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RESEARCH TITLE: POLICY AND PRACTICE GAP IN PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN PRESCHOOL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

BY

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POLICY AND PRACTICE GAP ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PRESCHOOL INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION

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This Thesis is submitted to CENTER OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE EDUCATION

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This certifies that Ljalem Tsegaye's thesis, " policy and practice gap in participation of children with special needs in preschool inclusive education," complies with university rules and standards for originality and quality. It was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for MA degree in Center of Early Childhood Care Education

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DECLARATION

I, Ljalem Tsegaye , thus certify that this thesis is wholly original with me and that all references used in the research paper have been properly cited. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the material included in this research paper has never been presented for the award of a master's degree.

Name: Sign Date

I, Fiseha Teklu, confirm that this research has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor.

Main Advisor Name

Signature

Date

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DFES Department for Education and Skills

ECDD Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development

ECE Early Childhood Education

EMLASA Ethiopian Mapping and Licensing Authority for Surface Accumulators

ESDPV Education Sector Development Programme V

ETP Education and Training Policy

FDRE Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

LKG Lower Kindergarten

MoE Ministry of Education

NAEYC National Association for the Education of Young Children

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

UKG Upper Kindergarten

UN United Nations

UNESCO United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

USAID United States Agency for International Development

ABSTRACT

During visits to preschools in certain areas of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, I became aware of significant issues in the early childhood care and education (ECCE) system. These issues stemmed from a disconnect between the stated policies and the actual practices in terms of the participation of children with special needs in inclusive preschool education. The central purpose of this study was to investigate the gap between policy and practice in the implementation of inclusive education in two government preschools, Netsanet Chora and Hawaria Petros. To address this, I employed a qualitative case study approach, which allowed me to deeply explore and describe the perspectives, experiences, and practices of the inclusive education policy implementers. The study involved 16 carefully selected participants. The findings revealed that the teachers lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement the inclusive education policies. Teachers were also working with inadequate resources and support, and there were shortcomings in terms of policy guidelines, standards, a common curriculum, and teamwork. Based on these findings, I recommended the adoption of an interaction model of policy implementation. This model integrates both top-down and bottom-up approaches to foster positive and active collaboration between policymakers at the higher level and the implementers at the local level.

KEY TERMS: *Early childhood education, preschool education, Education policy implementation, Policy framework*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Inclusive education is a philosophical approach and a set of practices that seek to eliminate barriers and facilitate the participation and learning of all students, including those with disabilities or other special needs. As well as it recognizes that every child is unique and has different learning needs, and seeks to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment that meets the needs of all children (UNESCO, 2009)

inclusive education in preschools focuses on creating a learning environment that is accessible, supportive, and accommodating for all students, with the ultimate goal of providing equal opportunities and enabling the success of every child (MoE, 2016). Hence, it requires strong government support and specific legislation. Fortunately, there is a growing global recognition of the right to education for children with disabilities. Currently, the majority of countries have implemented laws or regulations that are specifically aimed at ensuring equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities.

Effective inclusive preschool education requires ongoing professional development for teachers, the provision of specialized resources and assistive technologies, and the establishment of clear policy frameworks and guidelines to support inclusive practices. Ultimately, inclusive preschool education is a crucial investment in the future, empowering all children to reach their full potential and contributing to the creation of more inclusive, just, and equitable societies (UNICEF, 2012).

However, the quality and level of detail in these laws vary significantly. Additionally, even in countries where there are laws or provisions promoting inclusive education, there is often a lack of coordination with general education planning (USAID, 2010).

The specificity and comprehensiveness of inclusive education laws can vary significantly from country to country. For example, in some nations like Egypt, the legal provisions may only broadly state that children with disabilities have the right to education, without delving into more detailed requirements or implementation mechanisms. In contrast, other countries like Ethiopia take a more thorough and strategic approach. In Ethiopia, the National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities not only outlines the general rights of individuals with disabilities, but it also includes specific targets, detailed activities, and defined indicators related to realizing those rights within the education system.(EMLASA, 2012).

The National Policy on Special Needs Education in Ethiopia outlines the government's firm commitment to promoting inclusive education at all levels, including preschool. This policy emphasizes the need for implementing inclusive practices, providing comprehensive teacher training, and ensuring the availability of appropriate learning materials and resources to support the diverse needs of all students(FDRE, 2012).

Furthermore, Ethiopia's Education Sector Development Program V highlights the government's broader efforts to enhance access to quality education for all children, with a particular focus on reaching marginalized and vulnerable groups. This program specifically aims to ensure that preschool education is inclusive and designed to cater to the diverse learning needs of children(FDRE, 2015):

In summary, Ethiopia has enacted robust policy and programmatic frameworks that demonstrate a strong governmental dedication to advancing inclusive education, including at the preschool level. These initiatives underscore the importance of inclusive practices, specialized teacher preparation, and the provision of tailored resources to enable all children to access and thrive within the education system. Hence, Ethiopia's policy documents on health, family, education and social welfare articulate statements that uphold the protection, care, health and optimal development of the child within their sphere of influence. The policies intersect at three points, namely (i) the intent to promote the child's holistic development, by protecting him/her from any form of disabling diseases, or physical and psychological abuses, and creating an environment

conducive to his/her optimal development ; (ii) a recognition of the role and need for empowerment of the family in the harmonious development of the child; and (iii) an expressed commitment to address the needs of children requiring special protection (children with disabilities, children with HIV/AIDS, orphans, homeless and working children).

The National Education and Training Policy developed in 1994 encompass overall and specific objectives, implementation strategies, from kindergarten to higher education. It states that Kindergarten will focus on all round development of the child in preparation for formal schooling though not in an integrated manner; these policies thus generally recognize the importance of early life experience. They form a solid umbrella and legitimisation for ECCE, and pave the way for a comprehensive ECCE policy framework. This also implies that the policy framework can be focused on implementation.

There are so many barriers that affect the policy and practices of inclusive education is the inadequacy of policies. While Ethiopia has made efforts to promote inclusive education through policy frameworks such as the Education and Training Policy and ECCE policies, the Special Needs Education Strategy, and the Inclusive Education Resource Pack, there is a need for further development and refinement. These policies should be comprehensive, clearly defining the rights and provisions for students with disabilities or special needs, and outlining the responsibilities of educational institutions and stakeholders (MOE, 2018).

The lack of adequate funding and resources is another characteristic that contributes to the policy and practice gap in preschool inclusive education. Insufficient financial support for inclusive preschools hampers the provision of necessary assistive devices, learning materials, and support services required for effective inclusion (Temesgen, A., & Tesfaye, T. 2018).

In general, the gap of policy and its implementation are under here:-

Insufficient Data and Monitoring: Comprehensive data collection and monitoring systems are essential for tracking progress, identifying gaps, and making informed decisions regarding inclusive education. However, there may be a lack of standardized data collection methods and monitoring mechanisms. Without accurate data, it becomes difficult to evaluate the impact of inclusive education policies and practices and make evidence-based improvements.

Socioeconomic Disparities: Socioeconomic disparities can affect the implementation of inclusive education. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional barriers, such as limited access to support services, resources, or parental involvement, which can impact their ability to fully benefit from inclusive settings. Addressing socioeconomic disparities is crucial for achieving equitable and inclusive education for all.

Resistance to Change: Resistance to change can be a significant obstacle to implementing inclusive education. Some stakeholders, including educators, parents, and community members, may resist changes in traditional educational practices or have apprehensions about the feasibility and effectiveness of inclusive education. Addressing resistance requires ongoing dialogue, awareness campaigns, and opportunities for open discussion and collaboration.

The Limited resources: also contribute to the policy and practice gap in inclusive education. In Ethiopia, there is a scarcity of appropriate infrastructure, assistive technologies, and learning materials necessary for accommodating diverse learners Ministry of Education (Ethiopia). (MOE,2016). Additionally, the lack of funding allocated specifically for inclusive education hinders the implementation of necessary support systems. Adequate investment in infrastructure, technology, and learning resources is essential to bridge the gap between policy and practice in inclusive education

Insufficient teacher training is another significant component of the policy and practice gap. Many teachers in Ethiopia lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support students with disabilities or special needs. There is a need for comprehensive pre-service and in-service training programs that equip teachers with inclusive teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, and individualized support approaches. Ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers are crucial to address the gap in inclusive education practice (MOE,2017).

Societal attitudes and perceptions towards disability often play a significant role in creating gaps between inclusive education policies and their actual implementation. Negative stereotypes, discriminatory practices, and persistent stigmatization can hinder the full inclusion and participation of students with disabilities or special needs within mainstream educational settings(ECDD, 2019).

Addressing these deep-seated societal biases and attitudes is essential to foster a truly supportive and inclusive environment for all learners. Strategies such as awareness campaigns, community engagement initiatives, and advocacy efforts are crucial in challenging misconceptions, promoting understanding, and creating a culture that embraces diversity and the equal rights of students with diverse abilities.

In Ethiopia, there are several characteristics that contribute to the policy and practice gap in preschool inclusive education. One prominent characteristic is the limited availability of resources and infrastructure. Many preschools lack the necessary facilities, materials, and trained personnel to provide inclusive education for children with diverse needs (WB, 2019).

As (Tassew, Z. 2017) noted that limited awareness and understanding. A significant characteristic is the limited awareness and understanding of inclusive education among parents, communities, and stakeholders. the persistence of negative societal perceptions and biases acts as a significant barrier to bridging the gap between the stated commitment to inclusive education and the reality experienced by children with disabilities or special needs in preschools.

Even if Parental engagement is crucial in advocating for the rights of their children with disabilities or special needs, collaborating with schools and teachers, and supporting their children's learning at home. Strengthening parental involvement through awareness programs, parent-teacher associations, and support networks can bridge the gap between policy and practice in inclusive education however involvement affects the successful implementation of inclusive education (ETP, 2018).

Preschool inclusive education policies and their effective implementation can yield numerous benefits for children, families, and society as a whole. These policies aim to ensure equal educational opportunities for all young children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, thereby providing access to quality learning experiences.

Addressing the persistent societal attitudes, misconceptions, and stereotypes that hinder inclusive education is a critical component of this agenda. In this regard, the UNESCO Salamanca Statement serves as an important international point of reference and guiding framework.

Endorsed by over 90 countries, the Salamanca Statement emphasizes the pivotal role of inclusive education in combating discrimination and fostering greater social cohesion. It underscores the imperative to transform educational systems and communities to embrace diversity and provide inclusive learning environments for all children, including those with disabilities or special needs.

By addressing the attitudinal barriers that contribute to the policy-practice gap in preschool inclusive education, the Salamanca Statement and its principles seek to create a more equitable and just society where all children have an opportunity to learn, develop, and thrive together, irrespective of their individual characteristics or backgrounds. It calls for the elimination of barriers to learning and the provision of appropriate support to ensure the complete participation of children with disabilities in regular educational settings.

In summing up, even other researchers conducted about the policy and practice gap of inclusive education in early childhood care education, it requires further attention and action. Therefore, the researcher was investigated the policy and its practice of inclusive education in two selected governmental preschools of Addis Ababa at Nefas Silk Sub-City

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Inclusive education is a fundamental human right that ensures equal access to educational opportunities for all children, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities. However, in the context of Ethiopian preschools, there exists a significant gap between the policies advocating for inclusive education and their actual implementation on the ground(UNICEF, 2009).

This policy-practice disconnect hinders the provision of quality education, denies children with disabilities their rightful access to learning, and perpetuates the broader social exclusion of these children. This statement aims to shed light on and address this pressing issue in the realm of inclusive preschool education in Ethiopia.

One critical factor that can play a pivotal role in aligning educator beliefs, attitudes, and practices with inclusive education policies is the content and delivery of teacher education courses. Researchers have emphasized the importance of facilitating collective self-examination and reflective practices among pre-service teachers regarding their beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and concerns about children with disabilities (Lyons et al, 2013).

Furthermore, collaborative efforts between academics who design and deliver these initial teacher education courses can serve to effectively embed an understanding of inclusion and ensure that the course content is well-aligned with the principles of inclusive education. This approach can contribute to the development of educators who are better equipped and committed to implementing inclusive practices in their preschool classrooms.

The gap between policy and practice in inclusive preschool education is a complex issue with multiple contributing factors. Some of the key causes include:

Lack of understanding of inclusive education: There is often a lack of clear understanding of what inclusive education actually means and how it should be implemented in practice. This can lead to confusion and inconsistency in how inclusive practices are applied across different early childhood settings.

Lack of resources and training: Many early childhood educators lack the necessary resources and training to effectively implement inclusive practices. This can include a lack of access to appropriate materials, inadequate professional development opportunities, and a shortage of qualified early intervention specialists.

Structural barriers: Structural barriers, such as large class sizes, limited funding, and inflexible curriculum standards, can make it difficult to implement inclusive practices effectively. These

barriers often disproportionately affect children from low-income families and children with disabilities.

Lack of family engagement: Family engagement is essential for the success of inclusive preschool education. However, many families are not fully involved in their children's education, and they may not have the support they need to advocate for their children's rights.

Lack of data and evaluation: There is a lack of data on the effectiveness of different inclusive preschool education practices. This makes it difficult to identify what works best and to hold schools and programs accountable for their implementation of inclusive practices (NAEYC 2010).

The problem of policy and practice gap in preschool inclusive education refers to the discrepancy between what is mandated in policy documents and what actually occurs in preschool classrooms. This gap can pose a significant obstacle to ensuring that all children with disabilities have access to a high-quality education. A study by Watkins and Meijer (2016) identified several key challenges that contribute to the policy and practice gap in preschool inclusive education:

Lack of Conceptual Clarity: There is often a lack of shared understanding among stakeholders about what inclusive education entails, leading to misinterpretations and inconsistencies in implementation.

Inadequate Resources and Support: Preschools often face resource constraints, such as limited funding, insufficient trained staff, and a lack of appropriate materials and equipment, hindering their ability to effectively implement inclusive practices.

Limited Collaboration and Communication: Collaboration and communication between various stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, parents, and paraprofessionals, are often insufficient, leading to fragmented efforts and inadequate support for children with disabilities.

The problem of the policy and practice gap in inclusive education in preschools has significant implications. It restricts access to quality education for children with disabilities and other special needs, perpetuating inequalities and hindering their overall development. Furthermore, it limits the potential for inclusive education to foster social cohesion, tolerance, and acceptance among children of diverse backgrounds.

Limited Implementation of Inclusive Education Policies Ethiopia has made significant progress in adopting inclusive education policies, such as the Education and Training Policy and the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Strategy. However, the effective implementation of these policies remains a challenge, leading to a gap between policy intentions and on-the-ground practices (UNESCO, 2017).

Inadequate Teacher Training and Support Teachers play a crucial role in creating inclusive learning environments. However, many preschool teachers in Ethiopia lack the necessary training and support to effectively cater to the diverse needs of all children. This gap in teacher preparation contributes to the exclusion of children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2017).

Limited Access to Resources and Infrastructure Preschools in Ethiopia often lack the necessary resources, such as assistive devices, learning materials, and accessible infrastructure, to accommodate children with disabilities. The absence of these resources further widens the gap between policy and practice in inclusive education (MOE, 2015).

Negative attitudes towards disability and the lack of awareness among parents, pre-school teachers, and communities contribute to the marginalization of children with disabilities in Ethiopian preschools. This social stigma perpetuates exclusion and hampers the effective implementation of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2017).

As (Girma, 2014) showed that low commitment of the government to promote preschool education. So, the researcher will be tried to answer the following research questions. The policy and practice gap in inclusive education in preschools focuses on ensuring equitable access, participation, and quality education for all young children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. It aims to bridge the divide between policy intentions and effective implementation, ultimately creating an inclusive learning environment that fosters the holistic development of every child.

1.3. Research questions

2. What are the policy and practice gaps of inclusive education policy in selected two governmental preschools?
3. What are the factors that are responsible for Policy and practice gap in inclusive education in selected governmental preschools?
4. What are the consequence of policy and practice gap inclusive education in selected governmental preschools community?

1.4. Objective of the study

The main objective of this study was investigated Policy and practice gap in participation of children with special needs in selected one governmental preschool inclusive education.

1.4.1. Specific objectives of the study

1. To investigate the policy and practice gap inclusive education in selected two governmental preschool.
2. To investigate the barriers that affect the Policy and practice gap inclusive education selected governmental preschools.
3. To assess the consequence of inclusive education policy and its practice gap in selected governmental preschools community

1.4.2. Significance of the Study

Inclusive education is a fundamental right for all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. However, there often exists a gap between policy guidelines and actual implementation in educational settings. By studying this policy and practice gap, my research aims to shed light on an issue that affects the educational experiences and outcomes of diverse learners. As well as this study will be served as a foundation for future research in the field of inclusive education. By identifying the gaps and their implications, it provides a starting point for further investigations into effective strategies, interventions, and policy recommendations. This knowledge can support evidence-based practices and contribute to the existing body of research on inclusive education.

1.4.3.OperationalDefinition of terms

Policy: - A system of intentional rules to direct choices and provide sensible results.

Practice or Implementation: - Represents the stage where government executes an adopted inclusive education policy as specified by the legislation in to action.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature to address the research question, which investigates the implementation of inclusive education policy at the preschool level. It provides a scholarly contextual framework to help realize the aim of the study, which is to examine the nature of inclusive education policy implementation in the selected preschool setting. To address the literature pertinent to the research topic, research question, and study aim, this chapter first outlines the brief history of preschool education. It then discusses the theories underlying early learning and ECE. Additionally, the chapter captures the advantages and significance of well-developed preschool programs, as well as the critical role of the government and various stakeholders in ECE program delivery and policy implementation.

2.2. A brief history of Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The concept of early childhood education (ECE) has engaged philosophers, educators, and psychologists for over 20,000 years. Modern early childhood educators continue to grapple with issues similar to those faced by their professional predecessors. It is vital to understand the historical origins of the ideas and questions still being addressed in ECE and its policy implementation, as this can provide valuable insights.

The underlying principles, perspectives, and methods proposed by past ECE reformers were shaped by their philosophical beliefs, and these have laid the foundation for the current state of ECE. The idea of providing care and education for young children outside the home can be traced back to ancient philosophers like Plato, who proposed it over 20 centuries ago. More recently, during the 17th to 19th centuries, influential figures such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Locke, Dewey, and Montessori envisioned and created ECE schools as a means of improving the social conditions of young children through policy interventions.

As one of the prominent philosophers who influenced ECE, Locke's ideas were quite revolutionary for his time. He firmly believed that a child's early experiences and environment played a crucial role in shaping their cognitive, social, and moral development.

Locke rejected the prevalent notion of "innate ideas" and instead proposed the concept of the child's mind as a "tabula rasa" or blank slate. He argued that children are born without any pre-existing knowledge or ideas, and it is through their interactions with the environment and experiences that they gradually acquire knowledge and form their personalities. Locke emphasized the importance of sensory experiences and "hands-on" learning in the early years. He believed that children learn best through direct observation, experimentation, and active engagement with their surroundings. This laid the foundation for more experiential and child-centered approaches to ECE.

Additionally, Locke stressed the role of caregivers and educators in providing appropriate guidance, discipline, and learning opportunities for young children. He believed that good habits and virtues could be cultivated from an early age, laying the groundwork for lifelong development (John Locke, 1632-1704)

The final historical figure discussed in this overview is Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator, developed a comprehensive educational philosophy and method that had a profound impact on ECE practices worldwide. At the core of Montessori's approach was the belief in the child's inherent capacity for self-directed learning and development. She observed that children have a natural inclination to explore, discover, and master their environment through sensory-motor activities. Montessori's learning environment was meticulously designed to nurture this natural curiosity and self-directed learning. She developed a carefully structured set of educational materials, known as "Montessori materials," that were scientifically designed to appeal to children's innate interests and developmental needs.

2.3. ECCE programs

The primary aim of ECE programs is to support the holistic development of the child. This includes nurturing growth across multiple domains - physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral. The program activities and curriculum are designed to address the unique developmental needs and milestones of young children. ECE programs focus on helping children develop gross and fine motor skills through activities like indoor and outdoor play, structured movement exercises, and the use of age-appropriate educational toys and materials. This supports the development of coordination, muscle control, and overall physical well-being. (Chowdhury et al, 2002). To foster cognitive growth, ECE programs provide children with opportunities for hands-on exploration, problem-solving, and age-appropriate learning experiences. Activities like sorting, counting, storytelling, and exposure to letters and numbers help build foundational academic skills and logical thinking.

A key aspect of ECE is supporting children's social-emotional development. Programs facilitate positive peer interactions, teach conflict resolution skills, and help children develop self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy. This lays the groundwork for healthy social relationships and emotional intelligence. ECE programs also contribute to the moral development of children by instilling values like kindness, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. Through modeling, guidance, and age-appropriate discussions, children learn to internalize ethical principles and develop a sense of right and wrong. Beyond the immediate developmental gains, ECE programs aim to cultivate a love of learning and curiosity in children. The engaging, hands-on activities and nurturing environment help foster a positive attitude towards learning that can benefit children throughout their educational journey and beyond.

A variety of ECE programmes have been generated by different theoretical perspectives, each with specific aims, curriculum, teaching methods and teacher's roles. Traditionally, ECE programmes are intended to improve only the academic performance of economically disadvantaged young children. However, this approach has been changed since the 1970s to encompass different aspects of child development, where different theories may be applied to different aspects of ECE programmes such as aims, curriculum and teaching methods of the programme (Hasan, 2004).

2.3.1. Aims of ECE programs

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs are designed with the primary objective of supporting and promoting the optimal development of young children across various domains. This includes nurturing their physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic growth and capabilities. These ECCE programs create a nurturing and stimulating environment that fosters children's overall development and prepares them for future learning and success. By providing a strong foundation, ECCE programs aim to equip children with the necessary skills and knowledge to make a smooth transition into formal schooling (OECD, 2006).

The skills and knowledge imparted in ECCE programs include early literacy and numeracy, problem-solving abilities, and social skills. These foundational competencies are essential for children to engage effectively and succeed in their subsequent formal education.

In addition to academic preparation, a key aim of ECCE programs is to foster children's social and emotional competence. These programs create opportunities for children to develop positive relationships, empathy, self-regulation, and conflict resolution skills. This helps children build a strong social-emotional foundation that supports their holistic development and well-being. By addressing the multifaceted needs of young children, ECCE programs play a crucial role in laying a solid groundwork for children's lifelong learning, personal growth, and successful transitions throughout their educational journey (NSDC, 2004).

Encouraging Holistic Learning: ECCE programs recognize the importance of a holistic approach to learning, where children engage in a wide range of activities that promote their physical, cognitive, creative, and social development. These programs provide a balanced curriculum that includes play-based learning, hands-on experiences, and opportunities for self-expression (Pianta et al, 2007). ECCE programs recognize that children have unique learning styles, interests, and needs. Therefore, they strive to provide individualized learning experiences that cater to each child's development and abilities. Through observation, assessment, and ongoing interactions, educators tailor their teaching approaches and activities to meet the specific needs of each child.

ECCE programs often incorporate health and nutrition components to ensure the overall well-being of young children. This may include providing nutritious meals and snacks, promoting healthy habits such as handwashing and physical activity, and monitoring children's growth and development. These initiatives contribute to the physical health and cognitive development of children.

2.3.3. Role of different partners in ECE programmes

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs involve the collaboration of different partners to ensure the comprehensive development and well-being of young children. These partners play distinct roles in providing high-quality ECCE services.

Government agencies, such as ministries or departments of education, are responsible for formulating policies, regulations, and standards related to ECCE. They provide the legal framework for ECCE programs, allocate resources, and ensure the implementation and monitoring of quality standards. Governments also play a crucial role in coordinating and collaborating with other partners to promote inclusive and equitable ECCE services (UNESCO, 2012).

By working collaboratively, educational institutions and parents/families can create a comprehensive and synergistic approach to supporting the holistic development of young children. This partnership helps ensure that ECCE programs are responsive to the unique needs and contexts of the children and their families.

As well as Parents and families play a crucial role in ECCE programs as the primary caregivers and first educators of young children. They are responsible for providing a nurturing and supportive home environment, promoting children's holistic development, and actively participating in their child's learning. Collaborating with parents and families through regular communication, parent-teacher meetings, and involvement in decision-making processes is essential for the success of ECCE programs

2.3.3.1. Teachers role in ECCE programmes

In early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs, teachers play a crucial role in facilitating the growth and development of young children. Here are some key responsibilities of teachers in ECCE programs, along with references to support each paragraph:

Planning and implementing developmentally appropriate activities: Teachers are responsible for designing and delivering activities that are suitable for the age and developmental stage of the children in their care. They create engaging and stimulating learning environments that promote exploration, problem-solving, and social interaction (Berk, L. E. ,2017).

Promoting social and emotional development: Teachers foster a positive and nurturing classroom environment where children feel safe, supported, and valued. They help children develop social skills, empathy, and self-regulation through modeling, guidance, and encouragement (NAEYC, 2009).

preschool teachers play a crucial role in assessing and monitoring the progress of the children in their care. They employ various assessment methods, such as direct observations, checklists, and portfolios, to gather comprehensive information about each child's strengths, interests, and areas that require further development. This assessment process helps teachers gain valuable insights into the individual child's developmental trajectories across different domains, enabling them to tailor their instructional approaches and support accordingly (Puckett etal ,2018).

They recognize the vital role that parents and caregivers play as the child's first and most important teachers. They establish and maintain strong partnerships with families, regularly communicating with them about the child's development and growth. This collaborative approach allows teachers to share information with families and involve them in the decision-making processes related to the child's education and well-being. By fostering this family-teacher partnership, ECCE programs can ensure a cohesive and supportive learning environment that addresses the unique needs and circumstances of each child (Epstein, J. L. ,2018).

Teachers recognize and respond to the diverse needs, interests, and learning styles of children in their classrooms. They adapt their teaching strategies and materials to meet individual children's needs and provide appropriate challenges (Tomlinson, 2013).

Teachers establish positive relationships with each child by showing respect, empathy, and understanding. They create a warm and caring atmosphere where children feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and emotions. These relationships provide a foundation for learning and contribute to children's overall well-being (Hamre, B. et al, 2005).

The importance of preschool teachers actively fostering and supporting the development of children's creativity and imaginative capacities by providing open-ended materials, engaging in art and dramatic play, and celebrating children's unique ideas, teachers create an environment that encourages children to think outside the box, explore their interests, and express themselves freely. This approach helps cultivate children's creativity and innovative thinking, which are crucial skills for their holistic development and future success (Isenberg, 2017).

2.3.3.3. The role of government in ECCE programs

the government can establish integrated child care and development services that involve the collaboration of various ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, and Ministry of Rural Development. This coordinated approach allows these different government entities to cooperate and fulfill their respective roles in supporting the holistic development of young children(Choudhury, 2002).

It's central role in the implementation of ECCE policy is further highlighted. Due to its legitimate authority and position, the government can take the lead in designing a national policy for children, which can be incorporated into the constitution. Additionally, the government can adopt resolutions on early education policies that ensure access and equity for all children. (Choudhury, 2002) and Ding (2016), By fulfilling these multifaceted responsibilities, the government plays a pivotal role in creating an enabling environment that supports the holistic development and well-being of young children, ensuring equitable access to high-quality ECCE services across the country.

2.3.3.4. Role of education officers in ECCE programs

The role of educational officers in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is defined as a leadership role within early childhood settings. Research by Leeson (2006) highlights that leadership skills are an essential part of the responsibilities for any early years practitioner.

The Department for Education and Skills (DFES, 2007a) argues that there should be an integrated approach in providing services for children in the early years. This could involve a single center that combines various services, such as nursery education, family support, childcare, and health services, to deliver comprehensive care and education for young children. The key focus should be on bringing together the skills, expertise, and experience of a multidisciplinary team to benefit children, families, and communities, as well as to think outside the box.

Moss and Petrie (2002) argue that leadership in ECCE services should be inclusive, involving all participants: teachers, children, parents, and managers. They also explain the implications of the role of education leaders for policy. Educational officers are expected to manage the aims, budgets, and coordination among workers of ECCE programs to ensure the achievement of ECCE education policy

2.3.4. Principles of ECCE programs

Choudhury (2002) asserted that the application of inclusive education policy policies is directly impacted by certain ECCE program standards and principles that are applicable both inside and outside of the classroom. The paragraphs that follow go over these concepts. 1. Consider the children's requirements and developmental stage. A child reaches a specific age when they are prepared for a given activity. To ensure that the child completes the task easily and enjoyably, the activity should be presented at the right moment when the child is ready for it. 2. It should support comprehensive growth. Every facet of a child's development, including their physical, motor, social, linguistic, and cognitive growth, should be included in an ECCE curriculum.

3. Adjust as needed to meet the needs of the kids and cognitive development. 3. Be flexible to serve the needs of the children

The type and duration of the activities provided in the preschool should depend on the interests of the children for whom it is being designed. The ECE program should first be planned and thereafter, be modified according to the needs, interests and situation in which the children are being brought up.

2.3.5. The physical setup and equipment of preschool

To ensure the success of the ECE program, the physical setting and instructional materials should be appealing and enjoyable to the kids. Preschool ought to be an addition to the family, not its replacement. In order to support the home, it should progressively expose the child to a big group of kids and assist in meeting its expectations. In order to fulfill the goals of the Early Childhood Education program, a preschool must carefully plan for the physical setup of the site and buildings as well as the materials and equipment required for the teaching-learning process (Choudhury, 2002). Throughout the indoor and outdoor spaces, attention to safety, accessibility, and inclusive design principles is crucial to ensure that the preschool environment supports the holistic development and well-being of all children.

2.3.6. Advantages of ECE programs

The high-quality ECCE programs can have a positive impact on children's cognitive abilities, language skills, and overall academic achievement. A meta-analysis published in the Review of Educational Research found that participation in ECCE programs was associated with significant improvements in cognitive test scores, language development, and academic performance (Barnett, W. S2010).

It extends and supplements the parents' care in a way consistent with the values and goals of the child's families and culture. In general, it supports parents in their skills like parenting, training on literacy, child development, health and nutrition, stimulates and creates a good developmental environment for children (Choudhury, 2002).

Participation in high-quality ECCE programs can lead to improved educational attainment, higher earnings, and greater economic self-sufficiency in adulthood. A landmark study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that children who attended the Perry Preschool program had higher rates of high school graduation, employment, and earnings by age 40 compared to the control group (Nores, M.,2005)

2.3.9. Status of ECCE programs in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has developed various policies and strategies to support the development of ECCE, including the National ECCE Policy and Strategy (2010) and the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP). However, the implementation and enforcement of these policies have been uneven and more coherent and coordinated efforts are needed to strengthen the ECCE system.

To address these challenges, Ethiopia has set goals to improve ECCE access, quality, and governance through its Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) and other initiatives. However, sustained political commitment, increased investment, and a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach will be crucial to effectively transform the ECCE landscape and ensure equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care services for all children in Ethiopia.

2.4. International and National policy of Inclusive Education

2.4.1 International Policies and Frameworks for Inclusive Education

Anecdotal evidence suggests that advocates for improved education for persons with disabilities are using these legislative tools to effectively advocate for better laws and services within their countries. For example, within the first 4 years of the CRPD coming into force, 91% of the countries that had ratified the treaty had already adopted national laws for people with disabilities, and 72% of those countries' laws included a definition of reasonable accommodation (Ruh, 2012). This indicates that the existence of international human rights frameworks, when ratified by countries, can serve as a catalyst for positive changes in national legislation and the implementation of policies to support the rights of persons with disabilities, including in the area of education.

2.4.1.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of children. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and has been ratified by 196 countries, making it the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. It establishes a comprehensive set of rights for children, including the right to:

Protection from discrimination

- Have their best interests considered in all actions concerning them
- Life, survival, and development
- Express their views freely in all matters affecting them
- Access to education, healthcare, and other social services

The UNCRC has been instrumental in driving progress in improving the lives of children globally. Ratification of the treaty by countries commits them to aligning their national laws and policies with the principles and standards outlined in the convention.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that advocacy groups and civil society organizations have successfully utilized the UNCRC framework to push for reforms and improvements in child-related laws, policies, and service delivery within their countries. The comprehensive nature of the treaty has enabled advocates to address a wide range of issues affecting children's rights, including education, health, protection, and participation.

Overall, the UNCRC has been a powerful tool for advancing the rights and well-being of children worldwide, as ratifying countries align their domestic frameworks with the international standards set forth in the convention.

2.4.1.2. World Declaration on Education for All

Adopted in 1990 with support from UNESCO, UNICEF, and the UN Development Program, the World Declaration on Education for All served as one of the first milestones to support inclusive education throughout the world. A total of 155 countries adopted the Declaration, which asks countries to commit to universal primary education and stresses the need to provide access to education for all children with disabilities (UNESCO, 1990)

2.4.1.3. Salamanca Framework for Action

The Salamanca Framework for Action, which was adopted in 1994 at the World Conference on Special Needs Education, emphasizes how important it is to teach disabled children in the mainstream education system. In order to educate children with disabilities, this statement calls on governments and the global community to support inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994).

2.4.1.4. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The most extensive international legal framework for advancing children with disabilities' rights to an education was established in 2006 with the adoption of the CRPD. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) mandates that nations that have ratified the agreement shall guarantee inclusive education at all levels, guarantee children with disabilities the right to free primary and secondary education, and prohibit discrimination against them on the basis of their disability.

2.4.1.5. UN Division for Social Policy and Development (2006)

- According to Article 9 on Accessibility, all schools have to be physically accessible as well as information and communication-wise.
- Reasonable adjustments should be provided to students with disabilities in the classroom. Every kid should have their academic, social, and life skills requirements met by schools. Alternative communication devices or braille instruction should be employed as appropriate when it comes to learning approaches. To support linguistic identity, deaf pupils should get local sign language teaching. Those with impairments ought to have entry to adult, vocational, and postsecondary education.

2.4.2. National Policies for Inclusive Education

After a nation has embraced the idea of inclusive education, it is critical to modify national laws and regulations. The ideal way to incorporate inclusive education and the education of children with disabilities is within the nation's overall education strategy plan, with the national education strategic implementation plan reflecting implementation tactics. Thus, the dedication to inclusive education is acknowledged in bilateral and multilateral collaborations with financial agencies, reflected in national policy and strategic planning generally, and included in the education budget. As to the Policy Guidelines for Inclusion in Education by UNESCO (2009), national legislative frameworks must to endeavor to fulfill the following objectives, at the very least: Recognize inclusive education as a right;

2.5. Barriers to implement Inclusive Education policy

2.5.1. Lack of Funding and Resources

Less expensive resources such as specialized equipment, assistive technologies, smaller class sizes, and intensive teacher training are frequently needed for inclusive education.

A lot of schools, particularly those in underdeveloped areas, have trouble getting regular, sufficient financing to support inclusive policies. Due to financial restrictions, schools may be forced to give priority to some requirements over others, which may leave students with disabilities with vital resource gaps.

2.5.2. Teacher Preparedness

It's possible that teachers lack the specific knowledge and abilities needed to work well with kids who have a variety of needs and abilities. Pre-service teacher preparation programs frequently offer insufficient training for inclusive teaching, leaving newly hired educators ill-prepared. For in-service teachers, chances for ongoing professional development are often insufficient, which makes it challenging to develop their capacity to teach inclusively over time.

2.5.3. Attitudes and Biases

Administrators, instructors, and even parents may be resistant to inclusive methods because of unfavorable attitudes, persistent prejudices, and misconceptions regarding students with disabilities. In many communities, there is a persistent assumption that kids with disabilities perform better in separate, specialized environments. It is extremely difficult to promote a culture of acceptance and belonging while also altering deeply ingrained beliefs.

2.5.4. Infrastructure and Accessibility

Many classrooms, school buildings, and other facilities are not physically accessible enough to allow students with disabilities to participate to the fullest extent possible.

For kids with a variety of learning requirements, rigid curricula, teaching materials, and assessment procedures might provide obstacles.

Not all inclusive learning environments include efficient integration of assistive devices or easy access to them. Parents may be worried about how inclusive education may affect their child's educational experience if they are the parents of students with or without disabilities.

It might be challenging to establish mutual understanding, build trust, and get active parental support for inclusive practices.

2.5.5. Lack of parental buy-in can undermine the successful implementation of inclusive education policies

A broad, cooperative strategy involving legislators, school administrators, educators, families, and community people is needed to remove these interwoven impediments. To ensure that inclusive education policies result in meaningful, fair outcomes for every student, it is imperative to maintain a commitment to continual improvement, flexible resources, and sustained effort.

Chapter three

Research Methods

3.1. Design of the study

In order to know the level of inclusive education policy practices gap in the selected preschools, a qualitative research design was used on a case study design due to collecting a vast amount of detailed information through various sources such as interviews, observations, and documents.

3.2. Study Site

There were two government preschools selected in Addis Ababa, Nefas silk sub city by the researcher which are called NetsanetChora and HawariawPetros preschools purposively because the researcher has close relationship with these preschools. NetsanetChora established in 1989 in FDRE regime by a single Eritrean person. The nickname was given by this individual. The school has 3850 (square) or Three thousand eight hundred fifty Kare meter for both kg and first grade. It has 316 children from KG1-KG3 and 125 teachers

The second governmental preschool is found at the same area of Nefas silk sub city which is called HawariawPetros preschool. It is one of the cluster centers of special needs and inclusive education in Nefas silk cities. The exact location of this school is wereda 06 around Goffa Cump main road Atmeskel Kitfo Hotel turned 300 meters distances from the main road. It was established in 1964 in the Emperor Haile Silase regime. It has 1004 children from KG1-KG3 as well as it has 164 teachers

3.3. Population of the study

The population of this study consisted Netsanet Chora and Hawariaw Petros preschool teachers. They are 289 preschool teachers, 2 school principals and 2 resource room coordinators in these schools because population helps establish the boundaries and limits of the research, ensuring that the findings can be properly interpreted and generalized (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

3.2. Sample and Sampling Technique

By using purposive sampling technique, there were 12 preschool teachers, 2 school principals and two resource room coordinators selected due to the Preschool teachers are on the frontlines of implementation and can directly observe the challenges and barriers faced in making education truly inclusive. They can document these observations and provide valuable, on-the-ground insights to policymakers and school administrators (Cohen et al, 2018).

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

The major aim of the researcher was tried to collect information from respondents their preschool environments by gathering data in the form of description. The researcher had prepared for the study and then, data was collected by the researcher.

3.4.1. Interview

The researcher used a semi-structured interview approach to gather qualitative data from key stakeholders (2 preschool principals, 12 preschool teachers, and 2 resource room coordinators) regarding the gap between inclusive education policies and their implementation in practice. The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide, which is a flexible format that allows for open-ended questions and probing, while still covering pre-determined topics and themes.

The researcher was carefully developed the interview guide by identifying the key research objectives and questions they wanted to explore. The guide also included a combination of broad, open-ended questions to elicit rich, detailed responses, as well as more specific probing questions to explore particular aspects in depth. In order that the researcher ensured the guide closely with the study's research questions and objectives to ensure it addressed the core focus of the investigation.

3.4.2. Focused group discussion

The researcher conducted two separate FGDs - one with 6 preschool teachers and one resource room coordinator and another with 6 preschool teacher and resource room coordinators. The respondents had similar backgrounds or experiences together to discuss a specific topic of interest. The discussion guide was developed based on a thorough review of the literature, and research objectives. There were 8 open-ended questions that were presented for discussion in-depth exploration of the topic. The questions were structured to cover various dimensions of inclusive education, such as barriers, facilitators, strategies, and recommendations.

3.4.3. Observation

The observation guideline consisted of specific behaviors, events, or indicators that the observer needed to look for during the observation. These items included teacher-student interactions, classroom management strategies, student participation levels, use of inclusive materials, or any other elements relevant to the research objectives. The items were observable and measurable, allowing for consistent and reliable data collection.

Participant observation was used by the researcher. The usage of instructional strategies, resources, evaluation processes, and classroom relationships were all noted. For thirty minutes (one or two periods, depending on the grade level of the class), one classroom from each preschool that was specifically chosen was watched for this reason (Dewalt, 2002). Due to The researcher's goal was to investigate more about how these components were used and experienced in the classroom by closely observing these features

In summary, by employing observation as a data collection method, the researcher was able to gather detailed information about the preschool classrooms, gain insights into the implementation of educational practices, and draw conclusions about the interactions and experiences of children in those settings. The observation checklists were prepared. It was believed that the children's preschool interactions, their intention, and efforts occurred in the classrooms

3.5. Procedure of Data Collection

The researcher first contacted the principals of the two selected government preschools to request permission to conduct the study on their premises. After obtaining the necessary approvals from the school authorities, the researcher scheduled appointments to meet with the principals, preschool teachers, and resource room coordinators. The researcher personally met with the potential participants (preschool principals, teachers, and resource room coordinators) to explain the purpose of the study and invite them to participate.

Participants were selected based on their work experience, and educational qualifications to ensure a diverse range of perspectives. It was provided detailed information about the study, its objectives, and the data collection procedures to all participants. The semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted on the preschool premises, in private and quiet locations to ensure privacy and minimize distractions. The researcher obtained permission from the participants to audio-record the interviews and focus group discussions.

The researcher conducted a total of 16 semi-structured interviews (2 with preschool principals, 12 with preschool teachers and 2 with resource room coordinators).

The researcher conducted classroom observations in the two selected preschools to gain firsthand insights into the inclusive education practices being implemented. The observations focused on teaching methodologies, classroom interactions, and the overall learning environment. They were conducted in the preschool classrooms, as well as in the resource rooms and outdoor play areas. The researcher spent a total of 1 hours conducting observations across the two preschools.

The entire data collection process, including the interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, was spread over a period of 4 weeks. The interviews, focus group discussions, and observations were all conducted by the primary researcher.

3.6. Method of Data Analysis

The researcher was carefully transcribed the audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions verbatim to ensure accurate capture of the participants' responses. Thematic coding strategies were used to analyze the transcribed data according to the research questions. The researcher interpreted the findings by integrating the emergent themes with the review of related literature and their own professional knowledge and expertise. This allowed the researcher to construct a logical chain of evidence and draw inferences to address the research objectives.

The researcher presented the findings using a combination of descriptive text, narrative explanations, and direct quotes from the participants to accurately capture their perspectives. Based on the interpreted findings, the researcher independently formulated conclusions and recommendations to inform policy, practice, and future research on inclusive education.

3.7. Ethical Consideration

The researcher took formal letter from the Addis Ababa University Department of ECCE, the researcher requested permission from the two preschools before beginning this investigation. Following that, a rapport-building conversation was had with the participants about the intended study goal and their rights up to the study's conclusion. As a result, the researcher identified the following ethical concerns during the study: maintaining secrecy and privacy at all times, and representing all findings in a confidential way. There was no printing or recording of any identifiable or personal data in the study. When presenting the data, the researcher used codes rather than the participant names. As a result, before beginning the research interview procedure, the researcher verbally received informed consent from each participant.

Chapter four

Results of the study

The data from semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis were presented in an integrated format in accordance with the research objectives posed because this study used a qualitative methodology. A few recurring themes were also employed to display the information acquired from various participant groups. Consequently, the information that was displayed at Netsanet Chora and HawariawPetros preschools The interview, concentrated group discussion, and classroom observations with preschool teachers, the principal of the school, and the chosen preschool served as the foundation for the data results and analysis

4.2. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 4. 3.1 Demographic Characteristics of pre-school teachers

Schools name	Teaching qualification:	<i>Number</i>		
		M	F	T
Netsanet Chora and HawariawPetros preschools	Certificate in Education			
	Diploma in Education	5	3	8
	Degree in Education	3	1	4
	Total			12

4.4. The policy and practice gaps of inclusive education in selected governmental preschool

“These policy and practice gaps highlight the systemic challenges faced in effectively implementing inclusive education in the governmental preschool system in Ethiopia. Addressing these gaps through policy reforms, capacity building, resource allocation, and collaborative approaches would be crucial for improving inclusive education outcomes”(T3).He additionally the existing policy frameworks were not adequately translated into effective practical implementation of inclusive education.”.

“Inclusive education policy is not properly implemented because the majority of practitioners did not receive any professional training that qualifies them to teach at preschool. Participants were also asked to reflect on the types of resources that were allocated to them in implementing inclusive education policy. In this regard, the inclusive education policy of Ethiopia makes provisions for a number of indoor and outdoor playing and teaching materials such as chalkboard, theme table, stationery materials, flip charts, various pictures and playing equipment. This is because children learn best with concrete instances and teachers were supposed to receive all these teaching materials when teaching at this preschool (t2)

inadequate allocation of resources and materials to ECE programmes implies that the implementation of the inclusive education policy is not successful as the allocation of adequate resources leads to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy policy”(P4)

4.4.1. Barriers that responsible for Policy and practice gap in inclusive education in selected governmental preschool

“Preschool teachers may not have adequate training and skills to effectively implement inclusive education practices. This could include a lack of knowledge about different disabilities, teaching strategies for diverse learners, and classroom management techniques. There were insufficient monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that inclusive education policies are being properly implemented at the preschool level. This can make it difficult to identify and address between policy and practice “(p2)

“Insufficient data collection and analysis on the participation, achievement, and well-being of children with disabilities in preschool settings can make it difficult to identify and accountability measures, such as regular program evaluations and performance reviews, may be inadequate, hindering the identification and resolution of implementation challenges” (p1).

“There were not provided in-service training and ongoing professional development opportunities for existing preschool teachers on inclusive teaching methods, assistive technologies, and classroom management, establish specialized training programs to develop a cadre of qualified special education teachers who can offer support and mentorship to mainstream preschool teachers, and facilitate peer-to-peer learning and collaborative teaching practices among preschool teachers to promote the sharing of effective inclusive strategies” (FGD)

4.4.2. The consequence of policy and practice gap inclusive education in selected governmental preschools

As the policy and practice gap in inclusive education is, the disconnected between the policies and regulations that mandate inclusive practices in preschools, and the actual implementation and execution of those policies on the ground, the respondents responded under here:

“Policies may stipulate that preschools should be inclusive and accommodate children with diverse needs, but in practice, this preschool may not have the resources, training, or willingness to fully implement inclusive practices. Children with disabilities or special needs may face barriers to enrollment, participation, and access to the same educational opportunities as their typically developing peers” (T5)

In addition to (T4) also said that “Inclusive education policies aim to create learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of all children, but the practice gap can result in environments that are not truly inclusive. Preschools may lack the necessary accommodations, assistive technologies, or specialized support for children who require them, leading to suboptimal learning experiences”.

“Policies may mandate inclusive teaching practices, but preschool teachers may not have received sufficient training, professional development, or ongoing support to implement these practices effectively. Teachers may feel underprepared or unsupported in addressing the diverse needs of children, leading to frustration and challenges in the classroom. Parents of children with disabilities or special needs may feel that the preschool's practices do not align with the inclusive policies they were led to expect. This can lead to parental dissatisfaction, mistrust in the education system, and a breakdown in the crucial home-school partnership. When inclusive education policies are not fully implemented, it can contribute to the perpetuation of stigma, prejudice, and marginalization of children with disabilities or special needs.

This can have long-term consequences for the social and emotional development of these children, as well as their sense of belonging and acceptance within the community” (FGD).

Instead of being divided into sections as needed, the indoor classroom was set up with benches facing the front of the room. Preschoolers were not supposed to be in the classroom. The students occupying the benches facing the front may be a sign of an untrained practitioner. Furthermore, it is possible that the lack of playthings in the outdoor space indicates that the instructor is inexperienced and has never been taught how to set up the sessions. The implementation of inclusive education policies is harmed by all of the aforementioned findings because ineffective classroom learning occurs when supplies such as a theme table and outside play equipment are not provided. According to the study, this renders the implementation of inclusive education policies unsuccessful (observed by the researcher).

And learners were seated in rows on benches. The practitioner missed out arranging the classroom as required, which is a very important and basic aspect of managing a grade 1 classroom. The theme table was also missing which plays a very important role in introducing new concepts through circle discussions. There was no outdoor area with resources demarcated for playing as well as learning. The problem in this school is that only one room is assigned for the grade class within the primary school complex.

“The resources allocated to the class are very limited and inadequate. The resources that would have been allocated include the annual budget, stationery and sanitation materials including first aid kits, teaching-learning indoor materials and outdoor playing materials. Among these, only stationery materials in a very limited amount are allocated in most preschools. Moreover, the human resource allocated to this sector of education was unqualified. These findings are very comparable to the findings with researchers in the literature who reported that the allocation of inadequate resources to ECCE programs result in unsuccessful implementation of inclusive education policy. These findings could be attributed to the fact that the overall emphasis given to this important sector of education is either the lowest or almost none in the Ethiopian context. As the result this hampered the effective implementation of the policy(P2).

“internal factors that could affect policy implementation at these preschool level i) the policy has no clear structure that indicates all actors both individuals and organizations who take part and responsible for policy implementation, ii) the aims of the policy were not clearly stated in terms of how all children can benefit from ECCE, iii) the policy also lacks plans for regulating curricular and performance standards in the preschool system, iv) it was also about how resources are maintained and allocated within the preschool system, v) the policy also has no strategies that relate to specific school-and classroom-level practices such as classroom management, support for students, teacher-student relationships and improved learning activities”(R3).

Chapter five

Discussion

The practitioners encountered difficulties in locating and utilizing assessment forms correctly. This might be explained by a failure to recognize the distinction between assessment methods and forms. The preschool is having trouble preparing lessons for curriculum contextualization and continuous assessment, which suggests that even though practitioners have attended district workshops and training on inclusive education policies, they may still be having trouble grasping and applying theory. Hall and Hillman (2004) discuss the importance and use of evaluation procedures in the classroom, which is similar to what is stated in Ethiopia's ECCE policy guidelines. Nearly every school that was inspected lacked the policy norms, guidelines, and papers that provide as a foundation

If preschool teachers have received high-quality ECCE training prior to beginning their teaching positions, then the implementation of preschool policies has been successful (Tirusew et al., 2005). The responders, however, stated that they had not taken any ECCE training. Furthermore, every participant mentioned that they had not received any workshop or induction after starting to teach. These results suggest that the policy on inclusive education is not being implemented correctly, as most practitioners lack the professional skills necessary to teach at this preschool. This result is consistent with the findings of Habtamu (1996), Tirusew (2005), and Tasew (2011), who found that a shortage of competent ECCE instructors in Ethiopia is impeding the implementation of inclusive education policies.

Practitioners were also asked to reflect on the types of resources that were allocated to them in implementing inclusive education policy. In this regard, the policy of Ethiopia makes provisions for a number of indoor and outdoor playing and teaching materials such as chalkboard, theme table, stationery materials, flip charts, various pictures and playing equipment. This is because children learn best with concrete instances and teachers were supposed to receive all these teaching materials when teaching at class

To be successfully carry out the curriculum's implementation. The study's practitioners, however, retorted that many indoor and outdoor spaces lacked playing materials, and that flip charts, theme tables, teaching cabinets, and other essentials for preschool classrooms were missing. Practitioners generally stated in their responses that the resources provided to them were extremely scarce or nonexistent. This finding—that insufficient funding and materials were provided to ECCE programs—implies that the inclusive education policy is not being successfully implemented, despite Tobin et al. (2015) and Ding (2016) suggesting that the allocation of sufficient funding facilitates the successful implementation of this policy.

Even the teacher's guide consisted of the following main sections: introduction, aims, education and care in early years, assumptions of ECCE and the contents of ECCE curriculum which entails environment and self-awareness, language development, the development of basic numerical knowledge and skills, the development of basic social and emotional skills and the development of creativity and fine art skills. However, the classroom observation did not confirm the practical application of what was planned on paper into actions in the classroom. This is because what was actually practiced in the classroom is not holistic but rather focused only on the cognitive aspect by paying no attention to other aspects of child behavior as explained in document analysis in the classroom observation section. This implies that ECCE policy is not effectively implemented at the classroom level as previously reported by other researchers such as Habtamu (1996) and Tirusew (2005).

After establishing and conducting different classroom observations on practitioners' activities, it was found out that all participants did not carry out the daily activities as expected. They could not use the method to teach in a preschool classroom. They were unable to arrange and manage the classroom correctly into different learning areas. Also, they were unable to integrate various subjects this is an indication of a lack of knowledge about inclusive education policy implementation on the part of the ECCE practitioners. In this regard, the policy stipulates that practitioners should be able to properly carry out their activities in the daily programmes through correctly arranging and managing the classroom area, integrating different subjects while teaching as well as utilising resources properly. The absence of facilities such as outdoor equipment and other learning materials could be blamed on the principals

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. SUMMARY

Ethiopia has made some efforts to promote inclusive education, but the progress has been relatively limited, especially at the preschool level. Even National Special Needs Education Strategy (2006) aimed to increase access to education for children with special needs, including in preschools however, implementation challenges and lack of sustained funding have hindered its impact. The main objective of this study was understood the factors contributing to the gaps between inclusive education policy practices and on the ground realities as well as exploring the reasons why certain policies may not be effectively implemented or may have unintended consequences. In order to investigate the practices and gaps between inclusive education policy on the selected two government preschools, the study was tried to answer the following question.

1. What are the policy and practice gaps of inclusive education in selected governmental preschools?
2. What are the factors that are responsible for Policy and practice gap in inclusive education in selected governmental preschools?
3. What are the consequence of policy and practice gap inclusive education in selected governmental two preschools

were included it. After asking those research questions, the researcher was tried to know the level of inclusive education policy practices gap in the selected preschools, and the qualitative research design on a case study design was used by the researcher due to collecting a vast amount of detailed information through various sources such as interviews, Focused Group Discussion, observations, and the relevant documents. Since this study used qualitative method the data obtained through semi structure interviews, observation, Focused Group Discussion and document analysis were presented in an integrated format in line with the research questions posed. Some emerged themes were also used to present the data gathered from different groups of participants. Therefore, the data which was presented at Netsanet Chora and Hawarya Pawlos preschools, the data results and analysis was based on the interview and focused group discussion with pre-school teachers and school principal and classroom observation were conducted the selected two government preschools.

The finding of those two government primary school showed that practices effectively. Teachers may feel underprepared or unsupported in addressing the diverse needs of children, leading to frustration and challenges in the classroom. Parents of children with disabilities or special needs may feel that the preschool's practices do not align with the inclusive policies they were led to expect. This can lead to parental dissatisfaction, mistrust in the education system, and a breakdown in the crucial home-school partnership. When inclusive education policies are not fully implemented, it can contribute to the perpetuation of stigma, prejudice, and marginalization of children with disabilities or special needs. This can have long-term consequences for the social and emotional development of these children, as well as their sense of belonging and acceptance within the community

The indoor classroom was not divided into areas as required and learners were seated on benches facing the front. The classroom was not meant for the preschool level. The learners seated on benches facing the front could be an indication of a practitioner who was not properly trained. In addition, the absence of playing materials in the outdoor area could be that the practitioner is new without experience and was never oriented on how to organise the classes. All the above findings harm inclusive education policy implementation in that the absence of „arranging the classroom“ as required, theme table and outdoor playing materials make the classroom learning inefficient. This makes inclusive education policy implementation unsuccessful (observed by the researcher).

And learners were arranged on benches in rows. One crucial and fundamental component of running a grade R classroom is setting up the classroom appropriately, which the practitioner neglected to do. Additionally absent was the theme table, which is crucial for introducing new ideas through circle discussions. There was no designated outside space with play and learning resources. Within the primary school complex, this school has the issue of having one room designated for each grade level.

Resources allocated to the class are very limited and inadequate. The resources that would have been allocated include the annual budget, stationery and sanitation materials including first aid kits, teaching-learning indoor materials and outdoor playing materials. Among these, only stationery materials in a very limited amount are allocated in most preschools.

Additionally, the human resources assigned to this educational field lacked qualifications. These results are strikingly similar to those of academics who have documented in the literature that the implementation of inclusive education policy is not successful when insufficient resources are allocated to ECCE programs. These results may be explained by the fact that, in the Ethiopian setting, general attention to this crucial area of education is either the lowest or essentially nonexistent. This made it more difficult for the policy to be implemented effectively.

The following internal factors could have an impact on how the policy is implemented at the preschool level: i) it lacks a clear structure outlining all parties involved and accountable for its implementation; ii) the policy's goals regarding how all children can benefit from early childhood education and care; iii) it also lacks plans for regulating curriculum and performance standards in the preschool system; iv) it also addressed how resources are maintained and allocated within the preschool system; and v) it lacks strategies related to specific school- and classroom-level practices like classroom management, student support, teacher-student relationships, and enhanced learning activities.

6.2. CONCLUSION

Based on the above findings of this study concluded that

- ✓ The practices and p implementation of inclusive education policy in those preschools is still in its early stages, leading to discrimination against students with disabilities. This is due to a lack of understanding of inclusive education policies, inadequate teacher training, unsuitable learning environments and infrastructure, limited specialized teaching materials, and insufficient involvement of key stakeholders like parents and teachers.
- ✓ The lack of adequate and sustained funding to support teaching aids and resources has hindered the effective implementation of inclusive education policies. This financial

constraint has demotivated school administrators and stakeholders from fully embracing and practicing inclusive education.

- ✓ The policy-practice gap in inclusive preschool education has led to inequitable access, suboptimal learning environments, inadequate teacher support, and perpetuation of stigma - issues that can only be addressed through comprehensive reforms, sufficient funding, and meaningful collaboration between all stakeholders.
- ✓ Those two government preschools were not have and collaboratively with parents to discuss the specific types of support that need to be provided to children with disabilities.

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- To improve inclusive education approaches, school communities must build specialized facilities and infrastructure. Students with disabilities will benefit from a more accommodating learning environment thanks to this specialized infrastructure..
- Schools should work closely and collaboratively with parents to discuss the specific types of support that need to be provided to students with disabilities. This partnership will help facilitate the implementation of inclusive education policies, both at the school level and within the home environment.
- Sustainable and widespread awareness-creation about inclusive education policies needs to be driven by the government and other concerned bodies in the community. Rather than solely relying on additional recurrent budget support, schools should explore alternative funding sources to finance the implementation of inclusive education.

- Emphasize the importance of inclusive infrastructure, strong school-parent collaboration, and comprehensive societal awareness campaigns all of which are necessary to bridge the policy-practice gap and truly implement inclusive education in preschools and the broader community.

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Appendex

Addis Ababa University

Center for Early childhood care and education

Interview questions for preschool principals, resource room teachers and preschool teachers the selected two preschools in Addis Ababa at Nefas silk subcity.

Introduction

I am LEJALEM TSEGAYE, a Master of Education student in Addis Ababa University specializing in Early Childhood Care and Education. I would like to thank you for taking time to partake in this study titled: the policy and practices gap of inclusive education in this preschool. I would like to assure you that the information you will share with me will be used for research purposes only and your identities will not be publicized. I further assure you that the information obtained from this study will be kept secret and private, unless to be used for the purposes of research only.

Instructions

- Please share your views on the subject to the best of your ability.
- There are no rights or wrong answers to the questions that will be asked. All responses will be highly appreciated.

1. Do you have an understanding Early Childhood Care and inclusive Education policy? Explain.

2. Do you have an awareness about Early Childhood Care and inclusive education?

3. Does your preschool implement early childhood care and inclusive education policy? If yes please explain it. Y

4. Are you interested to implement this preschool inclusive education policy? If yes/No please explain it.

5. Do you have awareness how to implement the preschool policy of inclusive education. if yes please explain.

6. Do you think the environments of your preschool should be comfortable for practice of inclusive education policy? If yes please explain.

7. Do you think your preschool have enough material to implement the preschool policy of inclusive education. if yes please explain.

8. Do you think I should perfectly practice the policy of inclusive education?if yes/no please describe.

9. Do you think your preschool child's parent actively involved their child education?if yes/no please describe.

10. Do you think the parents have an awareness of early childhood care and inclusive education? if yes please explain .

11. Do you think your school principal should have contributed to practice of inclusive education policy? If yes please explain.

12. Do your think your preschool should facilitate a contentious training to improve my awareness about the policy of inclusive education?

13. Do you think your preschool has enough human resources to implement the inclusive policy? If yes, please explain.

14. Do you understand the policy and practice gap of inclusive education? If yes, please explain.

15. Do you have an awareness of how to bridge the policy and practice gap of inclusive education? Please explain.

Thank You for your information!!!

Observation check list

Have sufficient knowledge and understanding about inclusive Education policy

Yes
no

Have an ability to make decision to implement inclusive Education policy- no

Have a good motivation to implement inclusive Education policy- no

have an awareness about inclusive Education policy and its practice -no

Do always answer the child's need accordingly Early Childhood Care and Education inclusive Education policy -no

have preschool rules and regulation to practice inclusive Education policy -no

do always attended the inclusive Education policy implementation – no

Have numerous challenges in the time of practicing Early Childhood Care and Education inclusive Education policy

Have a good environmental facilitation in order to implement inclusive Education Education policy

Have preschool committee monitoring inclusive Education n policy practice.