing linkages and a story line that makes sense and is engaging to read (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). In congruent, Patton (2002, p. 480) explains that “interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, making inferences, considering meaning or imposing order.” These data segments were very crucial and useful in supporting the emerging story and in illuminating the research questions being explored. It was about analysing the factors that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum.
However, in qualitative data analysis, there are specific strategies—constant comparative analysis, phenomenological analysis and narrative analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Patton, 2001). In this study the grounded/constructivists approaches were used to analyse data because its strength lies in the cyclical process of generating data, analysing them developing a provisional coding scheme. Using this to suggest further sampling, checking out emerging theory and until a point of saturation as pointed out by Glaser and Strauss, (1987) cited in Theregood (2004:118). In this current research all these approaches were used to analyse the data regarding challenges experienced by the ECD user-systems. Data generated through the interviews, open ended questionnaires, artefacts and document analysis were carefully coded and presented descriptively and reference was made to related literature from Chapter 2. Quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire regarding demographic data were presented in forms of tables and descriptively with supportive literature. Those items that strongly addressed the same problem were intergraded.

3.13 Chapter Summary

The purpose of chapter 3 was to describe the methodology used to generate data. This chapter also presented the philosophical and theoretical framework basis underpinning this study from the interpretive tradition and the grounded theory. The study adopted a qualitative research paradigm and employed a case study design to generate data. The justifications for choosing were finally attached. It further discussed the selection procedures of participants. The chapter was organised as follows: the participants selected from each school. The concept of saturation referring to the establishment of the total sample was stated. It proceeded to discuss
the suitability of the data generation techniques used and these were interviews, questionnaires, classroom lesson observations and institutional artefacts and document analysis. The chapter explained how the researcher gained entry into the field of study. The chapter first carried a pilot study with five schools to pre-test the instruments (interview guide, questionnaires, direct observation guide and document analysis). The issue of trustworthiness in this qualitative research involved aspects of transferability, credibility, dependability and conformability. The chapter further described how triangulation in qualitative study as quality enhancement was achieved. There was a discussion of ethical and legal considerations observed during the study. Further, there was a description of how data was analysed, presented and the techniques applied in the interpretation procedures and the chapter ended with a chapter summary. Chapter 4 is the subsequent chapter that presents data, analyses and interprets in line with the research questions and review of related literature stipulated in chapter 1 and in chapter 2 of this study, respectively.
4.1. Introduction

Chapter 3 presented a description of the research methodology. The Chapter went further to give a description of all the activities and procedures used during the data generation process in the field of study. The overarching research question that guided the current study was: How do teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD students overcome the challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum? The purpose of this qualitative case study design was to critically identify and analyse inhibiting factors faced by ECD teachers in Mutare District Schools during the process of implementing the ECD Curriculum, in order to support the national curriculum policy of developing the whole child. To answer this broad research question, I used a qualitative research approach that involved in-depth interviews, classroom lesson observations and questionnaires.

To enhance the triangulation process of the study, I also analysed official institutional documents and artefacts, such as record books, children’s work, syllabus or schemes of work in order to generate more data. Taking advice from qualitative research methods’ experts namely: (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002), in this study the analysis of data was operationalised as working with and organising data; breaking data into manageable
units, synthesising the data. At the same time it involved searching for patterns, discovering what important and what is to be learned and deciding what to tell others/reporting findings (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Borgdan and Biklen, 1998).

The presentation of results in this Chapter began with contextual portraits of independent/private ECD centres in Mutare Urban Circuit and Public ECD sectors’ background status. The analysis of data follows the research questions stated in Chapter 1.10.2 of this study and these are: (1) What specific challenges do participants experience when implementing the prescribed ECD Programme in Mutare District?; (2) How do internal/external factors militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District?; (3) How does parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of ECD programme in Mutare District?; (4). What quality indicators do ECD teachers and leaders use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum? (5). How do institutional documents used by the ECD teachers augment the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District?

Following this, I present and describe the six (6) themes that emerged from the specific research questions orienting this study and data were generated through interviews with ECD teachers, heads of schools, lecturers and SDC members. Next, I discussed the six themes concerning factors that inhibit the effective curriculum implementation and how ECD user systems overcome the experienced challenges. The six themes encompass (a) what the ECD teachers do with the pupils (b) what they do in relation to curriculum and instruction implementation; and (c) what they do regarding the school and classroom environments. I did this by taking advice
from Madhlangobe’s (2009) ideas on his study on cultural responsive leadership. All the themes were generated through interview guiding questions, open-ended questions from the questionnaire and data from document analysis. Therefore, these themes and categories will have answered the specific research questions and the research topic. The following are the six themes and subthemes such as: Theme 1: Barriers related to lack of clear policy, Theme 2: Parental recognition and involvement, Theme 3: Lack of space and infrastructure, Theme 4: Effective implementation of developmentally appropriate practice, Theme 5: Quality instructional and managerial skills and Theme 6: Triangulation of ECD processes. From the observational techniques, data was generated from direct lesson observations of the schools that participated in this study. In Chapter 4, I applied the quantitative techniques to quantitative bio-data from closed questions from the questionnaire using the distribution table that presented the gender along age of the participants, professional achievements and working experience. All qualitative data generated from interviews and questionnaire presented descriptively. There was raw data cited from specific participants confirming research findings and these were supported or refuted by related literature from Chapter 2 of this thesis. The next paragraphs cover the context of the study.

4.2. Context of the Study

In Zimbabwe, there are at least two main categories of ECD institution-based provision including; ‘public’ and ‘private’ institutions. The public institutions are registered under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) and are attached to primary schools. Therefore, these ECD centres are governed by the norms, values and standards by the MOPSE. The private or independent institutions
are also registered under the local authority. Pre-schools in Mutare District are funded in a variety of ways in both public and private sectors. Most private ECD centres in Mutare Urban are privately funded and implemented the programme, as is done in the less developed countries such as Brazil as well as most of Africa (Kamerman, 2001). ECD in Zimbabwe was designed to consciously promote the child’s development towards participation in education. This was done essentially by parents themselves, during the children’s early years or by caregivers in the crèche for some hours of the day during the working hours of the parents. Usually each phase of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in private sectors sometimes is provided for at the same place and the care-givers are expected to address the specific needs pertaining to the children’s age group or the relevant stage of development of the children (The Nziramasanga Commission, 1999). In this study, ECD age range included the 3-5 year group only.

Educationists and scientists worldwide, draw attention to the importance and advantages of ECD programmes for the holistic development of the child. The term ‘holistic approach to ECD’ refers to policies, philosophies and programming that ensure that children’s rights to health, nutrition, cognitive and psycho-social development and protection are all met (Pate, 2009; Pelo, 2008; Van Leer, 1994). According to the findings of this study, intervention strategies should be used so that all children, including the most marginalised from both rural and urban set up receive supportive services. All four (4) public primary schools who participated in this study were constructed before the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 and the historical literature generated through interviews by the school heads stated that all Council schools that participated in this current study were built after the
independence. Among the ten ECD centres that participated, only one was under the authority of a church while one ECD centre that volunteered was under the authority of the Municipality of Mutare. From the three (3) participating independent ECD centres, one was situated in the south-west of Mutare urban and it was also located where industrial activities are also serviceable during the day. It was significant to note that the sites of the study were schools where the pupils and teachers’ demographics were continuously changing to match the demographic status quo of the communities around them. While this study confirms what other researchers or authors have said, I declare that this study was outstanding by being specifically and intrinsically connected to the Zimbabwe context because it is bringing in new information on a new phenomenon (ECD) education. Being the first study carried in Mutare District, I conclude that all the results are of typical value and importance to literature existing in the Zimbabwean context. The study was very imperative because it has brought new knowledge on how ECD shall be taught and how centres should overcome specific challenges experienced within the cultural context and within the resources limit of Zimbabwe and appropriate strategies within the standards of Zimbabwean ECD context.

4.3 Quantitative Data Description of all Participants from Questionnaires.

4.3.1 Results concerning Biographic Data of all Participants of this study.

The purpose of this research was to critically analyse factors that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD programme. The demographic data of participants of this study were composed of teachers, heads of schools, SDC chairpersons and lecturers from local colleges of education and one university located in Mutare
Urban. Table 1 below shows the distribution of age against gender lines of the participants. The demographic data were generated through closed-ended question and in-depth interviews carried with the participants. In addition the data also provided descriptive information of age and gender, data on professional achievements and working experiences of the ECD participants of this study.

**TABLE 1: Description of Age along Gender Lines N=57**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age &amp; Gender</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Admin</th>
<th>Lecturers</th>
<th>SDC</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 Years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+ years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research results on the demographic data on Table 1 above, illustrated the participants’ age according to gender. The majority of ECD female teachers were from the age range of 40-49 years while only four of the female teachers were in the age range of 50-59 years. Finally, only two female teachers were in the age range of 30-39 years and two males. The generated data reflected that among the ECD teachers who participated in this study, were only two male teachers. However, the data from the SDC’s indicated that the participants were gender balanced. One of the teachers confirmed the significance of age to effective implementation and
expressed that the age of the teacher was very important if people talk of effective implementation of the programme. There were various activities that needed a mature caregiver.

**Interview question 1: How does age and gender influence effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?**

The data generated through open-ended questionnaires from teachers to find teachers’ views on whether the age and gender of the teachers had an influence on the service delivery of quality education, especially at primary level where all developments are expected to take shape. Similarly, the current research findings on the demographic data showed that most ECD instructors were mature people as reflected by age ranges shown on distribution Table 1. The ages illustrated the maturity of the teachers who worked with young children. Similar to related literature, one of the School Development Committee parent confirmed the following interpretations.

**SDC Parent 3: If female teachers are out numbering the males we support that. In the ECD departments parents would like to see their children being taught by a mature female teacher because we believe that the ECD pupils still need the presence of a mother figure around them than the father figure. Therefore, I say that the age and gender of ECD caregivers should be mature people who tolerate young children’s personality.**

This selected observation from one of the SDC chairpersons summarised people’s views that females are by nature good nurturers and teachers should be of mature age. The results were congruent with studies carried by (Morgan, 2007; Seidel, 2010) who held common perceptions on the role of male and female in pre-school who felt that the teachers’ gender is a point of concern when parents choose
school for their children. Research findings of this study were contrary to findings by Sanders (2002) who noted that the absence of men in ECD centres also means young children may be missing out on any substantial content with male role models. From a critical analysis, for children in single parent families that could mean they have virtually no conduct with men at all and this becomes a challenge to effective implementation of the curriculum. The findings of this study do not support the male figure in the ECD centre. However, it did not imply that ECD centres needed one male and one female teacher in each class but it was supposed to be gender balanced.

From the historical perspectives, Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society and as such the roles and responsibilities for child-rearing are the primary responsibility of the females. This reflected an almost acceptable stereotype that females are more capable of handling children than males especially at pre-school age group level (Ainsworth, 2005; Decker and Decker, 2001). In support of the ideas by the philosopher, Akinpelu (1981) who sees female teachers of young children more able care-givers of young children than male teachers who were regarded as not familiar with baby minding at home. From the data in Table 1 the findings reflected that the female figure dominates all group titles who participated. The distribution by age against gender lines of this current study concurred with the findings by The Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education (1999) who found out that SDCs interviewed were against the employment of men in ECD centres. They were afraid of the possibility of the male teachers abusing the girl child (Sanders, 2002; Yin, 2011). Most heads who participated in this study had a common understanding that they recruit a teacher considering the age and gender of the teacher since young
children still need to be ‘mothered’. To confirm those views one of the heads explained that he usually told the DEO that he needed a female teacher in the ECD department because he needed nurturing attitudes and he believed that could be done effectively by mothers since they already had the experience from their families.

In the context of this study, the primary responsibilities for the child care also rests with female teachers as reflected on the demographic data generated through interviews by ECD teachers. Consistent with literature, Cole (2004)’s research findings on perceptions of the society in involving men in teaching young children, established that men generally lack day-to-day involvement with young children particularly infants. The findings generated through interviews by teachers and heads of school were in congruence with Stern (1985) and Ainsworth, Pine and Bergman (1975) quality interaction with young children takes place during caring, the critical analysis is that males missed out. When the researcher probed further one of the head teachers stated that his philosophy told him that men were not created with a soft caring heart as compared to women. During the school yearly class allocation; he usually received concerns from male teachers that they needed to be allocated as from Grade 4 to Grade 7 pupils, with the exception of those who were ECD specialist. He reported that throughout his working experiences, he had observed that most female teachers had patience and perseverance when confronted with challenges during instructional periods unlike the male figure.

The head’s perceptions supported Lamb (2000) and Sanders (2002) who pointed out that they (men) enter a zone of difference when they take ECD classes and when they are hired to work with young children. This cultural conflict can result in men experiencing a difference and isolation on a daily basis. From the interpretativist and constructivist philosophies guiding this study, the results
depicted that some parents had negative perceptions on male gender involvement in ECD and socialisation practices. These findings from the parents, head and teachers were congruent with the research findings observed by Desk Review (2000); Dyanda and Mudukuti (2007) on perceptions of a male figure in the preschool centres. Through the data generated from the questionnaire by the lecturers who participated in this study, it reflected that even at the Colleges of Education there is imbalance of males and females lecturers as reflected on Table 1 of this study. The same lecturers pointed out that even at their college there are fewer males than females training for the Diploma of Early Childhood Development. These findings supported studies by NAEYC (2002), which reflected that 97% of teachers in pre-school programmes had the same figure which was reported in a centre for the Child Care World Force Study (2002).

**Interview question 2: How do you overcome the challenges related to gender (male/female) teachers in ECD centres?**

Research findings by Cunningham and Dorsey (2004) on gender equity reflected that there were significant barriers that existed in balancing gender issues. If programmes are serious in their efforts regarding male involvement, they must start by carefully looking at themselves. Data generated through interviews and open-ended questionnaires to explain why the ECD programme is dominated by female caregivers reflected the following suggestions from the participants. These challenges were summarised from the responses generated particularly, from the teachers, heads, lecturers and parents.

- The ECD educational policies and procedures must all be reviewed;
- The MOPSE in collaboration with Colleges of Education must then develop training for male ECD staff;
- The community should be socialised to minimise people’s negative attitudes against the male figure in the ECD classes;
- The private ECD managers should also employ male para-professionals and find ways to attract male volunteers. Private ECD centres should apply specific approaches to increase father and significant male involvement in their programmes;
- One way to increase the involvement of men in the lives of their children is to include more fathers, other male relatives, boyfriends, into the early childhood education programme helping in the implementation of the curriculum as suggested by (Gadsden and Ray, 2002).
- One among the heads of schools stated that the best way to attract these men is to make them feel welcome. Research shows that fathers are more likely to become involved with their children when opportunities to do so are provided for them;
- Specifically invite men to volunteer when the school needed volunteers also ask men to suggest activities they would enjoy being involved in at school;
- Help each family identify a man in the child’s life, be it a biological father, uncle, or friend and work closely with that person (Cunningham and Dorsey, 2004).
- Train staff on ways to work with fathers and other significant men and
- Provide parenting activities that are of particular interest to men.

**Interview Question 3:** Why do Education, Qualifications or Professional Status of Participants Matter?

**4.3.2 Results Concerning Qualifications of the Participants generated through the questionnaire**
TABLE 2: Highest Qualifications of Participants N=57

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Admin</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>SDC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CE/Dip.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dip. ECD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Ed Primary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Ed MGT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Ed –ECD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Ed-Special Ed.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert. of Attendance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from the participants generated through the questionnaire reflected that qualification matters in terms of which skill sets and what knowledge are recognised as important for working with young children (Eliot, 2006; Sheridan et al., 2009). The professional profiles of the participants of this study mirror these different educational achievements. The Colleges of Education and University lecturers who participated in this study had attained a minimum of a Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Development. The research findings revealed that the lecturers who participated were holders of the Bachelors qualifications to train ECD student teachers who would later teach the ECD students. The finding of this current study was consistent with Hyde and Kabiru (2003)’s findings that indicate that diversity of the child population requires changes in teacher preparations and professional development at all levels of education to ensure that teachers are knowledgeable and skilled in meeting the needs of ECD (Click, 2000; Smith, 1994).

The professional status of the participants as illustrated by Table 2 above reflected that the majority of teachers who taught ECD pupils were holders of Diploma in
Early Childhood Development that specialise in early childhood education (ECE) while others had obtained a minimum of a Diploma in Education in general, implying that they did not specialise in the education of ECD. According to research findings of this study, the majority of the para-professionals and the three administrators were from the independent ECD centres and were holders of Certificates of Attendance in ECD programmes. The professional profiles indicated that seven among the twenty administrators acquired a Bachelor of Education in Management (B.Ed. MGT). Among the ten SDC members on Table 2 above indicated four of the SDC were holders of a Certificate in Education while six SDC members were retired teachers who were holders of Primary Teacher Lower (PTL) Certificates. The demographic data generated reflected that most of the participants were qualified to teach ECD pupils. Congruent with current literature, the quality of teachers in their educational work was the most important factor influencing the implementation of the ECD curriculum which in turn impacts the achievement outcomes (Morrison, 2001; Noddings, 2002). One of the studies on qualifications found out that pre-school teachers with Bachelor’s Degrees were the most effective practitioners (Eliot, 2006). According to Howes et al., (2003), teachers’ effectiveness was measured within the classroom and based on stimulation, responsiveness and engagement of the children in learning activities. However, from the interpretivists’ views of the researcher, it does not mean that qualified teachers do not face problems in implementation of the ECD curriculum. From the interview the researcher had with the most qualified teachers who attained a Bachelor of Education Degree in Early Childhood Education confirmed the above view and stated that there was a great difference in the performance of teachers with different qualifications. However, there were both internal and external factors that inhibited effective
implementation because some of those challenges were influenced by the norms of the school. For instance, big classes are created by the head of the school. The teachers stated that there was nothing they could do to change the head’s opinion. What they suggested was need for collaboration and that it was important for schools to stick to policies regarding pupils’ enrolment of 1-20 pupils.

The researcher probed further to establish strategies teachers can employ to overcome the challenge of lack of appropriate qualifications as one of the factors that inhibited effective implementation. Some of the teachers stated that: The ECD teacher’s ability to create rich, stimulating environment in ECD is jeopardised when staff had inadequate, insufficient or incorrect content with appropriate knowledge. There was need for teachers to up-grade their professional levels in order to meet the educational status-quo of the community.

The above views clearly indicated that all teachers could perform effectively when there was provision of learning and teaching resources. When the head of school ten (10) was asked to give his views to answer the interview research question stated: How do teachers and MOPSE overcome challenges related to under qualifications? Most heads had common views on how to overcome the challenge of under qualification such as providing in-service and work shops.

However, one of the school heads stated that:

**Head 20:** There is an in-service ECD teacher training course offered to teachers who are already in the service. The Government has of late encouraged primary school teachers to up-grade themselves academically. So many teachers have enrolled with different Universities on block-release approach. Some have enrolled with Zimbabwe Open University got scholarship through UNICEF.
In summary it reflected that the training and education is crucial in the implementation of the ECD curriculum in support of the national policy of developing the whole child. However, from a critical analysis, it was not the qualification that had an impact on child development and outcomes but the ability of better qualified members to create a high quality pedagogic environment that made the difference (Bruce, 2010; Eliot, 2006). However, the next section still covered quantitative data regarding working experiences of the ECD participants.

4.3.3 Results Concerning Working Experience of the Participants generated from the Questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE RANGE IN YEARS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>0-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research findings of this study established that on average, most ECD teachers were experienced instructors who had been in the teaching field for at least 0-5 years up to a maximum of above 21 years of experience. While the majority of the administrators had a working experience of more than six years and the majority had been in the administration office for more than 21 years and very few of them had any experience that was less than five years as illustrated in the demographic
distribution of Table 3. The lecturers who participated in this current study had more than six years of experience in Colleges of Education. This study focused on the lecturers because they were the trainers of the teachers who taught the ECD classes, therefore, they had an influence on how teachers implemented the curriculum. Mavhundutse (2014) is of the view that experience is one of the major factors contributing towards effective teaching. Tshabalala (2014) advances the argument that the quality of teacher training has an impact on teaching methods and improvement of skills. They knew some of the challenges that were experienced by their student teachers during their teaching practice. These findings were congruent with the research findings on the recorded bio-data of the participants in this current study and one of the teachers explained the impact of experience to effective implementation:

**Teacher 4:** When teachers are qualified and experienced in this department, it makes our job interesting. I believe that when one has all the experience she/he will be in a better position to know some of the problems and some hidden corners where one can easily render applicable solutions. Through my working experience, I have observed that experience has both negative and positive impact on quality service delivery to ECD pupils although educationist say experience is the best teacher.

When an experienced teacher was probed further on the negative impact of experience, teacher 4 said that there was need for continuous in-service training needed by teachers. The ECD curriculum introduced new teaching methods such as the thematic approach and the integrated teaching method. From the interview the researcher had with the teachers some responded that most old experienced teachers found it difficult to implement new ideas they always wanted to use the old methods of teaching that were teacher centred. The response by teacher 4 supported empirical
studies by (Hattie, 2003; Rockoff, 2004) that a teacher who has been teaching at a particular grade level for more than five years was positively and significantly associated with increased pupils’ achievement. The above views were also reflected by the bio-data showing the period of experience the lecturers and administrators of the ECD schools had worked as lecturers and supervisors respectively. The experience of a minimal of 0-5 year’s period by the SDC members had an implication that the time was sufficient enough to have established warm relationships with their teachers and heads of schools. From the Zimbabwean context, this study has demonstrated that SDC generally play critical roles in schools to ensure support for effective curriculum implementation in their communities. Similarly, one of the teachers expressed her views on how experience impact on the effective implementation of the curriculum.

**Teacher 14:** *I have all the experience in teaching young children. During my training as a Para-Professional, I have much of practical experience but face challenges on the ECD theories that we do during our In-Service training and it’s quite difficult for me to get head and tail of people like Piaget and Montessori’s ideas. The curriculum is quite loaded with content.*

The above citation reflected that lack of qualified and experienced personnel indicated who teachers that were providing instruction produced ‘half-baked’ pupils and provided low quality education to ECD pupils especially in these days of standards that guided education for quality assurance at every level. From the demographic data generated, findings indicated that most females were in the field for at least 6 years. The majority of heads of schools who participated in this study had been in supervision for more than twenty one years, while others had forty years of experience. However, most heads were not experienced in working with ECD
pupils in particular, but managing the whole school. Congruent with current
literature, Smith and Desimore (2003), suggest that getting experience is a teaching
role after teachers qualify from Colleges of Education. On the contrary, Department
of education (2012) found that those teachers who had been recently trained and less
experienced are more effective than the more experienced. It has the idea that newly
trained qualified personnel have more to offer since they have new knowledge.
Skills and experience as compared to those with longer experience. The participating
NGO (UNICEF, 2000) representative disclosed that: “Our organisation has an
average of forty years of experience working with primary schools in Mutare
District and when the ECD were attached to primary in the year 2004 – 2005, we
had to include the children in our programme”. The research findings of this current
study reflected that the SDCs representing parents, had known their school heads for
more than five years. This period of time reflected that the partners had created a
strong relationship to each other. The next paragraph discusses the themes that
emerged on factors that inhibited the effective implementation of the ECD
curriculum.

4.4. Results of the Qualitative Study Generated from the Questionnaire

**Interview Question 4:** What are your views concerning the demands of the
Definition of Early Childhood Development?

The researcher analysed some of the factors that inhibited the effective
implementation of the ECD curriculum as they emerged from this study. From the
working definition of early childhood development in Chapter 1 (paragraph 1:15) of
this study showed the processes and experiences which ECD children experience
from birth to 8 years and they included physical, emotional, skills, social, language and mental developments. According to Follari, (2011) refer to ECD as the most and rapid period of development in human life. Basically, the ECD department lays the groundwork for their formal education by introducing new concepts that develop into the different academic subjects they will learn throughout the rest of their educational career. According to the findings of this study, for effective implementation of the curriculum the teacher had to be knowledgeable in all fields of child development. The working definition reflected that the ECD education programme consisted of various activities or experiences that are intended to effect development changes in children prior to their entry into formal school. Therefore, it was the role of the ECD teacher to see to it that all children are introduced to education that promoted the holistic development of the child, in order to support the required standards of the ECD curriculum. Queries and concerns that emerged were on the credibility of the ECD teacher’s qualification and experience because the ECD programme is comprehensive with too many activities that should develop the whole child. It required a qualified ECD teacher and supervisor.

The findings of this study suggested that there is need to have workshops where teachers divulge some challenges they experience and collaboratively look for practical solutions. Through the lesson observations carried with all ECD centres, the demonstration was that half of the participating schools showed that their instructional strategies were not supporting the working definition of ECD. This was influenced by various inhibiting factors such as lack of knowledge on how the ECD children were taught, heads of schools were not experts in this field and there was shortage of learning/teaching materials in some ECD centres. Research studies
showed that there is much debate over what is covered by the ideal pre-school curriculum, but in actuality, early childhood is a period of such tremendous growth and curiosity that it is hard to decide exactly what and when a child needed to learn (Fleer, 2010; Gonzalez, 2000). Therefore, the ECD user-systems experience challenges to satisfy the demands of the definition. From data generated through the questionnaire most teachers concluded that they were meeting challenges to implement the requirements of the working definition of early childhood development. Among the responses given by some of the participants to explain the demands of the definition of ECD one of them stated that, it was difficult for teachers to go along with the requirements of the definition of ECD from the Zimbabwean context, due to lack of human, material and financial resources in some of the centres. The teachers added that the part played by the teachers in facilitating learning and the level of parental involvement should be strengthened if teachers were to address the meaning of ECD. They explained that the needs to satisfy the requirements by the definition were beyond their reach. The definition of ECD needed children to be developed holistically considering all forms of developments (physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and spiritually). The findings were confirmed by one of the care-givers who participated in this study revealed that most schools who participated failed to provide a holistic approach because none of the schools had adequate learning materials for both indoor and outdoor activities. However, one the teachers expressed the following views:

**Teacher 5:** *ECD teachers are expected to be specialists of the curriculum, diagnose any problem faced, are ‘doctors’ because the curriculum demands the teachers to check on health of the pupils, to promote the social interaction world of the pupils, to enhance the physical development of the pupils, to be family counsellors and educate the parents as well. This is too much a load to the caregivers. Do you think we will be able to provide all these activities?*
Van Leer (2005) suggested that, apart from the traditional roles that teachers have always assumed, the introduction of the ECD curriculum had added a comprehensive workload by giving them other crucial duties. Whilst Zimbabwe has achieved significant quantitative development in education, little has been achieved in providing equal access to quality education in urban, rural and private ECD categories to meet the demands of the definition (Dyanda, 2008). There was a dearth of literature on whether the definition inflicted challenges to the user-system; therefore, the findings of this study were very fundamental for new knowledge on how teachers overcome some specific challenges has been added to the little body of knowledge from the Zimbabwean context. Similarly, one of the caregivers from the private centre shared with the researcher the following observations regarding the challenges the teacher faced during the implementation.

**Teachers 15:** The definition of ECD demands lots and lots of activities that should be carried by the teacher. If the parents give their maximum support of learning materials, books and helping with furniture the burden will be lighter. We need to work as a community in order to achieve the needs of this programme. Failure to do so will cause challenges and we find it very demanding.

The next section covers the six themes and the specific research questions where the six themes and their categories emerged from. From each specific research question follows the theme that emerged.

4.5. The Six Themes Related to Barriers to Effective Implementation of the ECD Curriculum
In this section, I discussed the six themes that emerged during data generation through in-depth interviews, open ended questionnaires, official documents and artefacts such as children’s work, art works and direct lesson observations contacted among the ten ECD centres in Mutare District. The six themes addressed the specific research questions that were as follows: (1). What specific challenges do participants experience when implementing the prescribed ECD Programme in Mutare District? 2). How do internal/external factors militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District? 3). How does parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of ECD programme in Mutare District? 4). What quality indicators do ECD teachers and leaders use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum? 5). How do institutional documents used by the ECD teacher augment the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District? There were themes that emerged from the broad research question: How do teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD pupils overcome the challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum?

The qualitative data were generated through a triangulated of instruments and it was through the interviews, questionnaire and document analysis and lesson observations techniques where the themes and subthemes emerged. The six themes were analysing the factors that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. The study had the potential to benefit individuals as well as the society. The barriers that emerged impacted on both public and private ECD centres regardless of the geographical site and these were discussed in depth in the next paragraphs. The barriers established by the ECD teachers (teachers, heads, DEO, NGO, SDC). The
discussions of the themes were done in relation to specific research questions of this study. Table 4 below gave the summary of the core themes that emerged from the thesis.

**Table 4 Summary of Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Source and Confirmation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Barriers related to unclear policy</td>
<td>Access and equity</td>
<td>District Education Officer, Heads of schools, lecturers, teachers, interviews, questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.b.Barriers related to teaching and learning</td>
<td>Pedagogical approaches</td>
<td>Lesson observation, teachers, interviews</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shortage of human resources</td>
<td>Interviews, questionnaire, teachers, lecturers, SDC, NGOs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shortage of material resources</td>
<td>Lesson observation, document analysis, teachers, heads of schools, SDC, NGOs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>Lesson observation, document analysis, interviews, teachers, heads</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Workload and record management</td>
<td>Lesson observation, document analysis, artefacts, teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parental recognition and involvement</td>
<td>Building relationship</td>
<td>Interviews, questionnaire, teachers, SDC, Heads of school and NGOs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Absence of motivation among the staff</td>
<td>Interviews, SDC, DEO, teachers and heads</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration among staff</td>
<td>Stakeholder participation</td>
<td>Interviews, questionnaire, teachers, SDC, heads of schools, NGOs, lecturer</td>
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<td><strong>3. Lack of space and infrastructure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crowded classroom</td>
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<td>Lack of outdoor/indoor space</td>
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<tr>
<td>No free play space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observations, questionnaire</td>
<td>Teachers, heads, SDC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Effective implementation of developmentally appropriate practice</strong></td>
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<td>Lack of learning materials</td>
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<td>No cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>De-motivating</td>
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<td>Teachers, heads, interviews, questionnaires, document analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. Quality instructional and managerial skills</strong></td>
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<td>Teachers’ competencies on assessment</td>
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<td>Supportive heads of schools</td>
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<td>Lack of resting and recording time</td>
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<td>Crowded classroom</td>
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<td>Interviews, lesson observation, document analysis, Heads, teachers, lecturer</td>
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<td>Interviews, observations, questionnaires, teachers, SDC, DEO, NGOs</td>
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<td>Interviews, questionnaires, observations, teachers, heads of schools</td>
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<td>Lesson observation, interviews, teachers, heads, SDC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6. Triangulation of ECD processes</strong></td>
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<td>Play and talk as tools for learning</td>
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<td>Thematic approaches and its benefits</td>
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<td>Integrated curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews, questionnaire, lesson observations, teachers, lecturers, SDC, NGOs</td>
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<td>Lesson observation, interviews, document analysis, teachers, heads</td>
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<td>Lesson observation, interviews, document analysis, artefacts, teachers, heads of schools</td>
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Specific Research Question 1.9.2.1 What specific challenges do teachers and leaders experience during the implementation of the ECD curriculum in Muare District?

4.5.1 Theme 1: Barriers related to lack of unclear policy.

Data that was generated through interviews contacted with ECD teachers, heads of Schools, parents and DEO to find out challenges they experienced during the implementation of the programme, there emerged two themes and these were: Theme 1: Barriers related to unclear ECD Education and Theme 2: Barriers related to Teaching/ Learning. The first to be discussed was Theme 1. The theme was generated through in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires by the DEO, SDC, lecturers, teachers, and heads of schools, lectures, and NGOs. These had different understanding on Barriers related to lack of unclear ECD policies. Literature revealed that throughout the world, governments have the responsibilities of providing education for all their citizens (Circular 14 of 2004; Zvobgo, 2010). Zimbabwe was not an exception to this matter. Research findings reflected the generated ideas had certain implications about the education policy concept of, ‘Education for All’, was a concept that emerged from the first theme. From the data generated through the interviews by the DEO gave the following comments: “If any government adopts this philosophy as a guiding policy for its education system, it should ensure that the same type of education is provided to every citizen regardless of the geographical position.” Among the interviewed heads of schools, one of them commented on the educational policy concept of education for all and these were his sentiments:
Head 1: Yes, I accept the policy formation but the quality of education provided to ECD students was different and I think that it’s still discriminatory, meaning that it’s not education for all yet due to financial constraints experienced by parents. The quality of education received from ECD centres located in the rural, urban and private sectors are quite different because the difference is influenced by the label on them. Therefore, the geographical area of the ECD centres in town and in rural are different centres.

When SDC 2 was asked for his ideas on the same national policy on ‘Education for All, he addressed that:

SDC Parent 2: Parents are aware of the policy but some heads of schools are ignoring the demands of the policy because they don’t want to accommodate physically disabled children in their catchment area. Policy yacho inoramba vana vakaremara here? [Does the policy discriminate children with disability?]. Therefore, it’s one of the factors affecting children with disability. Even if they are enrolled the infrastructure is not user-friendly to students with special needs.

Among the four college lecturers who participated in this study, they had a common understanding of the unclear policy of the concept policy of “Education for All”. Most teachers believed that it had brought unintended constraints in Zimbabwean schools because they accepted that the policy was not firm on the issue of lack of qualified ECD teachers. When I asked one of the lecturers to explain more on barriers influenced by lack of unclear educational policies, she said that the policy circulars showed that the current ECD programme was based on foreign model which did not spell out on inclusive education that included disabled pupils, economic status of children and the how the curriculum would be implemented. The policy grouped all children from 3-5 years as one age group. The policy was not clear on how these groups would be taught and what graduating stages from one class to the other.
From a critical analysis the results showed that the ECD user-systems were experiencing challenges during implementation period since it was foreign based. There was evidence that the ECD education policy model was evaluated theoretically but the researcher took a critical analysis on how lack of unclear policy documentation affected effective implementation, considering the situation on the ground. The policy was silent on how the 3-4 year age and 4-5 year age group will be taught regarding the composite classes with different ages. These classes ECDA (3-4) and ECDB (4-5) clearly depicted challenges to teachers regarding the application of developmentally appropriate practice approach during the implementation period. The findings of this study was not supporting the ECD policy of and also contrary to Eggen and Kauchak (2007) push for DAP that in cooperates the physical, social, emotional and cultural development of the whole child. These findings also supported the results by Kaputa’s (2012) study on disability that had results reviewing foreign model policy adopted for students with disability. Therefore, such unclear policies needed a revisit by the policy makers. This would be effective if they involved appropriate stake holders in policy formation. While literature acknowledges the significance of NGO in the implementation of the government policies, one of the NGOs who represented their institution was asked to give his perception on whether there were barriers caused by the educational policy.

**NGO Co-ordinator:** Our organisation (UNICEF) is here to work in collaboration with the Government policies and we assist its implementation processes at all cost. We work with schools and the community to see to it that illegible citizens receive education in support of the policy. I don’t see any problems with the policy for ‘Education for All. The challenges normally emanate from those who implement the curriculum and as an organisation we are there to work together with the Zimbabwe Government.
The general observations from the findings above agreed with literature that pointed out that although the ECD policy stipulates guidelines that no member of the society was denied access to education due to sex, age, disability and health condition (Circular 14 of 2004; Circular 12 of 2005). This was supported by an observation by SDC 2 who advised the researcher that there were other young children in the 3-5 year age group who were denied the chance due to physical and mild disabilities. These observations were congruent with review of related literature from (Circulars 14 of 2004; 12 of 2005; Statutory Instrument 106).

However, the Zimbabwe version of the policy context only emphasised access to education and participation, but was silent on how it ensured an even start and completion of each level, especially those ECD levels (Circular 12 of 2005). The findings were similar to the Even-Start on American Education policy, the Zimbabwean ‘Education for All’ Act (1983) ensures that when pupils started school, each pupil should be equipped with skills, knowledge and attitudes that allowed them to start their education, projects with enough cognitive and motor skills or tools to participate equally in education as everyone else in the same age group (No Child Left Behind, 2001; Schiller, 2001). The findings of this study reflected to education and participants that there was still a wide gap that still needed to be bridged in order to limit the discrepancies among ECD centres in urban, rural and independent sectors regarding the policy requirements. This was one of the main thrusts of this current study to find strategies to override the challenges experienced by the ECD user-systems to effective implementation. Similar to the research findings stated above, the 2011 ECD Sub-sector Analysis identified that the existing policies on ECD provision needed to be effectively implemented on both government and
private centres in order to improve children’s access, equity and quality education as well as to improve the growth and development of the ECD (Mugweni, 2011; Dyanda, 2005). However, from the researcher’s interpretivist philosophy that was based on emerging views from the participants, I could conclude that the ECD user-systems felt humiliated because they were not involved in the formulation of the policy yet, they were the implementers. The research findings reflected that there was a reflection of lack of collaboration, which emerged as one of the sub-themes that enhanced effectiveness among the teachers, heads, Education Officials, NGO and Lecturers.

From the dialogues with the heads and teachers, there was clear evidence that the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) did not involve teachers from the initial stages of policy formation, yet their active involvement as the implementers of the curriculum would greatly contribute towards effective implementation of the requirements of the policy programme. In support of the reviews by TIC 3, data generated through direct lesson observations reflected that in most rural ECD centres that the researcher visited, showed evidence of children absenteeism. This was noted from the class attendance registers, which was one of the official documents that were used to generate data. The results from the direct lesson observation conducted in this study were similar to research findings by Mugweni (2012), that due to persistent droughts and lack of employment, some parents in poor communities face challenges in paying school levies thereby denying children access to ECD.

To summarise, an analysis of the ECD policy and the history of the programme indicated that the rationale for the policy was to solve problems of access and
equity (Circular 12, 2005). There was a dearth of guidelines on how the ECD programme was implemented as the gap that was identified in the review of related literature of this study. Therefore, an important finding showed that there were some degrees of lack of access, equity and quality exerted by unclear educational policy among ECD centres who participated in this study. In addition, the policy is silent on the pedagogical approaches used to resolve challenges experienced by the ECD user-systems. Therefore, this was an important finding that this study established. Consistent with literature, the language policy in Zimbabwe of this programme is that ECD classes should be taught in their mother language in all learning areas (Mugweni and Ganga, 2011; Sekeni & Dakwa, 2012). This depicted a very positive move that the content of the programme was a selection from culture. The expression was consistent with the views of the social cognitivists, Vygotsky (1978) that knowledge is embedded in a social context (Berk, 2000; Santrock, 2002). However, an essential the finding of this study reflected that the situation practiced among the ECD centres were not supportive to the language policy.

Research Question 1:10.2.1: What specific challenges do participants experience during the implementation of the ECD programme?

4.5.2: Theme 2: Barriers related to teaching and learning.

The following results were concerning barriers related to teaching and learning experienced by ECD teachers’, heads of schools and SDC members. The researcher integrated the research questions from the interviews, questionnaires and lesson observations that addressed the same questions. Theme 2: Barriers related to teaching
and learning emerged from the specific research question above and it was generated from the interviews by ECD teachers and SDC members, questionnaires by heads of schools. The theme emerged through interviews by teachers, heads of schools and SDC members. Apart from the information generated from the interviews, I also generated data through direct lesson observations of the ten schools that constituted the sample. Through review of related literature, this study noted some changes that have increased the depth of the meaning and significance of teaching-learning within the school system. This was facilitated by the introduction of ECD programme in both public and Private ECD sectors. The researcher’s analytical point of view, also viewed education of the young children from this new context suggesting more expectations to their traditional roles, to be family counsellor, health guider, curriculum experts, food provider, as reported by Sadker and Sadker (2005) and Mawere (2011). The findings of this study, I noted that the teaching load of teachers was too heavy for them to bear and it was stressful if the provision of learning materials is inadequate and general learning environment is not conducive. Then it became a challenge for effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. This is consistent with other research findings by Easton (2004) automatically imply that teachers do not have adequate teaching and learning resources to enable them to implement ECDE curriculum effectively (Bruce, 2010; Noddings, 2007; Tassoni & Hucker, 2005).

It is universally recognised that the main objective of any education system in a democratic society is to provide quality education for all learners so that they would be able to reach their full potential and to meaningfully contribute to and participate in that society throughout their lives (Dyanda, et. al., 2005; Kabiru and Njenga, 2001;
Najumba, 2013;). In agreement, review of related literature by Beaty, 2000; Bishop, 1986; Tassoni and Hucker, 2005) shared common views that barriers can be located within the learner, within the centre of learning, within the education system and within the broader social, economic and political context. The following views emerged as one of the barriers related to teaching and learning from teacher 17 who explained the following:

**Teacher 17:** Teaching/learning is not very comfortable in rural sectors as compared to ECD centres in town. The rooms don’t accommodate places for all the seven learning corners because of the size of the rooms. In this centre the supply of learning materials is very low and what is available are those books over there [pointing] donated but are not developmentally appropriate, ‘zvakaoma’ [it’s difficult] Madam.

**Interview Question 5:** How do ECD participants overcome specific challenges related to teaching and learning that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?

The results from the observation technique augmented the findings generated from interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Consistent with literature, it indicated that there was need to have specific knowledge; skills and competence are expected of the ECD practitioners. There was a general consensus supported by the findings of this research that well educated, well trained professionals are the key factors in providing high quality ECD with the most favourable cognitive and social outcomes for children (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000; Perez-Johnson and Maynard, 2007). The response from one of the teachers whom I observed and described the structure of learning facilities that hinders effective teaching as follows:
**Teacher 9:** Many rural ECD centres in Zimbabwe still resemble ordinary primary school classes but we try our best to convert them to suit the requirements of an ECD centre. The size of the classroom should be big enough to accommodate all the learning corners, airy and have enough space to house indoor movements.

The SDC of School 10 gave the following sentiments on barriers related to teaching/learning in their circuit and this was what she said:

**SDC Parent 4:** Since there is a very strong relationship between the school and the parents; I feel both of us should promote our children’s learning by supplying learning materials and big classrooms that are meant for an ECD room. You can see that this room is not big enough to house 35 pupils, therefore, it affects both the pupils and the teacher’s learning and teaching processes respectively.

The above citations from the ECD teachers, heads of schools and parents reflected that there was a gradual improvement of ECD centres in rural areas and school heads should take this department seriously if a holistic approach was to be attained. The findings of this study supported Najumba (2013) in his studies of school achievement that discovered that schools which are equipped with relevant educational facilities which comprise instructional materials such as textbooks, appropriate furniture and libraries do much better unlike these centres which do not have. When heads of schools were asked on how to overcome some of the challenges from occurring during instruction, most heads of schools had general views. Some of them said that there was need for monitoring and supervision so that teachers also observe some limiting factors among the ECD teachers. From the interview I had with teachers, they also proposed staff development lessons that would be facilitated by the ECD lecturers and other expert advisors in this field. This would be vital because it would be a refresher course for both the teachers and the school heads.
To sum up the above direct views from the participants, the findings of this research were generally in agreement with Manjengwa’s (1994) and The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education (1999)’s findings that most ECD classrooms were conversion of formal classrooms. This was also confirmed during lesson observations contacted in ECD schools in both rural and urban areas. The direct reports noted that benches and tables used by some pupils were still not developmentally appropriate and this was found as one of the factors that inhibited children performance in doing various activities since the furniture was not user friendly. The results from the observations contacted among the centres by the teachers, were noted that ECD pupils were still viewed as formal primary school children and this forced the ECD teachers to ‘pull’ and ‘push’ the pupils to adapt to the unfriendly environment. I came to the conclusions that teachers’ negative attitudes were influenced by inappropriate facilities and lack of adequate learning materials. Due to these challenges, there was a reflection of a very marginal improvement since the establishment of the ECD policy of attaching the 3-5 year age group to primary schools in 2004-05. Consistent with literature, Harris & Goodall, 2006) shows that the majority of ECD classrooms in rural areas, particularly Mutare District, were overcrowded and there was little space for children to move around and play freely in some centres. Research studies established that in Kenya many ECD centers lack adequate teaching and learning resource and facilities suitable for early childhood development education in their learning environment (Ackerman, 2006; Easton, 2004). The barriers that emerged from participants of this study were congruent with the findings made by (Grobler, 2009) that the learning process were seen a transitory in nature, hence, require different interventions or strategies to prevent them from causing learning breakdown or
excluding learners from the system. On the availability of classrooms one of the interviewed heads established that:

**Specific Research question 1:10.2.1: What specific challenges do participants experience during the implementation of the ECD programme?**

### 4.6 Results concerning challenges observed through direct lesson observations from ECD teachers

The researcher observed that data generated through direct lesson observations of the entire participating sample, interpreted and recorded the following phenomena as advantages to take note of as challenges faced by most ECD teachers during instructional periods. The researcher used guiding questions to observe all noted activities that took place during learning periods. The researcher was able to record observable behaviours of both the learners and the teachers.

- There was an opportunity to see the setup of the ECD classrooms; arrangement, class size, the playing areas and general appearance of the classroom
- There was more emphasis on group work at the expense of individual activities;
- There was more emphasis on repetitive learning;
- The teachers wanted chorus answers for most of their instructional period;
- The classroom observation showed that some teachers used concrete materials while others used the lecture method with the ECD pupils;
- Some teachers emphasised child-centred approach to teaching, teacher child participation and pupil to pupil interaction;
Some ECD teachers were adopting the thematic approach, integrated curriculum and some of the theoretical perspectives of Maria Montessori, the developmental Cognitivist Jean Piaget and the pragmatist John Dewey’ learning ideas.

Some of the classrooms lacked the necessary ventilation and not enough light that was mirrored in the classrooms;

There was a critical shortage of user-friendly furniture and the poor state of the available infrastructure;

There were excessive workloads in the ECD programme including planning, teaching, evaluation done daily and weekly, daily safety checking of learning; Materials and daily routines;

Most teachers showed happy faces during instructional period and they tried to accommodate each child’s needs;

Centres lacked some of the proposed learning corners stipulated in the ECD syllabus and

Some centres integrated both ECDA and ECDB in one class, regardless of different age groups under one teacher.

Some centres grouped children into two groups, either outdoor activities or the other group remained doing indoor activities.

It was established that some teachers were applying the guiding classical theorists such as the Cognitivist Jean Piaget (1976) and the Social-Cognitivist Vygotsky (1978) who both promoted the child-centred approach to effective learning. Learning was going on smoothly regardless of inhibiting factors such as inadequate learning materials for such big classes. Therefore, learning in some ECD centres, particularly in the rural areas, were not effectively
implemented because it was constrained by various factors that were observed. Some of problems were composite classes of 3-5 years age group under one para-professional teacher. When teachers were probed further during interviews, most teachers who participated complained of large classes.

**Interview question 7: How do large classes affect effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District?**

**4.7 Results concerning challenges experienced by teachers with large enrolments**

From the data generated through in-depth interviews, the findings reflected that challenges were either due to internal or external factors, such as limited (learning material resources, class size) and human personnel or external factors such as (culture and lack of parental involvement (Bruce and Meggitt, 2005). When teachers were probed further during lesson observations demonstrated some of the challenges they faced, some of them complained of large classes. The researcher confirmed these findings during the lesson observation she carried among the ten ECD centres that participated in this study. Most ECD classes that participated had an average teacher pupil ratio of 1-50. The research findings observed that the large classes were more dominant in ECD centres attached to primary schools unlike the teacher pupil ratio of independent ECD centres which had an average pupil ratio of 1-15 on the minimal. In addition to the findings from the direct lesson observation, the findings were also supported by the results that were generated through some interviewed heads of schools on why their schools had such large classes. Most heads shared the same views that the policy demanded the pupil-teacher ratio of 1-
20 children in the class. Some stated that the Zimbabwe school population does not warrant that. Therefore, such issues needed to be evaluated and revised by the policy makers and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. To validate these important findings one of the heads from School 5 explained the reasons that influenced large enrolment in the school. That he needed to raise allowances for para-professionals and purchase learning materials for the ECD classes as well. The head further stipulated that there was need to build ECD classrooms that have the appropriate standards stipulated by the ECD education policy.

The interpretations of the above views from teachers and heads of schools revealed that while they did not support large classes, they were influenced by other internal and external factors without realising the negative impacts they had on effective implementation of the curriculum. The research findings were in contrast with the ECD Policy Circular Number 12 of 2005 that stipulated that classes were expected to operate on a teacher to pupil ratio of 1:20. The perceptions by interviewed teachers concurred with the findings by Rubin and Wittebols (2000) who emphasised that small student teacher ratio was vital to quality programmes. In support of the findings of this study, Chicago Public School (1985) cited in Grobler (2009) found that children performed better in class size of 1:16 than 1:28. In this study, therefore, the sizes of the classes emerged as one of the major inhibiting factors for teacher’s effective implementation in Mutare District ECD schools. Further probing on teachers’ views on the impact of class size was expressed by Teacher 9 that, “Large classes reduce teachers’ ability to attend to individual needs of all children and this is a critical inhibiting factor in this centre”. Results from the interview with School Head 9 of the same school stated that “With large classes, teachers sometimes resorted to formal academic teaching ignoring the appropriate
teaching methods to set the required standards for a holistic approach, and therefore, it was a limiting factor to quality learning.” These findings showed that the major difficulties experienced by the ECD user systems were stated by one of the expect advisor who participated in this study:

**DEO-ECD:** Particularly, *ECD teachers fulfil too many tasks during the implementation processes. This shows that the curriculum is very comprehensive and heads of schools should make sure that teachers have to meet the requirements of the ECD syllabus despite faced challenges.*

The next category to be discussed is on barriers related to Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). This category supported the teacher’s instructional approaches to effective implementation and this category emerged through lesson observations and in-depth interviews by teachers. The question the participants answered was: What are the teaching challenges faced by teachers when applying DAP in ECD curriculum?

**Interview questions 6:** What are the teaching challenges faced by teachers when applying DAP in ECD curriculum?

**4.8. Results concerning barriers related to DAP experienced by teachers during teaching, through lesson observations.**

Through analysis of the official documents (syllabus, text books, students’ work outputs; and plan books), I discovered that the ECD curriculum adopted DAP approach as the most appropriate pedagogical approach in the implementation of the ECD curriculum. DAP is an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young
children develop and learn and what is known about effective early education. Its framework is designed to promote young children’s optimal learning and development (Bruce and Meggit, 2005; Jeffries, 2003). Its emphasis is to impart skills to ECD students holistically and appropriately basing on the chronological age and to the level of students’ intellectual quotient (IQ). However, research findings of this study revealed that it was difficult to effectively apply DAP during instructional learning because of various draw backs that were observed during direct lesson observations, such as shortage of learning text books and playing materials interviews by teachers, lecturers and TICs who participated in this study. Some of the factors were identified from document analysis which was used during lesson observations with all the ECD teachers as shown in Appendix C. The summary of the factors that emerged through observations regarding challenges experienced when implementing DAP approach were as tabulated below:

- Some centres used teaching approaches which were not individualised according to both chronological age and intellectual quotient;
- Some written exercises or tasks given by other ECD teachers were not age appropriate but were tilted towards formal learning;
- The furniture used by some centres was age appropriate for an ECD class but suitable for junior classes;
- In some centres reading books were not developmentally appropriate for ECD students but were appropriate for students in the main stream;
- Lack of competence by some teachers on applying DAP during instructional period;
Some of the teachers and heads of school lacked the knowledge of the subject matter on the concept of DAP and

Teachers’ teaching plans were not planned according to DAP’s requirements where they are supposed to teach according to the chronological and intellectual level of the children, hence, the research findings revealed that most schools would have willing to support the national holistic approach but, were hindered by either internal or external factors to effective implementation of the curriculum.

The results based on the interviews from teachers, lecturers, TICs and data generated through lesson observations and questionnaires, indicated that every teacher who participated in this current study was facing barriers during instructional periods. This was confirmed by one of the teachers who shared with me (researcher) the experiences in applying the DAP approach in her class. She stated that the application of DAP approach was not difficult as people might thought. She further explained that the effectiveness was determined by the supply of adequate learning materials at that particular centre. The researcher noted that she had a very big class of 52 students that made individualised activities difficult.

Reference was made to the response generated through questionnaires on whether teachers faced challenges when applying the DAP approach in teaching/learning. The selection of lecturers to participate in this study was very valid because they were the custodians of the ECD syllabus that was used to train the ECD teachers who practised in schools. Therefore, their participation had a very strong influence in the implementation of the ECD curriculum. This was further supported by Lecturer 3, who gave the following recommendations and
observations through questionnaires on how teachers should effectively implement the DAP approach in their centres.

Lecturer 3: For an effective implementation of the DAP approach, the ECD teachers should create a conducive classroom environment that must be inviting, nurturing and engaging. Children must be evaluated and the teacher must use a variety of teaching methods such as modelling, encouraging words, differentiation, small groups and demonstration for children to understand and master new skills. Our ECD teachers graduate with adequate knowledge and skills that they should later impart to pupils proficiently. However, I hope that there are internal factors in their schools that contribute to inefficiencies among schools.

I requested Lecturer 4 to elaborate further on internal factors that inhibited effectiveness of the DAP approach. The response from the lecturer stated that if schools did not provide adequate teaching materials to the ECD teachers, lack of teacher’s competencies and the teacher’s attitudes were internal factors that created challenges. The lecturer urged the researcher that if all those factors were in shortfall then, they would defeat the whole purpose and that was when teachers experienced challenges.

When further probed on how to override those challenges, one of the lecturers recommended that schools should do staff development concerning challenges experienced in implementing the DAP approach and the lecturer also appraised the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education for preparing workshops in collaboration with school heads and Para-Professionals of ECD centres in Mutare District. The lecturer suggested that there should be parental involvement if the schools were to achieve quality work.

The above comments from the teachers and lecturers had the following key words: shortage of learning materials, big class, variety of instructional approaches, classroom atmosphere, proficiency, impart skills and staff development. The
findings of this research indicated that the application of the DAP approach was quite applicable if there were adequate provision of learning materials with a manageable class size in agreement with the findings by Eggen and Kauchak, 2007; Pelo, 2008 regarding the effectiveness of DAP approaches in the learning of ECD pupils. The lecturers shared the same views that the ECD classroom should be conducive to enhance learning and that staff development workshops should be encouraged in schools.

During several lesson observations I attended among the ECD centres from School 9, I observed and recorded the following general observations from both ECDA and ECDB classes. When the ECD teacher asked pupils to do free outdoor activities, I discovered that most boys were rushing for tyres, metal bicycle wheels and balls while the girls took dolls, house utensils and netballs. When I followed the pupils outside, I noticed that boys were forming relay teams using the tyres and the metal wheels while the girls were also forming netball teams. The few girls with dolls and utensils were doing play house. When I was watching the pupils playing, I observed and heard one of the girls chasing the boy away from joining their play house. The girl said: “Iwe Peter ibva kuno kuvasikana enda undotamba nematyre nevamwe vakomana. [You Peter go away from us and play with the other boys]. The boy gave up and quickly joined the other boys. From these direct observations contacted, the interpretations the researcher deduced were that:

a) Children were introduced to group learning;

b) Shortage of adequate playing materials influenced students to form groups to resolve the limitation factors;

c) There were limited individual activities;
d) Pupils were exposed to natural selection of play;

e) Pupils were gender sensitive in the selection of playing materials and finally

f) I evaluated that the cultural background had an impact on the type of play the pupils embarked on.

From the findings generated through lesson observations, Teacher 5 from School 9 was probed further to give her perceptions through experience on challenges faced during free play. The teacher explained that it was easy to implement DAP when children do free playing activities because children would choose anything of interest or what the child was capable of doing. That implied that the activity would be developmentally appropriate because the child chose what he/she was talented in doing. However, provision of appropriate teaching/learning materials determined its effectiveness.

Additionally, one of the TICs divulged the following response regarding challenges experienced in implementing the DAP approach in her school. The TIC said she gave the ECD pupils some text books which the school received from donations from NGOs. The researcher observed the books during lesson demonstrations contacted and discovered that sometimes the books were not appropriate for the pupil’s intellectual age groups. However, the views from Teacher 5 and the TIC were in support of Rousseau (1712-1778), Comenius (1592-1670), Froebel (1592-1670), Montessori (1870-1952) commonly agree that when teaching and learning consider children’s interest, it becomes effective (Bruce and Meggitt, 2005; Santrock, 2002). The TIC’s and teachers’ comments, reflected that the TIC was not aware of the negative impact those donated books would have caused to the ECD pupils. However, the administrators should have given to the developmentally appropriate pupils in the formal school. The TIC as the head of the department needs to give support to the
development of the programme. There was need for staff development programmes across the ECD staff in order to educate the user-system on the concept of the DAP approach. From the researcher’s analytical point of view, there was an indication that most teachers ‘pushed’ children to learning what was not appropriate for their intellectual development.

From the researcher’s interpretations of the above findings, it reflected that there were indications that although some ECD faced challenges, there were other ECD centres that successfully overcame the challenges and implemented DAP effectively. In congruent with the ideas of Piaget (1976), Vygotsky (1978) and Montessori, that DAP classrooms have direct-hands-on interaction, full of learning materials, activities and interactions that lead to different kinds of knowledge that ECD children should acquire during the early years (Bruce and Meggit, 2005; Grobler, 2005; Morrison, 2010; Santrock, 2002). Review of related literature in this study stated that, Developmentally Appropriate Practice is a perspective within early childhood education whereby a teacher or child caregiver nurtures a child’s social, emotional, physical and cognitive development by basing all practices and decisions on: (a) Theories of child-development (b) Individually identified strengths and needs of each uncovered through authentic assessment and finally (c) children’s cultural background as defined by his community, family history and family structure (Beaty, 2009; Eggen and Kauchak, 2007; Pelo, 2008). Therefore, if the user-systems had challenges as was observed during direct lesson observations, the promotion to the acquisition of skills will not be effectively enhanced.

**Specific Research Question 1.10.2.2:** How do internal/external factors militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District?
Theme 2 “Barriers related to effective teaching and learning” included a number of sub-themes such as shortage of human resources, shortage of material resources, lack of motivation and too many records. The paragraphs that follow discuss the categories by demonstrating how they impacted effective implementation of the ECD curriculum.

**Sub-Themes 2.1 Shortage of Human Resources**

From the information generated through interviews and direct lesson observations to address how shortage of human resources impacted effective teaching and learning, research findings of this study indicated that human and material resources were ranked number one among several factors that inhibited the effective implementation of the ECD programme in Mutare District. In most of the private ECD centres, the researcher noted that there were para-professionals manning the centres including the supervisors of the participating centres. In this study, interviewed teachers, heads of schools, DEO-ECD, SDCs, and lecturers commonly reported lack of fully qualified human and material resources as major obstacles for effective implementation of the programme. These findings were congruent with studies carried out in Kenya that most ECD centres lacked professionals qualified to teach ECDE, inadequate teaching/learning resources and facilities suitable for ECD education in their learning (Ackerman, 2006; Sammons, 2010). The following responses confirmed the findings by one of the caregivers among the practitioners.

**Teacher 1:** We, as para-professionals, go for in-service courses planned by the MOPSE in collaboration with UNICEF and these courses are done in every District in Zimbabwe. We are usually trained for two weeks when schools are closed. When schools open that is when we implement the theory into practice. Sometimes we fail to do
effectively because the school does not provide adequate learning support services to the ECD group.

In response to the factor of shortage of human resources, most teachers had a common thought on its impact to effective implementation. To ascertain these findings one of the participating teacher explained the following ideas:

**Teacher 5:** *It is easy for a professional teacher to teach because I have the foundational skills for the profession and I can play around with challenges and find amicable strategies to find solutions to those challenges. A qualified human has most of the skills in his/her working arena. However, all human resources need cooperation with other resources for effective implementation of this new programme.*

The results that were derived from interviews were confirmed by one of the heads of schools who said that lack of qualified human resources spoiled the process because appropriate personnel were the pillars for effective implementation. The heads from other centres divulged that the ECD programme needed knowledgeable teachers because the syllabus was very comprehensive and demanding. Focussing on the same inhibiting factor, Head 5 also shared his experiences on shortage of human resources and he argued that for one to be an effective teacher he/she should be trained personnel and be an expert in the subject areas.

In addition, the DEO-ECD from the MOPSE gave the details concerning lack of qualified human personnel in her district. She explained that there was need to provide qualified personnel that were why all National Primary Teachers Colleges are training the Diploma in ECD and there is a great improvement since its inception in 2004-2005. One of the participating lecturers from a local College of Education for
Primary who participated in this study, made the following comments with regards to lack of human resources through the open-ended questionnaire.

**Lecturer 2:** Colleges of Education participate in both the formulation of Educational Policies and the implementers of the Education Acts. Therefore, we are aware of the importance of the qualifications of the human resources for effective implementation of this new programme. Our student teachers are equipped with both theory and practical skills before they graduate. Therefore, lack of qualified human resources is a major challenging factor for effective implementation of the whole programme.

The above comments raised by the participants showed that human resources are a critical requirement for any organisation to run effectively and efficiently. Most of the participants had a common agreement that achievements of educational policies are implemented effectively only when the field is manned by qualified personnel. There was a central finding by this research that qualified human resources were capable of producing productive fruits in this department. This was congruent with literature by Pence (2004) who argued that lack of human resources was a major obstacle to the success of the ECD programme and further findings that the issue of qualified ECD teachers was so acute that it almost paralysed the programme. From its initiation stages (2004-2005) there had been a great improvement in the training of professional ECD teachers that is facilitated by all national Colleges of Education for primary teachers and also the MOPSE assisted in training the para-professionals at District centres, hence, would reduce the shortage of human personnel in Mutare District ECD centres. However, the para-professionals still need a mentor for guidance and supervision since they are semi-skilled. The observations by the researcher during direct lesson observations contacted among the ten ECD centres revealed that most ECD caregivers were in possession of Certificates for attendance
to a training course. This was the situation prevailing on the ground and most of the ECD teachers seemed not to be contented with the certificates they attained. When the researcher probed further most of the caregivers who attended the workshops urged that there is need to improve both their academic and the professional status so that they move along with the educational status quo in Zimbabwe.

The above citations reflected that some of the semi skilled teachers acknowledged the need to upgrade themselves. However, there are internal factors that inhibited some teachers in Mutare District to upgrade their professional status. There was need for each school to do staff development regarding the ECD pedagogical approaches and also discuss issues that have to do with challenges experienced by teachers and find strategies to overcome the specific challenges. The next paragraphs discussed the sub-theme 2.2 on shortage of material resources that emerged from Theme 2: Barriers related to teaching and learning.

**Sub-Theme 2.2 Shortage of Material Resources**

Information generated from the participating ECD teachers, heads of schools and SDCs representing parents revealed that, in terms of resources, most implementers complained that the policy accepts and advises practitioners to be innovative. However, the MOPSE did not have sufficient resources to support instruction in most ECD that are attached to primary schools in Mutare District. In support of the related literature on resources, UNICEF (2005) comments that the ECD teachers were caught unaware and was unprepared to implement the programme. This implied that the instructional procedures were not effectively presented because of the shortage of teaching/learning material resources and lack of preparation. In
response to the impact of shortage of materials for effective teaching, most teachers had a general insight on the shortage of teaching materials. To verify this finding one of the teachers who participated explained that ECD children learn best when they see, hear, feel, touch and smell. This, therefore, implied that learning materials were very important because they enhanced children’s effective learning. I also confirmed through lesson observations that lack of furniture and infrastructure were other hindering factors for effective implementation of the ECD curriculum especially from the rural sectors. The research findings showed that furniture was a problem at most schools particularly, in the rural and some private schools. Some pupils sat on the mats they brought from their home. The few benches that were in some classes were not developmentally appropriate for the age level of the children although they served a purpose.

From a follow-up interview I had with the DEO-ECD regarding shortage of learning materials, I had the following findings.

**Head 10:** Resources such as computers, swings, materials for the play areas were difficult to come by. However, the responsible teacher and his/her children should cooperate with their parents and make their classroom corners an ECD centre that has all the potentials of promoting a holistic approach to learning since, my school has an open door policy.

**DEO’s Response:** There is great need to provide learning materials for effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. The Ministry of Education has done its services of providing Statutory instruments to support the curriculum. Schools should work closely with various stakeholders, particularly the parents. Therefore, I recommended that ECD centres create and maintain friendship with parents of their children.

The shortage of learning materials was confirmed by the researcher’s observations that there were not enough benches in some rural schools and I also observed that very few students were writing on the ground and others were writing while they
were standing since the benches were too big for the ECD child. The comments above were congruent with literature by Grobler (2009) who states that teaching materials can support student learning and increase student success. The findings of this study were in agreement with one of the studies by Ackerman and White (2006) when they remark that children learn through play and their play is more cognitively mature in the presence of learning material resources and peers (Fernandez, 2014; Young, 2002). When the DEO was asked through the questionnaire to give recommendations on shortage of material resources, this was what she stated.

**DEO’s Recommendations:** There is need for Colleges of Education to train qualified teachers for each grade. I recommend if the MOPSE could design an upgrading systems and the teacher-pupil ratio of 1-20 should be revised and maintained for quality results. It’s still a very big challenge if classes remain big because they fight against the supply of learning materials even if teachers are qualified this still will be a burden and hindrance to effective implementation of the programme.

However, there could be effective implementation is the ECD teachers were provided with adequate and developmentally appropriate teaching materials. Teachers’ reflections during interviews following direct lesson observations supported Matimba (2014) view that lack of instructional materials such as syllabus, textbooks to use during teaching/learning process negatively affects effective teaching. The researcher discovered that lack of human and material resources is the corner stone of effective teaching and learning in ECD schools. This concluded that there was need to train qualified personnel and schools should improve the supply of learning materials in all walks of the ECD learner so that skills could be imparted in line with the National Policy of developing the whole child. If important resources were not provided schools were likely to produce half-baked learners who would be
affected in their future educational achievements. According to Pianta and Hamre (2009) pre-school period is strongly dominated by the need of material action upon objects. Shortage of those learning materials and facilities was one of the major constraints that may affect change. The findings of this study shared the same sentiments with Van Leer (2002) who identified scarcity of learning materials in the classroom as one of the most serious impediments to educational effectiveness. Therefore, we encourage parents to cooperate and provide the learning materials needed so as to override challenges influenced by lack of learning apparatus. The next section covered the sub-theme of lack of motivation that also emerged from Theme 2: Barriers related to teaching and learning.

**Category 2.3: Lack of Motivation:**

Data generated from the individual interview with teachers, it emerged that lack of motivation has affected the ECD curriculum implementation in schools. Drawing from literature, motivation is an emotional attitude that provides energy and cooperation among the staff in an institution (Early, 2007; Sammons, 2010). Among the teachers interviewed about their perceptions on motivation towards ECD programme implementation, one of the teachers shared with me the following views: “I can’t think of effective implementation with an empty stomach. The staff development is an important practice, but it has just added more load on us teachers.” However, when I requested for potential causes why the teachers lacked concentration, motivation and interest. The reasons identified as causes of lack of motivation by ECD teachers were as tabulated below.

- We are demotivated from all walks of the teaching profession;
Inappropriate and inadequate facilities are used;
Discrimination among centres regarding geographical position such as rural, urban and private centres;
Too many records in this department that demanded daily evaluations and a lot of records to be documented;
Lack of knowledge in the subject matter;
Disgraceful salaries;
Negative attitudes from the main stream and also from the society.
Some parents made it a habit that the fees for an ECD pupil were paid last after paying tuition for other children in the formal grades.

From the above general concerns from the participants, the findings of this study reflected unfavourable working conditions that do not enhance both the learner and the teacher. However, the above justifications of why teachers lacked concentration, motivation and interest were congruent with Chikutuma and Musiyiwa (2010:119) who say “…motivation in education can have several effects on how teachers and children learn, lead to increased efforts, energy and lead to improved performance”

In summary, teachers, heads of schools and SDC saw lack of motivation as one of the major inhibiting factors to effective implementation. From the above citations, research findings demonstrated that most teachers needed to be motivated to boost their self-esteem. The key words in this category are: demotivated, concentration, disgraceful salary, negative attitudes and lack of infrastructure and records management. These were some of the factors that demotivated teachers from effective implementation. The recommendations suggested were to enhance the teachers’ morale in his/her job description.
Specific Research Question 1.10.2.5 How do institutional documents used by teachers augment the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?

Sub-Theme 2.4: Work Load and Record Books Management

4.9 Results concerning challenges faced in maintaining official documents used by teachers to augment the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?

From Theme 2, Barriers related to learning and teaching emerged the category of workload and records management. The category emerged from the research question: How do institutional documents used by teachers augmented the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum? Chifwepa (2001) defined record as a documented proof of transaction. In schools ECD teachers consistently document learner’ work progress to ensure teachers would have evidence of year long learner growth. Mpofu (2001) in one of his studies points out that lack of documentation of African practices has resulted in the dominance of Western ideas. Research results of this study were congruent with related literature that record keeping is critical in ensuring quality in classroom assessment (Northern Canadian Protocol in Basic Education, 2006). Data generated through official documents and children’s artefacts indicated that there were various different documents used by ECD teachers. During direct lesson observations that I carried among the ten ECD centres, results reflected that they showed the same opinions regarding record management. However, to confirm the findings one of the participating teachers spelt out the following experiences:
Teacher 13: The ECD records are too many; these include plan books, scheme of work, Developmentalist Record, Anecdotal, Social, Health Record, Progress Record and evaluation Record and Environmental Record. These record books have really introduced more work to our duties. Being a para-professional teacher, I really find limitations in record management.

When I physically checked the type of records they used, I discovered that most teachers had plan books, Attendance Register and Social Record books because these were the records they said were significant. During individual interviews that I conducted with the ECD teachers, the following were the highlights. Some of the teachers stated that in most cases they sometimes did unethical use of the record books by creating marks and comments that did not resemble the child’s performance. The findings of this study reflected that teachers did that to please the head’s assessment because he needed up to date records. Data generated from lesson observations revealed that most schools use 3 record books, namely Attendance register, Social record and plan books. The other records are not considered to be fundamental at most centres.

When teachers were asked to review the challenges they experienced in record management, Teacher 15 explained that: “These record requirements are too many. We just hope if the schools can supply us with learning materials for effective teaching the better”. Similarly, Head from school 7 explained that teachers had to meet the requirements of the programme. The national policy is to develop children holistically; therefore, records are part of effective teaching that was why they should be submitted to his office twice a month. The head of school 7 further clarified that his teachers had negative attitudes towards record management.

The heads of schools responded to an open-ended questionnaire to give their views on whether the ECD teachers were facing challenges in record keeping? Among the
school heads who participated, the research findings reflected a common understanding and these were the comments that emerged from the ten heads of schools.

✓ The ECD curriculum demands a secretary and a teacher in each class;
✓ The record books needed are many and have a lot to give;
✓ We are not very conversant with some of the ECD record books needed;
✓ We need workshops on ECD assessment records together with the ECD teachers so that we operate on the same platform of this new programme;
✓ Some teachers, particularly para-professionals lack knowledge of the subject matter and also what should be recorded;
✓ Large classes have a negative impact on individual assessment and
✓ We recommend that some records with related information should be integrated to reduce the number of record books and avoid duplication of work.

From the views by the teachers, it reflected that although they were aware of the use of various records, research findings showed that most teachers were not comfortable with record management. There were further indications from results generated from heads of schools that they also face challenges and showed lack of knowledge on the use of the records management. Therefore, some heads recommended that there was need for staff development and workshops on record management that would comprise of both ECD teachers and their heads so that they understood the significance and collaboratively find strategies to minimise the challenges faced on each record by the user-system. From the general perceptions that emerged from the interviewed heads of schools, it came out that both teachers and some of the heads experienced challenges, implying that there was ineffective
supervision on the effectiveness of the programme due to lack of appropriate knowledge. This was a significant finding of this current research. Creativity was one of the categories that emerged from Theme 3: Developmentally Appropriate Practice. The following paragraphs discuss on creativity as one of the emerging categories that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. This category emerged through lesson observations and in-depth interviews by teachers.

**Category 2: Creativity**

It is through literature that encourages ECD teachers to create a learning environment that enables the pupils to learn independently and the teacher becomes the facilitator (Gibson, 1976; Tassoni and Hucker, 2005; Vargas-Brown, 2005). Data generated during interviews, classroom observations, children’s artefacts and questionnaires supported literature that, “creativity is said to prepare children so that they can meet challenges, solve problems, develop thinking. Independent thinking brings out ‘hidden talents’” (Tassoni and Hucker, 2005 p.243). Responding to questions regarding factors that inhibited creativity, one of the teachers explained that it was said that every teacher had the potential to be creative. However, teachers needed to be competent enough because they needed more knowledge of the prescribed curriculum. Observations made by Head 15 in relation to factors that militated against effective implementation gave explanations as follows: “Sometimes teachers do not give much time for children to express their capabilities. Time is given most to teacher planned activities.” The findings of this study revealed that there was limited and the hours they had was a loaded time-table. Some of the teachers gave them creative learning towards the end of the official learning scheduled time-table so that they could have time to mark and attend to records that were evaluated daily.
When the heads were interviewed on how best teachers can develop pupils’ creativity, the following views were suggested by one of the school heads who participated in this study:

**Teacher 7:** *One of the best ways to develop children’s creativity is modelling but let me say that it’s difficult to teach creativity because I equate it to emotions that are define as outward expressions of inner feelings. In fact, I can’t guess how a child might want to express him/herself on paper. Therefore, it’s difficult to plan for creativity.*

From the data generated through children’s artefacts that were clearly labelled children’s work were displayed on the classroom walls, this reflected that students showed some competency in creativity. However, my observation during direct lesson contacted deduced that the children’s work were old and this was evidenced by discoloured and torn papers displayed on the walls, reflecting that the displays were there for more than a month. The ECD classes I visited had children’s work displayed. When I came closer to some artefacts such as children’s art, collages, moulded objects such as domestic animals, birds or drawings, I discovered that some of the written words/sentences were beyond the ECD’s ability. Through further probing, Teacher 7 was able to divulge that: “The availability of learning materials enhances creativity among children” This is congruent with literature by Berk (2009) that barriers hamper creative willingness, suppress and drive into hiding the creative talents of individuals. From the research findings, there was need for support from school heads and the parents in the provision of learning materials in order to assist the teacher to improve themselves in their changing environments as well as achieve their goals. Data generated through in-depth interviews, direct lesson observations and questionnaires gave a summary of obstacles faced by teachers in
Mutare District ECD centres who participated in this current study in developing children’s creativity.

- Loaded ECD curriculum;
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of the definition of creativity;
- Lack of competence in teaching creativity;
- Insufficient time to prepare for the lessons;
- Inadequate teaching/learning resources;
- Unsuitable teaching classrooms and
- Excessive teaching load.

To sum up, the above citations in Theme 2 require the ability of the ECD instructor to select the appropriate teaching strategies. The ECD teacher needs to be acquainted with the child’s acquisition rate and be able to create a rich learning environment so that pupils would be treated accordingly while at the same time promote holistic learning. There was a reflection that there was a dearth of literature on the pedagogical procedures of DAP from the Zimbabwean context. Current literature does not explain how ECD teachers overcome challenges experienced in promoting creativity. Therefore, this was an imperative finding, since the findings of this study are significant to the ECD Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) and the user system that will benefit on types of challenges experienced and approaches or strategies applied to overcome the inhibiting factors in curriculum planning and innovation from the Zimbabwean context. The custodians, who were the ECD teachers, will be enlightened on how lack of creativity inhibited effective implementation of the curriculum. The purpose of this study was to identify and
analyse factors that inhibited creativity and find appropriate ways to override those challenges.

Within the broad Theme: ‘Barriers related to teaching/learning the following categories: shortage of human resources, shortage of material resources, lack of motivation and are overloaded with records were identified. If these aspects were religiously recognised by the ECD teachers, cooperation and unity would assist the teachers to overcome inhibiting factors experienced during instructional periods. Taking the likes of Tassoni and Hucker (2005), the ECD teacher should be a facilitator and be able to set up the play areas that generate learning contexts that facilitated and encouraged individual participation. The subsequent paragraphs discussed Theme 3: Parental Recognition and Involvement. The theme emerged from the research question: How does parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of the ECD programme?

**Research Question 1.10.2.3** How does parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of the ECD programme?

4.10. Theme 3: Parental Recognition and Involvement

4.11. Results concerning the impact of parental involvement on effective implementation of the ECD curriculum

The involvement of parents in young children’s education was a fundamental right and obligation. Research findings show that there is a substantial need and demand for parental component in ECD services (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Parental recognition and involvement was a theme that emerged during interviews and
questionnaires that were directed to ECD teachers, school heads, the DEO and SDC. The research question they responded to was: How does parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of the ECD programme? In this study the theme, parental involvement emerged to be a major factor that militated against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. According to research findings, the theme included inclusive, involvement, consultation, attachment, participation and appreciation. The participants had a common establishment that supported research findings by (Clark, 2000; Farguhar, 2003) that active involvement of parents in the teaching and learning process is central to effective learning and development with school children. Research findings of this current study reviewed that all the participants valued the role of parental involvement and acknowledged that the success of both pupils and teachers in the school depended on the degree of parental recognition and involvement relationships.

Those who participated in this study shared a common understanding that parental involvement is a corner-stone that enhances effective implementation by the teachers. The theme ‘parental involvement’ was viewed through a number of sub-categories that included building relationship, motivation, collaboration, respectful and communication that are described in the next paragraphs. Data generated from the ECD teachers, school heads, DEO, SDC and lecturers, responded to the following specific sub-problem question in paragraph 1.10 of this thesis and it addresses: How parental and external involvements enhance the effective implementation of ECD programme? Most of the participants from the private-ECD shared the same sentiments to indicate how instrumental parents were in the learning of their children. To confirm the findings, one of the participants gave her opinion that:
Teacher 15: In our Private ECD centres, our maximum support is expected from the parents of the children enrolled with us. We hardly receive any assistance in terms of furniture, books, toys and other learning materials from the MOPSE, since this school is independently administered. Therefore, our request for both reading and exercise books are provided by the parents. If some children do not bring exercise books we will do with what is available and sometimes the supervisor had to provide the writing sheets to the pupils.

The parents are the key stakeholders for the development of the ECD programme in most of the Pvt-ECD centres that constituted the study sample. Drawing from related literature, comments by Teacher 15 were congruent with Excell and Linington (2011), who confidently argue that parental involvement at home and at school boosts programme effectiveness and promote all aspects of school readiness, which include language skills, motivation, emotional adjustment and cognitive skills. The SDC members and teachers who participated in this study responded to the following open-ended issues from the questionnaire on why parental involvement is essential in the learning of their children, one of the teachers articulated the following: “Such involvement is vital because they are the primary caregivers of their children and are a central resource to the education system. Without them nothing will flourish at this centre.” An expert advisor, the DEO gave her perceptions on the effects of neglecting parents’ inputs towards the development of the ECD programme. She believed that:

DEO’s Response: Through experience, I have observed that where parents are not given this recognition and consultancy or where their participation is not facilitated and encouraged, effective learning on their children is hindered. Schools are supported by the parents and the community; therefore, parents should be given the largest portion to promote learning of their children. There is need for collaboration, communication, motivation and respect. If all these are satisfied, challenges experienced by teachers will be minimised.
From the above citations by the DEO, the main emphasis was for parents and teachers working collaboratively in order to improve the quality towards the effective implementation of educational programme, particularly the ECD centres where a firm parental coordination is needed most. The findings from the participants established that schools should maintain positive attitudes so that they are in a position to draw parents closer to their learning centre. Congruent with literature, Chamberlain, (2005; Click, (2000) and Cole, (2004) acknowledged that co-operation with parents in the school was important for the success of their children and their exclusion therefore, would not build a strong foundation for both the school and achievement of their children in the early learning stages. From the direct observations that I carried out, witnessed how schools involve parents. I attended a Prize Give Day ceremony at School 7 and this was what I recorded from the SDC chairperson’s speech. The chairperson announced that parents were very important people to the development of the school and they were informed that the achievement of their children was influenced by their contributions and participation to the school.

The above views by the SDC from School 7 reflected that there was great involvement of parents and the school personnel’s cooperation. Results from lesson observations and interviews with both the teachers and SDC representing parents were consistent with the findings of Stevenson and Backer (1987) cited in Mawere and Matere (2010: 80) who pointed out that “both family and educational institution attribute major responsibility to the other, although ironically, the family may also refuse an institution’s educational intervention”. The results on benefits of parental involvement in this study is consistent with literature by (Suzuki 2001) that sharing information helps to improve the quality of family life that students will experience at home, because when they have it, parents become more aware of the learning
needs of their children. Drawing from literature, it has been established that the way the parents view their role in their children’s education was crucial (Suzuki 2001). The participants had general sentiments in support of drawn related literature that was confirmed by one of the teachers who revealed that: “Parents and teachers were the key stakeholders in ECD curriculum development. However, some parents believed that their role was only to get children to school and when they paid their fees they did not want to be bothered anymore.

In support of the Interpretivism and constructivism philosophies, it reflected that those attitudes mirror that; such parents would not be willing to be actively involved in their school-based and home-based parental involvement (Epstein, 2000; Eccles and Harold, 1993). Research studies revealed the examples of successful ECDE services that promote parental engagement was Early Head Start the Perry School and the Chicago Parent Centres from United States of America (USA) after evidence that parental engagement matters (Reynolds and Clements, 2005; UNICEF, 2008). It is possible for ECD centres to reach the quality standards demonstrated by the stated schools in the USA, provided such centres get both human and material leaning resources. Among the interviewed SDC members, I recorded different views on how to improve parental involvement at their centres and most of them shared similar feelings. However, this was what the SDC Chairperson shared with me (researcher).

**SDC Chairperson 7:** We educate our parents on the importance of effective school learning environment, parents should attend to school events and meetings and should also be given a platform to do their roles freely. Some heads of schools have negative perceptions on the competency of some parents; hence, they withdraw themselves from being involved. When parents are not valued by teachers or heads of schools, they are
This link required parents and school personnel to cooperate in improving the environment of the school towards quality acquisition. These findings were in agreement with Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995) and Sergiovanni et al., (1983), who stated that a school is part of the community and owned by the community and as such should be improved by both the community and school personnel. In this context, both teachers and parents should be prepared to learn something from each other. Drawing from literature, Epstein (2001) in his study of parental involvement, found out that parents are most effectively involved when teachers actively encourage them. The findings of this study were in agreement with the DEO’s perception on barriers related to parental involvement that “...if parents are not involved in the learning of their children, this has a negative impact on the effective development of the ECD programme”. Through the response generated from the interview with the ECD teachers and school heads, one of the teachers expressed the following experiences with the parents:

**Teacher 7:** Without the assistance and collaboration with the parents, we won’t be able to prepare a conducive ECD learning environment. Therefore, we really need to strengthen our relationships with our parents because they help us to get rid of some of the challenges we experience at this centre. We need teaching materials, books, classroom blocks and this can only be achieved through involvement of parents.

From the observations and data generated from school artefacts, they revealed that both parents and teachers valued the power of relationships. It also reflected that parents wanted to see their school leaders promoting those relationships through the
supply of learning materials needed by ECD centres. The results held up the views of power of relationships investigated by Madsen and Mabokela’s (2005) cited in Madhlangobe (2009) that creating positive workplace relationships help to prevent intergroup differences. However, Madsen and Mabokela’s study did not address how teachers override factors that inhibit effective relationships among staff members. Therefore, this is an important finding in this study. From data generated through interviews with the SDCs and heads of schools, Head 5 also divulged that “Parents’ level of education will influence their views on whether they have sufficient skills and knowledge to engage in different aspects of parental Involvement”. The educational levels of the parents were reflected as a barrier to effective implementation of the ECD curriculum since the parents were divorced from maximum participation in the school, implying those parents’ contributions in terms of knowledge was minimal.

The following sub-theme to be discussed was the building relationship of a that emerged from the specific research question: How does parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of the ECD programme?

**Sub-Theme 3.1 Building Relationship**

The findings of this study recommended that community support of ECD process was considered as one of the characteristics common to high quality ECD centres (Handerson et al., 2000). Research studies established that the school is a centre of most community activities and research evidence from literature has shown that effective schools involve parents in the education process of their children (Bruce, 2011). The category, ‘Building relationship’ emerged during interviews with the
teachers and heads of schools where I discovered that most school heads shared literature with their parents to help them understand the power of building relationships through understanding how ECD pupils learn regardless of factors mitigating against effective implementation of the curriculum. Reflecting on follow up interviews by school heads, teachers and SDC, one head explained on how they involve their parents’ opinions and what role they partake to support the ECD programme. To confirm these findings, the following participant echoed that:

**Head 15:** *I draw parents closer into partnership with the school, during Prize Giving Days, Consultation Days, and general school meetings. In addition, I have an open door policy where every parent is welcome into my office at any convenient time. I really need to know most of my students’ parents so that we create a strong bond for the benefit of both the student and the staff.*

From the above citation it showed that they shared a common understanding and that unity, collaboration, respect, partnership were factors that promoted the category, ‘building relationships’ in order to address the broad theme ‘Parental recognition and involvement’. The findings revealed by the participants, it was through cooperation by both teachers and parents that was needed to support the development of the whole child. Therefore, it was vital for the school and parents to build a strong attachment bond, if schools were to overcome inhibiting challenges to effective implementation of the ECD programme. These findings shared the same views by Deforges and Abouchaar (2004) and Harries & Goodall (2006) indicated that the most effective approach to boost children’s later achievement and adjustment was important for parents at home. This was congruent with research findings by Hanson (1970: 46) cited in Click (2000:46) that:
The provision of minimum package of text books and instructional materials is usually the most pressing need. He further pointed out that there was evidence that increasing the provision of instructional materials, especially text books, is the cost effective way that can be used to raise the quality of ECD programme and helped to overcome challenges teachers experience. This can only be promoted by collaborating with parents.

From the above citations from head teachers and SDCs, the researcher established that it was easier for children to develop the skills needed holistically, if only the connections between schools and community were strong. In support of the research findings, the earlier the role of the community in the lives of young children was recognised, the better the chances children have of achievements at school and in general (Oakes and Lipton, 2007; Catton, 2000). The following section discussed subtheme 3: Absence of motivation among staff that emerged from specific research question1- How does parental involvement enhance effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?

**Sub-Theme 3.2 Absence of Motivation among the Staff**

The next sub-theme, ‘lack of motivation’ also emerged as one of the mitigating factors to effective implementation of the curriculum. From the in-depth interviews with school heads, teachers and SDC, it became known that a lack of motivation has an effect on programme development, particularly the ECD sector. Most teachers, SDCs and Heads of schools revealed the magnitude of lack of motivation at work. Research findings reflected the negative impact influenced by a lack of motivation at work place.
**Teacher 13:** Teachers’ salaries are one of the de-motivating factors that have a negative impact on effective implementation of the programme. Teachers’ competencies have been lowered due to lack of motivation and worse they have completely wiped out the little we were given for our incentives. So, it is so difficult to think about effective implementation with a hungry stomach.

When I further investigated for possible causes why ECD teachers in particular, lacked interest on their job description, the researcher recorded the following reasons that emerged from the open-ended questions by participating teachers:

- Very low salaries after being trained for 3 years for a Diploma in Education and 4 years for a degree;
- Lack of benefits such as attractive allowances;
- Lack of expertise in the subject area;
- Inadequate learning facilities and resource teaching materials;
- The programme is comprehensively loaded, therefore, it’s too demanding and
- Too much clerical work for the teacher that is influenced by several assessment records of the curriculum.

In support, one SDC parent from School 10 pointed out why teacher lose interest in their work. Among the ten SDC members from the sample divulged that teachers needed to be motivated and promoted the services they provided to the future generation. The parents informed the researcher that they did not know the side to take for the scrapped incentives that they used to give as a token of appreciation to the teachers. The parents supported that if the Ministry responsible for the change of the benefit of the teachers they still wanted teachers get back the incentives.
The data generated from the interviews reflected that most teachers’ working conditions were not favourable at all and their morale was lowered by the stated inhibiting factors. It was interesting to note that there were other teachers who were dedicated to their duties; only what they wanted was the provision of adequate appropriate teaching resources. It also surfaced in this study that, Teacher 5 recommended that “If the MOPSE would be flexible on the issue of incentives, it will add some few dollars to the little salaries we get.” Conclusively, it emerged that lack of motivation was one of the factors that drew teachers back from attaining the goals stipulated for the ECD curriculum. The subsequent sub-theme that emerged from the broad theme was collaboration among staff.

Sub-Theme 3.3 Collaboration among Staff

Qualitative data generated through teachers, heads, NGO and SDC saw teamwork as a cornerstone to effective implementation of the programme and it emerged that a problem shared is a problem solved. This was from the data generated through interviews and open-ended questionnaire to establish how schools collaboratively work with the parents as a way to reduce barriers to effective implementation of the ECD programme. Most heads had a common understanding on the importance of collaboration. However, the following responses were given by School head 7 who stated that: “my emphasis is on love, unity and teamwork. If these three aspects are missing, there will be problems created, hence, affects the smooth running of the school.” The responses given by the school head supported and created a positive school climate that stimulated morale among staff and brought about the spirit of oneness. Madhlangobe (2009:238) posits that, “---when all members of the community experience good relationships and have a clear purpose, they are able to
interact in cordial ways that allow them to voluntarily contribute to the learning process.” Among the SDC members interviewed most of them had a general understanding regarding the concept of collaboration.

**SDC Chairperson 10:** *All schools need the community to support them because they are not islands. The school needs children from parents and parents also need education from schools. For effective implementation to take place there should be evidence of teamwork with different stakeholders, particularly the parents of the children of this school.*

In support of the above views one of the teachers gave the following response through the interviews contacted:

**Teacher 7:** *For teachers, inclusion needs collaboration with the community. Parents are responsible for providing information about their children’s abilities. What they can do or could not do is explained by the first teachers. The child (learner) is the victim of circumstances whether positive or negative.*

The above responses from the teachers, school heads and SDC members were also consistent with views from NGO member who participated in this current study who echoed that: “Our organization does not work in isolation; we need children, parents, other organizations and schools. Therefore, the aspects of cooperation, involvement and coordination were significant in our life time.” The subtheme ‘collaboration’ in this current study supported the ideas by Madhlangobe (2009:238) that “with a positive school climate all members of the community can work toward a school vision that reflects common ideas, values and beliefs”. Research studies have recognized that ECD is very crucial in laying the foundation for the future development of the children and therefore, the findings of this study were congruent with the studies by Goldschmied and Jackson (2004) and Reddy (2008) that saw
parents as the pillars of the development of the whole child. There is great need of creating a solid continuous supportive partnership between teachers and parents. Once there is a solid attachment bond between teachers and parents, this will enhance effective implementation of the curriculum, hence, minimise some limitations. The following sub-theme that emerged from the participants was ‘stakeholder participation’ and the discussions follow in the next paragraphs.

**Sub-theme 3.4 Stakeholder Participation**

Drawing from review of related literature of this study, on effective implementation of the ECD programme should not only target children, but also governments and international organisations that interact with their governments, parents, siblings, schools and the general social structure (Grobler, 2009; Chivore, 1992). This implied that a successful implementation of the ECD curriculum depended to a great extent on support by stakeholders. This was confirmed by the findings generated through interviews and open-ended questions given to the DEO, teachers and school heads. The following responses were recorded from the DEO who stated that:

**The District Education Officer:** From the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) the ECD centres have received the policy formulation, provision of Statutory Instruments, monitoring of ECD centres. It is also the MOPSE that arranges for ECD workshops with teachers and heads of centres in collaboration with NGOs in that District.

The findings of this study demonstrated that effective implementation of the curriculum is a shared responsibility between the MOPSE and the community. One other Head teacher from School 10 also confirmed the following: “We need to applaud the MOPSE for working in collaboration with NGOs and in-serving
para-professionals”. From the above category, research findings have evidenced that some ECD centres attached to primary schools received considerable support from some stakeholders other than parents. Additionally, the MOPSE does extend their hand to private ECD centres in the District by training the para-professionals periodically. However, the MoPSE does not provide the Statutory Instruments to Private ECD managers as those given to their counter-parts in the public schools attached to primary schools. When the DEO was asked to inform why private ECD centres did not receive assistance, the responses were that:

**The District Education Officer:** They should be registered first with the MOPSE so that we can easily identify them. However, by next year the policy approved that all Private ECD centres will be mentored by the nearest Primary School and all Private ECD centres will get registered with the Ministry of Education. It will be to the advantage of the centre and supervision will be easier for us when it will be an Act.

In summary, the responses that confirmed the broad theme ‘parental recognition and involvement’ included the following categories: building relationship, lack of motivation, collaboration and stakeholder participation. Therefore, parental recognition and involvement as a broad theme and its sub-themes were the critical factors that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD programme if schools do not recognize them. This agreed with literature that pointed out that if the school operated in isolation, the pupils would not achieve as much as they would be by the parents (Fabian and Mould, 2009; Chivore, 1992). Although, there were advantages in parental involvement, both teachers and parents agreed that there were challenges in involving parents in the education of their children. Below was a summary of the main challenges that emerged through individual interviews:
✓ Lack of knowledge of the methodological principles;
✓ Lack of knowledge of the stages in child development and the needs at every stage;
✓ Lack of knowledge on what is meant by ECD
✓ Failing to meet the demands of the programme, particularly the private ECD centres
✓ The fees from the private ECD centres are expensive;
✓ Lack of fathers’ involvement we normally discuss issues with mothers most of the time;
✓ Working parents lack involvement;
✓ Financial constraints reduces parental involvement at school; and
✓ Marital challenges had an impact on the development of the whole child.

Some of the findings that emerged as challenges stated above proved to be very important from a Zimbabwean ECD context since there was little literature published regarding stakeholder participation such as NGOs regarding development. Therefore, the findings of this study would add more literature on challenges regarding parental recognition from the Zimbabwean context. In the next paragraph I discussed the broad research question stated in Chapter 1.10.1.

**Broad Research Question: 1.10.1.** How do teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD pupils overcome the challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum?

**Interview Research Question 11.** How do successful teachers overcome challenges related to Parental Recognition and Involvement?
The researcher came up with the following reasons why the ECD user systems experienced challenges in providing parental recognition and involvement:

- The attitudes of parents towards ECD centres reflected a playing area rather than a learning environment;
- Parents needed to see pupils doing practical learning in mathematics and science in ECD. So this led parents to underestimated the significance of ECD education, therefore, that was the reason why some centres give a cold shoulder to parents;
- Parents should be taught how children develop physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually;
- Preschool teachers suggested that it was necessary to educate the community on the inclusion of the 3-5 year age group in informal schools;
- There is need for parental meetings at the beginning of each school year because the parents stated that such meetings strengthened the teacher-parental involvement. This also gave room for the two parties to know each other and improve relationships;
- There is need for a role play or dramatisation to show real- life experience regarding the benefits of ECD education.

**Specific Research Question: 1.10.2.4. What quality indicators do ECD teachers and heads of schools use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum?**

**4.12 Results concerning quality indicators teachers and heads of schools use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum?**
The broad theme that emerged was on “Barriers related to lack of space and infrastructure”.

4.13. Theme 4: Barriers Related to Lack of Space and Infrastructure

The research findings generated through direct lesson observation showed that there was a shortage of space and inappropriate infrastructure used by some ECD centres that constituted the participating sample. Research findings indicated that among independent schools in urban centres there was lack of space and appropriate classroom to accommodate the ECD programme as compared to rural centres. In both contexts, the needs of ECD pupils in terms of appropriate infrastructure were not prioritised. This was noted through the type of buildings that were allocated to some ECD department. During lesson observations, I discovered that among the ECD centres that participated in this study, there was one centre that shared a room with Officer’s Beer Hall. The ECD centre would occupy the morning session and then the social club took over the same room as from 1400 hours till late. These activities were done on a daily bases and one would wonder at the type of learning environment some ECD pupils and their instructors were experiencing. When I asked the Officer-In-Charge, on his views on such a leaning environment, the Officer said the following opinion.

**Head 11:** Madam, the responsible authority is constructing an ECD classroom block with two classrooms on the main site, by December this year (2015) I hope the two classes will be completed. I accept that at the moment there is great need of appropriate classrooms of this department in this school because we are exposing our children to unhealthy learning environment.
I noted that there was need for construction of appropriate ECDA and ECDB classrooms in order to overcome such unbearable situations. There was evidence of unbearable conditions that some of the private ECD centres experience. I made a follow up to the centre in November 2015 and I observed that the ECDA class was still in grass shade and by that time the grass was dropping from the poles. There was no sign of construction taking place such as gathering of bricks, river sand or pit sand. The question that was answered by teachers operating in such an environment was: What performance was expected from both the pupils and the teacher operating in such an environment, in support of the ECD National Policy of developing the whole child? Responding to the question, one of the teachers described the following experiences:

**Teacher 15:** This environment on its own was a clear internal indicator of some of the challenges that some Private ECD centres from both rural and urban sectors were experiencing. We have to abide by the National policy of attaching at least two ECD classes, although the Ministry did not look into the implications to infrastructure, space and sanitation. There is great improvement of shelter at this centre because we used to combine both classes in one room regardless of age groups. Now the ECDA is also operating from that grass shelter (pointing to the grass shed) without a roof.

When I walked around the school work area with the TIC of this school, I noticed that there were no learning materials both outdoor and indoor activities for ECDA and ECDB students from one of the schools in the study sample. I asked her to explain why the centre did not even have outdoor learning materials such as swings, seesaw, playhouse and the indoor playing/learning centres? This was confirmed by the following expression:
**Teacher-In-Charge 9:** This is a new centre [4 years] and a satellite school of school B that has just started as you can see. Therefore, my teachers have not established all those centres yet since we are still waiting for the completion of the ECD block and this has greatly affected the implementation of the programme in this centre.

I observed that most private ECD centres had inappropriate infrastructure because the owners converted their houses to ECD classrooms. This implied that the learning environment for effective learning and teaching was not favourable. There was only one toilet for at least 15 pupils and the rooms were not to the required ECD classroom standards. Consistent with literature, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1991: 43) states: “The quality of the physical space, infrastructure and materials provided affects the level of involvement of the children and the quality of interaction between adults and children.” The findings of this study supported the ideas of the pragmatist John Dewey, the developmental Cognitivist Jean Piaget; the philosophers Froebel and Maria Montessori have a universal understanding that young children need space and materials for play, exploration and social interaction (Bruce, 2010; Bruce and Meggitt, 2005). Research findings of this study demonstrated that children who use classrooms and appropriate furniture obtained a much higher level of reading achievement than those without adequate furniture.

**4.14 Results Concerning Direct Observation to Address to Barriers Related to Lack of Space and Infrastructure**

The researcher was the chief data generation instrument in this qualitative-case study, the researcher had the opportunity to visit the ECD centres and I generated the subsequent observational findings. The researcher used the observational technique
guiding questions to find responses to the questions regarding lack of space and infrastructure. The researcher was a participant observer who visited all the ten centres that participated in this study. The following observations were recorded.

- Observed that the facilities, classroom, outdoor/indoor playing materials were not appropriate and not enough for most centres;
- The rooms used by ECD students were formal classrooms that were not even full-size to accommodate the students freely;
- Those centres that had the opportunity to receive assistance from the donor community, had appropriate provision of outdoor/indoor learning material;
- I discovered again that the donated materials were not adequate for all children to be engaged in individual activities apart from cooperative activities;
- The playing space was limited due to large enrolments in most urban ECD centres attached to primary schools and
- It was unfortunate for Private ECD who participated in the study sample were taking their duties in the environment which was not favourable to teaching and learning. I observed and counted that they had fewer than five outdoor types of playing materials in most centres there were plastic balls, skipping ropes, tyres and a see-saw outside. In some areas there was virtually nothing except a few vehicle tyres and one swing.

Conclusively, of all the Private ECD centres that were part of the study had scarcity of learning materials to ‘build’ the seven play areas. Although most schools attached to primary schools showed materials for both indoor and outdoor materials, again, learning materials were not even adequate to cater for the large classes enrolled. In support of Vygotsky’s (1978), ideas, if developed according to the true spirit of the
ECD teaching-learning philosophies, the play areas should create conceptual interlinks that lead to the total development of the ECD child. After the school head’s consent, I had the opportunity to take photographs illustrating some of the outdoor playing materials found in one of the schools that participated in this current study. Ethical issues were adhered to by the use of pseudonyms and school code numbers. In addition, the researcher was advised by the Head of School 7 that the learning materials were donated by one of the donors in Mutare District in collaboration with the SDCs of that community. In very few cases where donor agencies were supporting the ECD programme, appropriate buildings and ECD classroom space was created because they built a standard ECD classroom furnished with developmentally appropriate chairs, tables and reading books. Among the interviewed heads who were asked to inform how stakeholders such as parents, commercial people or banks, were supporting their centres. One of the interviewed head from School 7 explained that:

**Head 14:** Stakeholders are really supporting this centre, last year in 2014, the ECD centre received a kit with valid items such as paints, toys, appropriate reading books, crayons from UNICEF and a television set from the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ).

During some lesson observations I carried with the ten ECD centres, I had the opportunity to observe the pupils learning through play, in groups and individually. The researcher had the chance to see how pupils were using the outdoor materials and noted whether they were adequate and developmentally appropriate. The findings were congruent with research studies carried in Uganda that the availability of textbooks emerged to be the most consistent factor in predicting teacher effectiveness towards teaching in primary schools (Kroeger and Cardy’ 2006). The
studies in Uganda had a strong correlation between textbooks, availability in the classroom and pupils’ performance regardless of pupils’ socio-economic status (Kroeger and Cardy’ 2006). The picture below shows some of the outdoor learning materials at one of the ECD centres in Mutare District.

**Fig 1: Examples of outdoor learning materials snapped from one of the ECD centres in Mutare District.**

![Image of outdoor learning materials](image)

**Picture showing outside play area of one of the ECD centres in Mutare urban**

Responding to the same question on stakeholder assistance, Teacher 14 from the same School stated that the centre received donations from individuals, parents and companies. However the head of the school relocated the television set to the School Hall so that it would benefit all school pupils.

From the above quotes, both the teacher and head from School 7 reflected that the administrators usually convert some donated learning items to the advantage of all students at the expense of the beneficiaries for the donations. From my interpretations, this reflected that some administrators were responsible for some of
the challenges experienced by their teachers and sometimes it took ages to aid teachers to find appropriate strategies to overcome challenges. During direct lesson observations the researcher established and recorded the following observations that were observed during lesson observations:

✔ That most of the ECD classes were formal classrooms and this was observed from both urban and rural centres;

✔ Managers of private ECD centres rented residential properties for an ECD centre and some ECD owners had big houses where they could easily make use of the rooms to establish an ECD centre;

✔ I observed that in most of the rural schools, classrooms were roughly constructed and were not built of standard classroom blocks. I made a note that some heads of centres had simply converted an old classroom to accommodate ECDA and ECDB students;

✔ Some teachers resorted to group activity as a teaching approach to overcome the non supply of learning materials that were developmentally appropriate practice to promote a holistic approach;

✔ In the rural areas there was plenty of open space to accommodate the new ECD classes. It was through the class visits I had in the rural schools where I observed that most of the schools were set so many kilometres away from the village houses to the extent that if local authorities were required to extend to the boundaries of the current school, could do so without interfering with the village houses. Therefore, the question of space in most ECD schools in this sector was ruled out as an inhibiting factor for effective implementation;
Although there is great space in this sector, the shadowing I had with the administrators of one of the school gave me the opportunity to discover that the available space was not utilised efficiently, this was evidenced by lack of outdoor playing materials that were supposed to be strategically planted;

Similar to Nziramasanga (1999) and Manjengwa (1994), study’s findings, the observation results of this current study revealed that some rural ECD children who participated in this study had a reflection of being treated as if they were formal pupils. I also made a note that there was very little or no reference that was made to the ECD syllabus as this was observed during classroom observations (Lack of schemes/Plan, no playing centres, non-availability of record books and very few children’s artefacts displayed in some ECD classrooms).

To sum up, Theme 4: ‘lack of space and infrastructure’ was a major factor that emerged through direct lesson observations, interviews and questionnaires submitted to teachers. The findings reflected that lack of space and infrastructure had limitations on some of the learners and the instructors to effectively implement the curriculum. The study established that learning in the rural areas was constrained by lack of sufficient appropriate classrooms and the poor state of the available infrastructures as compared to their counter parts in the urban sector. While ECD schools in the rural sectors were not affected by shortage of space, there was a shortage and inappropriate facilities and very few playing outdoor materials. The implications of the findings of this study supported the findings by UNICEF (2007) on the study they carried on challenges faced by the ECD teachers that the ECD rooms were not designed for the implementation of the ECD curriculum that
sometimes may require demarcated space for various activities or enough space to set up various activities. The subsequent section introduces Theme 5: Quality instruction and managerial skills. The theme emerged from the interviews and open-ended questions from the questionnaire.

**Research question 1:10.2.4.** What quality indicators do ECD teachers and leaders use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum?

**4.15: Theme 5: Quality Instruction and Managerial Skills**

Data was generated through interviews, open ended questionnaires and direct observations carried by the researcher. Theme 5, “Quality instructional and Managerial skills emerged from the specific research question above. These factors that follow also emerged as categories embraced in the broad theme: ‘Quality instructional and Managerial skills’ and the subthemes were teacher competencies on assessment, support by heads, shortage of resting time, crowded classroom and lack of time for recording and they follow in the next paragraphs.

Quality teaching was identified as a key lever for improving outcomes for diverse children by the participants of this study. Drawing from literature, quality teachers are those that use child-centred teaching approaches in well managed classrooms, schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities (Deforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Harris and Goodall, 2006). The theme, ‘Quality Instructional and Managerial Skills’ emerged during individual interviews carried with teachers and heads of schools. Generally, data generated through interviews by teachers and heads of schools had common perceptions that all programmes in early childhood
development education are not equally effective in promoting the learning and development of young children. Research findings of this study depicted that the overall effectiveness of ECD programmes were dependent upon several factors that emerged from the interviewed teachers and heads of centres. The next category to be discussed is teacher competencies on assessment.

**Category 5.1 Teacher Competencies on Assessment**

Teacher competencies on assessment are a subtheme that emerged from the broad theme 5: quality instructional and managerial skills. The theme and the categories were addressing research question: what quality indicators do ECD teachers and leaders to measure the effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum. The ECD curriculum, like any other curriculum, is measured through observation and assessment of ECD classes in action, or under instruction. Barker (1990: 20) defines competence in assessment as the ability to perform activities within an occupational area to level of performance expected in employment. In order to determine the extent of effectiveness in instruction, I discovered quite a number of records used by ECD teachers used for assessment. I had a physical check and I was informed of the following records that were used as indicators for effective implementation of the curriculum. From the interview I had with the ECD teachers, I had the chance to record all the types of assessment records they used in the department and these were: Developmental Records, Social Records, Environmental Records, Health Records, Attendance Register, Anecdotal Record and Progress Record books. The review of related literature in Chapter 11 of this study indicated that teachers coming out of training institutions and those in the field possessed inadequate information on how to use proper methods of instruction and
assessment (Kaputa, 2012). This was confirmed during a separate interview with school heads and ECD teachers. Nearly all the heads indicated that teachers were not competent enough to carry out assessment. However, research studies showed that primary schools practices in England and Greece have reported that teachers’ records tend to emphasise the quantity of learners work rather than its quality and that whilst tasks are often framed in cognitive terms (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). The ECD teachers also confirmed lack of competency on assessment and attributed it to inadequate assessment training in the Teachers’ Colleges. In response to the question on whether they received adequate training, the ECD teachers who participated in this current study confirmation were recorded from the following teacher that:

**Teacher 12:** The training was not much on the applied subjects. [When further probed she responded that] We were only trained in theory and the practical side was not effectively implemented. Our Teachers’ Colleges concentrated on educational courses and our major subjects thereby giving less attention to the applied subjects. Actual learning and implementation of record books as official documents were implemented in the schools.

From the citations above, established that teachers need to be competent in order to perform their duties effectively and incompetent teachers were likely to cause problems in assessment. In consistent with research studies, staff development held in schools helped caregivers to be more responsive to children’s needs and to be better equipped so that they helped children to succeed (Richardson, 2003). Responding to the same issue on assessment, Teacher 12 had the following comments: “Assessment was part of our training, but I don’t think it was thorough because the situation on the ground
is quite demanding now. I am really experiencing challenges to do assessment in ECD department.”

It appeared that, Teachers’ Colleges concentrated on theory and neglected the practical aspect. This being the situation in ECD centres, the competencies necessary to enable the teachers to carry out assessment were low. This confirms the findings by (Valiga and Magel, 2001; Faber, 1998; Gordon and Browne, 1995) In addition to the comments above, follow up interviews I had with the ECD teachers and heads of schools further revealed that schools were doing very little to develop skills of assessment with their staff. This was confirmed by Teacher 5 when she was asked whether or not they received professional development on how assessment recordings were done and this was her response: “I can’t remember doing any since my deployment in this school for the past five years, but I am learning through other teachers and my own experience.” These comments showed that teachers had problems in assessing pupils. This implied that they graduated from Colleges of Education ‘half-baked’ and when they got into the schools; the same ECD teachers received very little support in terms of staff development or in-service courses. I have discovered that some teachers who participated in this study were developing negative attitudes towards evaluation/assessment in ECD curriculum processes. However, Delvin et al., (2011) warns that more availability of materials are therefore, not enough, more innovative ways of understanding how schools work and how quality may be improved are the issues. Data generated through direct lesson observations contacted with all ECD teachers was augmented with
information from official documents that revealed the importance and reasons of observing and assessing the ECD children. Results established that documenting individual growth requires a good deal of research, as the ECD teachers must observe each child in a variety of areas of development (Social, emotional, cognitive, language, motor over a substantial length of time (Ritchie, 2003; OECD, 2006). This concluded that the teacher could only create a documentation piece that told an accurate story about each child with this prolonged time. However, the views from the teachers reflected common understanding of the reasons for carrying out assessment and these reasons are tabulated below.

- Check child’s progress;
- Evaluate appropriateness of the subject matter;
- Improve on teaching strategies;
- Help to plan for other activities;
- Learn more about a child’s particular need;
- Record challenges experienced by both the learner and the teacher and
- Informed of the teaching apparatus.

Although there was evidence of teachers experiencing challenges in assessment, these findings demonstrated some level of awareness among the ECD teachers on the need and significance of assessing and observing the learners. This supported what Kroeger and Cardy (2006) defined a record as a documented proof of transaction. In schools teachers consistently document learners working progress to ensure teachers had evidence of the learner’s growth. The findings of this study saw the effectiveness of the curriculum being enhanced through staff development.
workshops regarding the broad theme ‘quality instructional and managerial skills’.

In agreement with literature that positive teacher-child interaction and continuing professional development each improve programme quality, which in turn contributes to higher levels of child learning and development (Bloom and Paula, 2004; Warren, 2009; Walling and Lewis, 2000). The findings of this study established that the use of assessment records helped educators to get to know and understand children and it allows them to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching practices (Kaputa, 2012). The subsequent subtheme to be discussed was on ‘Supportive heads of schools’. This was also one of the categories that emerged from the broad theme, Quality instructional and managerial skills.

**Sub-Theme 5.2 Supportive Heads of Schools**

Data generated through interviews, direct lesson observations, official documents and open-ended questionnaires from the teachers, heads of schools and SDC representing parents reflected that curriculum change greatly depended on the management support given to the implementers. It was established in this study that the head teacher was one of the people who was supposed to provide necessary support to reduce the limiting factors among teachers. Drawing from related literature Beaty, (2000) urges that the head teacher plays a central role for he/she is involved in the promotion of the acquisition of resources and creating a pleasant climate for teachers to work. However, little is known about the type of support the supervisors provided to the pre-school teachers. Therefore, this was an imperative find out from this current study. It is therefore, fundamental to establish whether or not these heads provided the necessary support.
One other teacher commented her views regarding the emerged sub-theme, ‘support by heads’ and this was what Teacher 16 uttered: “Our head has little knowledge of the ECD processes. Usually the ECD requisitions to learning supplies are considered last in this school.” The comments from the heads reflected little understanding that non-availability of those learning materials were discovered to be one of the major inhibiting factors to effective implementation of the programme. In support of the findings of this study, Van Lee Foundation (2000) identified scarcity of learning materials in the classroom as one of the most serious impediments to educational effectiveness. In support of the findings established that school climate contributed towards school effectiveness. This implied that in a school where there is no bridge between school leadership and teachers the climate is conducive for effective teaching/learning (Kroeger and Cardy, 2006). Regarding the same category about the support given by SDC members, one of the parents revealed the following experiences.

**Parent 7:** *I believe that the head of the school must be the steering wheel directing the development of the school in terms of learning materials, networking with other schools, assisting teachers to reduce barriers to learning. We believe that every need for the ECD class should be the responsibility of the head of the school.*

In my follow-up interview with the DEO-ECD on building school heads’ capacity of ECD, she clarified her belief that:

**District Education Officer:** *Heads of ECD centres are the ones responsible for creating a climate that promotes the optimal learning/teaching growth and development of children as well as implementing systems to ensure that high quality is maintained and learning should be observable.*
The research findings of this study were consistent with Bruno’s, (2012, p.54) study that, “ECD administrators must be able to envision goals, affirm values, motivate staff, achieve unity of purpose and foster norms of continuous improvement for their programs.” Information generated through interviews and institutional documents from teachers and the expert advisors (DEO-ECD) had a general agreement of MOPSE and ECD practitioner about the importance of strong support in ECD programme. In agreement; research studies by Bloom, (2004) suggests that the most capable leaders are those who understand and address challenges from a system wide perspective. However, this study discovered that there was lack of information on building capacity leadership of ECD leaders, particularly in the Zimbabwean context, especially those working in the child care sector. This was a cause of concern because the majority of private ECD leaders assumed their leadership positions without prior management training. From the above quotation, there was evidence of some heads who actually do not understand how ECD curriculum should be implemented. The results of this study share the same sentiments with Matimba (2014) who has the opinion that lack of instructional materials such as syllabi and textbooks negatively affects effective teaching. This implied that workshops for all ECD were paramount to all ECD user-systems in Mutare District.

In summary, the comments by the teachers, the school head and the SDC demonstrated that the teacher’s requests were valued less than the requisition made for the main stream. From the research findings of this study, the majority of teachers who participated in the study established that they needed more help from heads since the assistance provided was not adequate. Therefore, for effective supervision and support, was important that education managers be knowledgeable,
aware and should understand the curriculum and process implementation. The next sub-theme that emerged from the broad theme, Quality instructional and managerial skills from the participating teachers was lack of resting time.

**Sub Theme 5.3 Lack of Resting and Recording Time**

The category ‘Lack of resting and recording time’ emerged through individual interviews and was also established during lesson observations when the researcher asked for official documents and assessment record books. The findings of this study revealed that lack of resting and recording time caused psychological problems for ECD teachers and that situation made them overloaded. This, in turn affected the quality of instruction in their opinion and this was one of the inhibiting factors for effective implementation of the program. The findings were confirmed by one of the participants when she stated that:

**Teacher 5:** Staying for long hours in the class makes me tired because there is no time to waste, evaluation of several record books are done daily. Although, students are dismissed earlier, teachers are dismissed together with the rest of the staff at 1530 hours.

Regarding the problems created by lack of resting and recording time, the ECD teachers who were interviewed elaborated that they needed small and frequent break times or so called resting times in the way that the primary school teachers had.

**Teacher 7:** The purpose from getting relaxed should not be considered as to sit and doing nothing rather it should let teachers to get out of the classroom and change the atmosphere for frequent breaks and these break times of preschool teachers must have been stated legally in the ECD related regulation.
The findings of this study demonstrated that most ECD teachers did not get resting time since it was disturbed by the amount of the workload, especially evaluation of record books that should be done daily. During interviews and lesson observations ECD teachers elaborated the reason of not finding time for writing detailed evaluation as there is a loaded curriculum during the day so this occupies most of the time for teachers. Then, no time is left for teachers to write and complete the evaluation in three parts: (a) evaluation for the plan (b) for each child and finally (c) for the teacher. The results from the above views suggested that, for the ECD students, learning is a process so evaluations should be made for longer time intervals rather than daily routine because they felt that too much work load was created for teachers. One school teacher also stated some reasons of having challenges in planning science and mathematics activities and these were what one of the teachers put forward:

**Teacher 7:** I do not have adequate resources for doing mathematical activities; I am just repeating myself. There is a problem of a variety of resources to make interesting mathematics activities. 'Mazvionaka kuti Science ne-Maths dzinonetsa kubva kana zera irori,' [you can see that science and maths are also difficult subjects for the age range of 3-5 years], that’s why most people in Zimbabwe fail these two subjects, 'kufoira kunobva pamavambo' [failing starts from an early age].

In summary, pre-school teachers explained the reasons of problems related to planning science and mathematics activities through open-ended questionnaire and these were some of the causes that inhibited effective implementation:

- lack of original books;
- materials for doing rich activities;
- shortage of science centre and related equipments and
Negative attitude of school administrators towards science activities for the age group of 3-5 years.

To summarise, the theme, ‘Quality Instructional and managerial skills’ embraces quite a number of sub-themes within that major concept, including, building a leadership capacity, lack of resting and recording time and crowded classroom. The findings of this study reflected that the ECD teachers needed a change of environment after instructional hours and this had affected the quality of teaching. Research findings of this study found out that individual daily evaluation emerged to be unrealistic because of the large enrolment in most of the ECD classes. In my follow-up interview with the DEO-ECD on building leadership capacity of ECD, she clarified her belief that: “Heads of ECD centres are the ones responsible for creating a climate that promoted the optimal growth and development of children as well as implementing systems to ensure that high quality is maintained.”

In attempting to respond to specific research question 1.10.4. What quality indicators do ECD teachers and leaders use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum? The next sub-theme/category to be discussed is crowded classrooms that has also emerged from the specific research question above.

Sub Themes 5.4 Crowded Classrooms

Crowded classrooms was one of the categories that emerged within the broad theme, ‘quality instruction and managerial skills’ that affected the quality of instruction among ECD teachers in Mutare District. This aspect emerged during lesson observations and was also recorded through open-ended questionnaires with the teachers and school heads. It was through the observation done by the researcher and
she had the opportunity to record and described how a crowded classroom looked like.

✓ The rooms were smaller than the prescribed standard measurement ECD rooms;
✓ Too many desks in some of the small rooms;
✓ The seven indoor corners were stuffed in the small room;
✓ The class size of an average of 45 students was accommodated in the same room;
✓ As the chief instrument (researcher) in qualitative data generation, I also noted that there was an elimination of one-to-one interaction between teacher to pupil and pupil to pupil;
✓ Children were restricted from doing free movements because the size of the rooms did not warrant that, therefore, it was a limitation for effective implementation and
✓ The teacher’s movements round the classroom to assist students was limited.

I noticed that the above observations resulted in the teachers dealing with the overall performance of the children rather than finding a chance to interact with each child’s individual needs. Also, the more children ECD teachers had in the classroom, the more they got tired physically and this affected their classroom performance accordingly. In response to the question on the impact of crowded classrooms on quality instructional and managerial skills, Teacher 1 recommended that:

Teacher 1: It really makes me tired and I just feel my mind crowded as the classroom. As soon as I enter this room I start by having a cup of tea while children are doing various playing activities. I have 60 children in my class and they all need my attention individually. As you can see its difficult for us all to move freely around this box room.
Think about how I manage preparing materials for the whole class. ‘Pane nyaya apa madam’ [It’s difficult].

From the above citation, it demonstrated that crowded classrooms was one of the inhibiting factors to effective implementation of the programme because some of the indoor activities were not effective demonstrated due to space limitation. In sum, being in a small classroom environment had some limitations on children’s free choice of activities, creativity and usually it increases in aggressive behaviour among children (Bruce, 2010; Bruce and Meggit, 2005; Jeffries, 2003). So, for teachers, there is an urgent need to build large classroom environment as well as decreasing the number of children in existing small classroom environment.

**Interview Research Question 12** How do ECD centres who successful override challenges related to quality issues accomplish that?

The theme quality and instructional and managerial skills together with the following categories: lack of space and infrastructure teacher competence, lack of resting and recording, supportive heads of schools are discussed in this section. The next paragraphs give out suggestions and proposed strategies generated from all participants of this study. The information was generated through in-depth interviews, questionnaires and documents analysis. The proposed strategies look at how those ECD centres that succeeded in effective implementation accomplished.

- In order to reduce the teacher's workloads, teachers suggested that daily evaluation should be promoted to weekly evaluations to be considered as health and reliable evaluation. The ECD is a learning process, therefore; evaluation should be made for longer time intervals rather than a daily affair;
The ECD teachers explained reasons of having problems with child evaluation as this creates too much workload as teachers are expected to evaluate each child. Their views were that it was unrealistic because of the large enrolment in public schools. As a result, one of the possible solutions was that they preferred making notes in less frequent time intervals. For them it was better to take notes for children when there is need;

Being in a small classroom environment caused the decrease about the kinds of activities and the increase aggressive behaviour among children. As a solution ECD teachers said that teachers should involve in outdoor activities at the most when the weather is favourable;

However, when the weather is not favourable, teachers suggested that they create more space by carrying tables and chairs to one side of the classroom. However, they said it was tiring to reshape the classroom environment in each time when there is need for activities with movements, and it is vital to provide harmony among children;

There is an urgent need to build large classroom environment as well as decreasing the number of ECD existing small classroom environment;

One of the consequences of being in a small classroom environment clarified by the preschool teachers was the limitations about the kinds of the activities they do. They elaborated that once the classrooms are small and not suitable for the activities with movements, the teacher’ selection would be limited to table activities;

The ECD teachers explained that crowded classrooms cause a decrease in the overall quality of the education carried out in classroom. Therefore, teachers will
resort to more teacher directed and guided activities chosen to be carried out within the classroom environment;

- The preschool teachers stressed that there is nothing they could do to overcome the challenge of crowded classroom. The policy says the pupil teacher ratio is 1--20 pupils. The solution is to stick to policies so as to enhance effective implementation and promote productive education environment.

The following section discusses theme 6: Triangulation and ECD processes. The broad theme emerged from the specific research question stated below.

**Specific Research Question 1.10.2.4.** What quality indicators do ECD teachers and leaders use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum?

**4.16. Theme 6: Triangulation and ECD Processes**

**4.16.1. Results Concerning the Triangulation and ECD Learning Processes**

This section covered Theme 6: ‘Triangulation and ECD processes’ that emerged through interviews, lesson observations, document analysis and questionnaires. The sub-themes also emerged in support of the main theme and these were: play and talk as tools for learning, Thematic Approach and Integrated curriculum. Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources. In particular, it referred to the application and combination of several teaching methods in studying the same phenomenon (Punch, 2002, Patton, 2002). Data generated through in-depth interviews, open ended questions and direct lesson observation demonstrated that the ECD curriculum could
best be taught through play and talk as tools for learning. Some teachers were applying the thematic approach and the integrated curriculum during instructional periods. The three approaches were the major subthemes that emerged through the same data generating instruments. The next paragraphs discussed the three subthemes that emerged from the theme triangulation and ECD processes. The subtheme that follows was: play and talk as tools for learning, the thematic approach and the integrated curriculum.

**Category 6.1 Play and Talk as Tools for Learning**

Early childhood professionals apply strategies to support sustained and shared interactions with children through play to more focused learning. Learning is an active process that must involve children’s engagement. Play is essential for its ability to stimulate and integrate a wide range of children’s intellectual, physical, social and creative abilities. Early childhood education is underpinned by a strong tradition which regards play as essential to learning and development. The information generated from interviewed ECD practitioners, heads of schools and parents described the sub-theme, ‘play and talk’ method of teaching as a child centred informal way method of teaching such that it suits the interest of the child and improves the acquisition of skills. Apart from challenges experienced by the user system in applying play way method there were also benefits of this approach to ECD learning. When Teacher 14 was asked to give more light on challenges she faced when implementing the play and talk way method, this was what she stated:

**Teacher 14:** There must be all the play areas in the classroom and adequate outdoor learning activities to promote effective learning through play. However, there is great need to have a variety of playing materials appropriate for each development, which off-
course most of our private ECD centres fail to supply and this is a limiting factor to effective implementation.

From the research findings from the teachers, school heads and SDC, they all had suggested for a universal understanding on the appropriate methods that should be used for all ECD programme from a national level. This was suggested because there was need for the user systems to increase equity and access of young children regarding their learning through play way methods centred to the play areas appropriate for them. The findings of this study supported Bruce, Meggit and Grenier (2011), who urged educators to choose teaching strategies that best fit our students. This was done by using our knowledge of children, child development and how they learn, how to plan curriculum, understanding what the goals are and applying different learning styles (Artfield and Wood, 2005; Bruce et al., 2010). The SDC’s who participated in this study had the following views regarding learning through play:

**The SDC Chairperson 9:** The best learning method for this age group is through play. Even at home the children are found to be playing all the time. However, some teachers may face problems because of shortage of learning materials that I feel must be provided by us parents. But some parents believe that play is wasting learning time, they want to see children quiet and busy writing in books/paper.

Data generated through in-depth interviews, lesson observations and open-ended questions answered the following questions regarding effective implementation of ‘play and talk’ method.

a) What type of plays are children engaged in?

b) What is the child doing in the play activity?
c) What is the benefit of the child in the play?

d) What observable behaviour can be recorded for further planning?

e) What learning processes can be acknowledged?

f) What challenges are children experiencing in play?

g) What inhibiting factors do teachers experience in applying the play way method?

In addressing the above questions, I identified three levels that could be used to understand the relationships between play, learning and development. First at a broad level, comments from the participants revealed that play was understood as contributing to the holistic development of the child. In this study, play and talk in the words of Froebel (1837) is the highest phase of child development and the most purest most spiritual activity of man at this stage, and at the same time, typical of human life as a whole (Bruce and Meggit, 2005; Tassoni and Hucker, 2005). Research findings of this study supported the views by philosopher Froebel (1837) and there was evidence that ECD teachers use play as a strong teaching approach. From an analytical point of view, if play was developed according to the true spirit of ECD teaching and learning philosophies, the play areas should create conceptual interlinks that lead to the total development of the ECD child (Vygotsky, 1978; Tassoni, 2000). As I contacted direct lesson observations, there was evidence of various set-ups of play areas displayed in ECD classrooms and I had the opportunity to compare the quality and quantity of play learning materials displayed on each play area. The findings of this study discovered that there was no uniformity among the ten ECD centres that participated in this study. This implied that there were no standards that were regulating the management and effective implementation of the curriculum. The findings were contrary to the national standard guidelines of the
ECD policy regarding implementation (Circular 12 of 2004 and 2005). Hildebrand (1986) cited in Bruce et al., (2010) describes play area as area of larger playroom which are partially enclosed by low storage shelves and contain the needed material and equipment for a certain type of play. The ECD play areas in Mutare District had no match with the standards set-ups that were displayed in most of the centres that participated in this study regardless of geographical status (rural/ urban /private /public). I consistently, observed that play areas viewed along this definition implied that ECD instructors should set up the classroom to provide developmentally appropriate learning environments, play that cannot play activities and labels that motivate ECD children to view each area as a zone for developing certain skills (Bruce, 2010; Fisher, 2008).

To sum up through the analysis of the data, four overlapping themes of this study have revealed that it is only through play and talk activities that can enhance both the ECD learner and the teacher to effectively override factors that inhibit programme implementation. The ECD curriculum focussed its attention on the child, stressing aspects of development such as a whole, including movement, communication, play symbolic behaviour, emotional development and relationships (Bruce et al., 2010; Bruce and Meggit, 2005). The findings of this study are congruent and supported by the ideas of Maria Montessori (1870-1952) who through her sensory materials saw children as active learners through participation with concrete aids. Frederick Froebel (1782-1778) who invented fingers play songs and rhymes and his theory valued symbolic behaviour through block play which he called gifts Margaret MacMillan (1860-1931); Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925); Artfield and Wood, 2005). Traditionally, these early philosophers introduced ECD
curriculum that is centred on play and talk as tools for learning of the young child and these ideas were adopted by the Zimbabwean curriculum. The next subtheme that emerged from the broad theme of triangulation of ECD processes was Thematic Approach. It is also a category that addressed the specific research question 1.10.4: What quality indicators do ECD teachers and leaders use to measure effectiveness of curriculum?

**Sub-Theme 6:2 Thematic Approaches and its benefits**

Qualitative data generated through artefacts such as children’s work, art work or write ups and institutional official documents including record books or schemes of work showed that most teachers who participated in this study adopted a Thematic Approach to teaching. This was confirmed by the qualitative data generated through in-depth interviews with the teachers and direct lesson observations that I conducted on the benefit of a thematic approach to ECD children. From the data generated through the interviews by the ECD teachers to demonstrate whether the thematic approach was beneficial to the learners and the instructors, research findings showed that all teachers who participated had common understanding of the benefits of using the Thematic Approach. To confirm the above findings below was a summary of how the learners benefit from the approach as was observed by the researcher:

- The thematic approach helps pupils understand connections and how to connect;
- It helps both the ECD teachers and pupils to draw connections from the real world;
- It promotes well rounded pupils because they experience many different learning activities;
• Can integrate all subjects and use literacy within those subjects;
• The approach keeps pupils engaged through making learning activities fun;
• Pupils have choice in what they learn;
• There is room to utilise collaboration and cooperative learning;
• Pupils share the same learning goals;
• Most activities were child-centred;
• The approach is time saver because the teacher introduces multiple subjects at once;
• There was a relationship of activities to the daily lives of children;
• The teaching/ learning follows the students’ needs;
• The approach provides activities that built on children’s previous experiences;
• The Thematic approach promotes a sense of community by working together, and
• There is a wide coverage of different subject matter under one theme.

Research conducted by famous Child Development Scientists, Piaget (1976), Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner’s findings were similar to the results of the current study that suggested that integrating subject matter across different content areas, such as mathematics and science, engages the whole brain through active and hands-on-involvement. Research findings from the teachers, supported the pragmatist John Dewey, the philosopher who holds the views that by following children’s interests, activities emerge spontaneously and can be differentiated into separate areas of study (Bruce and Meggit, 2005). The study findings revealed that ECD teachers lacked the necessary learning materials and resources required for effective implementation of the approach and non-availability of resources influenced the implementation of thematic approach in ECDs.
However, the next category that emerged from the broad theme, ‘Triangulation and ECD processes were ‘integrated curriculum’. This category emerged from the interviews and direct lesson observation and document analysis

**Sub-Theme 6.3 Integrated Curriculums**

Integrated teaching and learning approaches focus on the interweaving of child-directed play and learning, guided play and learning, and adult-led learning. Integrated teaching and learning means that early childhood professionals build opportunities in early childhood programs for children to interact with their environment, both physical and social (Tregenza, 2006). The ECD curriculum ideally caters for children across a wide range of developmental levels such as children with advanced literacy and language skills and children with disabilities, auditory impairment, speech and language skills and children with mild mental handicaps (Bruce et al., 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). Data generated through interviews from the teachers stated that they were responsive to the integrated curriculum; research findings reflected that most of teachers were experiencing some challenges during the implementation process. Research findings of this study revealed that successful integrated approaches to learning/teaching move children from where they are in terms of understanding and build on this using real life examples to make learning engaging and relevant. Research findings of this study support contemporary evidence that show that the best outcomes for children occur when there is an integrated approach to teaching/learning (Sylva, Sira, Blatchford and Taggart, 2003; Sylva, et al., 2007). Among the interviewed teachers, one of the teachers spelt out the following sentiments they experience in applying the integrated curriculum.
**Teacher 7:** Yes, the curriculum calls for an integrated curriculum, but it needs special attention from those teachers who are qualified. Above all, the syllabus just mentions literally but it does not give the methodology with pupils with disability of any kind. There is need for schools to establish a class of students with disability because they are not receiving inclusive education at all.

In addition, one of the teachers shared with me her experiences with children with disabilities in her classroom:

**Teacher 9:** I don’t have the knowhow of caring such children with mental retardation. Most of the students are very slow in the acquisition of skills and the student does not complete any work given to him/her on time. Usually, he is eliminated from group activities by the other peers, making him stigmatized and isolated.

When I had a physical check of official documents (schemes of work and records), there was evidence that the integrated curriculum was not included in most of the plans of teachers who constituted the sample. When I asked some of the teachers why they were not planning for integrated curriculum and yet this class had two students with mental retardation.

**Teacher 14:** I don’t plan individual activities or separate plans for normal and disabled students because of the large enrolment I have in this class. Instead, I plan basing on the average child excluding the disabled students. If I plan separately it means that I will have discriminated the Special Needs children.

The above citations from teachers reflected that they needed to be work-shopped on the special care given to children with disability. The findings of this study were in agreement with Bundy (2002) who suggested that lack of understanding of a disability in a child has consequences on the care of children with special needs. The
interviewed SDC who participated in this study viewed parents as one of the factors that caused barriers to effective integrated curriculum implementation. The responses from the teachers and parents reflected that successful implementation of the integrated curriculum in the ECD requires the education of both teachers and parents to understand the care of disabled students. Consistent with literature (Bundy (2002) suggest that lack of understanding of a disability in a child has consequences on the care of children with specials needs.

To summarise, the theme, ‘triangulation of ECD processes’ embraces the following sub-themes, play and talk as tools for learning, thematic approaches and integrated curriculum. This study suggested for ECD teachers to have professional development in their centres. Research findings of this study have noted its continuing improvement and support for teachers to improve quality in preschool experiences. Data generated through artefacts and institutional official documents showed that the thematic approach in the ECD centres under study incorporated reading, mathematics, science, social studies as well as art. The integration of different subjects in the ECD syllabus was to promote a holistic approach within the learning processes. The key to a child’s learning in this study, was to provide a learning environment that would allow the child to become secure and happy within the context in which they are living and developing. Meek (1989)’s findings cited in Wasik et al., (2002) stated that the required characteristics of a motivating teacher are concern and caring for the ECD students. These studies were similar to findings of this current study. However, the major theme, ‘triangulation of ECD processes’ together with its orienting sub-themes had been viewed to support the national policy of developing the whole child. This was achieved through triangulation of learning processes adopted for effective implementation.
Interview question 13: How do ECD teachers overcome challenges related to the use of thematic and integrated approaches?

4.17 What are the practices to achieve the best teaching/learning in an integrated approach?

Data generated through lesson observation and in-depth interviews describing how ECD teachers overcome challenges related to the use of thematic and integrated approaches. According to the findings of this current research, ECD teachers know the importance and significance of learning development in the early years but are often divided in terms of what constituted the best practice or high quality. Research studies showed that traditionally, Australian ECD learning environments have been heavily influenced by developmental paradigm and constructivist learning theories, with Piaget and Vygotsky’s work often dominating the agenda (Berk, 2009; Edwards, 2005). From the findings of this study, results revealed that the Zimbabwean ECD also adopted the same theories in curriculum implementation.

The researcher summarized all responses from the teachers who participated in this study who responded to the interview question that sought to find out how ECD teachers overcome challenges related to the use of thematic and integrated approaches. The findings also revealed the practices to achieve the best teaching/learning in an integrated approach.

- In order for children to have a strong sense of identity and should feel connected to their world by teaching through experiments, trips and outdoor activities;
- To have a strong sense of wellbeing and to be confident and effective communicators in all walks of life;
Early childhood professionals need to take an active role in children’s learning. Teachers should provide a range of examples of how everyday experiences can be used to develop literacy and numeracy concepts based on children’s own interests and experiences;

Effective early childhood professionals establish a learning culture where children have the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities which explore the same concepts in a variety of meaningful and engaging ways (Dockett and Perry, 2009).

There is need for both parents views the importance of engaging with even the youngest of infants and providing stimulating, meaningful and culturally relevant and responsive interactions;

Learner-centred practice allows children to explore and experience the world around them in a way that best suits their individual interests and learning style;

Integrated teaching and learning approaches are most effective when they are interactive, physical, and concrete and involve people, materials and the environment. Young children need practical, hands on learning experiences based on their interests and individual developmental level;

Extended interactions with infants in everyday activities prove essential for children to engage in learning (Hutchins and Sims, 1999). Research invariably shows that the experiences in the very early years have a powerful influence on later outcomes (Barnett, 1995; Hutchins, 1995; Katz, 2003a; OECD, 2006).

Learner-centred practice allows children to explore and experience the world around them in a way that best suits their individual interests and learning style (Dewey, 1915).
Integrated teaching and learning approaches are most effective when they are interactive, physical, and concrete and involve people, materials and the environment. Young children need practical, hands on learning experiences based on their interests and individual developmental level. Like adults, children learn from their mistakes as well as their successes. When early childhood professionals create a culture for this to happen, children’s thinking and learning is enhanced (Walsh et al., 2006). The next section covers the Chapter summary of the discussed aspects and findings.

4.18: Chapter Summary

The purpose of this current study was to analyse factors that inhibited effective implementation faced by ECD teachers in order to develop a holistic development. The qualitative data was generated through in-depth interviews, questionnaires with open ended items, institutional documents and artefacts. The results of this study were oriented by the broad research question in paragraph 1.10.1. The chapter’s findings were deduced from the specific research questions in paragraph 1.10.2. The Chapter had six themes and categories that emerged from the main themes focussing on barriers to effective implementation of the ECD curriculum and they emerged from the participants in the study sample that included the ECD teachers, heads of schools, SDC, lecturers and the DEO. The six main themes that emerged through the interviews, questionnaires, institutional and document analysis addressed both the broad research question and five specific research questions orienting this study.

The findings of this study were also supported by review of related literature and the findings were put in the context of the constructivist and interpretative approaches,
the philosophies guiding this study. As was indicated in the emerged themes and categories, research findings indicated that most ECD centres were facing challenges in the implementation processes caused by unclear educational policies, lack of learning/teaching materials, inappropriate infrastructure, lack of parental involvement and teacher incompetency in the teaching approaches used in ECD department. The subsequent Chapter 5 provides the summaries, findings, conclusions, interpretations of the research findings basing on the specific research questions and assumptions. The closing Chapter provides the way forward recommendations, which could be implemented when the findings of this thesis are published to enhance the quality of ECD education.
CHAPTER 5

THESIS SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The concluding Chapter of this qualitative thesis is Chapter 5 which explored the summary of the thesis from Chapter 1 to Chapter 4 correspondingly. The Chapter also discussed the themes and findings emanating from the specific research questions orienting this study. There is room for the Chapter to provide interpretations of the research findings. There are recommendations for practising the way forward and to guide decisions about the quality of education regarding the ECD programmes and further research that could be embarked on by other budding researchers. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary and finally the thesis references and the appendices section is prepared.

5.2 Summary of the Thesis

In Chapter 1 there was provision of the introductory background to the study that stipulated that there was a problem in the definition and job description of ECD teachers. The teachers were expected to be health care providers, family counsellors, diagnosticians, programme managers and child development experts (Sadker and Sadker, 2008). The introduction of ECD has increased the meaning and significance of teaching and learning within the education system. The rapid expansion in the demand for education has resulted in the ECD centres being manned by teachers
who did not have the professional experience, training and professional supervision. One fundamental aspect of the background to the problem was the Education Act of 2004 on which all approaches of the programme balances. The statement of the problem raised this question: What should be the blueprint or standards for effective curriculum implementation that ensures coverage of all aspects of the ECD students to promote a holistic approach? The statement of the problem which also influenced the purpose of this current study was outlined as to critically identify and analyse how effective teachers and administrators collaboratively overcome challenges related to implementation of the ECD programme in Mutare District.

For this study, I delimited my study to ECD centres of the age group of 3 to 5 years and this was carried out in Mutare District. The study area was appropriate because it provided all the characteristics (urban, rural and private centres) that provided answers to the broad research question and later on the specific research questions. The interview and questionnaire guiding questions were developed from the specific research questions as tabulated in Chapter 1: 10.2 of this thesis:

Chapter 2 provided critical information offered by the review of related literature to answer the research questions identified in Chapter 1.10; 1.10.1 & 1.10.2) of this study. The researcher analysed the global historical perspectives of ECD and attention was given to pre-independence history of ECD in Zimbabwe. The implications of the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (1999) recommends that the operation of ECD centres and programmes should be regulated by the provisions of the Education Act of 2004 and 1996 that made sure that all ECD centres were attached to the nearest primary school for management and supervision. In this section, the researcher only referred to those
theories that are related to ECD learning and teaching. Classical and modern theories of Early Childhood Education Development were reviewed. Finally, Chapter 2 established the following gaps that I identified in the review of related literature.

✔ Although reviewed literature attempted to answer some of the research questions, there was a gap between the national policy formulation and the user system and I noted that the gap was too wide due to flawed assumptions regarding the implementation of the ECD curriculum.

✔ From the Zimbabwean context, literature is soundless on empirical research carried to evaluate the competency of graduated ECD teachers from various teachers’ Development Colleges. The main thrust of this study was to cover this gap in literature when the results established teacher competence.

✔ There is very little literature to show the types of challenges experienced by Private ECD centres in comparison to public urban and rural centres from a Zimbabwean context. This study provided comparative comprehensive information on types of challenges experienced by the urban, rural and independent sectors and more new findings will add more literature on strategies that might be used by the ECD user system to overcome specific challenges.

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to describe the research methodology used to generate data that would address the specific research problem. The philosophical and theoretical frameworks bases underpinning this study were from the interpretive tradition and the grounded theory. I supported Galati’s (2011) ideas that both theories help to understand how participants from this study understood and defined the phenomenon under study because they gave voice to the participants. They are study adopted a qualitative research paradigm. The target population was 177
centres in Mutare Urban District, both public and private sectors. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select a sample size of 57 participants and was directed by the concept of saturation when establishing the total sample. The data generation techniques were interviews, questionnaires, classroom lesson observations and institutional artefacts and document analysis (Appendices A, B, C, D, E & F). The issue of trustworthiness in this qualitative research involved aspects of transferability, credibility, dependability and conformability.

In Chapter 4, I adopted Marshall and Rossman’s (2006) ideas on data analysis and presentation, these were (a) organising data, (b) immersion in the data, (c) generating themes and categories, (d) coding the data, (e) offering interpretations and finally (f) writing the report. Chapter 4 presented data, analysed and interpreted the data in line with the emerged themes and subthemes. There were proved with supportive direct quotations from the participants and review of related literature drawn from Chapter 2 of this study. The Chapter had six themes and various subthemes that also emerged from the main themes focussing on barriers to effective implementation of the ECD curriculum and these themes and categories emerged from the participants.

5.3 Findings of the Study

The findings of this study were deduced from the specific research questions and the broad research question. The research questions of this study were guided by the responses generated from the interview guiding questions, open ended questions from the questionnaire, direct lesson observations guide and responses from
document analysis. The findings of this study were presented following the sequence of the specific research questions.

**Interview question 1: Results concerning biographic data of all participants of this study**

The current research findings on the bio-data showed that most ECD instructors were mature in working with young children. The findings were congruent with the Zimbabwe’s patriarchal society ideology that gender roles and responsibilities for child rearing are usually the primary responsibility of the females. The findings on age and gender had similar ideas by participants in this current study and a strong agreement with other research findings investigated by Decker and Decker (2001) whose findings on age and gender of participants had a bearing on the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. The findings on perceptions of the society in involving men in teaching young children, established that men generally lack day-to-day involvement with younger children particularly infants.

The findings indicated that most of the participants had a common agreement that achievements of educational policies are implemented effectively only when the field is manned by qualified personnel. There was a central finding by this research that qualified personnel were capable of achieving good results in this department. This finding was congruent with literature, that lack of human resources is the major obstacle to the success of the ECD programme (Nyandiya-Bundy, 2000).
From the demographic data generated, findings indicated that the majority of heads who participated in this study had been in supervision for more than twenty one years, while others had forty years of experience. However, most heads were not experienced in working with ECD pupils in particular.

**Specific Research Question1.10.2.1:** What specific factors/challenges do participants meet when implementing the prescribed ECD programme?

One of the major research findings showed that some of the encountered challenges originated from the definition of ECD that added a very comprehensive workload by giving ECD teachers other crucial duties apart from the traditional roles teachers have always assumed. Critical analysis of the definition as discussed in Chapter I of this study clearly evidenced challenges that would affect both the user-systems and the child to effectively teach/learn holistically, since the curriculum demands the ECD teacher to be the manager of the ECD curriculum, health and care providers, the diagnostic teacher, family counsellor and curriculum implementer.

A critical analysis of the ECD policy and the history of the programme indicated that the rationale for the policy was to solve problems of access and equity. But there was dearth of guidelines on how the ECD programme was going to be effectively implemented as the gap that was identified in the review of related literature of this study. Though, an important finding showed that there were some degrees of lack of access, equity and quality exerted by unclear educational policy among ECD centres who participated in this study. In addition, the policy is silent on the pedagogical approaches used to surmount challenges experienced by the ECD user-systems;
therefore, this finding was one of the factors inhibiting effective implementation of the curriculum.

**Specific Research Question 1.10.2.2: How do internal factors militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?**

The direct observation reports noted that there was inappropriate infrastructure and learning facilities by most ECD centres particularly in private ECD centres where residential houses were converted to an ECD classroom and very few ECD centres conducted lessons under thatched shed where one could hardly find learning charts, chalkboard and benches for the pupils. The findings demonstrated a poor and demotivating learning environment for both the pupils and the instructors; hence, it has been concluded to be an obstruction to effective implementation of the curriculum.

From the direct lesson observations contacted, the findings noted were that ECD pupils were still viewed as ordinary primary school pupils and this forced the ECD teachers to ‘pull’ and ‘push’ the pupils to adapt to the unfriendly environment. I came to a conclusion that teachers’ negative attitudes were influenced by inappropriate facilities and lack of adequate learning materials. Due to these challenges I can sum up that there was a reflection of a very marginal improvement since the establishment of the ECD policy of attaching the 3-5 year age group to primary schools since 2004 to 2005.

The findings reflected that in terms of teaching approaches very few ECD teachers were adopting the thematic approach, the integrated curriculum and the theoretical perspectives their syllabus demanded. I discovered that most of the para-
professionals experienced great challenges to comprehend the implications of the theories related to ECD programme development. Therefore, lack of this knowledge proved several challenges experienced by the user systems.

From the data generated through direct lesson observations of the entire participating sample, these were a summary of the observations regarding challenges faced by most ECD teachers.

✓ Some teachers emphasized child-centred approach to teaching, teacher child participation and pupil to pupil interaction;
✓ In terms of teaching approaches, some ECD teachers were adopting the thematic approach, integrated curriculum and some of the theoretical perspectives of Maria Montessori, the developmental Cognitivists Jean Piaget and the pragmatist John Dewey.
✓ There were excessive workloads in the ECD programme including planning, teaching, evaluation done daily and weekly, daily safety checking of learning materials and daily routines and
✓ In this study, it could therefore, be concluded that the MOPSE in Zimbabwe did not give priority to ECD department from its inception in all primary school since 2004. The MOPSE only provided theoretical assistance related to the supply of the syllabus and related policies regarding to Statutory Instruments that only gave guide-lines of how the ECD should get started and these did not include independent ECD centres nationally.
✓ Most ECD classes that participated had an average teacher pupil ratio of 1-50. These large classes were more dominant in ECD centres attached to primary schools unlike the teacher pupil ratio of independent ECD centres which had an
average pupil ratio of 1-15. The large enrolments were influenced by the need to raise allowances for para-professionals and purchase of learning materials for the ECD classes as well.

✓ Shortage of learning materials was confirmed by the researcher’s observations that there were not enough benches in some rural schools and I also observed that very few pupils were writing while they were seated on the floor and others were writing while they were standing since the benches were not developmentally appropriate and user-friendly.

✓ From the interviews and direct lesson observation carried with private ECD centres from both urban and rural schools, research findings showed that there was shortage of space and inappropriate infrastructure used by some ECD centres that constituted the participating sample.

**Specific Research Question1.10.2.3:** How does parental and external stakeholders’ involvement enhance the effective implementation of ECD programme?

Parents’ level of education will influence their views on whether they have sufficient skills and knowledge to engage in different aspects of parental Involvement”. The educational levels of the parents were reflected as a barrier to effective implementation of the ECD curriculum since the parents were divorced from maximum participation in the school, implying those parents’ contributions in terms of knowledge was minimal.

The DEO’s response emphasised on parents and teachers working collaboratively in order to improve the quality towards the effective implementation of educational
programme, particularly the ECD centres where a firm parental coordination is needed most. The findings from the participants established that schools should maintain positive attitudes so that they are in the position to draw parents closer to their learning centre. Congruent with literature, Chamberlain, (2005; Click, (2000) and Cole, (2004) acknowledged that co-operation with parents in the school was important for the success of their children and their exclusion therefore, would not build a strong foundation for both the school and achievement of their children in the early learning stages.

Specific Research Question1.10.2.4: What quality and instructional indicators do ECD teachers and leaders use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD curriculum?

One of the major findings showed that the quality of teachers in their educational work is the most important factor influencing the implementation of the educational curriculum which in turn impacts the achievement outcomes. These findings reflected that lack of qualified and experienced personnel suggested that teachers were providing instruction produced ‘half-baked’ students and provided under-quality education to ECD pupils especially in these days of expected good standards.

The preschool teachers stressed that there is nothing they could do to overcome the challenge of crowded classroom. The policy says the pupil teacher ratio is 1-20 pupils. The solution is to stick to policies so as to enhance effective implementation and promote productive education environment.
There was evidence that the ECD education policy model was evaluated theoretically but the researcher took a critical analysis on how lack of unclear policy documentation affected effective implementation, considering the situation on the ground. The policy is silent on how the 3-4 year age and 4-5 year age group will be taught regarding the composite classes with different ages.

The findings of this research indicated that the application of the DAP approach was quite applicable if there were adequate provision of learning materials with a manageable class size in agreement with the findings by Eggen & Kauchak, 2007; Pelo, 2008 regarding the effectiveness of DAP approaches in the learning of ECD pupils.

**Specific Research Question**: How do institutional artefacts and classroom documents used by the ECD teacher augment the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?

From the views by the teachers, it reflected that although they were aware of the use of various records, research findings showed that most teachers were not comfortable with record-keeping. There were further indications from results generated from heads of schools that they also faced challenges and showed lack of knowledge on the use of records management. The findings of this study established that the use of assessment records helps educators get to know and understand children and it allows them to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching practices.
5.4 Conclusions Drawn from the Findings of the Study

The study was meant to critically analyse factors that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum and sought to establish strategies to overcome those challenges. On examining the bio-data data it was established that most of the teachers in ECD schools were females. There was a significant gender gap because the male figure was not imminent in most of the ECD centres under study. Therefore, I concluded that there is need to educate the society on gender roles and Teachers’ Development Colleges should train more male teachers despite the societal negative perceptions towards the male figure.

On analysing the age of teachers and heads of schools, the conclusions reflected that most participants were mature as reflected on distribution Table .1. The findings on age and gender had similar ideas by participants in this study and also supported research findings by Decker and Decker (2001) who found out that age and gender of participants had both positive and negative bearing on the implementation of the ECD curriculum.

On the question of qualification and teaching experience by teachers and school heads, the majority of the ECD teachers were para-professionals who were holders of Certificate of Attendance and others qualified teachers had attained Diploma in Education and some heads had Diploma in Educational Management. Others were retired teachers with Primary Teacher’s Lower Certificate (PTL). The researcher concluded that generally, most teachers attached to primary schools were qualified for the job while those attached to private ECD were semi skilled (para-professionals). This meant that there was need for teachers who were professionally
trained for the job. If teachers are semi skilled, it reflected that they lacked theoretical knowledge of the subject matter. This was the reason why the MOPSE prepared an official syllabus for training para-professionals since the main thrust was to standardise the scope and content of their training. Therefore, lack of training was concluded as an inhibiting factor for effective curriculum implementation.

Taking cognisance of the years of experience by the teachers and school heads of the participating schools, the researcher concluded that lack of experience as a factor that inhibited effective implementation. The study further examined the availability of learning materials in the school. The ten schools showed a discrepancy of resource availability with the majority operating with very little or no supply. There was evidence of data generated through in-depth interviews and direct lesson observations that I carried in each of the ten schools and I summed up that lack of learning resources was one of the major factors that thwarted the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. These findings were in agreement with reviewed related literature which recognized that learning resource materials, reading books, learning facilities and infrastructure are very instrumental for effective implementation (Bruce and Meggit, 2005; Morrison, 2001). Therefore, these findings were the major barriers to both pupils and the teachers’ competence in Mutare District ECD centres who participated in this study.

Generally, most ECD centres were relying on the support of their parents. To sum up SDC in all the ten schools that participated in this current study were considered to be the corner-stone of the development of the ECD centres. Therefore, there is great need to improve relationships with the community at large. One SDC chairperson from one of the Private ECD centres went to an extent of carrying class supervision
of ECD teachers. However, this was a sign of lack of knowledge on their roles as parents and I concluded that such parents do not know their boundaries of participation in the school. The research results evaluated the head’s managerial skills and there were quality indicators of lack of knowledge of their job description regarding the SDC. As a result, the finding of this study concluded that parental involvement was one of the major factors that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD programme.

On the issue of enrolment, the findings of this study showed that most ECD centres attached to primary schools had an average teacher pupil ratio of 1:55 pupils and all these pupils would be in one classroom that had no standard measurements stipulated in the Statutory Instrument Number 106 of 2005 and Director’s Circular Number 12 of 2004. The researcher concluded that such figures had negative implications to both the teacher and the pupils in terms of individual assistance, free movements, adequacy of learning materials and record management. The conclusions reflected that large enrolments were influenced by internal and external factors within a particular school and these were applied without realising the negative impact they had on curriculum implementation, hence, teachers experienced difficulty in finding appropriate strategies to override the challenges. There is need to revisit the ECD educational regulations and view whether there were challenges experienced by the user-systems regarding pupils enrolment registers.

On the education policy that stipulates ‘Education Act for All’, current literature points out that it only stipulated guidelines but as a researcher, I summed up that there was still evidence of lack of access, equity and quality put forth by unclear
Educational Policies and have been recorded as factors that inhibited effective implementation of the curriculum. Again, the integration policy of ECD into education structures rather than running parallel had implications to playing space, sanitation, classrooms and water supply. Therefore, the researcher concluded that the practice militated against achievement of the National policy of developing the whole child and above all, attainment of quality education.

On examining the issue of DAP, the researcher concluded that the practice requires the ability of the ECD care-giver in selecting the appropriate teaching strategies, since the current literature is silent on the instructive procedures. Consequently, I as the researcher, had similar conclusions with (Eggen and Kauchak, 2007; Beaty, 2007; Noddings, 2000) that DAP has direct hands-on approach, full of learning materials, activities and interactions that led to different kinds of knowledge that ECD pupils should acquire. Therefore, these findings were considered to be some of the factors that inhibited effective implementation of the ECD programme. From the researcher’s theoretical perspective, I also concluded that Piaget’s (1980) work is still valued as a guiding principle in ECD and is seen as a breaking ground for the way ECD teachers understand how ECD pupils think, process information and learn. However, the conclusions were that in some centres these aspects were not accomplished and had a negative impact on effective implementation and some of the care-givers found barriers to overcome the challenges experienced.

On the issue of play, current literature concluded that play is an assimilation learning process that meant that children were able to assimilate a variety of roles and use play as the appropriate teaching approach to represent real life contexts such as building or relating to others. Failure to apply this approach to ECD pupils would
create obstruction on the acquisition of life skills for future use in the formal learning. Therefore, I concluded that all schools should have provision of adequate and developmentally appropriate playing facilities were the necessary tools needed to overcome challenges experienced by the user-systems in Mutare District ECD centres. These conclusions supported the findings by Piaget’s (1978) reports that children pass through stages of development that are associated with the type of play they naturally engage in (Morrison, 2001; Noddings, 2007; Akinpelu, 1981).

On examining stakeholder involvement, the researcher concluded that the Zimbabwe government reflected that the government plays a crucial role to ensure successful implementation of the ECD programme. As a researcher, I wrapped up that apart from the Statutory Instrument Number 106 of 2005 and the syllabi provided to primary schools, it was revealed that there was lack of adequate assistance from the MOPSE. In terms of Per- Capita grants that used to be given to all schools, lack of provision has negatively affected effective implementation of the ECD programme, particularly the private ECD centres that only depend upon the parents of the children enrolled. In support of the current literature (UNICEF, 2009), I summed up that there was a dearth of literature that the government has availed on the implementation of the ECD curriculum. Therefore, if the government fails to service its people, the findings of this current study recorded this failure to be one of the barriers to programme implementation from a Zimbabwean context.
5.5 Way Forward

The following recommendations drawn from the findings of this study may facilitate recommendations for practice and for further research. These recommendations may help the ECD user-systems to minimise the challenges experienced during learning.

5.5.1 Recommendations for Teachers

There is need for teachers and heads to have staff development and workshops on record management. There is need to have workshops with ECD teachers in collaboration with heads of schools on teaching approaches, particularly, the thematic approach, integrated approach and the play way method. Collaboratively, they would work towards applicable strategies that may be used to minimise the challenges faced on each record by the user-system.

The quality of education offered by private pre-school centres should be improved to match primary schools offering a similar quality of education. The findings of this study recommend that the overall quality of education in this sector does not meet the standards stipulated by the Zimbabwe education policy. In order to acquire a higher quality reception of early childhood education, there is need for support from various stakeholders such as: the business people, Ministry of Education, NGOs, parents and other interested parties.
5.5.2 Recommendations for Supervisors/ Government Education Officials

There should be a co-ordinated plan for the training of para-professionals by the Government to ensure an even platform for pupils on their entry into formal education. As will be the case with public primary schools based, I also recommended that private preschool centres should also be required to fulfil national policy, norms and standards on the provision of ECD programme. I recommended if the MOPSE could design an upgrading system and the teacher-pupil ratio of 1-20 should be revised and maintained for quality results. It is still a very big challenge if classes are big because they run short of learning materials even if teachers are qualified this will still be a burden and hindrance to effective implementation of the programme.

The researcher recommended that school heads and education officials should regularly and systematically monitor pre-school care-givers through direct lesson observations and feedback from educational officials. There is need to revise the curriculum guidelines, incorporating new insights, paying particular attention to the 0-3 years. It seems the care-givers were facing challenges in applying the principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). The government should subsidize all registered pre-schools so that they improve the conditions of learning and this will reduce the amount of fees paid by parents since private ECD centres are very expensive considering the uncertain economic development of Zimbabwe.

The findings cited above were in agreement with Gough (2005) who recommends that adequate and appropriate playing facilities and materials were the necessary tools needed for effective teaching/learning of the programme. This might be exemplified
by family engagement in education Act (2011), which states that “positive benefits for children, youth, families and schools are maximised through effective family engagement that is continuous across a child’s life from birth to adulthood. Similarly, research findings of this study recognise parent involvement as a key component of successful ECD programme (Colds and Kitzam, 2007; Kirp, 2007). Therefore, failure to satisfy these will be an inhibiting factor to improve the quality of learning among the ECD students. It was reflected that teachers have the ability to introduce various skills in pupils and this was done in support of the national policy of developing the whole child. One response that attracted my attention was from most teachers who had a common view that time management was a factor that contributes towards ineffective teaching. The researcher noted that time was important for teachers to manage so that they would be able to cover the whole syllabus; hence pupils gain adequate content and skills. The findings were consistent with literature that schools that are efficient in terms of time management are at an advantage in terms of time

5.5.3 Recommendations for Parents

Education commences at the mother’s knees and every word spoken is imitated by the child. The study recommended that parents and teachers were the key stakeholders in the ECD curriculum development, and especially at the implementation stage. We recommended that parental involvement at home and at school boosts programme effectiveness and promotes all aspects of school readiness. Parents are expected to maintain and provide the child with adequate diet, shelter, clothing and medical care. Therefore, parents meetings, open days, prize giving
days, consultation days should be educative and helpful to both the school and the home, since these activities could draw parents into partnership.

5.5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Throughout this study, I have detected and experienced situations that call for more research on the topic of Early Childhood Development Curriculum Implementation. Further study could be carried out on a wider population including parents and others as the key stakeholders’ informants on effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. Comparative data in this area from diverse social, geographical and other significant areas of the country and regions need to be collected. Thus, there is need for serious research in this area. Therefore, finding the conclusions of this study is not regarded as final that could be used to direct policies or mandate decisions. The following topics may be of assistance that can be further investigated by future researchers.

1. A comparative study on challenges experienced by private and public ECD centres.
2. An amended version of this study with data generated with a larger group of participants from different ECD schools.
3. A descriptive study of aspects that impact effective implementation of the principle of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) in ECD curriculum implementation

5.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 presented the thesis summary from Chapter 1 to Chapter 4 respectively. Chapter 1 discussed the background to the problem that was guided by the research
objectives and research questions. Chapter 2 was on the review of related literature that was also oriented by the research questions. Chapter 3 described the appropriate research methodology and design and included the research philosophy that directed this thesis. The findings and conclusions were drawn from the research questions. The recommendations for teachers, supervisors and for further research work were explained in this chapter.


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Kaputa 2012


Secretary’s Circular Number 14 of 2004. *Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture*. Harare


*The Secretary’s Circular No. 14 of 2004.*


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Invitation to Serve on Expert Panel

Getrude V. Chiparange
10382 Florida
Mutare
Cell: 0775 240 215
Email: gvchiparange@gmail.com

Dear Expert Committee Nominee

My name is Getrude Vongai Chiparange and I am a PhD student with the Zimbabwe Open University. I am carrying out a study in Mutare District Schools ECD schools. The study topic is: A critical Analysis of factors that Inhibit Effective Implementation of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Mutare District Schools. To achieve this, my thesis supervisor Dr. Lewis Madhlangobe has advised me to identify an expert panel that will help me to select ECD centres in Mutare District. We believe that this expert committee possesses knowledge about ECD curriculum implementation and help me to identify centres that will provide information needed to examine inhibiting factors to effective implementation. You have been nominated to be part of this expert committee.

Some of the characteristics that I consider to be very important in selecting this type of centres are that the head must be experienced in working with young children and be at least four years in the same school. For the nomination, you will be requested to nominate an ECD school head that you know is quite competent and then complete a survey attached to this letter. The study has been approved by the Higher Degrees Directorate at Zimbabwe Open University and my approval reference is: P139386Y. My Directorate reference is D/JAN/15/14. The chairperson is Dr. A. S. Chikasha email: Chikasha@gmail.com. My supervisor Dr. Lewis Madhlangobe can be contacted at +263 779305205 Email: chimbaga@gmail.com. For more details contact me.

Thank you for considering this invitation

Yours faithfully Getrude Vongai Chiparange..............................
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ECD TEACHERS

Getrude Vongai Chiparange is Zimbabwe Open University studying Doctor of Philosophy in Education and the purpose of this interview is to generate data on the factors/challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. Please respond to the questions as honestly as you can and if any question makes you uneasy do not answer it.

**Section A : Biographical Data**

1. What is your Gender?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your highest qualification?
4. For how long have you been teaching ECD children?

**SECTION B**

1) How does age and gender influence the effective implementation of the ECD Curriculum? ................
2) How does teacher qualification and experience affect the effective implementation of ECD curriculum? .................
3) How do you overcome the challenges related to gender (M/F) teachers in ECD centres? ..........................
4) Why do education, qualification or professionals’ status of participants matter? ........
5) What are your views concerning the demands of the definition of ECD? ............... 
6) What specific challenges do teachers and leaders experience during the implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District? ................
7) How do ECD participants overcome specific challenges related to teaching and learning that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum? ............... 
8) How do large classes affect effective implementation of ECD curriculum in Mutare District? .........................
9) What are the teaching challenges faced by teachers when applying DAP in ECD Curriculum?......................

10) How do internal/external factors mutate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in Mutare District?......................

11) How does parental involvement on effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?

12) How do teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD pupils overcome the challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the ECEG?......

13) How do successful teachers overcome challenges related to parental recognition and involvement?.............

14) What challenges do you experience that inhibit both the pupils and the teachers’ creativity to promote child-centred approaches? ..............

15) Can you describe to me some internal and external factors that militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum? .....................

16) What quality and instructional indicators do ECD teachers and Heads use to measure effectiveness of implementation of the program?.........................

17) Can you describe to me some strategies applied by ECD centres who succeed in providing instruction override challenges related to the curriculum? .............

18) Can you make any other comments that you like regarding the implementation of the ECD curriculum? .............

Thank you
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNARE FOR ECD TEACHERS

Getrude Vongai Chiparange is Zimbabwe Open University studying Doctor of Philosophy in Education. The purpose of this questionnaire is to generate data on the challenges related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum. Please respond to the questions as honestly as you can and if any question makes you uneasy do not answer it. Please TICK or WRITE information where applicable.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA
1. What is your gender? .................................................................
2. For how long have you been a teacher? .................................
3. For how long have you been an ECD teacher? .

SECTION B
4)   How does teacher qualification and experience affect effective implementation of the ECD curriculum? ......................
5)   Give comments on adequacy and availability of materials or space to use with the 3-5 year olds class at your school?.........................
6 Briefly describe the importance of the ECD Resource Books for both the teacher and the pupils? .................................
7. Can you describe the teaching/learning methods you use in your class on ECD pupils?
8)   What are the benefits of teaching the ECD pupils through play? ..............

9) Can you state any barriers you experience that hold back you from performing your duties effectively? ..............

10) What internal and external factors militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum? ......................

11) What quality and instructional indicators do you (teachers & leaders) use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD syllabus?

12) How do teachers who succeed in providing instruction to ECD students override challenges related to the expected standards for implementation of the program?

13) How does parental involvement enhance the effective implementation of the ECD programme?

14) May you give any comment related to barriers inhibiting effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
APPENDIX C

THE OBSERVATIONAL INSTRUMENT FOR LESSON OBSERVATION OF ECD TEACHERS

Getrude Vongai Chiparange is Zimbabwe Open University studying Doctor of Philosophy in Education. The purpose of this observational technique is to obtain information through direct lesson observations on challenges related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum. Please respond to these observational questions as honestly as you can.

The Processes, Infrastructure and Technology

1. Comments on pupil-pupil interaction and enrolment?

2. Comment on pupil-teacher interaction?

3. Comment whether the employees are committed to their work?

4. Comment whether the infrastructure is adequate?

5. Comment whether the infrastructure is developmentally appropriate?

6. Comment on the types of pupils’ books, artefacts and Institutional Documents?

7. Comment whether the learning activities are aligned to play way method?

8. Comment on the availability of computers at the centre?

9. Comment whether the play Areas are available and functional?

10. Comment on the availability of water, sanitation and hygiene at the centre?

Thank You
Getrude Vongai Chiparange is Zimbabwe Open University studying Doctor of Philosophy in Education and the purpose of this interview is to generate data on the factors/challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. The purpose of this institutional document analysis checklist is to generate data on the availability and use of the documents during the implementation of the ECD curriculum. Please respond to the questions as honestly as you can and if any question makes you uneasy do not answer it.

A CHECKLIST FOR THE RESEARCHER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHEMES OF WORK</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Focus is on development of the whole child ECD learning goals</td>
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<td>A. Physical development</td>
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<td>B. Social development</td>
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<td>C. Intellectual development</td>
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<td>D. Health development</td>
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<td>E. Emotional development</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Creative development</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Focus is on specific concepts and skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Fine motor skills</td>
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<td>B. Gross motor skills</td>
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<td>C. Innovative skills</td>
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<td>D. Language skills</td>
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<td>E. Self help skills</td>
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<td>3. Reflects use of thematic approach.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.O.M.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. E.C.E.C. Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. ECD Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Learning through play</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. E.C.D. Teacher’s Guides</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. ECD Pupil’s books</td>
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<td>4. Reflects use of play as a teaching and learning method.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Reflects play materials in relation with theme of the work.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADS AND TEACHERS –IN-CHARGE

Getrude Vongai Chiparange is Zimbabwe Open University studying Doctor of Philosophy in Education and the purpose of this interview is to generate data on the factors/challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information on the challenges related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum. Please respond to the questions as honestly as you can. Please WRITE information where applicable.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. What is your gender? .................................................................
2. For how long have you been a teacher? .................................
3. For how long have you been an ECD teacher? ......................

SECTION B

3) How were you prepared by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture to supervise the 3-5 year olds class?
4) May you comment on the adequacy and availability of infrastructure and learning materials for the 3-5 years old in your school?
5) How do you as a head assist the ECD centre so that they effectively implement the curriculum holistically in support of the National Policy of developing the whole child?
6) What quality and instructional indicators do you use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD syllabus in your school?

7) What internal and external factors inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in your school? 8) What challenges do your ECD staff experience to effectively implement the curriculum in your?
9) What challenges do you face in your administrative duties that hold you back from effective supervision of the ECD centre?
10) How do you as a Head overcome specific challenges for effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?

12) Can you inform me how parental and external stakeholders’ involvements enhance effective implementation of the ECD program in your school?

13) Make any other comment that you like regarding challenges faced by the user-systems for effective implementation of the ECD program in your school?

Thank you
APPENDIX F

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LECTURES

Getrude Vongai Chiparange is Zimbabwe Open University studying Doctor of Philosophy in Education and the purpose of this interview is to generate data on the factors/challenges that inhibit effective implementation of the ECD curriculum. The purpose of this questionnaire is to generate information on the challenges related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum. Please respond to this questionnaire as honestly as you can. Please WRITE information where applicable.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. What is your gender?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your highest qualification?
4. For how long have you been a lecturer of ECD in this institution?

SECTION B

5. What was your reaction when you learnt about the new 3-5 year old policy?
6. How does teacher qualification and experience affect effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?
7. What changes have Teachers’ Training Colleges brought to ensure that the student teachers graduate with knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the implementation of ECD program?

11. What challenges do you experience as lecturer regarding implementation of the ECD curriculum?

12. What is your comment on institutional documents and artifacts used by the ECD teachers?
14. What strategies do ECD centres that succeed in providing instruction override challenges related to the program?

15 How do ECD teachers overcome challenges related to the use of thematic and integrated approaches?

16. Make any other comment in relation to challenges experienced by ECD user system?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH
APPENDIX G

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER (DEO-ECD)

Getrude Vongai Chiparange is Zimbabwe Open University studying Doctor of Philosophy in Education. The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information on challenges related to the implementation of the ECD curriculum. Please respond to this questionnaire as honestly as you can. Please write WHERE applicable.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. What is your age?
2. How long have you been in this office?
3. What is your highest qualification?

SECTION B

1) What are the expectations of the SECRETARY’S POLICY NUMBER 14 of 2004 and 2005 what positive changes have been implemented in your schools?

2) May you comment on the adequacy and availability of infrastructure and learning materials for the 3-5 years old in your District?

3) How does the Ministry assist the ECD centres so that they will effectively implement the curriculum holistically?

4) What quality and instructional indicators do you use to measure effectiveness of implementation strategies of the ECD syllabus?

5) What internal and external factors militate against effective implementation of the ECD curriculum in your District?

6. How does parental involvement enhance effective implementation of the ECD curriculum?
6) Make any other comment that you like regarding challenges faced by the user-systems for effective implementation of the ECD program in your District?

7. How are private ECD centres supervised?

8. What are your aspirations for the programme in your District?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH
APPENDIX H

CONSENT FORM FOR THE TEACHERS

I, (print your name in full)................................................................., is a teacher at ............... school. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer and participate in the study entitled: A critical analysis of factors that inhibit effective implementation of Early Childhood Department in Mutare District- Zimbabwe conducted by a researcher Getrude Vongai Chiparange, a Doctor of Philosophy Student enrolled by Zimbabwe Open University.

The researcher has informed me that I have been purposively selected to participate because I have the experience in working with the ECD pupils and the implementer of the ECD curriculum. I was advised of ethical issues of confidentiality, anonymity and that I can withdraw at any given time without any prejudice. I understand that if any question arises I can conduct the Higher Degrees Directorate, Dr. A.S. Chikasha, and email: chikasha@gmail.com. The supervisor of this study Dr. Lewis Madhlangobe can be contacted at chmbaga@gmail.com cell +263 779 305205. I understand that I will be interviewed, respond to questionnaires, have a demonstration lesson and make institutional documents available to the researcher.

Therefore, permission to participate in the study is granted and to use the information generated with the full understanding that my anonymity will be observed at all times. I have signed below to indicate my consent.

........................................................................................................... ................................................
Participant’s signature Date

........................................................................................................... ................................................
Researcher’s Signature Date
APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM FOR HEADS OF SCHOOLS

I, (print your name in full).................................................................................................., is a Head/TIC at.............................................................................................................. School. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer and participate in the study entitled: A critical analysis of factors that inhibit effective implementation of Early Childhood Department in Mutare District- Zimbabwe conducted by a researcher Getrude Vongai Chiparange, a Doctor of Philosophy Student enrolled by Zimbabwe Open University.

The researcher has informed me that I have been purposively selected to participate because I have the experience in working with the ECD pupils and I also supervise the ECD teachers who implement the curriculum. I was advised of ethical issues of confidentiality, anonymity and that I can withdraw at any given time without any prejudice. I understand that if any question arises I can conduct the Higher Degrees Directorate, Dr. A.S. Chikasha, and email: chikasha@gmail.com. The supervisor of this study Dr. Lewis Madhlangobe can be contacted at chmbaga@gmail.com cell +263 779 305205. I understand that I will be interviewed once, respond to a questionnaire and make institutional documents available to the researcher.

Therefore, permission to participate in the study is granted and to use the information generated with the full understanding that my anonymity will be observed at all times. I have signed below to indicate my consent.

.......................................................................................................................... ...............................................
Participant’s signature Date

.......................................................................................................................... ...............................................
Researcher’s Signature Date
CONSENT FORM FOR DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER (DEO-ECD)

I, (print your name in full)..........................................................................................................., is a District Education Officer in..................... District. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer and participate in the study entitled: A critical analysis of factors that inhibit effective implementation of Early Childhood Department in Mutare District- Zimbabwe. The study was conducted by a researcher Getrude Vongai Chiparange, a Doctor of Philosophy Student enrolled by Zimbabwe Open University.

The researcher has informed me that I have been purposively selected to participate because I have the experience in working with all ECD Centres and I am also an expert advisor in the ECD curriculum implementation. I was advised of ethical issues of confidentiality, anonymity and that I can withdraw at any given time without any prejudice. I understand that if any question arises I can conduct the Higher Degrees Directorate, Dr. A.S. Chikasha, and email: chikasha@gmail.com. The supervisor of this study Dr. Lewis Madlangobe can be contacted at chmbaga@gmail.com cell +263 779 305205. I understand that I will be interviewed once, respond to a questionnaire and make institutional documents available to the researcher.

Therefore, permission to participate in the study is granted and to use the information generated with the full understanding that my anonymity will be observed at all times. I have signed below to indicate my consent.

........................................................................... .................................................................
Participant’s signature Date

......................................................................... .................................................................
Researcher’s Signature Date
APPENDIX K

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION FROM PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Getrude V. Chiparange
10382 Florida Extensions
Mutare
Home: 02201078
Cell: +263 775240215
Email: gvchipaange@gmail.com

The Provincial Education Director
Manicaland Province

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A STUDY IN MUTARE DISTRICT SCHOOLS.

My name is Getrupe Vongai Chiparange and I am a PHD student with the Zimbabwe Open University. I am requesting for permission to carry out a study in Mutare District Schools. The study topic is: A critical analysis of factors that inhibit effective implementation of Early Childhood Department in Mutare District - Zimbabwe. The study has been approved by the Higher Degrees Directorate at Zimbabwe Open University and my approval reference is: P139386Y. My Directorate reference is D/JAN/15/14. The chairperson is Dr. A. S. Chikasha email: Chikasha@gmail.com. My supervisor Dr. Lewis Mdhlangobe can be contacted at +263 779305205 email: chimbaga@gmail.com

The participating schools will be advised of ethical issues of confidentiality, anonymity and that the selected schools can withdraw at any given time without any prejudice. Teachers, heads and parents will be required to sign consent forms before they can participate in the study. I am therefore, requesting your permission to allow me to carry out the study in your Province.

Thank you for considering this application.

Researcher’s Signature .................................................. Date

.................................................................
APPENDIX L

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION FROM TOWN CLERK

Getrude V. Chiparange  
10382 Florida Extensions 
Mutare 
Home: 02201078 
Cell: +263 775240215 
Email: gchiparange@gmail.com

The Town Clerk  
Mutare Urban 
Manicaland Province 
Dear Sir/Madam

RE: OFFICIAL REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A STUDY  
WITH PRIVATE ECD CENTRES AND PARENTS.

My name is Getrude Vongai Chiparange and I am a PHD student with the Zimbabwe Open University. I am requesting for permission to carry out a study in Mutare District Private Early Childhood Development centres in your town. The study topic is:  A Critical Analysis of the Factors that Inhibit Effective Implementation of the Early Childhood Development Curriculum in Mutare District Schools- Zimbabwe.

The study has been approved by the Higher Degrees Directorate at Zimbabwe Open University and my approval reference is: P139386Y. My Directorate reference is D/JAN/15/14. The chairperson is Dr. A. S. Chikasha email: Chikasha@gmail.com. My supervisor Dr. Lewis Madhlangobe can be contacted at +263 779305205 email: chimbaga@gmail.com. The participating schools will be advised of ethical issues of confidentiality, anonymity and that the selected schools can withdraw at any given time without any prejudice. Teachers, heads and parents will be required to sign consent forms before they can participate in the study.

I am therefore, requesting your permission to allow me to carry out the study in your Province.

Thank you for considering this application.

............................................................................ ................................
Researcher’s Signature Date
Ref: HDD/21

9 December 2014

To whom it may concern.

MRS CHIPARANGE GETRUDE (P1393286Y), DIRECTORATE REFERENCE (D/NOV/12/15/15)

The bearer, Mrs Chiparange P1393286Y, Directorate Reference Number D/NOV/12/15/15, is a bona fide Higher Degrees candidate registered for the Doctor of Philosophy programme with this University. She is conducting research under the theme: “Curriculum implementation: A study to describe how successful early childhood development centres override challenges related to program implementation in Mutare District, Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe.”

Any assistance offered to her to facilitate her study will be most appreciated.

Dr A.S. Chikasha
Director, Higher Degrees Directorate
Ref: C/377/1

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
Manicaland Provincial Office
Cabs Building, Cnr H. Chitepo &
R. Mugabe Road
P.O Box 146
Mutare
Zimbabwe

CHIBRANGE V.C.
10322, Florida Extensions
Mutare.

Re: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN
PRIMARY/SECONDARY: NAME: MUDADZI DISTRICT: MANICALAND
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY: ZDU

The above matter refers.

Please be advised that the Provincial Education Director has granted you permission to carry out research in Primary/ Secondary schools on—FACTORS THAT INHIBIT EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EARY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM—is advised to liaise with the District Office and Heads of targeted schools before embarking on the research.

Kanoerera C.
A/PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR MANICALAND

Disciplinary Form/err

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CITY OF MUTARE
TOWN CLERK’S DEPARTMENT

IF CALLING OR TELEPHONING
PLEASE REFER THE MATTER TO:
Mr. M. Machaka Ext. 219
Mrs. E. Mukwena Ext 234

Civic Centre
P.O. Box 910, Mutare, Zimbabwe
Phone: 64412 Fax: 61002
E-mail: townclerk@mutare.intersol.co.zw

04 February 2015

Your Ref: 
Our Ref: EM/pm

Mrs. G. V. Chiparange
10382 Florida Extension
MUTARE

Dear Madam,

REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A STUDY IN MUTARE DISTRICT PRIVATE ECD CENTRES.

Your letter dated 9 December 2014 on the above matter refers.

I wish to advise that you have been granted permission to carry out your research on “Curriculum Implementation: A Case study to describe how successful Early Childhood Development centres override challenges related to program implementation in Mutare District Schools - Zimbabwe”.

I wish to further advise that permission is being granted on condition that the research outcome will remain confidential and you will have to avail a copy to City of Mutare.

Yours faithfully

O. L. MUZAWAZI
TOWN CLERK