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RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT PRACTICES OF PLAY BASED LEARNING IN NORTH GONDAR PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The study basically aimed at assessing the current practices of play based learning in the Early Childhood Care and Education program of North Gondar, Ethiopia. This issue is important because of the recent movement for a more academic focus in preschool education. Therefore, this study first examined the teachers perceived emotional and social developmental value of play based learning in the preschool education. Second it examined and discussed the role of teachers in implementing play based learning. This is because understanding the significance of play based learning could make teachers to be less worried while implementing it and enable them to answer questions regarding the value of play for social and emotional development of preschool children. Third, it assessed the physical learning environment including the indoor and outdoor play materials and equipment of the preschools. Besides this study has assessed the major challenges and opportunities of both the private and government owned KGs. Those things that were investigated by the study, may contribute their lions' share in enhancing the effective implementation of play based learning in preschool education. As a means, mixed research method was employed to analyze both the collected qualitative and quantitative data. Comparative study was used to compare the government and private kindergartens (KGs). It involved, 32 preschool teachers drawn from 4 pre-schools (24 % of the study population) and 4 preschool coordinators, selected using simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques respectively. Data were collected by questionnaire from preschool teachers, interview guide from the preschool coordinators and observation check list of the preschool physical learning environment. Thematic data analysis techniques were used to analyze the gathered qualitative data; whereas the quantitative data were analysed by using statistical techniques of t-test .The study found out that most teachers do not fulfill some of the roles specified to them in implementing play based learning in the preschool education. Moreover, the result of the one sample t-test analysis displays that there was no appropriate integration of play based learning both in the private and government owned KGs. The study also revealed that there was better indoor outdoor materials and equipment in the private KGs than the government KGs. However, as the independent sample t-test result indicated, there is no statistically significant difference among the private and government owned KGs in implementing play based learning. Finally, pertinent recommendations were drawn from the findings and the conclusions of the study.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Early childhood is a time of remarkable transformation and extreme vulnerability. These years of a child's life represent a crucial period of growth and change. Programmes that support young children during the years before they go to primary school provide strong foundations for subsequent learning and development. Both nationally and internationally, there is a general movement to recognise early years education as a distinctive phase in children's learning, that should be characterised by a curriculum that focuses on whole-child learning, and by teaching methods that are appropriate for young children (OECD, 2001). There is strong evidence that Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is one of the best investments a country can make to prepare children for learning in school and for prospering later in life.

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Quality early child hood care and education promotes children's social emotional physical and cognitive development and help them develop their full potential. A child who benefits from early child hood education program are better prepared for primary school and will reach better education out comes. Quality of ECCE also helps to reduce repetition and dropout rates. Improve school readiness and increase school achievement. In relation with this, World Declaration on Education for All stressed that learning begins at birth. Systematic development of basic learning tools and concepts therefore requires that due attention be paid to the care of young children and their initial education, which can be delivered via arrangements of effective pedagogue. To be an effective pedagogue means to be skilled in the selection of appropriate teaching techniques in order to facilitate learning, and in schools it is generally recognized that a range of 'techniques' are required for the effective transmission of different forms of knowledge. In the pre-school context, however, this simply can't be taken for granted. In childcare institutions modelled on the 'kindergarten' ('children's garden') model, the idea of 'transmission' is seen to have little relevance. The most extreme and romantic childcare perspectives that have been adopted in some care-oriented settings have therefore offered only a minimal role for pedagogy. In some preschool settings 'education' itself has come to be considered didactic and inappropriate for young children, as Lindqvist, (2001) have put it "*The adverse reaction displayed by some teachers of young children to structured programmes... stems, probably, from their dislike of direct teacher instruction*".

Similarly Hadley (2002) stated that an educator's pedagogy is one of the most important aspects when assessing the quality of children's learning. So early childhood educators need to carefully consider and question their pedagogy and corresponding practices. In implementing the early childhood learning framework, educators have discussed and described their understandings of the practice principles. One of the practices most commonly used in the early childhood sector is 'learning through play'. Learning through play is an essential and critical part of all children's development. It is an enjoyable and motivating for children's education and it is how they spend much of their time. Not only learning through play is an important part of children's daily routine, it is also a window of opportunity into their developmental levels and a context where valuable teaching and learning can occur. Play starts in the child's infancy and ideally, continues throughout his or her life. Play based learning is how children learn to socialize, to think, to solve problems, to mature and most importantly, to have fun. Play connects children with their imagination, their environment, their parents and family and the world (Bailey, 2006). Play is ubiquitous in early childhood. Young children are constantly at play. Play can be conceptualized as an activity that is not a means to an end but an end itself (i.e., play for the sake of play), is motivating to the individual, and is associated with positive emotions (Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales, and Alward, 2003). Learning through play provides the most natural and meaningful process by which children can construct knowledge and understandings, practice skills, immerse themselves naturally in a broad range of literacy and numeracy and engage in productive, intrinsically motivating learning environments (Harley, 1999). In addition, play based learning has many benefits for children as it facilitates the development of skills, dispositions and knowledge. As effective play based learning can assist children to develop lifelong learning skills that will stay with them beyond the early learning environment. Therefore, engaging in play based learning enables children to use and develop thinking skills such as problem solving, reasoning and lateral thinking. It offers opportunities to interact with others develop communication strategies and work in collaboration with peers and adults. It can foster literacy, numeracy and the development of scientific concepts. As children are empowered to make decisions and initiate play, they become confident and motivated learners. This in turn fosters responsibility and self regulation. Play based learning also provides children with many opportunities to resolve conflict, challenge unfair play and embrace diversity. Moreover, play based learning provide for KG children to express their feeling, to appreciate beauty and to learn numbers (MoE, 2002:76). Therefore, this study in particular helps to examine the current practices of play based learning in the North Gondar preschool education area and provide ample opportunity for both KG teachers and KG children to plan carefully how to use play-based learning as one tool to promote the teaching learning process that will enhance the holistic development of KG children.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Deeply entrenched within the historical roots of early childhood education, play has long been a dominant feature of Western-European pedagogy (Rogers, 2011**).** Over many centuries, philosophers, theorists, educationalists and more recently, policy makers have worked hard to define the nature of childhood, play and the purposes of education (Fisher, 2008). In particular, researchers have become increasingly interested in how traditional and contemporary theories on play based learning and childhood have informed conceptualisations of childhood (Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales, and Alward, 2003).the 'image of the child' (Malaguzzi 1994), and the development of early childhood curriculum (Graue, 2008). Wood and Attfield (2005) suggested that it was the studies of classical play theorists, such as Rousseau, Froebel and Dewey, that dramatically changed societal views and attitudes towards children, to the extent that ''freedom to learn could be combined with appropriate nurturing and guidance'' (p. 29), through the strongly held belief that play was critical to children's learning and development (Platz and Arellano, 2011). In addition to this, many educators expressed value for the idea that young children should learn through play, and believed that learning is an active, engaged and exploratory process for young children. Interestingly, Froebel; Montessori; and Piaget each of these theorists positioned participation in play-based activities as central to children's learning (Harley, 1999). Play based learning has significant contribution on children's school readiness including academic competencies, social-emotional development, and physical development. The aim of the play based learning is to promote a sense of wonder, exploration, investigation and interest in a rich range of materials, resources and opportunities in which the child can engage (Harley, 1999).The child is viewed as being instrumental to the way in which materials and equipment are

selected and organised within the environment. Such environments are often described as child focused as children are constantly engaged in meaningful learning experiences. While children's interests form the basis of the program, the environment needs to be carefully planned and presented in ways that are inviting to young children. All experiences are based on supporting a balance of child and adult initiated ideas and investigations, and utilise the indoor and outdoor equipment, materials and area equally. Specific play spaces or areas may be arranged to within the environment to engage children in different areas of learning such as art, literacy and construction. Within each area children should be offered a range of open-ended and loose materials that can be used across different abilities and diverse interests. This particularly enables children to explore their interests and environments using their individual strengths and skills (Harley, 1999).

Despite the vast evidences of the contribution of play to childhood learning and development from Jean Piaget's Play, Dreams, and Imitation (1932) to Singer, Golinko, and Hirsh-Pasek's Play based learning (2006); play based learning has recently been shunted aside in early childhood education programs in favor of more teacher-directed instruction in order to address early learning standards. More specifically, administrators, parents, and some teachers increasingly regard play based learning as a waste of instructional time with no clear benefits for academic outcomes. In addition to this many preschools have reduced or even eliminated play based learning from their schedules. As a result, socio-dramatic play and domestic play areas have been disappearing from kindergarten classrooms (Lester, S. and Russell, S. 2008). In the introduction to this new edition, the authors alert us to these dangers to children's play as an ever-growing threat to children's health and development. In addition, play based learning and the environment in which it is implemented in early childhood education is an under-researched and under-theorised area (Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales, and Alward, 2003). More specifically, in recent years the emphasis given only to academic accountability and focus on children's cognitive skills has led to a decline in the practice of play based learning in early childhood education settings by which it constitutes the research gap of the study itself. Therefore, so as to have thorough assessment on the current practices of play based learning in early childhood education, the researcher has given due attention on the following basic research objectives.

1.3. Objective of the study

This study is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

1.3 General objective of the study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the current practices of play based learning both in the private and government owned preschools of North Gondar, Ethiopia.

1.3.1. Specific objectives:

This study will specifically try to:

- Examine the current practices of teaching methods in preschool education;
- Assess teachers' perceived value of play based learning in preschool children;
- Assess the physical learning environment of preschools in which play based learning is implementing;
- Identify major opportunities and challenges of preschool education.

1.4. Benefits and beneficiaries

This study is significant for:

- The study can give insight about the understanding of play based learning for KG teachers and children's parents.
- It will show what mechanisms and strategies should be employed while using play based learning in ECE.
- This study will add knowledge and skills to the current practices of play based learning and help in solving problems in relation with the implementation of play based learning in early childhood education.
- Enhance the awareness level of parents, KG teachers and curriculum developers about the contribution of play based learning for the holistic development of preschool children.
- It will give a new idea about the current practices of play based learning for the ECE program coordinators and curriculum developers;
- Besides, it will serve as a spring board for those who are interested to conduct further extensive research on play based learning in ECE.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

Due to the large number of potential participants in the study population, the population that was involved in this study will focuses only on the upper KG of both private and government owned KGs of North Gondar.

1.6. Operational Definitions of key terms

- **Play**: it is draws from children's natural desire to engage in experiences based on their interests, strengths and developing skills. When children initiate play, they are more motivated to learn and develop positive dispositions towards learning. The educator's role in supporting play based learning is vital. Belonging Being and Becoming The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2009:15)
- **Play based learning**: is defined as the principal source for holistic development and healthy growth in early childhood. It enables children to test and develop ideas, to learn to communicate with others, to develop motor skills, and to feel and control their own emotions. Therefore, for child-centered educators, a wide range of games (role-play, construction, playing with sands and waters, sport games, etc.) and materials are the main sources for fostering their development (Moyer, 1987).

CHAPTER TWO

Review of related literature

2.1. Conceptual Frame work of Play Based Learning In Early Childhood Care and Education

Although most professionals speak about play as though it were a single entity, play has been defined and theorized in many different ways. For instance, Fromberg (1992) suggests

that play is characterized by thinking and activity that is symbolic, meaningful, active, pleasurable, voluntary, rule-governed and episodic. Bateson (1972) suggests that play is evident when participants frame events, through attitude, pretence, vocalization and other Meta communicative cues. G¨onc¨u *et al*. (2000) suggests that play is evident when there is a sense of playfulness and fun, but also that we should look carefully across cultures for variations. These examples illustrate the diversity of views on how play is defined. This is not simply a contemporary challenge, but rather something that has been with us as a profession for a long time. For instance, Hutt *et al*. (1989) found in their review of children's activities, 'some fourteen distinct categories of behaviour were identified, all of which, in one or another context, have been labelled as "play"' (p.10). What is particularly interesting about their review of the literature at that time is that the fourteen distinct categories actually represented almost all children's behaviour. In essence, play could be viewed in its broadest sense as describing almost all the activities that young children engage in. This literature suggests that there is no standard definition for play and that most of the behaviours and activities young children engage in can be termed as play by one theorist or another.

Historically, different theories have been developed to explain the activities of children. For instance, Mitchell and Mason (1948) suggested that play was a way of 'blowing off steam'. Their surplus energy theory explained that play was undertaken when humans had excess energy. In contrast, Lazarus (1883) put forward the Recreation theory of play, whereby children restore their energy levels by playing. After extensive investigations of human and animal behaviours, Groos (1898) suggested that through play, children practised the skills they needed in adult life. He termed this the Instinct-practice theory of play. Hall (1906) also recognized instinct as an important dimension in play, suggesting that play was important for human evolution. The recapitulation theory of play put forward by Hall (1906) suggests that children enact the stages of human evolution through play. Play has also been explained as an opportunity for the safe expression of pent-up emotions (Carr, 1902). Moreover, Shipley (2008) stated that while there is no one definition of play, there are a number of agreed characteristics that describe play. Play can be described as:

- Pleasurable—play is an enjoyable and pleasurable activity. Play sometimes includes frustrations, challenges and fears; however enjoyment is a key feature;
- Symbolic—play is often pretend, it has a 'what if?' quality. The play has meaning to the player that is often not evident to the educator;
- Active—play requires action, either physical, verbal or mental engagement with materials, people, ideas or the environment;
- Voluntary—play is freely chosen. However, players can also be invited or prompted to play;
- Process oriented—play is a means unto itself and players may not have an end or goal in sight;
- Self motivating—play is considered its own reward to the player.

Once you have decided what play means to you, you should next ask yourself, why play-based learning? What is it about play that makes it so important? Play has a long and detailed research history that dates back to the work of Locke and Rousseau. Research and evidence all point to the role of play in children's development and learning across cultures (Shipley, 2008). Many believe that it is impossible to disentangle children's play, learning and development. NAEYC (2009, p. 14) clearly stated that children of all ages love to play, and it gives them opportunities to develop physical, competence and enjoyment of the outdoors, understand and make sense of their world, interact with others, express and control emotions, develop their symbolic and problem solving abilities, and practice emerging skills.

2.2. Play and children's socio emotional development

Bredekamp and Copple (1997) argued that play is the most developmentally appropriate way for children to learn, and others have suggested that play facilitates problem-solving, perspective-taking, emotional and social skills, and the development of a theory of mind (e.g., Bailey, 2002; Hartup, 1992; McArdle, 2001). Research supports sociodramatic play as a means for the development and promotion of children's socioemotional skills (Hughes, 1999) because it requires the capacities for reflecting before acting, sensing the perspective of others, and emotional understanding and regulation (McArdle, 2001). Pretend play provides children with opportunities to practice perspective taking (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). Consistent with this view, pretend play has been found to be associated with children's understanding of other people's emotions (Lindsey and Colwell, 2003), and with high emotion regulation and emotional competence, but for girls only (Lindsey and Colwell, 2003).

Also, rough-and-tumble play enables children to practice perspective taking, to learn the expression of emotion, to distinguish between real and play-related emotions of others, and to engage in emotion regulation (Pelligrini and Smith, 1998), although this effect pertains more to boys than to girls (Lindsey and Colwell, 2003). Socio-dramatic play enables and improves children's role-taking ability, a necessary element for communication, empathy, and altruistic behavior (Hughes, 1999). Ianotti (1978) reported that when children were given role-taking training, they improved in their sensitivity to the perspectives of others, compared with a control group that had no training. Burns and Brainerd (1979) also found that children in play groups that emphasized cooperation in constructive play improved in their role-taking abilities, compared with children in a control group. Role-playing also enables children to understand themselves and others better (Harley, 1999) because as they share emotions and responses during activities, they develop sensitivity to the needs of others and gain confidence in themselves as problem-solvers. Socio-dramatic play improves children's ability to cooperate, to participate in social activities, and to understand others (Smith, Dalgleish, and Herzmark, 1981). When preschool children engage in sociodramatic play, they explore issues of control and compromise (Howes, Unger, and Matheson, 1992) as they negotiate with their peers during the choosing of roles. Such negotiations help children communicate with each other more effectively and to resolve conflicts associated with peer interactions (Howes *et al*., 1992). Also, cooperation while

engaged in sociodramatic play appears to generalize to other areas of interaction as well (Hughes, 1999). Rosen (1974) reported that children trained in sociodramatic play showed improvements in the ability to work with other children on a task, and improved their ability to take the perspectives of other children when those wants and preferences differed from their own. Play with peers enhances social understanding and relationships. As children develop relationships and encounter problems, they extend their skills by discovering strategies that work and those that do not, how to sustain relationships, and how to solve problems (Glover, 1999). Also, in play with peers children practice and extend what they know about sharing, turn-taking, self-restraint, working in a group, and getting along with others (Glover, 1999). It has also been suggested that pretense is an early indication of children's ability to recognize mental states in others (Bailey, 2002). Children are not normally able to read intentionality in others before age four, yet children do engage in pretend play (which requires the recognition of intentionality in others) from about 18 months (Bailey, 2002). Thus, it appears that through play children first come to understand self-awareness, the distinction between pretend and reality, and possibly the intentions of others (Bailey, 2002). A summary of the evidence linking sociodramatic play to children's socioemotional development is presented in Table I.

dramatic play, each school context, and the challenges of implementing dramatic play in that context differ (Olsen and Sumsion, 2000). In sum, Whether play is used to promote learning and development depends on teachers' beliefs, practices, and contexts (Hadley, 2002; McLane, 2003). Hadley (2002) identified two types of teacher involvement: outside the flow or inside the flow. When a teacher is outside the flow, his/her involvement in play is meant to prompt reflection on the part of the children, which may lead to the modification and extension of play. Whether teachers are outside or inside the flow, they play several roles: an observer and recorder, stage manager and facilitator, mediator, or participant in play (Dau, 1999; Jones and Reynolds, 1992). As a stage manager and facilitator, the teacher organizes and provides play materials, designates a play area, schedules time for play, sets ground rules, decides what activities constitute play, and how to relate to play while it is in progress (Jones and Reynolds, 1992; Kontos, 1999). In setting the stage for play, teachers should use props and materials that enhance children's cultural awareness by regularly changing materials in the dramatic play area to reflect different cultures (Kendall, 1983). Also teachers could help remove clutter in the space around an ongoing play, but not intervene with accessories or action unless they perceive that an action is helpful in sustaining and elaborating children's play (Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales, and Alward, 2003).

Table I. Socioemotional Significance of Sociodramatic Play

Types of skills	Process
Socio-emotional	In socio-dramatic play, a child's capacities to reflect before acting, sense the perspective and emotional experiences of others, and self-regulate emotional experiences are enhanced.
Negotiation	As a child engages in play with peers, s/he explores issues of control and compromise as s/he negotiates with their peers. Such negotiations help a child communicate with others more effectively.
Problem Solving	During play with peers, a child's ability to problem solve is promoted because s/he exposed to various ways of problem-solving and conflict-resolution.
Perspective Taking	In socio-dramatic play a child has to take the perspectives of others, understand their pretend and real emotions, and be able to regulate his/her actions accordingly.
Role Taking	Play enables and improves a child's role-taking ability. This is because as a child shares his/her emotions and responses during play, s/he develops sensitivity to the needs and views of others.
Cooperation	Play improves a child's ability to cooperate; evidenced by a child's ability to work with others on a task.
Social Understanding, and Related Skills	As a child develops relationships and encounter problems, s/he extends his/her skills by finding strategies that work and how to sustain relationships. Also, in play a child practices and extends what s/ he knows about sharing, turn-taking, self-restraint, working in a group, and getting along with others.
Theory of Mind	Pretend play is an early indication of a child's ability to recognize mental states in others. Through play a child first comes to understand self-awareness, the distinction between pretend and reality, and the intentions of others.

2.3. The early childhood teacher's role in play

Kagan (1990) identified three obstacles to the implementation of play in the early childhood classroom: attitudinal, structural, and functional. Attitudinal barriers are associated with the value teachers place on play. For example, some teachers perceive involvement in play as interference (Korat, Bahar, and Snapir, 2003), others are ambivalent about play, and are hesitant about being involved (Lindqvist, 2001), while still others view their role as teaching and managing children in an academically oriented early childhood classroom (Hadley, 2002). Structural barriers to implementing play involve limitations imposed by curricula, time, space, and materials (Kagan, 1990). For example, growing expectations for teacher-directed academic instruction has limited time for play in early childhood classrooms. Finally, functional barriers are associated with attitudinal barriers. For example, although early childhood teachers may receive inservice training on the use of Teachers could act as mediators, supporting children's interactions with materials as well as with other children (Harley, 1999). For example, in a mediating role, teachers could resolve conflicts over materials or roles by offering new accessories, or by suggesting alternatives for disputed roles. In a mediating role, teachers model for children the flexible thinking and problem solving abilities needed for peer interactions (Van Hoorn *et al*., 2003). Also, teachers could use incidental comments to extend play. Such interventions often employed when children have shown an interest in or have been involved with materials, activities, or others (Brown and Odom, 1995, p. 40) is a means for promoting children's socioemotional development in the context of play. For example, a teacher could help a child develop effective strategies for entering play by introducing an accessory, or suggesting a new role. The teacher might say something like ''Camille, I see that you want to join your friends in play. Since they are pretending to go fishing, why don't you pretend to be a

big fish in the water so they can catch you?'' Another strategy may involve teachers' support of children's peer interactions by prompting children to elaborate their social behavior. For example, instead of the teacher suggesting a role for Camille, the teacher might say ''Camille, I see that you want to join your friends in play. I think you should tell them that you want to join them in play.'' As an observer and recorder, a teacher's interest is in understanding play, and how to build appropriate experiences that will scaffold children's learning and development. Observation can lead to a much better understanding of children, and give insights into how to plan for, initiate, and extend children's play (Dau, 1999; Korat *et al*., 2003). When a teacher takes on the role of co-player and actively participates in children's play, s/he models roles and offers ideas to enhance play and support children's growth (Jones and Reynolds, 1992).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

The very focus of this study is to investigate the current practice of play based learning in early childhood education. To this end, mixed research design is proposed. According to Cresswell, J. W. (2009), mixed research design is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. Since it involves the use of both approaches in tandem the overall strength of a study was greater than either qualitative or quantitative research. Mixed research as to the above writer, have six forms: sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory, sequential transformative, concurrent triangulation, concurrent embedded, and concurrent transformative strategies. Among these strategies, concurrent embedded strategy is selected. In concurrent embedded strategy, the researcher collects primarily one form of data (in this case qualitative) and collects the other forms of data (in this case quantitative) that provide supportive information. The researcher, thus, embeds a secondary form of data within a large study having different forms of data as the primary data base. The secondary database, i.e. quantitative data, provides a supportive role in the study. The reason behind selecting qualitative design as a primary database is that, most of the databases required for this study are difficult to quantify. Accordingly, the researcher has selected concurrent embedded strategy from the above mentioned mixed design strategies. It is selected for the following reasons. One is, it enable the researcher to collect the two types of data simultaneously, during a single data collection phase. It also provides a study with the advantageous of both qualitative and quantitative data. In addition, it helps the researcher to gain broader perspectives as a result of using the different methods as opposed to using the predominant method alone. Therefore, this design is chosen as an appropriate when evaluated in light of the purpose of the study, the time available to collect and analyze data and the type of data required to achieve the objectives.

3.2. Study Population

The populations of this study are (12,157) KG teachers, (159) parents of KG children, (60) KG children, and each KG directors (4). Thus, 12,345 human population and 4 preschools are targeted.

3.3. Data sources

The data source for the study was of two types: primary and secondary. The primary data was collected from, KG teachers, KG directors, KG children, and KG coordinators at woreda level. This decision is made based on the strong belief that the above mentioned sources have great role in the ECE and that they are able to provide the necessary data. The secondary information was gathered from the previous ECE reports and information made available by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Besides, MoE publications, manuals, training materials, library books, magazines, news papers and internet sources was used as a secondary source of data.

3.4. Sample Population and Sampling Techniques

From the population mentioned above, appropriate sample size was taken. The selection of sampling techniques for the study was based on the representativeness and resourcefulness of the sample and the type of population considered. Accordingly, both probability and non-probability sampling techniques was used. More specifically, KG teachers and children was selected using simple random sampling, directors of kindergarten and KG coordinators at woreda level were selected using purposive sampling. As already mentioned, ECE has been implemented in Amhar region. But, only North Gondar is selected for this study. This is due to two main reasons. One is that the researcher intended to conduct a more focused investigation. The other is, North Gondar has got special attentions by university of Gondar.

3.5. Data Collecting Instruments

As has been indicated, this study is going to employ both qualitative and quantitative research design in order to achieve the objectives. Therefore, it uses multiple data collection tools such as, questionnaire, open-ended and semi-structured interview, observation, as well as focus group discussions. In addition documentary analysis methods were used to enrich the data obtained through above instruments.

3.5.1. Questionnaire

This study will basically employ self-developed questionnaire as an instrument. In the design of this instrument the literature review was used as a base. Questionnaire was proposed to collect data from KG teachers. Both close and open-ended types of questions was prepared in English language, then was translated in Amharic for maximize comprehension.

3.5.2. Interview

Since interviews are usually unstructured, they allow for inducting the interviewees to talk intensively about the topic at hand (Jane and Lewis, 2003). Thus, interviews will provide the opportunity to have a deep understanding of one's beliefs, feelings, and behaviors on important issues. Accordingly, an in-depth interview was used to investigate the current practice of play based learning in ECE with KG directors. Besides,

semi-structured interview was employed to collect the desired data from coordinators of ECE at woreda level.

3.5.3. Observation

According to Creswell, J.W. (2009), observations are those in which the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. In these field notes, the researcher and other colleagues of the researcher will record the activities of KG children while they are learning through play at the research site. Observing young children requires the gathering of evidence of growth in a natural setting. An early childhood classroom and play grounds are a familiar place where the child feels at ease in experimenting and exploring with blocks, various art media, writing, computers, and puppets. This experimentation and exploration provides a rich storehouse of observable information for the researcher skilled in gleaning it from the play that surrounds the child. One of the important benefits of doing observations is that researchers are viewing many components at the same time. Unlike standardized tests, which focus only on cognition, observations allow the researchers to see the whole child. The emotional, physical, social, and cultural dimensions of the child are equally important, especially with the younger child in early childhood education. In addition, the researchers will employ unstructured or semi-structured way using some prior questions that the inquirer wants to know. Hence, this technique was employed to solicit information that cannot be obtained through the above methods.

3.5.4. Document Analysis

Apart from the data gathered through questionnaire, interview, and observation; document analysis was used to obtain additional data by reviewing the different documents and records of the ECE. Both published and unpublished documents were reviewed to obtain background information on the current practice of play based learning in preschools.

3.6. Data Analysis

As the study was used qualitative and quantitative type of data, the data analysis method that was utilized here is also be of two types- qualitative and quantitative. To analyze the qualitative data thematic analysis technique was employed. In doing so, the following tasks were carried step-by-step. Initially, the researcher organizes and prepares the data for analysis. This involves, transcribing interviews, typing up field notes, or sorting and arranging the data in to different types depending on the sources of information (KG teachers, KG directors, KG coordinators at woreda level, etc.). The next task was reading through all the data so as to obtain a general sense of information. The third step is coding- the process of organizing the material in to chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information, Rossman and Rills, as cited in Creswell, J. W. (2009). At the next step, the researcher, using the coding process, will generate categories or themes for analysis. These themes will appear as a major finding in this study and will use to create headings in the finding section. Then, the generated themes were narrated and finally, the data was interpreted and the findings were compared with the information obtained from the theories/literature. As far as the quantitative data is concerned, the quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The mixing of the data from the two methods- qualitative and quantitative- is accomplished in a discussion section of the study. The existing differences were tested for statistical significance at error value of 5%.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

The collected data of a study may be of little or no use unless possible analysis are made vis a vis the objectives of the study, as a result of which theoretical and practical implications can be identified. In this chapter, the collected data were presented and analysed in line with the general objective through answering the specific objectives. For this purpose, data, which were collected from respondents through observation check list, interview, and questionnaire were presented in this part. Factors such as the preschool physical learning environment, teachers' perceived value of play based learning in promoting the emotional and social development of children, the role of teachers in implementing play based learning, major opportunities and challenges while implementing play based learning in ECE were presented in order to answer each research questions of the study. The study has a notable impact in two other important areas. The very strong evidence of the importance of the 'physical learning environment of the preschool' on children's overall development has led to major initiatives to provide additional support to teachers and the children in their holistic development. The detailed study evidence, showing that effective pedagogy (play based learning) in high quality settings is able to balance adult initiated and child led play activities, that cognitive and social development are complementary and that children learn best through 'sustained shared thinking', has had a very considerable influence on the development of the first national guidelines for the foundation stage and, most recently on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

4.2.1. Input comparison of the private and government owned KGS

It is evident that the physical set up of the KG could affect the proper implementation of ECCE. Carefully designed setting promotes self-selection by children from a wide array of age appropriate materials and equipment. Both the classroom and the playground invite children to engage in active learning whereby they construct their own knowledge through interaction with adults, other children and materials. Besides, the KG is the place from where the children derive maximum benefits other than their home. Hence, its physical set up, site, surroundings, indoor and outdoor materials and equipments are of greater significant in achieving the goal of preschool education. Since children during the day time spent most of their time in pre-school, the physical set up has a distinct order and seeks to motivate the child to develop at his or her own pace. McCarthy and Houston (1980:54) confirmed that a well designed physical environment gives the children an opportunity to observe, explore, construct and to experiment. In early childhood period, a child learns through interacting with

immediate environment. Hence, the environment must be physically safe, socially enhancing, emotionally nurturing, intellectually stimulating and should equipped with variety of materials to arouse and maintain the child's curiosity, interest and promote learning and academic readiness (Chowdhury and Choudhury, 2002). Therefore, so as to assess and compare the current practices of ECCE both in the private and government owned KGs, the researcher had selected some specific educational inputs such as, KGs' physical setting (learning environment), indoor, outdoor materials and equipment, teachers and caregivers qualification.

4.2.1.1. Physical learning environment of the preschools

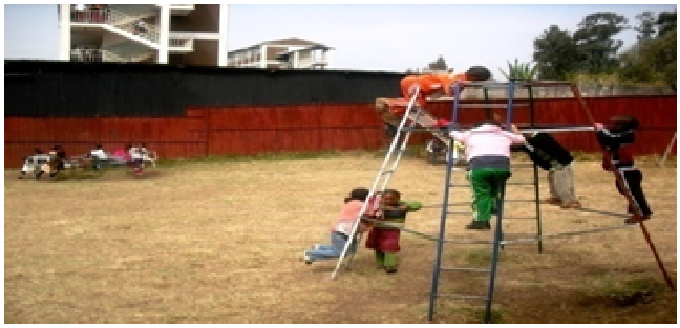
To assess and compare the physical setting of the selected KGs, observation by the researcher and interview with respondents were conducted. Accordingly, regarding the KG buildings, the observation and interview result obtained from the KG directors', ECCE coordinators found in each studied cities of both the private and government owned KGs indicated that except one KG (Atse Bekafa) all the studied KGs were built for the purpose of primary schools. So that, these respondents indicated that even if there were some problems in relation to the size and weight of the doors and windows, the class size, ventilation, and lighting of the class-rooms were appropriate for the children. Besides, the result of the observation revealed that both the private KGs and another one KG from the government owned KGs (Medhanialem Akababi) had enough class-room size which is about 1.5 square meters pre-child. Similarly, as regard to the size of the class-room, the standard adapted by MoE (2009) and Gondar Education Bureau also recommended 1.5 square meters per-child. In addition, these KGs had clean, well class-room ventilation, lighting, appropriate and child sized chairs, tables, shelves etc. More particularly it had proportional number of children to child sized, clean and separate toilet (1:20), proportional number of children to pure and child sized water pumps (1:20).

Similarly, as regard to the proportion of toilet and water pump to children, MoE (2009) has set a standard of 1:20. Moreover, these KGs had wide and appropriate outdoor play ground. Concerning the outdoor play ground researchers such as Chowdhur and Choudhury (2002: 115) and Curtis (2003: 103-110) revealed that play ground provide children to observe and explore the natural environment, stimulate children to play together in group or individually at the same time allow them to exercise their gross-motors. In addition, outdoor play by its nature creates chances for children to involve in making complex distinction between pretend and real as group running, chasing, feeling, and wrestling erupt in both playful and primitive expression of emotions. Therefore, it must be wide and safe for the children to play. Beaver *et al*. (2008:505) also asserted that children would gain more from watching the leaves on trees fluttering and taking in the sounds and smells of the garden; digging in the gardens and watching worms and insects than they will from looking at pictures. Therefore, the areas located outdoors can be the source of Science, Mathematics, language development and creative activities. Similarly, the outdoor play ground, the standard adopted by MoE (2009) and Gondar Education Bureau recommends the ratio of 1:2.5 square meters per-child.

However, as the observation and interview result uncovered that Atse Bekafa, one of the governments owned KGs was built for another purpose. Due to this, the physical setting of this KG was not conducive for teaching learning process of the KG children. According to the KG director and ECCE program coordinators, the reasons given for this were primarily, the class sizes of this KG were too small, that it had total class-room size of (4mx5m) 20 square meters which cannot accommodate 40 children, which is the standard set by MoE (2009). Secondly, the nature of this KG's lighting, ventilation, size of the doors, toilets with very bad pong and which are too near to the class-rooms, water facility, were not appropriate for the KG children. In general, the KG director, caregivers and the sub-city's ECCE program coordinator confirmed that this "prison like KG" (Atse Bekafa)'s class-rooms and physical settings were highly risk for the children, teachers and caregivers health condition in particular and the implementation of ECCE in general. Similarly, regarding the class-size of KG children, Christensen and Mora Vick (1987:137) clearly expressed that many children are disadvantaged with crowded class as they are deprived of space, privacy and time for exploration, interaction and discussion. As a result, children who attend the pre-school education in crowded classes may get in to different psychological problems, can be easily vulnerable to epidemic diseases and eventually can be exposed in to chronic health problems that result in poor academic achievement, dropouts and totally have an aversion to education . Therefore, so as to avoid these problems and save the lives of children who learn in such cases, the research finding from the interview of the ECCE program coordinators and the observation result suggested that the concerned body should take immediate reaction.

In line with this, Chowdhur and Choudhury (2002: 110-115) recommended that in order to encourage children to develop good work habits and perform good academic achievement, the kindergarten rooms should be well designed, pleasant and need to be highly attractive for the children. This implies, the majority of the studied private KGs had better physical learning environment than the government owned KGs. Moreover, the physical setting of Atse Bekafa, one of the governments owned KGs needs rapid modification and adjustment so as to save the lives of the children and the other service providers of the KG.

Physical environment of the private and government owned KGs



4.2.1.2. Availability and adequacy of indoor materials and equipment in ecce

Regarding the availability and adequacy of indoor equipment and materials, the interview result from the ECCE coordinators, the KG directors and the parents who are members of the TPA both from the private and government owned KGs indicated that the KGs were equipped with different locally produced instructional materials and equipment. In addition, the observation and interview result from the KG directors disclosed that all the private and one of the government owned KGs had 1:4 child sized table, 1:1 child sized chairs and 1:10 child sized shelves. Moreover, the observation result indicated that these KGs had clean and well ventilated class-rooms with sufficient amount of light and full of attractive and different teaching aids. The result of this study goes in line with Boren and Pickett (1954) and Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002) which explain that the presence of adequate indoor materials and equipment were fundamental for the effective implementation of various class-room activities in particular and ECCE in general. More specifically, Boren and Picket (1954) suggested that every room used by KG should contain child sized furniture table and chairs that are important for children to sit and work at puzzles, games and others that is necessary for children to develop new skills using real tools and real world. However, as the observation and interview result revealed that the indoor materials and equipment which were found in one of the government owned KGs (Atse Bekaffa) were quite different from the other KGs.

This KG had very narrow class-room size (4mx5m) with large class-size. It had also 1:4 tables to children ratio, 1:1 chid sized chair and no child sized shelf in the class-room. But there was a shelf outside the class-room in which the children put their meal and bags. Regarding to the negative impact of narrow class-rooms and absence of appropriate teaching aids, Bruce (2011) stated that children cannot learn without real, direct and first-hand experiences. Moreover, regarding the adequacy of indoor space, Gans Steindler and Almy (1952:352) noted that "in schools where there is adequate space and storage the varied activities go on without friction and all the materials can be tided away and kept dust-free and orderly." On the other hand, where space is restricted, impromptu partnering of any kind occurs less often than when children circulate more freely in the block area (Procchner, 1992:l6). Indoor materials and equipment are an integral part of the effective implementation of ECCE. These materials and equipments contribute their lion's share in attracting and getting the attention of children for long period of time. It also makes the teaching learning process more concrete, suitable and easily understandable. More particularly, locally produced instructional materials are very vital in creating different mental maps and conceptual understandings (Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002). Based on the interview and observation result, it might be possible to deduce that teachers in the studied KGs were producing different teaching aids, materials and equipment by using locally available resources and materials. Besides, though there was some inadequacy in child sized shelves, children were getting child sized chairs and tables in each studied KGs. As a result children were getting good opportunity to sit and work at different puzzles, games and others that were necessary for children to develop new skills and facilitate the implementation of ECCE. Hence, the studied government owned KGs had similar indoor materials and equipment.

4.2.1.3. Availability and adequacy of outdoor materials and equipment in ECCE

In order to assess and compare the appropriateness of the private and government owned KGs' physical setting, availability of outdoor equipment, materials and their organisations interview was held with the ECCE coordinators and observations were made by the researcher. As a result, almost all the respondents and the observation result confirmed that almost all the studied private and government owned KGs had similar physical setting and outdoor equipment. More specifically, except Atse Bekaffa, one of the government owned KGs, all the studied KGs were located next to the primary schools and were found at clean and secured area to keep the children's safety. The KGs had appropriate fence, well decorated wall with different and attractive pictures, numbers and letters; they were far from the main road and they had wide and convenient play grounds which are free from harm full objects. In addition, these KGs had play ground and sanitary facilities which were near and at appropriate distance to the class-rooms. Moreover, though the numbers of the KG children

in all four KGs were different, all these KGs had similar indoor and outdoor materials and equipment.

More specifically, they had similar number of Balance, Climbing Frame, Slide, Merry-go-round and Swinging. Each KG had not proportional number of outdoor materials and equipment to the number of the children they have. For instance the number of children in Kings, Waliya , Medanialem Akababi and Atse Bekaffa were 120, 94, 108 and 89 respectively. However, inmost the studied KGs, there were only one Balance, Climbing Frame, Slide, Merry-go-round, Swinging etc. This was in contrary to what the MoE (2009) recommend that was 1:40 (i.e. one balance for forty children). The study result goes in line with Bruce (2011) who indicated that the bizarre assumption that knowledge acquired from indoors is superior to that gained from outside has created frequent lack of attention to the external environment and outdoor playing materials and equipment. This indicated that there was lack of outdoor playing equipment and materials in most of the studied KGs. This condition may affect the effective implementation of ECCE in general and the children's holistic development in particular.

4.2.1.4. Availability and adequacy of facility rooms in ECCE

In order to assess and compare the presence of appropriate ratio of clean toilet, feeding room, pure water, napping room, class-room for providing first aid to the KG children, interview was held with respondents and at the same time observation was conducted. Accordingly, the interview held with the KG directors and observation result, indicated that the entire studied KGs toilet per child and pure-water per child ratio was 1:20. In addition, both the private KGs and one from the government owned KGs have 7mx6m and 7mx8m class-room size and napping-room size respectively. Surprisingly, Kings Academic, one of the private KGs has child sized water purification which was constructed by the help of NGO in the cost of more than 100,000 Ethiopian Birr. As a result, children in this KG were drinking pure and safe water. In addition, the observation result revealed that most of the studied KGs had napping (resting-room) for children. As the KG coordinators reported that, all children after they ate their lunch they take a nap for minimum of one hours and maximum of one and half hours. Children while taking rest in the private and government owned KGs. This implies, most of the studied KGs were in competition to achieve the pre-school standard set by MoE (2009) and GEB of toilet per child and water pump per child which is 1:20 and the class-room size 1.5 square meters per child. Hence it facilitates the implementation of ECCE both in the private and government owned KGs.

4.2.2. Professional qualification and experience of ECCE teachers

4.2.2.1. Long term training in ECCE

To assess and compare the professional qualification of ECCE coordinators, interview was held with the respondents. Accordingly, respondents indicated that all KG teachers had ten months certificate in preschool education from Gondar Teachers Training College.

In addition most (75%) of teachers from the private KG and some (25%) of teachers from the government owned KGs were holders of diploma in another field of education. Besides, all the ECCE program coordinators who were found at the sub-city level were degree holders in another field of education. Whereas the ECCE program coordinator at the GEB was degree holder in the field of ECCE. Moreover, the KG

coordinators of the studied KGs were also having similar professional qualification with the KG teachers. On the other hand, all the KG caregivers did not get any training after completing 10th or 12th grade. The training and qualifications of preschool teachers vary widely from one country to another. Different countries have their own licensing requirements that regulate teaching and caregiver training. According to Gore and Koury (1964:21) "the teacher of kindergarten children ought to be a graduate of an officially recognized four-year college with major work in early elementary education, completed either at the graduate or postgraduate level". However, as manifested by Dereje (1994:29), though there is a common understanding that per-school teachers have to have a sound training; teachers varies from institutions to institutions, countries to countries and above all from one agency to another. As indicated in the survey of teacher training programs related to ECE in the United States of America most states require a four-year professional program for certification in ECE. A few states have developed a five — year program (French, G., 2007). Regarding the training of pre-school teachers in Ethiopia, diploma in preschool education is required (MoE, 2009). However, in our situation regarding to the professional qualification of teachers, the questionnaire and interview result showed that 100% of the studied KG teachers both in the private and government owned KGs were holders of KG certificate from Gondar Teachers Training College. However as the interview result revealed that in the current situation there is no diploma program in ECCE in Ethiopia. As a result, many KG teachers are currently continued their diploma program in other field. From this point of view, one can deduce that the absence of long term professional development in ECCE diploma, Degree etc program can negatively affect the implementation of ECCE in general and can enhance the attrition rate of KG teachers in particular.

4.2.3. Preparation and utilization of teaching AIDS by teachers

Table 4.2.3.1. Chi-square comparison result of preparation of teaching aids by kg teachers

Crosstab				
			Teaching aid preparation by teachers Yes	Total
KG teacher's response	government owned preschool	Count	16	16
		% within KG teacher's response	100.0%	100.0%
	private preschool	Count	16	16
		% within KG teacher's response	100.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	32	32
		% within KG teacher's response	100.0%	100.0%

This table depicts that no statistics were computed because response of teachers in preparation of teaching aid were constant. This indicated that teachers of both the private and government owned KGs had equal participation in preparation of teaching aids.

Table 4.2.3.2. Chi-square comparison result of effective utilisation of teaching aids in ecce

Crosstab					
			Effective utilisation of teaching aids		Total
			some times	Often	
KG teacher's response	government owned preschool	Count	8	8	16
		% within KG teacher's response	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	private preschool	Count	2	14	16
		% within KG teacher's response	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	22	32
		% within KG teacher's response	31.2%	68.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)

This table depicts that there was significant difference in effective utilisation of teaching aids between teachers in the private and government owned KGs (X^2=5.23, df=1, p<.05). This shows that most (87.5%) of teachers in the private KGs often used teaching aids effectively where as only half (50%) of teachers in the government owned KGs used teaching aids effectively. This indicated that teachers in the private KGs better used teaching aids as compared to teachers in the government owned KGs. The result of this study goes in line with what Bruce (2011) reported regarding the importance of teaching materials and equipment in children's learning, that is children cannot learn without real, direct first hand experien ces. In addition, Christensen and Mora Vick (1987:162) and Morrison (2011) stated that KG classrooms require various furnishing equipment and materials that are necessary to support the classroom activities and respond to the needs of the children. Besides, they categorize these materials as natural materials, active-play equipment, construction materials, and manipulative materials, dramatic- play materials, art materials, cognitive materials and books. These materials have a vital role in the implementation of ECCE and enhancing the academic achievement of KG children. (Chowdhury and Choudhury, 2002) also confirmed that teaching aids are an integral component in the implementation of ECCE. It could help children in getting their attention, in making the lesson concrete and interesting, improving understanding, enhancing academic achievement of children, and make easy to remember concepts and learning activities. Besides, children tend to remember what they have learned if the teaching learning process is supported by teaching aids. From this point of view one can say that though there was equal preparation of teaching aids by both the private and government owned KG teachers, effective utilization of teaching materials and equipment was found to be better in the private KG than the government owned KGs. Hence, the children`s participation in using these different locally produced materials may positively affect the children`s holistic development in particular and enhance the effective implementation of ECCE program at large.

4.3. Process (throughput) comparison of the private and government owned KGS

4.3.1. Most commonly used method of teaching

The concern of this study was to investigate the frequency of using different child-centred teaching methods. Respondents were provided with the list of teaching methods and allowed to indicate one or more methods that they use commonly. The results were summarised as follows. This table depicts that there was significant difference in employing brainstorming teaching method between teachers in the private and government owned KGs (X^2=7.93, df=2, p<.05). This shows that almost all (93.80%) of teachers in the private KGs often used brainstorming where as only half (50%) of teachers in the government owned KGs used brainstorming teaching method. This indicated that teachers in the private KGs better used brainstorming method as compared to teachers in the government owned KGs.

Table 4.3.1.1. Chi-square comparison result of private and government owned KGs in using brainstorming teaching methods

			Teaching through brainstorming			Total
			Never	some times	Often	
KG teacher's response	government owned preschool	Count	4	4	8	16
		% within KG teacher's response	25.0%	25.0 %	50.0%	100.0 %
	private preschool	Count	0	1	15	16
		% within KG teacher's response	0.0%	6.2%	93.8%	100.0 %
Total		Count	4	5	23	32
		% within KG teacher's response	12.5%	15.6 %	71.9%	100.0 %
Chi-Square Tests		Value	Df		Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	

The result of this study goes in line with Christensen and Mora Vick (1987:208) which stated that brainstorming can be used in small or large group activities and encourages children to focus on topic and contribute to the free flow of ideas by posing a question or a problem, or by introducing a topic, the teacher establishes warmth and encouraging environment for all students to participate and initially listening to what others say to express ideas and adjust their previous knowledge of understanding, accommodate new information and increase their levels of awareness. This method is an open sharing activity, with teaches acceptance and respect for individual difference in their knowledge and their language abilities. Hence, this type of teaching method can help teachers to address children's individual differences and at the same time help to implement child-centred teaching method. Besides the calculated independent sample T-test indicated that the academic achievement of children in the private KGs was found to be better than the children from the government owned KGs. This might be due to high employment of brainstorming teaching method by teachers in the private KGs than the government owned KGs.

Table 4.3.1.2: Chi-square comparison result of private and government owned KGs in using cooperative teaching methods

			Teaching through cooperative method		Total
			some times	Often	
KG teacher's response	government owned preschool	Count	9	7	16
		% within KG teacher's response	56.2%	43.8%	100.0 %
	private preschool	Count	1	15	16
		% within KG teacher's response	6.2%	93.8%	100.0 %
Total		Count	10	22	32
		% within KG teacher's response	31.2%	68.8%	100.0 %

Chi-Square Tests	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

This table depicts that there was significant difference in employing cooperative teaching method between teachers in the private and government owned KGs (X^2= 9.30, df=1, p<.05). This shows that almost all (93.80%) of teachers in the private KGs often used cooperative teaching method where as only less than half (43.80%) of teachers in the government owned KGs used cooperative teaching method. The rest (52.6%) of teachers in the government owned KGs and (6.2%) of teachers in the private KGs sometimes employ cooperative teaching method. This indicated that teachers in the private KGs had better used cooperative teaching method as compared to teachers in the government owned KGs. The result of this study goes in line with Christensen and Mora Vick (1987:208), who stated that cooperative teaching method is the best teaching method in kindergarten. The teacher structured the task in such a way that involvement of each member contributes to implementation of the task. Success is based on the performance of the pair rather than on the performance of each individual. The method emphasizes interdependence and promotes cooperation rather than competition. Establishing and maintaining cooperative group norms develops the concept of a community of learners. Moreover, the method enhances student's respect for and understanding of individual differences in the ability, interest and needs. Hence, this type of teaching method can help teachers to address children's individual differences and at the same time to implement child-centred teaching method. Besides the calculated independent sample T-test indicated that the academic achievement of children in the private KGs was better than the children from the government owned KGs. This might be due to high employment of cooperative teaching method by teachers in the private KGs than the government owned KGs.

This table depicts that there was significant difference in employing play based teaching method between teachers in the private and government owned KGs (x2= 13.33, df=1, p<.05). This shows that almost all (93.80%) of teachers in the private

KGs often used play based teaching method where as only less than half (31.20 %) of teachers in the government owned KGs used play based teaching method. The rest (68.8%) of teachers in the government owned KGs and (6.2%) of teachers in the private KGs sometimes employ play based teaching method.

Table 4.3.1.3. Chi-square comparison result of private and government owned KGs in using play based learning

			Teaching through play-based method		Total
			some times	Often	
KG teacher's response	government owned preschool	Count	11	5	16
		% within KG teacher's response	68.8%	31.2%	100.0%
	private preschool	Count	1	15	16
		% within KG teacher's response	6.2%	93.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	12	20	32
		% within KG teacher's response	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)

This indicated that teachers in the private KGs had better used play based teaching method as compared to teachers in the government owned KGs. The result of this study goes in line with most early years professionals who agreed on that play is the first and most appropriate mode of instruction in KG (Beaver *et al*., 2008; Jones and Cooper, 2006; Attfield and Wood, 2005; Tallack, 1997; Boren and picket, 1964; Curtis, 2003; Froebel cited in Johnson, 1987; Christensen and Moravick, 1987; Mc Carthy and Houston, 1980:240). Play enables children to actively engage in different activities and help them to interact with both adults and children. This helps them to develop their social skills, to get access to information processes in a meaningful way and to become part of the large community. Besides, Bruce, T. (2011) also confirmed that play is exploratory, communicative, enjoyable, sociable, educational and creative. For children play is the most use full way to accumulate a vast amount of information about the world around them. More particularly, it helps children to accumulate a vast amount of vocabulary that is paramount important for their language, arithmetic and intellectual development. Hence, this type of teaching method can help teachers to address children's individual differences and at the same time to implement child-centred teaching method. Besides the calculated independent sample T-test indicated that the academic achievement of children in the private KGs was better than the children from the government owned KGs. This might be due to high employment of play based teaching method by teachers in the private KGs than the government owned KGs. In contrast, in countries where the pre-primary or readiness for school model of ECCE dominates, play tends to be curricularised with an associated need to identify specific purposes or functions of play in children's learning and development which are often articulated in terms of specific academic subjects. In such contexts, the role of the teachers is more directive than indicated. Therefore, this clearly indicated that teachers need further and deep training in how to integrate play based learning in the education system of ECE. This table depicts that there was significant difference in employing story telling teaching method between teachers in the private and government owned KGs ($x2= 13.33$, $df=1$, $p<.05$). This shows that most (87.5%) of teachers in the private KGs often used story telling teaching method where as only half (37.5 %) of teachers in the government owned KGs used storytelling teaching method.

Table 4.3.1.4. Chi-square comparison result of private and government owned KGs in using storytelling teaching methods

			Teachers through story telling method		**Total**
			some times	**Often**	
KG teacher's response	government owned preschool	Count	**10**	**6**	**16**
		% within KG teacher's response	62.5%	37.5%	100.0%
	private preschool	Count	2	14	16
		% within KG teacher's response	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	12	20	32
		% within KG teacher's response	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)

The rest (62.5%) of teachers in the government owned KGs and (12.5%) of teachers in the private KGs sometimes employ storey telling teaching method. This indicated that teachers in the private KGs had better used story telling teaching method as compared to teachers in the government owned KGs.

Table 4.3.1.5. Chi-square comparison of private and government owned KGs in using music and dance teaching methods

Crosstab

			Teaching through music and dance method			Total
			Never	some times	often	
KG teacher's response	government owned preschool	Count	2	14	0	16
		% within KG teacher's response	12.5%	87.5%	0.0%	100.0%
	private preschool	Count	0	9	7	16
		% within KG teacher's response	0.0%	56.2%	43.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	2	23	7	32
		% within KG teacher's response	6.2%	71.9%	21.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)

The result of this study goes in line with Choudhury and Chowdhury (2002) and Brewster *et al*. (2008) they confirmed that children love stories. It provides them both pleasure and information for KG children. Stories can be either written or oral and can provide either imaginary events or descriptions of real life, past or present. Children usually feel comfortable with them as there is a familiar structure to them. In addition sharing a story at home with family and/or at school between teachers and children has great contribution for development of literacy skills. Hence, this type of teaching method can help teachers to address children's individual differences and at the same time to implement child-centred teaching method. Besides the calculated independent sample T-test indicated that the academic achievement of children in the private KGs was better than the children from the government owned KGs. This might be due to high employment of storytelling teaching method by teachers in the private KGs than the government owned KGs. This table depicts that there was significant difference in employing music and dance teaching method between teachers in the private and government owned KGs ($x2= 10.08$, $df=2$, $p<.05$).

Table 4.3.1.6. Chi-square comparison result of private and government owned KGs in using classifying concrete objects teaching methods

			Teachers through classifying concrete objects method		Total
			some times	Often	
KG teacher's response	government owned preschool	Count	4	12	16
		% within KG teacher's response	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	private preschool	Count	2	14	16
		% within KG teacher's response	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	6	26	32
		% within KG teacher's response	18.8%	81.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)

This shows that less than half (43.80 %) of teachers in the private KGs often used music and dance method where as teachers in the government owned KGs did not use music and dance teaching method at all. The rest (87.5%) of teachers in the government owned KGs and (56.2%) of teachers in the private KGs sometimes employ music and dance teaching method. This indicated that teachers in the private KGs had better used music and dance teaching method as compared to teachers in the government owned KGs. On top of this Choudhury and Chowdhury (2002: 142) confirmed that children love rhythm, music and dance. Music brings pleasure to children and offers avenue of expression to children, which closely relates to that of language development. Besides, effective use of rhythm, music and dance helps to introduce various vocabularies linked to movement and expression in a fun way. A simple song accompanied by music brings children to a happy state of mind and engages them more and more specially in rhythmic activities. It also helps children to memorize the words and tone. Hence, this type of teaching method can help teachers to address children's individual differences and at the same time to implement child-centred teaching method. Besides the calculated independent sample T-test indicated that the academic achievement of children in the private KGs was better than the children from the government owned KGs. This might be due to high employment of integrated rhythm, music and dance teaching method by teachers in the private KGs than the government owned KGs.

Dramatization teaching methods

Crosstab

			Teaching through dramatisation			Total
			never	some times	Often	
KG teacher's response	government owned preschool	Count	2	12	2	16
		% within KG teacher's response	12.5%	75.0%	12.5%	100.0%
	private preschool	Count	0	11	5	16
		% within KG teacher's response	0.0%	68.8%	31.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	2	23	7	32
		% within KG teacher's response	6.2%	71.9%	21.9%	100.0%

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)

From the above two tables we can say that there is no significant difference between teachers from private and government owned KGs in using classifying concrete objects and dramatisation method of teaching both in the private and government owned KGs. This is because the level of significance ($P>0.05$) both in using classifying concrete objects and dramatisation method of teaching.

4.3.3. Class-room teachers' instructional condition

The interview held with the KG coordinators, the observation result and document analysis of the private and government owned KGs revealed that all the four upper KG teachers had annual, monthly and daily lesson plan. These plans were all prepared based on the five developmental domains (Amst chibtoch) of a child (i.e physical, social, intellectual, emotional and). The KG coordinators confirmed that, the main purpose of developing each plan based on the five developmental domains was to identify each child's current situation and to scaffold and extend each child's learning. In addition, most of the teachers both in the private and government owned KG were encouraging their students by calling their names to participate ask and answer questions freely in the class-room. However, children from the government owned KGs seems not happy and free, more specifically the children in Atse Bekaffa most of the time were much tiered. They repeatedly asked the researcher by saying " ?" this means "are you

willing to take us to visit some places outside this class-room?" and the researcher respond were also " ". As to the researcher's opinion, this indicates that the children dislike it utmost to stay in the narrow, suffocated (low ventilated) and low lighted class-rooms. Moreover, this prison like KG had very bad smell which comes from the toilet which is found very near to the class-rooms. Regarding to this very bad smell of the toilet, the KG coordinator said that " " which means we teachers had talked many times to the concerned bodies to bring us a solution, however, nobody gave us any solution, now we teachers and children of the KG have already adapted the bad smell of the Toilet. More specifically, the KG director told the researcher that they had informed many times the sub-city's administrative part, ECCE program coordinator and they had also contacted with many NGOs but still they did not give them any solution. As a result the teachers and the KG children, who are easily vulnerable to different diseases, were highly suffering from this learning environment which is not conducive and unhealthy situation for the implementation of ECCE program in general and the health condition of the children and the whole staff in particular.

4.3.3.1. Employing corporal punishment for children in ECCE (observation result)

The observation result revealed that instead of using multimodal approach to attract the attention of the children, most of the studied KG teachers and caregivers were employing corporal punishments as a means of getting children's attention. Most of the KG teachers were holding a stick. In addition, while they were teaching the children, if a child divert his/her attention the teacher automatically hit the table or shows the child a kind of psychological punishment by showing the stick. In addition to this teachers in most of the studied KGs did not give much attention for children with special needs. More specifically, these children did not get any special material supports and attention while implementing the ECCE program. Instead, the teachers had only developed sympathy (lip services) towards the children with observable disability and apply corporal punishment for the children with the non observable disability like children with behaviour problems. The result of this study goes in line with CYCONLINE (2001) stated that it is a punitive act that inflicts pain which includes hitting, slapping, spanking or forcing a child to maintain in uncomfortable position. The use of corporal punishment as a means of disciplinary method in Ethiopia has a long history and it is quite common in schools even today. Tigest and Dereje(1997); Daniel and Gobena, (1998) confirmed that physical punishment is highly prevalent in schools. Conversely, Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right (1948) prohibits the use of punishment. It states that "No one shall be subjected to torture or the cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." In addition, the United Nation Convention on the rights of the child, it is further stressed in article 19(1) as follows:

State particles shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents(s) or any other person who has the care of the child(UN, 1991:42).

Therefore, from this point of view one can deduce that employing corporal punishment as a means of getting children's attention in general and thinking to avoid children's behaviour problem using corporal punishment in particular results in poor implementation of ECCE program in general and harms the physical, psychological and mental health status of the children both in the private and government owned KGs in particular.

4.4. Output comparison of the private and government owned KGS

4.4.1. Academic achievement of private and government owned KGS

In order to assess and compare the academic achievement of children who were attending their preschool education in the private and government owned KGs, the same type of achievement test (i.e. simple letter and number identification) were administered for both groups. The results of independent sample T-test and one –way between groups ANOVA are summarised as follows in table—

Table 4.4.1.1. Independent sample t-test comparison result of the simple arithmetic achievement of private and government owned KGs

Group Statistics

	KG's responses	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Arithmetic result	Government owned KGs	61	16.8852	8.28271	1.06049
	Private KGs	61	23.2295	4.99798	.63993

This table depicts that the simple arithmetic mean score of children in the private KGs(M=23.22, SD=4.99) was greater than that of the students from the government owned KGs (M=16.88, SD= 8.28).

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed	Mean Difference
Arithmetic result	Equal variances assumed	29.089	.000	-5.122	120	.000	-6.34426
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.122	98.579	.000	-6.34426

The above table depicts that the mean score difference between the private and government owned KG children in simple arithmetic achievement was statistically significant at (t=-5.12, df=120, p<.05). This indicated that children in the private KGs scored better result in simple arithmetic test score as compared to children in the government owned KGs. This table depicts that the simple letter identification mean score of children from

the private KGs (M=42.54, SD=11.26) was greater than that of the children from the government owned KGs (M=34.00, SD= 14.39).

Table 4.4.1.2. Independent sample t-test comparison result of simple letter identification achievement of private and government owned KGs

Group Statistics					
	KG's responses	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Letter identification score	Government owned KGs	61	34.0000	14.39907	1.84361
	Private owned KGs	61	42.5410	11.26436	1.44225

The above table depicts that the mean score difference between the private and government owned KG children in simple letter identification score achievement was statistically significant at (t=-3.65,df=113.43,p<.05). This indicated that children in the private KGs scored better result in simple letter identification test score as compared to children in the government owned KGs.

Independent Samples Test							
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed	Mean Difference
Letter identification score	Equal variances assumed	9.783	.002	-3.649	120	.000	-8.54098
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.649	113.428	.000	-8.54098

Table 4.4.1.3. Independent sample t-test comparison result of simple arithmetic achievement of male and female KG children (based on sex difference)

Group Statistics					
	children's sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Arithmetic result	Male	54	20.3333	7.02287	.95569
	Female	68	19.8382	7.93746	.96256

Independent Samples Test							
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Arithmetic result	Equal variances assumed	.607	.438	.360	120	.720	.49510
	Equal variances not assumed			.365	118.559	.716	.49510

This table depicts that the mean score of simple arithmetic result of male children (M=20.33, SD=7.02) has a little difference from female children (M=19.83, SD= 7.93).

This table depicts that there was no statistically significant difference at (t=0.36, df=120, p>0.05) in the mean score of "simple arithmetic" test score between male and female children in the studied KGs. This indicated that though there was no statistically significant difference between male and female children, but male children had little better score than female children. Male and female children had similar mean score in the simple arithmetic score.

Table 4.4.1.4. Independent sample t-test comparison result of the simple letter identification achievement of male and female KG children (based on sex difference)

Group Statistics					
	children's sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Letter identification score	Male	54	38.2037	13.85011	1.88476
	Female	68	38.3235	13.44468	1.63041

This table depicts that the mean score of simple letter identification of male children (M=38.20, SD=13.85) had similar result with female children (M=38.32, SD= 13.44).

Independent Samples Test							
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Letter identification score	Equal variances assumed	.100	.752	-.048	120	.962	-.11983
	Equal variances not assumed			-.048	112.269	.962	-.11983

This table depicts that there was no statistically significant difference at (t=-0.048, df=120, p>0.05) in the mean score of simple letter identification test score between male and female children in the studied KGs. This indicated that male and female children had similar mean score in the simple arithmetic result.

In fact the above calculated independent sample t-test results indicated that children in the private KGs scored better result both in simple letter and number identification as compared to children in the government owned KGs.

The result of this study indicated that there might be specific factors associated with the academic achievement result of children in the private and government owned KGs. These were high participation of parents in their children's education, high employment of child-centred teaching methods such as brainstorming, play based learning, storytelling, cooperative

learning, and teaching children in wide and conducive environment, and educating children with the help of different and attractive teaching aids may result in high academic achievement both (letter and number identification) of children in the private KGs than the government owned KGs.

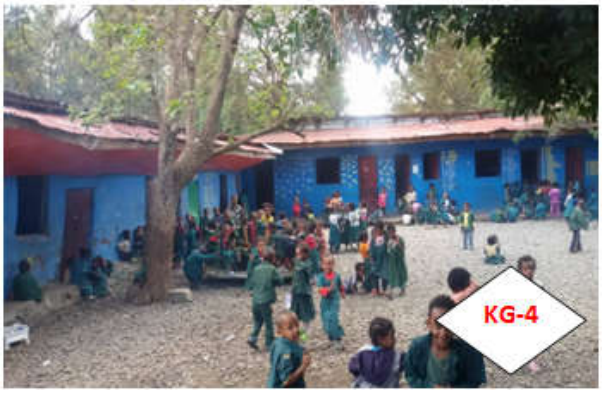
Similarly, the result of this study goes in line with Fantuzzo, Davis and Ginsburg (1995) which states that greater participation of parents in their children's education enhances students' academic performance. Further studies assured that parents involvement have been correlated with higher achievement, improved attitudes, increased attendance, fewer discipline problems, fewer grade retention, higher aspiration, fewer drop outs and fewer special education referrals (Chowdhury and Choudhury, 2002; Brudenell, 2004 and Green, 2007; Brewster *et al* , 2008; and Morrison, 2012).

Besides, Taguma, Litjens, and Makowiecki, (2012) confirmed that well-educated/ trained/ staff is better able to create more effective work environments and increase the efficiency of other ECCE staff members. As a result children may have better educational performance. More particularly; well educated staff can prepare and use effectively different teaching aids in any class-room. This could help children in getting their attention, improving understanding, making easy to remember concepts and learning activities and enhancing academic achievement of children. Besides, children tend to remember what they have learned if the teaching learning process is supported by teaching aids (Chowdhury and Choudhury 2002).

However, the calculated independent sample t-test result indicated that there was no statistically significant difference among male and female children in both simple letter and number identification result scores.

4.5.2. Empowering parents' involvement in their children's education

Regarding to the empowerment of parents in their children's education, the document analysis, and interview result from KG directors and coordinators, and ECCE program coordinators indicated that most of the children's parents are illiterate and are living in very poor socio-economic status. So that, the GEB in collaboration with different NGOs like ISR, plan international is currently providing different training for those parents through the KG teachers. The training was mainly focused on creating and raising awareness on child rearing practices and the effect of ECCE on the children holistic development. Besides, all the studied KG coordinators confirmed that the parental education and empowerment had brought radical change on the children's parents' involvement in their children's education. On the same spot, MoE (2010) and Chowdhur and Choudhury (2002) indicated that since low income parents often feel a sense of powerless and lack of confidence in their relationship with institutions beyond the family, empowering of parents and families is a key issue for the holistic development of KG children. In most developing countries like Ethiopia children's parents have low rate of adult literacy and severe poverty. Therefore, so as to enhance early stimulation of children, improve the child rearing practices and reduce poverty of these parents, providing appropriate training is highly crucial. From this point of view one can say that empowering of children's parents might enhance their awareness level on the importance of ECCE in their children holistic development and effective implementation of ECCE. As a result it may facilitate the effective implementation of ECCE in general and academic achievement of the children in particular.



4.5.4. Providing recognition and reward for preschools

Regarding to providing reward and recognition for the KGs, the interview and questionnaire result indicated that most of the respondents from the private and government owned KGs reported that if appropriate comparison, evaluation and sufficient amount of reward is given for the best KGs, having comparison among KGs is very important. It can enhance both the motivation of teachers and effective utilisation of resources. Besides, the ECCE program coordinator revealed that the presence of quality standard set by MoE and GEB helped the teachers of both the studied private and government owned KGs to be highly motivated in achieving the stated standards and it also helped them as a guideline in mobilising resources and develop sense of competition among each other. In addition, the ECCE coordinators who are found both in sub-city and GEB level also confirmed that the presence of this standard provided them a good opportunity to monitor and evaluate the current progress of each preschool. As a result different rewards and recognitions are making the preschools to be highly motivated and fulfill the different requirement of the standard. In addition to this, one KG director appreciated the current practices of creating competition among each KG and provide them recognition and rewards both for teachers of the KG and parents of that specific KG.

“

” (16 2007)

On the contrary to the presence of completion among KGs, education theorists do not agree on whether competitive desires should be encouraged or constrained. One theory claims that, since competition is part of every culture and since education should transmit culture, it is necessary to incorporate competition into education to help children get used to it in later life (Chowdhur and Choudhury, 2002). Another theory views competition as opposed to collaboration and, therefore, as an evil element in culture that should be curtailed. At school this often results in an ambiguous attitude towards competition, which confuses students, who will then try to compete successfully without making it appear they compete. From this point of view, one can deduce that conducting appropriate competition among preschools and at the same time providing them appropriate recognition and reward for the private KGs can facilitate the implementation of ECCE in general and create a sense of completion for the other government owned KGs in particular.

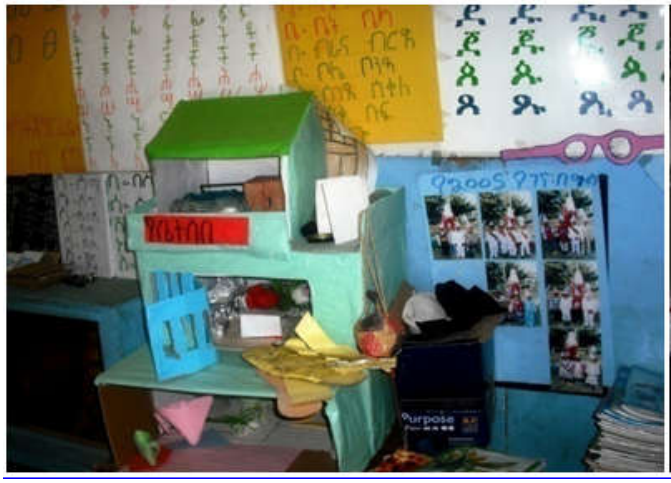
4.5.4. Providing meal services for children from poor background families

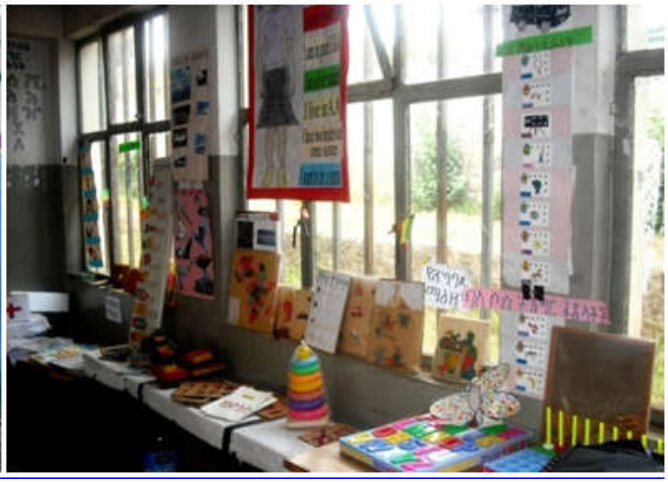
In relation with the socio-economic status of children’s parents; the interview result with the ECCE program coordinators, KG coordinators, and results of observation and document analysis indicated that most of the children who were attending their preschool education in government owned studied KGs were from poor socio economic background families. Most of the children’s parents are beggars, bar ladies, house servants and daily labourers. As a result, they did not provide meal for their children. So as to solve the hunger of the KG children, the KG coordinators in collaboration with the ECCE program

coordinators have tried to get different NGOs which can help them in this regard and fortunately all the studied KGs had meal support for children during the breakfast time. These NGOs also provided them child sized chairs and tables. Unfortunately, the NGO which were providing meal support for Waliya from the private and Atse Bekaffa from the government KGs had interrupted because their program had phased out. Picture of the KG children of the private and government owned while eating their breakfast. From this point of view one can infer that this kind of care and support system for children from low socio-economic background families can motivate parents to send their children to preschools and at the same time can facilitate the implementation of ECCE.

4.5.5. Preparation and effective utilisation of teaching AIDS

Teaching aids are an integral component in any class-room. It could help children in getting their attention, improving understanding, making easy to remember concepts and learning activities and enhancing academic achievement of children. Besides, children tend to remember what they have learned if the teaching learning process is supported by teaching aids (Chowdhury and Choudhury 2002). Teaching aids have great value to make the lesson more concrete and interesting for children. According to the interview result with the ECCE program coordinator, KG directors and coordinators and the observation result confirmed that in all the studied private and government owned KGs there are different teaching aids which are produced by the teachers using locally available resources. However, as the result from the questionnaire analysis indicate that effective utilisation of these teaching aids were much better in the private than the government owned KGs. Locally produced teaching aids in the private and government owned KGs





4.6. Basic challenges of the current practices of ECE

As Daniel; Haile; and MoE (2010); UNESCO (2005); Tirussew (2005) stated that the major challenges which are existing in the practices of ECE in Ethiopian includes lack of standard curriculum and guideline, lack of culturally relevant story books, an almost non-existent alternative care and education for the large child population in the rural areas, lack of access to preschool education for most children with disabilities and children from low socio-economic backgrounds, lack of awareness about the value and type of care and education of young children, low salary of teachers, high teacher turnover, lack of early childhood education professionals, misconception that anybody can teach kids because they are kids!; and the use of foreign language, mainly English, as a medium of instruction. Similarly, the interview result with the ECCE program coordinators, directors, document analysis and questionnaire result of KG teachers revealed that the common basic problems that were existing in the current practices of studied private and government owned KGs include absence of properly trained KG caregivers (mogzit), absence of work book for the KG children, lack of culturally relevant story books, inaccessible physical environment for most children with disabilities, use of corporal punishments as a means of getting children's attention, lack of outdoor playing materials and equipment, low salary of KG teachers and caregivers, low professional qualification and absence of getting professional development opportunity in the field of ECE, and loose collaboration and collective responsibility among the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social and Labour affairs in providing coordinated service for the KG children.

4.6.1. Lack of trained kg care givers in ECCE

In the document, standard for kindergarten program set by MOE (2009) and Gondar Education Bureau (GEB), it is clearly stated that in a class of 40 children, there should be one teacher, one assistant teacher and one caregiver (Mogzit).Besides, Chowdhur and Choudhury (2002) stated that child rearing practices do not exist in isolation but are usually related to broader constellation of environmental events. The process of child rearing practices is highly influenced by the parents and caretakers characteristic ways of thinking, feeling, and acting prevalent both in and outside of the child's home environment.

However, in the studied private and government owned KGs there was only two caregivers in each KG for 94, 108, 118 and 120 children respectively. In line with this, the interview result made with the KG care givers indicated that as they are suffering in providing appropriate care for many children while they are playing, feeding, taking nap, washing their hands

before and after meal, and when they come and go to their home etc. In addition to this, all the KG care givers confirmed that as they did not get any training that helps them to provide appropriate care for KG children before and after become an employees in the KG. As a result, both the KG care givers and KG children are confronted with different problems. Regarding to this, Tassoni, (1998) put the ratio of caregiver to children in the KG as 1:13 respectively. To care and nurture children without sufficient number of KG caregivers is virtually impossible. Hence, the practice of early childhood education in the KG can be highly affected the implementation of ECCE in general and academic achievement of the KG children in particular.

4.6.2. Absence of ECCE exprts

Regarding to ECCE experts, the interview result with respondents indicated that the primary school directors and some of the ECCE program coordinators do not have professional qualification in the field of ECCE. Even though, the ECCE program coordinators have degree or diploma in education field, most of them were not relevant to the education system of ECCE program. In addition, they are not well familiar with the KG curriculum, teaching learning process and the essential indoor and outdoor materials and equipment. As a result, most KG teachers and children were suffering from their inappropriate way of managing the KG program. One KG coordinator stated the problems as follows:
ye-kidme medebegna timihirt ende Kibtot new emiyaut betechemari “
”.

In contrary to this result, in the document, standard for kindergarten program by MoE (2009), it is clearly stated that preschools which have nursery, lower and upper KG should have its own KG director. However, though, all the studied private and government owned KGs had nursery, lower and upper KG, but any one of them had not its own director. Still they are managed by the primary school directors, who did not have awareness about KG and at the same time did not give any attention to it. However, Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002:144) states that ECCE coordinators need to have a basic knowledge of child development and psychology and they must know how to run a pre-school, its requirement for safety and health, nutrition and mental health services. In addition, they must know how to recruit and guide the other staff; work with parents and maintain their involvement; and collaborate with other community agencies. The job obviously requires a person of ability and experience and one whose professional training should include an academic degree in a field such as ECE, child development etc. This implies that, in the current practices of ECCE absence of qualified professionals in ECCE affects the proper implementation of preschool education and results in low facilitating the implementation of ECCE program.

4.6.3. Absence of professional development in the field of ECCE

Teachers who are knowledgeable about child development and learning are able to make broad predictions about what children of a particular age group typically was like, what they typically will and will not be capable of, and what strategies and approaches will most likely promote their optimal learning and development (NACECE , 2000). In addition, in the document, standard for kindergarten program by MOE (2009), it is clearly stated that preschool teachers should be holders of diploma in the field of ECCE program. With this knowledge, teachers can make preliminary decisions with some confidence about environment, materials, interactions, different activities and they can provide appropriate early education for all children. However, the interview and document analysis result indicated that even though there are many teachers who taught as a KG teaches for many years at certificate level, they did not get any opportunity to participate in the long term professional development in the field of ECCE. As a result, though, these well experienced and skilful teachers like teaching KG children utmost, but because of absence of professional development in the field and low salary amount they earn, currently they are leaving the KG and are becoming teachers in primary schools. The interview result from the KG coordinators, ECCE program coordinators also indicated that losing these well experienced KG teachers is unpleasant and very dangerous for the children. Regarding to this,

4.6.4. Employing corporal punishment to get children’s attention

Well-educated/ trained staff is better able to create more effective work environments and increase the efficiency of other ECCE staff members (Taguma, Litjens, and Makowiecki, 2012). The teachers and caregivers of young children have great responsibility in creating effective work environment and in helping children to become part of the social world. According to Christensen and Mora Vick (1987:46) and Choudhury and Chowdhury (2002:101) a teacher of kindergarten is expected to provide children with a sense of psychological comfort and security, values like love, sympathy, humility, co-operation, and obedience; organize and maintain an environment in which children live and learn, plan for daily activities that are part of broader curriculum design, mediate relationship between children and avoid corporal punishment.

However as the observation and interview result indicated that teachers and caregivers of the studied private and government owned KGs sometimes use psychological and corporal punishments as a means to get children’s attention both inside and outside of the classrooms. Besides to this the interview made with Shiho a volunteer from Japan International Cooperation Association (JICA), who was providing support in ECCE in Atse Bekafa KG also highly condemned the practice of using corporal punishment for the KG children. Instead teachers can use different teaching methods which can hold the attention of KG children for longer time.

Therefore, from this point of view, one can deduce that employing corporal punishment for KG children both in the private and government owned KGs was affecting children negatively. Since the corporal punishment can affect the children’s physical, mental and holistic development of the children.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The general objective of this study was to assess and compare the private and government owned KGs in the North Gondar of Amhara region. In addition, it was intended to examine and document their major opportunities and basic challenges while implementing ECCE. Therefore at the very beginning, the study was designed to compare by compartmentalising the educational process into educational input, throughput and output part. In addition, the study was basically intended to achieve the general objective through responding the following specific research objectives. More specifically, it was designed to:

- Examine the current practices of teaching methods in preschool education;
- Assess teachers' perceived value of play based learning in preschool children;
- Assess the physical learning environment of preschools in which play based learning is implementing;
- Identify major opportunities and challenges of preschool education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn:

In an era where most adults and parents prefer early childhood classrooms that are more academically oriented, this review suggests that play is beneficial to children's socio-emotional development. Given the importance of socio-emotional skills to school performance, the significance of enhancing those skills through socio-dramatic play is paramount in the early childhood setting. There are many advantages to letting children engage in play with others. For example, socio-dramatic play enhances children's capacity for reflecting before acting, role taking, perspective-taking, empathy, altruism, and emotional understanding and regulation. Furthermore, in play with peers, children's negotiation and problem-solving skills are promoted, as are their abilities to cooperate with others, share, take turns, self-restrain, work in a group, and g*et al*ong with others. Play also promotes children's ability to read intentionality in others. In addition, early childhood teachers have to recognize the developmental significance and appropriateness of play in promoting children's socio-emotional development, and engage in practices (whether inside the flow or outside the flow) that scaffold children's experiences and socio-emotional skills during play. This implies that there is a role for child-initiated and teacher-guided play. Teacher-guided play could be used to scaffold understanding of concepts or issues that children are interested in, but requires some form of adult intervention and guidance.

In summary, play based learning contributes to children's emotional and social development. As children engage in play, they develop and enhance emotional and social skills that will serve them in the school setting and other aspects of life. Also, early childhood teachers have a role to play in making play a developmental and learning experience for young children. More specifically:

- Opening government owned KGs next to primary schools is one of the best practices observed in the studied KGs. Its advantages are older brothers and sisters can accompany their younger brothers and sisters to school; the KG children can also share the primary school students' activities through observation, it also provides good opportunists for the KG teachers and the primary school teachers to discuss and share their own teaching-learning experiences and behaviour of the children. More interestingly, it also helps the KG children to have smooth transition from the KG to the primary school which they have already known it very well.
- Most of the studied government owned KGs have similar educational inputs which help them for their effective implementation of ECCE. More specifically, they have similar KG physical environment, class-rooms, indoor outdoor materials and equipment, play-grounds, similar syllabus, qualifications of caregivers and most of the KG children were from low socio-economic background families. However, the presences of ill-equipped, narrow and highly suffocated class-room are the most prominent of all the problems observed in Atse Bekaffa, one of the government owned KGs.
- In the studied government owned KGs there was significant difference in effective utilisation of some of the educational throughputs (process). More specifically, teachers in the private KGs were using child-centred teaching methods better than teachers in the government owned KGs. The private KGs were employing teaching methods such as, brainstorming, cooperative, play based, storytelling, and integrated rhythm, music and dance better than the government owned KGs.
- Empowering parents' Involvement in their children's education, providing recognition and reward for the private preschools, Providing meal services for children from poor background families, effective record keeping system of children's profile, preparation and effective utilisation of locally produced teaching aids, employing effective teaching methods such as, teaching children through integrating rhythm, music (singing songs) and dance, teaching children through play based learning, teaching children through storytelling and employment of cooperative teaching methods were identified as the current best practices of PRESCHOOL EDUCATION.
- Lack of Trained KG care givers, absence of KG directors, absence of professional development in the field of ECCE, In accessible physical environment of the KG for children with disability, lack of budget on the ECCE program, employing corporal punishment to get children's attention were identified as some of the basic challenges in the current practice of ECCE in the studied KGs.
- Even though training and qualification of KG teachers differs from one country to another, our countries current practice of giving certificate within ten months cannot make KG teachers competent enough and skilful in understanding the growth and developmental stages of a

child and the specific potential and need of care and educational support he/she needs at that specific age.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study it seems reasonable to suggest the following important points that enhance the effective implementation of ECCE:

ECCE is not a task only performed by MoE, instead it is a task which needs high involvement of Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Labour and social Affairs (MoLSA). Therefore, it needs to have and maintain collaborative work among all the community in general and these specific ministries in particular.

- Since KG children are easily and highly vulnerable groups, pre-schools should have appropriate resting-room, feeding room, telephone numbers for fire, police, and medical assistance posted on telephone book.
- Corporal punishments and humiliating or frightening methods of control or discipline should be prohibited. Instead, pre-school teachers, and caregivers can use different and interesting activities so as to get children's attention
- Essential and supportive materials set by MoE and adapted by GEB should distribute equally to the private and government owned KGs.
- The government involvement in opening preschools next to primary schools provide for children from the low socio-economic back ground families a good opportunity to attend preschool and minimize the life-long gap which is created due to preschool and early stimulation among those of children from low socio-economic statues and well to do families. So this kind of best experience should expand to all similar areas.
- It is evident that physical learning environment of the KG, classroom space and outdoor equipment and materials affects the quality of children's learning. Therefore, per-school physical environment, outdoor equipment and materials and classrooms should be enough so that children can have opportunity to actively engage to their own learning and develop the desired output.
- Teachers must know and have detailed knowledge and skills of child's growth and development characteristics. Ten months training cannot be sufficient to know about children's growth, development and how to provide appropriate care and educational services.
- Since the study is very limited in its scope to come up with all best practices and basic challenges as well as to compare the private and government owned KGs using all educational input, throughput and output is impossible and unmanageable. So that further studies should have detailed look at the other educational inputs, throughputs and outputs.

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