

**Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education: The case of selected  
Government ECCE centers in Bole and Kirkos Sub-cities in Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia**

**Rahel Gashaw**

**A Thesis Submitted to  
Institute of Educational Research**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Arts in Educational Research and Development**

**Addis Ababa University**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**2 June 2014**

**Addis Ababa University**  
**School of Graduate Studies**

This is to certify that this thesis presented by Rahel Gashaw, entitled: “*Quality of Early Childhood Care: The case of selected Government ECCE centers in Bole and Kirkos Sub-cities of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of Master of Arts (Educational Research and Development), complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

**Signed by the examining committee**

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

.....  
**Chair of Department or Graduate Program Coordinator**

## Abstract

*This study examined the quality in early childhood education in Addis Ababa. It is a descriptive survey research, which aimed at assessing the quality of early childhood care and education in 15 randomly selected ECCE's in Kirkos and Bole Sub cities. Data were collected using 11-item structured and semi-structured questionnaire items administered on 50 parents, 23 structured and semi-structured questionnaire administered on 39 teachers, 2 FGDs in the respective sub cities consisting of teachers, principals, ECCE experts and parents. Quantitative detail obtained through structured questionnaire data were analyzed using means and percentages. Whereas, semi-structured questions were analyzed by thematic analysis. Findings showed that, overall, the quality of early childhood education is below standard. Physical environment and teaching materials were below the expected level. This was found to be due to low budget allocated for ECCE. Despite the fact that, teachers, based on the training given, strive to improve the teaching material by using their rich experiences from the locally available material on a daily basis. This is found to be encouraging. The qualities of academic staff, in terms of, quality training was found to be inadequate and require continuous training. Teachers should be adequately assessed during the training and high standard should be maintained. Parent involvement in school's management was also found to be low. Recommendations were made towards achieving quality early childhood care and education.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Dr. Girma Lemma for not giving up on me and for his tolerance and remarkable guidance - you are truly a researcher.

My deepest thanks goes to my husband Yilma Tamiru who deserves recognition for his patience and understanding throughout my preparation for this thesis. I admire your incredible knowledge about research and kept me sane at my high points. I am truly blessed to have you.

Also I would like to thank those people who have been there for me, encouraging me and for assisting with the project involved as well as the final touches for me to get this thesis finished!

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
List of Tables .....	7
List of Figures.....	8
Chapter One: Introduction .....	9
1.1 Background of the Study.....	9
1.2 Objective of the Study.....	14
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	15
1.4 Basic Research Questions .....	16
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	16
1.6 Scope/Delimitation of the Study .....	17
Chapter Two: Review of Literature .....	17
2.1 What is Early Childhood Education?.....	18
2.2 Concept and Theoretical Framework of Quality of Early Childhood Education.....	20
2.3 Early Childhood Education Curriculum .....	30
2.4 Early Childhood Education Teaching and Learning Process.....	34
2.5 Early Childhood Education Human Resources.....	35
2.6 Early Childhood Education Physical Environment.....	38
2.7 Major Challenges in improving Quality of Early Childhood Education .....	42
Chapter Three: Method.....	45
3.1 Design of the Study.....	45
3.2 Data Collection Instruments.....	46
3.2.1 Questionnaire .....	46
3.2.2 Focus Group Discussion .....	47
3.2.3 In-depth Interview.....	47
3.3 Method of data Analysis .....	48
3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size .....	48
3.4.1 Sampling Techniques.....	48
3.4.2 Data Collection Procedure .....	49
3.4.3 Sample Size.....	50
3.4.4 Study Population.....	51
3.4.5 Sampling Framework.....	51
Chapter Four: Results and Discussions.....	52

4.1	Results.....	52
4.1.1	Curriculum.....	52
4.1.2	Teaching and Learning Process.....	54
4.1.3	Human Resources.....	59
4.2	Discussion.....	64
Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendation.....		68
5.1	Conclusion.....	68
5.2	Recommendation.....	70
References.....		71
Appendices.....		77

## List of Tables

Table 1:	Number of ECCE Centers in Addis Ababa .....	51
Table 2:	Teachers who use Curriculum as a Guide .....	53
Table 3:	Teachers who make Regular Assessment .....	55
Table 4	Teachers who give Reward for performing children .....	55
Table 5	Parents who believe the ECCE is Enriched Learning Environment ...	58
Table 6	Parents who Receive Regular Feedback from ECCE Center .....	59
Table 7	Educational Status of Teachers .....	60
Table 8	Teachers who took ECCE Training .....	61
Table 9	Parents who believe the ECCE is clean and organized .....	63

## List of Figures

Figure 1	UNESCO Framework for understanding education quality.....	23
Figure 2	UNICEF Child Friendly School Framework .....	24
Figure 3	Adopted Quality Framework .....	28

## Acrynoms

AAEB	Addis Ababa Education Bureau
CFSs:	Child Friendly Schools
ECCE:	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA:	Education For All
ESDP:	Education Sector Developmetn Programe
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
OECD:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNESCO:	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Early childhood is a critical time in life when young children learn skills and develop abilities that set the stage for future development. Social-emotional development is at the foundation of healthy growth and learning in early childhood. Children develop competencies in these areas through observation, interactions with peers and adults, and learning experiences that promote children to practice new skills for continued growth. The social-emotional domain includes abilities and skills in social and emotional competency. Both are critical areas of development that enable children to interact positively with others, and attend to academic tasks that help prepare them for future academic success (Ashiabi, 2007).

The right to education, in the broadest sense, is the right to quality instruction starting at birth and continuing throughout life – instruction that gives individuals capacities for full development, learning and participation. There is a great deal of evidence of the enormous short- and long-term benefits of quality care and education for individual and societal development (REIP, 2010).

Comprehensive care in the first years of life lays the groundwork for later educational development and learning achievements, and contributes to reducing inequalities. Thus, Early Childhood Care and Education from a very early age can have extremely important consequences, including decreased grade repetition, dropout, aggression and violence. It also improves socialization in general, fostering broad participation in national development in the broadest sense (REIP, 2010).

Supporting Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is among the best long-term investments that countries can make. Children with supportive and stimulating environments early in their lives are more likely to complete school, have better health outcomes, and are less likely to develop ‘anti-social’ behaviour later in life (UNESCO, 2013).

In 2010, the national government of Ethiopia, represented by the ministries of Education, Health and Women's affairs, signed and endorsed a *National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)* to provide a holistic and comprehensive approach to the development of children from pre-natal to seven years of age. The vision of the policy is to ensure the fulfillment of every child's right to a healthy start in life, to grow in a nurturing, safe, caring and stimulating environment, and to develop to their fullest potential. The National Policy to be implemented through a multi-sectoral structure of coordination amongst the Ministry of Education (as coordinating agency), the Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Women's Affairs. There is strong ownership of the National Policy Framework for ECCE, which was developed through a participatory and multi-sectoral process spearheaded by the Minister of Education, in coordination with the Ministers of Health, and Women's Affairs. A multi-sectoral ECCE Task Force coordinated the technical preparations with support of UNICEF, and in coordination with NGOs, civil society organizations, and academic organizations. (National Policy Framework for ECCE, 2010)

To support the National Policy Framework, the Government of Ethiopia formulated a Strategic Operational Plan with the aim of achieving the Policy's vision by increasing access and improving the quality of ECCE services for children. The ECCE Programme will be based on the basic 4 pillars of the Policy framework and strategic operational plan:

- i) ***Parental education*** – where all parents and primary caregivers will be empowered and supported in their parenting role;
- ii) ***Health and early stimulation*** – to promote holistic development and health of newborns, infants and young children;
- iii) ***Preschools attached to primary schools and community-based kindergartens*** – to promote children's learning of basic skills, hygiene and basic life skills, social and

emotional competence, self-regulation, learning motivation, cooperation and social interactions with peers; and

**iv) *Community-based non-formal school readiness*** – to reach children who do not have access to preschool programmes to promote readiness for school.

The above 4 pillars will inform the design of the National ECCE Programme and will align with the principles of the National ECCE Strategic Operational Plan in order:

1. To ensure availability, equitable access to and affordability of quality ECCE services to all children, especially those who are marginalized and disadvantaged;
2. To provide supportive systems, guidelines and interventions that ensure the quality and standardization of ECCE services and provisions;
3. To protect young children from any form of abuse and harmful practice;
4. To promote and strengthen required partnerships and collaboration among all stakeholders for the effective delivery of services and programmes for young children;
5. To establish a coherent governance structure for ECD and ensure mainstreaming of ECCE in all relevant national policies and programmes (National ECCE Strategic Operation Plan, 2010)

Through implementing the policy the government aims to ensure a considerable step forward in giving children in Ethiopia a healthy start in life, and an enabling and stimulating environment for developing their talents, stimulating and helping them to become caring and productive citizens (National Policy Framework for ECCE in Ethiopia, 2010.)

Guidelines for Preschools (4 to 6 + year) give clear instructions regarding the physical space of the preschools, cleanliness, sanitation facilities and the recommended minimum number of children for one teacher and one assistant. The recommendations are also given on learning materials, (visual, and rich in colour), outdoor play equipment, preschool curriculum and scheduling of preschool activities. The minimal qualifications for teachers and assistant teachers are given, as well as the guidance for pedagogically sound teaching and learning methodology, to focus on teacher child interaction and active learning. The parents are guided to have regular contacts with teachers and teachers are guided to carry out holistic, continuous assessment. (Strategic Operational Plan and Guideline for ECCE in Ethiopia, 2010)

The Framework proposes that schools become involved in constructing ECCE facilities attached to primary schools and that Grade 1 and 6 teachers train Child-to-Child facilitators drawn from children in Grades 5 and 6. (National Policy Framework for ECCE in Ethiopia, 2010)

Still, Non-governmental organizations such as communities, private institutions, and faith-based organizations, are the predominant operators of kindergartens. The government of Ethiopia introduced “O” class and child to child programs in the education system in the past few years. The government is also involved in developing curriculum, training teachers, and providing supervisory support. The enrolment of preprimary education is increasing every year though underreporting remains a persistent issue in the kindergarten program of the pre-primary education. (Statistics Annual Abstract, 2011/12)

According to Ministry of Education, Education Statistics annual Abstract 2011/12 out of the estimated 7.51 million children of the appropriate age group (age 4-6) about 1.62 million children have been reported to have access to pre-primary education all over the country. Though the enrolment is small when compared to the appropriate age group, gross

enrolment rate is higher than the previous year by about 16.4 percentage point. This increment is due to the reporting of “O” class and child to child data in the year 2004 E.C. (2011/12), which was not considered in the past years.

Overall, ECCE has been increasing dramatically in urban areas of Ethiopia and the government is likely to continue to rely on the non-governmental and private sectors to provide services. (Kate O et al, 2012).

This paper referred to the Kindergarten Standard that is being used by Ministry of Education as a guideline for quality standard for early childhood Care and Education in Ethiopia. At government level, there is *no* other reference guideline on Quality standard that is currently being used. On the other hand, privately owned kindergartens adopt different country’s standards. However quality pillars are stated in a “strategic operational plan and guidelines for early childhood care and education”, a document released in 2010 jointly by FMoE, FMoH and FMoWA

According to the kindergarten Standard the following three are the major categories;

- Education structure, Time table and Educational Programmes
- Educational Guideline
- School organization; Level of the school, School Building, School compound, Number of students in a class, Teachers and staff, educational level, Books, Teacher instruction and student text books, and Educational materials that is required for children with special needs

## **1.2 Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to assess the is to assess major challenges and suggest way forward in relation to improving quality of Early Childhood Care and Education program.

Specific objectives of this research include:

- Describe the current status of Early Childhood Education in Addis Ababa in terms of resources, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Examine the learning environment of the early childhood education
- Identify major challenges in relation to quality of early childhood education
- Propose possible way forward for improving quality early childhood education

## **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Early childhood programmes offer very good opportunities for the growth of a child both mentally and socially. Parents expect their children to master certain skills by the time they exit preschool. However, due to inadequate school facilities, large class sizes, weak institutional capacity, and insufficient teacher's training and low salaries in ECCE Ethiopia they perform low academic and social skill achievement. The above factors also contribute to high absenteeism and dropout rates (Plan International Report, 2013).

Currently in Ethiopia, children under five years of age comprise the largest age range. There are approximately 10 million children zero to three years of age and seven million children four to six years of age. Therefore, investment in Early Child Development (ECD) is critical for the short and long-term prosperity of the country. Although net ECCE enrollment is low, there have been increases in gross enrollment ratios. Despite these opportunities for expansion of ECCE, as of 2010/11 only about 5% out of the estimated 7.31 million children of the appropriate age group (ages four to six) had access to formal pre-primary education (MoE Annual Abstract, 2010). Again, according to MoE

Annual Abstract (2012/13) access to early learning and pre-primary for the young children has gone up from 5.3% in 2010 to 25% in 2013. Despite this fact, the quality of ECCEs remain to be an issue.

The new ECCE Framework offers a real opportunity to provide universal, low-cost and quality ECCE in Ethiopia in a long term. However, the Framework is implemented without sufficient extra resources, it is likely to place a significant additional burden on an already overstretched primary education system. (Orkin, et al., 2012).

It seems clear enough. If early education is to fulfil its promise, especially in offering educational equity to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, then this will require major targeted investment in quality programmes. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the status of quality of ECCE centers.

This research will try to examine the status of the quality dimensions of Early Childhood Education, whether those aspects are fulfilled despite the current expansion. If this situation is not fully researched, the effect will be seen when children are reached higher grades, which would have been fully avoided if quality issues were addressed.

#### **1.4 Basic Research Questions**

This research will address the following questions and issues in measuring quality Early Childhood Education and Care:

- What type of curricular design is being used?
- Do teachers strictly use the curriculum as a guide?
- To what extent teachers use instructional and hands-on materials?
- Does the teacher per child ratio up to the standard?
- To what extent do teachers use their creativity to teach children in addition to the curriculum?
- What is the qualification status of ECCE teachers?
- Is the physical environment suitable for early childhood education?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study will be significant to identify the current status of Early Childhood Care and Education, in terms of current progress (technical and financial) at the ECCE centers run by government. It will also help to see how far ECCE has expanded in the past years and also the current challenges that require meeting the minimum quality standards. It will also serve as a future reference for other researchers who are interested in ECCE. The study is contributing to inclusion of quality in current ECCE expansion. It is imperative to inform the stakeholders as to how quality ECCE impacts a child life and as such should be taken seriously.

## **1.6 Scope/Delimitation of the Study**

The study will be more comprehensive if it includes all program centers in Addis Ababa. However, the present study was conducted in two sub cities (Kirkos and Bole) in only government ECCE centers. This is only done because of the current expansion of government ECCE centers in all sub cities and how quality, which is an important issue, is counted in.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

This chapter is devoted to a literature review that describes the major components that defines quality in Early Childhood Care and Education in general. In addition it tries to see the concept and theoretical framework that surrounds Early Childhood Care and Education programs. Finally it tries to see the key challenges of ECCE.

### **2.1 What is Early Childhood Education?**

Given the multifaceted nature of early childhood, it often goes by a number of names and definitions, in different countries, as well as between different stakeholders. For example, UNESCO refers to early education as early childhood care and education (ECCE), the OECD calls it early childhood education and care (ECEC), the World Bank calls it early child development (ECD), while UNICEF calls it early childhood development (ECD). (Education International Report, 2010).

Education International Report (2010), refers to services for young children as early childhood education (ECE). This includes all kinds of education taking place before compulsory schooling and provided in different kinds of settings – nurseries, crèches, childcare centers, kindergartens, pre-schools and other similar institutions. Similarly, OECD (2013) define Early childhood education (ECE) as all forms of organized and sustained center-based activities – such as pre-schools, kindergartens and day-care centers – designed to foster learning and emotional and social development in children.

In the Ethiopian context, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) refers to a holistic and comprehensive approach to policies and programs for children from prenatal to seven years of age, their parents and caregivers. Through the program it will ensure a considerable step forward in giving children a healthy start in life, and an enabling and

stimulating environment for developing their talents, stimulating and helping them to become caring and productive citizens (National Policy Framework for ECCE in Ethiopia, 2010.)

*Defining Quality: Broader Dimension*

What constitutes a ‘quality education’ has been subject to intense debate. The concept has been beset by rigorous debates on the scope of the definition of quality as well as very real difficulties in agreeing on indicators and obtaining data (UNESCO, 2012).

Bacchus (1995) argues that the concept of quality is multidimensional with a range of definitions and with differing weight given to its various components by its different actors in the educational process.

A set of criteria / framework for quality in education is suggested by Colby (2000) who points out the importance of the quality of learners; the quality of learning environments; the quality of content or curricula; the quality of processes and the quality of outcomes.

Delors et al., (1996) in what became one of the first influential explanations of quality education, *Learning: the Treasure Within* defined the ultimate aims of education as four pillars: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be*. The authors proposed that the quality of learning should be assessed by the capacity of individuals in their childhood, their youth and throughout life to acquire knowledge, skills, understanding and values to live and participate in society.

According to Education For All Global Monitoring Report (2005), quality is measured as being universal primary enrolment and gender parity, without any concern for the quality aspects of how education systems should perform or what students should achieve.

The Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) states quality of education programme can work if it realizes; i) healthy, well-nourished and motivated students; ii) well-trained teachers and active learning techniques; iii) adequate facilities and learning materials;

iv) a relevant curriculum that can be taught and learned in a local language and that builds upon the knowledge and experience of the teachers and learners; v) an environment that not only encourages learning but is welcoming, gender-sensitive, healthy and safe; vi) a clear definition and accurate assessment of learning outcomes, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and values; vii) participatory governance and management; and viii) respect for and engagement with local communities and cultures.

Another advance in educational quality within EFA came with publication of the Global Monitoring Report (2005). In its Executive summary, the Global Monitoring Report 2005 notes that:

“Although there is no single definition of quality, two principles characterize most attempts to define quality in education: the first identifies learners’ cognitive development as the major explicit objective of all educational systems. Accordingly, the success with which systems achieve this is one indicator of their quality. The second emphasizes education’s role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development. The achievement of these objectives is more difficult to assess and compare across countries.”

In summary, the list goes on and thus it becomes clear that there is no common agreement on a definition of what constitutes quality particularly in the context of education which is not only a complex field embedded in political, cultural and economic context.

## **2.2 Concept and Theoretical Framework of Quality of Early Childhood Education**

Despite the increased consensus about the importance of quality education, the precise definition has been far from universal; how to measure quality education continues to remain a great source of debate. As identified in the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2005): The Quality Imperative, at least two elements of quality are commonly observed in the education literature: cognitive development and social and emotional development (UNESCO, 2004).

Both are considered important aims of an education system. Two of the most well-known frameworks of quality education, presented by UNESCO and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UNESCO conceptualization of quality is based on the four pillars of:

- a) *Learning to know* acknowledges that learners build their own knowledge daily, combining indigenous and ‘external’ elements.
- b) *Learning to do* focuses on the practical application of what is learned.
- c) *Learning to live together* addresses the critical skills for a life free from discrimination, where all have equal opportunity to develop themselves, their families and their communities.
- d) *Learning to be* emphasizes the skills needed for individuals to develop their full potential. (UNESCO, 2012)

In the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29 (1), the State Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- c) The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

e) The development of respect for the natural environment. (Delors et al., 1996)

According to UNESCO, (2012), globally and in the region, greater efforts are now taken to measure *learning outcomes* as the ultimate indicator of educational quality, through international assessments as well as various national learning assessments. Interest in measuring non-academic attributes like values, attitudes and emotional development are gradually increasing, although the considerable difficulty in measuring them remains a huge challenge. In the absence of learning assessments that provide appropriate measures of education outcomes, other indicators, such as survival to the last grade of primary, the pupil-teacher ratio and completion rate, are also used as proxies – albeit limited – for measuring quality.

A range of frameworks for quality exists in the education literature, and although details may vary, they can be traced back to *two* influential discourses: the human capital approach and the rights-based approach. Frameworks based on the human capital theory usually emphasize linear ‘input-process-outcome’ models, which account for human and resource inputs to produce outcomes in a given organizational context. These models are widely used by education economists and form the basis for many studies on education functions that identify the most effective deployment and use of inputs for quality outputs (Barrett and Tikly, 2010).

Some of the most common quality frameworks derive from the input-process-outcome model, including the 2005 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report’s* framework for quality, which expanded the model to include dimensions of learner characteristics and context (figure 1). By presenting the complexities of interactions within education systems, the framework is a useful starting point for analysing the building blocks of quality education. Relationships among inputs, processes (or as dubbed in the framework, ‘enabling

inputs') and outcomes, however, are not linear in practice but are multidirectional and strongly influenced by context. (UNESCO, 2012)

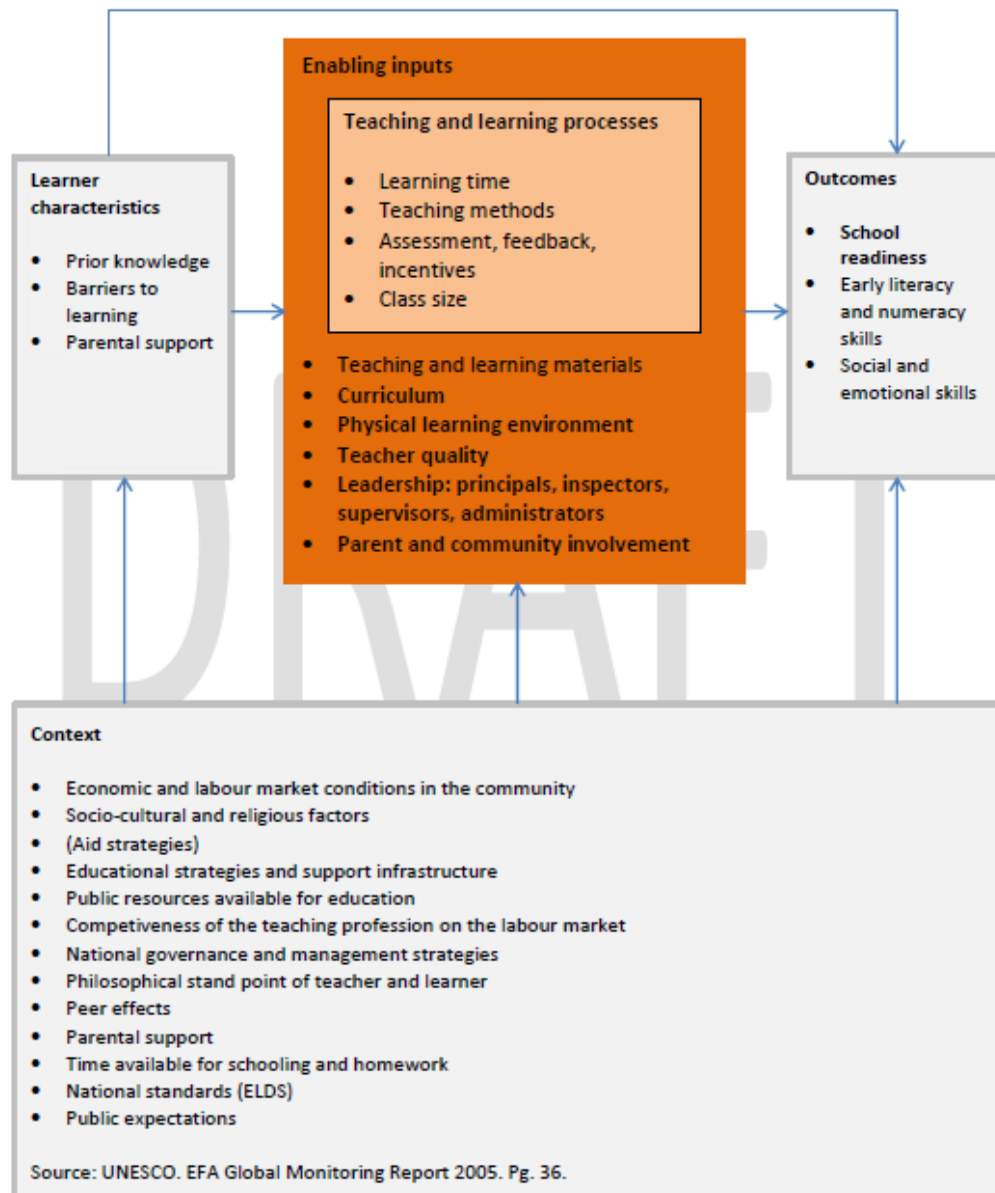


Figure 1 Framework for understanding education quality (EFA UNESCO,2005)

In contrast to the human capital approach, the rights approach emphasizes rights *to* education, rights *in* education and rights *through* education in equal magnitude. Rights-based frameworks not only necessitate the elimination of all barriers to learning opportunities but also require that the learning experience have intrinsic worth and promote children's rights.

Most notable of the rights based approach to monitoring quality education is the child-friendly schools (CFS) model that defines quality with dimensions (figure 2) and is founded on the “rights of the whole child, and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation” (UNICEF, 2000, p. 4). Compared with the input-process-outcome model, the CFS framework provides a comprehensive understanding of quality and, perhaps more importantly, an approach to recognizing quality of education as a sum of the quality dimensions, each of which are also important ends in themselves.



*Source:* UNICEF, 2006.

Figure 2 Child Friendly Schools Framework

No single framework of quality can be universally applied; the diversity of economic, political and social-cultural contexts affects what constitutes quality in a country.

Nevertheless, the influence of these two quality frameworks is reflected in various national and global documents such as Education For All.(UNESCO, 2012)

The Association Childhood Education International (ACEI) believes that “every child should have the opportunity to grow up in a setting that values children, that provides

conditions for a safe and secure environment, and that respects diversity” (ACEI, 2000, p. 1).

The children are often regarded as the future; however children are also the present of a nation. Children have a specific set of needs, rights and values, with that comes a need of suitable nurture and education within and outside the family context from birth onward in order for them to develop to their full potential. Consideration of health, nutrition, education, and psychosocial development of children throughout their early years is vital for the future well-being of both nation and the global community en large. According to ACEI the following features included in the global guidelines for ECE and care in the 21st century need to be considered when providing early childhood services including education and care for children;

- Environment and physical space of settings for children
- Curriculum content and pedagogy
- Early childhood educators and caregivers
- Partnership with families and communities
- Services for young children with special needs
- Accountability, supervision, and management of programs for children

The first feature entails *the learning environment*, including physical space and psychologically safety. The physical safety entails the necessity to protect a child from health hazards that prohibit the child’s ability to learn and develop. The child’s psychological safety implies that the overall environment should introduce a sense of belonging and well-being for all children. Moreover, it is important that the learning environment is a stimulating environment for a child to explore and experience new situations.

The second feature includes *curriculum content and pedagogy*, entailing experience, routines and interactions during family care as well as ECE programs. A curriculum is “a plan that reflects the educational philosophy and provides guidelines for educators and

caregivers and the interactions between adults and children who carry out the plan” (ACEI, 2000, p.2.). Every aspect of the child and his or her development aspects should be put central in the design of a curriculum. The various aspects included in the curriculum content and pedagogy are the curriculum document, content of the curriculum, pedagogical methods, learning materials, assessment of children’s progress and evaluation of programs. On these aspects the quality of curriculum content and pedagogy can be measured, monitored and evaluated.

The third feature encompasses early childhood *educators and caregivers*, who have an important and greatly demanding responsibility. It is therefore important that these educators and caregivers have the acquired knowledge and skills concerning the development of children. The various aspects included as essential for educators and caregivers are a particular set of knowledge, performance, personal and professional characteristics and a moral/ ethical dimension. These individuals are the core of teaching activity, which is of remarkable influence on the effectiveness of education.

The fourth feature is *partnership with families and communities*, this is relevant as the care and education of a child is a shared responsibility among various stakeholders and should sustain the best environment possible for a child to develop in. It is important to communicate with families, to outline moral/ ethical responsibilities and behaviors, to formulate and enforce policies, to sustain a recognition of diversity, to create a fluent transition from home to school, to stimulate participation and an inter-professional collaboration for education to be used to its’ full

#### *Framework for Measuring Quality ECCE*

There is no static definition of quality. Quality is a dynamic concept that changes with time and across contexts. For the purpose of this this study, quality framework is defined according to categories and components deemed essential for ECCE services in the country.

UNESCO (EFA, 2005) ‘A Framework for understanding quality of center-based ECE services’ adopted to suite this study.

This definition of quality comprises seven fundamental components, which are organized into five categories. UNESCO provides a visual representation of the structure of the quality ECE services according to the five categories: learner characteristics, enabling inputs, teaching and learning processes, outcomes and context. See Figure 1.

The tools, definitions and indicators provided in this framework center on these seven priority components (shown in bold in Figure 1):

1. **Physical learning environment**
2. **Teaching and learning processes**
3. **Teacher quality**
4. **Curriculum**
5. **School readiness outcomes**
6. **Leadership**
7. **Parent and community involvement**

In this study, considering the major inputs demonstrated in UNESCO’s framework, four main inputs namely, Curriculum, Teaching & Learning, Human Resource and Physical Environment are adopted as a framework for this research.

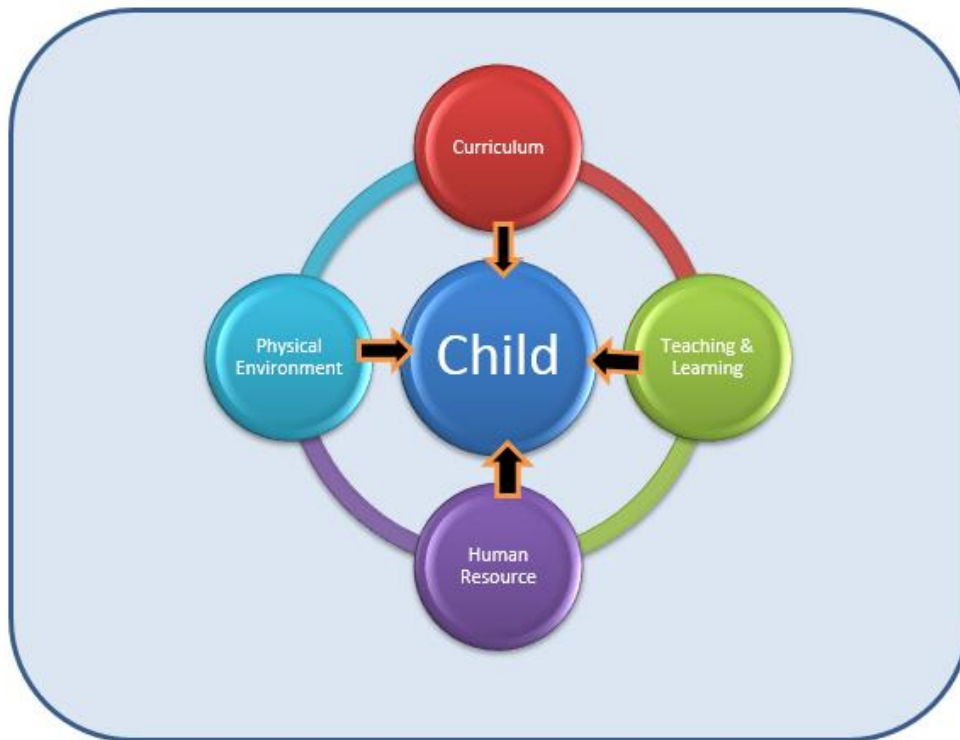


Figure 3, Adopted ECCE Quality Framework

*Theoretical Framework for Conceptualizing Early Childhood Education*

This section will briefly discuss the theoretical framework for curriculum which considers play as a means of education. The other quality components of ECCE; teaching and learning, human resource, and physical environment will be evaluated separately against the standard set in the strategic guideline and kindergarten standard. (Strategic Operational Plan and Guideline for ECCE in Ethiopia, 2010)

The belief that play should be the major activity for young children gradually took hold in European societies alongside industrialization and the introduction of mass schooling. Children's lives were becoming more separated from adult workplaces and enlightened thinkers such as Pestalozzi (1746–1827) and Froebel (1782–1852) designed environments especially for young children, which became the forerunners of contemporary nursery schools (Nutbrown *et al.*, 2008). They advocated a 'natural' regime which included playing

with simple objects and working at simple tasks: exploring balls and blocks, learning songs and rhymes, and digging the garden (Manning, 2005).

In the Global Monitoring Report (2005), a structured approach to teaching (with an eye to primary school?) gets a great deal of play; by way of contrast, in much of the early development literature, a less structured, more active learning approach is prominent.

During the later years of the 20th century the nursery tradition became more diverse, with numerous innovatory programmes claiming some role for play in young children's development (Miller *et al.*, 2003). Many national curricula also advocate that preschool children should learn through exploring and discovering the world through self-chosen activities which stimulate their interest and curiosity (OECD, 2004).

While young children may play purely for pleasure, research in the last half-century has focused on the ways that play contributes to their development (Bruner *et al.*, 1976; Göncü and Gaskins, 2007). As a result, both free play in family settings and planned play in preschools have been encouraged by parents and educators keen to promote all aspects of children's development: their physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development. Every type of play, from infant peekaboo and catching games to older children's sports and board games, can be seen to contribute to the growing child's skills and competencies.

Psychologists and educators have also been eager to explain exactly how children's play contributes to their development (Wood, 2010). Piaget recognized the importance of play for young children, but understood its function mainly as an opportunity for the child to practice newly acquired skills and concepts (Piaget, 1951).

In recent decades the theories of Lev Vygotsky (1967, 1978) have become much more influential. Vygotsky viewed play as having a key role in children's learning, arguing that play is a social and cultural activity, embedded in 'the social situation of development... the

path along which the social becomes the individual' (Vygotsky, 1998: 198). He described children as learning, first *interpersonally*, in relation with the minds of others, and then *intrapersonally*, within the individual child's own mind. In consequence, mental development is seen as a process in which children first borrow the ideas and language of others while playing, and then transform them into mental structures which they can use and apply independently. For Vygotsky (1967), all play, at any age, is an 'imaginary situation' which allows the player to think beyond her or his everyday constraints.

### **2.3 Early Childhood Education Curriculum**

Dodge (1995) asserts that it is important for educators to be guided by a curriculum framework that is based on child development theory. Not doing so could lead to inappropriate practices in infant and toddler classrooms as well as decisions that could be harmful to children.

According to Sigel (1999), Vygotsky stressed that symbols can be used as cognitive tools in order to record events, aid in planning, and assist in lightening the burden of memory. Every culture has its own symbols and symbol system that supports the cognition and communication that is important to each culture. Symbolic representations refer to the use of symbols as a tool in order to make sense of the world around us. At an early age, children learn how to reason and problem solve through the very symbols that represent various experiences (Sigel, 1999). Furthermore, creating mental representations is directly related to our cognition; and cognition is necessary for learning; thus learning is how teachers assist children in succeeding academically. In order for teachers to promote student success, they need to have a theoretical foundation on the developmentally appropriate curriculum in order to apply structure in their teaching methods.

Lauritzen (1992) believes there is an urgent need for the preschool settings to incorporate developmentally appropriate practices. Boone (2003) also discusses this practice and how it is

linked to cognition and positive social outcomes for young children, which assists in school readiness for kindergarten and beyond. Furthermore, there is concern for the number of children who are failing as well as the failing schools in the United States (Boone, 2003). Boone (2003) describes how the teachers in a preschool class planned around the children's interests to extend their learning and comprehension. In this way, they were able to accommodate the children's specific skills and with modification and repetition the children could master skills that resulted in the development of self-competence. Lauritzen (1992) goes on to say that integrating Vygotsky's, Erikson's and Piaget's theories provides the groundwork for a new paradigm of teaching as well as learning in the early childhood programs. Although this paradigm is no longer new, it would be an emphasis on the preschool child and the interacting adult, that would include a knowledge that is personal and lends a hand in constructing meaningful levels of integration that is made up of the physical and social environment "with internal levels of mental schemas" (Lauritzen, 1992, p. 531).

Dodge (1995) discusses that it is not merely enough to define what to teach, but to focus on an environment that is able to nurture each child's growth and development with both the physical and social aspects in mind.

Lonning, Defranco, and Weinland (1998) have defined theme-based curriculum as "both a focus and organizing framework that guide the development and implementation of a cohesive, interrelated series of lessons or activities" (p. 312). Katz and Chard (2000) have defined theme-based as a set of activities that surround a larger concept or broad topic. They discuss the importance of the goals that teachers set for their students. These goals help determine the themes that also assist in challenging the students. How a teacher explains an activity can elicit different kinds of responses from the children that can either warrant a challenge seeking perspective or a challenge avoidance perspective (Katz & Chard, 2000).

Katz and Chard (2000) developed a project approach using themes in order for children to learn firsthand with something familiar to then be able to expand their

understanding of their experience and their environment. In addition, the authors were concerned with the child's growing mind and creating an education that focused on all aspects of knowledge and skills, such as emotions and social behavior (Katz & Chard, 2000). Creating an environment full of various opportunities and developmental domains is of concern for the toddler teacher as well (Burchinal, Cryer, & Clifford, & Howes, 2002).

An example of a theme is "summer" in which various activities could include discussions of warm to hot weather, vacations, and beaches, as well as engaging in water play. Teachers could read a book about beaches that includes an array of pictures showing toddlers what kinds of items are associated with the beach. The teachers could then bring in their own photographs from a time when they were at the beach. An activity could be a clear container with sand in it with water, shovels, pails, shells, etc. and the children could explore the sand and water as a sensory and gross motor activity. Another example, under the Language and Literacy domain, the activity surrounding the theme of summer could include pictures and stories, in the Mathematics domain; the sand and water activity could have a focus on measurement. This measurement activity is linked to the child's Cognitive abilities through symbolic representation. California Department of Education (2008)

Melear and Lunsford (2007) created a theme-based unit on earthworms to demonstrate how a long-term activity could attend to the various content afforded by the National Science Education standards. This long-term activity fostered small group as well as entire class discussions, in which students created their own questions and were able to assist others with their questions. The teacher was able to facilitate question asking as well, to enhance the learning process as well as create a collaborative, scientific learning community within the classroom (Melear & Lunsford, 2007). Therefore, linking a theme-based measurement activity to science standards can increase the toddlers' interest and can cover various domains of learning.

Toddlers are just learning to communicate through language as they are beginning to grasp the concept of what words describe what thought, action or object. If the teacher is able to assist in the connection between language and thoughts, then the toddlers will gain more competence (Thurmann & Otten, 1995). In this way, using a theme-based curriculum sparks an interest in students to discover the world. It enables them to have a better understanding of matters that are strange and different to them, through assimilation. Morrison (2001) states that “assimilation is the taking in of sensory data through experiences and impressions and incorporating them into knowledge of people and objects already created as a result of these experiences” (p. 136). For example, toddlers use assimilation when they encounter a cotton ball and they try to bounce it. They discover that it does not bounce like a regular ball; therefore, they create a new

Research is quite clear in showing that children learn best through their play and the best programs use a child-centered, play based curriculum. Research also shows that children who experience a child centered curriculum in the preschool years are more successful in later school years.

The presence of a curriculum, or learning and well-being standards, can help ensure more consistency among ECE services in a country or region. Curricula help prioritize certain learning elements and provide common goals for educators and centres. This is particularly important in unregulated ECE environments, which often serve the youngest children. (OECD, 2006).

A well-planned and co-ordinated curriculum is crucial. First, it ensures that important learning areas are covered. Second, the curriculum can act as a tool to shape staff behaviour to ensure continuous child development from age zero to compulsory, or even beyond compulsory, schooling. Such curricula help to promote a more even level of quality across age groups and provision; guide and support professional staff in their practice; facilitate

communication between staff and parents; and ensure pedagogical continuity between ECEC and school (OECD, 2006).

## **2.4 Early Childhood Education Teaching and Learning Process**

The teaching and learning process brings the curriculum to life. Although ECE programmes are difficult to compare, research indicates that the teacher's education level, small group activities and the availability of equipment and materials play positive roles in the teaching learning. (EFA, 2005)

A study by Johansson and Sandberg (2010) shows most preschool teachers and preschool student teachers consider that children learn by seeing how other children act, and support a group-oriented approach in which children's interactions are given great freedom. This reflects Vygotsky's theory of a zone of proximal development where children's abilities are challenged to stimulate learning in relation to children's current level of knowledge and skills. The primary goal for the children is to acquire specific knowledge and skills, which lead to knowledge of how to be a participant in the existing peer culture. Children are eager to learn from each other in the preschool through play and in recurrent everyday activities. Children explore and learn from active interaction with the surroundings (Pramling Samuelsson, Sommer and Hundeide 2011). This puts specific demands on the preschool teacher: to guide children's interests to specific learning tasks, and also to stimulate and relate to children's innate interest for learning. Thus the teacher needs to create a stimulating learning setting that encompasses the whole preschool environment or 'rooms for learning' which inspire active experiences and participation (Björklid 2005).

While research is scarce on how teachers use textbooks in classrooms, such materials plainly make a difference to the quality of teaching and learning. (EFA, 2005). In addition regular, reliable, timely assessment is a key to improving learning achievement. At classroom level, assessment may be classified as summative (evaluating achievement through externally

devised tests) or formative (diagnosing how each pupil learns through observation). The goals are to give learners feedback and to improve learning and teaching practices. Some countries (e.g. Ghana, South Africa and Sri Lanka) have adopted formative assessment as a complement to formal exams. In many countries, local circumstances prevent the practice from being widely extended: adequate resources, teachers trained in assessment techniques and relatively small class sizes are required. (EFA, 2005)

McDonnell (1999) describes the early childhood teachers' role as having the knowledge of twelve areas; (1) foundations, (2) child development and growth, (3) curriculum, (4) health, safety and nutrition, (5) child observation, record keeping and assessment, (6) creating environments for young children, (7) child guidance and disciplines, (8) cultural diversity, (9) special needs, (10) family and community relationships (11) professionalism and professional development (12) administration and supervision.

A large body of research has found that the lower the child-staff ratio is, the better the children perform in cognitive (mathematics and science) and linguistic (language, reading and word recognition) assessments.(OECD, 2013).

On average, there are 14 pupils for every ECCE teacher in OECD countries. The pupil-teacher ratio (excluding teacher aides) ranges from more than 20 pupils per teacher in France, Israel, Mexico and Turkey, to fewer than 10 in Chile, Iceland, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden.(OECD, 2013)

## **2.5 Early Childhood Education Human Resources**

Teachers are the strongest influence on learning. Available data suggest that large proportions of primary school teachers lack adequate academic qualifications, training and mastery of content, especially in developing countries. National standards for qualification as a primary school teacher ranged from twelve to seventeen years of education in twenty-six sub-Saharan African countries surveyed in 2001. Less than 10% of the teaching force in a

few countries met even the low minimum standard of a lower secondary school education and many countries fell short of standards set at upper secondary level. (EFA, 2005)

Twenty years of research has consistently identified teachers and practitioners as the key to high quality early childhood programs and child outcomes. This is found in the early childhood literature where the focus is on early childhood teachers (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1996). A report from the recent joint data analysis by Early et al. (2007) has demonstrated that the link between teacher education and child outcomes is not as strong as previously stated, calling attention to the need to examine more closely the quality of preparation programs for teachers and practitioners. For early childhood teachers, simply having a degree may not be sufficient for helping all children learn and develop to their highest potential. Furthermore, the early childhood knowledge base is constantly expanding requiring practitioners to engage in on-going professional development to stay abreast of new discoveries; professional growth depends on lifelong learning, degree or no degree. Therefore, it is also important to examine the quality of the ongoing professional development and support experiences available to early childhood practitioners.

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. They studied 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.

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 Early Childhood Education 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 ECEC 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 favourable child outcomes in the socio-emotional domain (social relationships with their peers and co-operation). However, the general conclusion that higher education of ECE staff leads to higher pedagogical quality and, therefore, to better child outcomes is not supported by all studies. (OECD, 2012)

An area that can improve pedagogical practices of ECEC staff includes supporting staff's competence to communicate and interact with children in a shared and sustainable manner (Sheridan *et al.*, 2009).

Research also points out that it is not necessary that all staff have high general levels of education. Highly qualified staff can have a positive influence on those who work with them and who do not have the same high qualifications. The EPPE study finds that the observed behaviour of lower-qualified staff turned out to be positively influenced by working alongside highly trained staff (Sammons, 2010).

## 2.6 Early Childhood Education Physical Environment

A learning environment, which is called the third teacher in the Reggio Emilia schools (Gandini, 2002), plays one of the most important roles in education and development of children with special needs. A learning environment has been broken into many aspects, such as the social/emotional environment, the behavioral environment and the physical environment.

The literature review indicates that the physical environment of preschools has an important influence on education and development of children. Greenman (1988) states, “More than the physical space, it [an environment] indicates the way time is structured and the roles we are expected to play. It conditions how we feel, think, and behave; and it dramatically affects the quality of our lives” (p.5). Caples (1996) also emphasizes the importance of the physical environment in children’s education and states, “The better the architect understands the school’s philosophy, schedule, and operations, the more likely the design will embody the school’s fundamental goals” (p.20). Accordingly, it is important to examine how the physical environment influences preschoolers if it is well designed or poorly designed.

Dukes and Lamar-Dukes (2009) state that when thinking about the issues involved in designing an environment for children, it is important to define the parameters of the issue first. In the current study, more than a physical space, the physical environment is discussed in terms of different aspects, namely, relation of the physical environment to the curriculum philosophy, general schedule of activities, modifications, safety-security, areas, placement of different areas, furniture/materials, lighting, textures/colors, and the outdoor area. Since the needs and interests of children may change from classroom to classroom, the aim is not to suggest one specific environmental arrangement or examine each material or area individually. General factors related to the physical environment will be examined

considering that the physical environment must be adapted to individual needs of children. Before examining the physical environment, it is essential to define it.

Curriculum may come into mind first when planning is the issue in classrooms. However, planning a supportive environment is as important as planning the curriculum, since it will support the teacher, the children and the curriculum. Wolery (2004) states, “intervention and educational programs are manipulations of children’s environments; thus, understanding those environments is central to making decisions about using assessment results in planning children’s individualized intervention programs” (p.205). Negative effects may occur if the physical environment is not planned thoughtfully. There is some evidence indicating that if the classroom is poorly designed and planned, it will not support children’s development and growth and will lead to inattentive and frustrated children (Kentucky State Dept. of Education, 1991).

Dukes and Lamar-Dukes (2009) state that the environmental design process begins by identifying all of the issues that may help or hinder education and development of children. Failure to recognize the power of the physical environment over children may lead to problems. For example, the physical environment may hinder children’s development or hurt children. In order to avoid the drawbacks of physical environment and to add a significant dimension to children’s experience and development, it is essential to understand how the physical environment can be carefully and knowingly arranged.

The physical environment and the curriculum together enhance and support the child's ability to do something himself, take care of himself, initiate and complete activities, take control of his own actions and responsibilities, communicate and interact with others easily, and have better perceptual and motor skills. Moreover, if the physical environment is designed thoughtfully, it can encourage choices, discoveries, and communication among children and the teacher. Bailey and Wolery (1992) state that a good physical arrangement

meets the following three components: (a)“the ideal space allows the teacher to observe ongoing activities in the classroom and yet reduces distractions across activity areas”; (b)“the space should be functional, comfortable, and safe for both children and adults”; (c)“finally, the space should be designed to encourage and facilitate maximum independence for children with sensory and motor impairments” (p.210).

Many researchers and educators studied the physical environment to understand how it can support young children. Behind the research, there are many theories about the physical environment and its relation to its inhabitants. Bailey and Wolery (1992) indicate that many theorists agree that the environment has an influence on education, development, and experiences of young children.

Depending on the goals of the curriculum and changing needs of preschoolers, different areas of interest can be created, such as an art/science area, a dramatic play/water area, a computer area, a reading/language area, a block area, a big group area, and a therapeutic area. Different interest areas are very important, because they allow children to feel secure, and not overwhelmed with the complexity of a big room (Caples, 1996; Greenman, 1988). This leads children to develop a sense of control and easiness to explore the environment (Kentucky State Dept. of Education, 1991). Different interest areas also enable teachers to provide diverse activities for individualization. Accordingly, each child can choose what to do (Kentucky State Dept. of Education, 1991). Moore (1996) called these areas resource-rich activity pockets, since each area is a different source of activity.

Allen and Schwartz (1996) state, “Minimizing clutter and confusion enhances the ability of all children to concentrate on the tasks at hand; for children with attention or learning disorders, reducing distractions may be the best way to promote learning” (p.225). Clayton and Forton (2001) indicate that if the area is clearly defined with distinct boundaries and obvious pathways, children will use it more appropriately and successfully. A physical

order in spaces may lead to the room more predictable and familiar (Caples, 1996; Greenman, 1988), and may foster children's skill of competence and independence (Kentucky State Dept. of Education, 1991; Greenman, 1988). Shepherd and Eaton (1997) indicate that young children need familiarity and stability in their physical environment. They also state, "In a stable and orderly environment, children are secure in their knowledge of where things are and aimless wandering is therefore reduced" (p.45).

Children need and love high mobility activities, such as sliding, climbing, gardening, spraying, crawling, balancing, riding and running, and playgrounds are usually the places for high mobility activities. Prescott (1994) indicates that when choices are provided, a number of children will never choose sitting down activities. Accordingly, playgrounds are another physical environment which should be examined for benefits of children.

Outdoor spaces are essential not only for exercise and physical coordination, but also children's social skills and their imaginations. In order to create safety play areas, rubber matting is essential. They should be used in especially areas around equipment and stairs. Moreover, well-designed equipment can allow an exuberant level of body movement. Also, it can provide shapes and configurations that encourage children to connect the natural world and their imagination, so that they can create stories (Caples, 1996).

Moreover, teachers should be careful about whether there is shade, because shade provides children a place for role playing games, as well as medical necessity to escape from heat and sun light. Teachers should provide a source of water for any reason, such as drinking or watering plants (Allison, 1999; Caples, 1996). Allison (1999) also suggests that easy access to toilets is important for children to satisfy their various needs. Furthermore, Shepherd and Eaton (1997) indicate that through effective organization and simple room arrangements, teachers can have more time and energy to devote to meaningful interactions with children.

Research demonstrates that the design, layout and space of ECE environments can influence a child's learning, creativity, behaviour and cultural interests (Dearing *et al.*, 2009). Cross cultural studies of preschool quality highlight that the quality of conditions for children's learning depend on physical space in addition to staff-child ratios and staff working environment. Specifically, well-defined spaces and boundaries are associated with more positive classroom interactions and increased time spent exploring environments (CCL, 2006). Based on research findings, numerous countries have set minimum "space per child" benchmarks, which gradually decrease with age (Childhood Resource and Research Unit, 2004).

## **2.7 Major Challenges in improving Quality of Early Childhood Education**

According to UNICEF (2013), for too many children school has not always have positive experience. Some endure difficult conditions, like missing or inadequate teaching materials or makeshift sanitation facilities. Others lack competent teachers and appropriate curricula. Still others may be forced to contend with discrimination, harassment and even violence. These conditions are not conducive to learning or development, and no child should have to experience them.

Access to education that is of poor quality is equal to no education at all. There is little point in providing the opportunity for a child to enroll in school if the quality of the education is so poor that the child will not become literate or numerate, or will fail to acquire critical life skills (UNICEF, 2013).

In developing countries, the main challenges to Early Childhood Education include inadequate access to health, water and sanitation, food and nutrition, early learning and stimulation, resulting in low enrollment rates. A high under 5 mortality rate, high infant mortality rate, vulnerability to abuse, harassment and exploitation, disease, social exclusion

and poverty were some of the challenges facing Early Childhood Education. In addition, the educators face the problem of high educator-child ratios, unattractive conditions of service, low level of professionalism, low salaries and inadequate teaching and learning materials. (Education International, 2009).

When we look at the history of modern preschool in Ethiopia it goes back to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century established for the children of French consultants, who were helping the construction of the first railroad in Dire Dawa. Then number of kindergarten in the country grew to 77 in 1974 (UNESCO, 2010) and in 1,044 in 2012/13 (Addis Ababa Education Bureau, 2013).

In 2007 situation assessment done by the Ministry of Education revealed major challenges as;

*“ ..high payment to attend preschool, lack of proper training of preschool teachers; lack of standard curriculum and guidelines; lack of culturally relevant story Books, lack of access to early childhood education for almost all children and especially children from low socio-economic backgrounds, lack of awareness about the value and type of care and education of young children; low salary for teachers, causing high staff turnover; lack of early childhood education professionals; misconception about teaching children “because they are children!”; and the use of foreign languages (mainly English) as a medium of instruction.”*

Similarly, in a case study by UNESCO (2010) revealed some of the challenges as unattractive salary for teachers, particularly in kebele and public owned kindergartens, has led to high turnover of preschool teachers, making pre-school teachers/ children ratio high. For example, teacher per ECCE ratio could be as large as 1:141 in Gambela region or as low as 1:17 in Addis Ababa region. In the recent kindergarten standard it states the number of

children per class not be more than 1:40. This is an indication of a wide range of variation with implication for the quality of service provided in these centers.

Again, the UNESCO (2010) case study showed additional challenges ECCE centers face as; location on unsafe places or are not appropriate for pre-school education because the facilities were not in line with the health and developmental needs of young children. Furthermore, ECCE centers may possibly be environmentally inadequate due to lack of spaces for play and learning because most of operate in buildings not originally constructed for that purpose. Moreover, there is lack of children's books, toys and other relevant educational materials in some of these pre-schools.

When it comes to access, in recent years, the Ministry of Education statistic (2011/12) pointed out a regional disparity in ECCE as indicated by 92.4 per cent in Addis Ababa and 0.1 percent in Somali region. Although there is a tremendous growth in gross enrolment rate between 2001/2, 2.1 per cent and 2011/12, 21.6 per cent of the total number of children appropriate age, coverage and access to pre-school education for children between 4-6 years of age is still very limited. In 2011/12 out of the estimated 7.51 million children of the appropriate age group (age 4-6) about 1.62 million children have been reported to have access to pre-primary education all over the country.

## **Chapter Three: Method**

This study aimed to assess the challenges in improving quality of Early Childhood Education in two sub cities of Addis Ababa. This study used only focus on the preschool level 2 commonly known as KG-2. To fulfill the purpose a qualitative design used to address all the research questions, which sought to assess variables that describe major components of quality education in early childhood setting.

In addition, this part has attempted to clearly describe method of the study, data collection instruments, method of data analysis, sampling techniques, sample size and sampling framework used.

### **3.1 Design of the Study**

In educational research, the most common descriptive methodology is the survey, as when researchers summarize the characteristics (abilities, preferences, behaviors, and so on) of individuals or groups or (sometimes) physical environments (such as schools) (Fraenkel & Wallen.2009). Therefore this study used descriptive research to assess the quality of early childhood education. For this research, activities such as observations using check lists, in-depth interviews to describe situations and contexts, focus group discussions were carried out to describe situations and reflect them on the stated standards to identify gaps and discrepancies.

## 3.2 Data Collection Instruments

### 3.2.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire was used extensively in educational research to collect information that was not directly observable. This data collection method typically inquires about the feelings, motivation, attitudes, accomplishments and experience of individual. (Borge 1996). Therefore questionnaire was used to assess the challenges of improving quality early childhood education in Addis Ababa.

There were two questionnaires prepared for Parents and Teachers. Both were developed to answer the research questions as appropriate.

**ECCE teachers Questionnaire:** The contents of the teachers' questionnaire included: background data about themselves and the preschools they are associated to, training experiences particularly as preschool teacher and reflections, teaching methods, aids and materials employed and their developmental and cultural appropriateness, medium of instruction, quality of preschool education, problems encountered and solutions. Close ended with responses yes and no questions were used. In total there were 23 item questions.

**Parental Questionnaire:** The contents of this questionnaire consisted of background data (about themselves, their children, and spouses), school expenses, attitudes to preschool education and preschools, and relationships they have with the children, teachers, and the preschools. Here, parents who could read and write were selected. Semi structured questionnaire was used. In total there were 11 item questions

The data collection tools have been validated by distributing questionnaires in one ECCE center and feedback were received on the organization of the questionnaire, content of the questionnaire and clarity of the questions. Face and content validation has been checked. In addition the tools were also reviewed by Researcher in this field for similar content and face validity.

### **3.2.2 Focus Group Discussion**

A focus group discussion is an interview with a small group of people on specific topic (Patton, 2002). Focus groups can be useful to obtain certain types of information or circumstances would make it difficult to collect information using other methods (Hancock, 2002).

The FGD guide were organized in order to address the formulated research questions. It has seven parts, Introduction and Ground rule, Child Education in general, Curriculum, Teacher Training, Teaching & Learning, Physical Environment and Challenges on Quality ECCE. FGDs were conducted in the two sub cities, involving Addis Ababa education bureau expert, Early Childhood Care and Education Teachers Training Institute, directors and teachers. The Bole sub city FGD took 1:13hrs whereas the Kirkos took 1:09hrs.

The FGD shade light on major issues of quality in ECCE, regarding curriculum, teaching learning process, physical environment, teacher qualification and parent expectation. In addition, the extent of government involvement in terms of capacity building, budget and monitoring (in terms of standardization in curriculum, textbooks, objectives, levels, medium of instructions, subjects to be taught and the training of teachers).

### **3.2.3 In-depth Interview**

Interview was conducted with, Addis Ababa Education Bureau expert, Sub City ECCE Expert and UNICEF ECCE Specialist. UNICEF was specifically selected because of its intensive involvement in ECCE.

A semi-structured interview was used because of its flexibility (Patton, 2002). It allowed depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand interviewee's responses. This atmosphere enabled the researcher to clarify points and raise fresh questions so as to gain a deeper understanding.

The interview tried to find responses in issues such as; strategies, access and equity and government commitment towards improving quality of ECCE. The interview with AABE took 1:30hrs, ECCE Specialist 1:40hrs and Sub City ECCE Expert took, 1:14hrs.

### **3.3 Method of data Analysis**

Part of the data were coded and entered in to SPSS software. Data was analyzed using the same software and the result was expressed using frequency distribution, and presented using tables.

After the data was collected, the open ended questions in the questionnaire, FGD and interview data were not convenient to be analyzed in Atlas software. Therefore, the researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the semi-structured questions.

### **3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

#### **3.4.1 Sampling Techniques**

When selecting the two sub cities from the ten sub cities found in Addis Ababa, convenience sampling method was used. This is due to location, time and manageability of the samples. Answers to basic questions such as the researcher's adequate knowledge about population, leading to methodological options such as focus group discussions and in-depth interviews followed by issues of under representation and issues of access to study population has been analyzed to decide which sampling technique to go for. The simple diagram below is used to show the decision made on the type of sampling technique preferred.

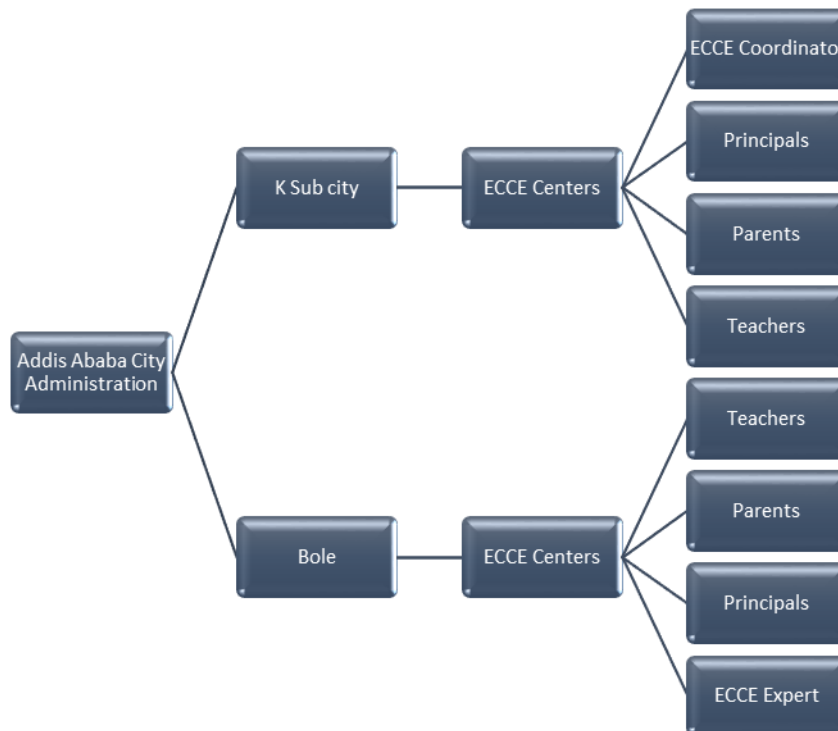


Figure 4 Sampling Strategy

According to Addis Ababa Education Bureau (2013) there are a total of 27 early childhood care and education centers in Kirkos (12) and Bole (15). When selecting the preschools where this research was conducted, convenience sampling was used. Similar decision algorithm used above was followed to pick up eight schools from each sub city.

### 3.4.2 Data Collection Procedure

As Early Childhood Education Quality issues are better understood with qualitative data analysis and hence, data collecting tools like, questionnaire, FGD and In-depth interview were used to collect data.

A total of 38 teachers have filled in the teacher's questionnaire. The contents of the teachers' questionnaire included: background data about themselves and the preschools they are associated to, training experiences particularly as preschool teacher and reflections, teaching methods, teaching aids, quality of preschool education, problems encountered and solutions.

A total of 50 parents have filled in the parent's questionnaire. The contents of this questionnaire consisted of main themes like: background data (about themselves), school physical environment, child care satisfaction, believe about the knowledge of the teachers as well as the preschool staffs and continuous feedback about their children progress.

Focus Group Discussion guide were prepared to guide the discussion and the facilitator introduced the ground rules and the duration. FGD was conducted to collect data one Focus Group Discussion had taken place in each sub city. The composition of the participants were teachers, principals, sub city ECCE experts, sub city ECCE supervisor (not present in Bole sub city FGD), and parents. All group discussions were tape recorded

In-depth interview questions were prepared in consultation with ECCE Expert. In-depth Interview was conducted with, Addis Ababa Education Bureau expert, Sub City ECCE Expert and UNICEF ECCE Specialist. Furthermore, observation checklist were developed to check against the standard set by government. The checklist has, yes and no items to be checked against the equipment and materials available the ECCE center.

### **3.4.3 Sample Size**

Out of the ten sub cities found in Addis Ababa, two (Kirkos and Bole) were selected. A total of 27 preschools (12 Bole and 15 Kirkos) were found. Sixteen preschools were selected using convenience sampling. However one school from bole sub city was not assessed adequately due to poor questionnaire return rate so that the data is rejected as incomplete. Hence the total number of schools targeted is reduced to fifteen.

### 3.4.4 Study Population

From the selected two sub cities, teachers, directors, education experts and parents were the study population. In addition, supervisors and authorities of selected woreda education office were part of the study.

### 3.4.5 Sampling Framework

According to the MoE's Education Statistics Annual Abstract report (2012/13), access of early learning for young children has gone up from 5.3% in 2010 to 26.1% in 2013. Even though the Annual Abstract states 94% of the enrolment involves non-government organization, there is substantial expansion of ECCEs done by government. This is also part of the government determination to enroll all disadvantaged children in schools. This study therefore is trying to seek how quality is factored in the expansion process. Accordingly, government schools are only studied for this purpose.

*Table 1 Number of ECCE Centers in Addis Ababa*

Ser. No.	Sub City	No. of ECCE Centers				
		Gov't	Public	Private	Others	Total
1	Addis Ketema	15	-	22	7	44
2	Arada	14	6	26	11	57
3	Kolfe Keranio	8	5	152	20	185
4	Kirkos	15	-	38	-	53
5	Gullele	14	4	40	9	67
6	Lideta	8	8	18	5	39
7	Bole	12	-	119	4	135
8	Nefas Silk Lafto	16	-	156	19	191
9	Akaki Kaliti	17	-	80	9	106
10	Yeka	17	-	137	13	167
<b>Total</b>		<b>136</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>788</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>1,044</b>

Source: Addis Ababa Education Bureau 2013

## **Chapter Four: Results and Discussions**

### **4.1 Results**

This chapter tries to discuss, the result of the data collected from parents, teachers, principals and experts on quality of ECCE centers in Addis Ababa. Frequency distribution was used to show the number of responses for close ended questions. The overall result from all data collection tools were analyzed thematically based on the four dimensions of quality, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning process, Human Resource and Physical Environment.

#### **4.1.1 Curriculum**

In both FGDs, participants explained that the importance of the concepts (Physical Health and Development, Social and Emotional Development, Language Development and Cognitive Development) the curriculum is constructed on. They said that it encompasses every aspect of the child's development, such as knowing their environment, discovering their senses and cognitive growth. Hence, teachers said they strictly follow the curriculum and prepare their lesson plans based on the five pillars.

FGD participants said that we had to teach most of the content with practical exercise. We no longer orally tell them what to do rather we have to show them how to do. For example hand-washing practice, this is very practical and we have to show them step by step on how they do it. Therefore, the curriculum has helped us on how to guide the children.

It was said that the curriculum is reviewed by the teachers as well as other stakeholders to improve the content from time to time. It will assist a lot the children as well as the teachers in the teaching learning process. The teachers also agree that they are called for reviews on regular bases for their inputs.

*Table 2. Teachers who use Curriculum as a Guide*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always	35	92.1
Sometimes	3	7.9
Total	38	100

When the teachers were asked how consistently they use curriculum as a guide to teach, 92.1% (35) of them said they always do and 7.9% (3) said they sometimes do (Table 3). Concerning the standard format for the daily lesson plan they all said there is a standardized format for monthly, weekly and daily lesson plan.

In a more general context, during the FGD, it was said the curriculum allows creativity in the teaching learning process, all participants have agreed it does. Participants said since children get bored so easily you are obliged to create new way of teaching a certain content. The curriculum also encourages teachers to use whatever material available in the environment to create new and wonderful teaching materials. They also said that being creative helps to be engaged in so many ways to the children and hence help the children to gain knowledge in an interesting way.

All participants have agreed they found the curriculum as a useful guide and they use follow instructions strictly. However, a few participants said that sometimes, teacher go out of the curriculum to please parents. Even though this is seen in private schools, sometimes teachers in Government school practice this as well. A few other participants were against this as this does not apply to their respective school. They explained that here is an observation done twice a year and there is a coordinator in the ECCE who does report on

their daily routine. In addition, the teachers prepare their daily lesson plan and hence help the teachers as well as the coordinator to be programmed.

In another sub city FGD discussion, participants said that parents want their children to speak and read English language. It was said that parents buy the alphabet chart for home use and when they ask their child to locate a certain letter he might now know it. At school we divide the alphabet according to the curriculum guide so the lesson don't include all alphabets at once. In spite of the parent's quest, they said that they try to explain how the curriculum is designed and advise that they should not burden their children as such. As a result, they ensure that they follow the curriculum accordingly.

#### **4.1.2 Teaching and Learning Process**

All of them said that play should be the central part of the teaching learning process. The consistently mentioned teaching method the teacher apply include, play, songs, stories, role play, exploring senses and question and answer. Moreover, they refer to the teacher's guide and syllabus for more improved teaching method. They also said, in many occasion, prepare teaching materials from the surrounding. This has greatly helped them to make the teaching process enjoyable for the children.

All responded 'yes' concerning consistently using teaching aid. Again 97.4% (n=37) of them believe the teaching aids are appropriate for the children's age and one teacher said no. Similarly, while 94.7% (n=34) said the teaching aids are convenient for teaching, only 2 of them said it is not. Most teachers found the following teaching aids as helpful; flash cards, toys, painted wooden alphabets, animal shapes, colours and paints and puzzles.

Almost all teachers said there are no enough teaching aids in their respective school. However, couple of them reported that there are enough mentioning those created by the teachers but also said that it is not often interesting or enjoyable compared to those made by the professionals.

*Table 3. Teachers who take regular child Assessment*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	37	97.4
No	1	2.6
Total	38	100

Regarding undertaking continuous assessment, 97.4 % (n=37) of them said they do regularly, and only one said no (Table 4). The majority of the teachers said they do the assessment against the five pillars. Some said, by observing their skill development such as knowing the alphabet, numbers, writing skills, knowing their environment and cleanliness. In doing so, the teachers gather information about the children from parents, administrative office, by observing their behavior and recording their profile and talking to the children are the major ways.

In the same way, when asked if they share their assessment to children parents 81.6% (n=31) said they do and 18.4% (9=7) said they don't report to parents. Those who said they give feedback to parents, they do it every month by preparing assessment sheet for every child.

*Table 4. Teachers who give reward for good performing children*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	33	86.8
No	5	13.2
Total	38	100

The majority of the teachers 86.8% (n=33) reward children for good performance while 13.2% (n=5) said they don't do so (Table 5). The teachers said they give feedback to children, by encouraging them, clapping, drawing stars on their exercise book, by bringing them in front of class and praising them, by handshaking and by giving small gifts as pencil, eraser & sharpener.

The major challenges mentioned by the teachers were high number of children in a classroom, no or inefficient teaching aids, absence of adequate playground, lack of sufficient playing equipment, no or inappropriate sleeping area, shortage of water, not adequate toilet and cleanliness. Others said, there should be more trained caregivers who can help with feeding and cleaning the children. In relation to teachers training, most of them said that they need to get in-service training just like any other teacher. They also mentioned, low salary and motivation for such a demanding job.

Furthermore, during in-depth interview Sub City ECCE expert said that classrooms are overcrowded, even though the standard says 30 for nursery, 40 for KG2 & KG3. In some schools there are classrooms with over one hundred children. This was due to the government call for all children from age 3 to enroll to ECCE. This was done without any prior plan and preparation she says

In general, teachers said the government should be able to fulfill all the required support such as material, manpower and technical support. There should be continuous and regular consultation between the government and teachers and administrative staff for better improvement of the teaching learning process. In-service training, increment of salary and increase salary are among the major request by the teachers. Concerning, accommodating many children, there should be more fully equipped classrooms, convenient sleeping space, sufficient playground, playing equipment and clean and safe toilet with hand washing

facilities. Teachers also said the need for technology in the teaching and learning process. Finally, teachers stressed involvement of parents in decision at all levels.

As all participants agree, play is the central part of teaching. Play can be using teaching aids, songs, role playing, etc. Nothing is thought without involving play. Play is the central part of younger's development they say.

In relation to teaching aids, most of the teachers believe that there is no enough teaching material. As one teacher said, when they show them to do puzzles for example there is no enough for each child and hence the teacher show them from a distance. This does not help the child to acquire the necessary motor skill as well as help his/her cognitive development she said. Another teacher said that, the most important thing about teaching aid is the safety. She said that whatever teaching aid we are creating our number one priority should be the material that is made from, it shouldn't be harmful.

In terms of quality, most teachers agree that not all of the materials are of good quality. Rather most of them are fragile, it easily teared and not durable for long. Some of them said that since they do create most of the teaching materials from papers, glues and colors (if available) have very short life. One teacher gave example of playing balls, since there are no enough of them they make many of them using half liter milk plastic bags found from garbage or out on the road. These balls are short lived and very small to play with. Nevertheless, those made wood, plastic and other hard materials (not all have that) do stay longer and they can resist damages. All in all, teachers agree that the quality and quantity does not meet even the minimum standard.

In connection to giving feedback for the child, they all say they do mostly by praising all of them orally. Even though there is no formal assessment, children are also praised on their exercise book with remarks such as excellent and very good. They all are also given rewards, this is the practice across. If only they give reward to the one who answered

question, the rest of them will not be happy said one teacher. Most importantly, they observe all children the moment they got into school, if for example, a child is not smiling they ask him/her what has happened and encourage him to tell them whatever the situation he/her are in. Unless they get to the bottom of that they don't start their daily teaching.

*Table 5. Parents who believe the ECCE is Enriched Learning Environment*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Always	36	72.0
Sometimes	14	28.0
Total	50	100.0

Relating to ECCE is enriched learning environment, 72% (n=36) of parents said it is and 28% (n=14) of them said sometimes (Table 8). Parents 88% (n=44) of them think that teachers and staffs show patience and empathetic for their child and 6% (n=3) of them sometimes and the remaining 6% (n=3) said not sure. Regarding parents who believe that ECCE center staffs are easily approachable and easy to talk to; 78% (n=39) said that they are and 16% (n=8) said occasionally and one parent said not sure.

When parents were asked if ECCE staff are knowledgeable & answers questions willingly, 80% (n=40) said always, 14% (n=7) said sometimes and 6% (n=3) said they are not sure.

*Table 6 Parents who Receive Regular Feedback from ECCE Center*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Always	36	60.0
Sometimes	18	36.0
Not sure	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0

In connection to receiving regular feedback about their children progress from ECCE, 60% (n=30) of the parents said they do, where as 36% (n=18) said sometimes and 4% (n=2) said not sure (Table 9).

In general, the majority of parents are happy with care given to their children, especially by the teachers. However, some are not happy with the way the children are handled and the cleanliness of the preschool. Some still plea the need for the preschool to consistently communicate with parent concerning their children. Parents don't feel that their children are secured when going to toilet or playing on the ground. Parents were asked if they are satisfied with the overall care their child receives they responded as they are.

#### **4.1.3 Human Resources**

All teachers have a one year long training from Kotebe Teacher's Training College. The training includes, observation write up for about a month and practical teaching for another month. They said training also includes psychology course that helped them to understand the child's mental development stages. In addition, some of the courses taught them to act as a child and play which is very interesting to see the teaching from the child's perspective.

Teachers indicated that there is lack of conducive learning environment, shortage of teaching aids, classrooms, and unsuitable environment; too much emphasis on theory, failure

to assist trainee's effort to prepare teaching aids, learning too much courses within a short period as some to the constraints of the one year training.

They said that, even though the one year training can be labeled as adequate, it can only be said enough as it practiced in the actual world. Clearly, the training should be supported by regular refresher and experience sharing exposures. Experience disclosed that it is dull to teach the children in the same teaching material over and over again. The children will get bored and will not be fruitful at the end of the day. In many occasions, they said they don't sit and wait for a training to come rather we create from the surrounding to make the momentum going.

Regarding the qualification of Assistant Teachers, they said that they are both equally qualified as the main teacher and they are both treated the same. However, if the budget allows school hire caregivers who feed and clean the children and take care of the compound. Hence, caregivers are different from Assistant Teachers.

*Table 7. Educational Status of Teachers*

Type of Education	Frequency	Percent
High school	7	18.4
Certificate	29	76.3
Diploma	1	2.6
Degree	1	2.6
Total	38	100.0

There were 37 female and 1 male teacher, this shows that most of the teachers are females who are considered to be more of mother figure in caring for the children. Half of the teachers 55% (n=21) had between 1 – 4 years of teaching experiences. The remaining, 34.2% (n=13) fall under 5 -8years, 5.3% (n=2), 9 – 12years and 5.3% have 13 years and above teaching experience. Regarding their educational status, 76.3 % (n=29) said they have

certificate, one teacher has diploma, another teacher with degree and seven of them are high school graduates (Table 1). The majority of the teachers are trained by governmental institutes with certificate. Small number said had certificate in ECCE but from private and other institution.

*Table 8. Teachers who took ECCE Training*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	35	92.1
No	3	7.9
Total	38	100.0

In relation to courses taken linked to ECCE, 92.1% (n=35) said they have taken and 7.9% (n=3) said they did not. Similarly, when they were asked if they have taken curriculum specific training, 94.4% (n=36) of them said they have taken and one teacher said no and another one said not sure (Table 2). The majority of the teachers (76.3% or n=29) got their training by Education bureau whereas the ECCE center and other institutions, comes 13.2% and 10.5% respectively.

During in-depth interview, concerning teacher qualification, FGD participants said that the 10 month long training is given by the teacher training institutes is low quality. Teachers with low education background are admitted to this program said the AAEB Expert. In addition, they graduate without mastering the required skills. Most of the graduates don't even properly write and read. As we can imagine, he continues, the major impact on the children learning outcome.

#### **4.1.4 Physical Environment**

Teachers in their response regarding the condition of the physical environment, they said that, since there is no enough playing equipment, they are forced to allow children to play one class at a time. This has created to do different schedule for each class.

Participants from the FGD said that the physical environment of their respective preschools are not suitable. Most of them said that since there are many children, the playing equipment, the toilets, hand-washing facilities, sleeping area, classroom and playing ground are not safe, functional, adequate as well as clean. Recently more children are coming to ECCE centers as much as possible the school doesn't send back children even if classrooms are full. This has created a lot of problem and stress, for the child, the other children in the classroom and the teacher. Participants said that the sleeping area and the toilets need more attention as it has become a place for diseases. Furthermore, sleeping areas are not clean, mattresses are very unclean and it smells and hence not suitable for children. Participants stressed the problem of having dedicated sleeping area for the children and they are taking naps on their desk.

FGD Participants have said the Government is thriving to open preschools for low income families in all parts of the city. As there are no church preschools anymore and private schools are very expensive low income family children are forced to stay at home. Even though the expansion of opening preschools needs to be encouraged on one hand, the quality issue is something that needs improvement on the other hand. In other words, what the standard document recommends and what is on the ground is very different- quality is very low he said.

*Table 9. Parents who believe the ECCE Clean and Organized*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Always	33	66.0
Sometimes	9	18.0
Not sure	8	16.0
Total	50	100.0

Similarly, Parents responded if the ECCE is clean and organized 66% (n=33) of them believed it is clean. Whereas 18% (9) said sometimes and 18% (8) said they are not sure (Table 7).

During the in-depth interviews, related issues that have direct impact has been discussed. At policy level, UNICEF Education Specialist said, EDPV Education Sector Development Program IV (ESDP IV) (2010-15) clearly stated that the involvement of the government will remain limited however shall continue to attempt to improve quality. There are no revised policy documents since the improvement of the ESDP IV for ECCE in 2010. However, other NGOs and International organizations are assisting continuously in school material supplies, technical guidance and training. Nevertheless he said that is not enough, there is a lot to be done.

The AAEB Expert said that the government does not allocate budget for ECCE and since many of the newly opened ECCEs are attached to the Primary School they share their resource materials. The Principals of the Primary Schools don't properly manage as they are expected.

Sub City ECCE Expert asserts that even some of the content in the standard should be revised again, especially the classroom and teacher qualification. It is difficult to teach 30-40

children with the required level detail. By nature, children need the utmost attention and follow up to make sure they are understanding what has been happening the classroom.

In all ECCE's, the observation checklist showed that most of the equipment, teaching learning materials and playing items are not up to the standard. In few schools, even though the equipment are there they are not functioning. In others, the equipment is not enough for all the kids to play and they have to wait for they turns. Overall, there is shortage, properly working and enough materials and equipment suitable for all the children.

## **4.2 Discussion**

This chapter discusses the outcomes of the study, that is, the categories of description and outcome presented in the results.

The Ethiopian National Early Childhood Care and Education curriculum is designed around the five key developmental milestones; Physical Health and Development, Social and Emotional Development, Language Development and Cognitive Development and General Knowledge. According to the curriculum even though the main teaching technique to realize the four developmental concepts it is important that it is divided into five major themes; Caring for physical development, Appropriate social relationship with others, appropriate language use, use of mathematics for daily activities and learning about environment. Focusing on "themes" enables teachers to meaningfully link different disciplines so that children will develop "big" and important ideas

A project done by Katz and Chard (2000) also supports theme based curriculum. They discuss the importance of the goals that teachers set for their students. Similarly, the goals help determine the themes that also assist in challenging the students. How a teacher explains an activity can elicit different kinds of responses from the children that can either warrant a challenge seeking perspective or a challenge avoidance perspective. Planning a theme-based

curriculum can provide a planning method that allows the theme activities to be more inclusive and coordinated-hence they are more effective a learning event.

Overall in this study teachers strictly follow the curriculum, and hence prepare their monthly, weekly and daily lesson plans. In order for executing the lesson plans, teachers use play, teaching aids, songs, puzzles etc as appropriate. Even though the curriculum guides on how to do so, there is plenty of room for creativity. Most teachers in the study said they create teaching aids and arrange classrooms regularly. Here, the key issue is how do we know if it is up to the standard? Also how safe it is for the children.

Continuous assessment was regularly conducted in the schools. The children are assessed fairly regularly and such assessment was recorded. Rewards were given for good performance. This in essence motivate the children to work harder.

Another concern was the number of child per class. As per the standard 40 student per class is allowed, however in most of the schools this standard is met. However, teachers feel that to teach 40 students is challenging especially with the limited material and time required. OECD (2013) study showed that lower child-staff ratio leads to better performance in children. During the visits in the selected schools, in most of them the classroom were generally crowded. There was no ample space for sitting and also the play corners. In some of them, wall shelves and racks are used to keep the playing materials so as to accommodate the sitting space for the children.

Relating to teachers and assistant teachers, in this study it was found that there are no called Assistant teachers, rather there are two qualified teachers per class and they share responsibility equally. So this study refer all of them as teachers. The study showed, the majority of the teachers were qualified. Though the certificate level training is adequate, according to the MoE standard, it is equally important to give continuous training, In spite of their training teachers stressed the need for continuous training. This related to an important

issue that is attached to high level qualification – increase in salary. A study by Early, et. al (2007) showed that there should be quality in preparation programs and on-going professional developments to stay abreast of new discoveries; professional growth depends on lifelong learning, degree or no degree. Therefore, it is also important to examine the quality of the ongoing professional development and support experiences available to early childhood practitioners.

Furthermore, teachers said that teaching in preschools is very demanding and requires full energy and full day job. They said that they should be given due attention and must be encouraged with higher salary and incentives.

Throughout the FGD discussions and observations, the physical infrastructure and facilities, in almost all schools don't fulfill the required minimum standard. In some, the classrooms are in fragile condition, even to the extent of where they are about to collapse any minute. In others, its too crowded, unclean and not well ventilated. Some of the classrooms are close to the toilets and teachers close the doors and windows to prevent the coming smell. This makes it very difficult for the children to get fresh air.

Inside the classrooms, children are forced to sit in a crowded spaces. In some schools, the tables provided are too high and children are always standing to use the table for writing. In most of the classroom, visual teaching materials are posted on the walls. However, the dedicated areas/corners are not present in all schools. This was mostly because of space and material shortage.

Even though, there are water facilities in some centers, there are centers that doesn't get supply regularly. This in turn compromise the cleanliness of children, classroom, toilets and compound. Even some parents mentioned that their kids are sick on regular basis. Not all schools have a dedicated sleeping area and children take naps on their desk. Those that have

sleeping rooms is very unclean, the sleeping materials are very dirty. Plus the sleeping rooms are not well ventilated and hence has very bad smell.

In the observation of the outdoor playing equipment functionality varies from school to school. It can be said that in all preschools the minimum standard is not fulfilled. However, in those schools where there is outdoor playing equipment (such as swing, marry-go-round, ladders, slides, teeter-totter), not all are functioning, either some of them are broken or out of use.

According to Caples (1996) “The better the architect understands the school’s philosophy, schedule, and operations, the more likely the design will embody the school’s fundamental goals”. As a result, it is important to examine how the physical environment influences preschoolers if it is well designed or poorly designed.

On parent’s participation, the level of parent’s participation in their children’s education was limited. Parents, in general, are given the reports about the performance of their children. However, when it comes to involvement in the management in terms of PTA was very low.

Lastly, this research has limitations. The study was primarily limited by its small sample size. The sample size could have been expanded by including more ECCE centers. An earlier start in data collection would have increased the time needed to survey more participants. More contact between the researcher and the target sample may have increased participation.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendation**

This section discusses the conclusion arrived at by reviewing the results discussed in chapter four. Subsequently recommends possible way forward that might help improve the quality of ECCE services.

### **5.1 Conclusion**

There is consensus among stakeholders that increasing enrollment in high-quality early childhood care and education will advance education outcomes later in the education cycle. This study found clear recognition of the value of preprimary education. Respondents believed that children who have attended preschool are better prepared academically and socially to enter grade one than children who have not attended preschool. Children with no preschool experience start school behind, and it is difficult for them to catch up.

Concerning following the standard ECCE curriculum, it is very encouraging as almost all teachers use it as a guide and also use it to assess the children. Here the issue might be, it might need regular revision and update to adjust to the need of children accordingly.

While the quality of facilities and availability of materials vary from ECCE center to another, the finding shows that ECCE center facilities are of poor quality and there are not enough materials. The majority of ECCE centers known to have a variety of materials available for classroom use, including puzzles, flash cards, art supplies, posters, and corners of the room dedicated to different subjects and activities. However, the material safety and age-appropriateness is not known. In fact, in most schools, teachers develop materials with locally available, low cost materials as part of their training courses. These materials are not sufficient to maintain an adequate supply for their students.

Lack of qualified teachers is a major obstacle to expanding quality preschool education. Lack of teachers, and particularly lack of trained teachers, as a major impact in

the teaching and learning process. Current training opportunities are inadequate and diverse training modalities will need to be considered to meet the demands.

There is variation in physical facilities, specifically in the availability and quality of classrooms, playgrounds, and toilets. Many service providers complained about a severe shortage of classroom space and poor quality of school buildings. Playgrounds are not always available or in poor condition.

Parental perceptions of quality of ECCE have an impact on demand and enrollment. Though many schools in this study lack appropriate (and adequate) play and educational materials and supplies and are often overcrowded. They also lack qualified teachers. Parent stated that good preschools need to be clean, have nice facilities and plenty of materials, and be staffed by skilled teachers. If parents see that preschools in their community are overcrowded, in poor condition, and taught by unqualified teachers, they do not see any benefit to enrolling their children.

In summary, this study clearly showed the presence of challenges to meet the desired quality in ECCE. The major components that comprise quality in ECCE; curriculum, teacher's qualification, teaching and learning process and physical infrastructure and facility are highly compromised. However, the benefits of ECCE for the children are abundant and have the potential to produce high rates of return in the long term.

## 5.2 Recommendation

Since early childhood has a positive influence on the educational development of the children in later life, it is therefore important that it should be based on sound foundations.

On the basis of the conclusion made above the researcher forwards the following suggestions:

- The government should put quality and safety control monitoring system in the teaching materials created by the teachers
- The government should employ well trained teachers in the ECCE
- In-Service training should be regularly organized for these teachers by government, NGO or other institutions
- The government should establish effective control over the formation of the ECCE
- Facilities in the schools should be regularly monitored and inspected by the Ministry of Education or Sub City ECCE Bureaus
- Parents and community should be given opportunities to participate in some of the school programmes

## References

- Allen K.E., & Schwartz, I.S. (1996). *The exceptional child: Inclusion in early childhood education* (3rd ed.). Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers.
- Allison, N. (1999). Pre-k possibilities. *American School & University*, 71, 106-108.
- Ashiabi, G. S. (2007). *Play in the preschool classroom: Its socioemotional significance and the teacher's role in play*. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35(2).
- Bailey, D. B. & Wolery, M. (1992). *Teaching infants and preschoolers with disabilities* (2nd ed.). New York: Merrill.
- Barrett, A. M. and L. Tikly. "Education quality: Research priorities and approaches in the global era", *Changing Educational Landscapes 4*, edited by Dimitris Mattheou, pp. 185-206. Netherlands: Springer, 2010.
- Barnet, W.S., 2006. *Research on benefits of preschool education. Securing high returns from pre-school for all children*. New York; National Institute for Early Education Research.
- Björklid, P. (2005). Learning and physical environment. Stockholm: Myndigheten for Skolutveckling.
- Boone, S. (2003). Emergent curriculum and kindergarten readiness. *Child Education*, 79, 194-199.
- Bruner, J., Jolly, A. and Sylva, K. (eds) (1976) *Play: Its role in development and evolution*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Burchinal, M. R., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. M., & Howes, C. (2002). Caregiver training and classroom quality in child care centers. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6, 2-11.
- California Department of Education, Child Development Division, & West Ed. (2008). *The California Preschool Learning Foundations, 1*, Sacramento, California: CDE Press
- Caples, S.E. (1996). Some guidelines for preschool design. *Young Children*, 51, 14-21.
- Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) (2006). "Why is High-Quality Child Care Essential? The link between Quality Child Care and Early Learning", *Lessons in Learning*, CCL, Ottawa.

- Clayton, M.K., & Forton, M.B. (2001). *Classroom spaces that work*. Greenfield, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Colby, J. (2000). *Learning outcomes in international context. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society*. San Antonio, Texas, March, 2000.
- Dearing *et al.* (2009), “Does Higher Quality Early Child Care Promote Low-Income Children’s Math and Reading Achievement in Middle Childhood?”, *Child Development*, Vol. 80, No. 5
- Delors, J., I. Al Mufti, I. Amagi, R. Carneiro, F. Chung, B. Geremek, W. Gorham, A. Kornhauser, M. Manley, M. Padrón Quero, M. A. Savané, K. Singh, R. Stavenhagen, M. W. Suhr, and Z. Nanzhao(1996). *Learning: The treasure within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first century*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Dodge, D. T. (1995). The importance of curriculum in achieving quality child day care programs. *Child Welfare*, 74, 1171-1188.
- Dukes, C., & Lamar-Dukes, P. (Jan/Feb 2009). Inclusion by design: Engineering inclusive practices in secondary schools. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 41(3), 16-23.
- Early, D., Maxwell, K., Burchinal, M., Alva, S., Bender, R., Bryant, D., et al. (2007) Teachers’ Education, Classroom Quality, and Young Children’s Academic Skill: Results from Seven Studies of Preschool Programs. *Child Development*. 78 (2), 558-580
- EFA Global Monitoring Report Team (2004). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005. The Quality Imperative*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Education International (2009). *Pan-African Early Childhood Education seminar: Theme: “Quality Early Childhood Education: Every Child’s Right*. Brussels Education International
- Education International (2010). *Early Childhood Education: A Global Scenario*. Brussels, Education International
- Engel, J. (2010) Ethiopia’s progress in education: A rapid and equitable expansion of access. *Development Progress Stories*. London: Overseas Development Institute 1-29.

- Fraenkel, J. R. & Wallen, N. E. (2009). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (7th ed.). San Francisco: McGraw-Hill.
- Gandini, L. (2002). The story and foundations of the Reggio Emilia approach. In V.R. Fu, A.J. Stremmel, & L. T. Hill (Eds.), *Teaching and learning: Collaborative exploration of the Reggio Emilia approach* (pp.13-21). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill.
- Göncü, A. and Gaskins, S. (eds) (2007) *Play and Development: Evolutionary, sociocultural and functional perspectives*, Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Greenman, J. (1988). *Caring spaces, learning places: Children's environments that work*. Redmond, WA: Exchange Press Inc.
- Hancock B. (2002). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research, Trent Focus Group*  
University of Nottingham, UK
- Howes, C., J. James and S. Ritchie (2003), "Pathways to effective teaching", *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Vol. 18.
- Johansson, I., and A. Sandberg. 2010. Learning and Participation – Two Interrelated Key-concepts in the Preschool. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 18, no. 2: 229-242.
- Katz, L. G. & Chard, S. C. (2000). *Engaging children's minds: The project approach*, Second Ed. Stamford, Connecticut: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Kentucky State Dept. of Education. (1991). *Physical environment: planning a supportive environment. Kentucky preschool programs technical assistance paper number 4*. Frankfort. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.ED379102)
- Lauritzen, P. (1992). Facilitating integrated teaching and learning in the preschool settings: A process approach. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 7, 531-550.
- Lonning, R. A., Defranco, T. C., & Weinland, T. P. (1998). Development of theme-based, interdisciplinary, integrated curriculum: A theoretical model. *School Science and Mathematics*, 98(6), 312-318.
- M. Q. Patton (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Manning, J. (2005) 'Re-discovering Froebel: a call to re-examine his life and gifts',  
*Early Childhood Education Journal*, vol. 32, no. 6, pp. 371–6.
- Melear, C.T., & Lunsford, E. (2007). Worms cultivate our curriculum: A long-term, them  
based unit. *Science Activities*, 40, 48-55.
- Miller, L., Soler, J. and Woodhead, M. (2003) 'Shaping early childhood education' in  
J.Maybin and M.Woodhead (eds.), *Childhoods in Context*, Childhood Vol 2, Chichester,  
Wiley/Open University.
- Moore, G.T. (1996). How big is too big? How small is too small? *Child Care  
Information Exchange*, 110, 21-24.
- Morrison, G.S. (2001). *Early Childhood Education today*. 8th Ed. Upper Saddle River, New  
Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Ministry of Education(2007), '*General Education Quality Improvement Program  
(GEQIP) 2008/09–2012/13 (2001–2005 E.C.) Program Document*', Federal Democratic  
Republic of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Ministry of Education (2010) *National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care  
and Education*. (Addis Ababa: Government of Ethiopia).
- Ministry of Education (2010) *Strategic Operation Plan for Early Childhood Care and  
Education for Ethiopia*. (Addis Abba: Government of Ethiopia).
- Ministry of Education (2013) *Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2001/2*. Addis  
Ababa: Government of Ethiopia.
- NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, (1996). Characteristics of Infant Child  
Care: Factors Contributing to Positive Caregiving. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 11,  
269-306
- Nutbrown, C., Clough, P. and Selbie, P. (2008) *Early Childhood Education: History,  
philosophy and experience*, London, Sage.
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2001) *Starting  
Strong: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2004) *Starting Strong: Curricula and pedagogies in early childhood education*

- and care, Five curriculum outlines*, Paris, OECD.
- OECD (2013). *Education Indicators in Focus*. Paris, OECD
- OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education Care: Finland 2012*.  
Paris, OECD
- OECD (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris OECD
- OECD (2013). Retrieved from [www.oecd.org/educ/earlychildhood](http://www.oecd.org/educ/earlychildhood), on 14 Nov 2013
- Orkin, K. (2012) Are work and schooling complementary or competitive for children in rural Ethiopia? A mixed-methods study. *In: Bourdillon, M. and Boyden, J. (Eds.) Childhood Poverty: Multidisciplinary Approaches*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 298-315.
- Orkin, K., Abebe, W., Yadete and Woodhead, M. (2012). *Delivering quality early learning in low-resource settings: Progress and challenges in Ethiopia. Working Paper No. 59, Studies in Early Childhood Transitions*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation
- Patton M. Q., (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Sage Publications, UK
- Piaget, J. (1951) *Play Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*, London, Routledge
- Prescott, E. (1997). 3 keys to flexible room arrangement. *Child Care Information Exchange*, 9, 48-50.
- Pramling Samuelsson, I., D. Sommer, and K. Hundeide. (2011). *Child perspectives and Children's Perspectives in Theory and Practice*. Stockholm: Liber
- Regional Education Indicators Project (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.prie.oas.org> & <http://www.unesco.org/santiago>, on 14 Nov 2013
- Rolnick, A. and R. Grunewald, 2003. *Early Childhood development: Economic development with a high public return*. Fedqazette.
- Sammons, P. (2010) "The EPPE Research Design: an educational effectiveness focus"  
in: Sylva *et al.* (eds.), *Early Childhood Matters: Evidence from the Effective Pre-school and Primary Education project*, Routledge, London/New York.
- Sheridan, S. (2009), "Discerning pedagogical quality in preschool", *Scandinavian*

*Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 53, No. 3

- Sigel, I.E. (1999). *Development of mental representation: Theories and applications*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, Mahwah, New Jersey.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2010), in Sylva *et al.* (eds.), *Early Childhood Matters: Evidence from the Effective Pre-school and Primary Education project*, Routledge, London/New York.
- Thurmann, E. & Otten, E. (1995). The encounter with languages in the elementary school and intercultural education. *European Education*, 27, 93-111
- UNESCO (2000). *The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for all: Meeting our collective commitments*. Paris, UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2004). *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2005: The quality imperative*. Paris: UNESCO, 2004.
- UNESCO (2010). *Country-Case Studies on Early Childhood Care and Education in selected sub-Saharan African Countries 2007/2008: Some Key Teacher Issues and Policy Recommendations*. Addis Ababa, UNESCO
- UNESCO (2013). *Education Sector Technical Notes: Early Childhood Care and Education*. Paris, UNESCO
- UNESCO, UNICEF(2012), *Asia-Pacific, End of Decade Note on Education for all; Quality Education*. Bangkok, UNESCO
- UN General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York: United Nations, 1989.
- UNICEF(2000). *Defining Quality in Education*. New York: UNICEF, 2000. Available at: <http://www.unicef.org/education/files/QualityEducation.PDF>
- UNICEF (2013). Retrieved from [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/early\\_childhood\\_20592.html](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/early_childhood_20592.html), on 14 Nov 2013
- UNICEF (2010). *Child Friendly Schools: A Case Study*. Addis Ababa, UNICEF
- United States Agency for International Development and General Education Quality

- Assurance and Examinations Agency, 'Ethiopia National Learning Assessment Draft Report', USAID and GEQAEA, Washington, D.C., and Addis Ababa, 2008 (Unpublished).
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1967) 'Play and its role in the mental development of the child', *Soviet Psychology*, vol. 5, pp. 6–17. (Original work published 1933.)
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1998) *The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky. Volume 5: Child psychology*, New York, NY, Springer.
- Wolery, M. (2004). Assessing children's environments. In M. McLean, M. Wolery, & D. B. Bailey Jr. (Eds.), *Assessing infants and preschoolers with special needs* (pp. 204-235). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill.
- Wood, E. (2010) 'Developing integrated pedagogical approaches to play and learning' in Broadhead, 3P., Howard, J. and Wood, E. (eds) *Play and Learning in the Early Years*, London, Sage.
- Zajda, J., Bacchus, K., & Kach, N. (Eds.). (1995). *Excellence and Quality in Education*. Australia: James Nicholas Publishers Pvt Ltd.

## **Appendices**

Teacher's Questionnaire

Parent's Questionnaire

In-Depth Interview

FGD Guide