



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

CENTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING - LEARNING PROCESS IN PRESCHOOLS IN WEST  
SHEWA ZONE, OROMIA REGIONAL STATE

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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

**Addis Ababa University**

**College of Education and Behavioral Studies**

**Center for Early Childhood Care and Education**

**Assessment of teaching -Learning - Process in Preschools in West Shewa Zone, Oromia  
Regional State**

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## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, declare that this Thesis is my original work and has not been prepared by others, and that all sources of materials used for this thesis have been fully acknowledged.

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## **Acronyms**

**ABE** Alternative Basic Education

**CDA** Child Development Associate

**DAP** Developmentally Appropriate Practice

**DIP** Developmentally In Appropriate Practice

**ECCE** Early Childhood Care and Education

**ECE** Early Childhood Education

**EPPE** Effective Provision of Pre-school Education.

**ESDP** Education Sector Development Program

**IEA** International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

**MoE** Ministry of Education

**NGOs** Non-Governmental Organizations

**NAEYC** National Association for the Education of Young Children

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### ***Abstract***

*The purpose of this study was to assess the- teaching learning process in West Shewa Zone Preschools. To this end, qualitative research method was used for the study. Fifty six (56) preschool teachers and principals were taken as sample of the study by applying purposive sampling technique. Interview, focus group discussion (FGD) and observation checklist were used to get data from the target population. The result of the study shows that the common method of learning - teaching practiced in the classroom situation was teacher-centered which is inappropriate at the preschool level. The result of the findings indicates lack of professional experts and training in the area, lack of resource and other related facilities stuck them from implementation of appropriate teaching method in preschool. Finally, based on the findings and discussions some helpful implications have been provided. As inferred from the result of the study teachers in selected preschool were not implementing the common teaching learning method which needed in preschool - teaching learning due to different factors such as, overcrowded classes with a single teacher, lack of materials and facilities, lack of classrooms and lack of qualified teachers. Therefore West Shewa Zonal Educational Office, Woreda and other non-governmental organization must pay their attention to the preschool students.*

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Pre-school education is the first step in the child's educational journey. Early childhood experts have the opinion that attending pre-school program, helps to promote children's social and emotional development and prepare them for primary education (Justice & Vulkelick, 2008). The first five years of life are highly significant, what children learn and feel during this time, particularly about themselves will be foundational to the rest of their life. At this stage a child develops good relationship with people around him (Hightower, 1999).

Early childhood is defined as the period from birth to eight years old. This early period is considered to be the most important developmental phase throughout the lifespan. Healthy early child development includes the physical, social-emotional, and language-cognitive domains of development, each equally important –strongly influences well-being, throughout life (Hightower, 1999)

The earliest years of a child's life represent a crucial period of the biological, psychological, social, and emotional growth and change. The first year of life represent a critical window of opportunity in the healthy development of young children; what children learn and feel during this time will be foundational to the rest of their life (Bibi, 2013).

Piaget (1978) envisaged these psychological stages as driven by a process of equilibration. He suggested that children develop schemata to represent their understanding of the world, and that they try to assimilate the world to these schemata until too much external contradiction forces a change and re-equilibration of their world view. The implication of seeing child development as a series of progressive psychological transformations, from one stage to the next, from infancy to

maturity, is that these stages become crucial reference points for discussing optimal timing for transitions, e.g., from home to Pre-school or from more informal to more formal curriculum.

Vygotskian theory breaks from traditional developmental psychology by focusing on the importance of social interaction. It emphasizes activity, rather than the individual, as the basic unit of analysis. This more dynamic vision of child development offers a relational view on transitions. In this view, children are actively involved in the timing and quality of their transition experiences. Vygotskian socio-cultural psychology has the advantage of recognizing all aspects of childhood as shaped by social, cultural, and economic processes. This also applies to children's environments, whether these are within the home, the farm, or a preschool setting (Vygotsky, 1998).

Early childhood researchers broadly discussed the impact of a child's early development on later development. There is increasing recognition that ECCE provides crucial foundation for learning and helps to develop cognitive and non-cognitive skills important for future success (Litjens, Tagum2a, 2010).

Neurobiological research by Knudsen et al. (2006) highlights the importance of ECCE on brain and behavioral development. Both occur mostly during early childhood, a phase where development is influenced by the quality of experiences and interactions, and where development occurs at a more rapid pace than in later years (Harrison and Ungerer, 2005; Ridley, 2003; Herschkowitz et al., 2002; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2000; Shonkoff and Philips, 2000; NICHD, 1997).

Different perspectives on learning have discussed the importance of early learning. For instance, the ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998); the Soci-

ocultural perspective (Rogoff 1998); and the activity theory perspective (Engestrom, Meittinen, and Punamaki; 1999) emphasized on the socially constructed nature of learning and of assessment. They also stressed on the importance of the learning environment and of the context in which learning takes place. Vygotsky's theory of learning (1978) and in particular, his concept of the zone of proximal development led the foundation for the initiatives of young children's learning.

Early childhood educators have always relied upon their knowledge of child development and maturational theories. More recently, it has become equally important to understand the vital roles that experience, culture and responsive adults play in the emergence in children of skills and abilities in each developmental domain. In the last 30 years numerous studies have demonstrated that children are more able to learn and develop lasting relationships when they have learning experiences with individuals who are knowledgeable and responsive to their individual capacities.

Vygotsky (1978) describes how children's problem-solving abilities can be strengthened when they are guided through tasks under adult supervision. Gobbo and Chi (1986) demonstrate that when teachers provide children with knowledge in a content area or about a specific topic, the children are better able to use this new information, act on it and continue in the learning process. Such research shows how capable children are of learning a great deal when they are in environments that provide stimulating experiences and responsive adults to support their development.

Responsive adults influence not only cognitive learning, but also children's social-emotional competence (peer relations and teacher/child relations). Howe and Smith (1995) have written

about how children who are emotionally secure in their relationships with their teachers will use this base to explore the classroom, engage in pretend play, anticipate learning and promote their own self-regulation behaviors and peer relations.

The teaching profession, as a whole, is facing ongoing change and challenge; not only are ongoing educational changes redefining teachers' work, but increasing teacher attrition and turnover also creates challenges of ECCE provision. A number of challenges in early learning such as professional knowledge in understanding of early development and learning, (Bowman, Donovan, Burns 2001), challenges related to understanding of diversity, content matter and pedagogical content knowledge as well as how authentic assessment can be carried out (Espinosa 2005), time management in conducting observation, conversations and documentation (Ridgway 2001; Fler and Richardson 2004). The challenges of learning - teaching in early childhood can be caused by different factors. For instance, Rodriguez (2008) asserts that rigid curriculum and assessment, classroom shortages, and unfavorable learning environment and others are some of the factors that challenge the learning - teaching process in ECCE.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem.**

The experience of young children in ECCE is mostly related to process quality, that is, the nature of the pedagogical interactions between staff and children, as well as between peers, and in relation to their environment (Bäumer, 2014).

The arena for positive interactions and experiences includes such aspects as child and age appropriate behavior and domain specific stimulation in important early development areas such as pre-reading literacy and early numeracy. These interactions and experiences are fundamental to pedagogy, which is one of the most significant factors underlying the effects of care and early education on children's learning and development. Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development"

theory suggests that teachers observe and are prepared to assist the child's learning experience at Levels one and two, so he or she can become independent at that particular task or learning experience (Sowers, 2000; Berk and Winsler, 1997).

Teachers employ a variety of teaching strategies, modifying and adjusting tasks, setting expectations, demonstrating, assisting and facilitating (Berk and Winsler, 1997). Sometimes all of these teacher behaviors occur within the same learning experience (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1995).

Stressing that educator should focus on the strengths and capabilities of children, Vygotsky suggested that all children be educated in group settings, Social interaction and discourse with peers has a powerful effect on a child's development, and mixed age groups provide learners with additional resources beside the teacher and environment.

This educational pioneer shared a belief that the child constructs knowledge through interactions with the physical and social environments. This model of interaction and construction provides a solid framework for decisions about teaching strategies, content, performance standards, environment and materials. Based on a foundation built by these educators, this guide serves to support knowledgeable teachers who seek to create early childhood settings where play based learning is viewed as paramount in children's experiences; problem solving opportunities occur within the context of genuine questions and investigations; interactions are cultivated; and appropriate and rich materials are selected and provided according to the individual interests of children.

The government of Ethiopia understood the importance of ECCE emphasizing on the Education and Training Policy that ‘Kindergarten were focused on all round development of the child in preparation for formal schooling’ (MoE, 1994:14) Pedagogy implemented by childcare providers and centers plays an important role in ensuring quality in ECCE. As Stated in the Ethiopian National Policy Framework, in Ethiopia everyone plays with the infants and small children in the house, mothers in the rural areas carry their babies with them everywhere they go.

Early psychosocial stimulation is mostly done in a way both parents and caregivers are not aware. The predominant preoccupation is to satisfy the basic physical and physiological needs of the child. Early childhood education teachers are mainly engaged in developing reading, writing and arithmetic skills; early stimulation in a play full way is very often not part of their teaching. It means that the psychosocial component, which is critical for proper cognitive, linguistic and overall stimulation and instrumental for adapting to new environment situations, is largely ignored especially in the schools and parents are not really aware of it. In order to fill this gap, promoting quality child-adult interaction both at home and at school is necessary.

Despite the fact the policy framework and national guidelines for childhood education as expounded in the National Policy on Education emphasize the importance of pedagogy in influencing children’s opportunities and outcomes in later life, still there is gap between what is written in the preschool standard document and what is applied in real situation.

While child pedagogy helps in the provision of education and holistic development of children, the situation in most early childhood centers does not reflect active learning process. Pedagogical approach allows professionals collect evidence, analyze and interpret each child’s learning and to

make program and intervention decisions for extending the child's learning and development in the future (Bagnato, 2010).

An appropriate learning - teaching process in ECCE help children in communicating and making their own learning visible to them which in turn promote children's own self-efficacy that is, belief in their own ability to take actions that will achieve their goals (Carr, 2001). An efficient pedagogy makes children academically, socially and psychologically competent in later life. Even though pedagogy is arguably the most powerful policy tool in education, data from different stakeholders and my observation during practicum uncover many practitioners in western Shewa preschools teachers have been ill-equipped for the task and many of them also lacking knowledge and skills of implementing developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices.

### **1.2. 1 Research questions**

This study proposed to examine five research questions, below:

1. What are the common methods of teaching - learning used by preschool teachers?
2. To what extent preschool teachers are using developmentally appropriate practice?
3. What are the challenges that hinder using appropriate teaching- learning methods in Preschools in west Shewa Zone?
4. Does teaching -learning process in preschool differ as function of teacher's demographic characteristics?
5. What professional development programs are in place to capacitate the preschool teacher's pedagogical skills?

### **1.3 Objective of the study**

#### **1.3.1 General objective**

- ❖ The main objective of this study was to assess the appropriateness teaching -learning process in preschools of Western Shewa Zone.

#### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

- ◆ To examine the common method of learning - teaching used by preschool teachers
- ◆ To see how far learning - teaching process are developmentally appropriate in preschools.
- ◆ To identify challenges that hinder using appropriate learning - teaching methods in Preschools.
- ◆ To identify whether learning - teaching processes in preschools differ as a function of teacher's demographic characteristics.
- ◆ To examine professional development programs in place to capacitate preschool teachers pedagogical skills.

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

The following are some of significance of the Study

- ❖ At first, the study aimed to help others to have knowledge about the Common method of learning - teaching used by preschool teachers and challenges of implementing developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood care and education.
- ❖ Secondly, the findings of this study were help to provide first-hand information to government and non-government organizations about the ongoing Pre-school learning - teaching process.

- ❖ Thirdly, learning institutions are also beneficiaries of the result of their study in that the findings help them to design strategies to apply appropriate pedagogy.
- ❖ Finally, it also serves as a base line for further study.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The study had been carried out on West Shewa Zone public and private preschool. West Shewa is chosen for the study primarily since the site is accessible with the financial and time limits for the researcher. In addition, West Shewa Zonal town is the work place of the researcher to minimize unnecessary cost and time wastage. In relation to the Assessment of teaching Learning Process, it was limited to the common methods of teaching used by preschool teachers, the extent preschool teachers are using developmentally appropriate practice, the challenges that hinder using appropriate learning - teaching methods, variation in the teaching learning - process as function of teacher's demographic characteristics, and professional development to capacitate the preschool teacher's pedagogical skills.

### **1.5 Delimitation of the study**

It is not possible in a single research study to cover every aspect of concepts associated with the learning - teaching process under investigation. Although, the problem is very natural and is prevalent everywhere yet due to shortage of time and resources all the aspects of the factors related to the learning - teaching process in preschool could not be covered and the study is limited in several ways. It had to be determined in terms of population covered, sample selected, scope of factors studied and the scope of generalizability of findings. The phenomenon of achievement has been studied only in relation to the learning - teaching process in preschool only. The scope of study covers only some selected West Shewa Zone government and private

areas, so one cannot generalize the finding of this study to all other private and public preschool schools in the country due to number of differences in their conditions and circumstances.

### **1.6 Operational Definition.**

**Preschool/young child:** A child encompasses provision of education capturing through early stimulation, guidance and arrange developmental activities and opportunities before enter to primary school, yet between age 4 and 6 years.

**Challenges:** any threatening condition or a situation which influence young child's learning.

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice:** is a set of principles about how to teach young children that is based on an understanding of child development and a familiarity with the cultural context within which each child is being raised.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Concept of learning - teaching process (child pedagogy) in Preschools**

Pedagogy (and pedagogical interactions) concerns how adults in early year's settings engage with children to achieve developmental objectives, and what directs their methods. Specifically, pedagogy refers to "that set of instructional techniques and strategies which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context.

In other words, it refers to the interactive process between teacher and learner and to the learning environment" (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002). It concerns the how of adult and child interaction, which is particularly important in an ECCE context, given how children learn and develop during early childhood. How children learn and develop at this stage is subject not only to what is taught but more importantly, how it is facilitated (Anders, 2015). Consequently, pedagogy has a significant effect upon the (process) quality of ECCE and the impact ECCE can have on children. The terms "teaching" and "classroom" are avoided in this conception of ECCE pedagogy and practice since, for many Countries, these terms are associated with the "schoolification" of ECEC and with formal schooling. The use of these terms would contrast and misrepresent the ECEC approach and system in many countries, where ECEC systems exemplify a more socio-pedagogical tradition.

In referring to pedagogy, the term "instruction" as used in Siraj-Blatchford's (2002) definition of pedagogy, as well as the term "educating" are preferred over the term of "teaching." Instructing and educating refer to all processes aiming at initiating or maintaining learning and development processes, and include the whole portfolio of specific didactic techniques, such as phonemic

awareness techniques; integrating technology; strategies to encourage interaction among children and co-operative learning; differentiated instructions; goal-setting; assessment; documentation; cross-curriculum teaching; means of sustained shared thinking; preparing physical environments; material and learning environments; and play-based approaches (Pramling, I. 1995).

## **2.2 Common methods of teaching learning - used in preschools**

Children arrive at school with different backgrounds, experiences, and at different stages of development. To give each student the best possible start, it is essential that pre-school programs provide a variety of method of teaching and instructional experiences. (Haile, 2010:20) According to Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002), play is part and parcel of a child's life; Play is a fun, Children without fun, children without play, is children without childhood.”

The right to play is truly a basic right for each child. Whatever the social or economic situation may be, indeed fostering of play is clearly a part of preventive medicine. Furthermore, (Sawyers, 1994) explained that Play help children develop knowledge, social skills, and motor skill. Play helps children to prepare for adult life by letting them, in natural way, practice and explore what they will need to be able to do as adults. According to Aggarwall (2006:153), “play is the purest, most spiritual activity of the child and gives joy, freedom, contentment, inner rest and peace in the world. It is the source of all that is good”. Hence, most scholars agreed that play is the first and most appropriate method of teaching in kindergarten or pre-schools. There are other appropriate methods of teaching suitable for facilitating pre-school children development and learning besides play children enjoy and benefit from short group sessions during which they learn to listen to each other and the teacher singing together, listen to stories and develop a sense of time by remembering what they have done and planning ahead learning centers are sometimes

design to focus children's attention on concept, process or skill and provide opportunity for self-initiated investigation and practice. Children benefit from well-planned field trips and learn much from subsequently guided discussion.

Quality early childhood programs are "highly organized and structured environments that teachers have carefully prepared and in which teachers are in control" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1995). They employ a variety of teaching strategies, modifying and adjusting tasks, setting expectations, demonstrating, assisting and facilitating (Berk and Winsler, 1997). Sometimes all of these teacher behaviors occur within the same learning experience (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1995), Stressing that educator should focus on the strengths and capabilities of children, Vygotsky suggested that all children be educated in group settings. Social interaction and discourse with peers has a powerful effect on a child's development, and mixed age groups provide learners with additional resources beside the teacher and environment.

This educational pioneer shared a belief that the child constructs knowledge through interactions with the physical and social environments. This model of interaction and construction provides a solid framework for decisions about teaching strategies, content, performance standards, environment and materials. Based on a foundation built by these educators, this guide serves to support knowledgeable teachers who seek to create early childhood settings where play based learning is viewed as paramount in children's experiences; problem-solving opportunities occur within the context of genuine questions and investigations; interactions are cultivated; and appropriate and rich materials are selected and provided according to the individual interests of children.

Play, as well as learning is natural components of children's everyday lives. When children are asked what they like to do best, the answers are unanimous: to play. On the other hand, education for children is, on the whole, organized to promote learning rather than play. However, while school is traditionally seen as a place of learning and not of play, preschool is more often associated with play rather than learning, from the child's perspective (Pramling, Klerfelt, & Williams Granel, 1995). Play is also considered to be a practice initiated by children, while learning is seen as a result of a practice or activity initiated by an adult. In the context of early childhood education, play and learning are often separated in time as well as in space. Circle time, literacy hours, creative art work etc. are seen as practices of teaching and instruction and thus the origin of learning, while play is put aside until leisure time or outdoor hours and is part of children's own resort. At the same time, curricula of early year's education around the world state that play are supposed to be of the utmost importance. Certain aspects of pedagogical practices, i.e. actions that the staff implement and use, are found to have a greater influence than others on children's development: Firstly, interactions between adults and children are vital in stimulating early learning.

In high quality interactions, adults are genuinely interested in what the child is doing; adults are listening, are helping to extend children's thoughts and knowledge, and implement sustained, shared thinking. In settings where such sustained shared thinking was more common, children have been observed to make greater developmental progress. Secondly, play-based learning, for example through the use of puzzles and constructional materials, is found to be a highly effective method of enhancing child development. Within play, the way sensitive adults help children reflect on situations, through scaffolding, for example, is important. Scaffolding-focused learning environments, where the practitioner attempts to help children only with tasks that are just

beyond their current capability, demonstrated greater overall positive effects on children's development than teacher-directed and child-centered environments. This suggests that, thirdly, pedagogy should neither be too staff-directed or staff-focused, with a high share of staff-initiated activities, or too child-centered, where children decide on the activities. While studies on staff-directed approaches have revealed some advantages, such as better achievement in letters and reading, this approach negatively affects children's motivation to learn.

In France, it was found that highly teacher-directed pedagogical practices were less effective. In Germany, for example, a child-centered pedagogy, in combination with specific teacher-managed activities and a high level of assistance, was found to help develop academic skills such as numeracy and literacy, and children also demonstrated higher levels of well-being and motivation to learn. Research in the United States also found that mixed teacher- and child-managed activities are associated with alphabet and letter-word growth, and purely child-managed experiences, including play, were associated with vocabulary growth.

Pedagogical practices are influenced by organizations that monitor settings' results and practices. Indeed, if staffs are assessed on their actual interactions and activities with children, and receive feedback, they will to some extent reflect on this and can improve their practices and interactions. However, given the current limitations of the data and information available, it is not clear how and in what way monitoring influences pedagogy in practice, and what aspects of monitoring most impact pedagogy.

An important component in the caring and education of preschool children involves understanding, describing, and improving interactions taking place within the micro-system that facilitates the social ecology of the transition period (Pianta, & Kaufman, 2006). The state of

interaction between preschool children and their care givers in center-based settings is a crucial element in children's readiness for school. Citing various sources Palermo et al.,(2007) stated that children who experience warmth or closer teacher-child relationships tend to have fewer behavior problems, like school more, and perform better academically than do children who experience more conflicted teacher-child relationships.

The child-adult interaction process that shapes school readiness is based on the contention that neither the child nor the environment alone would contribute substantially in smoothing the transition period. Rather, "child-by-environment model" (Palermo, 2007), provides a comprehensive picture of the factors that shape children's school readiness. Birch and Ladd (1997), Palermo et al., (2007), showed that teacher-child closeness was positively associated with preschools' self-directedness, and greater competency behavior such as assertive social skills, and peer sociability at the end of first grade.

Emphasis on the quality of the interaction among preschool teachers, children, and materials reflect the widely accepted view that the effects of early care and education settings derive from these exchanges (Howes, & Richie, 2002; Pianta, 199; Cited in Crouch et al., 2006). Classrooms and play grounds in early childhood care and education centers are developmental niches in which preschool children's developmental outcomes are configured through the process of child-care giver-setting triad interactions. Analogous to the child's home environment, ECCE classrooms are "the most proximal settings nested within child care centers" (p.303) for predicting quality of child care services (Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, &Debby, 1997).

There is plenty of research evidence to suggest that children's success in school and other aspects of their life can be considerably enhanced when quality educational experiences in their

early years are taken seriously (Melhuish and Petrogiannis, 2006, Sylva, Whitebread, and Yelland, 2010). It is theorized in the literature that the focus in learner-centred teaching in the early years is to enable an individual learner to construct knowledge for him or herself using the environment, including both the physical and social environments (Tracey and Morrow, 2012, Vygotsky, 1978), and therefore require a flexible curriculum within the broad parameters of the socially constructed curriculum (Bell, 2011, Mligo, 2008).

Developmental achievements so this study aims to investigate current pre-school practice and to explore what should be done in the future. Quality pre-school education in the literature indicates the importance of teaching by using Learner-Centered Pedagogy (LCP). By definition, learner centered pedagogy, also known as child centered learning, is a learning that mainly focuses on the needs and interests of the learners rather than those of other involved parties such as administrators and teachers in the education system (Al-Zu'be, 2013, Herbert, 2004, O'Sullivan, 2004).

In this approach, the teacher is placed to facilitate the learning, and to focus on the needs, interests, and learning styles of the pupils. Previous studies indicate that the lack of pedagogical skills of teachers who work with young children is closely associated with children's delay in achievement of developmental goals and milestones and causes serious disadvantage in their future work and careers (Herbert, 2004, Sylva et al., 2003, Wood, 2004).

However, many writers advocate that Learner centered Approach is situational, that means it is not effective for all learning environments i.e. "it works some of the time, or for some of the pupils, but not all of the time for all of the pupils, and that some clusters of variables produce better results in terms of pupils academic achievement than others" (Herbert, 2004). In other

words, aspects that produce better results are described where academic attainment is understood in terms of performance measurable by internationally accepted assessment tools, such as those used by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) e.g standardized test (Barnett and Frede, 2010, Herbert, 2004). Recognizing settings that are likely to enhance the effectiveness of LCP, as well as those in which it is likely to fail, should help education policy makers to take a course of action most suited to a particular context, instead of adopting (habitually for ideological reasons) a learner-centered framework only because it may have worked in another country, or for a different population (Herbert, 2004, Wood, 2004).

However, for meaningful learning in the early years, LCP is the most suitable for engaging in spontaneous learning (Barnett, Frede, 2010, Melhuish , Petrogiannis, 2006, Sylva et al., 2003, Wood, 2004, Mitchell et al., 2008).

### **2.3. Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs**

This position statement was first published in 1987 and then revised in 1997 (Bredekamp, 1997). The primary purposes of the Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) Guidelines were to provide explicit guidelines for childcare centers that were seeking accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, and to 'take a position' on responding to contemporary trends of adopting academically oriented instruction in early childhood programs (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The philosophy of the DAP Guidelines is based on 'current best understanding' and 'shared beliefs' which are rooted at the core of early childhood philosophers such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Montessori, and Dewey. The DAP Guidelines' committee members synthesize these core values in early childhood education and describe at least three types of DAP: age-appropriate Practice,

individually appropriate practice, and culturally appropriate practice. Age-appropriate practice should consider the child's development, growth, and learning in general; individually appropriate practice should discover the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual child within a group; and culturally appropriate practice should regard the cultural and social contexts where the child grew up (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Firstly, the development of the whole child is significant. In other words, all domains of development should be considered in childcare programs, including cognitive, language, physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, and moral development. Secondly, empirically proven principles of learning and child development guide decisions about DAP. For example, child development results in complex interactions between genetic, environmental, and cultural factors, and follows an orderly succession. The child, viewed as an active and unique learner, learns and develops best in a play-based and secure environment.

The revised DAP Guidelines also clarify the empirical approvals that support DAP, which were not clarified in the first version.

Thirdly, the document argues that classroom practices in the education of young children are so complex that they cannot be easily dichotomized. For instance, debating which is the better method of reading instruction, whole language or phonics, is a waste of energy because the two methods of instruction represent different reading approaches and children may need a balanced approach.

In fact, the DAP Guidelines attempt to move from either/or to both. Children are recognized as individual, active learners, who benefit from adult and peer assistance. Fourthly, based on the general knowledge of child development, the document provides guidelines for early childhood teachers to inform them of developmentally appropriate practices.

The DAP Guidelines contain five interrelated dimensions:

1. Teachers are responsible for enhancing children's development and learning;
2. Teachers should create a caring, secure environment for learners;
3. Appropriate curriculum design should provide children with meaningful learning experiences;
4. Authentic assessment is essential to evaluate children's progress in learning and development;
5. A reciprocal relationship should be established between families and schools.

In addition, the DAP Guidelines supply essential policies for childcare centers seeking to follow DAP, including the recommendations of a teacher preparation system, teacher–student ratios for different age groups, class size, teacher benefits, and necessary materials and equipment. The DAP Guidelines go on to articulate that teachers are the chief decision makers in a DAP classroom. This statement does not intend to provide a certain model or steps for teachers to observe, rather it merely provides early childhood teachers with a framework for classroom decision making.

Hence, no two DAP classrooms look exactly the same and each decision depends on the context at that moment. Teachers who deal with a similar event by using different approaches could both be viewed as teachers adopting DAP. In fact, the best DAP occurs in a classroom where the teacher uses his or her knowledge of child development: observes the individual child's needs

and interests, recognizes the impacts of social and cultural factors on the child, is open to communication with parents, and seeks possible solutions when contradictions occur.

Lastly, the authors of the DAP Guidelines illustrate concrete examples of developmentally appropriate practices and developmentally inappropriate practices (DIP) in relation to different age groups. For instance, providing children with ample opportunities for free choices is DAP, whereas supplying limited materials for choices is DIP.

Whilst opponents indicate that the DAP Guidelines are not appropriate for those children from low socio-economic backgrounds (O'Brien, 1996), advocates indicate that the DAP Guidelines facilitate children's learning in all developmental domains. For example, Charlesworth (1998a) argues in a literature review article that: 'DAP is for everyone' (p. 274), regardless of ethnic or socio-economic background. Native-American students actively engage in classroom discussions in a learning environment that is categorized as developmentally appropriate, whereas most students are apt to withdraw from lecture-based instruction.

In addition, in another research review article, Dunn & Kontos (1997) conclude that children learning in a child-oriented environment show less anxiety and aggressive behaviors, and demonstrate positive cognitive performance, compared to those children studying in an academically focused environment. Children who experience a less structured environment during the early childhood period can still achieve high academic performances at elementary levels.

While the revisited DAP documents tend to modify the weakness of the first version, some of the major issues relating to implementation and anti-bias practice are still under debate. In terms of application of the DAP Guidelines in real classrooms Richard et al (2002) are concerned that

early childhood teachers lack the tools to improve their teaching to use DAP. In addition, Lubeck (1998) strongly argues that the fundamental philosophy of the DAP Guidelines is biased and contradictory. The DAP Guidelines' committee members call for a need for open dialogue in the field of early childhood education, but, in reality, the committee encourages teachers to observe the sole standard (DAP) and evaluate their teaching performance based on this.

Teachers' voices are not mentioned in the document and the complexity of teaching practices is not realistically assessed. Teachers are evaluated by the use of a checklist in observation periods of only a few hours' duration. No time is spent talking to them to understand why and how they teach. Lubeck (1998) continues by questioning the consensus on core values and current understanding in the field of early childhood education.

DAP Guidelines adopt too much of Piaget's developmental theory and does not focus enough on the diverse perspectives of childcare and education, especially with regard to minority groups. Moreover, Fowell & Lawton (1992) and Lubeck (1998) argue that teaching practices are so complex that they should not be dichotomized as appropriate and inappropriate practices. Another critique concerns cultural diversity and racial equality.

DAP Guidelines superficially promote a general assumption about the knowledge of the culturally appropriate practice, without showing respect for the traditional values of each culture, such as children's responsibility for dressing and eating in a certain way, and interdependence. Also, the DAP Guidelines do not explicitly emphasize individual needs of children from other cultural backgrounds, such as the need for teachers who can speak a language other than English (Bernhard1998).

In response to the above critiques, advocates argue that the critiques misunderstand and misinterpret the content and the intention of the DAP Guidelines. The DAP Guidelines do not represent a solitary method for carrying out DAP. They do not encourage unstructured teaching, nor do they abandon academics' and teachers' prior knowledge. In fact, the DAP Guidelines are tools that allow teachers to examine, and improve the effectiveness of, their teaching. All classroom decisions should rely on teachers' knowledge and understanding of their students (Kostelnik, 1992; Bredekamp, 1993; Charlesworth, 1998).

#### **2.4 Challenges of Teachers in using developmentally appropriate practice in preschools**

Effective pedagogies facilitate positive interactions, by structuring environments and planning activities that fully engage children. This in turn enhances the children's cognitive, linguistic and social development, since positive relationships have the most consistent and enduring influence on a child's development (Bowman et al., 2001; Shonkoff ,Philips 2000). Characteristics of effective pedagogy include nurturing and consistent relationships, child- and age-appropriate behavior, a positive class- or playroom environment, and domain-specific stimulation in areas such as verbal and pre-reading literacy, early numeracy, and science (Shonkoff and Philips, 2000).

Pedagogy is influenced by a number of factors in different countries, including the organization of ECCE settings and whether they are aligned with primary education, In addition, the country's regulatory minimum standards and the curriculum framework (whether or not this is an integrated document for the whole ECEC age range, influence pedagogical practices. Factors such as the knowledge, initial education and training of staff and their competences and skills, and how quality and process quality in particular are monitored, also influence the pedagogy in a

given country or setting. Pedagogical approaches vary not only between national and regional contexts, but individual ECCE settings.

Different aspects of structural quality can influence pedagogy. For example, the choice of interaction and strategies can depend on the staff-child ratio as well as the materials available. As a result, regulation policies and funding can greatly impact structural quality, and hence the quality of pedagogy. From an alternative perspective, pedagogy also impacts structural quality because certain pedagogies make use of the spatial-physical environment in a particular way or use materials or practices that require a certain space or trained staff (Anders, 2015).

Though pedagogy is closely related to the concepts above, pedagogy in essence relates to the *how* or *practice* of educating and care giving, i.e. the actions, activities and practices of ECCE staff in relation to the children. In an early year's context, however, as noted by Siraj-Blatchford (2002), "any adequate conception of educative practice must be wide enough to include the provision of learning environments for play and exploration".

In addition to monitoring quality, the regulatory minimum quality standards regarding staff child ratios can impact the quality of staff interactions with children. A lower number of children per practitioner makes it possible for staff to pay more individualized attention to children. With a higher number of children per staff member, conditions are less favorable for individualized attention and interaction with children.

## **2.5 Teachers professional Development in preschools**

The knowledge, skills, and practices of early childhood educators are important factors in determining how much a young child learns and how prepared that child is for entry into school (Howes, 1995). Early childhood educators are being asked to have deeper understandings of child development and early education issues; provide richer educational experiences for all children, including those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; engage children of varying abilities and backgrounds; connect with a diverse array of families; and do so with greater demands for accountability and in some cases, fewer resources, than ever before.

The rich developmental growth that occurs in early childhood makes providing young children with stimulating and developmentally appropriate early childhood education (ECCE) environments an important target for promoting positive developmental trajectories. The richness of young children's growth increases the impact of supportive interventions, such as high quality early childhood education (ECE), to facilitate optimal child development outcomes.

Among the different factors that can contribute for ECCE the knowledge, skills, and practice of early childhood educators are important ones in determining how much a young child learns and how prepared that child is for entry to school. In light of the current policy context, early childhood educators are being asked to have a complex understanding of child development and early education issues and provide rich, meaningful educational experiences for all children and families in their care. However, accountability for outcomes is high, and resources for professional support are limited. In a comprehensive review of what is known about how young children learn and develop and the implications of this knowledge for the care and education of children, the Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy concluded, "There is a serious mismatch

between the preparation (and compensation) of the average early childhood professional and the growing expectations of parents and policy makers” (National Research Council 2001, p. 261).

The importance of understanding the qualities of early childhood educators that contribute to optimal child learning and development has been heightened in recent years with the passage of the No Child Left behind Act of 2001 and its complement in early childhood policy, *Good Start, Grow Smart*. In this early childhood initiative, early learning guidelines serve as a Framework for practice and assessment, and individuals caring for children are required to meet certain educational qualifications and receive professional development to enhance their abilities to support young children’s learning. Indeed, the professional development of practicing early childhood educators is considered critical to the quality of experiences afforded to children (Martinez-Beck & Zaslow, 2006).

At the surface, “professional development” in early childhood programs refers to a number of experiences that promote the education, training, and development opportunities for early childhood practitioners who do or will work with young children birth to age 8 years and their families. In this vein, professional development applies to a full range of activities that attempt to increase the knowledge base, skill set, or attitudinal perspectives brought to bear as a practitioner engages in home-visiting, parent education, child care, preschool education and/ or kindergarten to third grade teaching or educational support services (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004). Its ultimate, long-term goal is to facilitate the acquisition of specific learning and social emotional competencies in young children, and in many cases, to promote important family-specific attitudes or abilities to support children’s learning and development.

In other words, the desired long-term, indirect outcomes of all early childhood professional development initiatives involve enhancing children's learning across cognitive, communicative, social-emotional, and behavioral domains (Guskey, 2000;2001), and such outcomes are the ultimate measure of successful professional development initiatives.

In a more immediate sense, professional development in early childhood takes place to accomplish two primary objectives. First, is it anticipated that professional development will advance the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices of early childhood providers in their efforts to educate children and support families. A second objective is to promote a culture for ongoing professional growth in individuals and systems (Candy, 1991; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). The first objective concerns the advancement of practitioner knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Katz, 1992, 1995).

### **2.5.1 Training and adequacy of pre-school teachers**

Pre-school teachers play a critical role in the development of the children. There is general agreement today that teachers of young children need to be involved in all areas of child's development (Social, emotional, intellectual and physical) (Feeney et al, 1987 cited in Yalew 2011). Similarly, Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002) explain that the role of pre-school teachers and other care givers influence the development of children more than any specific curriculum or educational methodology and they are also responsible for immediate ,face to face care (physical and psychological ) of the children.

Feeney et al. (1987) indicated that the job of pre-school teachers is varying and challenging; it demands knowledge, skill, sensitivity and creativity. Likewise, Miller and McDowelle (1993); further explained the need for basic knowledge in the area of health and nutrition, pedagogy,

curriculum development, handling of interpersonal and inter group relations with children, parents, specialists and colleagues. On the same vein, Woodfield (2004) stressed the fact that preschool teachers need to have knowledge and understanding of: All aspects of children development including theories and approaches to learning; How to combine and apply pedagogical knowledge and understanding; Multi-sensory learning and teaching approaches for young children; and Safety issues and application in practice.

In addition to the above points Marguaruta and Cohen (1984), explained that the professional training in pre-school education includes: curriculum and methods, school-parents relationships, materials and equipment experiences and recourses, current problems, history, philosophy of education and the administration and organization of schools.

The training of pre-school teachers varies from country to country. The training ranges from two years or more in diploma and degree levels to less than one year in certificate.

In general, the training of pre-school teachers is critical for the pre-school program implementation. Because it is what goes to the training institution of pre-school teachers that is particular in classroom that finally affects children's learning in pre-schools (Yalew 2011).

According to Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002), there are several basic requirements of preschool teachers such as:- ,Should be at least 18 years old-matured enough to handle young children; Should be healthy enough to perform all duties safety and should have no disease that could be communicated to the children; Must be willing and able to carry out the activities required by the curriculum; Must be able to work with children without using physical or psychological punishment; Be willing and able to increase her/his skills and competence through experience, training, and supervision; Be very progressive and enthusiastic, always to work for

the development and welfare of the children; Be academically well trained and qualified. Preferably training in early childhood education, or child development or child psychology; Be preferably women to deal with the young children with their soft and motherly affection; Be a good “house keeper” both indoors and outdoors so that the school is always clean and attractive; and Be enthusiastic and enjoy being with the children relax and smile on the whole, personal characteristics of pre-school teachers, either enhance or diminish the implementation of the pre-school education as intended.

Taking these facts in to consideration, the Ethiopia government in its education policy has given due emphasis about the importance of teacher training and competence is the medium of instruction from the kindergarten to higher education under article 3.4.5.of 1994 Education and Training Policy.

Moreover, UNESCO (2007) report indicates that the trainees of Kotebe College of Teacher Education get ten months certificate training; while training at the private preschool teachers training institutes train pre-school teachers between three to ten months by showing its concern about the inconsistencies of the training time.

In the end, adequate training of teachers and care givers in ECCE program is a mandatory component for the overall development of children at their own setting. Furthermore, according to the report mentioned above, the allotted and utilized time discrepancies in the training of teachers at pre-school level between the private and government training institutes should be harmonized and given due emphasis from all sides of concerned bodies.(Yalew,2011).

The training and education of ECCE staff affects the quality of services and outcomes primarily through the knowledge, skills and competencies that are transmitted and encouraged by

practitioners. It is also considered important that staff believe in their ability to organize and execute the courses of action necessary to bring about desired results (Herschkowitz, N. et al. 2002).

Qualifications can matter in terms of which skill sets and what knowledge are recognized as important for working with young children. The skills and staff traits that research identifies as important in facilitating high-quality services and outcomes are: good understanding of child development and learning; ability to develop children's perspectives; ability to praise, comfort, question and be responsive to children; Leadership skills, problem solving and development of targeted lesson plans; and good vocabulary and ability to elicit children's ideas.

However, it is not the qualification perse that has an impact on child outcomes but the ability of better qualified staff members to create a high-quality pedagogic environment that makes the difference (Sheridan 2009).

There is strong evidence that enriched stimulating environments and high-quality pedagogy are fostered by better qualified staff; and better quality pedagogy leads to better learning outcomes (Litjens and Taguma, 2010). Key elements of high staff quality are the way staff involve children and stimulate interaction with and between children as well as staff's scaffolding strategies, such as guiding, modeling and questioning.

More specialized staff education and training on ECCE are strongly associated with stable, sensitive and stimulating interactions (Shonkoff and Philips, 2000). Other elements of high staff quality include staff's content (curriculum) knowledge and their ability to create a multi-disciplinary learning environment (Pramling and Pramling Samuelsson, in press 2011).

Studies that have addressed the question of whether higher staff qualifications lead to better pedagogical practice have yielded mixed results.

There are various studies showing that, generally, a higher level of education is associated with higher pedagogic quality in ECCE settings. One study found that preschool teachers with bachelor's degrees were the most effective practitioners. Their effectiveness was measured within the classroom and based on stimulation, responsiveness and engagement of the children in learning activities (Howes *et al.*, 2003).

The results of the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study from England (United Kingdom) have also shown that key explanatory factors for high-quality ECCE were related to “staff with higher qualifications, staff with leadership skills and long-serving staff; trained staff working alongside and supporting less qualified staff; staff with a good understanding of child development and learning” (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Higher proportions of staff with low-level qualifications were related with less favorable child outcomes in the socio-emotional domain (social relationships with their peers and co-operation). However, the general conclusion that higher education of ECCE staff leads to higher pedagogical quality and, therefore, to better child outcomes is not supported by all studies. Early *et al.* (2007) emphasize that teacher quality is a very complex issue. There is no simple relationship between the level of education of staff and classroom quality or learning outcomes.

At the surface, *professional development* in early childhood programs refers to a number of experiences that promote education, training, and development opportunities for early childhood practitioners who do or will work with young children aged birth to 8 years and their families. In this vein, professional development applies to a full range of activities that attempt to increase

the knowledge base, skill set, or attitudinal perspectives brought to bear as a practitioner engages in home visiting, parent education, child care, preschool education and/or kindergarten to third-grade teaching, or educational support services (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006). Its ultimate, long-term goal is to facilitate the acquisition of specific learning and social–emotional competencies in young children and, in many cases, to promote important family-specific attitudes or abilities to support children’s learning and development. In other words, the desired long-term, indirect outcomes of all early childhood professional development initiatives involve enhancing children’s learning across cognitive, communicative, social–emotional, and behavioral domains (Guskey, 2000, 2001), and such outcomes are the ultimate measure of successful professional development initiatives.

In a more immediate sense, professional development in early childhood takes place to accomplish two primary objectives. First, it is anticipated that professional development will advance the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices of early childhood providers in their efforts to educate children and support families. A second objective is to promote a culture for ongoing professional growth in individuals and systems (Candy, 1991; Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

Most structural definitions of early childhood professional development identify it by its various forms of organization. In general, professional development efforts have traditionally taken five forms: (a) formal education; (b) credentialing; (c) specialized, on-the-job in-service training; (d) coaching and/or consultative interactions; and (e) communities of practice (CoPs) or collegial study groups (Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2006). Although formal education (degree earned prior to employment) and credentialing (agency or organizational qualifications or standards) fall under the umbrella of a professional development structure, this project intent is to focus on

those forms and related processes of professional (or “staff”) development most commonly associated with employed practitioners.

The study conducted on the relationship between child outcomes and staff qualifications and found no, or contradictory, associations between the two. They argue that increasing staff education will not suffice for improving classroom quality or maximizing children’s academic gains. Instead, raising the effectiveness of early childhood education will likely require a broad range of professional development activities and support for staff’s interactions with children. An area that can improve pedagogical practices of ECCE staff includes supporting staff’s competence to communicate and interact with children in a shared and sustainable manner (Sheridan *et al.*, 2009).

Not only the level of education but also the content of the staff’s educational or training curriculum is important for the level of quality in ECCE. Specialized education is associated with better child outcomes and improved staff competences to provide suitable pedagogical learning opportunities. Specialization can refer to “any education or training focusing on early childhood education, child development or similar, above and beyond general educational attainments” (Litjens and Taguma, 2010).

Initial education and training in areas such as early child development and early education increase the likelihood that practitioners are effective in promoting the educational, socio-emotional and healthy development of children.

The practitioners’ ability to create rich, stimulating environments in ECCE is jeopardized when staff have inadequate, insufficient or incorrect content and pedagogical knowledge. When trained on matters related to early development and care, staff can better develop a child’s perspective

are better able to integrate playing and learning into practice (Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Johansson, Pramling Samuelsson, 2009); have increased ability to solve problems and develop targeted lesson plans; and have an improved vocabulary, which stimulates early literacy development (NIEER, 2004).

Additionally, staff with higher education *and* specialized training engage in more positive teacher-child interactions including praising, comforting, questioning and being responsive to children (Howes *et al.*, 2003).

However, specialized education and training does not guarantee greater effectiveness (Hyson *et al.*, 2009). The quality of the education or training programme may be a more critical factor in staff's ability to stimulate children's development and learning. There is a strong need for good initial staff preparation; and there is a call for greater consistency across initial professional preparation programmes to enhance quality (Elliot, 2000).

### **2.5.2 Physical setting and classroom environment in pre- schools**

It is generally accepted that the richer and more pleasant pre-school environment provides more Opportunities for a child to explore, experiment, plan, and make discussions for them, thereby enabling them to progress in their learning and development (promoting Good practice, no date).

A good environment for children must be safe physically as well as psychologically (Feeney *et al.*, 1987).

In line with this, Curtis (1998) also explained that children are active learners in well prepared, safe and secure learning environment. Mayer (1990) with the same concept strengthened this idea by stating that the cognitive development of infants living in environments with little variety is generally lower than that of infants living in the environment that contain variety (cited in Haile,2010:23)

According to Chowdhury and Chuoldhury (2002), some of the criteria suggested for site and building of pre-school are the following:

The pre-school, must be located away from the crowded areas of the city/town, burial ground and main traffic for the purpose of children's safety, the vicinity must also be as to permit any future expansion, raised area, dry, and have natural drainage free from water logging, Clean, pleasant, and well maintained building.

In line with this, Curtis (1998 cited in Haile, 2011) explained that a basic need of all young children is space. The space to move freely within the environment is of particular importance for children living in urban areas where many are housed in high risk flat or in cramped conditions with little or no outdoor play space. Moreover, Chuoldhury (2002) explained that in a pre-school equally important are the factors to be care of with regards to the rooms, floors, walls, and doors, sanitary facilities, and ventilation.

The building should be planned to confirm to the laws of sanitation, hygiene, ventilation, and lightening, a single story building is preferable for convenience and safety for the small children, the building should fulfill the minimum requirement of playrooms, lavatories, washrooms, and storage space; and there must be some open for the outdoor play activities are the school building.

The physical environment of classroom has a profound effect on individual child the group as a whole and on the others. The physical environment include the size of the room, the color of the walls, the type of flooring, the number of windows (the creative curriculum for pre-school, no

date), Feeney et al.,(1987) suggested that classroom environment includes organized space in to interest centers.

This may include areas of art, science, blocks, books, dramatic play, sensory materials, music, woodworking, and manipulative toys and games. In addition to these, library, discovery, sand and water, cooking and computers are components of classroom environment (the creative curriculum for pre-school, no date, Cited in Haile, 2010).

Equipment and materials make the bones of pre-school education program. It gives children first-hand experience. Hence, to promote children's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development, it is necessary to provide appropriate equipment and materials for variety of activities. It should be wide ranging with natural and manufactured objectives (Bruce, 1997). According to Susanna, (2005) among the major categories of materials of great significance for pre-school children include skill and concept materials (simple car games, books of varies types and puzzles); from gross motor materials (balls, pull toys, riding toys, etc); manipulative materials (building sets, markers, pencils, scissors, etc); constructional materials (blocks, building sets, and wood working materials): self-expressive materials (dolls, dress-up clothes, housekeeping toys, and musical instruments) and natural materials (sticks, leaves, rocks, sand, mud, water etc). Of indoor equipment, chairs must be of such weight and design that can be carried out easily and safely about the room by children. It should permit the child to sit comfortably in relaxed position. Tables, which are square and wide enough to allow children to work opposite each other, encourage conversation and appreciate of the work of others required child-sized and open shelves make it easy for children to have toys and books they need when they need them (Lubeck, 1998).

In general, it is accepted and agreed that the richer and more pleasant pre-school environment provides more opportunities for children learning. Therefore, the pre-school should fulfill at least minimum required standard of environmental condition (site, building, physical setting and the equipment as well as materials) in order to achieve the desired result which is expected of preschool age children.

The physical environment of pre-school has a profound effect on individual learning. In support of this, Curtis (1998 as cited in Haile, 2010:27) stated that the physical organization of the indoor space is important but no pre-school environment is complete without taking in to account the

Outdoor area since together they make a total learning environment, which caters for every child's interests and provides materials that, will be appropriate for the level of development of each child.

Many of the skills and competencies which develop during those early years are learned from the outdoor natural environment children will gain more from digging in the garden and watching worms and insects than they will from looking at pictures.

Moreover, (Studer (1998 as cited in Haile, 2010:27) explains that the outdoor environment can offer rich learning experiences not found indoors. The play yard is full of wonderful things for to experiment, discover, and explore. In a well-planned outdoor environment; children do much more than run, climb, and ride bikes. They notice the weather, insects, plants, and everything going on around them. Their curiosity is stimulated as they seek answers to their questions about new discoveries.

The outdoor is also the ideal place to provide experiences that are sometimes considered too messy to do indoors sensory experiences such as measuring flour or mixing sand and water can

be more fully explored without the limits of the indoor classroom. For the pre-school child, the freedom to use materials without restriction, always leads to greater levels and understanding (Bryman, 2012).

Likewise, Curtis (1998) suggested “the main requirements of outdoor play area to facilitate learning primarily it must be safe and secure with ample space for the children to play freely, preferably with trees, flat grass areas and bushes where children can hide-and-seek and play in the mud.” If the pre-school is attached to an elementary or secondary school then it is important that the play area is separated from the older children. The outdoor equipment should provide children with a wide variety of opportunities for active physical experience wood, boxes, crates, planks, and so on will enable children to build interesting structures which will serve as triggers to imaginative play.

A minimum area of square meter of play space per child is desirable. If several groups of children use the area and the space is limited, a schedule for using the playground should be provided so that not all children are outdoors at the same time (Chowdhury and Choudhury, 2002).

Concerning the playground safety, Sawyers (1994) suggested seven points as follows: Playground equipment should be six feet away from fences and buildings; Place shock absorbent material under equipment and extending six feet beyond, Gates should have a safety latch, Remove poisonous plants, litter and insect nets Check equipment for sharp edges, missing or loss parts, or deteriorated, splintered wood; Cover a sandbox when not in use; and A minimum of two teachers be on the playground at all times

To ensure the safety of children (Choudhury, 2002) recommended a nursery school or pre-school must have a playground close to the building. The outdoor play space and playground must be safe and secure for the children to play freely. It should be free from nails, rocks, broken parts and edges, and glass places. The area should be well-fenced, drained, and surface materials should be appropriate for the activities in the area.

Developmentally appropriate play grounds include a variety of equipment and materials selected on the basis of the age characteristics and individual differences in abilities of the users selected materials and equipment must support the types of play we observe in children (Sawyers, 1994 as cited in Haile, 2010:29).

Moreover, outside play allows for more active play with fewer restrictions on noise and movement, and greater freedom with natural materials like water, sand, snow, and soil. Also children revel in the variety inherent in the seasonal changes.

The benefits of outdoor play are maximized when developmentally appropriate equipment and materials are combined with adult supervision to support child initiated learning (Sawyers, 1997 as cited in Haile, 2010).

In general, the outdoor learning environment plays a great role for the child in the overall development when the playground design is developmentally appropriate and adult follow up is continuous for every activities of every child.

As Montessori (1870-1952) & Joan Belk (2005) explained the physical environment of the classroom may need to be modified to the welcoming of all students. Further may need to be rearranged to provide more space for path ways for children in wheelchair. Additionally teachers should be active mobilizes to the settlement of safe classroom environment. The environment should let them play unreservedly (Ayalew, 2011). In this aspect Hertzberg and stone (1971) cited in Begna (2010) stated the following: If class room is well organized, a child can find what

he needs to work with. If the room is filled with beauty, a child can learn to care for and value beautiful things. If supplies are readily available, the child learns to choose and share. If a variety of materials are available, then the child learns something about making intelligent choices. If adults show respect for and trust in the child, he will learn to experiment without fear or failure. Both the physical and emotional elements of the environment influence learning.

Above all, to make the pre-school learning environment child friendly and support the learning an holistic development of the child, teachers and their aides together with the relevant management group need to have appropriate skills, knowledge, awareness and commitment which ultimately requires to have appropriate in training and refreshment (Yalew 2011).

## **2.6. Teacher Demographic Characteristics as a Function Learning - teaching Process in Preschool**

Teacher qualification has been identified by policy makers as one of the relatable features and crucial variables that can predict quality in ECCE (Stephans, K. (1996) approved early childhood teaching qualifications vary between states and across countries.

Based on current literature, teacher qualification can be categorized according to their level and type of education. Level of education can be referred to formal schooling in primary, secondary and tertiary systems. The tertiary system can be categorized as community college, junior college and university. The details of intervention may also include years of education, course credits in any specialized early childhood or child development-related education, and title of program (Zaslow, & Berry, 2006).

Further, differentiation of qualification is based on the type of program and the degree earned, such as associate degree (AA), Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential/AA/certificate

in ECEC, bachelor's degree (BA), BA in ECEC or primary education, master's degree (MA), MA in ECEC or primary education, PhD, and EdD (professional doctorate). One should note, however, that some of the literature does not separate degrees of ECEC and that of other majors. MA and PhD are sometimes categorized as post-graduate education.

Training in early childhood in service contexts is comprised of activities specific to early childhood programs and populations that take place outside of a formal educational system and that provide specific skill instruction or skill-building content for on-the-job application (Maxwell, 2006; Tout, Zaslow, & Berry, 2006). Training events and activities may include workshops, conferences, in service presentations, live or web-based lectures or discussions, live or video demonstration, behavior rehearsal, manuals, tutorials and a host of other modes, synchronous and asynchronous, that impart knowledge and information and attempt to affect professional practice.

Although similar forms of instruction are used in both formal pre service education and on-the-job in service training programs, the latter tend to be shorter in duration (e.g., one session, 3-days versus 10 to 16 weeks) and to have fewer opportunities for repeated contact with instructors for clarification of information. Most in service training programs use a format that provides generalized knowledge and information to groups of early childhood practitioners with limited follow-up or feedback on observed practice (Pianta, 2006).

Trainers are often considered to be expert sources of information, and the trainees to be novice learners acquiring targeted knowledge or skills. The training format typically provides brief, non-sustained contacts between trainer and trainee, and the flow of information is most often one-directional. Hypothetical cases or trainee-reported situations may be used to rehearse application

of new principles or skills within the training context but are usually of limited familiarity to all trainees and the rehearsals short in duration and intensity (i.e., one example, one-minute practice).

Additionally, the underlying conceptual framework of this review is based on the notion that a strong ECEC knowledge base involves a set of professional competencies, abilities and specific teaching skills, which can lead to high-quality ECEC and positive child developmental outcomes (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Vartuli, 1999). Berk (1985) discovers that tertiary education (e.g., AA and BA) is associated with greater early childhood teaching skills. By comparing early childhood teachers with a high school diploma to those teachers who possess a college education of two years or more, Berk finds that teachers with an AA or BA, regardless of the specific major, were more responsive, encouraging and inspiring when communicating with young children.

On the other hand, teacher education with more ECEC content is essential to produce high-quality teaching skills (Maxwell, 2006). This idea is supported by other empirical evidence, which demonstrate that teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and actual implementation of developmentally appropriate practice are positively correlated with ECEC education and early childhood coursework (McMullen).

According to File and Gullo (2002), students from child development-related programs also have a stronger and more consistent preference towards developmentally appropriate practices than those in other education programs. Teachers with a BA or tertiary-level specialized ECEC/child development-related qualification often display more sensitive and less harsh and detached behaviours (Howes, Whitebook, & Phillips, 1992).

Moreover, the literature suggests that more knowledge in ECEC encourages teachers to adopt developmentally appropriate practices (Gullo 2002), which are likely to facilitate supportive and nurturing interactions that are essential to high-quality ECEC.

Training in early childhood in service contexts is comprised of activities specific to early childhood programs and populations that take place outside of a formal educational system and that provide specific skill instruction or skill-building content for on-the-job application (Maxwell, 2006; Tout, Zaslow, & Berry, 2006). Training events and activities may include workshops, conferences, in-service presentations, live or web-based lectures or discussions, live or video demonstration, behavior rehearsal, manuals, tutorials and a host of other modes, synchronous and asynchronous, that impart knowledge and information and attempt to affect professional practice.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

Exploring participants' views that are involved or engaged in specific situations, events and experiences helps the researcher to better understand the meaning of their world (Maxwell, 2005). This is the key feature of qualitative research and, therefore, this study was conducted using qualitative methods in order to assess teaching learning process in Preschools of West Shewa Zone.

### **3.2 Population.**

Target populations of this study were preschool teachers and principals working at West Shewa Zone selected towns including both government and private school. There are 73 preschools and 270 teachers and one principal for each preschool. Accordingly, the study was conducted on selected preschools.

### **3.3. Sample size and Sampling technique**

Purposive sampling technique was applied to select the sample participants of the study. In purposive sampling, the researcher intentionally selects individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. The standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are "information rich" (Patton, 1990). In any given qualitative study, you may decide to study a site (e.g., one college campus), several sites (three small liberal arts campuses), individuals or groups (freshman students), or some combination (two liberal arts campuses and several freshman students on those campuses). Purposive sampling thus applies to both individuals and sites.

Sample sizes, which may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, depend on the resources and time available, as well as the study's objectives. Purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to the research questions). Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection.

Accordingly, 12 preschools: four (4) governments and (eight) private Preschools: were taken from Ambo, Guder, Ginchi, and Ejere .In that three (3) preschools were selected from each site as described in the following table.

**Table- 1 Distribution of sample School**

**Table- 1 Distribution of sample participants**

Ambo	Beka preschool Biftu Preschool Hayome preschool
Guder	Lelistu preschool Naf yaad pre school Mada walabu
Ginchi	Mekana Yesus. Bakkalcha Bari preschool Wan-ofii pre-chool
Ejere	Hude Gudina Oliyad Preschool Abdi Boru Preschool

### **3.4 Data Collection Instrument and Procedure**

Interview, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and observation checklist were applied to gather information from the sample participants. These all instruments were crafted by researcher based on literature review.

Focus group discussions are useful method to gather shared understanding from individuals (Creswell, 2012). In this case, FGD was applied to get information concerning common methods of teaching used by preschool teachers; the extent preschool teachers are using developmentally appropriate practice, and professional development to capacitate the preschool teacher's pedagogical skills. Thirty six (36) preschool teachers were participated into three FGD groups which mean 12 individuals in one FGD.

Interview was conducted with principals to get information concerning the challenges that hinder in using appropriate teaching learning methods and variation in the teaching learning process as function of teacher's demographic characteristics. After the instruments were crafted, interviews were made with 12 preschool principals.

Interview was made with the preschool principals based on the sessions adjusted with each preschool principal. All interview made with the participants were conducted at different time and place then asked to reflect on the above mentioned research questions. Each session of the interview was done by the researcher him-self. Interview sessions were recorded and organized so as to make it transcribe able at the end. Each sessions of the discussion was given about 35 to 40 minutes.

Observational checklist was applied as a supplementary for interview and FGD on the same concept and selected school. Observations were conducted at different setting based on the previously structured checklists. Four preschools were selected purposively.

### **3.5. Validity and Reliability**

Although validity and reliability originates from quantitative research, qualitative researchers also consider these elements for the validation and trustworthiness of a study (Golafshani, 2003; Bryman, 2012; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Gall et al. (2007) suggest three strategies to secure the validity of qualitative research: to meet the user's needs; to ensure through data collection; and to reflect a sound research design.

To meet the user's needs, the researcher can use "truthfulness and reporting style" (ibid, p. 474), which can help obtaining information as precise as possible from the participants by clarifying their responses. For example, in this study, the researcher described the data through direct extracts of the participants' opinions.

To ensure through data collection, 'triangulation' can be utilized, i.e. employing multiple methods to avoid the bias of simple methods (Maxwell, 2005). A wide range of tools (i.e. interviews, focus group discussions and observations) were used to cross-check the information from the participants in this study. For instance, some pre-school who participated in focus group discussions were later selected for an individual interview in order to confirm the information provided in the first interview.

Reflecting sound research design, 'peer examination' (Gall et al., 2007), which refers to the consideration on comments from peers on the findings or the draft of the research, is crucial.

In this study the researcher had exchanged many ideas with his advisor and friends to ensure validity of the instruments. Finally based on the above discussed ideas the reliability and validity of the data gathering instruments were treated.

### **3.6. Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected by using interview, FGD and observation checklist were transcribed from audio to the paper, coded, classified in to the theme and finally analyzed and reported in form narration of and paragraph respectively. Finally table and percentage were used to present the participants demographic characteristics.

### **3.7. Ethical Considerations**

To make the participants confidential the researcher inform the purposes of the study and as their response is used only for the research purpose and keep it confidential and finally as any of the data obtained would be not personalized in any part of the research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section is classified in to two parts. The first part describes sample demographic characteristics involved in the study. The second part presents the findings concerning the common methods of teaching used by preschool teachers, the extent preschool teachers are using developmentally appropriate practice, the challenges that hinder using appropriate teaching learning methods, variation in the teaching learning process as function of teacher's demographic characteristics, and professional development to capacitate the preschool teacher's pedagogical skills.

### 4.1. The Demographic Characteristics of Sample Participants

**Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the participants based on sex**

1. Sex	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Preschool Teacher</b>		
Male	8	14.28
Female	36	64.28
<b>Preschool Principals</b>		
Male	3	5.35
Female	9	16.07
Total	56	99.98

As it is observed from the above table among the participants of the study based on sex, 36 (64.28%) female and 8(14.28%) were males, In case of principals 3(5.35 %) were males and 9(16.07) were females. Here it is possible to say that in the sampled preschools, child care and education is left to female.

**Table 3 Demographic characteristics of the participants based on qualification**

<b>Qualification.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Less than Grade 12	6	10.71
Trained in preschool teaching.	6	10.71
Certificate	20	35.71
Diploma	11	19.64
Degree	13	23.21
Masters	-	-
Total	56	99.98

As portrayed in the above table majority of the participants were certificate holders (i.e., 46.2%). Moreover, next to the certificate holder 30.35% and 23.21% of the participants were diploma holders and degree holders respectively.

In general as described in the table above, those diploma and degree holders were not appropriate to teach in preschool, because their specialization is not related to preschool education, rather they are trained in biology, mathematics, chemistry, physics and other field of studies.

**Table 4 sample characteristics based on their experience**

<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Below 2 Yrs.	32	57.14
Between 2yrs and 4yrs	18	32.14
5 years and above	6	10.71
Total	56	99.99

As mentioned in the above table majority of the participants (i.e., 57.14%) have minimum experience in teaching that is below two years. In addition 32.14% of the participants have two to four years' experience in teaching preschool. Finally as observed from the table above small number of the participants had five and above experience in teaching preschool. Here as portrayed in the table above, one can conclude that teaching process in preschools was dominated by the beginner teachers.

## **4.2 Findings**

The results presented in this section are mainly based on analysis from the interviews, classroom observations and focus group discussions with the preschool principals and classroom teachers, since their points of view are the main focus of this study. Moreover, focus group discussion and observation checklist were used to gather data from the preschool principals and teachers. The observation checklists were applied to collect information about the common teaching method applied by preschools teachers, physical accessibility, and social accessibility and preschools environments. In addition, representative quotes were included to clarify the points under discussion.

### **4.2.1 Common methods of learning - teaching used by preschool teachers.**

The findings indicated that the current method of teaching learning practiced in the classroom situation were teacher-centered which is inappropriate at the preschool level. During interview with preschool teacher, researcher found teachers guided children with teacher-centered approaches. Most of the teachers public preschool mentioned the difficulties in

using learner-centered pedagogy due to overcrowded classes with a single teacher, lack of materials and facilities, to lack of classrooms and lack of teachers specialized in the area of teaching preschool.

The results of FGD with private preschool teachers they confirmed themselves as most of them were not specialized in teaching pre-school classes. As mentioned by teachers during the session of FGD they try to implement the students centered approach during the teaching learning process. Moreover they claim to get awareness raising training on the learner centered pedagogies informing that did not attend any professional development or orientation about the method of teaching. As one understood from their responses they said that as they use student centered learning approach without the knowledge of the approach. So it's difficult for those teachers to implement the appropriate teaching learning approach like professional teacher certified in the area teaching in preschool. For example, the following quotes illustrate the views of classroom teachers during focus group discussion:

*“I implement student centered approach by giving the students with playing materials on the fields and waiting until the period end and then let them to the class.*

*Sometimes I teach by using non-participatory approaches, that is, teacher directed method in the class rooms. I write alphabets, words and numbers on the blackboard and I guide them on reading as a whole class thereafter if time allows I pick one by one to read a letter or number written on the blackboard” ( Teacher FGD)’.*

*“I always wanted to do more child-centered [practices], but I have found that it is easier for me to be teacher-directed rather child centered. When I give them a little*

*room for discussion, I just find that children disturb and everything falls apart.”*

*Teacher similarly noted, “I have read a lot about child-centered and I think they are takes a lot of work from the teacher (and you have) to provide a lot of materials.”(Teacher FGD).*

The findings of this study is inconsistent with the previous finding of Yelland, (2010) who found that, learner-centered teaching in the early years enable an individual learner to construct knowledge for him or herself using the environment, including both the physical and social environments. Similarly, this finding is contrast with Pre-school standards of (2007) that suggests “Pre-school education should be child-centered pedagogy rather than teacher directed”.

#### **4.2.2 The Extent of Preschool Teachers Use of Developmentally Appropriate Method**

Researcher raised the following question (i.e. do you think that your school implements developmentally appropriate practice) for preschool teachers.

The findings indicated that the implementation/use of developmentally appropriate practice in and outside class room situation was practiced with many limitations.

During FGD with preschool teachers the researcher found that teachers were practiced developmentally appropriate teaching practices. As I understood from their response during the session almost all teachers from private and government school mentioned the difficulties in using developmentally appropriate practice due to lack of skill and knowledge in the area, lack of materials, facilities, and lack of qualified teachers in general. But when we compare the private school with the public preschool, relatively the private schools were better in terms of materials and playground which the researcher confirmed during observation.

As I understand in the private school the problem of implementing developmentally appropriate teaching practice was related to teacher's skill and was not related to school facilities. Whereas public preschool were disadvantageous in terms of implementing developmentally appropriate practice due to lack of professional teacher, lack of playground in particular and school facilities in general.

During observation session at private preschool inside and outside classroom I confirmed that teachers were not appropriately implement developmentally appropriate practice in teaching learning process in preschool. Surprisingly, there are teachers who even don't know what developmentally appropriate practice mean. The following is quote illustrating the view of classroom teachers during FGD:

*"I simply thought the students like as grade one students, I don't have any information and skills about the developmentally appropriate practice that you asked me" (preschool teacher from government).*

*"There is no appropriate physical environment in our school and no enough materials which are appropriate to children" (teacher from government preschool).*

*Regarding of adequacy of school facilities, teacher responded:*

*"Yes of course, we have adequate school facilities materials. For instance, sufficient playground, child-sized table, books and play materials which is made from locally available materials" participant preschool (teacher from private school).*

*However, during observation, in majority of preschool environment, what the participants responded and what is in real situation is contradicted each other.*

The above findings show that, preschool teachers lack knowledge regarding developmentally appropriate practice. This is inconsistent with the finding of (Kostelnik, 1992; Bredekamp, 1993; Charles worth, 1998) whom suggested that, DAP Guidelines are tools that allow teachers to examine, and improve the effectiveness of; their teaching and classroom decisions should rely on teachers' knowledge and understanding of their students.

#### **4.2.3 Professional development to Capacitates the Preschool Teacher's Pedagogical Skills**

Another crucial question that was asked preschool teachers were if they have taken short term training on preschool teaching and care or not and for how long. According to their response and data from demographic characteristics from the participants 85.71% (48) have not taken any preschool teaching and care related training while 14.29% (8) have taken preschool teaching and care related training more than 2 months period. Even those who have taken short term training more than 2 months, the researchers could not see required practice of preschool teaching and care and education inside classroom and outside during observation. Based on researcher own reflection, it was very apparent that preschool teachers had no skills and knowledge on how teacher teach and approach children. The poor child pedagogical of unqualified teachers had impacted quality of education.

These findings is inconsistent with target that is set in Ethiopian's Education Strategy Development Program (ESDP V) with regard to the qualified teachers on preschool teacher professionals.

The training of pre-school teachers is critical for the pre-school program implementation. Because it is what goes to the training institution of pre-school teachers that is Particular in classroom that finally affects children's learning in pre-schools. (Yalew 2011).

#### **4.2.4 The Challenges in using Appropriate Teaching Methods**

The findings indicated that there are a number of challenges that hinder the teacher from implementing appropriate method of teaching in preschool classroom. During interview with preschool principals, they responded that lack of professional in the area, lack of professional training development, lack of resource, lack of single curriculum across all school and other related facilities stuck them from implementation of appropriate teaching method.

One public preschool principal responded that teachers were not appropriately implementing the child centered approach method in their preschool. During interview with principals both from the public and private they confirmed as most of them were not specialized in teaching pre-school classes and this resulted in the lack of professional skill in using appropriate teaching method in preschool classroom. Moreover they claimed to be aware of learner centered pedagogies as they never attended professional development or orientation about the new approaches that is child-center approach. For example, the following quotes illustrate the views of principals during interview:

*“Teachers still use the traditional way of teaching because they lack the skills that enable them to implement the child centered approach, but the Ministry of Education through curriculum developers introduced a new pre-school quality standards in 2007 which directed teachers to use child-centered method [pre-school principal interview]”.*

*Unfortunately I as a principal of this school, I just saw the circular of implementation of the new approaches in the office. A single teacher with such big classes becomes difficult to use learner-centered pedagogy. “I thought indoor training but still we need expertise and materials” [preschool Principal Interview].*

The findings supported with Rodriguez (2008) who asserts that, rigid curriculum and assessment, classroom shortages, and unfavorable learning environment and others are some of the factors that challenge the learning - teaching process in preschools. Moreover the finding of this study is consistent with the findings of (Bowman, Donovan, and Burns 2001) who stated that, a number of challenges in early learning such as lack professional knowledge are the challenges in understanding of early development and learning.

**4.2.5** Does teaching -learning process in preschool differ as function of teacher’s demographic characteristics.

As it was trapped from the study, vast majority of the respondents represent female which accounts for 88.35% (45). This figure also reveals that female dominates over male in preprimary subsector as teacher which is in agreement with Early Childhood care and Education Strategy as it calls for teachers assigned in the preschool to have ability to work well with children (MoE, 2010).

In this study, qualification of preschool teachers were explored and it was found out that vast majority of the respondents are certified with certificate which accounts for 35.71% (20) while rest are 10.71% (6), 19.64% (11), 23.21 % ( 13), and 10.71% (6) are certified with preschool teaching profession, Diploma, Degree and less than 12 grade respectively. However, 89.28 %

(50) respondents are not certified with preschool teaching field of study. Out of the 56 total respondents only 10.71% (6) have required specialization to teach preschool.

*I certified with teaching preschool in 2011 and I have been thought preschool children for eight years. So as to me having diploma, degree and masters is doesn't make an individual's effective teachers at preschool because teaching preschool children, sufficient training in the area to treat children is very well in and out of the classroom. In addition experience is more important for teaching children at preschool and to provide different treatment (preschool principal).*

This finding is supported by the Rahel (2014) findings in which she found majority of the preschool had no required qualification to teach preschool. Only few respondents had anticipated qualification of certificate on preschool teaching.

During Observation there is a great variation between those teachers certified by preschool teaching profession and other teacher out of the profession who participated in teaching preschool children. For example the researcher observed that teachers who certified in preschool teaching profession were more practicing DAP both in and outside the classroom in different way.

More specialized staff education and training on ECCE are strongly associated with stable, sensitive and stimulating interactions (Shonkoff a, Philips,2000) children are not thought always by writing on the black board rather teachers are expected to implement different teaching approach such as playing, storytelling, and others based on their interest, so that those individuals out of the teaching preschool profession might not identify the interest of the children and applying different teaching approach which need skills.

As the researcher understands during school observation there is variation between female teacher and male teacher in the practice of teaching preschool inside and outside the classroom. For instance female teachers are better than male teacher in understanding interest of the children and responding for them rather than male. Moreover female teachers were play with children during outdoor and indoor teaching rather than male teachers. In relation to experience of the teacher it was observed that, there was variation between more experienced teacher and less experienced. More experienced teachers approach children in better way than less experienced teachers.

During interview the principals were asked why preschool is not hiring qualified teachers certified with Early Childhood Care and Education those have knowledge and skills to teach preschool children.

*“It is very difficult to get qualified teachers certified with preschool teaching profession, as there are no preschool teacher professional in the market, then the situation has forced us to hire alternatively teacher who have other qualification preferably language(Afan Oromo, English and Amharic), mathematics and environmental science”(Principals).*

This finding is contradict with what Early Childhood Care and Education strategic operational plan and guideline for Early Childhood Care and Education recommends as minimum qualification essential for a preschool teacher. Early Childhood Care and Education strategic operational plan and guideline required all preschool teachers to have minimum Certificate on Early Childhood Care and Education or have attended a 2 months course to upgrade their skills and knowledge, especially in the field of “active learning of young children” ( MoE, 2010).

The ESDP V recognizes existence of this encounter and shows that primary school teachers are using available period to provide instruction in the public preschool. It is stated in ESDP V, all College of Teacher Training (CTEs) will start a multi-year diploma specifically for pre-primary teachers to overcome this specific short coming. But it is very evident from the finding that vast occurs in terms of meeting minimum required qualification for preschool teachers.

Regarding the importance of training for kindergarten teacher, Heffman, Tood (1964) as cited in Amelewok (2007) indicated that because teachers markedly influence the lives of children, special professional training is required. Hence, taking a special training in the area of kindergarten education by taking sufficient time is key element to achieve the intended objective of the Programme, moreover, continuous on job-training and orientation is also important for teaching kindergarten education.

With regard to preschool teachers' experience, more than 10.71 % (6) have preschool teaching experience more than 5 years followed by 32.14% (18) who have 2-4 years. 52.14 % (32) who have below 2 years have preschool teaching experience respectively. The study depicted that number of less experienced were dominated in the pre-schools which is challenges for preschool teachers' and principals.

## **RESULTS FROM OBSERVATION**

Data from observation shows that, Presence of large number of children beyond the capacity of classrooms. Overcrowd classroom were observed during observation visit in the selected preschool centers. As it was observed most of preschool were lacks child-sized tables/chairs, about the general cleanliness and safety of the whole preschool environment, playground, supply of play materials and equipment specially the government preschool.

Though the great majority responded that, in favor of the adequacy of the already mentioned during FGD, the existence of less than majority, but considerable numbers of participants in favor of the other category like inadequacy or unavailable with respect to the above mentioned.

Further, the researcher observed the availability and adequacy of separate feeding rooms, separate rest rooms, toilets with water for girls and boy, different children books, basic aid facilities, easily reached medical consultants and about the availability of materials and equipment for children with special needs.

The most participants responded inadequate Hence, the majority of respondents emphasized the in adequacy or unavailability of the above mentioned items except few ones. More specifically, separate feeding rooms, easily reached medical consultant and materials & equipment for children with special needs were nonexistent for the great majority of preschool according to the respondents. The information obtained through observation using check list also substantiates the conclusion reached during FGD of key inputs in pre-schools.

In addition, the researcher was able to find very few preschools with separate rest rooms, feeding rooms, less crowded classrooms, oversized chairs, non-conducive playing fields like dusty and, non-conducive toilet tap water area either far from classroom or high to reach, and non-attractive or less child friendly environment. For the holistic development of children, practice of play in a

well -furnished in and out door child friendly environment is advisable at early ages of the children for their holistic development (Mooney, 2000).

In general, the presence of inadequate inputs is identified to be key impediments of providing quality education in Ethiopia at all levels of education system (MoE, 1994).

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The main aim of this study was to assess the teaching learning process in preschools. The finding, the study shows that majority of preschool teachers were not specialized in preschool education. This would hamper the quality of teaching learning - process in preschool in particular the holistic children development of the children in general.

Most of the inside classroom practice were found much below standard. Improvement in relation with teachers' specialization in the area of teaching at preschool, teacher knowledge of child centered teaching approach, school facilities, and others challenged the preschool teacher to meet desired standard.

The children need to be more comfortable and feel happy in the classroom. Preschool needs to be more proactive to meet children's interest and needs. Trained teachers, good school facilities and other related factors were needed to fulfill the child interest, and to make children learning smooth.

The implementation of developmentally appropriate method was another issue that needs attention in all preschool. As the finding of the study verified in both public and private preschool teacher didn't implement developmentally appropriate practice in appropriate manner during teaching learning process inside and outside the classroom. The visited and sampled physical environment were also found to be much below the national standard: inadequacy of out-door playing materials, lack of playing ground and age inappropriate playing material and insecure playing ground were areas that needed great improvement specially in the public preschool.

Children who experience a less structured environment during the early childhood period can still achieve high academic performances at elementary.

The combinational effect of the above challenges could force children to drop out from school and create bad experience. Lack of appropriate curriculum deteriorated quality of education that is desired.

Teaching and learning process practice in both private and government was not as per National preschool Quality standard. Child centered approach were implemented inappropriately due to lack of knowledge and skill on the side of preschool teacher and principals in both private and public preschool. Children's interest and needs in teaching and learning has never been taken into account. Lecture-based approach lesson delivery was opted as normal lesson delivery. Learning through play in most of preschool visited was rarely practiced appropriately.

To bring practice with regard to desired teaching and learning process, huge effort is expected both government and private sector to uplift lower standard practice to required standard.

The result of the study indicated that there was no professional training provided for the preschool teacher to develop their pedagogical knowledge and skills. This can be achieved when relevant and varied training provided frequently by the concerned body in the area. Teachers' pedagogical skills are important because such knowledge may inform us about the benefits of developing a whole child in all aspects of learning. Also, in the future there needs to be a greater government commitment and spending on training more teachers in preschool education. Alongside this, emphasis should be placed on the provision of professional development, and improving teaching and learning materials and facilities. For meaningful learning in early

childhood education and care, teachers should be trained in a preschool education particularly in child pedagogy.

## 5.2 Implications

Based on the finding from the Study the following implications were provided.

- ❖ As inferred from the result of the study teachers in selected preschool were not implementing the common teaching learning method which needed in preschool - teaching learning due to different factors such as, overcrowded classes with a single teacher, lack of materials and facilities, lack of classrooms and lack of qualified teachers. Therefore West Shewa Zonal Educational Office, Woreda and other non-governmental organization need to pay their attention to the preschool students.
- ❖ West Shewa educational office need to work on the above mentioned factors by making network with higher institution educational that are found in that zone and the others to overcome the aforementioned problems through in-service training, asking for some resources and others to capacitate the preschool and teaching learning process in the preschool.
- ❖ In addition there is a need for an intervention study to evaluate the enactment of developmentally appropriate practice in a play context with a variety of playing materials made by local teachers, parents, and community. Teaching methods could include drawings, simulation, role play, storytelling, songs, local dances, games, and cultural aspects. The intention would be to develop children's critical thinking after intervention.
- ❖ Preschool is a social and cultural meeting place that can reinforce social integration and prepare children for life in the future so that, every stake holders need to give high attention to preschool education.

- ❖ There is a need to be a greater government commitment and spending on training more teachers in initial teacher education to develop preschool teacher's professional development.
- ❖ Alongside this, emphasis should be placed on the provision of professional development, and improving teaching and learning materials and facilities.
- ❖ For meaningful learning in preschool, teachers should be trained in a learner-centered pedagogy.
- ❖ Teachers' pedagogical skills are very important in helping the benefits of developing whole children in all aspects of learning. Therefore, different trainings, workshops, and seminars on the issue of preschool education need be prepared jointly by all relevant stakeholders so that everyone can get awareness and take the responsibility under common understanding.
- ❖ Finally West Shoa Education office and Oromia Education Bureau need to follow up and give the necessary support for those preschools in western Shewa Zone.

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## **Appendix I**

**Addis Ababa University**

**College of Education and Behavioral Science**

**School of Graduate Studies**

**Center for Early Childhood Care and Education**

### **PART I: Guiding Questions for FGD with Preschool teachers.**

The objective of these guiding questions is to collect information about common methods of teaching learning used by preschool teachers, to what extent preschool teachers are using developmentally appropriate practice, and finally to gather information on professional development programs in place to capacitate preschool teacher's content and pedagogical skills.

I greatly appreciate for your willingness to take time to answer the following questions. Please give your frank and unreserved opinion. The information I get will be used for research purpose and be confidential.

**Thank you in advance for your cooperation.**

1. Personal data will be confidential
2. You are kindly requested to provide appropriate.

### **PART ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARTICIPANT.**

**Direction:** encircle the appropriate responses or provide the necessary information for the following questions listed below.

1. Respondent's Code: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sex:     1) Male                             2) Female
3. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you trained in pre-school teaching?   1) Yes             2) No  
If "Yes" for how long   a) 6 months     b) 1 year   c) short-term training     d) other

5. Grade you completed    1) Grade 8   2) Grade10    3) Grade 12
6. Qualification: 1) Certificate    2) Diploma    3) Degree    4) Masters    5) other
7. Preschool Teaching Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix II**

### **FGD Items for Preschool Teachers.**

**1. What are the common methods of learning - teaching used by preschool teachers in western Shewa Zone preschools?**

a. List the teaching learning approach you used in the teaching of preschool students.

b. Which teaching learning method you use commonly/frequently? Why?

**2. To what extent preschool teachers are using developmentally appropriate practice**

1. How do you explain developmentally appropriate practice in preschools?

2. Do you think your school is practicing DAP?

3. Do you think school environment has adequate school facilities?

**3. What professional development programs are in place to capacitate the preschool teacher's content and pedagogical skills?**

1. Did you attend the professional training provided for the preschool teachers after you start teaching at your school? If have you attended, explain the types of training?

2. And by whom was the training provided?

3. Where and when was this professional training provided?

4. Are you benefited from professional development program you attended?

**Appendix III**  
**Addis Ababa University**  
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**School of Graduate Studies**  
**Center for Early Childhood Care and Education**

**PART II: Guiding Questions for Interview items for preschool Principals.**

1. Are there any factors that interfere while you implement appropriate teaching method?
2. How do they hinder your implementation, explain it?
3. Is there any strategy that you tried to challenge the challenges, if there is mention it?
4. Do you think teaching experience can make variation among teachers in preschools?
5. What about Qualification of individual teacher?

## **ANNEX II: INTERVIEW GUIDING ITEMS**

### **Translated to Afaan oromoo**

#### **PART II: Guiding Questions for FGD with Preschool teachers**

1. Maloottan baruu fi barsiisuu mana barumsaa oolmaa daa'immanii keessan keessatti fayyadamtan tarreessi.

1) Maloottan amma naaf tarreessite keessaa yeroo baay'ee kana itti fayyadamtan isa kamiidha? Maalif?

#### **The extent preschool teachers using DAP.**

2) Jecha developmentally appropriate practice jedhu akkamitti ibsita?

3) Manni barumsaa keessan DAP hojirra oolchaa jira jettee yaaddaa?

4) Manni barumsaa keessan haala mijataa fi wantoota barbaachisu hunda guuttatee jira jettee yaaddaa?

5) Akka yaada keetitti manni barumsaa keessan daa'imman barnootaaf dhufaniif hawwataadhaa/ ofitti kan harkisuudhaa?

#### **Ogummaa barsiissota oolmaa daa'immanii cimsuu irratti.**

#### **Gaafiif Deebii dura bu'oota manneen barnoota oolmaa daa'immanii waliin taasifame.**

1. Mee wantoonni sirna baruu barsiisuu keessan akka haala gaariidhaa hin gaggeessine gufuu isinitti tahan jiruu? maal fa'aadha?

1.1. Mee akkamitti gufuu isinitt tahuu danda'an naaf ibsuu dandeettanii?

1.2 Tooftaan/ malli isin wantoota gufuu isinitti tahan kana ufirraa ittiin dhoorkitan jiraa? Yoo jiraate tooftaa akkamii fa'aadha?

#### **Does teaching learning process in preschool differ as function of teachers demographic charecteristics?**

1. Muxannoon/ yeroo dheeraaf barsiisuun oolmaa daa'immanii barsiisuu irratti garaagarummaa qaba jettee yaaddaa?

2. Sadarkaan barnootaa barsiisotaa hoo? Sababa kana jetteef naaf ibsuu dandeettan?

## Appendix IV

Addis Ababa University

College of Education and Behavioral Science

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Center for Early Childhood Care and Education

### Observation Checklist

#### PART III: Guiding items for observation checklist.

In addition to interview and focus group discussion, Observation checklist is to assess the nature of physical accessibility, the nature of school environment, the materials employed to use play method, and social interaction which is very important in child pedagogy.

Observers Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-school Name \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

Location

#### 1. Physical accessibility

S/ N	Items to be observed	Availability		Quantity		Quality		Remark
		Available	Not Available	Enough	Not Enough	Good	Not Good	
1.	Child-sized Tables							
2.	Child-sized Chairs							
3.	Accessible Play Ground							
4.	Modified Play Materials							
5.	Rump installation							
6.	Mats to play on							
7.	Appropriate doors and windows							
8.	Accessible learning materials							
9.	Classroom brightness							

10.	Classroom ventilation							
11.	Child-sized toilet							
12.	Textbooks reflecting diversity							
13.	Easily reached Medical consultant							