

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRESCHOOL POLICY AT SCHOOL-BASED  
GRADE R CLASSES OF SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTHERN REGION OF ETHIOPIA**

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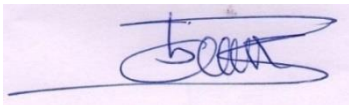
## **DECLARATION**

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## **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRESCHOOL POLICY AT SCHOOL-BASED GRADE R CLASSES OF SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTHERN REGION OF ETHIOPIA**

I declare that the above dissertation/ thesis is my work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged using complete references.

SIGNATURE



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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to:

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## **ABSTRACT**

*While visiting preschools in rural areas of the southern region of Ethiopia, I became aware of the early childhood education (ECE) problems that emanated from ECE policy and its implementation. The problems I observed included that the school building was not well constructed for it had broken doors and windows, unclean and narrow rooms and the school campus had not enough space to allow kids to play freely. In addition, there were no learning materials and playground facilities and teachers did not have qualifications at all. From my subsequent observations that I had made with other preschools in a rural area, I observed the same problems. This situation triggered me to carry out this research. The overall purpose of this study was to establish the nature of ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in southern Ethiopia. To achieve this aim, I employed the qualitative descriptive design for it helped me to capture and describe in-depth views, perceptions, meanings and practices of ECE policy practitioners. The major theories that informed this study are maturation, learning and interaction theories that promote holistic development of children via ECE programmes. There were 38 purposively selected subjects who participated in the study. The findings of the study revealed that practitioners had a lack of knowledge about policy implementation and did not teach correctly in the classrooms. Teachers taught Grade R with inadequate material resources and support; there was a lack of policy guidelines, standards, common curriculum, teamwork and supervision. Based on the findings, I recommended an interaction model of policy implementation that integrates bottom-up and top-down approaches to promote positive and active interplay between the policy managers at the top and implementers at the local level.*

**KEY TERMS**

Early childhood education or preschool education

Ethiopian early childhood education

Education policy implementation

Policy framework

## ACRONYMS

ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
MoE	Ministry of Education
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
HoDs	Heads of Department
DEOs	District Education Officers
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1. Introduction**

Developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom have benefited much from the success of Early Childhood Education (ECE) through the effective implementation of the ECE policy by improving the quality of their education. However, Ethiopia's failure to use the merits of quality ECE is entrenched in the educational system of Ethiopia in general and unsuccessful implementation of ECE policy in particular (Tirsew, 2005:67-68; Tasew, 2011:12).

The development of education policies including other social policies is primarily regarded as the role of government towards the welfare of its citizens (Hill, 2003:20-37). This definition indicates the fact that the ECE policy implementation is a complex process in which both the government and other partners take an active part. In this research, the concern is about the implementation of ECE policy at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. Through discussing the best practices in ECE policy implementation, this study was added on the existing knowledge in ECE and development.

### **1.2. Awareness of the problem**

In many different countries around the world, the implementation of ECE policy is challenged by multiple factors including the absence of policy that guides this sector of education, lack of awareness about the importance of ECE and inaccessibility of ECE to the vast majority of children in the rural areas as well as children of urban dwellers with low income. Also, the prevailing ECE programmes lack some of the quality indicators such as developmental appropriateness, cultural responsiveness in terms of relevant materials, resources, activities and trained personnel to mention a few (Tirusew, 2005: 67-72; Mtahabwa, 2010:353-364).

To discern the existence of the ECE policy implementation problem, it is imperative and logical to review the related literature starting from a global overview of the problem proceeding to the regional and then to Ethiopia.

Research evidence reveals that many Asian countries in East Asia and Southeast Asia as well as Latin America experienced the following obstacles in implementing ECE policies that include inaccessibility of ECE programmes to particularly rural children, unequal opportunities to all children, irrelevance of ECE programmes in terms of the relevance of curriculum, materials and qualified teachers (UNESCO, 2014:29-38; Mark, 2010:49-64).

Research made on ECE policy implementation in the African context in countries such as Senegal, Kenya and Tanzania identified gaps in ECE policy implementation, which include many underlying causes that deter towards ECE equity such as high attrition rates of students, teacher shortage, poor infrastructure and materials, inaccessibility of ECE to rural and remote areas and stigmas surrounding marginalised groups among others (Kamara, 2005:105-114; Walter, 2015:55-69).

In the Ethiopian context, I made a careful observation and examination of the ECE policy implementation that can be put as follows. Based on the lessons I learnt from the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994:1-33) about the importance of ECE, the policy declares that “Preschool education focuses on the all-round development of children through providing and expanding basic education for all children” (TGE, 1994:7). The education policy document also states that the ultimate aim of ECE is preparing young children for formal schooling (TGE, 1994:14). The Education Policy is in implementation since 1994. Later, even though only a few studies have been conducted in the local context, several problems impeding the implementation of policy have been identified and reported by different researchers (Habtamu, 1996:104-114; Tirusew, 2005:39-44; Tasew, 2011:7-12).

In one of my first visits to a private preschool located in a rural district, I observed there was a low participation of children because only 120 children out of 4000 children eligible for preschool were absorbed which was very low in terms of accessibility. Secondly, there was only one private preschool in the district. Thirdly, there was limited training of educators for about thirty percent (30%) of the educators did not have any form of professional training. Lastly, the school principal reported that the participation of the community was very low. According to Education Statistics Abstract (MoE, 2016:



18-22), out of an estimated 7.51 million children of the appropriate age group (4 -6 years), only about 1.62 million have been reported to have access to ECE all over the country. This indicates that the enrolment is smaller (only 21.6%) when compared to the appropriate age group.

For the second time, I had the opportunity to participate in an annual education forum held at a local district level organised by the district education department office. This great opportunity gave me the chance to observe and experience some hindering factors in the implementation of ECE policy at the grassroots level. Firstly, there was low value and priority given to ECE by the government as well as the community. Secondly, there was unawareness of the importance of ECE on the part of the community and government bodies. Thirdly, private preschools were very expensive, thus, inaccessible for the majority of rural and urban children. Fourthly, the existing preschools have diversified curriculum isolated from one another, thus, lack mutual interaction, dialogue and cooperation. Furthermore, there were inadequate playground facilities in many preschools.

In general, based on the literature review made at a global, regional and local level, there was a host of impeding factors for the effective implementation of ECE policy including a very limited establishment of preschools, inaccessibility of ECE to all children both in rural and urban areas, inadequate training of qualified teachers, lack of awareness about the significance of preschool education on the part of the community at large, lack of attention and support by the government, shortage of finance and educational materials. Hence, a meticulous investigation was made on the ECE policy implementation in the southern region of Ethiopia.

### **1.3. Theoretical framework**

In modern society, it is believed that education plays a key role in national development and there is a need to maintain every level of education especially the pre-primary stage because it is the foundation upon which all other educational levels build. Once a child misses that early stage education, usually, it is difficult for the learner to get back to the basics in his/her academic career. As a result, ECE is a common practice in most

societies; they set policy and make provisions of ECE programmes of various types for children below the official school age (usually seven years) mainly to prepare them for the rigours of primary education and beyond (Obiweluzor, 2015:3-12). In line with this assertion, some research evidence shows that ECE has a positive influence on children's affective, conceptual and social development in later years (Gormley, Phillips & Dawson, 2005:872-884; Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003: 209-223; Aggarwal, 1994:55-67; Tasew, 2011:7-12).

However, it should be noted that everyone is not in support of ECE. For instance, Cockburn (1998:99-117) held the view that young children are immature and inactive enough to learn complex tasks or skills that are required of them in the early years. Also, children are only valued more for their future as adults than for their present lives as children. Besides, the mother's love and warmth are more vital than any educational programmes.

Despite the different perspectives on ECE among scholars, the National Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994:14) of Ethiopia stressed the importance of ECE even though it is not given priority and excluded in mainstream education. Instead, it is an area left for private investors and non-governmental organisations and for parents who can afford to pay the fees. Further, it states that this does not, however, mean that the government does not take part in the implementation of the ECE policy at all. Indirectly, the government supports the initiative for private kindergartens by preparing the curriculum, supporting the training of kindergarten teachers and encouraging such investors by offering land at minimal lease rates (Habtu, 2012:18-21; MoE, 2016:18-22).

The issue of policy making and its implementation in which the government and other partners interacted has been the topic of discussion and argument for many years from different perspectives (Cohen, Moss, Petrie & Wallace, 2004:38-40). It is important to note that social policies can be determined by objectives other than public wellbeing and that other policies, not necessarily recognised as social policies and these can contribute to the welfare of a society (Hill, 2003:120-127; Roberts, 2011:101-113). Current debates focus on the provision of quality of services that are effective in ECE to our children (Davis, 2012:36-50; Gananathan, 2015:75-80). As we examine the issue,

we noticed that the concepts “care” and “education” have played a great role in informing service provision for children in the past and have a consequence for practitioners both in schools and elsewhere.

The key question explored in the issue of ECE policy is whether a practice has evolved as the result of political and economic convenience or it is based on a belief about ways of best fostering young children’s development and potential (Edgington, 2004:135-149; Rogers & Rose, 2007:47-63; Joseph, 2014:89-101). Regarding young children and social policy, children are encompassed across all fields of social policy (Pinkney, 2000:29-34). Yet, they are frequently remaining hidden, seen only as members of a family and reliant on adults. When children are included in debates, they are seen as objects rather than subjects of social policy. Hendrick (2003:83-97) points out that in social policy, discourses on children are limited to three distinct roles: as a victim, as a threat or as an investment. Even feminists, who made women visible in social policy analysis, often appear to have a blind spot concerning children (Skevic, 2003:423-440). Although there is a growing body of empirical research knowledge that demonstrates children as active in contributing to and in constructing social life (James & Prout, 1997:53-69; Christenson & James, 2000:233-243; Hallet & Prout, 2003:72-93), they remain largely invisible. Education and child protection are exceptions. The language used in educational policies describes children as future adults, employees and parent investments.

In understanding the relationship between the government and the welfare of its citizens, it is imperative to observe how policies are made and implemented. In this regard, the adoption of two policies and their implementation perspectives are useful (Hill, 2003:160-171) in describing the relationship. One is the top-down perspective meaning the people who implement policies doing what they are told to do. If not, why not? The other one is the bottom-up perspective. These people implement policies and think that policies are appropriate. Taking these two perspectives, we can observe tensions between the policy makers and professionals, between intended outcomes and unintended effects. The critical analysis on conflicting intentions results in an understanding of processes and actions that help us to see where the tensions lie and

where change may be facilitated or resisted (Cohen et al, 2004:38-40; OECD, 2006b:62-79; Lee, 2012:121-143). The different policy implementation approaches were discussed in detail in chapter three.

When implementing the process of educational policies, the parties who implement the policy include local authorities, education officers, advisors, school administrators, classroom teachers and other members. The analysis of the implementation of ECE policy shows a more complicated relationship among the government, policy makers and the welfare of young children. In addition, it is the result of a muddle of factors: of stated intentions unsupported by financial commitment, of different implementation issues at a local level and of complex relationships with other social and educational policies that interact dynamically (DfES, 2003:117-126; Rogers & Rose, 2007:47-63; Ang, 2012:87-100). Notably, the implementation of policies for ECE remains a subject of discussion in educational circles.

Researchers have contributed to the understanding of ECE and the theories that guide and influence the implementation of ECE today. In this study, three learning theoretical frameworks have been employed which explain the implementation of ECE namely the maturation theory, the learning theory and the interaction theory (Hassan, 2004:31-59; Robson, 2006:247-351; Willian, Parker-Rees & Savage, 2007:122-139). The three learning theoretical frameworks that have direct application in ECE were discussed below.

### **1.3.1. The maturation learning theory**

The maturation learning theory is based on the basic assumption that children's learning and development are primarily determined by biological or natural factors. The proponent of the maturation theory was Amold Gesell who introduced it in 1925 and was credited as its founder. Other advocates include Erikson (1950:7-12) and Dewey (1944:50-57).The supporters of this theoretical framework did not reject the importance of factors other than biological factors in their explanation of early childhood learning such as environmental stimulation and experience. They argue that biological factors

play an important role in explaining ECE and its policy implementation (Oates, 1994:103-124; Silver & Silver, 2006:157-165; Rogers & Rose, 2007:47-67).

The implementation of ECE policy in the maturation theory is based on home and school-based intervention and improvement of children's readiness in a variety of developmental aspects including cognitive, social and emotional. The primary objectives of this theory are to promote the development of emotionally healthy and competent young children and providing parenting instruction and support to low-income parents with limited formal education. These objectives are implemented both through the home-based and school-based programmes that include enhancing children's feelings of competence and self-esteem through making learning meaningful to them by using their experiences and interests (Robson, 2006:47-61; Roger & Rose, 2007:147-267).

In explaining ECE and its policy implementation, maturation theory argues for the creation of a supportive environment in which the child's natural potentialities and characteristics such as curiosity and desire for competence are allowed to develop at an optimal level. Besides, the maturation theory focuses on the development of school readiness. The term *school readiness* refers to the idea that most children, upon entry into kindergarten, have achieved a developmental level that enables them to adapt to formal schooling and achieve later academic success (Mayall, 2002:71-79; Ajay, 2005: 119-145; Fisher & Goodley, 2007: 66-81).

The main purpose of the ECE programmes in the implementation of ECE policy inspired by the maturation theory is to create a supportive and conducive environment for children so that the child's natural potential such as curiosity and desire for capability will be allowed to cultivate and develop to the maximum. In line with the purpose of ECE, the role of the teachers in the implementation of ECE policy in this model is facilitation and guidance of each child's learning and social development by creating a supportive, nurturing context, providing an emotionally safe environment, one in which children feel secure and competent enough to explore and learn through playing (Hassan, 2004:59-65; Robson, 2006:28-41; Carpendale & Lewis, 2006:109-132).

A curriculum is a basic part of any education programme, which consists of a set of courses and experiences that learners acquire through the learning process. Also, the curriculum serves as a guideline for education policy implementation to achieve the intended educational objectives (Obiweluozer, 2015:15-21). The curriculum within the maturation theory can best be described as child-centred, one in which the contents and methodology of a curriculum are determined by both children's maturation level and their interests. There is also an emphasis on the readiness of children during the implementation of ECE policy in children to lead their activities based on their interests. In all, the curriculum in this model is designed to facilitate each child's competency at his or her current level of functioning rather than pushing children to learn or perform beyond their current abilities as suggested by different scholars (Lindon, 2006:7-14; Brown, 2007:70-82).

In summary, the programmes employed for the implementation of ECE policy in the maturation framework focus on improving children's school readiness in a child-directed way and the facilitation of the development of self-esteem and feelings of competency in a variety of developmental aspects such as cognitive, social and emotional domains.

### **1.3.2. The learning theory**

Learning theory has emphasised factors other than biological ones such as environmental stimulation and experience in facilitating and explaining ECE. According to the upholders of this theory, the learning process is viewed as a change in behaviour of learners in which the environment is organised in such a manner that it is suitable to draw out desirable responses through such devices as behavioural objectives, competency-based learning, skill development and training. Skinner (1953:14-21), along Watson (1878 -1958) and Pavlov (1849-1936) are pioneers of modern learning theory. Skinner discovered operant learning; Pavlov discovered classical learning and Watson developed behaviourism that lay the basis for applied behaviour analysis, which uses analysed antecedents, replacement behavior strategies and reinforcement to change learner's behaviour (Irons, 2012::302 -327).

The advocates of this theory argue that environmental factors are the most important in explaining ECE and its policy implementation (Daniel, Wassel & Gilligan 1999:77-84; Billington, 2006:146-157). In contrast to the maturation theory, the learning theory is founded on the belief that children's development in the implementation of educational policy can be best understood and explained through their experiential backgrounds that emanated from their interaction with the environment including cultural transmissions, language and social factors among others. The implementation of educational policies is checked across through educational methods, which entail applied behaviour analysis, curriculum-based measurement and direct observation (Hall & Elliman, 2004:143-155; Smith, Cowie & Blade, 2003:92-103).

The purpose of any ECE programme derived from any learning theories is to change behaviour or transmit information in the most observable and measurable manner. In the realisation of the purpose of the ECE programme, the implementation of its policy involves a curriculum which typically includes pre-academic and academic skills. Also, it includes the teacher's role which requires them to possess a strong understanding of the basic principles of behavioural analysis including breaking down longer tasks into smaller components, reinforcing appropriate behaviour by employing environmental stimuli such as reward or punishment and providing models of the desired behaviour. The objective of this programme is to ensure they are met through a highly structured technique such as teacher-directed instruction, programmed instruction, active and interactive learning between the individual child and the teacher (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004:19-30; CWDC, 2007:10-24; Hasan, 2004:41-47).

In a nutshell, ECE programmes based on the learning theory emphasise the application of environmental consequences that reinforces the learnt behaviour with reward or punishment in the implementation of ECE policy (Keenan, 2002:1-10; Cunningham, 2006:39-48).

### **1.3.3. The interaction learning theory**

Interaction learning theory is based on the belief that the source for cognitive change is the interaction between internal processes (maturation) and external experiences

(learning), hence the development and implementation of ECE policy should take this process into account. Although this view acknowledges the roles of both maturation and environmental factors, it is their interaction that provides the essential component for developmental changes and policy execution (Aggarwal, 2000:70-81; Robson, 2006: 78-120). The assumptions inherent in the interaction theory are rooted in the developmental theory of Jean Piaget (1964:7-20) who is considered as the proponent of interaction learning theory. Many discussions have been continued concerning the educational implication and application of Piaget's theory for classroom instruction. These discussions are limited to three theoretical aspects that have particular relevance to ECE policy implementation. These are the sources of developmental change, types of knowledge and constructivism (Corsaro, 2005:7-21; Habtu, 2012:18-21).

In Piagetian's viewpoint, developmental changes may be attributed to five sources: maturation, experience, cultural and educational transmission, social factors and equilibration which have a direct application for ECE policy implementation.

Maturation refers to abilities that have a strong biological basis and implies children's school readiness. Experience refers to two types of activities: manipulating physical objects and observing their properties which promote physical knowledge and concluding from experiences, which entail logic and mathematical knowledge. Cultural and educational transmission refers to instruction, both direct and indirect, whereas the idea of social factors implies the importance of social heritage. Therefore, experiences with physical, educational and social affairs are acknowledged as essential external processes for development and ECE policy implementation. However, it is through the internal process of equilibration or self-regulation that enables the child to make sense out of those experiences (Christensen & James, 2000:40-70; Hallet & Prout, 2003:12-21; DfES, 2007a:19-26).

The second theoretical aspect related to the execution of ECE policy is the types of knowledge children acquire during early childhood years. It encompasses physical (knowledge about physical properties of objects), social (knowledge based on cultural heritage and community practices) and logical-mathematical (knowledge based on logic and systems of rules and relationships). These types of knowledge are aspects of child



development and provide implications and interventions for the intellectual, physical, social, moral and emotional development of children which is the main function of the ECE policy (Edwards & Rose, 1994:42-47; Sutherland, 1992:98-112; Robson, 2006:33-44).

The third theoretical assumption is constructivism, which refers to the acquisition of logical-mathematical knowledge. It is the type of knowledge that must be created by each child from his/her experiences. This type of knowledge promotes creativity in children. It is based on cognitive psychology and an approach to education that emphasises the ways knowledge is created in children to adapt to their environment. Constructivism implies the implementation of ECE policy in classroom instruction. It calls for active learning, discovery learning and knowledge building which promotes children's free exploration to discover principles for themselves and construct knowledge by working to solve practical problems (Siraj Blatchford & Sylva, 2004:19-30; Jeffrey & Woods, 2003:15-22; Craft, 2005:11-30).

In explaining the execution of ECE policy, the learning theories have evolved out of the wish to improve the educational performance of economically deprived children during the 1960s. The three learning theories have generated different programmes of ECE with specific objectives, curriculum content, teacher's role and teaching methods. Since the 1960s, there has been the application of the single, best theoretical approach in explaining the implementation of ECE programmes. However, the theoretical approach has changed since the 1970s from the application of the single best theoretical approach to the theoretical plurality, where different theories are applied in the study of ECE programme implementation. Put differently, there has been a practical shift into an ecological perspective, the recognition of the natural potentials of children, their families and the cultural context in which they live (Hendrick, 2003:13-34; Penn, 2005:1-10; WHO, 2007:33-45).

In summary, in the implementation of ECE policy, the programmes functioning within the interaction model share a fundamental consensus in the necessity of active, self-directed, independent and manipulation of materials by the children for the construction of new knowledge.

#### **1.4. Dissemination of the problem**

The appropriate implementation of the ECE policy provides an opportunity for all children to realise their development potential to the optimum and fulfilment of their needs through overcoming various developmental, educational, health, social and economic problems at early years of development. However, if the ECE policy is not implemented properly, it is difficult to make early interventions of child problems and this could escalate the problems to the level that it is not easy to overcome later in life (Tirusew, 2005: 21-31). In general, the ineffective implementation of ECE policy can have the following negative implications on preschool children: it can hamper children's acquisition of basic social skills, knowledge and attitudes that promote better adjustment in later life and it does not provide a better chance for children in completing basic education and pursue primary and secondary education by reducing grade repetition and dropout rates. Also, it can reduce the quality of education and equal opportunity to be successful in school work for all children. It can weaken the learning foundation particularly for the poor and disadvantaged children through providing less quality education, health, nutrition, care and stimulation. Besides, it may promote unequal opportunity for all children to ECE by exposing them to unfair practices such as discrimination in terms of social class, ethnicity, gender and ability (Ridge, 2002:52-66; Nutbrown & Clough, 2006:83-92; Brown, 2007:46-50).

In this study, the following three learning theoretical approaches were considered. These are:

- 1) The exclusively classroom-based nature of the maturation model of learning programme separates a child from the rest of the child's lives, has evolved into the realisation that a contextual approach, one that includes families, peers and other members of the community are more effective.
- 2) It is believed that economically disadvantaged, minority poor children were culturally different in terms of their culture, language skills and abilities in countries like Ethiopia with over eighty ethnic groups where education access, quality and equity are not ensured among all ethnic groups. Therefore, there is a

need to design different programmes that serve culturally diverse learning contexts, style language and value systems.

- 3) Different theoretical learning models have been applied in this study. Applying different ECE theoretical learning models enables to examine different aspects of early childhood education programmes. The maturation learning model has been applied to assess the aspect of children's school readiness. The learning theory has been applied to examine children's learning experiences and information they have acquired. Also, it is used to evaluate the curriculum content, instructional methods and teacher's role in promoting children's learning. The interaction theory has been applied to examine children's learning skills, independent and problem-solving skills, creativity, logical thinking and/or representational thinking (Tirusew, 2005:45-58; Tasew, 2011:9-16).

### **1.5. Statement of the problem**

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia launched an integrated national Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy and Strategic Framework (Developmental Social Welfare Policy) in 1996. The policy requires a collaborative effort by all subdivisions in achieving the overall goal of promoting early stimulation, health care and early education for all children to ensure their readiness for formal schooling (MoE, 2005: 32-38). However, the implementation of the ECE policy is hampered by a host of problems including the inaccessibility of preschool education to the vast majority of rural children, lack of awareness and participation on the part of the community at large, lack of strong support by the government, lack of qualified teachers, lack of experts in the area and very poor curriculum and pedagogy (Tirusew, 2005:67-72; Tasew, 2011:12-21).

The effective implementation of the ECE policy is directly related to successful teaching and learning strategies. Research conducted by Choudhury (2002: 50-88) and National Audit Office (2004:24-40) shows that investments in childhood programmes are based on findings that indicate a positive link between the implementation of quality programmes in the early years and children's academic outcomes. This fact suggests

that a good implementation strategy of ECE policy and its associated regulations is related to the development of good ECE programmes. The question that arises could be as follows:

**Research question:**

In what way is the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994: 1-33) implemented at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia?

**Sub questions:**

1. What does the preschool policy Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994:1-33) entail about the preschool sector?
2. How is the ECE policy at school-based Grade R classes implemented in terms of contents and context?
3. Which factors impede ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes?
4. What are the views of the practitioners of ECE policy at school-based Grade R classes?
5. Which strategies are regarded as best practices in ECE policy implementation?

**The aim of the study**

This study aimed to establish the nature of policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.

To achieve the aim, the following secondary aims were accomplished:

**Secondary aims**

- 1) To discuss the ECE policy as explained in the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994) document.
- 2) To explain views about ECE policy implementation.
- 3) To discuss effective strategies for ECE policy implementation
- 4) To establish the views of preschool teachers about the implementation
- 5) To outline factors that may impede ECE policy implementation.

## **1.6. Significance of the study**

ECE is a foundation for overall human development. Thus, assessing the ECE policy implementation process provides a very clear picture regarding the quality of ECE itself. The result of this study suggested the model that can be employed to improve the implementation of ECE policy for our children in Ethiopia (Tirusew, 2005:67-72). Hence, ECE education is of great significance mainly due to the reasons listed below.

The preschool age is the most impressionable in one's life. Whatever children learn at this age gets so deeply and embedded in a child that it becomes difficult to change later on. Therefore, it is the duty of adults and the community at large to provide rich and healthy experiences to the child and help her/him develop good and desirable habits, proper attitudes and behaviour (Bandura, 1977:17-29; Burner, 1983:23-39; Sutherland, 1992:71-81).

The rate of growth and development during preschool age is very rapid that the child can take in almost anything if it is given to him/her in the form in which he/she can understand it. Therefore, the more experiences or exposures we give the child at this age, the better-off are the result in later life. At no other stage is the child able to benefit as much from an enriching environment as she/he can than at the preschool stage (Blackman, 2003:4-9; Choudhury, 2002:90-92).

This study was relevant to schools in many regards. The tremendous wastage and repetition that are seen in primary grades in schools can be reduced and avoided if children who join these classes are ready in advance for formal schooling. A child who has had preschool experience before joining the primary school adjusts him/herself easily and successfully in primary classes because of his/her early preparations. Such preparation in the preschool helps the child considerably in his subsequent education. Therefore, ECE prepares a sound base for primary education. Statistical research has shown that children who have experience in early childhood or pre-primary programmes are more likely to remain in primary school and achieve better results than other children (UNESCO, 2006:104-120; Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003:79-86; Gormley, Phillips & Dawson, 2005:872-884).

Also, this study was pertinent to young children in that it uncovered how children acquire the basic life skills that would enable them to get ready and consequently be effective in primary education. The preschool year is the period of socialisation. Children love to play with other children, which they may not get at home. Moreover, during these years, the peer group becomes increasingly important to them. In a preschool, a child gets the opportunity to play with other children thus, learns to share, interact and cooperate with others. Early stimulation and educational enrichment can promote creativity in young children. It was felt that early educational intervention and instruction during the preschool years would make a difference in the children's preschool experiences (Library Congress, 2004:16-35).

Usually, the ECE policy is developed, implemented and evaluated through a consultative approach with policy makers and experts in the area of ECE to identify its focus areas which include safe and healthy education environment for children, support for vulnerable children who are at risk through poverty and health problems, provision of intervention for children with special education needs and disabilities and provide support and training for parents and the community in the areas of child development (Hansen & Hawkes, 2009:33-39). Thus, by identifying and discerning the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the implementation of the ECE policy, this study may inform policy makers to make the necessary amendments to make its implementation effective (Heggerty, 1996:70-80; Tirusew, 2005:28-38 ).

Research has shown that ECE education has a positive effect on children's subsequent levels of education later in life; therefore, the national policy on ECE should be effectively implemented by the respective members of the education department to achieve and maintain its objectives and goals (Heggerty, 1996:70-80; Blackman, 2003:4-9; Library Congress, 2004:16-35; Robson, 2006:81-100). Thus, this study informed the various departments of the Ministry of Education on the effective implementation of the policy both in urban and rural areas.

### **1.7. Scope and delimitation of the study**

This study was delimited to the southern region of Ethiopia (SNNPR) in terms of geographical demarcation. Among the reasons why this study was delimited to the southern region include the region being disadvantaged of the states in the country in terms of socio-economic status (SES), access to ECE and the quality of ECE.

Ethiopia is a multilingual and multicultural state. It hosts around 80 ethnic groups. The SNNPRS is the most diverse region in the country in that it has 56 ethno-linguistic groups and a number of administrative zones and districts. A great majority of the people speak the languages of their respective ethnic groups. Also, it is the third most populated (19.71%) region in Ethiopia next to Oromia National State (36.21%) and Amhara National Regional State (25.66%). The total population of these regions accounts for 88.56% of the country (CSA, 2007:7-20). Hence, issues of equality and equity within the region and between administrative zones and districts in the region are a matter of concern and research (Habtamu, 1996:104-109; Tasew, 2011:15-18).

In terms of theoretical delimitation, there is no single theory concerning how children develop and learn and, consequently, how they should best be taught. However, there are clusters of learning theories that share assumptions about the nature of young children's development that have given rise to programmes that are theoretically compatible. This study was delimited to three theoretical frameworks: maturationist, learning and interactionist, which are pertinent to explain the implementation of ECE policy (Hasan, 2004:34 -60; Crain, 2015:44-55).

The methodology is the general research strategy that outlines how research is to be undertaken and among other things, identifies the methods to be used in it. Also, it comprises the research approach employed, the philosophical assumptions that inform the approach and examines aspects of human life including culture, beliefs, experiences or practices and morality. Since the study aimed to establish the nature of ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia based on the practices of practitioners (teachers) at the school level, the qualitative research approach along with an interpretive paradigm and interpretive general qualitative method is appropriate and employed in this study. Therefore, this

study was methodologically delimited to the qualitative approach, interpretive general qualitative method and coding and pattern thematic data analysis (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002:717-732).

In terms of the topic, this study was delimited only to the investigation of the implementation of ECE policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.

### **1.8. Research methodology**

According to Kara (2015:4), research methodology is a general strategy which is a coherent and logical plan based on views, beliefs and values, which guide researchers to answer their research questions. It entails the research approach employed, the philosophical assumptions (paradigms) that underlie the approach and the specific methods employed to collect, analyse and interpret data. It is logical, therefore, to start with the research paradigm and then proceed to the research approach, research design and research method sequentially. Thus, the research methodology employed in this study was discussed according to the aforesaid sequence in the following paragraphs.

#### **1.8.1. Research paradigm**

Through carefully investigating the ECE policy practitioners' practices, their understandings and beliefs about policy implementation, the research aims to establish the nature of ECE policy implementation policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia. The research paradigm that is appropriate to achieve this aim is interpretivism. This assumption is typically seen as an approach to qualitative research and the aim of research within this assumption is to understand the meanings people make of phenomena; to understand the practices and experiences of people in everyday life and understand people's views and perceptions about social life. Therefore, in this study, the research participants' views, practices, experiences and perceptions about ECE policy implementation were analysed and interpreted to answer the research questions posed (Creswell, 2009:3 -8; Lincoln & Guba, 2000:163-188).



### **1.8.2. Research approach**

The type of research approach employed in any research depends on the type of questions posed to be answered among other things. Since this research is intended to describe, understand, explain participants' actions, practices, views and perceptions in ECE policy implementation, this calls for the qualitative research approach which is aimed at exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a research problem, in this case, ECE policy implementation (Creswell, 2009:232; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:37- 52).

### **1.8.3. Research design**

According to Tobi, Hilde; Kampen and Jarl (2018:1209-1225), research design refers to the overall strategy utilised to carry out research that defines a concise and logical plan to tackle established research question(s) through the collection, interpretation, analysis and discussion of data. Research design defines the study type (descriptive, correlational, semi-experimental, experimental, review, meta-analytic) and subtypes (case study, descriptive longitudinal). It also defines data collection methods and data analysis plan (Creswell, 2014:92-116). The purpose of this study was to investigate the implementation of ECE policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia. Thus, the descriptive design was appropriate to answer the research questions posed as investigation of ECE policy implementation requires careful observation of practitioner practices in the classrooms at schools. Since research designs involve the intersection of philosophical assumptions (paradigms), approaches of study and specific research methods (Creswell, 2009:233), this research design calls for interpretive paradigm, qualitative research approach and interpretive general qualitative method which were briefly described below (Marshall & Rosman, 2006:120-140; Creswell, 2008:45-59; Creswell, 2009:107-116).

### **1.8.4. Research method**

The research methods specifically define the means or modes of data collection instruments and data analysis procedures in particular research. Qualitative researchers usually gather data through observations, note-taking, interviews, focus groups (group

interviews), documents and artefacts. Qualitative researchers have several analytic strategies including coding, pattern thematic analysis and content analysis depending on the type of data gathered. In addition, contemporary qualitative data analyses can be supported by computer programmes termed *computer- assisted qualitative data analysis software*. Under the qualitative approach, among different methods, the general qualitative method was employed in this study. It was most suitable for describing the participants' meanings in the natural setting or field (Best & Kahn, 2004:73-79; Creswell, 2009:15-16; Jackson, 2011:19-27).

#### **1.8.4.1. Population and sampling**

There are 15 administrative zones and 350 preschools in the southern regional state of Ethiopia (MoE, 2013:29-37) from which six sample schools for this study were selected. The participants in this study were all preschool policy implementers who included teachers, principals, departmental heads (HoDs), district education office heads (DEOs) and policy experts.

In this study, a total of 38 participants from six sample preschools were selected. The sampling procedure involved three zones that were selected purposively from 15 administrative zones based on socio-economic status (SES). Following this, six preschools (two from each zone) were selected purposively from these three zones. Then, six teachers (one from each school), six department heads (one from each school), six principals (one from each school) were purposively selected and 12 parent representatives (two from each school) and two policy experts (from regional education bureau) were selected using snowball sampling. The details of the sampling procedure are discussed in chapter four.

#### **1.8.4.2. Instruments of data collection**

According to Creswell (2009:173-193), qualitative researchers typically use multiple instruments to gather data such as interviews, observations and documents rather than relying on a single data source. Accordingly, in this study, observation, interviews, document analysis and focus group interviews of Grade R practitioners were used to

gather data from the participants. The detail of the instruments of data collection and how the data were obtained are analysed are presented in chapter four.

#### **1.8.4.3. Data analysis and interpretation**

The data was analysed using the following generic qualitative data analysis procedure with the help of computer software (Creswell (2009:185)). The data analysis procedure entails the following steps (the details of each step are presented in chapter five).

1. Preparing and organising the data for analysis.
2. Reading thoroughly all the data in detail.
3. Use the coding process to generate descriptions and themes for analysis.
4. Use description and themes to represent the data in the qualitative narrative.
5. Interpreting or meaning out of the data.

In addition, the data analysis process is aided by the use of a qualitative data analysis computer programme called ATLAS.ti which facilitates recording of field notes, memos and texts, sorting data and coding it into categories, organising data by linking categories, clusters or networks of data, searching and retrieving data that can easily be displayed and reviewed and building theme and conclusions based on and supported by the stored data (Banner & Albarran, 2009:24-31; Paulus & Lester, 2016: 405-428). The details are presented in chapter five.

#### **1.9. Ethical considerations**

In planning research, it is important to take into consideration the ethical guiding principles intended to protect our research participants. In qualitative research approach, the researcher should respect and safeguard the rights, needs, values and desires of the research participants because many qualitative methods such as ethnography and case study usually involve obtrusive participant observation and interviews that invade the life of the participants (Creswell, 2009: 73-93). Hence it is logical to set rules or guidelines that define ethical limits for the protection of human participants of research (American Psychological Association, 2002:1060-1073; Best & Kahn, 2004:73-79; Jackson, 2011:46-64). Accordingly, the following are the major principles that characterise writing in the field of ethics and several professional codes

were employed in this study.

### **1. Getting permission**

For researchers to get permission to access the information they need and get acceptance at the outset of the research project is a primary ethical principle (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:132-240). It allows the researcher to get access to the institution or organisation where the research is to be conducted and acceptance by the participants whose permission one needs before continuing research activity. In this study, official permission was obtained from all participants, institutions and schools through fully informed consent.

### **2. Informed consent**

Enrolment of volunteers for a study should always entail the participant's comprehensive understanding of the procedures employed, the risks involved and the requirements that may be fulfilled by participants. Whenever possible, participants should be informed about the purpose of the research. When the participants are incompetent to give informed consent due to age, illness or disability, the informed consent of parents, guardians or responsible agents must be secured. Also, the participants should have the freedom to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. In this study, all adult participants were voluntarily made to sign an informed consent form (see appendices: 8 - 14) before they participate in the research process. This form acknowledges that the participants' rights have been protected during the research process. For young children and participants who could not give informed consent, the consent was obtained from their guardians, parents or responsible agents (see appendix –15).

### **3. The right to confidentiality**

Researchers take reasonable precautions to protect confidential information obtained from participants or stored in any medium through recognising the extent and limit of confidentiality as established by institutional rules or professional relationships (Jackson, 2011: 49-50). In this study, the researcher held all information that he could gather in strict confidence, disguising the participant's identity in all records and reports.

In addition, the participant's anonymity was kept secret and no information was released without the participant's permission.

#### **4. Protection from harm**

Researchers take reasonable steps and precautions to protect the participant's well-being in terms of avoiding any risk, physical and mental stress or harm (Jackson, 2011: 49-54). A balance is needed to be achieved, with benefit overshadowing risk, in such a case. In this study, steps were taken to minimise any physical and mental harm where it was foreseeable and unavoidable.

In this research, every attempt was made to hire participants through respecting and protecting their rights and values. This means each individual was first asked for her/his willingness to participate in the study. Then, only those who were willing to participate voluntarily were allowed to take part in the study by giving short orientation and training. Accordingly, all subjects who participated in this study, that is, teachers, department heads, principals, district education office heads, parents and ECE experts completed consent forms to take part in the study. In addition, parents who allowed their children to be observed in their classrooms completed assent forms on the behalf of their children.

#### **1.10. Explanation of basic terms/concepts**

**I. Preschool policy document:** A broad national manuscript stating the very general aims of preschool education policy usually measured in terms of specific objectives attained at school level (Choudhury, 2002:173-199).

**II. Implementation of the policy:** The execution process of the policy by the policy practitioners (Bhola, 2004:295-312).

**III. Policy output:** The outcome of the implemented policy is measured in terms of the changed behaviour of learners concerning the specific objectives (Egonmwan, 2009: 79-85).

**IV. Policy practitioners:** All partners of the preschool policy who take part in the implementation of the policy (Tobin, Lietz, Nugroho, Vivekanandan & Nyamkhuu, 2015:

52-61).

**V. Children's background:** Children's life settings such as experiences, poverty, abuse and health conditions (Choudhury, 2002:4-13).

**VI. Policy implementation context:** The overall scenario in which the policy is implemented (Egonmwan, 2009:79-85).

**VII. Home and community conditions:** The living conditions of the families and community (Choudhury, 2002:50-71).

### **1.11. Arrangements of chapters**

This thesis is organised as follows:

#### **Chapter one: Orientation to the Study**

This chapter begins by presenting a clear statement of the research. Also, it includes the purposes of the research, the main research question, theoretical framework, significance, overview of research methodology and ethical considerations.

#### **Chapter two: Review of literature**

In this chapter, a systematic review of the related literature has been done. This includes critically reviewing the literature concerning the methods used, the techniques to interpret data, perspectives (paradigms), findings and ethical issues addressed.

#### **Chapter three: Discourse on the implementation of preschool policies**

In this chapter, a systematic review of the literature pertinent to the ECE policy implementation framework has been discussed. Such topics include education policy framework analysis, strategic planning in education policy analysis and education policy implementation approaches among others.

#### **Chapter four: Research methodology**

This chapter begins by stating a research paradigm that underlies the research purpose. Then, it continues by describing the research approach, design and methods used, sampling of participants of the research used, the target population of the study, sampling techniques and procedures. In this chapter, techniques and instruments of

data collection procedures have been discussed and the detailed discussion was presented in chapter four. The ethical issues involved with human research will be considered critically. The researcher received a Unisa ethical clearance certificate approved by the 2019 Unisa research ethics committee.

### **Chapter five: Research findings and analysis of data**

This chapter presents the findings of the research. This includes organisation and presentation of qualitative data, presentation of description and themes drawn out of field observations, interviews, documentary analysis, logs, reflective diaries and narratives. Procedures of data analysis have also been considered in detail. Finally, it has also included the findings and how they relate to previous studies.

### **Chapter six: Limitations, conclusion and recommendations**

This chapter presents limitations and conclusions of the investigation by showing the implications of the study for further thinking and the recommendations that would be made in light of the findings of the study.

#### **1.1.2. Chapter conclusion**

This chapter discussed the overall outline of the study including awareness of the problem, the theoretical framework; dissemination of the problem, statement of the problem and significance of the study. It also discussed the scope and delimitation of the study. The general research design and ethical considerations were anticipated. This chapter culminated with the discussion of the organisation of chapters in the manuscript. The next chapter deals with the review of the literature.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Chapter one orientated the reader by introducing the study by providing a clear description of the problem and theoretical basis upon which the study is grounded. The discussion centred on the implementation of ECE policy at Grade R classes. It elaborated on the dissemination of the problem, significance and scope of the study. The chapter also outlined the methodology that is used to investigate how the ECE policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes.

In this chapter, literature related to the topic has been reviewed to answer the research question which inquires how the ECE policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes. It also provided a scholarly perspective context in realising the aim of the study which is to establish the nature of ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.

To address the literature related to the research topic in light of the research question and aim of the research mentioned above, this chapter discusses the brief history of preschool education, theories about early learning and ECE. Also, it captures the advantages and importance of well-developed preschool programmes, the imperative role of government and different partners in ECE programmes and policy implementation.

#### **2.2. A brief history of ECE**

For over twenty thousand years, issues related to ECE have engaged philosophers, educators and psychologists. Modern early educators have continued to deal with issues similar to those that have occupied their professional predecessors. Because there are valuable insights to be gained by understanding “our professional ancestors,” it is vital to make note of some of the sources of the ideas and questions still being addressed in ECE and its policy implementation. The underlying principles, perspectives and methods that are proposed by these reformers were coloured by their



philosophical beliefs and had laid the foundation of ECE. The following paragraphs present a brief overview of the history of prominent pioneers of ECE.

The issue of providing care and education for young children outside the home might be traced back to the ancient philosophers like Plato who proposed it over twenty centuries ago (Choudhury, 2002:96-107). More recently, during the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Locke, Dewey and Montessori have imagined and created schools of ECE as a means of improving the social conditions of young children via ECE policy (Hasan, 2004:31-34). The contribution of these prominent scholars in the area of ECE is presented in the following paragraphs.

Plato (427-347) was the first who advocated that placing consistently children early in life in public schools would promote the autonomous growth of children's abilities which reduces the influence of the home environment. In contrast, later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Comenius proposed that mothers were the best educators of their young children. The two views of Plato and Comenius may be conceptualised as two poles on the continuum of school-based versus home-based approaches whose legacy is expressed in current service delivery approaches in ECE (Choudhury, 2002:96-107; Hasan, 2004: 31-34). Current issues related to school-home relationships in ECE policy implementation reflect this continuum. Therefore, some early childhood educators take the position that school programmes should involve parents to enhance their children's learning. Others, on the contrary, are interested in developing school programmes that support or complement the training that parents already provide. In either case, the nature of parental involvement in ECE policy implementation is an issue that is derived from varying views along the Platonic–Comenius continuum, which is still being addressed.

John Locke (1632-1704) is one of the prominent philosophers towards ECE. Locke proposed the idea that ECE experiences have a profound effect on later adult development. He believed that because ECE experiences shape later personality development and are the period during which lifelong habits and skills are formed, it deserves a great deal of attention. Locke opposed the idea of inborn knowledge, which had been discussed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Hasan, 2004:31-34).

Another noted historical discussion addressing ECE was related to the work of Jean Jacques Rousseau in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Rousseau visualised and advocated child-centred education which led him to suggest early schooling that enabled young children to direct their activities and free from the constraints imposed by adults.

Following Rousseau's philosophy, Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852) advocated respect for young children's needs and the importance of sensory training. Specifically, he promoted the importance of play as the main method of teaching through which children could reach their maximum intellectual and emotional potentials. Froebel is considered the father of kindergarten and he believed that education must begin in the early childhood period. The main features of Froebel's viewpoints of ECE may be summarised in terms of self-regulated activity of the child, play as the main method of child teaching, songs and gestures, gifts as the main stimulant of children activity and the active role of the teacher as the good model for children's learning.

The last historical figure in this brief overview is Maria Montessori (1870 –1952). Montessori emphasised the importance of a well organised structure in the learning system of her children. As a result, the Montessori learning environment tends to be highly prearranged and developmentally appropriate to the child's level. Montessori implemented an ECE curriculum which is composed of work with self-correcting instructive materials. According to Montessori, those instructive materials must be relatively simple, naturally interesting and self-correcting. The didactic materials are successively introduced and designed to facilitate the interaction between sensory and cognitive development. Therefore, many of her equipment and materials contain puzzles, stacking blocks and cards containing numbers and letters which the child arranges in prescribed ways (Hasan, 2004:204-222).

Even though the historical overview presented here is certainly incomplete, it represents much of the thinking that laid a foundation and shaped the field of ECE and nowadays practised in ECE policy implementation. The thinking may be summarised as follows:

- 1) ECE can serve to complement what children learn in their homes and can also facilitate learning that has not yet occurred.

- 2) A useful approach for planning a curriculum for young children is to employ a developmental theory appropriate for children's learning.
- 3) An important component of ECE programmes is active learning which mainly entails learning through play.

### **2.3. Early childhood education (ECE) programmes**

In chapter one, theories about learning are discussed in general as part of a theoretical framework describing theories that guide the implementation of preschool education policy. In this chapter, ECE programmes are discussed in detail focusing on topics, aims of ECE, the curriculum of ECE programmes, teachers' roles in ECE programmes and teaching techniques in ECE programmes that are directly related to teaching-learning process at the classroom level in implementing ECE policy. The ideas and detail of the three main theories (maturation, learning and interaction) that underpin ECE programmes are incorporated in this discussion.

The ECE programme is planned to meet the objectives of ECE. An early education programme is aimed at ensuring holistic development of the child including different developmental aspects such as physical, social, emotional, moral and cognitive. It helps the child to develop good health habits, good intellectual skills, proper attitudes and appropriate social skills. It also enhances the emotional maturity of the child and develops a creative mind and scientific outlook, thus, stimulates the total and lifelong development of the child (Chowdhury, 2002:120-127; Aggarwal, 2000:30-42; UNICEF, 2006:20-26; UNESCO, 2015:15-20).

A variety of ECE programmes have been generated by different theoretical perspectives, each with specific aims, curriculum, teaching methods and teacher's roles. Traditionally, ECE programmes are intended to improve only the academic performance of economically disadvantaged young children. However, this approach has been changed since the 1970s to encompass different aspects of child development, where different theories may be applied to different aspects of ECE programmes such as aims, curriculum and teaching methods of the programme (Hasan, 2004:204-222). In the next sections, aims of ECE programmes, a curriculum of ECE programmes, teacher's roles, instructional techniques of ECE programmes, the role of

parents in ECE programmes, the role of government in ECE programmes, types of ECE programmes and status of ECE programmes in Ethiopia are captured.

### **2.3.1. Aims of ECE programmes**

According to Choudhury (2002:120-127) and Hasan (2004:2004-222), specific aims of ECE programmes can be summarised into the following:

- I. To develop in children healthy body structure, adequate muscular coordination and basic motor skills through various activities of preschools.
- II. To develop in children healthy practices and build up basic skills necessary for personal adjustment such as dressing, eating, toilet training and cleaning to mention a few.
- III. To develop desirable social attitudes and behaviours, encourage healthy group participation and make the children sensitive to the rights and privileges of others.
- IV. To develop emotional maturity in children by guiding them to express, understand, accept and control their feelings.
- V. To inspire and stimulate aesthetic appreciation in children
- VI. To arouse the intellectual curiosity of children, explore, investigate and experiment to understand the environment in which they live.
- VII. To encourage independence and creativity in children.
- VIII. To develop children's ability to express their thoughts and feelings in fluent, correct and clear speech.
- IX. To develop in children's moral values such as faith in God, respect to elders and younger, promote civic concepts and other moral values.

More broadly, UNESCO's (1991b:40-50) world survey of 73 countries on ECE shows that the main objectives of early childhood care and objectives for many countries are the following in order of priority which are the overall objectives of ECE policy implementation: 1) the whole development of the child, 2) intellectual development of

the child, 3) preparation for primary school, 4) language development of the child, 5) promoting child care, 6) promoting health and nutrition and 7) promoting religious and ethical instruction.

In the learning theory, the ECE programme aims to bring about desirable changes in learner's behaviour such as honesty, punctuality, respect and love to mention a few through the use of reinforcements such as token economies and rewards that promote the implementation of ECE policy successfully. This idea is comparable with what Keenan (2002:32-42), Hurley and Charter (2005:82-85) and Rogers and Rose (2007: 12-17) contend. According to these scholars, the aim of ECE programmes driven by behavioural theories is to change the behaviour of learners or transmit information in the most efficient, direct and observable manner. The change in children's behaviour is most influenced by environmental stimuli rather than internal factors.

According to the interactive learning approach, the aim of the ECE programme varies according to the sources of developmental changes and types of knowledge children acquire in ECE. The objective of traditional education with an emphasis on transmitting cultural knowledge, social values and habits is to enable children to acquire these different experiences and knowledge. The objective of ECE based on constructivism is to enable children to create, invent, discover new knowledge and capable of doing new things. To bring together, as Hill (2003:65-69), Papworth (2004:24-33) and Fisher & Goodley, (2007:66-81) put it, the overall goal of an ECE programme derived from the interaction theory is to facilitate the development of creative, independent thinking and problem-solving.

Psychoanalysts see the aim of an ECE programme as to provide a fostering and supportive environment in which the child's inborn potentials such as curiosity and desire for competency are allowed to flourish while less desirable characteristics such as lack of cooperation have made under control. Thus, the ECE programme objectives are stated in qualitative terms, often related to the development of competency and self-esteem. How each child accomplishes these objectives depends on her/his unique timetable of naturally unfolding developmental processes as suggested by Siegler (1998:81-89), Mayall (2002:47-61) and Boddy, Cameron & Moss (2006:92-96).

To sum up, the aims of ECE programmes are drawn up so that they can meet the objectives of ECE policy that is the all-round development of young children, which intends to prepare children for primary education and provide care, health and nutrition services for children from poor families and in underprivileged areas.

### **2.3.2. Curriculum of ECE programmes**

According to Choudhury (2002:116-120), the word 'curriculum' refers to a carefully planned set of lessons to be taught and learnt or a set of learning experiences to be presented in a certain way. In this sense, it is usually spelt out, with clear goals, concrete and measurable objectives, a set of rules for teacher training, a realistic educational viewpoint and an evaluation method. In its broadest sense, the word curriculum refers to all the developmental experiences that are planned for the whole programme that include the entire day's activities, the care giving style, the degree of freedom or control for both learners and teachers and the advantage given to intellectual, emotional or social values. Hence, a curriculum encompasses the whole range of school experiences and opportunities for learning, designed by teachers, administrators and planners for the total and integrated development of children (Educational Planning Group, 1995:51-59).

According to Hasan (2004:204-222), the curriculum content of ECE programmes driven by the behavioural perspective typically includes pre-academic, academic, cultural information and moral behaviour. The purpose of such behavioural changes emphasises the preparation of children for the future. The purpose of such an ECE programme curriculum is to enable each child to understand and develop socially acceptable behaviour as suggested by Choudhury (2002:116-120).

The ECE programme curriculum contents, activities and experiences within the interaction perspective are determined by the developmental level of understanding and interest of children that are pertinent to the aims of ECE programmes intended to implement ECE policy. The learning experiences within this perspective facilitate physical knowledge, logical thinking and skills. The materials should be open-ended in

nature to facilitate divergent thinking in children (Hallet & Prout, 2003:20-32; Hansen & Hawkes, 2009:33-39; Silver & Silver, 2006:42-56).

On the other hand, the ECE programme curriculum within the psychoanalysis approach can best be described as child-centred. That is, the curriculum content is determined by both children's developmental levels and their learning needs and interests. There is an emphasis on "school readiness" about which children are considered to be the best judges. Therefore, children are expected to direct their activities based on their interests. In general, the curriculum is designed to facilitate each child's competency at his or her current level of functioning rather than offering specific training for the future because a solid foundation is considered the best preparation (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998: 81-89; Moyles, 2005:20-25; Carpendale & Lewis, 2006:2-16).

In summary, the ECE programme curriculum should contain a diversity of experiences that can satisfy the various needs and benefits of young children to promote the total and integrated development of all children.

### **2.3.3. Role of different partners in ECE programmes**

The implementation of the ECE policy calls for a collaborative effort of all stakeholders who implement the policy including policymakers, education officers, teachers, parents, the administrators and the community (Tirusew, 2005:67-72). The street-direct stakeholders of ECE policy implementers comprise the teachers, parents, government and education officers.

#### **2.3.3.1. Teachers role in ECE programmes**

Preschool teachers play a vital role in ECE programmes to successfully implement ECE policy. Preschool teachers are the practitioners of ECE programmes who are responsible for the immediate, face-to-face care (physical and psychological) of the children. They are the principal staff since the effectiveness of the ECE programmes depends on the quality of leading and interaction with children (Choudhry, 2002:168-170). Because preschool teachers play a key role, there are some basic requirements for preschool teachers which are listed below:

- a) Should be at least 18 years old; thus, mature enough to handle young children.
- b) Should be healthy enough to perform all duties carefully and should have no disease that could be communicated to children.
- c) Must be willing and carries out the activities required in the curriculum.
- d) Must be able to work with children without using physical and psychological punishment and be able to use only positive rewards and social experiences to their ages. They must recognise physical hazards and eliminate them.
- e) Be willing to increase her/his skills and competence through experiences, training and supervision and ready to receive professional guidance from experienced colleagues.
- f) Be very progressive and passionate, always working for the development and wellbeing of the children.
- g) Be academically well trained and qualified in early childhood education or child psychology.
- h) Should always properly plan and run activities in a daily programme.
- i) Be preferably female to deal with young children with their soft and motherly affection.
- j) Be a good housekeeper both indoors and outdoors so that the school is always clean and attractive.
- k) Be always relaxed and smile when interacting with children.

In general, preschool teachers play a crucial leading role in shaping the behaviour and learning of young children to make the ECE programmes successful in the preschool (Hasan, 2004:81-103; Choudhury, 2002:168-170). The following paragraphs discuss the roles of teachers in ECE programmes within the three theoretical approaches.

Within the behavioural perspective, teachers should possess a strong understanding of the basic principles of behavioural analysis, enabling them how to teach children effectively in ECE programmes so that they are likely to determine specific behavioural objectives for the classroom lessons as a whole as well as for each child. The role of the teachers is to arrange the objectives in sequence, provide materials, activities and



appropriate reinforcements to enhance the achievement of children. Since the objectives are specific enough, teachers can see the value of the curriculum and readily acquire a sense of commitment and participation. In general, there is a high degree of teacher's direction in instructing young children and making their learning effective. Specific activities in instructing young children in the classroom involve lesson preparation, designing and assessing student activities and implementing effectively ECE policy (Moss & Petrie, 2002:112-122; Hall & Elliman, 2004:22-34; Rodd, 2005:50-55; Jackson, 2011:69-77).

Teachers working within the cognitive perspective of ECE programmes play a supportive role to encourage the vigorous involvement of children in the learning process. The materials and activities provided should foster particular types of thinking skills. Teachers should be sensitive to the reasoning skills that children exhibit, planning activities that are optimally challenging, that are neither too difficult nor beyond children's interest, nor too familiar to be considered boring. Teachers should also provide activities that will accommodate variability in the range of cognitive abilities within the classroom. In general, teachers are seen as facilitators of children's intellectual development. They fulfil the role of co-workers, stimulating the children's thinking by creating challenges to their organisation of knowledge (Hill, 2003:12-23; CWDC, 2007:30-37).

Goleman (1998:18-29), Bertram and Pascal (2002:72-82) and WHO (2007:62-67) report that the teachers' role working within the psychodynamic approach is to critically understand the children's development and interests, enabling them to make appropriate choices when planning activities and providing materials for children to make their learning effective. Activities are organised into interest contents with related activities such as animal care and art and children are free to initiate and direct their activities throughout the ECE programme.

#### **2.3.3.1.1. Instructional techniques of ECE programmes**

According to Hasan (2004:204-222), instructional techniques are methods that teachers use to impart learning content to their learners. The content of ECE requires diversity as

it is based on children's needs and interests. Therefore, different instructional techniques are required to meet the different learning needs and interests of children in ECE. On the other hand, Choudhury (2002:127 -143) contends that 'play' is the most important method of teaching in ECE programmes. According to Choudhury, play is any activity in which the child is engaged for enjoyment. Therefore, it is a sort of pleasure-giving activity for the child. A properly planned play provides the child with dynamic experiences and opportunities for learning. Because it provides tremendous benefits for children with regards to all-round growth and development, it should be considered as the best method of instruction in ECE programmes. The following paragraphs discuss the instructional techniques of ECE programmes within different theoretical approaches.

The teaching methods within the behavioural perspective follow directly from empirically derived principles of learning and include identifying desired learning behavioural outcomes, identifying and using effective rewards. They also include determining and hierarchically arranging learning goals that comprise the desired outcome, identifying the skills in the sequence children already possess, determining mastery criteria and teaching according to each step through demonstration and verbal instruction to attain the ECE programme objectives (Hasan, 2004:204-222; Adams, Alexander & Drummond, 2004:19-34).

The instructional technique that is used within a cognitive perspective can be best described as that of a co-worker. Teachers work closely with children. They make every effort to understand the interests of each child and encourage them to stretch their thinking. Even though social knowledge is obtained from direct instruction, the source of physical and logical knowledge does not emanate from adults but from the interaction of children with the environment. Therefore, with physical and logical knowledge, children should be encouraged to reflect on their actions and relate them to past experiences. Children's thinking can be more facilitated through commenting on their activities, asking open-ended questions and provoking questions. Thus, when designing daily lesson activities, teachers should clearly understand the classroom situation. (Engel, 2005:12-25; Cunningham, 2006:36-44).

According to Moyles (2005:20-25) and Carpendale and Lewis (2006:72-76), the instructional techniques employed within the psychoanalytic perspective facilitate both individual child learning and social development. Teachers comment on the activities of their children. Collaboration and interaction with others are facilitated through guided reasoning and modelling. Generally, teachers fulfil a supportive, fostering role, providing an emotionally safe environment, one in which children feel secure and competent enough to explore and learn through playing to make ECE programmes successful.

### **2.3.3.2. The role of parents in ECE programmes**

Human development theories have long proposed that the family is the primary context in which children's capabilities develop, especially during the early years from birth through five or six years of age. The parents are the transmitters of cultural and social values. Parents as the first teachers of children lay the foundations of early childhood education. Most of the education at this stage is at the unconscious level. While interacting and communicating with their children, parents impart knowledge, develop skills and inculcate values. How the parents interact and communicate with their children and their choice of words have an enduring effect on the personality of the children ((Gonzalez– Mena, 2000:20-41; Engel, 2005:12-25).

The rationale and premises for parental participation in ECE programmes comprise parents or caregivers as the most important teachers, socialising managers and caregivers for children during the early years. The parents are in a unique and strategic position to influence the children's early intervention programmes. Also, parents can serve as key intervention agents and primary teachers in their child's life and the special skills their children need to acquire. Parental involvement and education offer a means for parents to build a positive perspective about their child and their position as parents. Intervention works best when parents and professionals are cooperating and working together towards common goals for a child and. Parental education and involvement foster parent and public support for early referral to early intervention ECE programmes (Gonzalez-Mena, 2000:20-41; Hasan, 2004:204-222; Engel, 2005:12-25; Willian, et al, 2007:12-27).

In general, the participation roles of parents in ECE range from passive to active involvement and emphasise the importance of mutual interaction between parents and professionals. The nature of the various roles played by parents can be understood on both descriptive and interpretive levels and in terms of how practical and desirable each role is for a given parent at any given time. The roles played by parents in ECE programmes for successful implementation of preschool education policy are summarised as under.

### **1. Participation in educational decision making**

The major role played by parents in the ECE programme is their participation in educational decision making. This role pertains to the involvement of parents in the development and implementation of their child's individualised educational plan. This role also partly involves protecting the rights of children for education. Even though, there is a debate regarding the benefits of this role and its influence on the relationship between schools and parents; the implementation of this role gives parents a chance to be heard in decision making in ECE programmes (Hasan, 2004:80-103).

### **2. Parents as advocates of their children's rights**

Another role conferred upon parents of children with disabilities in the ECE programme is that of advocate for their children's rights as well as for their own. All children, normal or special, need certain basic provisions of life to grow from the helplessness of infancy and childhood to become mature and self-regulating adults. This great concern for the welfare of children calls for the declaration of children's rights at the international level which is reflected in various international conventions. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised that children are entitled to special care and protection. It is stated in Article 24 of the declaration that:

*"Every child regardless of her/his race, colour, sex, language, religion, nationality, ethnic, or social origin, property, or birth, disability, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his/her status as minor, on the part of the family, society and the state."*(Choudhury, 2002:9)

This was followed by the “*Declaration of the Rights of the children*” adopted by the UN general assembly first in 1958 and has been revised several times. The convention enumerates the various political, social, economic and cultural rights of every child in particular the right of survival, development, protection and participation. The right to survival includes the right to life, health, nutrition and adequate standards of living. The right to protection includes freedom from all forms of exploitation, abuse or inhuman treatment and neglect. The right to participation includes respect for the views of the children, autonomy of expression, access to appropriate information and education and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Mainly, parents’ role as advocates of the rights of their children in early education focuses on the children’s rights to access equitable and quality early education (Rake, 2001:209-231; Papworth, 2004:24-33; Hall & Elliman, 2004::12-34; World Bank, 2015:11-35).

### **3. Parents as intervener of their children**

Parents as interveners of their children refer to involving parents in early intervention programmes in the ECE programme. The advantage of involving parents as interveners is that they serve as change mediators to modify the behaviour of their children cheaply and continuously at home. To accomplish this role, parents need training on how to interrelate with children and treat them in a way compatible with professional intervention methods (Kehily, 2004:22-34; Cunningham, 2006:9-17).

### **4. Parents as programme evaluators**

According to Neale (2002:455-475) and Corsaro (2005:12-15), the theory behind parents as programme evaluators in ECE programme is based on the assumption that sound programme evaluation involves assessment of views of consumers of services. Thus, parents have to be involved in monitoring and evaluating programmes for children. In this role, parents are asked to evaluate the quality of services offered to children on both formative and summative levels. This role affords parents an opportunity to contribute to programme development and designing implementation strategies on dimensions such as child achievements, teaching methods, staff attitudes, parent involvement activities and appropriateness of acceptability of recommendations.

## **5. Parents as team members**

Parents as team members in various ECE programmes is a recent role meant to encourage full participation of parents in the assessment and intervention process for their children. Until recently, the purpose of working with parents is considered as compensating for their inadequacies, both in terms of their parenting skills and their limitations in understanding and providing for their children's needs. However, the debate regarding this role emanates from the preference of some professionals to have a forum for a discussion of issues without the presence of parents, the difficulties of incorporating parental input into teams' structure, process and language system. Also, it involves on-going developmental changes within a team and a family that influence ease and desire for involvement. Consequently, variation exists across ECE programmes regarding how this role is implemented in preschools (Leeson, 2006:36-42; Samuel, 2007:92-97).

For child professionals to accept parents as co-workers, they have to accept them as equals and experts in their children and their family culture. Only then, parents can move from a compensatory involvement to a fully participatory one (Whalley, 2001:54-60). Such full participation is essential to achieve the wider benefits of working with parents. Desforges and Abouchar (2003:413-431) claim that parental participation in early year's settings and schools has a positive effect on children's achievement. This is supported by case studies on early year's parents and professionals partnership which shows parents and staff can work together so that the learning environment of home and preschool are coordinated and stretched (Pugh, 2005:8-19).

### **2.3.3.3. The role of government in ECE programmes**

Research evidence shows that the government plays a significant role in ECE through engagement in activities like managing, controlling and evaluating the performance standards of its programmes (Choudhury, 2002:71). It can play its role through setting national policy for young children which is the policy of the state to provide satisfactory services to children to ensure their best growth and development. According to Choudhury (2002:110-116) and Ding (2016:61-66), the government plays the central

role in the implementation of ECE policy through its legitimate authority position and can undertake the following activities:

- 1) Due to its legitimate position and authority, the government can take the initiative to design a national policy for children to be included in the constitution and adopt the resolution on the early education policy for all children.
- 2) Establish integrated child care and development services constituting different ministries such as the ministry of education, ministry of health and social welfare, ministry of rural development and others to cooperate and play their roles.
- 3) Raise and allocate sustainable funds for different programmes of children from different financial grants, community and non-governmental sources.
- 4) Establish and run institutional services for normal as well as special need children who require special care and services.
- 5) Set curriculum, guidelines and performance standards for preschool programmes and undertake control and supervision to evaluate their implementation.
- 6) Establish teacher training institutions and administer the institutions to produce quality teachers for preschool programmes.
- 7) Foster the provision of nutrition services to get rid of deficiencies in the diet of children.
- 8) Embark on programmes for the general upgrading of the health of children so that health-related education should be imparted to the nursing mothers as well as to the family as a whole.
- 9) Ensure equality of chance to all children by providing special assistance to children who are handicapped, from poor families and disadvantaged areas.
- 10) Provide consultancy service, training and research to practitioners of preschool programmes.

In general, the government plays a central role in initiating the national policy for children, direct and implement the preschool programmes through coordinating different partners to achieve their aims.

#### **2.3.3.4. Role of education officers in ECE programmes**

The role of educational officers in ECE is defined as the leadership role in early childhood settings (Leeson, 2006:36-42). Leeson explains that leadership skill is an important part of any early year practitioner's responsibility. Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2007a:77-82) argues that there should be an integrated approach in providing services for children in the early years. For example, the claim is that one centre would combine nursery education, family support and childcare and health services to provide integrated care and education for young children. In this regard, the key focus should be bringing together the skills, expertise and experience of a multidisciplinary team for the benefit of children, families and communities to help every child and to think outside the box.

Moss and Petrie (2002:112-122) argue that leadership in ECE services should be inclusive for all participants: teachers, children, parents and managers. They also explain the implications of the role of education leaders for policy. Educational officers are expected to manage aims, budgets and coordination among workers of ECE programmes towards the achievement of ECE education policy.

In summary, educational officers at their respective administrative levels such as province or district may play the role of managing resources human skill and material, finance and coordinating all the partners to make the ECE education policy implementation successful.

#### **2.3.4. Types of ECE programmes**

Evaluation of the ECE programmes has shown that the programmes can be categorised into three in terms of the child involvement as child-centred, family-centred and combination of child and family-centred programmes (Choudhury, 2002:120-127 Hasan, 2004:204-222). These different programmes are explained in the following paragraphs.

##### **I. Child-centred programmes**

The child-centred ECE programmes are based on the initiative of serving the children and self-directed activities of children in ECE. This programme takes into account the



developmental level and needs of children and works towards enabling children to achieve their needs and potentials designed as objectives of the programme. Presently, this programme is common in many western countries including the USA, UK and Germany. One such programme is the “High-Scope” programme which enables the children full freedom in planning, implementing and reviewing their learning daily. However, the limitation of this programme is that children do not easily learn how to handle such a high degree of freedom. This means they require the help of trained teachers and professionals who guide them in their initiatives (European Commission, 2003:102-113; OECD, 2006b:32-40; Boddy et al., 2006:92-96).

## **II. Family-centred programmes**

Family-centred ECE programmes focus on helping family members or parents in providing the necessary care and education to their children. LeDoux (2003:14-21) and Robson (2006: 80-86) suggest that children learn best when receiving appropriate intervention and guidance from adult parents. Children are more successful in early learning when parents are actively caring for them. The family-centred ECE programmes are based on the assumption that involving parents by educating them and helping them build new skills in dealing with their children’s special needs from the onset has obvious economic advantages. The best of such programmes is the Head Start programme, which is a federally funded programme for economically disadvantaged children and their families in the USA. The Head Start programme is an approach in which the parents play an active role in planning and implementing the programme in serving children (Graue & Walsh, 1998:10-20; Chowdhury, 2002:168-170; Hanson, 2003:38-45). Also, concerning the influence of family members on their young children’s early development, education and intervention services, Simeonsson and Bailey (1990:428-444) suggest that others outside the family members including peers, neighbours and community members at large also affect the development and early intervention process of young children.

### **III. Centre-based programmes**

The centre based ECE programmes provide ECE and care to children at different centres. The centre-based programme was originally established to help economically disadvantaged children in the 1960s and became the school-based component of a larger intervention project: the family development research programme. The family development research programme serves two main purposes: to provide parenting instruction and support to low-income parents with limited formal education and promote the development of emotionally healthy and competent young children. This was accomplished through both a home-based and a school-based approach (Blackman, 2003:4-9; Hasan, 2004:204-222).

The home-based component of the family development research project was practised by trained professionals who fulfilled the roles of teacher, friends and supporter for the participating families. Mothers rather than their children were the focus of this component. Also, the child development trainers provide numerous support services ranging from helping to gain access to community services in modelling appropriate interactions with children (Hendric, 2003:67-76; Fitzgerald, 2004:14-20). In contrary to home-based programme, the school-based programme was designed to facilitate children's development, adhering closely to the psychosocial aspect. That is, the objectives of this programme focus on age-appropriate goals such as developing trust and autonomy. These were considered essential for the development of positive self-concept, feeling of competence and personality characteristics that facilitate learning and intellectual growth (Gauvain, 2001:21-40; Hasan, 2004:204-111; Brown, 2007:: 63-72).

Among the three ECE programmes, the child-centred programme has been widely used in many countries including the USA, UK and Germany in the 1960s. However, since the 1970s, both theory and practice have moved ECE towards incorporating multi-theoretical and context-oriented approaches. Therefore, nowadays, family-centred and centre-based ECE programmes are commonly practised both in developed as well in underdeveloped countries such as South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria (Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003:1-13; FRN, 2012:10 -22; Obiweluzor, 2015:33-49).

### **2.3.5. Principles of ECE programmes**

According to Choudhury (2002:120), there are principles and standards of performance of ECE programmes that are applicable in and outside classroom learning which have direct implications for ECE policy implementation. These principles are discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### **1. Take into account the developmental level and needs of the children.**

A child is ready for certain activities only at a particular age. Therefore, the activity should be introduced at the appropriate time when the child is ready for it so that he/she accomplishes it with ease and enjoyment.

#### **2. Should cater to all-round development.**

An ECE programme should entail all aspects of a child's development such as physical, motor, social, language and cognitive development.

#### **3. Be flexible to serve the needs of the children.**

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

#### **4. Be balanced between individual and group activities.**

In the preschool, there are various types of an individual and group activities provided during the play period to children. The teacher should ensure the balance between these two activities such that each child gets an opportunity for an individual as well as group work as its main objectives.

#### **5. Be balanced between free play and guided activity.**

In the ECE programme, each child should get an opportunity for free play as well as guided activity in a balanced manner. The free play activity is self-initiated play and it should involve both indoor and outdoor play. The guided activity is teacher-initiated and it should not be more than 10 -15 minutes for the younger age group and 15 -20 minutes for the older age group.

#### **6. Alternate between active (vigorous) play and passive (quiet) play.**

The ECE programme should be designed in such a way that there is an alternate between active play and quiet play. If children are taken outdoors for a play that involves too much physical activity, then, it should be followed by some quiet activity indoors. This is because too much physical activity makes children exhausted and so is necessary to provide some restful activity (pause), after a course of active play.

#### **7. Be functional and meaningful.**

In a preschool, the teacher should always have a clear purpose in mind as to why she/he wants to have a particular activity for her children. Otherwise, it may become meaningless. For example, if the teacher takes children to the garden, she should know the purpose of taking them there. Similarly, the preschool programme should be relevant to community life, social skills and values.

#### **8. Satisfy the need of each child and the group.**

The ECE programme should also cater to the specific needs of the individual child as well as those of a group of children. The activities that are given to each child and group should depend on their interests. This is because the need of each child is unique and his/her needs are different from other children. So does the need for one group of children differ from another group of children? For example, the needs of urban children may be different from the needs of rural children.

#### **9. Provide concrete first-hand experiences.**

During the preschool stage, the child's thinking is at a sensory-perceptual level. They understand the world around them through play. Thus, the teacher should develop a concept in them through play by allowing them to explore, compare, classify and handle a variety of tangible instances and objects.

#### **10. The learning themes should be from the children's environment.**

The themes of learning in ECE programme content should be selected from the children's immediate environment and be able to evoke their interest.

#### **11. ECE programmes should be age-appropriate**

Separate age-appropriate feasible activities should be planned for the younger group and older group children. For example, divide the children into smaller groups

according to their ages, younger group (3 to 4 years) and older group (5 to 6 years) and give them separate and feasible activities.

### **2.3.5.1. Standards of human and material resources for ECE programme**

The following are important elements of preschool programmes and the requirements expected of them to meet the standards of the preschool programme.

#### **1. The head teacher**

The head teachers of preschool must have a basic knowledge of child development and psychology. They should have an academic degree informal training in the field of early childhood education or child development. They must know how to run a preschool, its requirements for safety and health, nutrition and mental health service. Moreover, they should be able to recruit and guide the other staff and work with community agencies.

#### **2. The preschool teachers**

The preschool teachers are the chief practitioners of the ECE programme in a face-to-face manner in the classroom. They provide both physical and psychological care of the children through making day to day interaction. In general, preschool teachers play a decisive role in shaping the attitudes, skills and learning of children for the successful implementation of the ECE programme as well as preschool education policy (Hasan, 2004:104-143; Choudhury, 2002:144-146).

#### **3. Assistants**

There is a necessity of one or two preschool assistants, whose duty is housekeeping services such as cleaning floors, washing the clothes and care of the grounds, putting up new sheets on the bulletin and easel board, taking care of the equipment and mending. In addition, the assistants need to be sensitive to the needs of young children. They must not become irritated by noise or confusion created by the young children and be willing to help the teachers to handle the situation effectively.

#### **4. A physician**

A physician is a desirable staff of a preschool as a part-time worker. He is responsible for the physical examination of the children at least once a week. He can also be a great

help in case of accidents and emergencies if possible, paediatrics need to know how to deal with children's problems.

### **2.3.5.2. Teacher child ratio**

The teacher-child ratio is the ratio of staff members in a preschool to a child which is an indicator of the amount of individual attention available to each child. In India, it is generally agreed that there should be one teacher to every 15 children (1:15) for older children (4 and above 5 years) and one teacher to every 10 children (1:10) for younger children (2 and 3 years) as they require significantly more individual attention (Choudhury, 2002:144-146). However, in developing countries, the normal teacher-learner ratio is 1: 25 with a maximum tolerable ratio of 1: 30.

### **2.3.6. The physical setup and equipment of preschool**

The physical environment and teaching-learning equipment should be pleasant and appealing to the children to make the ECE programme successful. The preschool needs to be a supplement of the home and not a substitute. In supplementing the home, it should gradually introduce the child to a large group of children and helps him/her to meet its demands. For a preschool to meet the objectives of the ECE programme, it should make careful planning with regards to physical setup (the site and buildings) and materials (or equipment) necessary for the teaching-learning process (Choudhury, 2002:110-115; Hasan, 2004:144-203). The following elements of physical setup and materials of preschool are very important and can be taken as a benchmark for quality physical setup or conditions and materials to be used in preschool programmes for the achievement of the objectives of preschool education policy.

#### **I. The preschool building**

The preschool building is the main part of preschool which is the living place for the growing children where they acquire the basic knowledge, skills and attitudes important for their development. The quality of buildings can be either conducive or inhibiting to the development of children. Therefore, the first requirement for the building to be conducive is that it should be clean, pleasant and well maintained. Because children

spend most of their time in preschool rooms and grounds, they should be clean enough for the general health and good development of the behaviour of children.

## **II. The surroundings**

The essentials of preschool buildings are their surroundings. The surroundings of the preschool greatly influence a child's health, attitudes and development of personality. Hence, the surroundings of the preschool have to be designed comfortably, safe and stimulating to promote the children's effective learning. Ugly and unclean surroundings harm character formation. Therefore, pleasant, beautiful and enriching preschool surrounding is desirable for children's healthy and all-round development.

## **III. Site of preschool**

The site of the preschool includes proper location, soil, aspect and location. The location of the preschool should be in the neighbourhood of the children as far as possible and far away from the crowded areas of the city/town, burial ground and main traffic areas for children's safety. The site of the preschool should also be near to a garden or a public park for it allows preschool children to appreciate beauty. The site of the preschool also includes the soil on which the building is built. The decisive factors to be considered in selecting the site concerning soil conditions are a raised area, dry and have natural drainage free from water logging. Another important feature of site selection is the aspect and elevation of the buildings. The site should allow the construction of buildings to face south, one-sided to allow the rooms free access to light. Moreover, planting trees on the other side of the building helps to serve as sunlight a breaker especially in hot places.

## **IV. Indoor and outdoor areas**

In a preschool, equally important are the factors to be taken care about the inside and outside areas. The indoor and outdoor areas encompass classrooms, kitchen, sanitary facilities, ventilation, storage space and outdoor play areas. The indoor area contains spaces for equipment, storage shelves or erected partitions for small group activities that can be adapted and arranged quite easily. The inside rooms should provide enough

space for children to work together freely at 1.5 square metres per child. The rooms should also be free from hidden areas to facilitate proper supervision.

The outdoor areas should contain free play areas, sanitary facilities (water, toilet and washing facilities) and storage space. The outdoor play space provides exposure to nature stimulates imaginative play and allows children to exercise large muscles and play together in groups or individually. A minimum area of two square metres of play space per child is desirable. The outdoor area should include a hard surface area where toys can be used and balls bounces, a grass plot for playing, running and jumping, a spot for pets and gardens for digging, a sandpit for sand play and manipulative activities and some space for water play to allow children for more exploration. The outdoor area needs to be regular in outline so that outdoor play can be supervised adequately. It should be securely fenced with a non-splintering material at least 4 feet (about 1.33 metres) high and kept in good repair, with a gate that can be locked. The area should be well-drained and free from nails, rocks, broken parts and glass pieces.

The outdoor area in the preschool should also contain sanitary facilities and storage space. The storage space is necessary for keeping play materials, books, teaching aids and records. There must be space for large toys, blocks and smaller articles. Cupboards should be in place to serve for keeping books and other materials before and after use. The sanitary facilities are water, toilet and washing facilities which are very important in the preschool. The water facilities are necessary for cleaning up activities. The toilet and washing facilities should be easily accessible for children both indoors and outdoors.

### **2.3.7. Advantages of ECE programmes**

According to Choudhury (2002:89-93), the ECE programme has a paramount benefit to assure the child's smooth transition into primary education. It is also a critical stage to the child's subsequent transition to adulthood, influencing both social skills and behavioural choices. In general, ECE can be defined as a lifetime of continuous learning from birth to old age programme that provides the following benefits to children in their life:



The first benefit of ECE is to foster in young children the development of basic education and basic life skills that lay the foundation of lifelong learning that stays with them for the rest of their lives and help them to do better in later life.

The second benefit of ECE is that it provides positive experiences for parents to better help and takes care of their children. In other words, it extends and supplements the parents' care in a way consistent with the values and goals of the child's families and culture. In general, it supports parents in their skills like parenting, training on literacy, child development, health and nutrition, stimulates and creates a good developmental environment for children (Choudhury, 2002:84-85).

The third benefit of ECE is to serve as an aid to child development. The early years from three to six are an optimal period for mastering certain developmental tasks such as self-confidence, healthy personal hygiene, basic morals and personal rights, basic social and language skills, creative ways of thinking and problem-solving. In general, enabling children to master these basic skills prepares them for primary education (Choudhury, 2002:84-85).

The fourth benefit of ECE is that it reduces inequality in the community by providing chance and opportunity to children who are vulnerable (or at risk), who are handicapped (or disabled) and from disadvantaged backgrounds (or live in poverty) in life and school (Choudhury, 2002: 84-85).

In general, a well-practised ECE programme brings all-round development in children and assures the establishment of an environment conducive to which they live through the effective implementation of preschool education policy.

### **2.3.8. Significance of ECE programmes**

Shaffer (1994:41-49), Gonzalez-Mena (2000:20-41), Kehily (2004:22-34) and Avant-Elliott (2013:113-120) contend that ECE programmes need to be designed in such a way that they meet the objectives of preschool education policy. ECE aims at the all-round development of the child encompassing physical, social, emotional and cognitive aspects. ECE helps the child to develop good health habits, proper attitudes and values, appropriate cognitive knowledge and desirable social skills. It also enhances the

emotional maturity of the child and develops a questioning mind and scientific outlook in the child. In general, ECE has greater importance for young children which calls for a well designed and implemented early education policy at this critical stage of development. The following paragraphs present the detail of the importance of ECE programmes.

### **I. The development of basic life skills and knowledge**

Recognition of ECE for young children as an integral part of continuous education has developed gradually in the whole world. Recent research has confirmed that a large group of both parents and educators understand the significance of the children's early experiences for their educational foundations. A well-practised ECE programme enables young children to acquire basic life and intellectual skills and knowledge that prepare the child to join the primary grade (Boddy, et al, 2006:92-96; CWDC, 2007:19-20).

### **II. The rate of learning and development during early childhood is rapid.**

According to Choudhury (2002:89-91), early childhood age is the period of rapid growth, learning and development. This means the child can learn almost anything rapidly if it is given to him/her in the form in which he/she can understand it. The more experiences or exposure we give to the child, the richer he/she can learn. Specifically, the children can learn the basic motor skills of good physique and muscular coordination, good healthy habits and basic skills necessary for personal adjustment such as dressing, toilet habits, eating, washing and cleaning and develop emotional maturity to express, understand, accept and control their feelings and emotions. Also, they can learn desirable social attitudes and to be sensitive to the rights and privileges of themselves and others, learn the basic language to express their thoughts and feelings in correct and fluent speech, learn the art and aesthetic appreciation and learn independence and creativity by providing children with sufficient opportunity for self-expression. Besides, they learn moral values such as faith in God, respect elders and younger, promote civic concepts and human rights (Klein & Rye, 2004:340-354; UNICEF, 2004:115-146).

### **III. ECE as an aid for parents in economic problem**

Early childhood education necessitated the establishment of preschools where young children who live in poverty and from families who suffer from economic pressure can be looked after properly by providing the necessary social, educational and economic aid to underprivileged parents.

### **IV. ECE as an instrument to reduce grade repetition and wastage in primary grades.**

The wastage and repetition in grades one and two in primary grades can be reduced and avoided if the children who join preschools are well prepared and ready for formal schooling.

### **V. To compensate for the limited space at home for children to move freely and play.**

There is hardly any space for a child to move about, run and play freely at home particularly in urban areas. Hence, preschools with enough space and enriching environments for free movement and proper play equipment are perhaps the more positive answer for children today.

### **VI. The early childhood stage is the period of socialisation.**

Social development during the preschool years is comparable with cognitive and self-development that usually occurs through play. In preschool, a child gets the opportunity of playing with other children (peers) and thus learns several basic social skills such as to share and cooperate with others, a sense of group identity and sex-role stereotypes among others (Choudhury, 2002:89-91).

### **VII. To provide better guidance to the young children**

In preschools, teachers are better trained, equipped and experienced enough in guiding, counselling and providing a better environment to professionally educate and facilitate young children's growth and development than parents.

### **VIII. To promote creativity in young children**

It is believed that providing early educational stimulation, instruction and intervention during the preschool years would promote creativity in the children. Curiosity and

problem solving play an important role in the development of creativity among preschool children.

To sum up, the significance of ECE programmes can be summarised into the following: i) to cater all-round development of the child such as physical, social, emotional and intellectual, ii) helps the child to develop good health habits, proper attitudes and desirable social skills, iii) it leads to better adjustment and social maturity on the part of the child, iv) it develops in the child the questioning mind and scientific outlook (Hanson, 2003:38-45; Blackman, 2003:4-9; Odom & Wolery, 2003:103; Library of Congress, 2004:16-35; Penn, 2005:50-70).

### **2.3.9. Status of ECE Programmes in Ethiopia**

In the Ethiopia context, traditionally, exclusively classroom-based and teacher-directed ECE programmes have been practiced. In these programmes, teachers plan, direct and control the learning activities and the learning process. According to the Education Statistics Annual Abstract (MoE, 2016:26-41), the ECE programmers include kindergartens, O class and child-to-child programme. The kindergarten programme is categorised into three levels:) nursery which usually involves young children of age less than three, Lower Kindergarten (LKG) which involves children of age three and four and Upper Kindergarten(UKG) that involves children of age five and six. This programme is predominantly run by communities, non-governmental organisations and religious institutions. (Tirusew, 2005:23-44; Habtamu, 1996:104-114; MoE, 2005:39-53).The government of Ethiopia recently launched the O class and child to child ECE programmes in addition to the traditional ECE programmes in the public primary schools in 2008. The three ECE programmes are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

#### **2.3.9.1. Traditional ECE programmes in Ethiopia**

According to Tirusew (2005:39), traditional ECE programmes in Ethiopia have been established and practised by religious institutions particularly by traditional priest Orthodox schools and Quran schools. This long-standing practice has been continued these days even with the advent of modern ECE programmes. The nature of traditional

ECE programmes and the preschool system has been predominantly oral and was oriented towards studying religious texts either that of Christianity or Islam (Library of Congress, 2004:16-35).

The positive role played by traditional religious ECE preschools in educating the successive generations in Ethiopia needs to be underscored. These religious ECE preschools are widely spread in the country and are accessible and affordable for the majority of children in rural areas as well as urban poor (Tirusew, 2005:39-44). However, these traditional ECE programmes are characterised by many limitations including, i) its content is religion-oriented and not scientific, ii) its instructional method is mainly oral missing essential skills of writing and reading, iii) it is not modern and as a result cannot cater all-round development of the children (Habtamu, 1996:104-114; Tirusew, 2005:39-44).

The traditional kindergarten ECE programme has three phases, namely Nursery, LKG and UKG as mentioned earlier. The services given at nursery phase usually involve care giving and introducing the child to new social interaction apart from home - the child meets a large number of other children of her/his age, teachers or caregivers for the first time, learn to sit in the classroom and interact and play with peers and others. At the LKG phase, children start to learn how to read and write numbers and alphabets. At the UKG phase, they learn more about the basic language, arithmetic and environmental science skills that prepare them for formal schooling (Tirusew, 2001:11-22).

In the last four decades, in addition to the long-standing traditional religious ECE preschools, four different types of modern ECE preschools have evolved. These include: i) preschools sponsored by the government, ii) preschools sponsored by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), iii) private sector sponsored preschools and iv) community preschools. Beginning in the mid-1980s, there was a growing establishment of community sponsored preschools all over the country. Growth was also observed in many ECE preschools which are financially supported by NGOs such as the SOS Children's Village Ethiopia, Christian Children's Fund, Save the Children Norway and

Save the Children Sweden. These were encouraging efforts even though the increase did not bridge the gap between demands and supply (Tirusew, 2005:39-44).

In the last few years, the private sector has shown an increment in investing in ECE programmes. This has brought an increase in the number of private preschools in urban centres, particularly in Addis Ababa. For instance, the number of preschools in Addis Ababa has increased from 52 in the year 2002/2003 to 299 in the year 2009/2010 (MoE, 2002: 52-67). There are also notable increases in the number of private preschools in the capitals of the regional states. However, the emerging preschools have many weaknesses including shortage or unavailability of trained caregivers and teachers, classrooms and furniture, instructional resources, first aid services and latrines. The other problem is that they are very expensive and unaffordable for the majority of children living in rural Ethiopia as well as children of urban dwellers with low -income families. Also, the community preschools which were relatively cheaper than private preschools are declining due to financial setbacks, scarcity of resources and space (Tirusew, et al, 1999: 76-87; Tirusew, 2005:39-44).

The study conducted by Habtamu (1996:104-114) on the ECE programme in Ethiopia reported that ECE has not received the due attention and resources it deserves from the relevant bodies. Private preschools and NGOs preschools are inaccessible and unaffordable for the majority of children because of high tuition fees; ECE participation rate is 2% which is very low. A majority of preschool teachers are unqualified; there is the inadequacy of educational facilities and teaching materials, minimal support by the government and inadequacy of community participation.

Despite all these efforts made by partners in ECE programmes, research made in the area by different scholars can be summarised into the following main problems in the area of ECE in Ethiopia:

1. ECE is not accessible to all eligible children particularly in rural areas (Habtamu, 1996:104-114 & Tirusew, 2005:39-44). This means that all young children eligible to ECE in the region have no equal opportunity to attend ECE due to a variety of

reasons such as inadequate infrastructure of preschools and preschool education is not government-funded.

2. There is a lack of awareness about the significance of the ECE largely on the part of the community, thus, there is low participation of parents and other members of the society (Ayalew, 1989:25-51).

3. There is a lack of quality education and quality-assuring institutions, thus, lack of qualified teachers in ECE (Teshome, 1989:25-51; & Teklehaimanot, 1982:7-14). According to Teshome (1989:23-28) and Teklehaimanot (1982: 12-29), ECE in Ethiopia lacks inclusive and equitable quality education because it does not have strong equity dimension and clear emphasis on the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

4. There is no adequate resource mobilisation, thus, lack of adequate education facilities and teaching-learning materials (Habtamu, 1996:104-114; Tirusew, 2005: 39-44 & Tasew, 2011:2-9). The aforementioned researchers suggest that some of the reasons for inadequate resource mobilisation are the absence of good educational governance and lack of robust educational financing.

5. The support provided by the government to this important sector of education is minimal and it is not the priority area for the government (Tasew, 2011:2-9).

6. Public investment in this critical sector of education is currently very low in the country and left for the private sectors. As a result, the sector is dominated by fee-charging kindergartens in which children from low socio-economic status do have very little access to attend this critical stage of education (Tirusew, 2005:39-44 & Tasew, 2011:2-9).

### **2.3.9.2. O class and child to child ECE programmes in Ethiopia**

O class and child-to-child programmes are the recently launched ECE programmes into the primary education system by the Ethiopian government in the last few years. O class and child-to-child programmes are introduced into the primary education system for those children who do not have access to kindergarten. The children in O class

programme are coached by selected teachers from the respective primary schools. The child-to-child programme is also a part of the pre-primary education system in which older brother or sisters (younger facilitators of grade 5/6 students) play with their younger siblings and neighbour's children. The playing becomes learning as the benefiting child gets to know how. For instance, to count or differentiate colours and identify letters (MoE, 2016:26-41).

In the Ethiopian context, the preschool education (pre-primary education) system consists of three ECE programmes namely kindergartens, O class and child-to-child programmes. Kindergarten is part of pre-primary education in which children aged 4-6 years are involved. This programme has its curriculum, trained teachers, administrative staff and school compounds. Most kindergarten schools are operated by non-governmental organisations such as communities, private institutions and faith-based organisations. As indicated earlier, O class and child-to-child programmes are ECE programmes recently introduced into the primary education system to create access for those children who do not have right of the entry into kindergarten education (MoE, 2013:77-98). The O class programmes are designed to be run by the local governments. There is limited research about the effectiveness of O class and child-to-child ECE programmes in Ethiopia.

In conclusion, pre-school programmes, are delivered through three modalities in Ethiopia. First, kindergarten is predominantly operated by NGOs, communities, private institutions and faith-based organisations. Second, non-formal pre-school service is being delivered mainly through the child-to-child initiatives. Third, this modality is about the most widespread response of local governments and that has been the setting up of the 'O' class.

#### **2.3.9.3. Policy guidelines of ECE programmes in Ethiopia**

The preschool policy guidelines are prepared by the Southern Nation, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) Education bureau via the Ministry of Education in 2016 (MoE, 2016:7-25). The guideline contains the following main parts: i) Main aim, ii)



Specific objectives, iii) Contents of ECE programme in Ethiopia, iv) Basic philosophy of ECE programmes in Ethiopia and v) Assumptions ECE programmers in Ethiopia.

### **I. Aim of the ECE program in Ethiopia**

The main aim of the ECE programme in Ethiopia is to lay the foundation for the all-round development of young children and preparing them for primary education through providing care, basic knowledge, skills and attitudes and ensure quality in education.

### **II. Specific Objectives**

- 1) To develop self-understanding and self-confidence in children.
- 2) To build up physical strength, sense organs and tissues and promote coordination among these.
- 3) To develop in children the ability to pay attention, follow direction, critical thinking and in-depth thinking that enable them to learn different subjects.
- 4) To promote in children's independent thinking, self-initiative, self-care, keep self-hygiene and accomplish tasks by following directions.
- 5) To develop self-control understanding others' feelings and express their feelings to others.
- 6) To enable children to understand their environment, explore, know, appreciate and create new things and delight through this process.
- 7) To develop different plays, communicative and social skills.
- 8) To develop in children non-verbal language skills, receiving and sending information, and assertiveness.
- 9) To develop in children basic speaking, writing and arithmetic operation skills.

### **III. Contents ECE) programmes in Ethiopia**

According to the manual of policy guideline, the contents of ECE programmes entail seven chapters:

- 1) Chapter one: Parts of human bodies and sense organs development.

- 2) Chapter two: Language development and usage
- 3) Chapter three: Development of basic arithmetic operations
- 4) Chapter four: Personal, social and attitudinal development.
- 5) Chapter five: Environmental awareness and understanding
- 6) Chapter six: Developing skills of creativity, exploration and appreciation.
- 7) Chapter seven: Identifying the English alphabet and phonetics.

#### **IV. Basic philosophy of ECE programmes in Ethiopia**

Educators, curriculum designers, teachers and parents should be aware of the fact that child care and development are based on certain philosophies. ECE programmes are based on the following philosophies:

1. ECE education lays the foundation of education in later life.
2. ECE programme enables children to be ready for primary education physically, mentally, attitudinally, socially and educationally.
3. ECE programme is integrative and based on home and school conditions. In ECE programme, children learn through logic but with full freedom.
4. In ECE programme, children learn through their mother tongue and based on environmental resources to develop self-awareness.
5. ECE programmes are based on understanding and respecting the differences of others, team learning, playing and appreciating and respecting others' thinking and attitudes.
6. ECE programmes are based on learning different subjects in an integrated manner by involving multidiscipline experts and partners such as experts, teachers, administrators, caregivers, parents and peers.

#### **V. Assumptions ECE programmers in Ethiopia.**

- 1) Children begin learning at the time of birth. Infants are physically and mentally active to learn through their sense organs stimulation.

- 2) Children develop knowledge from within but are not given knowledge from outside. Through continuous interaction with their environment, children progress and expand their knowledge through sensory activities.
- 3) Naturally, children are eager to learn through their sense organs and movement. Their learning ranges from self-awareness, knowing others and all objects in their environment.
- 4) Children learn through playing. Playing is a method of learning for children. Play enables children to explore, experiment, exercise several times without being tired and learning freely.
- 5) Differences exist among children in their development and learning. When teaching children their differences should be taken into account.
- 6) A child's learning proceeds from simple to complex.
- 7) Children's learning exposure should lead to success and develop a positive attitude rather than the acquisition of knowledge.
- 8) Children's learning is all-rounded. It involves many aspects such as physical, cognitive and social ones.
- 9) Children's learning involves parents as second teachers. Parents are the first teachers to their children at home. Even after they join preschools, the parent's participation is decisive. Parents should participate both at the planning and decision making stage of school work representing their children.
- 10) Provide equal opportunities to all children. Avoid discriminating among children based on ethnicity, sex, religion, ability and socio-economic status.
- 11) Provide special attention and help to special needs children. At this stage, it is easy to identify and solve the problems of children with special needs and problems. Therefore, teachers should make an adequate assessment to identify, give support and teach them according to their needs by utilising different teaching aids and equipment.

12) ECE programmes require adequate teaching and learning equipment and resources. Children learn through playing. There are a variety of playing such as i) free and structured play, ii) individual and group play, iii) vigorous and quiet play and iv) outdoor and indoor play. All these plays require different resources and equipment. In general, preschool children require fresh air, pure water, safe and adequate space for play, adequate indoor and outdoor playing equipment and materials, latrine, playground and different teaching aids among others. All these materials and equipment should be properly utilised in Grade R classes to make children's learning effective.

13) Time usage during the daily programme. During the daily programme, the activities in the classroom should assign time for:

- i) Indoor and outdoor play
- ii) Storytelling and song
- iii) Break time for discussion
- iv) Writing and reading
- v) Tea and lunch
- vi) Receiving and sending children

## **VI. Methods of teaching and learning in ECE programmes**

The policy guideline of Ethiopia states that the main method of teaching and learning should be the play method. The policy justification for this is that play provides preventive, therapeutic and creative values for children. The most important values of play include physical, social, cognitive, moral, therapeutic, recreational and educational.

There are some parents and teachers who believe that play is fun and a waste of time and energy. But truly speaking, play involves greater social interaction in the child. It develops physical, motor skills, language, emotional, social and intellectual abilities in children during preschool years. As a developmental process, it leads to physical coordination as well as social interaction. In this regard, it serves two functions: i) as a means of exploring physical, emotional and intellectual experiences and ii) as a means

of assimilation of these experiences into behavioral patterns, social conventions and frames of reference against which future exploration of experience could be tested (Choudhury, 2002:127-144). In addition, the policy recommends the use of other methods related to play that can be used by teachers as appropriate to their context.

#### **2.4. Chapter conclusion**

This chapter first discussed the brief history of preschool education that addressed underpinning issues in early childhood education and its policy implementation. Second, this chapter discussed early childhood education (ECE) programmes focusing on its aims, types, curriculum, the role of different partners, principles, advantages, significance and preschool physical setup and equipment. Third, the chapter ended with the a discussion of the status of ECE programmes in Ethiopia. The next chapter presents the discussion of discourse on the implementation of preschool policy.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DISCOURSE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ECE POLICY

#### 3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. The study aims to establish the nature of ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia. Thus, it is imperative to review the scholarly literature of the preschool policy implementation in terms of a meticulous educational policy framework.

This chapter is devoted to the discussion of the nature and implementation of education policy. It examines what an education policy framework entails, components of the education policy framework, policy implementation approaches and the role of main partners such as the government, teachers and parents in the implementation of preschool education policy. The chapter culminates in the discussion of the Commonwealth Policy framework that can be referred to when education policy implementation strategy is proposed in chapter six of this study.

The purpose of this study is to establish the nature of preschool education policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia

This study investigated how the ECE policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes.

#### 3.2. Education policy framework

In the Ethiopian context, there is no specific policy for ECE. Rather, it is a general education policy that is also applicable to school-based Grade-R classes. This is evidenced by the 1994 education and training policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994:7). In this general education and training policy document, 'preschool education' is stated only as a sector of general education. In addition, it is not among the areas that are given

special attention and priority. Therefore, one of the claims of this study is that the ECE sector should have a separate specific policy and deserves special attention and priority.

### **3.2.1. Framework analysis for the development of educational policies**

Responding to the needs of current education developments, scholars present a framework for the analysis of education policies specifically for the analysis of educational policies. Studies conducted by Gobel (2011:53-76) and Commonwealth Secretariat (2017:1-27) present a comprehensive framework for the analysis of educational policies and how they can be put into practice. The framework comprises four frames and each of the frames proposes the major area of concern that needs to be focused on in a discussion of educational policy implementation. The first frame analyses the background of the policy. The second one examines policy formulation while the third one investigates policy implementation. Last, it focuses on the effects of policy. The details of each frame are presented in the following paragraphs.

#### **3.2.1.1. Policy background analysis framework**

The first framework analyses the background and underlying principles related to the initiation and development of educational policies. Leichter (1979:79-99), Rizvi and Lingard (2010:10-20) used the term 'background' to refer to the contextual factors which are systematic and mainly include political, social and economic ones which affect education policy implementation. Leichter (1979:79-99) categorises such factors into four as situational, structural, cultural and international.

According to Leichter (1979:79-99), situational factors are less temporary conditions such as droughts, wars and socio-economic instability which can harm policy implementation or policy failure. For example, McNeal, Kunkle and Bryan (2016:62-82) find anecdotal evidence that high-profile cyber bullying cases in American schools have led to states modifying existing bullying laws to include cyber harassment as well.

The second background factors are the structural factors that are a relatively permanent component of the social system. They comprise the political system and nature of administration that enables the public society to participate in policy discussions,

decision making and implementation. Structural factors also include the type of economy and employment status. For example, if there are too few jobs for those who have trained, countries may suffer migration of these professionals to other societies where there is a shortage. Still, another structural factor is advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). For example, according to SEAMEO (2010: 49-57), all countries in Southeast Asia have either begun establishing or already have, a national ICT in their education vision. Such a vision provides policymakers, education leaders and policy practitioners with a means for coherent communication about how ICT can be effectively used for teaching, learning and administration.

According to Bechtel (2010:112-124), the third category of background factors affecting education policy implementation is cultural factors that are related to the values, principles, traditions or customs of a given society. For example, the position of ethnic minorities or language differences may lead to certain groups being unreached or underserved. In the Mekong sub-region, Southeast Asia, children from remote communities and poor ethnic minority families often lack access to schooling or to complete schooling. Religious factors can also affect education policy implementation, as evidenced by a strong debate on the teaching of evolution in American schools since the 1920s. In the last decades, many American states have adopted anti-evolution education bills that allow children to be taught by creationist view alternative to evolution (Jaffe, 2015:25-42).

The fourth vital background factor is the international or exogenous factor, which requires common effort and international cooperation among nations or states in education policy implementation. Commonly, many educational policy issues are dealt with by national governments. However, some require cooperation between national, regional or multilateral organisations. For instance, Asian member states signed a charter in 2007, expressing the regional common reference framework—the ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework (ACRF) for the recognition of professional qualification across ASEAN member states (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010:10-20). Similarly, the Commonwealth Education Policy Framework (CEPF) aims to provide member countries with a comprehensive approach to support the benchmarking of policy implementation



with similar member countries and the monitoring of national progress on education policy implementation (UN, 2015:24-36).

### **3.2.1.2. The education policy formulation process framework**

The second framework examines the policy formulation process. According to Buse, Mays, and Walt (2005:141-153), the policy formulation process comprises initiation, development, negotiation and communication. In other words, policy formulation is one of the stages of the policy process at which we identify who is involved in planning policy, how are policies arrived at, agreed upon and how are they communicated? Haddad and Demsky (1995:91-99) maintain that the framework for education policy analysis entails the processes through which issues are analysed and policies are generated, implemented, assessed and redesigned. Accordingly, an analysis of the education policy implies an understanding of the education policy process itself—the ‘how’ and ‘when’ of educational policy development.

According to Buse et al., (2005:141-153), the conceptual framework for policy formulation consists of seven policy-planning processes: i) analysis of the existing situation, ii) the generation of policy options, iii) evaluation of policy options, iv) making the policy decisions, v) planning of policy implementation, vi) policy impact assessment and vii) subsequent policy cycles. The first four deal with policymaking while the fifth with planning and the sixth and seventh focus on policy adjustment. The stages of policy formulation are discussed below.

#### **1. Analysis of the existing situation**

Analysis of the existing situation starts with an examination of the education sector itself then, proceeds to its context. For example, the policy of ECE primarily focuses on examining and resolving the early childhood education sector problems. In addition to the examination of the education sector itself, policy analysis should consider several aspects of social context, including political, economic, demographic, cultural and social issues which are likely to affect the decision making and policy implementation process as also argued by Gill (2005:241-260).

## **2. The generation of policy options**

Policy options can be generated by using different ways. For analytical purposes, methods of generating policy options can be categorised into four modes: systemic, incremental, ad hoc, and importation as proposed by Haddad and Denisky (1995:91-99). In a systemic mode, policy options are produced based on three operations: generation of data from sector analysis and professional knowledge of the real context, formulation and prioritisation of options and refining and redefining options. In incremental mode, the legitimacy of the policy agenda is maintained through widespread public debate and discussions by promoting incremental improvements. In this approach, implementation is executed in a step-by-step manner which enabled lessons learned at one stage to be incorporated in the next. In the ad hoc mode, an adjustment is to be made to fit into the political or administration system if the problem is outside the educational system. In the importation mode, policy options may be adopted from foreign contexts and international agencies if they meet the needs of particular groups in society as suggested by Acuña-Alfaro and Do (2010:48-55).

## **3. Evaluation of policy options**

According to Windham and Chapman (1990: 10-19), policy options can be evaluated only if alternative scenarios are developed to allow assessment of the likely implications of the options considered. The existing policy options are evaluated in terms of desirability, affordability, feasibility and sustainability. Each option should be evaluated in terms of desirability to all stakeholders or beneficiaries, financial, social, economic, political affordability and feasibility in terms of the availability and quality level of human resource. Finally, it is also evaluated in terms of the sustainability of each option financially and politically.

## **4. Making policy decisions**

Decision making is the most difficult task in the policy formulation process. It is the process of selecting the best policy option among the available options based on a critical evaluation of the options and empirical evidence. Even with the best planning, there is always a need to make good decisions in policy management. Major decisions

require the full support of many constituent partners like beneficiaries, sponsors, politicians, planning agencies and other segments of the government. In this context, the following three principles have been suggested by Lynn and Wildavasky (1992:121-129).

- 1) **Exception principle:** the principle which states that difficult decisions (other than routine decisions) that have broader implications for the whole policy implementation should be reserved for higher level and senior staff in the organisation.
- 2) **Delegation of authority:** It is needed at each level for assigning responsibility to the staff to perform their duties and tasks effectively.
- 3) **Consensus building:** It refers to an agreement to support a particular decision. Consensus building in a participative management strategy ensures that good ideas are not ignored. It also builds a strong group among all those constituents, which are involved in the implementation process.

## **5. Planning of policy implementation**

Once the policy option has been chosen, the planning of policy implementation should begin immediately. According to Haddad and Denisky (1995:91-99) planning for implementation involves avoiding concreteness absent in earlier stages of the policy formulation process. What was vague and abstract during the evaluation stage must be concrete during the planning stage. A schedule for every activity, for moving people, physical objects and funds must be drawn up with clarity and attention to detail that leaves no doubt as to who will do what and, when and how. Physical resources must be located and their availability must be assured; financial resources must be appropriated so that implementation delays are minimal. The personnel needed to put plans into action must be freed from other commitments and made ready to go to work. The technical knowledge needed to guide the policy implementation must be mastered by those who will employ it. The administrative systems within which the policy is directed must be structured and firmly in place.

Haddad and Denisky (1995:91-99) also suggest that a significant amount of planning takes place during actual implementation. This is the case because during implementation, the following is the rule rather than the exception:

- a) circumstances related to implementation constraints cause policy modifications to take place;
- b) feedback obtained during implementation causes reassessment of aspects of the policy decision and subsequent modifications by policymakers. A mere translation of abstract policy intentions into concrete implementation causes re-assessment and re-designs. These changes occur with great frequency because, unfortunately, implementation problems are often greatly underestimated during the stage of policy planning.

## **6. Policy impact assessment.**

Policy impact assessment is the type of assessment made to check policy implementation success once the policy has been in place long enough to produce results (Haddad & Denisky, 1995:11-29). If the assessment reveals that the policy outcome is a failure, it is necessary to determine whether the failure of the policy is due to the inadequacy of the policy itself or poor implementation. Human capital inadequacies, under-funding or inadequate economic stimulus during the implementation stage are among the many possible causes of the failure of a well-designed policy. On the other hand, if the assessment reveals deficiencies in outcomes and if the implementation can be shown to have been well done, then, it is necessary to re-examine the policy decision and to determine what adjustments or what new policies should be substituted for the original choice. Once this is accomplished, then, one moves again to the planning and implementation stages. Given the rapid pace of contemporary change and the intimate links between the educational system and the rest of society, even successfully conceived and implemented initiatives require adjustments over time.

## **7. Subsequent policy cycles.**

If a policy initiative is carried out systematically, the process of policy design, planning, implementation, impact assessment and redesign will become repetitive and in theory,

infinitely so, as suggested by Haddad and Denisky (1995:35-47). This indicates that policy analysis is never to end. Ideally, once implementation has been completed and policy outcomes are forthcoming, a policy impact assessment stage proceeds, leading potentially to a new policy cycle.

### **3.2.1.3. Strategic planning in education policy implementation**

The third frame investigates the implementation process and the related gaps between policy implementation and planning. According to Pressman and Wildavsky (1984:69-78) and Blackerby (2003:39-46), strategic planning is part of the process that turns policies into realism. It is generally accepted that education policy planning must be strategic and reflect the complex nature of the education systems. It should imply: i) how education policy can be transformed into actionable strategies, aims and outputs, ii) establishing appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to decide the success of implementation and iii) establishing an effective programme of stakeholder engagement and management.

The existence of strong educational financing is also an essential aspect of educational policy to achieve educational aims successfully. Strong educational financing requires: i) mobilising an adequate and sustainable budget, ii) establishing sustainable financial systems and iii) establishing and maintaining transparency and accountability in the financial management of education (Tobin et al., 2015:52-61).

An organisational structure is an aspect of good governance that affects the implementation of ECE policy (Buse et al., 2005:141-183). Successful educational delivery also requires that the right people, institutions and processes are in place to allow goals to be met. The effective organisational structure requires: i) clarifying the roles, responsibilities, outcomes and accountability of organisations, stakeholders and individuals, ii) establishing educational decentralisation so that the appropriate structures and procedures are in place to deliver education functions appropriately at all levels and iii) ensuring that there is sufficient capacity to deliver infrastructure, knowledge, services, functions and operations.

#### **3.2.1.4. Effects of policy analysis framework**

The fourth frame focuses on the effects of policies. According to Kamens and McNeely (2009:5-25), policy effect assessments are intended to provide information on education policy outcomes. Moreover, it can help further discussions about how assessment data can best be used to inform policy and practice and evaluate the effectiveness of policy reforms. In line with this, Haddad and Denisky (1995:91-99) explain that policy reforms should be systematically assessed, preferably with a built-in mechanism, in terms of their impact whether it is achieving what is expected. Further, they suggest that the result of the impact assessment may be the inadequacy of the policy itself or failure at policy implementation.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993:31-48), points out that policy analysis identifies what happens once a policy is put into effect –how it is monitored, whether it achieves its objectives or has unintended results. In an influential comparative analysis of East African countries, Psacharopoulos (1989:179-195) examined a series of educational policy statements across these nations, assessed how successful these policies had been in achieving their original objectives and concluded that there are three main reasons why an educational policy may not be put into effect or subsequently be seen as a failure:

- 1) The intended policy is never implemented in the first place.
- 2) Even if an attempt at implementation is made, it failed to be completed or achieved the minimum critical mass to have an impact.
- 3) Although the policy is implemented, it did not have the intended effect.

In addressing the effect of policy implementation on students learning needs and performances, Tobin et al., (2015:52-61) undertook a systematic review of 68 studies that examined the link between participation in large-scale assessment programmes of students' learning and education policy in 32 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. These studies come up with the conclusion which indicates that many stakeholders of the member countries use assessment data to manage education systems rather than directly addressing the needs of learners (Montoya, 2015:105-117). However, SEAMEO (2016:51-65) suggests that assessment results can better support stakeholders in

identifying effective levers that will support bottom-up or micro reform in schools to improve students' learning outcomes.

In adding up, the above studies also depict that by using these four frames, the policy analysis might have a more comprehensive perspective for critically reviewing current educational policies both at local and international levels.

According to Ang (2012:87-100), by applying the education policy framework, it is possible to find answers for the following questions which are pertinent to preschool education policy implementation: What are some factors that assist or impede preschool policy implementation? What are the potential effects of ECE policy implementation on the school readiness of young children? What are the underlying factors that go behind formulating preschool policy? What might be some preschool policy implementation effects that result from certain global developments? Most importantly, is there a systematic and structured method for scholars to answer these questions?

While education research might encompass broad themes in areas such as leadership and school improvement, teacher development and teacher quality, skills and employability, equity in education, governance and quality assurance and citizenship education, it is ultimately policy-making that translates these domains into practice (Quah, 2016:96-106). According to Ahlers (2014:42-60), policy implementation analysis within the education system must be capable of recognising the various levels at which policy development takes place. It must be aware of the multitude range of educational institutions involved, recognising analytical models through which the policy process can be understood and interpreted and the importance of specific cultural contexts.

### **3.2.2. Components of an education policy framework**

According to Rivzi and Lingard (2010:10-20), the education policy framework is a broad strategic plan to undertake comprehensive reform and improvement of education. It is intended to be visionary, conceptual and directional. It incorporates a coherent and carefully thought out design according to which the education sector can be developed over time. It provides a conceptual and policy plan which allows the government to discuss its future policy directions and investments with stakeholders, both inside and

outside a country. It also identifies priorities for future investment and further capacity development of the Ministry of Education.

Many studies have been made on education policy implementation across nations such as in China (Zheng, Lu & White, 2009:102-109; Burns & Zhou, 2010:112-121; Gobel, 2011:53-76; Ahlers, 2014:42-60), the Philippines (Riedinger, 1995:55-71; Reyes, 2007: 97-125; 2009a:515-535; 2009b:80-120) and across different countries (Walt & Gilson, 1994:353-370; Taylor, Rivzi, Lingard & Henry, 1997:49-79; DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002:467-492; Buse et al., 2005:141-183; Bell & Stevenson, 2006:56-73); Rizvi & Lingard, 2010:10-20). These studies suggest the use of the education policy framework that acknowledges the importance of looking into the policy contents, process, context and actors that determine its implementation is imperative to a large extent.

#### **3.2.2.1. Contents of education policy**

According to Tobin et al., (2015:52-61), the contents of education policy refer to the structure of the policy and how it is articulated. It also entails the aims and values contained within the policy and addresses whether these are explicit or implicit. The same above researchers also identified three specific education policy contents as system-level, resource allocation and teaching-learning policies. System-level policies deal with evaluation systems within the policy operations regulating curricular and performance standards. Resource allocation policies refer to how resources are determined and shared within the education system. Teaching and learning policies relate to specific schools and classroom level practices such as classroom management, support for students and teacher-student relationships.

#### **3.2.2.2. Education policy process**

The term education policy process refers to a series of stages of policy initiation, formulation, implementation and evaluation (Buse et al, 2005:141-183). However, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993:31-48) argue that breaking down education policy into different stages is only an ideal type and does not necessarily represent exactly what happens in practice. This suggests that the education policy process is not straight-forward. This means what is planned theoretically is not appearing to progress



easily from one stage to another because it is affected by a variety of content and contextual factors during implementation (Bhola, 2004:295-312).

### **3.2.2.3. Contextual factors**

Contextual factors are the ones that affect education policy to a large extent. They entail a wide range of structural, situational, socio-cultural and international factors (Leichter, 1979:79-90).

According to Stone (1989:281-300), situational factors are temporary social conditions such as drought, pandemic, wars and political unrest that may have the potential to cause policy failure. Recent evidence from McNeal et al.,(2016:62-82) about high-profile cyber bullying cases in American schools that have led states to update their existing bullying laws to include cyber-harassment shows a situational factor that affects education policy.

Structural factors are relatively unchanging elements of the social system. They include political and administrative systems. The type of economy and employment status, demographic features and technological advancements such as a technological change in everyday life and efforts to integrate ICT into schools affect education policy to a large extent (Hew & Brush, 2007:223-252; SEAMEO, 2010:49-57).

Socio-cultural factors such as social order (being urban or rural, poor or rich), the existence and position of ethnic minorities, language differences and various religious perspectives also affect education policy (Bechtel, 2010:112-124).

International factors related to social, cultural and economic conditions which are leading to greater interdependence and cooperation among different countries also affect education policy (UNESCO, 2015:15-20).

### **3.2.2.4. Actors**

Actors are individuals, groups of individuals and organisations who take part in policy design and implementation. Actors are the core elements of education policy because they are the only ones that can plan and implement education policy. Their values, interests and beliefs strongly affect education policy implementation (Nor Haslynda, 2014:41-65).

### **3.2.3. Education policy implementation**

Policy implementation has been defined differently as i) the step that follows policy formulation and is viewed as the 'process of carrying out a basic policy decision' (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1983:143), ii) a process to actualise, apply and utilise policy in the world of practice (Bhola, 2004:295-312) and iii) what transpires between policy expectations and perceived policy results (Deleon, 1999:311-338).

Buse et al., (2005:141-183), define and conceptualise policy implementation as part of the policy process. According to this view, a policy is broken down into a sequence of different stages theoretically and does not necessarily represent exactly what happens in the real context. However, it is usually understood as part of policy-making occurring in three different stages: i) Problem identification and issue recognition—how issues get onto the policy agenda and why some issues do not even get discussed? ii) Policy formulation—how are policies arrived at, agreed upon, who is involved in designing policy and how they are communicated? iii) Policy implementation—this often the most neglected phase of policy-making and is sometimes seen as quite separate from the first two stages. However, this is debatable that the most important phase of policy-making if the policies are not implemented or are diverted or changed at implementation, then, it would seem something is going wrong—and the policy outcomes will not be those which are sought.

There is a debate among scholars about whether policy formulation and policy implementation should be considered as distinct steps, with the latter following the former or both being part of the policy process during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One view of the policy process states that it is first drawn up by experts, then, executed by administrative officials (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1983:13-54). This view is more prevalent in government bureaucracy as it promotes the view that policy is designed carefully by legislators, then, fails at the implementation stage because of issues related to bureaucracy. The second view holds that there is no clear distinction between policy formulation and implementation, as the real policy is formulated not only at the legislative level but continues to be reformulated at the administrative level (Lindblom, 1980:30-48; Trowler, 1998:118-129) and also at school level(Hope, 2002:40-43).

Today, it is common to observe a gap between what was planned and what occurred as the result of policy implementation. For example, in one of their case studies, Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa (2015:56-72) argue that even though international foreign aid has made a considerable increase to education in aid-recipient poor countries, there is a considerable gap between what aid does and what it might potentially achieve when particularly the focus is on enrollment and quality.

Similarly, the other policy implementation approach employed by some countries and organisations is now focused on devising systems that set targets with specific achievement dates, then, work with the commitment towards achieving them. For example, the Malaysian government set up a Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) in 2009 to assess and evaluate the progress of policies formulated under its Government Transformation Programme (GTP). The GTP is meant to be a broad-based programme of change to fundamentally transform the government into an efficient and people-centred institution. Similarly, the UN set its Millennium Development Goals focusing on the efforts of its agencies on quantitative and timed targets to increase access to education by 2015 among others. Unfortunately, while primary school enrolment figures rose tremendously, with the net enrolment rate increasing from 83% in 2000 to 91% in 2015, the goal of achieving universal primary education was missed (Galatsidas & Sheehy, 2015:11-51).

UNESCO (2014:17-36) claims that for many developing countries, it is easier to make policy than implement it. They also further explain that policy does not have meaning unless it is enacted. Therefore, there is a great concern to ensure that there is a clear focus on mechanisms that support policy implementation practices. The potential priorities required for effective policy implementation comprise programmes of professional development on policy implementation, a strong focus on financing of policy implementation and a commitment to ongoing mechanisms of partners' communication.

In general, the current literature on policy analysis reveals that policy implementation assumes that there is a generalised theory or policy framework of education policy implementation. However, policy implementation is affected by unique social, cultural,

economic and political contexts in different localities. The literature also discusses different education policy implementation approaches and strategies. The subsequent section is devoted to the discussion of different policy implementation approaches and strategies.

### **3.2.3.1. Policy implementation approaches**

In this section, different policy implementation approaches that explain how education policy is put into practice are discussed. According to Ding (2016:61-66), different studies made in the 1970s on policy implementation indicate policy-making in many countries had not achieved its stated goals. It was evident that government interventions relating to social problems were ineffective. This has led to a generation of academic interest in designing studies to evaluate policy and such studies made important contributions to the creation of implementation theories that underlie different policy implementation approaches which include the following.

#### **1. Top-down approach**

The top-down policy implementation approach perceives policy implementation as the linear sequence of activities in which there is a clear distinction between policy formulation and policy execution. The former is seen as clearly political and the latter as a largely administrative activity. Policies set at the top (national or international level) have to be communicated to lower levels (e.g. local education authorities, districts, schools and teachers) which are, then, charged into practice (Ding, 2016:61-66).

The top-down approach was developed from early studies by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984:69-78) and VanMeter and Carl (1975:112-117) which focuses on policy implementation relationship and policy implementation system building. Particularly, these studies emphasise the implementation gap to deliver policymakers with a better understanding of what system they needed to minimise the gap between policy expectations and reality. The key to effective implementation is based on the ability to devise a system in which the casual links between setting goals and the successive actions to achieve them are clear. In such a system, the goals have to be very clear and widely understood; the necessary political, administrative, technical and financial

resources have to be available. A chain of command has to be established from the centre to the periphery. Communication and control systems have to be in place to keep the whole system on the right track. Later top-down theorists set up six necessary and sufficient conditions which can serve as a criterion for effective policy implementation (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979:13-54). The six points include:

- 1) Clear and logically consistent objectives
- 2) Adequate casual theory (that is, a valid theory as to how particular actions would lead to the desired outcomes).
- 3) An implementation process is structured to enhance compliance by implementers (e.g. appropriate incentives and sanctions to influence subordinates in the required way).
- 4) Committed, skilful and implementing officials.
- 5) Support from interest groups and legislature
- 6) No changes in socio-economic conditions that undermine political support or casual theory underlying the policy.

Supporters of this approach claim that it could differentiate empirically between successful and failed policy implementation processes by taking the above six points as a criterion. However, this approach is not without limitations. According to Buse et al., (2005:141-183), the following are the main limitations of the top-down approach.

- a) it is not inclusive in adopting the viewpoint of all central decision-makers or those at the top neglects the role of other actors(e.g. NGOs, professional bodies, the private sector) and the contribution of other levels in the implementation process(e.g. regional educational district, authorities and teachers).
- b) it overestimates the effect of top-level actors on the problem versus other factors.
- c) it is difficult to implement policy in situations where there is no single, dominant policy or agency involved in many fields because the situation becomes complex.

- d) there is no possibility that the preconditions for successful policy implementation designed by a top-down approach will be satisfied.
- e) the difference between policy decisions and subsequent implementation are misleading and not usually feasible.
- f) it does not take into account the impact on the implementation of the extent of change required by the policy.

Critics against the top-down approach argued that policy implementation is chaotic and more complicated than even the most sophisticated top-down approach itself. Therefore, a practical recommendation is made in reducing the gap between expectation and reality. To emphasise this point, Hogwood and Gunn (1984:14-39) created a list of ten preconditions for what they termed 'perfect implementation' to illustrate that the 'top-down' approach is impractical in most situations. The following is a list of ten preconditions of Hogwood and Gunn (1984:14-39)'s Perfect Implementation.

- 1) The circumstances external to the agency do not impose crippling limitations.
- 2) The existence of adequate time and sufficient resources.
- 3) There is an appropriate combination of resources available.
- 4) The policy is based on a valid theory of cause and effect.
- 5) The relationship between cause and effect is direct.
- 6) Dependency relationships are minimal—the policymakers are not reliant on groups or organisations which are themselves interdependent.
- 7) There is an understanding and agreement on objectives.
- 8) Tasks are fully specified in the correct sequence.
- 9) Communication and coordination are perfect.
- 10) Those in authority can demand and obtain perfect obedience.

Since it is rare that all ten pre-conditions would be present at the same time, critics of the 'top-down' approach asserted that the approach is neither a good description of what is practical nor a helpful guide to improving policy implementation.

## **2. Bottom-up approach**

In the bottom-up approach policy implementation, the implementation process is not merely based on administrative commands passed from the above but the process in

which the implementers participate actively in the complex process, thus, contribute significantly in putting plans into actions (Buse et al., 2005:141-183). In this approach some authority is usually granted to subordinate agencies so that implementers may modify ways to implement the policy and redefine the objectives of the policy. One of the most prominent studies in the development of the bottom-up perspective on policy implementation is by Lipsky (1980:78-90) who studied the administrative behaviour of front-line staff (e.g. social workers, teachers and local government officials) concerning their clients. He showed that even those working in the rule-bound contexts had some discretion in how to deal with their clients and had high levels of discretion which enable them to get round the dictates of central policy and reshape policy for their own needs.

Based on Lipsky's work (1980:78-90), researchers in the area focus on the actors in the implementation process. Particularly, they put their attention on goals, strategies, activities and links to one another among actors. Since then, 'bottom-up' studies showed that even where the necessary conditions by the 'top-down' approach were in place, policies could be implemented in ways that policymakers had not intended. Rather, policies could make things even worse, for example, by increasing staff workload so that they had to develop undesirable coping strategies (Wetherley & Lipsky, 1977:171-197).

Studies on front-line administrators still have relevance on policy implementation at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, Taylor (2007:555-572) acknowledges that policymaking and implementation have been highly compromised by British education reform. Some policy practitioners maintain that policy implementation has brought changes that create new situations that demand imaginative responses.

Lessons learned from the bottom-up approach on policy implementation have also initiated several studies in non-Asian countries of how interactions between central, regional and local agencies influence education policy implementation in Spain (Fuente, Vives & Faini, 1995:11-51); the Nordic region (Suorsa, 2016:15-29) and Russia (Prina, 2015:50-59). These studies show that the capacity of the centre to manage and control lower levels of the system varies and widely depends on factors such as political

conditions, legislation, communication processes, operational rules and the ability of the government to enforce these.

The relationship between the centre and the lower levels in education systems determines the outcome of many policies whether they are successful or failed. For example, according to Zairil (2016:17-20), the two scenarios occurred consecutively in Malaysia. The Education Ministry attempted to transform its exam-oriented education system to school-based assessment by incorporating more comprehensive methods of assessment. In doing so, the Malaysian government issued a circular proclaiming that in 2016, the format of national examination taken by all students in Malaysia at the end of six-year in primary school would be changed from a completely written and central examination to a school-based assessment where the central exam papers only constitute 60 percent of the total marks with the remaining 40 percent to be derived from school-based assessment. However, within four years, the implementation of this policy encountered strong opposition during initial implementation. Finally, following nationwide protests by teachers, the implementation was unsuccessful. Nor Haslynda (2014:45-65) argues that this failure of policy implementation results from the mismatch between curriculum policy set from the top (centre) and school practice (the periphery).

### **3. Policy-action relationship approach**

Lewis and Flynn (1979:171-175) developed a behavioural model which views policy implementation as action by actors. In this model, the emphasis is on the interaction of the actors with the outside world and the organisation's external context which implies that policy goals are not the only guides to actions but there are also external factors that mediate policy actions.

This theme of analysis has also been developed by Barrett and Fudge (1981:18-31). They argue that policy implementation may be best understood in terms of a 'policy-action-continuum' in which an interactive and bargain process takes place over time between those who are responsible for enacting policy and those who have control over resources. In this model, more emphasis is placed on issues of power and dependence and pursuit of interests than on either the top-down or the bottom-up approaches. The



policy-action model shows that policy is something that gradually progresses from a plan into action. In support of this approach, Egonmwan (2009:79-85) suggested that the challenge that policy implementers confront largely is related to the contextual factors that affect their actions. Such factors include the actor's interests, values, authority level, the culture of people and a host of different social, political and economic conditions.

#### **4. Inter-organisational interaction approach**

According to Jones (2016:203-253), policy implementation is also viewed as a process that involves interactions within a multiplicity of organisations. In this context, there are two approaches, which are mentioned as under.

##### **A) Power-dependency approach**

According to this approach, policy implementation takes place in the context of interaction of organisations in such a way that the interaction produces authority relationships in which organisations can induce other fewer authority organisations to interact with them. In such a relationship, those organisations which depend on their provisions on other more resourceful organisations have to work in such a way to secure and protect their interests and maintain their relative autonomy so that implementation does not suffer.

##### **B) Organisational exchange approach**

This view holds that organisations collaborate with their counterparts for mutual benefit in the implementation process. Whereas in the power-dependency approach the organisational relations are based on dominance and dependence. The organisational exchange approach is based on exchange for mutual benefit. In support of this view, Jones (2016:203-253) argues that policy implementation should be analysed in terms of institutional structures, which comprised clusters of actors and organisations working through a set of organisational pools to satisfy their joint benefit. In general, implementation of programmes, which requires a multiplicity of organisations, gives rise to a complex pattern of interactions that top-down frameworks fail to recognise. As a

result, these approaches do not satisfactorily explain implementation and in practice, programmes based on their application yield little success.

## **5. A Synthesis of top-down and bottom-up approach**

According to this approach, policy implementation is seen as the continuation of the policymaking process. Sabatier and Mazmanian (1986:13-54) reported that implementation and policy making are the same process. They synthesised the ideas of top-down and bottom-up approaches into a set of six conditions for the effective implementation of policy objectives. These conditions are:

- a) Clear and consistent objectives to provide a standard of legal evaluation and resources;
- b) Adequate causal theory, thus, ensuring that the policy has an accurate theory of how to bring change;
- c) Implementation structures that are legally structured to enhance the compliance of those charged with implementing the policy and of those groups that are the target of the policy;
- d) Committed and skilful implementers who apply themselves to use their discretion to realise policy objectives;
- e) Support of interest groups and sovereigns in the legislature and executive body.

This approach has the distinctive feature of combining the bottom-up approach and the top-down approach. Implementation in this approach is thought of as the process which essentially occurs within the system and policy subsystems. This framework is designed to analyse institutional conditions and to produce a consensus that is not there in the original model based on their interactions.

In summary, Elomore (1985:15-28) suggests multiple policy frameworks are needed to be employed in the analysis of policy implementation including 'backward mapping' (bottom-up) and 'forward-mapping' (top-down) approaches. He also proposes four implementation models: systems management, bureaucratic process, organisational development and conflict and bargaining. Further, he argues that models of policy

implementation should not be considered as opponent hypotheses, which could be empirically proved but as uncertain and conflicting frames of assumptions. Regarding the problems of inconsistencies and incompleteness associated with various approaches, it is important to adopt a critical and creative approach to think comprehensively. There is no single model that leads to a general theory. Each approach has comparative advantages and provides some insight into a particular dimension of the reality of policy implementation.

### **3.2.3.1. Policy implementation structure**

It is imperative to adapt to the structure that is employed to explain the implementation of ECE policy in this study. The following figure 3 -1 presents the analytical structure that shows the relationship between basic elements (CSA, 2007:8).

The SNNPR Education Bureau of Ethiopia (MoE, 2010:40-53) suggests an ECE policy implementation framework for gathering and analysing information about its implementation (see Figure -1). This framework provides an analytical structure that comprises the interplay of the basic elements for studying the implementation of preschool policy in SNNPR.

Investigation of the education policy implementation requires clear understanding and discerning how the policy is developed and what focus areas it entails such as its vision statement, objectives and how the objectives are achieved through the application of the strategic actions.

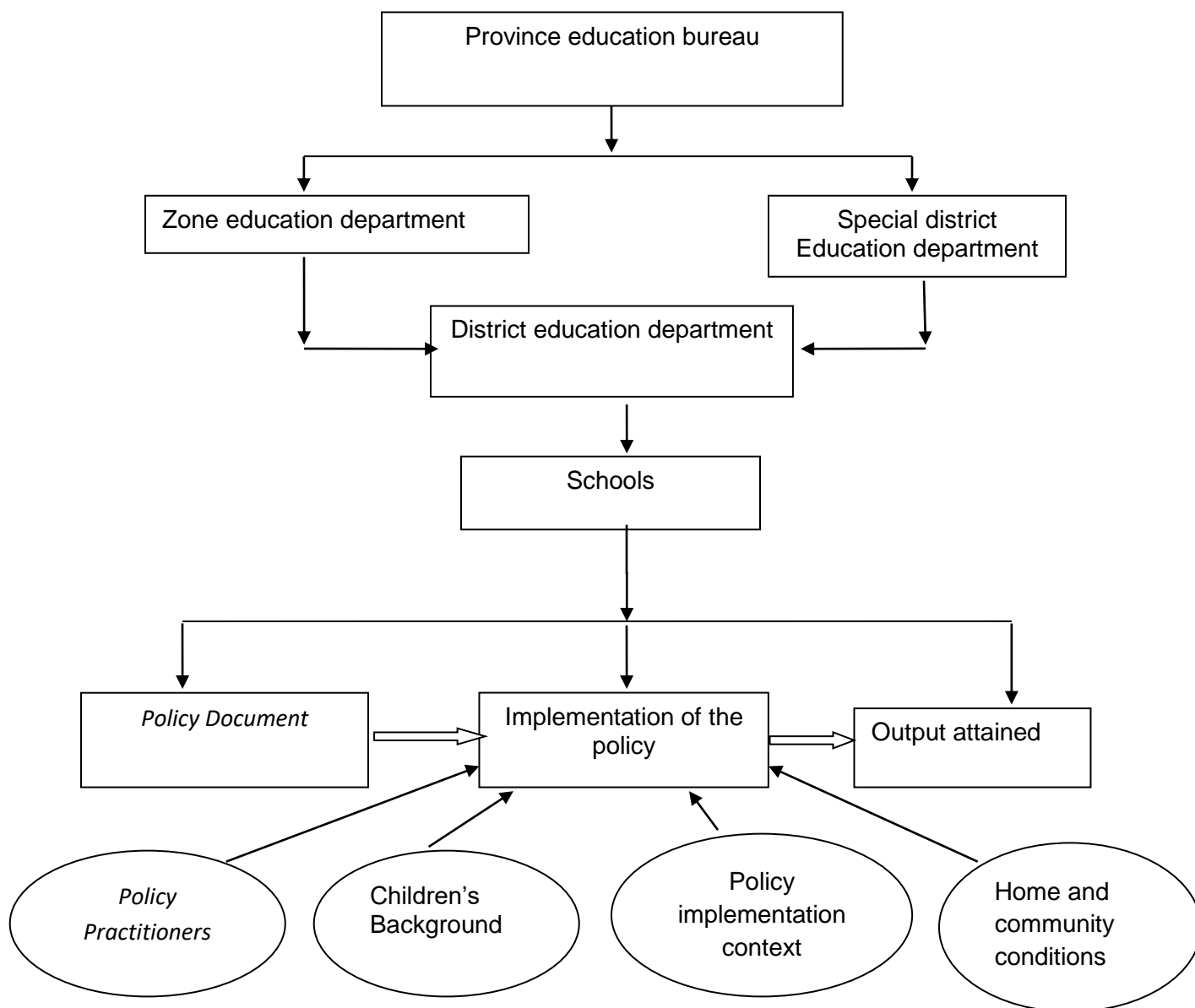


Figure 3.1 : The ECE policy implementation assessment framework

Source: SNNPR Education Bureau (MoE, 2010: 12), Education planning & development group.

The ECE policy implementation can be explained as a system representation that comprises policy documents and guidelines as input, methods and strategies to implement the policy as the process and the results attained at the end of the process

as the output of the policy. The whole system of the policy is affected by the following main factors: i) policy practitioners—all stakeholders who take part in the process of implementing the policy. The main stakeholders include teachers, parents, education department officers, policy experts and government bodies. The detail of the role of each of these partners is explained in chapter two as in the children's background implying children's life setting such as experiences, poverty, abuse, stigma and poor health. This is followed by policy implementation context meaning the overall situation in which the policy is implemented. Also, this includes the home and community conditions meaning the living conditions of the family and community (MoE, 2010:40-53).

The following section illustrates how an education policy framework is used or how it shapes policy implementation, in this regard, ECE policy implementation. The Commonwealth Education Policy Framework (CEPF) is used as a case in point.

#### **3.2.4. The Commonwealth Education Policy Framework (CEPF)**

According to the commonwealth Secretariat (2017:1-27), the commonwealth education policy framework (CEPF) entails four cornerstones which are the guiding principles that underlie the view of what constitutes a good education system. These include quality, equitable access, relevance and sustainability. An education framework also includes four enablers which are aspects of processes and systems that are crucial to effective policies, governance, knowledge, advocacy and capacity. There are elements of an educational system that form part of an Education Framework that are seen as subsystems such as early childhood care and education, primary schooling, secondary schooling, technical and vocational education and training, tertiary education and adult education. For this study, the subsystem of early childhood care and education is the focus.

##### **3.2.4.1. Cornerstones of education policy implementation**

According to the commonwealth secretariat (2017:1-27), CEPF is built on cornerstones and enablers. It incorporates four cornerstones which are the guiding principles that underlie a commonwealth view of what constitutes a good education system namely equity, quality, relevance and sustainability. An education framework that is built upon

these four fundamental cornerstones will ensure that education policy will give due emphasis to these important anchors as a means of improving education outcomes.

## **I. Equity**

According to the commonwealth education policy framework (2017:6), the Commonwealth's values of equity comprise access and development, stressing the key role of education for sustainable development (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015:1-27). There is a call for a commitment on Goal4 which addresses access to education of all learners and extend the period of participation. Emphasis has been placed on the development of a quality education system that is equitable, inclusive and relevant to the needs of all learners so that they can improve their livelihoods and contribute to sustainable development.

It is in this regard that access and equity, quality, relevance and sustainability form the foundation of CEPF. Each of these cornerstones reinforces others and must be understood collectively rather than in isolation. A human right is non-negotiable. All individuals should have access to educational opportunities. This access must be irrespective of any form of disadvantage or discrimination. The extent of these opportunities must extend beyond basic education to give equal access to the full range of lifelong learning elements. Access should be understood in terms of the '4As' if it is to conform to rights obligations (Tomasevski, 2001:12-26):

- a) Availability: education should be free and government-funded and that there are adequate infrastructure and trained teachers that support education delivery;
- b) Accessibility: the education system should be non-discriminatory and accessible to all learners and that positive steps are taken to include the most marginalised;
- c) Acceptability: the content of education should be relevant, non-discriminatory, culturally appropriate and of quality; the school should be safe and teachers are professional

- d) **Adaptability:** education should evolve with the changing needs of society and contribute to challenging inequalities, such as gender discrimination; it should also be adapted locally to suit specific contexts.

Bray and Menefee (2015:11-21) suggest that the achievement of access, equity and inclusion requires the identification of and addressing of obstacles to these goals at the individual, institutional and system levels of policy implementation. At all levels, commitments should be made to improve equity, expand policy and legislative devotion to promoting equity control and evaluation. Addressing cultural and societal norms and attitudes that constrain equity in education policy implementation must also be given a priority even though it requires great sensitivity.

## **II. Quality**

Quality is a basic aspect of education that should be promoted and fostered in any education system to ensure lifelong learning for all learners (UNESCO, 2014:17-36). According to UNESCO (2015:15-20), access and retention are not sufficient without the quality of education. Hence, notions of quality schooling must encompass a stronger equity dimension, knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development including sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity.

The existence of quality in education typically includes well-trained educators, support staff and good education managers as well as appropriate learning resources and materials. The use of ICT is an important aspect of all these. Moreover, processes of quality assessment and improvement both internal and external supervision need to be further developed and implemented more widely. Even though the quality is related to resourcing, it is important to notice that cost-effectiveness is one aspect of quality as claimed by the World Bank (2015:11-35).

## **III. Relevance**

Relevance refers to the extent to which learning experiences are directly connected to the real-life situations of the learners. Education should meet societal needs, including but not limited to employment and productivity. Education should support

the delivery of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015: 24-36). Accordingly, learning experiences should be directly relevant to the personal aspirations of students and the real-life issues they are likely to face. It should also support them to become global citizens. Education must support the value base of communities and society.

In terms of education policy implementation, Bhola (2004:296) defined it as a process 'to actualise, apply and utilise it in the world of practice' relevance in education should be evaluated in terms of the connection between the curricula contents and the lived experience of learners including learners a knowledge, values, attitudes and actual skills that can be applied in various contexts throughout their life.

#### **IV. Sustainability**

Sustainability is a global education agenda. It is also a foundation of the commonwealth's approach. In this view, education's relevance must be judged largely in terms of its contribution to sustainability. Sustainability is not only seen in the realm of environmental education, rather, it also has to be understood as crucial to addressing global challenges, and create more sustainable and resilient individuals and societies constructively and creatively (UNESCO-GMR, 2014:12-21). Broadly, sustainability encompasses the social, economic and environmental areas. The sustainability of education is dependent on finding ways to resource activities adequately in the future but also requires careful attention to be given to building and maintaining the support of other stakeholders (Commonwealth secretariat, 2017:6-24).

In this study, the purpose of discussing the CEPF in detail is to support the benchmarking of policy implementation. This framework can be adapted by other countries into their particular contexts to address how it works and subsequently address some of the gaps existing in their policies concerning the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

##### **3.2.4.2. Enablers of policy implementation**

I indicated at the beginning of my discussion of the commonwealth policy implementation model that the success of implementation is based on the cornerstones



of the policy and on those factors that are enablers of policy implementation. The following discussion shows the role of enablers in an Education policy framework.

According to Commonwealth Secretariat (2017:9-15), enablers are aspects of processes and systems that are crucial for effective policy implementation. There are four critical enablers: governance, knowledge, capacity and advocacy. These enablers are considered as the key pillars to support the formulation and subsequent implementation of education policy. According to Gill (2005: 241-260), enablers are named as context factors referring to systemic factors, political, economic and social both national and international which may affect educational policy implementation.

### I. Educational governance

According to CEPF, having the right knowledge and capacity about educational policy might be still difficult and ineffective to achieve the aims of educational policy without good educational governance. The very complex nature and challenges of the current era and the greater diversity of educational providers and stakeholders implied by SDG4 bring new dimensions to the area of educational governance. According to Commonwealth Secretariat (2017:9-11), aspects of good educational governance include political will, legislation, policy and regulation, strategic planning, financing and organisation (see Figure – 3. 2).

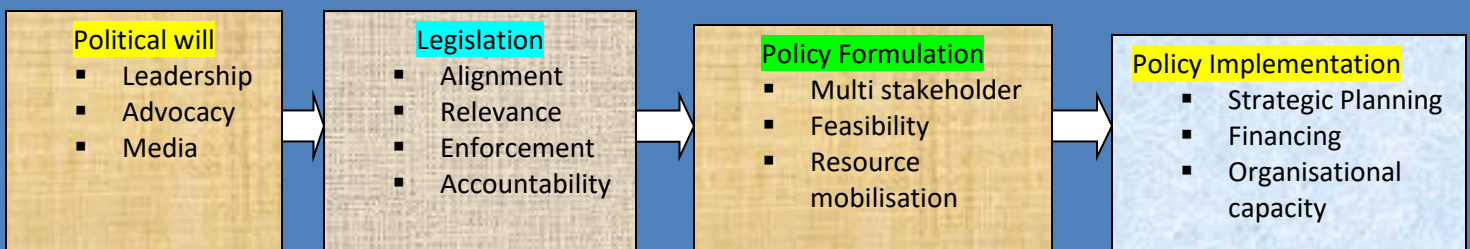


Figure 3.2 : Education governance for SDG alignment.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat (2017: 11)

As depicted in figure–3.2, legislation is a basic element for policy reform. It provides clarity about mandates and responsibilities, endorses implementation, facilitates democratic scrutiny, gives direction to mobilise resources and establish a new structure for policy delivery. The legislation also helps to align education policy with current international agreements and norms such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26: Right to education), UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and to take steps to fill gaps and localise the provision of such agreements as suggested by Commonwealth Secretariat (2017:9-11).

Policy formulation not only requires legislation but also ensures the appropriate policies and regulations to build a practice of education for sustainable development. This can be achieved through i) reviewing the existing national education policies and regulations and developing new policies and regulations where necessary, ii) organising and promoting consultations, policy formulation and implementation of all relevant stakeholders, iii) paying careful attention to the feasibility of policy implementation at the policy formulation stage and iv) articulation of theories of change that anticipate the possible obstacles to policy implementation.

Effective policy implementation also requires strategic planning, financing and organisational capacity. It is widely accepted that planning must be strategic and reflect the complex nature of the education system by transforming wider educational policies into actionable strategies, targets and outcomes. Strong educational financing is also essential for sustainable educational development. This can be achieved through organising adequate and sustained resourcing from budgetary, other domestic and international sources and identifying and establishing sustainable financing systems. Successful education policy programmes also require that the right people, institutions and processes are in place to allow goals to be met as proposed by Commonwealth Secretariat (2017: 12-15).

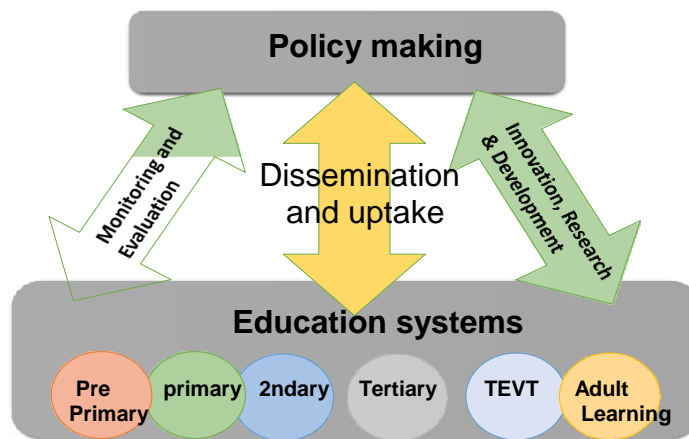


Figure 3.3 : Flows of knowledge production and transmission in education

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat (2017: 15)

## II. Knowledge

As stated by Commonwealth Secretariat (2017:12), much of the transmission of knowledge takes place in education systems. Although construction of new knowledge is a core function of tertiary education, education policy also requires a strong knowledge base to be effective. This requires focusing on research and development, innovation, monitoring and evaluation and dissemination and understanding (see Figure 3- 3).

## III. Capacity

One of the basic components of education policy enablers is the capacity development of the learners and the society at large as stated by the Commonwealth secretariat (2017:15). It also further explains that education is meant for developing the capacity of individual learners and the community. Thus, education policies and programmes usually depend on the adequate capacity development of all actors. Elements of this include the professional development of educators, of institutional leaders and officials

of ministries and other agencies, the construction of relevant curricula, the development of infrastructure and technologies of delivery and the establishment of appropriate standards and accreditation mechanisms. The following figure adopted from the Commonwealth Education Policy Framework (CEPF) depicts the interplay of these elements.

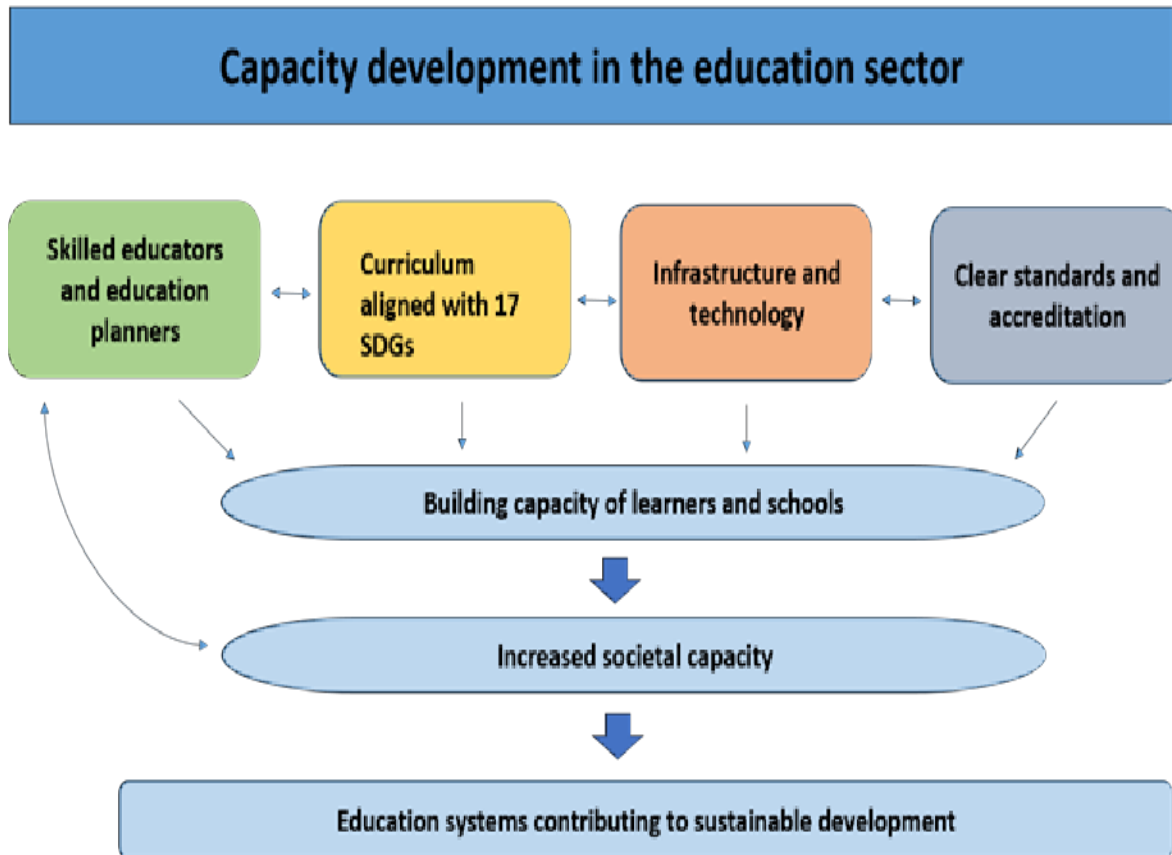


Figure 3 - 4 : Capacity building in the education workforce

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat (2017: 20)

According to Commonwealth Secretariat (2017:15), the following points are noted concerning the professional education workforce, relevant curriculum, infrastructure and technology and standards and accreditation for effective policy implementation. There should be an established system and standards for continuous professional

development for the wider educational workforce that allow them to effectively implement the policy. It aims to promote curricula and pedagogical quality, develop flexible curricula and pedagogies that are suitable to different modes, new technologies of learning and patterns of learning. Also, it develops a good quality infrastructure that promotes effective policy implementation and integrates ICT into education curriculum and pedagogies across all levels. It develops clear standards of learning and systems of accreditation regarding what are appropriate learning outcomes both for learners and other stakeholders.

#### **IV. Advocacy**

According to Commonwealth Secretariat (2017:14), successful implementation of education policy requires many-faceted processes of communication between the government and other partners where all actors will be engaged in advocacy for particular education policy approaches. Execution and interpretation should be followed. Important aspects of this process include leadership and ethics, social mobilisation, community engagement and communication.

Hew and Brush (2007:223-252) define advocacy factors as contextual factors that affect education policy implementation. According to Hew and Brush (2007: 223-252), context refers to systemic factors such as political, social and economic, both national and international which may affect education policy. They further categorise such factors as situational (e.g. security problem, wars and drought), structural (e.g. political system, the nature of bureaucracy) factors and cultural (ethnic diversity, gender stereotypes and language differences). Religious factors can also strongly affect education policy as evidenced by harsh debate regarding whether school children should be taught by the evolution or creationist approach as Jaffe (2015:25-42) puts.

#### **3.2.3.4. Elements of commonwealth education policy framework**

According to Commonwealth Secretariat (2017:17), the six learning stages are the basic elements of the Commonwealth education policy framework. These six learning stages: pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, TEVT and adult learning are an important part of any country's education system and policy. According to CEPF, to achieve the SDGs,

there should be a faultless transition through each cycle, ensuring that no learner is left behind. Among these cycles, ECE is one of the basic stages at which all girls and boys should have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

According to Bray and Menefee (2015:11-21), pre-primary enrolment expanded across every region during the education for all (EFA) periods. The largest growth was seen in Sub-Saharan Africa, although smaller growth was witnessed within the Caribbean and advanced economies. Research also suggests that it is one of the smartest investments a country can make in promoting development (World Bank, 2015:11-35). However, ECE is challenging element of the education system, characterised by a large number of not well trained educators and managers, weak regulation and multiple ministry mandates.

As envisaged by the CEPF, the priorities of ECE include:

- 1) Sustaining a strong focus on the goal of establishing effective early socialisation of young children,
- 2) Make certain the readiness of learners for primary schooling,
- 3) Developing appropriate inter-ministerial collaborative strategies to meet the particular challenges of the distinctive early years (0-3), preschool and reception phases,
- 4) Constructing effective collaboration of actors to bring about improvements in the quality and quantity of provision, aware of particular challenges in the ECE phase of matters of education development, curriculum and pedagogy and quality assurance and
- 5) Refining approaches to measuring ECCE learning that take account of its particular objectives.

These priorities can be taken as a standard to evaluate early childhood care and education policy implementation.

#### **3.2.4. Chapter conclusion**

In summary, the purpose of discussing the implementation of the preschool policy was to provide a detailed description of components of the education policy framework, various education policy implementation approaches and the role of main education policy implementation partners namely, government, teachers and parents. This chapter also discussed the CEPF that can be adapted and referred to when the policy implementation strategy is proposed in the discussion and conclusion part of this study in chapter six.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the policy implementation framework and other contributing factors that influence ECE policy implementation in detail. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a discussion of the research methodology used when investigating the implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of the southern region of Ethiopia. This study is needed to answer the following research question:

How is the preschool policy of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia implemented at school-based Grade R classes? This study aims to establish how preschool policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. Discussions in this chapter include the research design, the population, the sample, data collection instruments, ethical considerations and the validity and reliability of the collected data. An explanation of how the pilot study was conducted to determine the feasibility of the research methodology preceded this discussion.

Before the instruments of data collection were used in the main study, a pilot study was conducted to ensure that the data instruments selected will draw out the needed information and yield desired results. The pilot study was conducted as indicated below

#### **4.2. The pilot study**

According to Kraemer, Mintz, Tinklenberg and Yesavge (2006:484-489), the term 'pilot study' also known as feasibility study refers to a small version of full-scale study aimed at pre-testing research instrument such as questionnaire or interview schedule before it is used in the main study.

Kraemer et al., (2006:484-489) suggest that the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it might give warning about where research procedures may not be followed or whether offered methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated where the main research project could fail. Therefore, the pilot study was intended to establish whether the methodology used would yield the expected results.



In this study, the pilot study was conducted at three purposively selected preschools (one school per district) to establish how the preschool policy in southern Ethiopia was implemented at school-based Grade R classes. The individual interview, observation and focus group discussion were used as instruments to collect data. The instruments were piloted on a group of participants similar to the researcher's study population (teachers, department heads, school principals and district education officers).

Specifically, first, three classroom observations (one for each district) using were conducted using an observation template checklist that contains five aspects to be focused on; second, the face –to-face individual interviews with six teachers(two from each school) were conducted using interview schedule that contains five questions; third; the face–to –face individual interviews were made with three school principals(one from each school) using interview schedule containing five questions; fourth, three focus group discussions(one at each school) were conducted with four members(department head, district education office head and two parent representatives) using focus group interview schedule that contains five questions; fifth, the document analysis of staff minutes, lesson plans, official letters at district and school level and regional education bureau ECE policy document were made with respect to the ECE policy standards available.

Teachers were interviewed on their classroom practices while school principals and department heads on their school management practices. Parents were interviewed on their involvement in school partnership activities to render support for their children and district education officers on the provision of supervision and resource mobilisation to schools. Three focus group discussions were made at each school consisting of group members department head, district education office head and parental representatives. (four members) The documents that were viewed included policy documents, lesson plans, official letters, minutes of official meetings and text materials. Each document was analysed against the policy standards set by MoE (2016:7-25). Three classroom observations at each school were made for thirty minutes to see the actual classroom setting and interaction.

Special attention was given to the four ethical principles of informed consent, the right to anonymity, the right to confidentiality and the right to protect participants from harm as stated by Jackson (2011:46-64). The outcome of the pilot study is reported in chapter five. The University of South Africa's (UNISA) ethical clearance certificate was received before the pilot study was conducted. (See Appendix -7 for UNISA Ethics Clearance Certificate).

The methodology used to achieve the aim of this research is discussed next.

### **4.3. Research paradigm**

According to Kara (2015:4) research methodology is defined as 'a contextual framework' for a research, a coherent and logical plan based on philosophical assumptions that guide the choice researchers make to answer their research questions. It comprises a theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a particular branch of knowledge such that the methodologies employed from different disciplines vary depending on their historical development. This creates a continuum of methodologies that stretch across competing understanding of how knowledge and reality are best understood. This situates the methodologies within overarching philosophical assumptions (paradigms) and approaches (Nigolas, 2010: 215-236). This indicates that the type of methodology employed in any research is mainly reliant on the type of paradigm held by the researcher and the research approach appropriate to answer the research questions at hand.

Investigating the ECE policy implementation requires a careful observation and thorough investigation of policy practitioners' practices, understandings, beliefs, and views of research participants. Since the aim of this research is to establish the nature of ECE policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in southern Ethiopia, the research paradigm that is relevant to achieve this aim is interpretivism. This is because the aim of research under the interpretivism paradigm is understanding of social life; recognising how people construct meaning and explaining people's experiences or practices of everyday life to mention a few (Fossey et al., 2002:717-732; Creswell, 2009:107-116).

#### **4.4. The research approach**

According to Nigolas (2010:215-236) research methodology can be visualised as a continuum of three approaches ranging from predominantly quantitative approach towards predominantly qualitative approach. In this continuous division, three research approaches: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches have been identified in modern research. Researchers choose among these three approaches according to the nature of the research topic they want to investigate and the research questions they aim to answer (Creswell, 2009:3-21).

This research is aimed at establishing the nature of ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in southern region of Ethiopia. This aim can be achieved through making meticulous observation of classroom practices of policy practitioners; in-depth interviewing participants by asking open-ended questions; gathering document and audio-visual data; and making text, visual data analysis by searching for themes, and patterns interpretation of the meaning of the data. All these procedures called for a qualitative approach and hence in this research a qualitative approach has been employed to investigate the ECE policy implementation in schools of Grade R classes (Creswell, 2009: 15-21; Guba & Lincoln, 2005: 191-215).

#### **4.5. Research design**

According to Tobi, Hilde, Kampen and Jarl (2018:1209-1225) research design is defined as the overall strategy utilised to carryout research that defines a brief and logical plan to answer an established research question(s) through the collection, interpretation, analysis and discussion of data. Wright, O'brien, Nimmon, Law & Mylopoulos (2016: 97-98) asserted that the type of design employed in a research depends on the research paradigm and approach employed. In this research therefore, the descriptive design was employed to investigate the nature of ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia which stretches from the interpretivism paradigm and qualitative research approach (Best & Kahn, 2004: 73-79; Cohen et al., 2011:132-140; Karyn & Robert, 2012:12-22; Maggi & Claire, 2010: 40-45). This qualitative descriptive research was employed to explore and discuss the nature of

ECE policy implementation of Grade R classes at school level and thus recommend the implications of the findings to improve the policy implementation. In this study, the qualitative research method was adopted as discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

#### **4.5.1. Research method**

According to Alasuutari (2010:139-155), qualitative research relies on data obtained by the researcher from first-hand observation, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, participant-observation, recordings made in natural settings, documents, and artifacts. The data are generally non-numerical. According to Fossey et al., (2002:717-732) qualitative methods include qualitative (general), ethnography, grounded theory, discourse analysis, and interpretative phenomenological analysis to mention a few.

Qualitative research has been informed by several strands of philosophical thought and examines aspects of human life, including culture, expression, beliefs, morality, life stress, life practices and imagination (Creswell, 2006:26-37). The aim of the qualitative research is to have a deeper understanding about the issue under investigation in the real world contexts (Jackson, 2011:101-104). Accordingly, in this study the general qualitative research method was employed to collect, analyse and interpret data in terms of the meanings and perceptions participants have at the site where participants directly experience the ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia to reach a conclusion. Thus, this general qualitative research expected to establish the implementation strategy based on processes and meanings that occur naturally. Also, it sets out to penetrate participants' experiences, perceptions and insights on ECE policy implementation and construction of the holistic perspective thereof for in-depth investigation, which is the essence of qualitative research. Special attention is given to a sample that is scientifically selected from the research population.

#### 4.5.2. The research site

In this study, the sample consisted of six preschools selected from three purposively-selected districts of the SNNPR of Ethiopia. The three districts under study are Sidama, Hadiya and Segen. Since the districts vary in their socioeconomic status, some are more disadvantaged than others are. Three schools from the most disadvantaged rural areas and three from the semi-urban areas were purposively selected. All sampled schools have Grade R sites in their school complexes. These schools are, therefore, relevant as they can provide rich information, which is pertinent to this study. As stated by Best & Kahn (2004:73-79), the researcher also ensured that access to the sample school is feasible. The six sampled schools were, thus, used as the sites from where the participants were purposively selected.

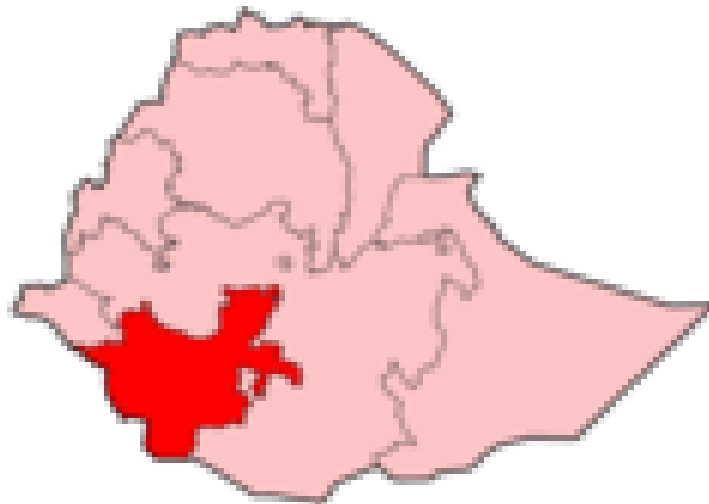


Figure 4.1: Map of Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), Ethiopia.

Source: Central Statistical Authority of Ethiopia (CSA, 2007:12)

### **4.5.3. The population**

Hurlburt (2003:42-63) suggests that it is difficult for researchers to obtain data from the entire population because of inaccessibility of all elements, shortage of time and high expense. According to McBurney and White (2010:102-115), purposive sampling is used to select from the population, specific participants who are enlightened and are very clear about the topic of interest. Jackson (2011:119-120) depicts purposive sampling as a non-random sampling procedure in which the researcher includes individuals with specific characteristics that fit the purpose of the research to take part in the investigation. For the current study, all ECE policy practitioners are a population of the study.

The sites for this study are three education districts among fifteen of the education department in the southern region of Ethiopia. According to the Central Statistical Agency (MoE, 2010:40-53), 'district' is an area of a region which is demarcated by the Regional Executive Council (REC) for administrative purposes. The district is the first-level administrative subdivision of Regional Education Department (RED). Depending on this partition, the term 'district' is used to describe either the geographic area or administrative unit.

### **4.5.4. The sample**

In this study, a purposive sample of 38 participants was selected from the sample schools. Participants included are six teachers, six department heads, six principals, six district education officers (DEOs), 12 parent representatives (two from each sample preschool) and two preschool education policy experts from southern region education bureau. Among these, 14 participated in an individual interview and 24 participated in three focus group discussions.

### **4.5.5. Sampling procedure**

In this study, purposive sampling technique was used to select 38 participants. Jackson (2011: 119-120) defined purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling technique in which members of a population who fit the purpose of the research and who have rich information regarding the issue under investigation are included in the sample based on

their being volunteer to participate. The sampling procedure was preceded as follows. First, individuals who directly participate in the implementation of ECE policy were identified. Second, participant information sheet was provided to every individual a week earlier to help them decide on either to participate or not to participate on volunteer basis (See appendix 8 –appendix 14). Third, a week later for those who are volunteers a consent form was provided and their agreement was obtained through signing the consent form. Consequently, only individuals who voluntarily signed the consent form participated in the study. Fourth, a detailed orientation on how to participate in the study was given by the researcher to them.

#### **4.6. Data collection instruments**

According to Creswell (2009:178-183), qualitative researchers usually collect multiple forms of data such as interviews, observations and documents rather than relying on a single data source. The process of applying the multiple data gathering techniques is referred to as the triangulation of data and is discussed in the next paragraph.

##### **4.6.1. The triangulation of data**

According to Creswell (2009:191), triangulation of data refers to employing multiple data-gathering instruments to ensure internal trustworthiness or credibility of the collected data source. It enables the researcher to build a coherent justification for her or his research results. In this study, to ensure triangulation, more than one data collection instrument (interviews, observation and analysis of documents) were used to investigate the research question. This was done to enhance and ensure confidence in the findings as stated by Gibbs (2007:24-40) cited in Creswell (2009:190-193). The researcher, therefore, used triangulation to support primary information collected. Attention was paid to the following measures to increase trustworthiness in the study.

In qualitative research, the credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of the research are believable from the perspective of the participants who take part in the research (Flick, 2009:50-70). The participants of the research are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. In this study, to maintain credibility, the researcher made sure that the outcomes were plausible from the perspective of the

participants. This is in agreement with what Kelly (2007:21-35) says regarding the credibility of a qualitative study.

According to Maxwell (2005:110-125), the idea of dependability focuses on the need of the researcher to take into consideration the continually changing context within which research occurs. This means it is the researcher's responsibility to develop measures that, in the absence of any real change, would yield constant results. In addressing the issue of dependability more directly, Creswell (2007:61-72) maintains that a detailed report on the process of the study should be given, to enable the future researcher to gain the same results if the work has to be repeated. The degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others is referred to as conformability. The researcher employed multiple method strategies, which permit the triangulation of data.

Peer-checking was done by engaging the services of a colleague who has an understanding of qualitative research methods. This was done to confirm the categories, review all coding of data and themes that emerged.

In this research, to get information on a broader scale, interviews and focus group interviews of Grade R practitioners and district education department officers were conducted. In addition to interviews, observation and document analysis were made to substantiate the data obtained from interviews. Individual interview schedules were used to collect primary and in-depth data from the sampled teachers, preschool principals and preschool education policy experts. When conducting individual interviews with practitioners, it was also necessary for the researcher to know the profile of practitioners to establish how much support they needed to conduct quality in their respective work.

#### **4.6.2. Classroom observation**

McBurney and White (2010:102-115) refer to observation as a logical process of recording an ongoing behaviour of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily attempting to influence them. They also state that observation is used to gain an in-depth insight and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Jackson (2011:96-98) states that the goal of participant observation is to enable the researcher



to actively participate in the situation in which the research participants are involved and developed a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible. In this study, non-participant classroom observations were used to collect data on a classroom setting and classroom interaction.

According to Jackson (2011:96-98), observation can be systematically used to collect primary information. The information can be collected by watching and listening to interactions that are taking place in a natural environment. Rosenbaum (2009: 29-40) outlines the advantages of observation as allowing the researcher to gather relatively true behaviour of participants and gain access to the "backstage culture" of the setting in which the study is taking place. Creswell (2009:181) adds that observation improves the quality of data collection, interpretation and facilitates the development of new research questions or theories.

In this study, the researcher, therefore, employed non-participant observation to collect data because of the advantages mentioned above. Activities observed included routine activities, classroom arrangements and the use of relevant resources. There was no involvement of the observer in the activities of the group and the researcher remained a passive observer watching activities and taking notes in line with "observation protocol" that Creswell (2009:181-182) recommends. One class from each of the selected six preschools was observed.

The purpose of the classroom observation was to note practitioners' classroom practices, especially how they carried out the routine activities, which is an important aspect of policy implementation. The observation technique would also establish if they were following ECE policy in their teaching and classroom preparations. Appendix - 1 presents the practitioner's observation schedule that was used.

In the observation schedule (Appendix – 1), column A specifies the areas that were observed. Three broad areas were targeted, that is Areas 1 to 3. In Column B, the researcher has stated the questions guiding the observations for each area and in Column C, the rationale behind each area that was observed is stated.

### **4.6.3. Individual interviews**

According to Creswell (2009:183), an in-depth open-ended qualitative interview is a face-to-face communication that flows from both sides of interviewer and interviewee where data are being collected by the interviewer through questioning the participants to elicit views, ideas, beliefs and opinions from them. Interviews as stated by Jackson (2011:103-105) allow participants to argue their understandings of the world in which they live and to express how they interpret situations from their point of view. It also enables the researcher to record not only verbal responses but any facial or bodily expressions or movements that may give the researcher greater insight into the respondents' true opinions and beliefs.

Moore (2014:115-128), states that interviews allow the interviewer to explore more complex and sensitive questions and to allow the interviewer to obtain in-depth information by probing, repeating of questions or putting them in a form that is understood by the participant. They were chosen to get rich, descriptive data that would assist the researcher to understand the participants' social reality, practices and construction of knowledge as claimed by Jackson (2011:103-105). Also, it was meant to get a profounder understanding of the nature of implementation of ECE policy and support at Grade R classes and because they would permit the researcher to access information that would not be accessed from observation alone (Cohen et al., 2011:132-140).

To get a deeper understanding of the nature of the implementation of ECE policy at Grade R classes in this study, individual interviews were conducted with the teachers, principals and ECE policy experts. The interviews were planned to establish the extent to which these participants provided the required supervision and support to the Grade R classes. Proceedings of the interviews were recorded as well as non-verbal cues because they are all of the extreme importance (Creswell, 2009:181).

There were six teachers selected from each of the six schools in the research, six principals (one per school) and two policy experts from the district education bureau. Principals and ECE policy experts were interviewed in their respective offices and teachers were met and interviewed in the staffrooms. The individual interview schedule

for teachers is included as Appendix - 2, for principals as Appendix - 3 and for district experts as Appendix - 4.

The individual interview for teachers was semi-structured with questions related to their training, resources allocated to them, the professional support provided to them by higher officials and best practices and opportunities that are in place to facilitate the successful implementation of ECE policy in the actual classroom context.

Teachers were asked a total of five questions pertinent to their practices in the classroom in implementing ECE policy. There are a total of five questions. The reason why I asked each question and the purpose for which I used the information obtained from teachers is attached as an interview schedule (see appendix– 2). As pointed out by Creswell (2009:181-183), I was attentive to the answers of the teachers to be able to categorise emerging lines of questions that were related to the practice of ECE policy implementation.

The individual interview for principals was semi-structured with open-ended questions relevant to their school managerial practices. There are a total of five questions focusing on the allocation of resources, preparation of teachers, principal own views about ECE policy implementation, policy communication and the use of ICT in ECE policy implementation. The rationale behind asking each question and the purpose for which I used the information obtained from the interview were included in the interview schedule attached as an appendix (see Appendix -3).

The individual interview for policy experts was also semi-structured with open-ended questions about ECE implementation practices. There are a total of five questions focusing on the design of ECE policy, aims of ECE policy, what the ECE policy entails as designed by the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994:7), the components of ECE policy in Ethiopia and how the policy is implemented. The reasons behind asking each question and the purpose for which I used the information obtained from the interview were incorporated in the interview schedule attached as an appendix (see Appendix - 4).

#### **4.6.4. Focus group interview**

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006:120-140), Best and Kahn (2004:73-79) and Jackson (2011:103-104), a focus group interview is a method that involves interviewing a small group of people usually six to ten at the same time. By putting an adequate focus on the research question, the focus groups usually meet for one to two hours, the questions asked are open-ended and addressed to the whole group. This procedure allows respondents to answer in any way they choose and respond to each other. In this study, the researcher employed focus group interviews because it is a strategy based on the assumption that “the interview has activated forgotten details of experiences, productive in widening the range of responses and releasing inhibitions that may, then, reduce participants from revealing information during individual interview” (Cohen et al., 2011: 432- 433).The focus group schedule that was used for group discussion is contained in (Appendix - 5).

Three separate focus group discussions, each group with eight members (two department heads, two district education department officers (DEOs) and four parent representatives(two from each preschool) were conducted at the centre of each district under the researcher’s leadership and guidance to ensure that they do not lose focus in answering the group interview questions. The researcher used focus group interviews as he wanted to gather rich and descriptive information from members of focus groups. The participants’ agreements to focus on a topic of mutual interest were ensured.

The focus group participants were different from participants of individual interviews. The focus group interviews were to gather additional empirical data to authenticate the data collected through individual interviews. To this end, focus group members were encouraged to make comments, to offer an in-depth view and to build on each other’s thoughts. The focus group interview questions were open-ended in nature (Appendix - 5), which Creswell (2009:181) claims to allow for an inquisitive explanation, detail-oriented probes, elaboration and clarification of responses.

#### **4.6.5 .Artefacts/ document analysis**

According to Best and Kahn (2004:73-79) and Jackson, (2011:102-103), documents are all types of written accounts which include records, reports, lesson plans, assessment records, letters, diaries, minutes and journals that may serve as data source about the phenomenon that the researcher is investigating. Documents are referred to as secondary sources. Therefore, in line with this, Best and Kahn (2004: 202) argue that when using documentary sources, it is the researcher's responsibility to establish authenticity and the credibility of its contents that he or she draws from artefacts sources

In this study, documents that were analysed are official documents which include policy documents, lesson plans and classroom assessment plans to see the types of activities that are planned for the Grade R practitioners. Agendas and minutes of the staff meetings were meant to establish the nature of the discussions while the teachers' preparation plans and files were drawn to see whether teachers can do their lesson preparations to contextualise the policy plans provided by the DEOs. The list of documents analysed and the rationale behind analysing each document is presented in artefacts list attached as appendix -6.

#### **4.7. Data analysis and interpretation**

Data analysis and interpretation in qualitative research entails collecting an open-ended data through multiple instruments and making sense out of the data based on research questions. It involves analysing participant's information through employing general analysis steps which include preparing and organising the data for analysis, initial reading through the information, moving deeper into understanding the data through repeated reviewing, coding the data, developing from the codes description and thematic analysis, using a computer programme, representing and interpreting the findings (Creswell, 2009:183-190). In this study, analysis of data was conducted concurrently with gathering data, making interpretations and writing reports continually employing the above general steps as presented in the following figure.

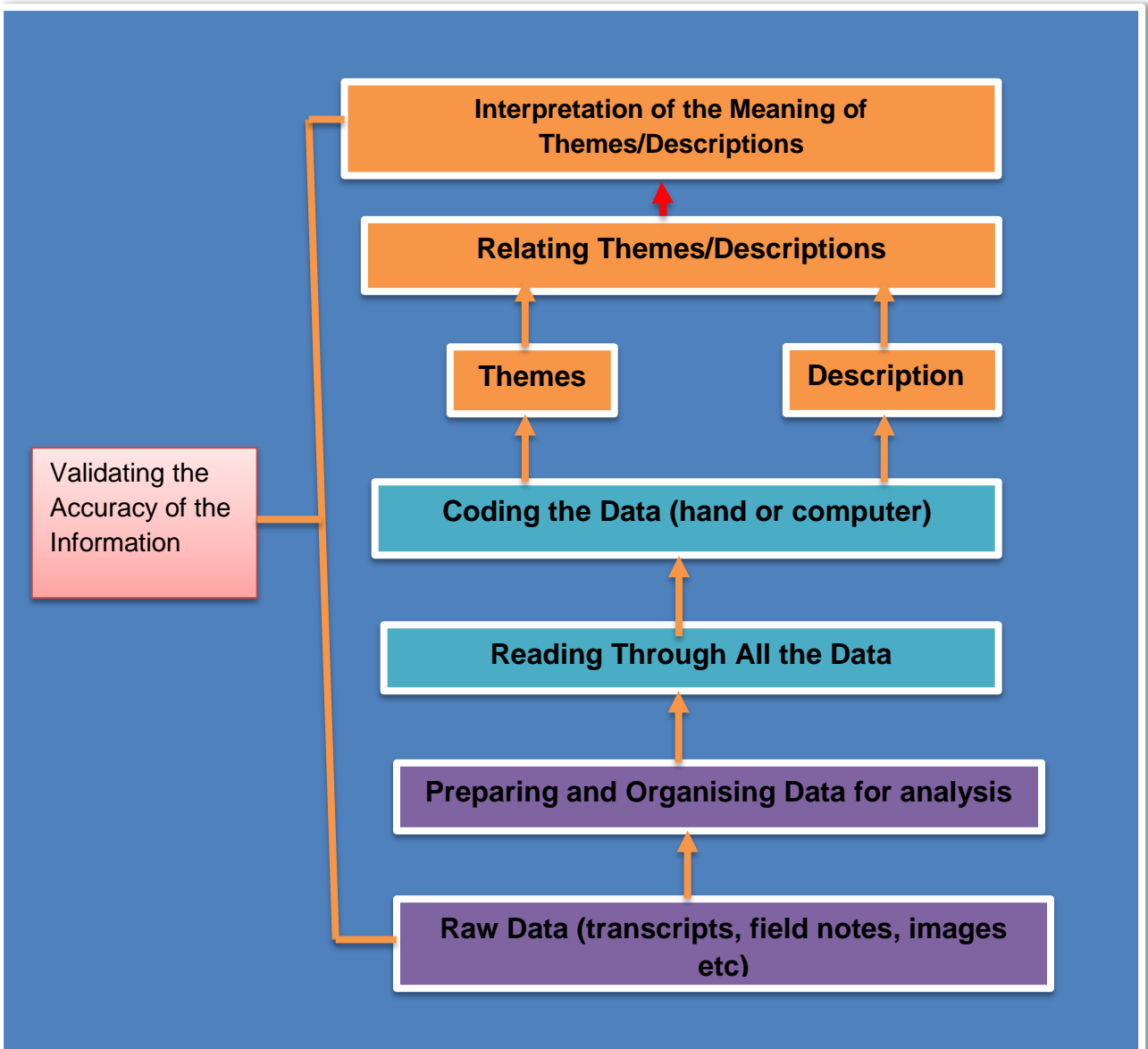


Figure 4-2: Analysis of data in qualitative research

Source: Creswell (2009: 185)

An overview of the general data analysis process followed is presented in Figure 4 -2 above. The figure presents a linear ranked approach building from the bottom to the top. However, it can be seen as it as more interactive in practice, following from specific to the general and as involving multilevel analysis. The steps that were followed in the analysis and interpretation of data are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

**Step1:** *prepare and organise the data for analysis.* At this step, the interview data were transcribed, the collected data were edited, and the field notes were typed, classified and arranged into different types depending on the sources of information.

**Step2:** *Read through all the data.* At this step, the meaning of the gathered information was derived and the researcher reflected on its overall meaning. This step focused on capturing the general ideas of participants, the impression of overall depth, credibility and use of the information.

**Step3:** *Making a detailed analysis with a coding process.* Coding is the process of organising the data into different chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information. Thus, at this step, the text and image data were coded, segmenting sentences or paragraphs or images were coded and labelled into different categories.

**Step 4:** *Use the coding process to produce a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.* At this step, thorough descriptions of information about participants, places or events in the research site were made. Following this, the coding was used to generate a small number of themes or categories usually from five to seven that appeared as major findings in this study.

**Step 5:** *Use a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis.* At this stage, a discussion that mentions a chronology of events, a detailed discussion of several themes (complete with subthemes, specific illustrations, multiple perspectives from individual participants and quotations) and discussion with interconnecting themes were made.

**Step 6:** *Making an interpretation of the data.* At this step, the data were analysed by deriving meaning out of the data. These interpretations involved stating lessons learned, comparing the findings with past literature and theory and in terms of the researcher's interpretations based on his understanding of the study context, his culture, history and experiences.

Moreover, the process of data analysis was assisted by the use of a qualitative data analysis computer programme called Atlasi.ti ([http:// www.atlasiti.com](http://www.atlasiti.com)) that facilitated the recording and analysis of textual and audiovisual data. Utilising the software, the

researcher directly entered the field data, including interview data, observations, researcher's memos and illustrations so that all or part of the source data were coded and chunks of data can be pulled out. Finally, meaningful chunks of data were identified, isolated, retrieved, grouped and regrouped for analysis. Code names or categories were entered initially or at later date. Codes can be added, changed or deleted with the software editor and text data can be searched for key categories, themes, words or phrases.

#### **4.8. Ethical considerations**

When conducting scientific research with human or non-human participants, the researcher is ultimately responsible to protect the rights and values of participants that might potentially be threatened by the research procedures. Ethical issues may emanate from the kind of problems investigated by the researcher and the methods they use to obtain trustworthy and credible data. This means each stage in the research sequence raises ethical issues. They may arise from the nature of the research project itself, the context of the research, the procedures to be adopted, the methods of data collection, the nature of participants, the type of data collected and what is to be done with the data (Oliver, 2003:53-62). Professional ethical principles and guidelines have been set to assist researchers to abide with to safeguard the rights of their participants. The following are the key ethical principles that were used in this study to protect the rights and values of participants.

##### **4.8.1. Getting permission**

According to Flick (2009:50-70), codes of ethics are formulated and used to regulate the relations of the researcher with participants. In this study, access to the sample was obtained by getting permission from all participants to research preschools. The template for requesting permission to conduct research (Appendix - 8) form was completed and submitted to all participants to get permission from them to take part in this study. The preschool teachers, principals, departmental heads, district education department office heads, parents and policy experts were also given permission



(Appendix 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 & 14 respectively) and the letter requesting parental consent for minors to participate in the research project (Appendix - 15) to get their permission.

#### **4.8.2. Informed consent**

Mukerji and Albon (2010, 57-74) defines informed consent as the procedures in which participants of a research choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would likely influence their decisions. This definition involves four elements: competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension. Competence implies that only mature and responsible individuals can make correct decisions, if they are given the relevant information about research. Voluntarism is the principle that ensures participants freedom to take part (or not) in a research and guarantees that exposure to risks is undertaken knowingly and voluntarily. Participants should also be provided with full information about a research and fully understand the nature of research project. If these four elements are present, researchers can be assured the participants' rights have been given appropriate consideration (Cohen et al., 2011:132-140). In this study, informed consent form that acknowledges the participants rights (based on their competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension about this research) have been provided to all participants and only those who have voluntarily signed the form are allowed to take part in this research. (See Appendix 8-14)

Contact details of the researcher, as leader of the research project, were also given to each of the participants to allow them to ask questions for clarity or to report anything they might not like about the process of the study. All practitioners of the sampled schools were served with two weeks' notice after which the researcher visited them to conduct interviews and focus group discussions.

#### **4.8.3. The right to confidentiality**

According to Jackson (2011:46-62), the principle of keeping secret, the identity of individuals involved in the research is anonymity, whereas that of confidentiality refers to the safe-keeping of data collected from subjects. Participants were, therefore, informed and assured that their identities would remain anonymous. The researcher further informed them that their names would not be mentioned in the study and that

pseudonyms were allocated to each participant to protect their identities and ensure confidentiality. This was done as described in the next paragraphs.

Sample schools in this study were referred to as schools A, B, C, D, E and F. Individual teachers interviewed were referred to as teacher 1 from school A (PTA1) and teacher 1 from school B (PTB1). The same pattern was used with the remaining schools and practitioners. Departmental heads and principals were also referred to by their preschools, for example, the departmental head from school A would be (PDA1) and principal one from school B would be referred to as (PPB1). The pattern was the same with parents from schools C, D, E, F and G. For example, parent one from school D was referred to as (PPD1) and parent two from school D as (PPD2). Preschool policy expert one and two were referred to as (PPE1) and (PPE2). Finally, district education office head one is referred to as (DEO1) while district education office head two as (DEO2) and so on.

With the focus groups, numbers were allocated to the departmental head, for example, practitioner 1 would be HoD1 until department head 6 (HoD6). The same coding was applied also to the (DEOs), for example (DEO1) and (DEO12). For each category of participants' confidentiality is maintained through by not disclosing any confidential information that reasonably could lead to the personal identification of the participants.

#### **4.8.4. Protection from harm**

The researcher guaranteed the participants that they would be safeguarded against any physical and emotional harm. They were also informed that they would not be imposed any payment for participation. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. According to Flick (2009:50-70), codes of ethics were formulated to regulate the relations of the researcher with participants.

#### **4.9. Trustworthiness and credibility**

Trustworthiness in qualitative study refers to whether the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, whereas qualitative credibility refers to whether the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects (Gibbs, 2007:91-102; Creswell, 2009:190). Trustworthiness

ensuring strategies in qualitative research entails participant checking and triangulating data sources that qualitative researchers use to demonstrate the accuracy of their findings and convince readers of this accuracy (Creswell, 2009:190).

#### **4.9.1. Trustworthiness**

According to Creswell and Miller (2000:124-130), cited in Creswell (2009:190), trustworthiness is one of the strengths of qualitative research and it is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants or the readers of an account. Terms abound in the qualitative literature such as trustworthiness; authenticity and credibility represent qualitative validity. According to Golafshani (2003:597-607), credibility refers to the extent to which the research results are believable from the perspective of the participant in the research, whereas transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings. Cohen, et al., (2007:132-140) assert that if a piece of research is invalid, then, it is worthless. James and Busher (2006:403-420) suggest that the methods must justify the people's confidence and those who read and rely on the research outcomes must be satisfied that the studies are trustworthy and that they lead to truthful outcomes.

In this study, to make sure the internal trustworthiness of the research findings, the researcher employed the following strategies: i) triangulation of data have been collected through multiple sources including observations, interviews and document analysis, ii) member checking—participants have been allowed to check out my interpretation throughout the analysis process concerning their meanings and reality, iii) long term and repetitive observations at the research site – regular and repeated observations of a similar situation and setting have been made on-site for over four months and iv) peer examination—two doctoral graduates and a graduate assistant in the Educational Psychology Department(my Department) have participated as peer reviewers and examiners of my thesis.

#### **4.9.2. Credibility**

According to Creswell (2009:191-193), credibility refers to the extent to which a particular approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects. Yin (2003:50-58) suggests that for qualitative researchers check to determine if their approach is reliable, they need to document as many of the steps of the procedures as possible. Gibbs(2007:34-46) suggests the following credibility procedures: i) checking transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious errors made during transcriptions, ii) making sure that there is not a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding and iii) cross-check codes developed by different researchers agree by comparing results that are independently derived.

In this study, three techniques to ensure credibility have been employed. First, the researcher has provided a detailed account of the focus of the study, the participants' position and the basis for selection and the context from which the data have been gathered. Second, triangulation or manifold methods of data collection and analysis have been used and third, the researcher was sensitive during observations and records the participant's responses faithfully. For making an in-depth and insightful exploration of the policy analysis, questions were posed following ideas as stated by Patton (1990). The credibility of the research was further promoted through triangulation as discussed in section 4.6.1 above.

#### **5. Chapter conclusion**

This chapter discussed the research paradigm, research approach, research design and methods employed to collect data for both the pilot and the main study. The processes of classroom observations, individual interviews and focus group discussions were explained. Document analysis was done as an additional method of data collection. The chapter also explored how the researcher observed ethical considerations. Steps were undertaken to promote trustworthiness and credibility. The next chapter deals with the presentation and interpretation of the research findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FIELD RESULTS**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

Chapter four explained the research design and methods that were used in investigating the research topic at hand. In this chapter, the results obtained are presented and data is analysed. The report comprises the responses from observations, individual interviews of teachers, principals and policy expert's focus group interview of the HoDs, DEOs and parent representatives and document analysis. Also, the investigation was conducted to achieve the aim of the study which is 'to establish how preschool policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia'.

##### **5.1.1. Results of pilot study**

As it was discussed in section 4.2 of chapter four, the pilot study was conducted on three purposively selected preschools (one from each district). Analysis of the data obtained from classroom observations, teachers interviews, principal's interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis yields the following results:

From the analysis of classroom observation data it was emerged that the number of items the observation template should contain should be reduced from five to three.

It was emerged that ECE policy experts from the SNNPRS education bureau should participate in the main study to obtain more information about the overall ECE policy implementation.

It was emerged that distinct interview schedule for each group of teachers, principals, and policy experts should be prepared in the main study.

The results suggested that the focus group interview for the main study should contain eight members (two department heads, two district education office heads and four parent representatives).

Based on the results and suggestions of the pilot study, the necessary amendment of the instruments of data collection was made and the data was collected for the main study.

It is now imperative to first present the setting of the research area and the background of the research schools to present an informative interpretation of the results obtained for the main study.

## **5.2. Background of the research area**

The research sites for this study entail three districts namely Sidama, Hadiya and Segen in the southern region of Ethiopia. The research districts are described in the following paragraphs.

### **5.2.1. The research districts**

According to the 2007 census conducted by the CSA, (2007:7-20), the Sidama district is the largest one among the fifteen districts of the provincial department of education in the southern region of Ethiopia. It is located to the North-East part of the region. Most of its areas are rural with a small number of urban dwellers in Hwassa city which is the capital of the Sothern, Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). In Sidama district, currently, there are 75 preschools of which 48 of them are in Hwassa (CSA, 2007:7-20).

The Hadiya district is a district in the southern region of Ethiopia. It is one of the districts that occupy the central part of the southern region of Ethiopia. It is the densely populated areas in Ethiopia. However, the number of preschools in the district is 55 which show that there is an inequitable distribution of preschools in the district (CSA, 2007:7-20).

The Segen area district is one of the most rural districts located to the southern part of SNNPR. It is characterised by inhabitants sparsely populated who are farmers. According to CSA (2007:7-20), there are only 12 preschools in the district indicating that access to preschool education is very low.

The participating six schools in this study have been purposively selected two schools from each district (one from rural and one from the urban area). The next paragraphs give the background of research schools.

### **5.2.2 The research schools**

School A is a rural primary government school in the Segen district with all the community around the school farmers. The school is located in the Great Rift Valley, which is a very hot area. Due to this, learners are attending only the morning shift and no classes in the afternoon shift. As a result, there is a scarcity of pure drinkable and sanitation water in the school complex. The school assigned only one section for Grade R class. The learner-teacher ratio is 34:1 which is not acceptable in farm schools.

School B is also a rural community school in the Segen district and learners come from the neighbouring farming areas. Contrary to school A, school B is located in the highland area, thus, learners learn in both shifts. The learner-teacher ratio at school B is 44:1 and 55:1. Both ratios are not acceptable because the maximum learner - teacher ratio in Grade R is 30:1.

School C is a rural government school in the Hadiya district. It is one of the primary schools in the area. The school runs the O class programmes in two sections in the primary school complex. Since the preschool has no complex, it has no head teacher. The learner-teacher ratio in both classes is 90:1 and 89:1. This is not acceptable for Grade R classes because the maximum learner-teacher ratio is 1:30 and both classes are overcrowded.

School D is a private kindergarten preschool in Hadiya district run by religious organisation. It is located at the centre of Hossana town, the capital of Hadiya district. It is a school in semi-urban area. The school has a complex separated by a fence with the infrastructure of learning classrooms, latrine and water sources. It has three sections for nursery, three sections for lower KG and three sections for UKG classes. The average learner-teacher ratio for the three classes respectively are 55:1, 46:1 and 44:1.

School E is a rural government primary school in Sidama district. The school does not have a complex and as a result, there is no separate latrine and other infrastructure. In this school, only two very narrow rooms are allocated to run ECE programmes. One room is used for administrative purpose and the remaining room is being used by staff members through the shift for teaching. Two teachers in this school have no

professional training. The programme run in this school is O class in two sessions. The learner-teacher ratio is 33:1 and 35:1 which is unacceptable.

School F is an urban preschool in Hawassa city, the capital of Sidama district. It is a NGO sponsored school known as SOS kindergarten school which has its separate complex with buildings of learning classrooms, latrines and sanitation bathrooms. More importantly, it has a separate children’s village where children from poor families as well as orphans live. In addition, it has also a playing outdoor area with enough space. The learner-teacher ratio in the three categories of Nursery, LKG and UKG respectively are 54:1, 36:1 and 41:1 which is still unacceptable.

During the research it has emerged that all schools are overcrowded. In all sample schools, the learner-teacher ratio is greater than 30:1 indicating that the amount of attention given by the teacher to each child is limited and beyond the standard. This overcrowding of classes could hurt the quality of teaching because the teacher cannot adequately help and assess each child’s learning progress on a day to day basis and this, in turn, hampers ECE policy implementation at these schools. The issue of overcrowding and its impact on the delivery of quality of teaching by practitioners can be a subject for future research.

### 5.3 Presentation and interpretation of field results

The collected data was transcribed and structured into codes or themes using ATLAS.ti software. Through the use of ATLAS.ti software, it is possible to identify themes based on the collected data. The table below presents the research themes as created by the ATLAS.ti data analysis instrument.

#### 5.3.1 Findings from classroom observation

**Table 5 -1 : Captures of the findings of classroom observations**

<b>Research schedule</b>	<b>ATLAS.ti Research themes</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>Classroom</b>	<b>Routine activities in</b>	In school A, the practitioner failed to perform some of



<p><b>observation</b></p>	<p><b>the daily programme</b></p>	<p>the basic routine activities properly in the classroom. She missed out refreshment time, the free play between two consecutive classroom activities and register marking that are the basic activities for assisting Grade R learners. Free play in the classroom is not properly guided. Learners were not given instructions on the activities they were engaged in. There were no teaching aids utilised during teaching. Only mental Maths was done during Maths teacher-guided activity.</p> <p>In school B, some of the routine activities were supervised and carried out properly, Sanitation and toilet routines were not supervised and the practitioner missed out on news and health care discussion which have to be discussed daily with learners. During art activity, all learners were given the same activity.</p> <p>In school C, most of the learners' activities were unsupervised by the practitioner. Moreover, the practitioner focuses on oral presentation rather than participatory learning. The daily supervision, assessment and registration were missed out for all students. During teacher-guided only mental Maths was noted.</p> <p>In school D, the practitioner properly supervised indoor activities. However, these activities were not properly guided. A lot of time was spent on mental Maths activity Maths content area teaching was not observed.</p> <p>In school E, refreshment time and news time were not properly carried out. During mealtime kids were allowed to collect food from the kitchen and sat outside to eat</p>
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		<p>without washing their hands. There was no health talk from the practitioner.</p> <p>In school F, the practitioner properly supervised indoor activities even though she put much emphasis to bring in the themes during the discussion. The practitioner was observed to spend a lot of time with learners who were actively participating. However, learners who were not actively participating were seemingly not paid attention.</p>
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**Interpretation and discussion**

It emerged that all the six practitioners follow the daily programme as stated in the teacher’s guide. However, some routine activities were not properly carried out at some stages and some were left out. For example, the practitioner in school A missed out some routine activities of daily lesson presentation, refreshment time and free play time which could be attributed to the fact that the teacher did not receive professional training to fully practice daily routine activities in the teaching-learning process in Grade R classroom. The other factor could be that she did not have someone to get support from since there is only one Grade R class in the area. All the aforementioned factors could have an impeding effect on the implementation of the preschool policy. This is why I decided to interview the teachers individually to get a full picture about the factors that affect the successful implementation of the ECE policy. Education policy in Ethiopia stipulates that teachers should be academically well-trained and qualified in ECE and should always properly plan and run activities in the daily programme. Therefore, it was important to establish if schools adhered to this policy in terms of teacher training and producing teachers who are competent to carryout daily activities effectively. This is comparable to what literature in chapter two pointed out in section 2.3.3.1 which stated that as teachers play a key role in ECE programmes, they should receive quality

training so that they can competently carry out daily activities for the successful implementation of ECE policy.

This could also be ascribed to the fact that the practitioner has never been taken through any induction workshop to orient them on how to teach, interact and work with children at Grade R classes through playing a leading role in shaping their attitudes, skills and learning to meet the objectives of ECE programmes in particular and effective implementation of ECE policy in general. In connection with this, the literature review in section 2.3.3 discloses the responsibilities to be provided by the preschool teacher in the classroom to implement ECE policy successfully (Choudhury, 2002:144-145).

The situation in School B is similar to School A, even though the practitioner had received ECE training, toilet routine and refreshment times during which the practitioner has to emphasise life skills content were not properly carried out. News time and weather discussions were missed out which play a big role in developing language skills.

Even though the teacher had received training to teach at Grade R, she missed out some routine activities in daily teaching. This could be attributed to the fact that she might be challenged by overcrowding in her class and had no neighbouring school to get help from. As suggested by Choudhury (2002:146) in paragraph 2.3.3, if the number of learners in the class is less than 30, the teacher can pay attention to each child, manage and assess their activities daily so that each child has a chance to be successful. The implication to ECE policy implementation is that if learners are successful in their learning, then, the objectives of ECE programmes have been met and consequently ECE policy implementation is effective (Choudhury, 2002:120-126; UNESCO, 2015:24-36).

The findings in school C reveal that daily supervision, assessment and registration were missing out for all students. This could be attributed to the fact that the class is highly overcrowded (at least 89 students per class) and the practitioner is forced to omit many participatory activities which are a basic principle of learning in ECE programme. This is because children's learning in early childhood is active and participatory. Overcrowdedness does not enable the teacher to promote active learning in the classroom

and therefore, it negatively affect ECE policy implementation. This finding is contrary to what the literature explains the principle of participatory approach learning in ECE programmes as argued by Choudhury(2002: 120-124) & (Hasan, 2004:222) and stated in section 2.3.1

In school D, the situation was different from schools A, B and C in that the practitioner tried to supervise all the indoor activities. However, what was missing is supervision of the outdoor activities of learners. Mental maths was the focus at the expense of other mathematical concepts or content areas. The difference in the findings might be because the school is in the semi-urban area and there are several schools to join forces with to share good practices. The finding of not properly guiding and managing outdoor activities has an implication for ECE policy implementation. Outdoor activities are part of indoor activities and equally important as indoor activities. Hence, outdoor playing should be properly planned and guided to make children's learning complete. In school E, the practitioner missed weather discussion and news time. Besides, learners were improperly guided to keep sanitation before eating meals. This may be attributed to the problem of putting theory into practice because the practitioner has not received professional training. To fill in the gap of putting theory into practice in the early learning context, teachers should take the necessary professional training that enables them to function properly in Grade R classes. The policy implication of this finding is that teachers should receive professional training in ECE that enables them to properly interact with their learners and adapt their interactions to bring meaningful changes in learners behaviour in the areas such as keeping sanitation and others which is the ultimate aim of ECE policy implementation (Choudhury, 2002:120-124; Hasan, 2004:222).In school F, the practitioner properly carried out almost all activities except that she paid less attention to the learners who were inactive in class. This might be attributed to the fact that the practitioner was inexperienced in promoting learners who are not actively participating. Even though the outdoor areas are properly managed, they had poor sanitation and not comfortable for free playing. The policy implication of this finding is that teachers should receive additional workshop or training from more experienced teachers or education officers on how to encourage the active involvement

of learners who are not actively participating and on how to effectively utilise the outdoor areas to promote effective implementation of ECE policy as suggested by Hill (2003:19-28) and CWDC (2007:1-21).

**Classroom arrangement and use of resources**

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

The situation of the schools B and C is similar to A except that in school C, two sections are overcrowded.

In school D, the practitioner divided the indoor classroom into the required area although the areas were not labelled as required. The room was very limited by space. The Grade R school has its site but the outdoor area is not properly managed. The outdoor area needs maintenance and regular removal of wasteful materials.

The situation of the school E is the same as that of D.

In school F the indoor area is properly arranged as required with a big carpet for rings. The areas were labelled but with incorrect font. The outdoor area is fenced but with broken resources, wasteful materials

		and weeds grown all over the area.
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## **Interpretation and discussion**

### **Indoor classroom**

In school A, the indoor classroom was not divided into areas as required and learners were seated on benches facing the front. The classroom was not meant for the Grade R but was spacious.

The learners seated on benches facing the front could be an indication of a practitioner who was not properly trained. In addition, the absence of playing materials in the outdoor area could be that the practitioner is new without experience and was never oriented on how to organise Grade R classes. All the above findings harm ECE policy implementation in that the absence of 'arranging the classroom' as required, theme table and outdoor playing materials make the classroom learning inefficient. This makes ECE policy implementation unsuccessful. This finding is similar to the findings of different researchers such as Choudhury (2002:138-145) who discussed about the availability of play equipment and teachers competency to manage both indoor and outdoor activities for the success of ECE policy implementation as presented in literature section 2.3.6 page 48.

Findings at schools B, C, D and E were almost similar as practitioners were not properly arranging the indoor class into required areas with relevant resources even though school E was limited by space. The difference with schools D could be because the practitioners had received training on how Grade R classes have to be set in areas and the department is also providing them with the basic resources.

The literature reveals that a well-planned playroom may contain many partitions in which a variety of parallel activities can be presented during indoor play where the child has the chance and freedom to make her/his own decisions (Hasan, 2004:69-70). The utilisation of relevant resources is also considered as the most important practice ECE practitioners can use to support teaching and learning in Grade R classes. In this

regard, the Ethiopian education policy guideline (MoE, 2016:26-41) stipulates an effective utilisation of teaching-learning resources and indoor areas in Grade R classes to facilitate effective implementation of the preschool policy.

**Outdoor Area**

At school A, there was no outdoor area demarcated for Grade R. This was because the school is included in the primary school system only as one grade without having its site.

The situation in schools B, C, D, E and F was similar as they all had a problem of managing the outdoor area properly. The reason for not managing the outdoor area properly is that the teachers have no knowledge and experience of how to manage the outdoor area for Grade R classes properly. Other role players such as district education officers and principals, also, did not support teachers properly on how to utilise outdoor areas. In this regard, the Ethiopian policy guideline in the literature describes the proper utilisation of indoor and outdoor areas to make ECE policy implementation successful. However, this finding is similar to what the literature evidence presented in section 2.3.9.1, page 57 as traditional practices of ECE programmes in Ethiopia which discloses that teachers in ECE programmes are unqualified to teach properly and unable to manage resources in classrooms as pointed out by Habtamu (1996:104-114) and Tirusew (2005: 39-44)

	<p><b>Lesson planning and integration of subjects in routine activities</b></p>	<p>In school A, the practitioner did not prepare her daily lesson plan which could help in practising of the lesson plan which has been provided by the district education department. She was teaching reading directly from the provided policy guideline manual. She also missed integrating her teaching with other subjects. Also, she was struggling with the discussion of the theme.</p> <p>In school B, the practitioner did not have her lesson preparation which is very important in guiding the</p>
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		<p>activities to be practiced in the classroom. The integration of Mathematics with other subjects was not observed during the presentation.</p> <p>In school C, the practitioner did not have her adjusted lesson plan at all to suit the context of her class. She presented her lesson reading directly from the provided lesson plan. Some parts of the lesson plan like assessment, teacher reflection and side activities were not completed. In carrying out some activities, integration with other subjects was not noted.</p> <p>In schools D and E, the practitioners did not prepare their lesson plans. Thus, there was no prior preparation on how to utilise the resources and contextualising the lesson plan provided by the district education department. Integration with other subjects (Maths and Life skills) was not observed during storytelling.</p> <p>The practitioner at school F had her separate lesson preparation apart from the one provided by the district education department which reflected changes she made from the provided lesson plan to suit her context. At school F, minimal integration with other subjects was noted during daily programme discussion with learners.</p>
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**Discussion and interpretation**

In school A, the practitioner failed to reflect integration with other subjects when carrying out other routine activities. This can be attributed to the fact that the practitioner does not know didactics, thus, lacked experience in teaching Grade R. The other problem could be that the practitioner has only training but was never given any induction on how to prepare the lesson plan and present it to Grade R classes. She had no one in



the school or neighborhood to guide her. In this regard, the literature states the role of teachers in ECE programme as decisive when it fulfills the basic requirement of being competent and willing to increase their skills through experience sharing, training and receiving professional guidance from experienced colleagues to make the ECE policy implementation successful at the classroom level (Hasan, 2004:204-222). This finding is also contrary to what the ECE policy guideline presented in the literature section 2.3.9.3, page 59 as policy guideline of ECE programme in Ethiopia (MoE, 2016:7-25).

The findings at schools B, C, D and E were similar to that of A as all the practitioners failed to reflect integration with other subjects when carrying out daily routine activities. This problem could be attributed to the fact that the practitioners were not acquainted well with the ECE policy guideline of Ethiopia either through induction or workshop. The problem could be also related to the fact that the practitioners are inexperienced and as a result had the problem of putting theory into practice. The literature in section 2,3,9.3, page 59 the ECE policy guideline of Ethiopia points out that teachers in ECE programmes should teach different subjects in an integrated manner. This finding implies that teachers should stick to the policy guideline to make its implementation successful.

Integration with other subjects at school F was minimal. This could be because the practitioner was able to interact with the provided lesson plan and made her preparations to contextualise the lesson plan. Regarding teachers' lesson plan preparation and its implementation, the literature explains teacher's role in the ECE programme by stating that they should always properly plan and carryout activities in a daily programme which implies the success of ECE policy implementation (Choudhury, 2002:144-145).

<p><b>Artefacts analysis</b></p>		<p>During observations, the following documents were also requested to be analysed: Lesson plans and personal preparations, assessment records, HoDs' management plans, agenda and minutes of previous staff meetings.</p>
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		<p>The reason for requesting these documents was to establish as to whether practitioners are interacting with the ECE policy guidelines designed to put the policy into practice as presented in paragraph 2.3.9.3, page 59.</p> <p>Also, the purpose was to establish whether practitioners do receive support and guidance from the supervisors which would be reflected in the ECE policy guideline documents as explained in paragraph 2.3.9.3, page 57.</p> <p>In school A, the lesson plan provided by the district education department was available but the practitioner did not have lesson preparation notes. There was no assessment activities indicated in the column for assessment. The practitioner was still using ticks for recording learner performance.</p> <p>In schools B and C, the practitioner used the provided lesson plans by the province and the lesson plans were dated. The practitioner did not properly write down assessment activities and record assessment results. She only wrote 'questions' which meant she was going to ask questions based on the story. She failed to reflect on assessment activities for Maths and Life Skills in the space provided.</p> <p>Provincial lesson plans were available at schools D and E and the practitioners had assessment plans done separately. Assessment activities were stated for each subject but the practitioner failed to indicate the forms of the assessment she was going to use. Learners were assessed based on a continuous assessment procedure in which everyday activity is assigned a smaller weight so</p>
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		<p>that the cumulative weight is finally obtained out of 100 percent.</p> <p>The situation at school F was different from the rest. There was a lesson preparation note and the practitioner designed and stated the assessment activities for each subject in the prepared lesson plan. The assessment recording sheet was completed using the continuous assessment procedure.</p>
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**Interpretation and discussion**

The practitioners at school A, B and C failed to reflect the assessment activities in the space provided in the lesson plan and they did not even have an assessment plan. The reasons for this could be that even though the practitioners had received training in ECE, they are inexperienced to teach at Grade R. It can also be attributed to a lack of knowledge about the ECE policy guidelines of Ethiopia. This finding shows that the practitioners were not accomplishing their daily assessment tasks and this implies that ECE policy is not accomplished with this regard. The explanation in the literature section 2.3.3.1 page 33-34) is similar to this finding which describes the basic requirement of a teacher who is well qualified to teach in Grade R classes.

At schools D, E and F, the practitioners had challenges in properly identifying and using assessment forms. This could be attributed to a lack of understanding of the difference between assessment forms and assessment methods.

Five of the six observed schools have problems with continuous assessment and preparing lessons for contextualisation the curriculum which implies that although practitioners have attended ECE training as well as district workshops, they might still be experiencing problems in understanding and putting theory into practice. The significance and application of assessment techniques in the classroom are explained by Hall and Elliman (2004:12-34); Rodd, (2005:50-55) and Jackson (2011:46-64) which is comparable to what is described in policy guidelines of ECE in Ethiopia presented in

section 2.3.9, page 54 which serves as a benchmark for the successful implementation of ECE policy in Ethiopia.

	<p><b>HoDs' management plans, agenda and minutes of previous meetings</b></p>	<p>At school A, HoD's management plan reflected only parent meetings and Grade R graduations. There were no minutes of meetings on ECE policy issues and no policy guidelines. Also, there was no indication of planned Grade R internal workshops or meetings. The agenda and minutes did not reflect any discussions of Grade R curriculum issues. No meetings were specifically planned to address content areas for Grade R subjects. Most of the time the meetings were about giving feedback to teachers from the district school visits or HoDs' meetings they had attended.</p> <p>The situation in schools B and C were almost similar to that of school A. There were no minutes of meetings on ECE curriculum issues, content areas for Grade R subjects, teaching-learning process and ECE policy issues in general.</p> <p>In Schools D, E and F, there was a management plan but it did not reflect any planning for Grade R curriculum support activities like internal workshops, classroom visits and content clarification meetings. The planned assessment phase meetings deal only with starting and submission dates of assessment results which are inapplicable to Grade R. The agenda and minutes from previous meetings reflect more on issues affecting Grade 1 to three classes. The only time grade R is mentioned is when announcements are made about Grade R</p>
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		<p>graduations, parent meetings, excursions and feedback from the district visits and HoDs. Minutes related to the set dates for meetings in the management plans did not reflect any discussions about Grade R curriculum-related issues. Only the parents' orientation, trips and Grade R graduations are mentioned.</p>
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**Interpretation and discussion**

The findings at all the six schools (A, B, C, D, E and F) visited are similar about planned activities and agenda in the minutes of previous phase meetings. The HoDs' failed to plan for Grade R meetings or include Grade R curriculum issues in their planning. The meetings held were phase meetings where the agenda was almost the same and focused only on Grades 1 to 4 teachers.

Minutes captured reflect feedback from the DEOs' visits, announcements about starting and submission dates of assessment results which is more relevant to primary grades and discussions about the excursions and the Grade R graduation. There was no reflection of special Grade R meetings to address ECE curriculum and policy issues noted.

In almost all the observed schools, there were no policy documents, guidelines and policy standards that are a baseline for the effective implementation of the ECE policy. All the findings regarding HoDs and DEOs' management plans, agenda and minutes of previous meetings indicate that in all sample schools, little attention was given to Grade R class and its policy issues. This indicates that the implementation of ECE policy in the Ethiopian context was not successful. These findings are similar with the research findings in the literature section 2.3.9, page 54 which states that in the Ethiopian context very low emphasis and priority had been given by all partners of ECE policy implementers both at the classroom level as well as among community and government bodies in Ethiopia as presented by the following researchers (Habtamu, 1996:104-114; Tirusew, 2005:39-44; Tasew, 2011:7-12.; Habtu, 2012:12).

### **5.3.2. Findings from practitioners' interview**

Individual interviews were conducted with six teachers (practitioners) one from each sample school to collect relevant information about the practice of implementing ECE policy in their respective schools because the aim of this study is to establish how the ECE policy is implemented in Grade R classes in Ethiopia. The questions that were asked and the responses of the practitioners were presented next:

**Question 1:** How were you trained to implement ECE policy?

The results show that preschool policy implementation is successful if the teachers who are teaching at Grade R received quality training in ECE before they start teaching at Grade R (Tirusew, 2005:67-72; Obiweluozor, 2015:3-12). However, four of the six practitioners responded that they had not received any training in ECE. In addition, all the six practitioners responded that they had not received any induction or workshop after they joined teaching. These findings indicate that ECE policy is not properly implemented because the majority of practitioners did not receive any professional training that qualifies them to teach at Grade R. This finding is comparable with the findings of Habtamu (1996:104-114), Tirusew (2005:67-72) and Tasew (2011:12) who stated that the implementation of ECE policy in Ethiopia is hampered by lack of qualified teachers in ECE programmes and lack of support provided by different partners in the area including principals, education officers and government officials as explained in paragraphs of section 2.3.9, pages 54-57.

**Question 2:** Which resources were allocated to you to implement the ECE policy?

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

classes to be successful implementers of the curriculum. However, practitioners in this study responded that there were no flip charts, theme tables, teaching cabinet, aids and many indoor and outdoor areas were with no playing materials which are very important for Grade R classes. In general, practitioners responded that the types of resources allocated to them were very limited and sometimes absent. This finding with inadequate allocation of resources and materials to ECE programmes implies that the implementation of the ECE policy is not successful as the allocation of adequate resources leads to the successful implementation of ECE policy as suggested by Tobin et al, (2015:52-61) & Ding, 2016:61-66).

**Question 3:** What are the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of ECE programmes in your context?

The practitioner responses on the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of ECE programmes were summarised as next:

- 1) Lack of policy guidelines, standards and common curriculum.
- 2) Unavailability of school facilities and resources
- 3) Lack of qualified and professionally trained teachers who understand the policy?
- 4) Lack of cooperation and teamwork among teachers, the principal and district experts in monitoring policy implementation
- 5) Lack of effective monitoring and supervision to ensure policy implementation
- 6) Lack of awareness about the significance of ECE
- 7) Lack of quality ECE training institutions

These ECE policy implementation impeding factors are similar to the factors listed in the literature chapter two section 2.3.9.3, page 59 as precondition factors that hinder successful policy implementation which is originally set by Hogwood and Gunn (1984:14-39) and cited by Ding (2016:61-66).

**Question 4:** What strategies can be regarded as the best practice to strengthen ECE policy implementation?

Grade R teachers responses to the strategies that can be regarded as the best practices to strengthen ECE policy implementation were summarised as next:

- 1) Designing policy guidelines and standards to establish a system for managing ECE programmes and institutions.
- 2) Public awareness creation about the importance of ECE.
- 3) Determination, mobilisation and resource allocation for early childhood education.
- 4) Designing supervision and assessment standards to ensure the quality of ECE.
- 5) Design a system for promoting cooperation and teamwork among partners of ECE policy implementers.

The above findings are very similar to the factors that are presented in the literature chapter three, section 3.2.1.3, page 71 which describe the strategic processes that turn policy plans into actions (Tobin et al., 2015:52-61; Buse et al., 2005:141-183).

**Question 5:** How was professional support such as supervision provided to you helps you to implement ECE policy?

The practitioners' responded that they received very limited or non-professional support from the HoDs, DEOs and the principals during the implementation of the ECE policy. This could be because the policy support providers themselves were not well qualified in ECE. Also, perhaps, the organisational structure of ECE does not allow them to do so. The literature in chapter three, section 3.2.4.1, page 87-90 discusses quality schooling system as the best solution for ensuring professional support and many others that include the importance of well-trained teachers, managers and support staff, as well as appropriate equipment and resources, learning materials and learning space that promote successful implementation of the ECE policy. Moreover, processes of quality assessment and improvement both internal and external supervision need to be further developed and carried out more widely in implementing ECE policy (UNESCO, 2015:15-20; World Bank 2015:11-35).



### **5.3.3. Findings from principals interview**

Individual interviews were also conducted with six principals, one from each sample school to collect relevant information related to the management of ECE policy implementation in their schools. The aim of this study is to establish how the ECE policy is implemented in Grade R classes in Ethiopia. The questions that were asked and the responses of the principals were presented next:

**Question 1:** How were resources allocated to your school to implement ECE policy?

The principals responded that the resources allocated to Grade R are very limited and inadequate. The resources that would have been allocated include the annual budget, stationery and sanitation materials including first aid kits, teaching-learning indoor materials and outdoor playing materials. Among these, only stationery materials in a very limited amount are allocated in most preschools. Moreover, the human resource allocated to this sector of education was unqualified. These findings are very comparable to the findings with researchers in the literature who reported that the allocation of inadequate resources to ECE programmes result in unsuccessful implementation of ECE policy. These findings could be attributed to the fact that the overall emphasis given to this important sector of education is either the lowest or almost none in the Ethiopian context. As the result this hampered the effective implementation of the ECE policy. The literature in chapter two, section 2.3.9.3, page 59 supports this evidence by stating that there is a lack of resource mobilisation in this sector of education and this result in the failure of ECE policy implementation in Ethiopia (Habtamu, 1996:104-114; Tirusew, 2005:68-72; Tasew, 2011:12).

**Question 2:** How did you prepare your Grade R teachers to implement the policy?

Regarding the question of how principals prepare their teachers to implement ECE policy in their respective schools, they responded that they prepare their teachers by giving orientation in the form of an announcement on the primary grades staff meeting twice in a year at the start and end of the semesters. Induction workshops were seldom practised due to budget deficiency. In cases of emergency, the ECE teacher is replaced by an older student in the class. The higher district education officers did not make

regular supervision to Grade R teachers. All these findings could be because the school principals are not committed to the implementation of the ECE policy. In this regard, literature in chapter two, section 2.3.3.4, page 42 explains the role of education officers (including principals) as education leaders who are expected to be committed to bringing together the expertise, skills and experience of a multidisciplinary team for the success of ECE programmes and ensuring correct policy implementation (Leeson, 2006:36-42). However, this is not practised by principals in sample schools of this study.

**Question 3:** What are your views about the implementation of preschool policy?

School principals were also asked about their views on the implementation of the ECE policy. The responses they forwarded are summarised as next:

- 1) The policy lacks clear aims, guidelines, standards and common curriculum.
- 2) The implementation of the policy is hindered by lack of budget, unclear organisation structure, lack of material and human resources.
- 3) Public awareness about the significance of ECE is low.
- 4) Support from the Ethiopian government for this important sector of education is very low.
- 5) Policy implementation is hampered by a lack of qualified human resources and material resources.
- 6) Special attention and priority should be given to ECE by all partners including teachers, principals, education officers, parents, government bodies and the public.

The above findings are similar to practitioners' responses that emphasised the challenges that hinder successful implementation of the ECE policy. This could also be because the ECE policy is not well-framed; it has a poor organisational structure and inadequate budget, human and educational resource allocation. These ECE policy problems are explained in the literature review chapter two, section 2.3.9.3, and page 59;

**Question 4:** How was the ECE policy communicated and monitored to implement it in your school?

The responses of principals indicated that the way the policy aims, guidelines and schedules were communicated is unclear. The mechanism of monitoring it is not regularly functional. This could be because either the preschool communication system is not working at all or the principals are not committed to accomplishing their tasks. The literature in chapter three, section 3.2.4.2, page 90-94 explains the importance of communication processes among others in the management of ECE policy implementation as suggested by the studies of Suorsa and Prina in the Nordic region and Russia (Suorsa, 2016:15-29; Prina, 2015:50-59) as opposed to findings in this study.

**Question 5:** How was technology (such as computers and ICT) utilised in your school to implement ECE policy?

School principals indicated that ICT and computers are unavailable. This could be because there was no budget allocated for such purpose or less priority was given to this sector of education. This finding indicates that ECE policy implementation is limited by the absence of the use of ICT in Ethiopia. In contrary to this finding, the literature in chapter three, section 3.2.1.1, page 65-66 explains the use of ICT as a contextual factor that is related to socio-structural factors that affect ECE policy implementation to a large extent when appropriately implemented (Hew & Brush, 2007:223-252; SEAMEO, 2010:49-57).

#### **5.3.4. Findings from a policy expert's interview**

The individual interview was also held face-to-face with two early childhood policy experts of the education bureau of SNNPR to obtain additional information related to ECE policy implementation in the selected sample preschools.

**Question 1:** How is the ECE policy designed?

Policy experts were asked to reflect on how the policy is designed. They responded that the draft of the policy was first set by the policy experts at the national level. Then, it is

enriched through workshops and symposiums held at lower levels with different education sector partners (such as educational officers, principals, HoDs, teacher representatives) and then finally approved.

In explaining the detailed process of policy designing, policy experts responded that the policy approach followed is top-down in which the draft of the policy was first set at the national level, then, enriched through different workshops at lower levels. However, they did not believe that all the comments that were forwarded during discussions at local levels were included in the final approved policy document. This could be because the policy makers did not follow the bottom-up approach in designing the policy and give chance to all partners to take part and their ideas are equally represented. In contrary to this finding, the literature chapter three, section 3.2.3.1, page 81-82 explains bottom-up approach that ensures the participation of the implementers in the policy design that enhances the implementation of ECE policy (Suorsa, 2016:15-29).

**Question 2:** What does the policy aim to achieve?

Policy experts were asked to reflect on what does the ECE policy aim to achieve. The policy experts also reflected that the policy aims to make ready young children for grade one by focusing on enabling children to identify basic letters and numbers. They also responded that the curriculum is loaded with much content focusing on content area and the method of teaching is not based on the play method which is the most important in ECE. Further, they added that the approach followed is not a holistic approach in that it does not focus on all aspects of the child development because it mainly focuses on cognitive aspects and paying less attention to others such as physical, social and moral. In contrary to this, the literature chapter two, section 2.3.1, page 30-32 explains holistic development which refers to an integrated development in all areas of development and we cannot separate one aspect from the other to have a complete understanding in a particular area of development (Choudhury, 2002: 30-49:).

**Question 3:** How do you evaluate the major aspects of the ECE policy as designed by the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994: 7)?

Policy experts were also asked how they evaluate the major aspects of ECE policy as designed by the TGE (1994:7). The following two captions highlight what the ECE policy should entail about the ECE sector. Here is the excerpt from preschool policy expert one:

*I was an ECE policy expert of Grade R from the southern region Education Bureau. I have a 12 years of experience as an expert. According to my experience, I suggest that the ECE policy document should contain a declaration about i) clear aims and objectives of ECE, ii) clear standards and guidelines for teaching and learning process in the classroom, iii) common curriculum for preschool programmes, iv) provision for adequate learning resources and teaching materials for indoor and outdoor activities and v) establishing ECE training institutions and training qualified teachers.*

The second policy expert who had a rich experience of 17 years as an expert stated the following:

*I was serving as a policy expert for the last 17 years and had observed many administrative problems related to ECE policy implementation. From my professional experience, I suggest that the policy should contain i) strategies to ensure access and equity of ECE for all eligible children, ii) a system for monitoring and supervision of ECE policy implementation, iii) a strategy for ensuring the quality of preschool programmes, iv) a system for resource allocation for preschool programmes and v) values enclosed in it among others. In addition, I suggest that the ECE policy should contain i) ethical principles to protect the rights of young children, ii) proclamations to address the needs of young children with disability and special needs and iii) a system for ensuring the health care and psychological well-being of young children.*

The pattern and prevalence of responses given by policy experts regarding as to what the ECE policy ought to entail focuses on the following aspects of the policy: i) relevance and clarity of the aims to the Ethiopian context, ii) the presence of policy standards and common curriculum, iii) resource generation (both material and human)

and allocation within the education system, iv) regular policy monitoring and supervision, v)parental partnership, vi)accessibility and equity of ECE, vii)ethical principles to protect the rights of young children and viii) paying special attention to the needs of young children with disability. Regarding this, the literature in chapter three, section 3.2.1.3, page 71 explains the importance of strategic planning in ECE policy implementation that entails many of the factors mentioned above as its elements (Tobin et al., 2015:52-61).

**Question 4:** How do you evaluate the preschool policy of Ethiopia in terms of its contents and contextual (situational, structural, cultural and international) factors that affect its implementation?

Policy experts were also asked about how they evaluate preschool policy in terms of its contents and contextual factors. The first policy expert stated the situation as follows:

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

The second policy expert has the following to say:

*It was very common in many districts of the southern region to open preschools without fulfilling the necessary human resource and physical materials such as school complex with no enough space, buildings, classrooms, and adequate learning-teaching materials such as chairs, desks, and textbooks. It was also common not to take into consideration the*

*appropriate site for opening preschools. For instance, one preschool is located near to the bus station so that it was very challenging to protect children from traffic accidents and noise during the teaching-learning process.*

Putting together all the elements identified in the above excerpts, the contents and contextual factors of ECE policy should entail clear organisational structure, clear aims, a mechanism for regulating curricular and performance standards, a system for maintaining and allocating resources, strategies that relate to specific school-and-classroom level practices, adequate infrastructure and appropriate site for opening new preschools. This finding is also in line with what researchers reported in literature (McNeal et al., 2016:62-82; Bechtel, 2010:112-124).

**Question 5:** How is the policy to be implemented?

Policy experts were also asked to respond to how the preschool policy is implemented. What they reflected is summarised as next:

- 1) The policy implementer should be aware of the policy. This means the implementer should know the policy aims, contents and its beneficiaries
- 2) The implementer should prepare a plan to implement the policy.
- 3) The implementer should determine fund or budget, mobilise and obtain resources (both human and material).
- 4) Creating organisational capacity. This means selecting the right people, institutions and processes that enable them to achieve the objectives.

These findings are the same with what the researchers in chapter two literature part paragraph 3.2.1.3 suggested which states that effective ECE policy implementation also requires strategic planning, financing and organisational capacity. It is widely recognised that planning must be strategic and reflect the complex nature of the education system by changing wider educational policies into targets, actionable strategies and outcomes. Strong educational financing is also essential for sustainable educational development. This can be achieved through mobilising sustained and

adequate resourcing from budgetary, other local and international sources and establishing and identifying sustainable financing systems. Successful ECE policy programmes also require that the right people, institutions and processes are in place to allow goals to be met as proposed by Commonwealth Secretariat (2017:1-27).

### **5.3.5. Findings from the focus group interview**

The questions that were asked and their responses were presented next:

**Question 1:** How do you evaluate the participation of parents in ECE policy implementation?

The focus group members were asked to evaluate the participation of parents in their respective preschools. The focus group discussion results showed that:

- a) School-parent partner committee usually consisted of five parent representatives have participated in school activities on the behalf of the parents.
- b) The extent of parent participation was varied from school to school. In rural schools, parents participated only in what is called parents' day. Usually, it happens at the start of the year (school opening day) and the end of the year (school closing day). In sub-urban schools, parent representatives were also invited to participate in final decision making meetings but not invited to participate in the planning and execution process. In this regard, the ECE policy guideline of Ethiopia stipulates that parents should participate both at the planning and decision making stage of school work for the effective implementation of the ECE policy as presented in the literature chapter two, section 2.3.3.2, page 37-40 and chapter three, section 3.2,3.1, page 85-87 which explains that the extent of the participation of different partners such as teachers, parents and government bodies affect the ECE policy implementation to a large extent as asserted by MoE(2010:40-53); Pugh(2005:8-19) and Samuel(2007:92-97).
- c) Parents of all children both in rural and sub-urban areas are only invited to participate once in a year at the graduation or closing day and when students'



disciplinary problems arise. This could be because there is a lack of awareness among the school administrators about the importance of parents in school participation in ECE programmes and this impedes the effective implementation of the preschool policy. The literature chapter two, section 2.3.3.2, page 37-40 on the other hand, held that inclusive parents' participation is crucial for effective implementation of ECE policy. (Hasan, 2004:80-103; Engel,2005:12-25)

**Question 2:** How do you evaluate the management of ECE programmes concerning ECE policy implementation?

The focus group also discussed the management of ECE programmes about ECE policy implementation. The discussion indicated that the management of ECE programmes is the role of the principals and higher governing bodies. The group evaluated the management of ECE programmes in terms of these two bodies. The higher government bodies including the ministry of education did not play their role to run ECE programmes because there was no budget allocation and no workshops and training both at the national and district levels to promote ECE programmes. At the school level, orientation and induction training were not conducted by school principals. These findings indicate that the management of ECE programmes was improperly run and the attention given to this sector of education is very insignificant. These could be because there is a lack of commitment on the part of principals and government to implement ECE policy. The literature in chapter two paragraphs 2.3.3.3 and 2.3.3.4, on the other hand, discusses the roles of education officers and government to coordinate, guide, encourage and run ECE programmes with a commitment to implement ECE policy successful (Leeson, 2006:36-42).

**Question 3:** How do you evaluate the role of the district education department office and department head in promoting ECE policy implementation?

The focus group also discussed the role of HoDs and DEOs about ECE policy implementation. The results of the discussion showed that HoDs and DEOs did not support teachers in their classroom routine activities. The DEOs did not carry out timely supervision for preschools in their districts to facilitate ECE policy implementation. However, contrary to this finding, the literature in chapter two, section 2.3.3.4, page 42

discusses about the consistent support provision for teachers to make the ECE policy implementation successful (Moss & Petrie, 2002: 112-122).

**Question 4:** What cultural and contextual factors most affect ECE policy in your district?

Focus group members also discussed cultural and contextual factors that most affect ECE policy implementation in their district. The outcomes of the discussion indicated that factors that are related to public unawareness about the significance of ECE and harmful traditional beliefs related to the education of female students were found to be common in Ethiopia. The common beliefs about females include i) females are not naturally competent as males to succeed in education, ii) girls are not as good as boys to think rationally, thus, do not deserve education but to work in the kitchen. Problems related to unclear organisational structure, unclear aims, none existence of adequate infrastructure, common curriculum and performance standards were factors that make the failure of ECE policy implementation in almost all districts. These findings were very similar to the harmful cultural, factors that negatively affect the implementation of ECE policy as discussed in the literature chapter three, paragraph 3.2.1.1 by Bechtel (2010:112-124).

#### **5.3.6. Findings from artefacts**

In this study, policy documents were also analysed to obtain information relevant to ECE policy implementation. The documents that were analysed include the TGE (1994:1-33), the SNNPR education bureau, agendas and minutes of teachers' previous meetings, HoDs' management plans and teachers' lesson plan preparation. The analysis that was made according to the above five documents were presented as next:

1. The TGE (1994:1-33) document, the original document consisted of 33 pages whose main contents include the introduction, aims, areas of special attention, overall strategy and action strategy.
2. ECE as one aspect of general education is only mentioned once and stated as kindergarten focuses on all-inclusive development of the child in preparation for formal schooling (TGE, 1994:14). This sector of education was not mentioned among the areas that were given special attention and priority.

3. This finding indicated that ECE in Ethiopia was not given special awareness despite its critical importance in the Ethiopian context. The finding is similar to what the literature in chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3 explains on major problems of ECE in Ethiopia (Habtamu, 1996: 104-114; Tirusew, 2005:39-44; Tasew, 2011:12).

The second policy document that was analysed is the guideline document prepared by the education bureau of the southern region. This guideline document was the teacher's guide manual. The teacher's guide consisted of the following main sections: introduction, aims, education and care in early years, assumptions of ECE and the contents of ECE curriculum which entails environment and self-awareness, language development, the development of basic numerical knowledge and skills, the development of basic social and emotional skills and the development of creativity and fine art skills. However, the findings from the classroom observation did not confirm the practical application of what was planned on paper into actions in the classroom. This is because what was actually practiced in the classroom is not holistic but rather focused only on the cognitive aspect by paying no attention to other aspects of child behaviour as explained in document analysis in the classroom observation section. This implies that ECE policy is not effectively implemented at the classroom level as previously reported by other researchers such as Habtamu (1996:104-114) and Tirusew (2005:39-44).

The third document analysis is concerning agenda and minutes of teachers' previous meetings. In three sample preschools, the agenda minutes of staff meetings indicated that there was no agenda and discussion focusing on the issue of Grade R classes.

- a) The minutes showed that the issues of Grade R classes were only raised in the form of an announcement to inform teachers about the test and exam dates and dates for supervision with DEOs. Official letters from DEOs focused only on primary grades ignoring Grade R classes.
- b) In private preschools, there were staff minutes that showed discussions on different topics such as classroom management, teaching-learning materials and request for budget and resource support from DEOs. However, response

letters from DEOs to schools did not guarantee the support the schools requested.

These findings are comparable with the findings obtained from classroom observation. This is because the attention and priority given by the government and other partners to this important sector of education and its policy implementation is very low as it is explained in the literature chapter two, section 2.3.9.3, page 59 (Habtamu, 1996:104-114; Tirusew, 2005:39-44; Tasew, 2011:12).

The fourth document analysed was HoDs' management plans. The result showed there was an absence of planning for and exclusions of Grade R issues in the HoDs' annual plans and agenda. This finding indicates that HoDs are not providing support to practitioners in their school to implement the policy on regular basis. The ECE policy guideline of Ethiopia, on the contrary, explains that HODs' should provide support to practitioners to facilitate ECE policy implementation (Chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3, page 59).

The fifth document analysed was the teacher's lesson plan preparation. The results showed that the majority of the practitioners had not prepared their lesson plans. This could be because practitioners lack knowledge about how to prepare lesson plans. In this regard, the ECE policy guideline of Ethiopia as well as literature in chapter two, paragraph 2.3.3.1, page 33-35 explains that practitioners should properly plan and run activities in the daily programme.

#### **5.4. Chapter conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to present the research findings of this study. The title of the study is "The implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia". This title has been chosen to examine the current status of the implementation of ECE policy in Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia. To answer the question "how is the preschool policy of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia implemented at school-based Grade R classes?" I used classroom observation, individual interviews, focus

group interviews and artefacts as tools to answer the question. The explanations in the chapter showed the extent to which the research questions were answered.

In chapter six, the whole study will be reviewed to establish if the aim of the research has been met. Recommendations will be made based on the conclusion arrived at after an analysis of participants' responses.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

Chapter five presented the findings and interpretations of the research results obtained from the analysed data. In this chapter, I have reflected on the limitations of this study before drawing up a conclusion and recommendations. Also, the aim of this chapter is to present the recommended model of policy implementation.

#### **6.2. Limitations of the study**

Limitations are conditions in a research beyond the control of the researcher that may place restrictions on the results and conclusion of the study as well as their application to other situations. The following conditions are limitations of this study.

Although this study employed multiple data collection instruments, it only used purposive sampling for the selection of the participants. Hence, a lack of generalisability could be the limitation of the study.

This research employed four data collection instruments, as a result, a large volume of data were obtained, which took a lot of time to analyse and interpret. This huge task resulted in time and financial constraints.

Fourteen individual interviews were carried out and this was a challenge as it required a lot of time and resources.

#### **6.3. Conclusion of the study**

This study aimed to establish how preschool policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. The conclusion to the research question is founded on the findings from the observations explained in 5.3.1 and table 5.1, documents analysis discussed in 5.3.6, individual interviews of practitioners, individual interviews of principals and policy experts respectively explained in paragraphs 5.3.2, 5.3.3 and 5.3.4 and focus group interview in 5.3.5. The observations, document analysis and focus group interview results were used to back the

practitioners, principals and policy experts' interview results. I considered the responses and general views of participants to draw the following conclusions.

### **6.3.1. Conclusion about classroom observations**

After establishing and conducting different classroom observations on practitioners' activities, it was found out that all six practitioners did not carry out the daily activities as expected. They could not use the method to teach in a Grade R classroom. They were unable to arrange and manage the classroom correctly into different learning areas. Also, they were unable to integrate various subjects. I can conclude that this is an indication of a lack of knowledge about ECE policy implementation on the part of the ECE practitioners. In this regard, the policy stipulates that practitioners should be able to properly carry out their activities in the daily programmes through correctly arranging and managing the classroom area, integrating different subjects while teaching as well as utilising resources properly. The absence of facilities such as outdoor equipment and other learning materials could be blamed on the principals and DEOs' lack of support for proper policy implementation (Chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3).

### **6.3.2 Conclusion about practitioner's interviews**

The conclusions were made based on the three categories compiled based on the responses derived from the interview questions.

Concerning the type of training the practitioners received, the material resources allocated to them and the professional support they received, the respondents indicated, they were assigned to teach at Grade R level without receiving any formal training. The types and amounts of material resources allocated to them were inadequate. Also, they received very limited professional support from HoDs and DEOs. I can conclude that teachers are teaching at Grade R level without receiving training, adequate physical resources and support. Training of Grade R practitioners should be enforceable so that it is compatible with the ECE policy of Ethiopia which states that practitioners should receive quality training in ECE programmes and professional support from experienced partners and be guaranteed of adequate material resources to promote successful implementation of the ECE policy.

Concerning the challenges that hinder practitioners from effective implementation of ECE programmes, the factors that emerged out include lack of policy guidelines, standards and common curriculum, unavailability of adequate school facilities and resources, lack of qualified teachers and teamwork among partners, lack of supervision and awareness about the significance of ECE and lack of training institutions. I can conclude that some factors that impede ECE policy implementation in the Ethiopian context entail the aforementioned factors. In this regard, the aforesaid factors echo the factors listed in the guideline of the ECE policy of Ethiopia (Chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3) and previously reported by different researchers such as Habtamu (1996: 104-114) and Tirusew (2005:69-44).

Regarding the strategies that can reinforce the implementation of ECE policy, the practitioners revealed that the following strategies appear: i) designing policy guidelines and standards to establish a system for managing ECE programmes and institutions, ii) public awareness creation about the importance of ECE, iii) determination, mobilisation and resource allocation for ECE, iv) designing supervision and assessment standards to ensure quality ECE and v) designing a system for promoting cooperation and teamwork among partners of ECE policy implementers. Therefore, I can conclude that the abovementioned factors are strategies that can be regarded as best practices in ECE policy implementation in Ethiopia. This is in line with what is presented in the literature chapter three, section 3.2.1.3, which explains the importance of creating effective organisational structure and good governance, designing strategies that easily convert policy into actions and mobilising adequate and sustainable budgets that are pillars for the effective implementation of ECE policy as reported by Buse et al., (2005: 141-183) and Tobin et al., (2015:52-61).

### **6.3.3. Conclusion about principals interviews**

I have categorised the principals' responses to personal interview questions into two categories based on some themes.

First, the principals responded that the allocated resources were inadequate or sometimes absent and the human resource was unqualified to handle ECE. They were



incorrectly preparing their teachers through irregular orientation, induction workshop and supervision. The way the ECE policy is communicated and monitored is unclear and not functional. ICT is hardly used. Thus, I can conclude that principals are improperly managing Grade R programmes in terms of preparing teachers to teach effectively, allocating adequate resources, communicating and monitoring policy and the utilisation of ICT to make the ECE policy effective. Sadly, resource allocation is blamed on DEOs. In this regard, the ECE policy document of Ethiopia states in clear terms that adequate material resources should be allocated for effective implementation of the ECE policy in chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3 and chapter three, paragraph 3.2.1.3 as reported by MoE (2016:7-25) and Tobin et al., (2015:52-61).

Second, regarding the principals' views about the implementation of ECE policy, they responded that the policy lacked clear aims, guidelines, standards and common curriculum. The implementation of the ECE policy was hindered by a lack of budget, unclear organisational structure and a lack of material and human resources. Public awareness about the importance of ECE is low. The support from the Ethiopian government for this important sector of education is equally poor. Special attention and priority should be given to ECE by all partners including teachers, principals, education officers, parents, government bodies and the public. Therefore, I can conclude that the views of practitioners about ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes in Ethiopia are the aforesaid factors. This conclusion is comparable with the findings of different researchers (Tirusew, 2005:39-44; Tasew, 2011:12).

#### **6.3.4. Conclusion about policy experts interviews**

Policy experts' responses have been categorised into three as presented in the next paragraphs.

The policy experts responded that the policy designed is employing top-down approach. Although the policy aims to make children ready for primary education, it lacks a holistic developmental approach. Policy implementers should fulfil the following to make implementation practical: be aware of the policy aims, methods and content, prepare a plan, obtain adequate resources and materials and create a functional organisational

structure. Thus, I can, conclude that the policy design approach was one-sided and aimed to prepare children for primary education. In this regard, the ECE policy of Ethiopia states that in addition to preparing children for primary education, it should promote holistic development of children (Chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3). Regarding policy design, the literature in chapter three, paragraph 3.2.3.1, explains that policy design should also involve bottom-up approach so that implementers actively participate in the processes and significantly contribute to policy implementation as reported by Suorsa (2016:15-29) and Zairil (2016:17-20).

Concerning how policy experts evaluate the major aspects of ECE policy as designed by the Education Training Policy of Ethiopia, they responded that the policy has to entail the following to be effective: i) relevance and clarity of the aims to the Ethiopian context, ii) the existence of policy standards and common curriculum, iii) resource generation and allocation within the education system, iv) regular policy monitoring and supervision, v) parental partnership, vi) accessibility and equity of ECE, vii) ethical principles to safeguard the rights of young children and viii) paying special attention to the needs of children with disability. I can, therefore, conclude that the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia ought to entail the aforementioned factors about the ECE sector to be successful. The Ethiopian ECE policy explains aforesaid factors as factors promoting effective implementation of ECE policy (Chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3,) as reported by Tirusew (2005:39-44).

About what the ECE policy of Ethiopia should contain in terms of its contents and contextual factors, principals responded that preschool policy should entail clear organisational structure, clear aims, a mechanism for regulating curricular and performance standards, a system for maintaining and allocating resources, strategies that relate to specific school-and-classroom level practices, adequate infrastructure and appropriate site for opening new preschools. I can conclude that the above-mentioned factors are contents and contextual factors such as political, social and economic ones that mainly affect ECE policy implementation. The literature in chapter three, paragraph 3.2.1.1 explains the significance of policy background factors that are categorised as situational, structural, cultural and international factors that encompass the factors

identified in this study and mentioned above which are reported by Rizvi and Lingard (2010:10-29) and Jaffe (2015:25-42).

### **6.3.5. Conclusion about focus group interviews**

Regarding parental involvement in schoolwork, group discussion showed that parental participation was very limited in that parents were invited to participate in school work usually on the school opening day and school closing or graduation day. I can, therefore, conclude that the participation of parents in school work was limited and passive. On the contrary, the literature in chapter two, paragraph 2.3.3.2, as well as the Ethiopian ECE policy in chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3, explains the active participation of parents in ECE programmes which promotes the full participation of parents that enable them to participate in a range of activities including decision making, early intervention, teamwork and programme evaluation to facilitate ECE policy implementation as suggested by Leeson (2006:36-42) and Samuel (2007:92-97).

Regarding the management of ECE programmes, the focus group evaluated the roles played by the principals, DEOs and higher government bodies. Results showed that the higher government bodies did not allocate budget and organise workshops at the national level. At the district level, supervision was not carried out properly. Even at the school level, orientation and induction training were not granted by principals. I can, then, infer that principals, DEOs and higher government bodies did not play their roles to promote ECE policy implementation. In the regard, the ECE policy of Ethiopia underscores the collaboration of multidisciplinary experts and partners to promote the implementation of ECE policy as discussed in the literature chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3, and as reported by MoE (2016:7-25).

Also, the focus group discussed the role played by HoDs and DEOs in implementing ECE policy. The discussion showed that HoDs did not properly support practitioners as well as DEOs did not carry out timely supervision for preschools in their districts to facilitate ECE policy implementation. I can, then, conclude that the HoDs and DEOs did not properly accomplish their responsibilities to facilitate ECE policy implementation. On the contrary, the ECE policy of Ethiopia states that the policy implementation would

have been effective only if all partners have properly played their own roles as put in literature chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9.3, and as reported by Tasew (2011:7-12).

The last point of discussion of the focus group was the cultural and contextual factors that affect ECE policy implementation. Results of the discussion showed that the most important factors that affected ECE policy implementation were: public unawareness about the significance of ECE and harmful traditional beliefs related to the education of female students. I can, therefore, conclude that public lack of knowledge and harmful traditional practices that are prevalent in the Ethiopian community are important factors that did not promote the implementation of the ECE policy. The literature in chapter two, paragraph 2.3.9, explains the effect of traditional factors on ECE policy implementation as stated by Tirusew (2005:23-44).

#### **6.3.6. Conclusion about artefacts**

The following documents were collected and analysed: the national education and training policy of Ethiopia, SNNPR education bureau policy guideline, agenda and staff meeting minutes, HoDs' management plans and teacher's lesson plans. In examining the documents, I came to the highlighted conclusions below.

In the original national Education and Training Policy document of Ethiopia, the word "preschool education" was mentioned only once and was not among the areas that were given special attention and priority. I can, then, conclude that this indicates that the awareness and attention given by the government to this sector of education was very low. This finding is comparable with the results of research reported by different researchers in the Ethiopian context (Habtamu, 1996:104-114; Tirusew, 2005:39-44; Tasew, 2011:7-12).

Regarding the policy guideline document, as a policy on paper, the policy guideline document consists of all pertinent elements. However, findings from the classroom observation did not confirm the practical application of what was planned on paper into actions in the classroom. Therefore, I can conclude that there is a gap between what is planned and what is implemented. The literature in paragraph three, paragraph 3.2.1.3 recommends strategic planning in ECE policy implementation as a means to narrow the

gap between policy planning and its implementation (Blackerby, 2003:39-46; Tobin et al., 2015:52-61).

Third, document analysis is about agenda and minutes of teachers' previous meetings. Results showed that there were no practitioners' lesson preparations which they had to develop to consolidate and contextualise the lesson plans in their possession. I can, then, conclude that practitioners were having problems in interpreting the lesson plans and putting them into actions correctly in the classroom. This finding is comparable with the findings from classroom observation explained in chapter six, paragraph 6.3.1.

The fourth document to be analysed was the HoDs' management plan. The results showed that there was an absence of planning for and exclusions of Grade R issues in the HoDs' annual plans and agenda. From this, I can conclude that the practitioners were not receiving any guidance, supervision and support in their ECE programmes. This supports their statements that practitioners do not have any classroom support, have to plead for the HoDs' help and that they are on their own when it comes to classroom practices in implementing ECE policy as explained in paragraph 6.3.2.

The fifth document analysed was the teacher's lesson plan preparation. The results showed that majority of the practitioners did not prepare their lesson plans. I can, then, conclude that this is an indication that practitioners had either lack of knowledge or lack of training to properly implement ECE policy in the classroom as explained in paragraph 6.3.1.

The realisation that there might be problems with the implementation of ECE policy at Grade R classes as indicated in chapters 1 paragraph 1.5 prompted me to embark on this study whose research question is:

*In what way is the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994:14) implemented at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia?* This was pursued to investigate the implementation of ECE policy at school-based Grade R classes to improve policy implementation.

The research aim for this study is as follows;

:

*To establish the nature of policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.*

Chapters two and three presented review of a literature on the theoretical framework of the study and issues related to ECE policies, models of policy implementation and discourse on the Grade R programmes.

Observations were conducted in selected schools to observe the practitioners in action. Individual interviews were made with practitioners, principals and policy experts. Focus group interviews were also made with HoDs, DEOs and parents. Documents were analysed. The observations, documents analysis and focus group interview results were used to back the practitioners' and principal's interview results.

Recommended research procedures were followed including ethical necessities. In providing the research report, the background to the research area including sampled schools was provided to make the reader understand the context of the investigation. The report was presented using the categories (observations) and themes (interviews) emerged during data analysis.

The findings of the study revealed that the practitioners had a lack of knowledge about ECE policy implementation and did not teach correctly in the classrooms. The study also revealed that teachers teach at Grade R with inadequate material resources and support. Other findings that emerged were a lack of policy guidelines, standards and common curriculum. Also, it included a lack of teamwork and supervision, awareness about the significance of ECE and training institutions. The study revealed that principals are improperly managing Grade R programmes and not in terms of preparing teachers to teach effectively. The study also revealed that the policy design approach was one-sided and aimed to prepare children for primary education. Besides, the findings identified the views of practitioners about policy implementation. The major aspects of ECE policy as designed by the Education Training Policy of Ethiopia, factors that impede policy implementation and the strategies that can be regarded as the best practices to strengthen ECE policy implementation were also reported. The findings

highlighted the need for training of all stakeholders on Grade R practices. Collaboration amongst all partners was also an area of finding that needs keen attention to address ECE policy implementation. Based on the findings of the study, it can therefore be decided that the research question has been answered and as a result, the aim of the research is realised.

In the previous section, the conclusion of this study has been made based on the findings of the study. In the next section, recommendations have been made based on the conclusions made so far.

#### **6.4. Recommended model of ECE policy implementation**

The concept of policy implementation model which explains how education policy put into practice or action can help to improve the quality of policy implementation in Grade R classes. In this section, I recommended a model that fits the Ethiopian situation. I also discussed the relationship between the recommended model and the theoretical framework of the study.

The findings of this study brought the recommendations that are presented in this section. To generate achievable strategies for improving the success of ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes, all stakeholders involved in Grade R classes must collaborate and see them as part of the whole system. All role players need to be capacitated on the policy stand about how Grade R children learn and on the practices in Grade R classrooms, the management and maintenance of resources. Their roles and functions need to be emphasised. Models of policy implementation presented in chapter three paragraph 3.2.3.1 play a vital role in guiding role players in their implementation functions. The diagram below presents the recommended structural model of policy implementation.

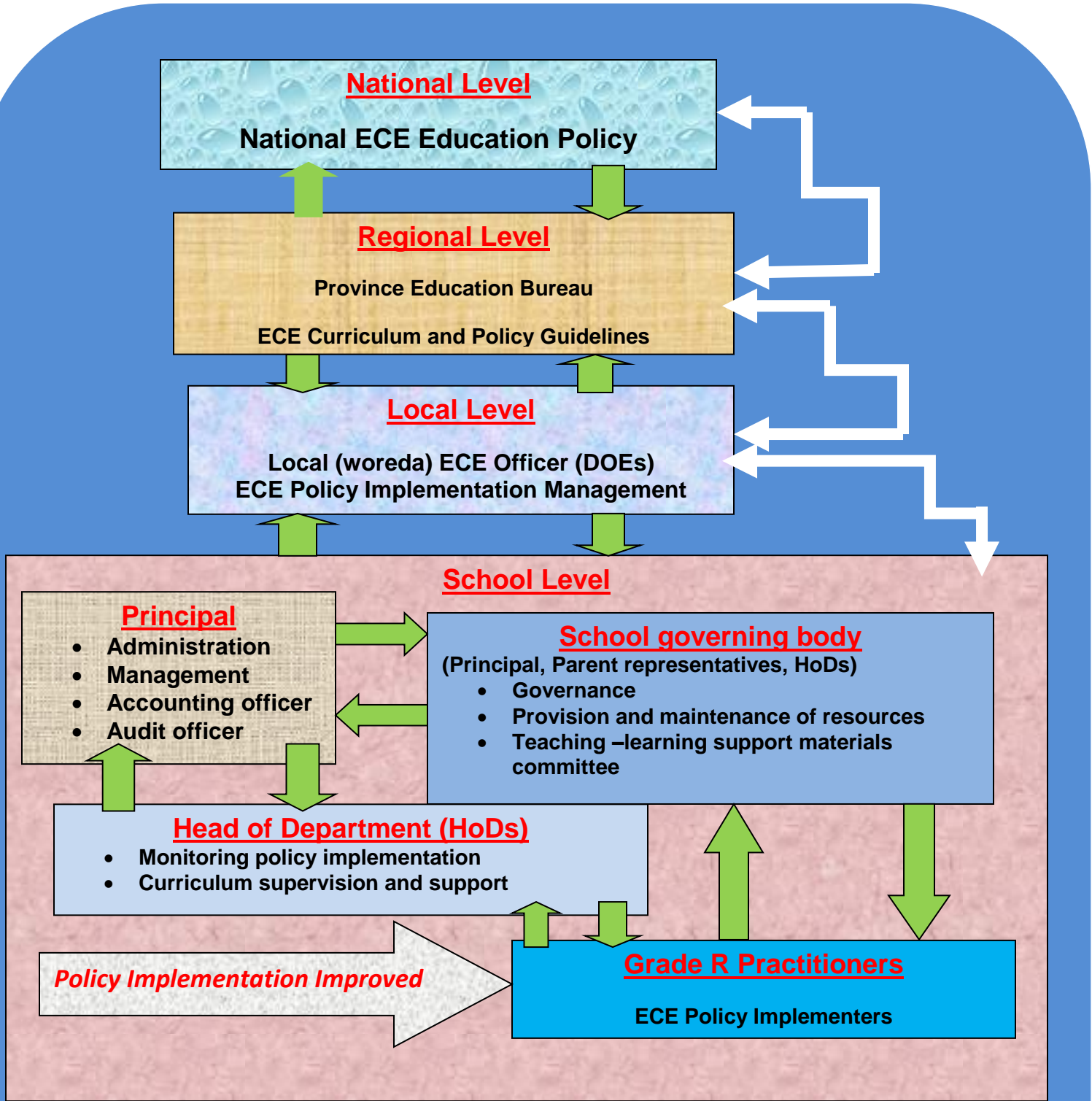


Figure 6-1: A proposed B.B. Aberra (2020) Interaction Model of Policy Implementation.



#### **6.4.1. Explanation of the model/ structure**

Policy implementation theories discussed in chapter three, section 3.2.3.1 are the pillars that supported the conception of the concept 'Interaction model of policy implementation'. The structure represents all the role players in Grade R which the researcher has drawn from its (transformational theory) functions in support of the proposed model. The proposed model is based on a transformational theory which is a collaborative leadership style where the leaders and the workers have shared values, beliefs and attitudes that assist them to easily interact and work towards a common aim of an organisation (Owen, 2000:122-143). The blocks in the model represent all the role players (Stakeholders) and their functions towards supporting practitioners to improve the success of ECE policy implementation. The connection of each role player to the other is represented by arrows, which indicate collaborative management among role players.

#### **6.4.2. Collaborative management theory**

In this model, collaborative management means joint management in which all role players take part in an activity through active participation with common aims. A school can be thought of as a system or organisation composed of different partners that work in a cooperative manner to achieve a common goal. Each member as part of the school system needs to know and understand her/his roles to function effectively. All members must work collaboratively to make the school successful. This means it is the interaction within the members in the school and the interaction between the school members with others outside the school that plays the greatest role in the achievement of the desired goals, in this case, policy implementation.

The results of the finding have shown a lack of collaboration between the role players. Also, the findings showed that the DEOs, HoDs and principals were not providing the necessary professional support and supervision to practitioners. It is very important that ECE supervisors and school leaders provide the necessary instructional support to the unqualified practitioners to improve the success of ECE policy implementation through the proposed interaction model of policy implementation.

There was a finding that there was no appropriate professional support and supervision and problems related to poor management of Grade R classes is due to a lack of collaboration among different role players. The supervision and support that can be provided by the school management team (HoDs and principals) are related to the proposed interaction model of policy implementation in which interaction among the role players is crucial and is described next.

### **6.4.3. Interaction theory**

In this proposed interaction model of policy implementation, the term “interaction” refers to an interchange of ideas, feelings or experiences among role players that helps to accomplish tasks. Interaction among role players shows a fundamental role in this proposed model and is explained next.

In this study, different role players consisted of practitioners, HoDs, principals, DEOs and policy experts. These different role players have to interact regularly to achieve good results. According to this model, role players have to interact in three different ways as indicated in figure 6 -1. This means the interaction analysis involves three processes. The first is known as **within interaction** -the interaction in which practitioners interact with each other (internal) to share experiences, ideas and feelings. The second is known as **between interaction** - the interaction in which practitioners interact with other (external) role players such as HoDs and principals. The third one is known as **total interaction** - the ones in which practitioners interact with themselves as well as other role players. In figure 6 -1, the straight arrows represent within interactions, the elbow arrows represent between interactions where both arrows represent total interactions.

In figure 6 -1, the different role players have represented blocks and include those who are at the national level-government bodies of countrywide, regional level-government bodies at district level local level–administrators at the local (woreda) level (woreda is the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia) and school level. At the school level, there are four role players: i) the principal-head teacher who lead, coordinate and collaborate with other role players such as teachers, parents and other community agencies ii)

school governing body– a committee with members principal, parent representative, HoD, teacher representative and responsible for administering the school, iii) HoD – a teacher assigned to coordinate activities of a department and iv) practitioners -teachers who are ECE policy implementers.

The finding that there was no collaboration among role players can be attributed to two factors: i) due to lack of appropriate interaction between practitioners and the school team comprising the HoDs, principals, teachers and others and ii) due to lack of organisational structure that allows them to do so. The proposed interaction theory of policy implementation is aimed at the development of healthy interactions in a social organisational context such as school leading to the formation of positive relationships among different role players to improve the achievement of the aims of ECE policy.

Both practitioners and external role-players (HoDs, principals, DEOs and policy experts) have to interact on regular basis to discuss relevant issues and problems about the Grade R programmes for effective implementation of the ECE policy. The achievement of ECE policy implementation is also linked to the good communication between the role players in the school system. Currently, an individual's communication skills play a central role in interacting with others at the workplace (Ramah & Singh 2011: 21-31). Therefore, communication among role players plays an important role in this proposed support structure.

#### **6.4.4. Communication theory**

The development of individuals in any profession largely depends on their skill to effectively communicate with others such as peers, superiors as well as subordinates. Communication can play the following main roles in the implementation of ECE policy at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia: transmission of information, controlling function, motivating function and emotional expression.

**Transmission of information:** communication has the purpose of enabling practitioners to facilitate knowledge, decision making and solving problems. Sufficient and effective communication enables the reception and transmission of information among different role players in an organisation.

**Control function:** refers to the power of communication to influence people's behaviour. Communication serves the purpose of changing the mind, attitudes and beliefs of others and having an impact on the culture of the organisation. It also deals with whether the workers comply with organisational rules and procedures such as adherence to job description or communication of grievances to the immediate leader.

**Motivation function:** refers to the fostering of stimulating spirit across the organisation. Effective communication enables three major functions in the organisation notably setting and defining goals, providing feedback on progress made and reinforcing the desired behaviours.

**Emotional expression:** refers to transforming out internal feelings in the form of movements, sounds, rhythms or actions in general. Formally, emotional expression occurs in the form of a conversation between people.

Based on the findings of this research, communication is one-sided, only focusing on providing feedback in the form of an announcement from the meetings attended. Besides, teachers were unable to carry out daily routine activities indicating that they lack knowledge about Grade R practices. This suggests that practitioners should know Grade R practices and policy. The communication should also be two-sided (both from top and bottom indicated by double arrows one pointing up and the other down) so that role players interact actively. The arrows in the structure indicate an interaction between role players and information flow should be both downwards and upwards and across R.

### **6.5. Recommendations on the function of role players**

According to Choudhury (2002:90-92), ECE has a paramount benefit to assure the child's smooth transition into primary education. It is also a critical stage to the child's overall development, influencing both social skills and behavioural choices. Therefore, based on the findings in chapter 5, I present the following recommendations to improve the success of the implementation of ECE policy at school-based Grade R classes of the Southern region of Ethiopia.

### **6.5.1. Practitioners**

The success of ECE policy implementation in Grade R would be endorsed by practitioners who are good at implementing curriculum, managing the classroom effectively and carrying out daily routine activities properly and using the correct teaching methodology. According to the Ethiopian ECE policy, practitioners should prepare a daily lesson plan and teaching aids, organise the classroom into different areas as required and teach various subjects using integrated approaches. Also, they should be ready to receive professional support and supervision from all the role players involved.

### **6.5.2. Principals and HoDs**

Both principals and HoDs should know the Grade R curriculum and policy. Communication in the system should be flowing downwards, upwards and across so that there is an active interaction among all role players. The HoD's plan should include internal workshops for practitioners to address the gaps they have identified. The principals together with the HoDs should integrate Grade R into the primary grade school system to avoid the exclusion of practitioners of Grade R working in isolation. Thus, practitioners as part of the schooling system should be embraced, guided and supported to promote successful implementation of the ECE policy of Ethiopia.

### **6.5.3. District education officers (DEOs)**

At the district/local level, there should be collaboration between the officials in support of the Grade R. The district education office should organise sessions where the above role players will work together to address Grade R policy issues about the implementation of programmes, the standards that need to be met, provision of resources and curriculum support and monitoring. There should be platforms where reports are shared so that the challenges are noted and addressed. Also, the district, through the infrastructure building management committee, should make sure that correct infrastructure is in place before registration of a site could be approved to avoid accommodating learners in storerooms or libraries which do not have space for classroom layout. Besides, the district should organise sessions or workshops for

parents to give them awareness workshop about Grade R so that they understand their needs and can be able to, sometimes, volunteer their services to assist where there is a need.

#### **6.5.4. Policy experts**

The policy experts at the regional level should note all the gaps identified by the findings of this study including the knowledge deficit of Grade R practitioners, lack of support and supervision to practitioners. Then, they should make an impact assessment to make the necessary adjustments to fill in the gaps identified and improve the success of ECE policy implementation in Grade R.

#### **6.6. Recommendations for further study**

ECE policy implementation in Ethiopia requires qualified teachers who have adequate knowledge and skills to correctly carry out daily routine activities as expected, arrange the classroom correctly into different learning areas, able to use the appropriate methods to teach by integrating various subjects in a Grade R classroom. However, this study revealed that practitioners lack all these qualities. Therefore, further research could be conducted to establish the following:

- 1) The impact of quality training of practitioners on ECE policy implementation.
- 2) The relationship between ECE policy implementation and quality training of practitioners.
- 3) The relationship between ECE policy implementation and teaching methodology.

Also, the ECE policy of Ethiopia requires collaboration and teamwork among different role players in ECE programmes. However, this study confirmed that HoDs, principals and DEOs were unable to provide the necessary support and supervision to their practitioners. The study identified the following as factors that impede ECE policy implementation in Ethiopia: lack of policy guidelines, standards and common curriculum, unavailability of school facilities and resources, lack of qualified teachers, teamwork among partners, supervision, awareness about the significance of ECE and training institutions. Therefore, the following could be topics for further research:

- 1) The effect of collaboration and teamwork among role players in ECE programmes on ECE policy implementation.
- 2) The success of ECE policy implementation with the presence of policy guidelines, school facilities and resources.
- 3) The effect of community awareness about the importance of ECE programmes on ECE policy implementation.

## **6.7. Chapter conclusion**

The awareness that there might be problems with ECE policy implementation at schools of Grade R motivated me to investigate the problem. The problem was prevalent in the research area and that raised questions about the implementation of ECE policy in Grade R classes. The question that came to the fore is:

In what way is the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994:14) implemented at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia?

This study aims to establish the nature of ECE policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.

To answer the research question, the descriptive qualitative research design was used to investigate the problem. From classroom observations and interviews with teachers, HoDs and principals, challenges related to policy implementation were noted. Therefore, I maintain that the research question has been answered. In the same way, I contend that the aim of the study was realised. The analysis of the outcome of this investigation established that the latter role players did not perform their duties as stipulated by the policy. To promote the successful implementation of the ECE government policy, I proposed an “Interaction Model of Policy Implementation” that could ensure its successful implementation.

## Appendices



### Appendix – 1: Observation Schedule

<b>Policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes in the districts of the Southern nations, nationalities, and peoples region of Ethiopia</b>		
<b>A: What was observed</b>	<b>B: Questions guiding the observation</b>	<b>C: Rationale behind what was observed</b>
1. Routine activities in the daily programme	Are activities in the daily programme in line with policy objectives? Is there adequate care and support for the development of a variety of skills	Every routine activity in the daily programme is important and practitioners need to supervise and guide all the integrated activities. They also have to take note of the teachable moments that arise during free play. Education policy in Ethiopia stipulates that sufficient care and support for young children. It was, therefore, important to establish if schools adhered to this policy.
2. Planning and preparation of the lesson.	Has the practitioner developed their lesson plan from the lesson plan provided by the DEO? Are policy documents available?	Although practitioners are provided with lesson plans, it is very important that they also have a separate plan to familiarise themselves with the policy content and to know which relevant resources they should prepare in advance as well as contextualising the lesson plan for the successful implementation of the preschool policy.
3. Classroom arrangement and use of resources	Are there relevant resources displayed and used on the Theme table? Are the resources labelled as required?	Relevant resources to the theme must be displayed and labelled since the learners are still learning at a concrete level. The education policy of Ethiopia proclaims that children at the early childhood level should be provided with various learning aids and resources. It was thus important for teachers to stick to this policy while teaching in the classroom.
	Are the indoor and outdoor areas arranged accordingly, resourced and well maintained?	A stimulating environment will enable spontaneous and safe discovery or investigation for young children since they have a natural desire to explore their world. The experiences from the preschool policy of other countries indicate the need for adequate indoor and outdoor areas to promote young children’s learning. Therefore, The preschool policy of Ethiopia needs to adapt this experience to the Ethiopian context.



**Appendix–2: Individual interview schedule for preschool teachers**

In this qualitative interview, I conducted a face-to-face-individual interview with preschool teachers. An interview schedule for asking questions and recording answers during the interview comprises the following components as suggested by Creswell (2009). The purpose of asking teachers general questions is to obtain information regarding general characteristics such as type of preschool, gender, level of qualification, and amount of experience teachers have that may affect ECE policy implementation.

**Part I: General Information**

1. Your Full Name \_\_\_\_\_(Teachers are be labelled as practitioner A, B, C, D, E, F, and schools are labelled as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6 and the interviewer use these codes as their names, name of the preschool and type of preschool while interviewing them).

2. Name of the preschool\_\_\_\_\_

3. Type of your preschool\_\_\_\_\_ Public/Private/NGO

4. Gender: Male  Female

5. Educational qualification

Certificate

MA/ MSc

Diploma

MD/PhD

BA/BSC

Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Year/s of service at the preschool\_\_\_\_\_

<b>Individual interview questions for preschool teachers</b>	
<b>Individual interview questions</b>	<b>Rational behind the question</b>
1. How were you trained to implement ECE policy?	The type of training received by teachers affects the implementation of the preschool policy. This question was therefore asked to obtain information about how teachers are trained and suggest the best way to promote the successful implementation of preschool policy
2. Which resources were allocated to you to implement the ECE policy?	Resources both human (knowledge & skill) and material (equipment & finance) are one of the key pillars that enable education policy implementation successful. Therefore, this question was asked to identify the types of resources in place and propose the resources that are not in place to make the preschool policy implementation effective.
3. What are the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of ECE programmes in your context?	Challenges to implementing education policy are hindering factors for effective implementation which are usually inherent in any policy implementation context. Thus, this question is asked to discern the impeding factors for the effective implementation of the preschool policy.
4. What strategies can be regarded as the best practice and opportunities in the classroom to strengthen preschool policy implementation?	There are policy implementation practices that are peculiar to a certain context. The purpose of this question is therefore to identify the best practices in the Ethiopian context and suggest strategies that can best promote preschool policy implementation.
5. How was professional support such as supervision provided to you helping you to implement ECE policy?	Research results indicate that the properly provided professional support such as in the areas of supervision and management to less experienced teachers enable them to improve their performance. The purpose of this question was therefore to discern the professional support provided to teachers by experienced and higher officials and professionals and propose the best strategy to provide such support to teachers.

**Appendix–3: Individual interview schedule for principals**

In this qualitative interview, I conducted a face-to-face individual interview with preschool principals. An interview schedule for asking questions and recording answers during the interview comprises interview questions and general information components as suggested by Creswell (2009:183). The purpose of asking general questions is to obtain information on general characteristics such as type of preschool, gender, level of qualification, and amount of experience principals have that may affect ECE policy implementation.

**Part I: General information**

1. Your full name \_\_\_\_\_ ( Principals are labelled as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6,and schools as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, and the interviewer use these codes as their names, name of their preschool while interviewing them to keep their identity confidential).

2. Name of the preschool \_\_\_\_\_

3. Type of your preschool \_\_\_\_\_ Public/Private/NGO

4. Gender: Male  Female

5. Educational qualification

Certificate  MA/ MSc

Diploma  MD/PhD

BA/BSC

Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Year/s of service at the preschool \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Individual interview questions for preschool principals</b>	
<b>Individual interview questions</b>	<b>Rational behind the question</b>
1. How were resources allocated to your school to implement ECE policy?	The presence of knowledgeable and skillful human resources as well as adequate equipment and finance in preschools plays a key role in the effective implementation of the preschool policy. The intention of this question is, therefore, to identify how resources are allocated to schools in the Ethiopian context and propose the best way to endorse the effective implementation of the preschool policy.
2. How did you prepare your Grade R teachers to implement the ECE policy?	The way principals prepare preschool teachers entails supporting teachers by providing the necessary teaching-learning classrooms, play equipment and organise provisional supervision and training for those who need it to promote effective implementation of the preschool policy. The intention of this question is to find out the practice of principals in preparing their teachers to implement preschool policy and propose ways to fill in gaps in teachers' practice.
3. What are your views about the implementation of ECE policy?	The principals' views about preschool policy implementation can affect preschool policy implementation. This is because principals have their values and expectations as human beings. Therefore this question is aimed at discerning principals' views that might affect managing their school teachers in particular and preschool policy implementation in general.
4. How was the ECE policy communicated and monitored to implement it in your school?	The mechanism through which policy is communicated and managed plays an important role in transmitting information about policy among different partners who implement it. The purpose of this question was therefore to discern the ways through which preschool policy in the Ethiopian context is communicated and managed and suggest ways through which it is effectively communicated to facilitate effective implementation of the policy.
5. How was technology (such as computer and ICT) utilised in your school to implement ECE policy?	The use of ICT, a modern mode of instruction in early education has paramount importance in implementing preschool policy because it promotes programmed instruction through the use of computers in instruction. Thus, the purpose of this question was to assess the use of ICT if any in preschools of Ethiopia.

**Appendix – 4: Individual interview schedule for policy experts**

In this qualitative interview, I conducted a face-to-face individual interview with preschool policy experts. An interview schedule for asking questions and recording answers during the interview comprises the interview questions and general information as suggested by Creswell (2009:183). The purpose of asking general questions is to obtain information regarding general characteristics such as gender, level of qualification, and amount of experience as policy experts they have that may be related to ECE policy implementation.

**Part I: General information**

1. Your full name \_\_\_\_\_ (Policy experts are labelled as PE1 and PE2 and schools as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6. The interviewer uses these codes as their names and name of their preschool while interviewing them to keep their identity confidential).

2. Gender: Male  Female

3. Educational qualification

Certificate  MA/ MSc

Diploma  MD/PhD

BA/BSC

Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Year/s of service as policy expert in year \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Individual interview questions for policy experts</b>	
<b>Individual interview questions</b>	<b>Rational behind the question</b>
1 How is the ECE policy designed?	The process through which policy is initiated and formulated, for instance, the steps through which it is formulated, the partners who are involved in formulating it, the extent of the agreement upon the policy by different partners all affect its implementation. The purpose of this question was therefore to detect how preschool policy is designed in the Ethiopian context and propose the working strategy.
2. What does the ECE policy aim to achieve?	The aim of policy greatly affects its implementation because every method and process is geared towards its achievement. The purpose of this question was therefore to identify the aim of preschool policy in Ethiopia and recommend accordingly the possible ways that facilitates its effective implementation.
3. How do you evaluate the major aspects of the ECE policy as designed by the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia? (TGE, 1994:7)?	There are some standards for a particular preschool policy to be functional in its implementation. For instance, it should have clear and logically consistent objectives; it should have a clear implementation structure and have committed skillful implementing officials among others. Therefore, this question was intended to determine whether the preschool policy of Ethiopia entails these sufficient conditions for its effective implementation.
4. How do you evaluate the ECE policy of Ethiopia in terms of its contents and contextual (situational, structural, cultural and international) factors that affect its implementation?	The main components of education policy include contents, contextual factors, actors (partners) and processes that significantly affect its implementation. Therefore, this question was asked to discern and check whether the preschool policy of Ethiopia entails these major components for its effective implementation
5. How is the policy to be implemented?	There are logical steps through which a given policy is implemented. For instance, the following are the suggested steps: i) first the policy should be communicated to the implementers so that a clear understanding & agreement is made on its objectives, ii) second, tasks are fully specified in the correct sequence, iii) third, adequate time and resources are available, iv) communication and coordination are perfect. The purpose of this question was therefore to stipulate through what steps preschool policy in Ethiopia is implemented and suggest possible ways to improve its implementation.

**Appendix – 5: Focus group interview schedule**

In this qualitative interview, I conducted three focus group interviews at the centre of each district with eight members (two department heads, two district education officers and four parent representatives (two from each preschool).An interview schedule for asking questions and recording answers during the interview comprises the interview questions and general information as suggested by Creswell (2009:183). The purpose of asking general questions is to obtain information regarding general characteristics such as gender, level of qualification, and amount of experience of each member of the focus group they have that may influence ECE policy implementation.

**Part I: General information**

1. Your full name \_\_\_\_\_( Department heads are labelled as D1 and D2, district education officers as DEO1 and DEO2, parent representatives as PR1, PR2, PR3 & PR4, and schools as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6. The interviewer uses these codes as their names and name of their preschool while interviewing them to keep their identity confidential).

2. Gender: Male  Female

3. Educational qualification

Certificate  MA/ MSc

Diploma  MD/PhD

BA/BSC

Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Year/s of service as department head//district education officer/parent representative

<b>Focus group interview questions</b>	
<b>Focus group interview questions</b>	<b>Rational behind each question</b>
1. How do you evaluate the participation of parents in ECE policy implementation?	The participation of department heads, district education officers and parents plays a major role to make preschool programmes successful through understanding and assisting their children. The purpose of this question was therefore to discern the extent of participation of the focus group in preschool programmes in Ethiopia and recommend strategies to promote the focus groups participation in preschool programmes.
2. How do you evaluate the management of ECE programmes in ECE policy implementation?	The management of school programmes by management bodies (principals and district education officers) plays a decisive role in the implementation of the preschool policy. The purpose of this question was therefore to assess the management of school programmes and suggest the best strategies that can facilitate effective implementation.
3. How do you evaluate the role of district education department officers, department heads, and parents in promoting ECE policy implementation?	The purpose of this question was to assess the actual practice of the focus group members (i.e., department heads, district education department heads, and parents) in terms of their roles to be played by these groups as envisaged in the preschool policy and recommend ways to improve the situation.
4. What cultural and contextual factors most affect ECE policy in your district?	Contextual factors (social, situational, structural, etc) and cultural factors are among the major factors that greatly affect preschool policy implementation. The purpose of this question was therefore to obtain information from the focus group and suggest strategies to promote effective implementation of the preschool policy.



**Appendix – 6: A list of artifacts**

In this qualitative document analysis, I analysed the following artefacts. The following are table presents the documents that were collected and analysed in this study

Type of document	Rational behind analysing the document
1.National ECE policy documents	The presence of an official preschool policy document specifies the due attention given to preschool education which is aimed at the all-round development of young children. The purpose of this document analysis is to discern the attention given to this important sector of education in Ethiopia which serves as an indication of the basic foundation for preschool policy implementation.
2.Minutes and agendas of staff meetings	The purpose of analysing minutes and agendas of staff meetings can serve as an indication of the extent of awareness and attention given to preschool education programmes at the school level that can facilitate a positive implementation of the preschool policy.
3. ECE policy guidelines	Policy guidelines are guiding principles that enable policy practitioners to implement the policy in the way expected. Therefore, the purpose of this analysis is to identify the existence, nature, and characteristics of the policy guidelines and suggest ways to create effective policy guidelines
4. Teachers' lesson plan preparation.	Teacher's preparation of daily lesson plans and putting them into actions in the classroom can serve an indication for the implementation of the preschool policy. Therefore, the purpose of analysing teachers daily lesson plan documents and the activities of teachers in the classroom can serve as evidence whether they properly implementing the policy or not.
5. HoDs' management plans	Analysis of HoDs' management plans can serve as evidence for the support provided by the HoDs to practitioners in the implementation of the preschool policy. The purpose of this analysis, therefore, to determine the support provided by the HoDs to practitioners.

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2019/10/16

Ref: **2019/10/16/45434360/11/MC**

Name: Mr BB Aberra

Dear Mr Aberra

Student No.: 45434360

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2019/10/16 to 2024/10/16

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mr BB Aberra  
E-mail address: biniam22birru@gmail.com  
Telephone: +251 92 563 3940

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof EM Lenyai  
E-mail address: ellenoge@gmail.com  
Telephone: +27 72 434 2560

**Title of research:**

**The implementation of preschool policy and its implications for school readiness in southern Ethiopia.**

**Qualification:** D. Ed in Psychology of Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2019/10/16 to 2024/10/16.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2019/10/16 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2024/10/16**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2019/10/16/45434360/11/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



**Prof AT Motlhabane**  
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
motlhat@unisa.ac.za



**Prof PM Sebate**  
**ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

**Appendix – 8: Template for requesting permission to conduct research**

Request form for permission to research Preschools of Southern Nations and Nationalities People Region of Ethiopia.

Title: The Implementation of Preschool Policy at School-Based Grade R Classes of Schools in the Southern Region of Ethiopia.

**Researcher's Contact Information**

Name: Biniam Birru Aberra

Department: Department of Psychology

Tel: +251925633940

Email: [biniam22birru@gmail.com](mailto:biniam22birru@gmail.com)

Dilla University

**Supervisors Contact Information**

Name: Prof EM Lenyai

Tel: +251724342560

Department: Department of Early Childhood Education

Email: [ellenoge@gmail.com](mailto:ellenoge@gmail.com)

UNISA

To: The Southern Nations Nationalities and People's Regional State Education Bureau

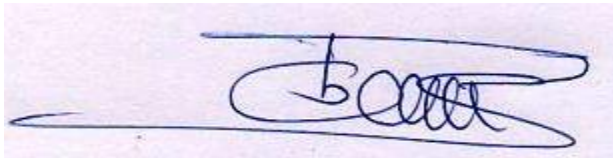
Dear sir/ Madam;

I, Biniam Birru Aberra, am researching under the supervision of Prof EM Lenyai, a research professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education towards a DEd at the University of South Africa (UNISA) on the topic entitled: *the Implementation of Preschool Policy at School-Based Grade R Classes of Schools in the Southern Region of Ethiopia*.

The purpose of this letter is to request permission from the Bureau to research the selected six preschools in three zones in the southern region of Ethiopia from October 20, 2019. The participants of this research include preschool policy practitioners at grade R classes namely, teachers, principals, department heads, parents, district education office heads, and policy experts.

The study will entail the collection of qualitative data which is important to enrich the findings. The benefits of this study will help policy makers, preschool policy practitioners and the community to render quality early childhood education for young children. The research has medium potential risks on the participants and the organization. The risks will be minimized through obtaining informed consent and assent between the researcher and the participants as well as through protecting and respecting the privacy, confidentiality, and rights of participants. The feedback of the research will be provided to the education bureau through publications, conferences and seminars.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Biniam Birru Aberra', is written over a light purple rectangular background.

Biniam Birru Aberra

**Appendix-9: Participant information sheet for teachers**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Title: The implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia**

To: Preschool teachers, principals, department heads, district education office heads and policy experts (During execution a separate letter will be prepared for each practitioner, principals, district education office heads, etc).

**Dear teacher,**

My name is Biniam Birru Abera and I am researching under the supervision of my supervisor Professor EM Lenyai, a research professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education towards a DEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *the implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia*.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

I am conducting this research to investigate how the preschool policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. The findings of this study are important in outlining strategies for strengthening the quality of early childhood education and care to benefit society at large.

**Why you are invited to participate?**

You are purposely selected to participate in this study. Your selection is based on your experience as a practitioner and exposure you have on the issue of preschool policy implementation about the contexts of your district and school. In this study, there will be a total of 38 participants.

**What is the nature of your participation in this study?**

This study involves individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation and document analysis. The main instrument of data collection for this study is the

interview. For the individual interview, a semi-structured interview will be submitted to you and you will be allowed to react on the issues indicated. This may take you nearly 50-60 minutes. For the focus group interview, the interview guide will be read to you by the researcher and you will be motivated to react to the questions raised. You will also be expected to reflect on your experiences of preschool policy implementation from your experienced perspective. This may take nearly 90 minutes. Both individual and group interviews involve videotaping to make a valid transcription. Information will also be obtained by observing one section from each preschool using an observation template. Videotaping will also be made while observing. This will take nearly 30 minutes. Evidence about policy implementation will also be obtained through document collection and analysis at various times. Data obtained through observation and documents will be used to triangulate the data obtained through interviews.

**Can you withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you have no obligation to give consent for participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason before starting responding to the interview. However, it will not be possible to withdraw once you have responded to the interviews.

**What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?**

There is no kind of material and/or financial reward because you participate in this study on an individual basis. But, at the country level, this study may contribute to the development of the country (Ethiopia) by pinpointing the challenges of preschool policy implementation and thus improve the quality of early childhood education for young children. It also contributes to the world of academia by filling the knowledge gap in the literature.

**Are there any negative consequences for you if you participate in the research?**

There will not be any kind of possible harm to the participants as the results of this study. There is no such foreseeable risk or side effects that bear on the participants.

**Will the information that you convey to the researcher and your identity be kept confidential?**

The information that you provide here as a participant, will strictly be kept confidential. You have the right to claim that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research teams will know about your involvement in this research or your name will not be appeared anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conferences and proceedings.

The data will be transcribed by the researcher himself and it is the full responsibility of the researcher to keep confidentiality. To check the reliability and validity of data, my research supervisor may have access to raw data. Your responses may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly including the transcriber and members of the research ethics review committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you permit for other people to see the records. A report of this study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group interview, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this response, I advise you not to disclose personal sensitive information in the focus group.

**How will the researcher(s) protect the security of data?**

Your responses on interviews will be stored by the researcher for five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *in the department of psychology (researcher's office)* for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Finally, the stored document will be



permanently deleted from both the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.

**Will you receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?**

There is no payment effected for participating in this research. Participating in this study will not incur your cost as well.

**Has the study received ethics approval?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the *College of Education (Unisa)* on October 16, 2019. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

**How will you be informed of the findings/results of the research?**

You must be informed of the final research findings which will be accessible at the end of 2020. You will be contacted through the following address:

Name: Biniam Birru Aberra, Mobile No: +251 925633940

E-mail: [biniam22birru@gmail.com](mailto:biniam22birru@gmail.com)

If you require any further information about any aspect of this study, please contact:

BINIAM BIRRU ABERRA Department of Psychology

Department of Psychology Dilla University, Ethiopia P. O. Box 419

The address of my supervisor is as follows: Professor EM Lenyai, [lenuaem@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lenuaem@unisa.ac.za) (e-mail) or [ellenoge@gmail.com](mailto:ellenoge@gmail.com). Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Research Ethics Review Committee in the College of Education, [motlhat@unisa.ac.za](mailto:motlhat@unisa.ac.za)

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for taking part in this study.

Best regards

UNISA university of south africa



A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background, appearing to read 'Biniam'.

Biniam Birru Aberra

**Appendix-10: Participant information sheet for principals**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Title: The implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia**

**Dear Principal,**

My name is Biniam Birru Aberra and I am researching under the supervision of my supervisor Professor EM Lenyai, a research professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education towards a DEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *the implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia*.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

I am conducting this research to investigate how the preschool policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. The findings of this study are important in outlining strategies for strengthening the quality of early childhood education and care to benefit society at large.

**Why you are invited to participate?**

You are purposely selected to participate in this study. Your selection is based on the experience exposure you have on the issue of preschool policy implementation about the contexts of your district and school. In this study there will be a total of 38 participants.

**What is the nature of your participation in this study?**

This study involves individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation and document analysis. The main instrument of data collection for this study is the interview. For the individual interview, a semi-structured interview will be submitted to you and you will be allowed to react on the issues indicated. This may take you nearly 50-60 minutes. For the focus group interview, the interview guide will be read to you by the researcher and. you will be motivated to react to the questions raised. You will also

be expected to reflect on your experiences of preschool policy implementation from your experienced perspective. This may take nearly 90 minutes. Both individual and group interviews involve videotaping to make a valid transcription. Information will also be obtained by observing one section from each preschool using an observation template. Videotaping will also be made while observing. This will take nearly 30 minutes. Evidence about policy implementation will also be obtained through document collection and analysis at various times. Data obtained through observation and documents will be used to triangulate the data obtained through interviews.

**Can you withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you have no obligation to give consent for participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason before starting responding to the interview. However, it will not be possible to withdraw once you have responded to the interviews.

**What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?**

There is no kind of material and/or financial reward because you participate in this study on an individual basis. But, at the country level, this study may contribute to the development of the country (Ethiopia) by pinpointing the challenges of preschool policy implementation in Ethiopia and thus improve the quality of early childhood education for young children. It also contributes to the world of academia by filling the knowledge gap in the literature.

**Are there any negative consequences for you if you participate in the research project?**

There will not be any kind of possible harm to the participants as the results of this study. There is no such foreseeable risk or side effects that bear on the participants.

**Will the information that you convey to the researcher and your identity be kept confidential?**

The information that you provide here as a participant, will strictly be kept confidential. You have the right to claim that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research teams will know about your involvement in this research or your name will not be appeared anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conferences and proceedings.

The data will be transcribed by the researcher himself and it is the full responsibility of the researcher to keep confidentiality. To check the reliability and validity of data, my research supervisor may have access to raw data. Your responses may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly including the transcriber and members of the research ethics review committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you permit for other people to see the records. A report of this study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**How will the researcher(s) protect the security of data?**

Your responses on interviews will be stored by the researcher for five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *in the department of psychology (researcher's office)* for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Finally, the stored document will be permanently deleted from both the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.

**Will you receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?**

There is no payment effected for participating in this research. Participating in this study will not incur your cost as well.

**Has the study received ethics approval?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the *College of Education* (Unisa) on October 16, 2019. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

**How will you be informed of the findings/results of the research?**

You must be informed of the final research findings which will be accessible at the end of 2020. You will be contacted through the following address:

Name: Biniam Birru Aberra                      Mobile phone: +251 925633940 or

E-mail: [biniam22birru@gmail.com](mailto:biniam22birru@gmail.com)

If you require any further information about any aspect of this study, please contact:

BINIAM BIRRU ABERRA                      Dilla University  
Department of Psychology              Dilla Ethiopia              P.O. Box: 419

The address of my supervisor is as follows:

Name: Professor EM Lenyai,              Email: [lenyare@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lenyare@unisa.ac.za) (e-mail) or  
[ellenoge@gmail.com](mailto:ellenoge@gmail.com)

Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Research Ethics Review Committee in the College of Education, [motlhat@unisa.ac.za](mailto:motlhat@unisa.ac.za)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study

Best regards



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Biniam', written over a light purple background.

Biniam Birru Aberra

**Appendix- 11: Participant information sheet for department heads**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**itle: The implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.**

**Dear department head,**

My name is Biniam Birru Aberra and I am researching under the supervision of my supervisor Professor EM Lenyai, a research professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education towards a DEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *the implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia*.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

I am conducting this research to investigate how the preschool policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. The findings of this study are important in outlining strategies for strengthening the quality of early childhood education and care to benefit society at large.

**Why did you invite to participate?**

You are purposely selected to participate in this study. Your selection is based on your experience exposure you have on the issue of preschool policy implementation about the contexts of your district and school. In this study, there are a total of 38 participants.

**What is the nature of your participation in this study?**

This study involves individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation and document analysis. The main instrument of data collection for this study is the interview. You are invited to participate in the focus group interview. For the focus group interview, the interview guide will be read to you by the researcher and. you will be motivated to react to the questions raised. You will also be expected to reflect on

your experiences of preschool policy implementation from your experienced perspective. This may take nearly 90 minutes. The group interviews involve videotaping to make a valid transcription. Information will also be obtained by observing one section from each preschool using an observation template. Videotaping will also be made while observing. This will take nearly 30 minutes. Evidence about policy implementation will also be obtained through document collection and analysis at various times. Data obtained through observation and documents will be used to triangulate the data obtained through interviews.

**Can you withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you have no obligation to give consent for participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason before starting responding to the interview. However, it will not be possible to withdraw once you have responded to the interviews.

**What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?**

There is no kind of material and/or financial reward because you participate in this study on an individual basis. But, at the country level, this study may contribute to the development of the country (Ethiopia) by pinpointing the challenges of preschool policy implementation in Ethiopia and thus improve the quality of early childhood education for young children. It also contributes to the world of academia by filling the knowledge gap in the literature.

**Are there any negative consequences for you if you participate in this research?**

There will not be any kind of possible harm to the participants as the results of this study. There is no such foreseeable risk or side effects that bear on the participants.

**Will the information that you convey to the researcher and your identity be kept confidential?**

The information that you provide here as a participant, will strictly be kept confidential. You have the right to claim that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no

one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research teams will know about your involvement in this research or your name will not be appeared anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conferences and proceedings.

The data will be transcribed by the researcher himself and it is the full responsibility of the researcher to keep confidentiality. To check the reliability and validity of data, my research supervisor may have access to raw data. Your responses may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly including the transcriber and members of the research ethics review committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you permit for other people to see the records. A report of this study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

+While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group interview, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this response, I advise you not to disclose personal sensitive information in the focus group.

### **How will the researcher(s) protect the security of data?**

Your responses on interviews will be stored by the researcher for five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *in the department of psychology (researcher's office)* for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Finally, the stored document will be permanently deleted from both the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.

### **Will you receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?**



There is no payment effected for participating in this research. Participating in this study will not incur your cost as well.

**Has the study received ethics approval?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the *College of Education* (Unisa) on October 16, 2019. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

**How will you be informed of the findings/results of the research?**

You must be informed of the final research findings which will be accessible at the end of 2020. You will be contacted through the following address:

Name: Biniam Birru Aberra Mobile phone: +251 925633940 or

E-mail: [biniam22birru@gmail.com](mailto:biniam22birru@gmail.com)

If you require any further information about any aspect of this study, please contact:

BINIAM BIRRU ABERRA                      Dilla University  
Department of Psychology,              Ethiopia      P. O. Box: 419

The address of my supervisor is as follows:

Name: Prof. EM Lenyai, E-mail: [lenyaem@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lenyaem@unisa.ac.za) or [ellenoge@gmail.com](mailto:ellenoge@gmail.com).

Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Research Ethics Review Committee in the College of Education, [motlhatt@unisa.ac.za](mailto:motlhatt@unisa.ac.za)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Best regards



A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Biniam Birru Aberra'.

Biniam Birru Aberra

**Appendix- 12: Participant information sheet for district education office heads**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Title: The implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.**

**Dear district education office head,**

My name is Biniam Birru Aberra and I am researching under the supervision of my supervisor Professor EM Lenyai, a research professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education towards a DEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *the implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern Region of Ethiopia*.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

I am conducting this research to investigate how the preschool policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes southern region of Ethiopia. The findings of this study are important in outlining strategies for strengthening the quality of early childhood education and care to benefit society at large.

**Why are invited to participate?**

You are purposely selected to participate in this study. Your selection is based on the experience exposure you have on the issue of preschool policy implementation about the contexts of your district. In this study, there will be a total of 38 participants.

**What is the nature of your participation in this study?**

This study involves individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation and document analysis. The main instrument of data collection for this study is the interview. You are invited to participate in the focus group interview. For the focus group interview, the interview guide will be read to you by the researcher and. you will be motivated to react to the questions raised. You will also be expected to reflect on your experiences of preschool policy implementation from your experienced

perspective. This may take nearly 90 minutes. The focus group interview involves videotaping to make a valid transcription. Information will also be obtained by observing one section from each preschool using an observation template. Videotaping will also be made while observing. This will take nearly 30 minutes. Evidence about policy implementation will also be obtained through document collection and analysis at various times. Data obtained through observation and documents will be used to triangulate the data obtained through interviews.

**Can you withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you have no obligation to give consent for participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason before starting responding to the interview. However, it will not be possible to withdraw once you have responded to the interviews.

**What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?**

There is no kind of material and/or financial reward because you participate in this study on an individual basis. But, at the country level, this study may contribute to the development of the country (Ethiopia) by pinpointing the challenges of preschool policy implementation in Ethiopia and thus improve the quality of early childhood education for young children. It also contributes to the world of academia by filling the knowledge gap in the literature.

**Are there any negative consequences for you if you participate in this research/?**

There will not be any kind of possible harm to the participants as the results of this study. There is no such foreseeable risk or side effects that bear on the participants.

**Will the information that you convey to the researcher and your identity be kept confidential?**

The information that you provide here as a participant, will strictly be kept confidential. You have the right to claim that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research teams will know

about your involvement in this research or your name will not be appeared anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conferences and proceedings.

The data will be transcribed by the researcher himself and it is the full responsibility of the researcher to keep confidentiality. To check the reliability and validity of data, my research supervisor may have access to raw data. Your responses may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly including the transcriber and members of the research ethics review committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you permit for other people to see the records. A report of this study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group interview, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this response, I advise you not to disclose personal sensitive information in the focus group.

### **How will the researcher(s) protect the security of data?**

Your responses on interviews will be stored by the researcher for five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *in the department of psychology (researcher's office)* for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Finally, the stored document will be permanently deleted from both the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.

### **Will you receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?**

There is no payment effected for participating in this research. Participating in this study will not incur your cost as well.

### **Has the study received ethics approval?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the *College of Education (Unisa)* on October 16, 2019. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

### **How will you be informed of the findings/results of the research?**

You must be informed of the final research findings which will be accessible at the end of 2020. You will be contacted through the following address:

Name: Biniam Birru Aberra Mobile no: +251 925633940

Email: [biniam22birru@gmail.com](mailto:biniam22birru@gmail.com)

If you require any further information about any aspect of this study, please contact:

BINIAM BIRRU ABERRA                      Dilla University

Department of Psychology,              Ethiopia              P. O. Box: 419

The address of my supervisor is as follows:

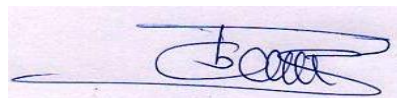
Name: Professor EM Lenyai,

Email: [lenyaem@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lenyaem@unisa.ac.za) or [ellenoge@gmail.com](mailto:ellenoge@gmail.com)

Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Research Ethics Review Committee in the College of Education, [motlhat@unisa.ac.za](mailto:motlhat@unisa.ac.za)

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for taking part in this study.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Biniam Birru Aberra'.

Biniam Birru Aberra

### **Appendix-13: Participant information sheet for parent/guardian**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Title: The implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.**

**Dear parent/guardian,**

My name is Biniam Birru Abera and I am researching under the supervision of my supervisor Professor EM Lenyai, a research professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education towards a DEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *the implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia*.

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

I am conducting this research to investigate how the preschool policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. The findings of this study are important in outlining strategies for strengthening the quality of early childhood education and care to benefit society at large.

#### **Why are you invited to participate?**

You are purposely selected to participate in this study. Your selection is based on your being a parent/ guardian of a preschool child experience and exposure you have on the issue of preschool policy implementation about the contexts of your school. In this study, there will be a total of 38 participants.

#### **What is the nature of your participation in this study?**

This study involves individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation and document analysis. The main instrument of data collection for this study is the interview. You are invited to participate in a focus group interview. For the focus group interview, the interview guide will be read to you by the researcher and. you will be

motivated to react to the questions raised. You will also be expected to reflect on your experiences of preschool policy implementation from your experienced perspective. This may take nearly 90 minutes. The focus group interviews involve videotaping to make a valid transcription. Information will also be obtained by observing one section from each preschool using an observation template. Videotaping will also be made while observing. This will take nearly 30 minutes. Evidence about policy implementation will also be obtained through document collection and analysis at various times. Data obtained through observation and documents will be used to triangulate the data obtained through interviews.

**Can you withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you have no obligation to give consent for participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason before starting responding to the interview. However, it will not be possible to withdraw once you have responded to the interviews.

**What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?**

There is no kind of material and/or financial reward because you participate in this study on an individual basis. But, at the country level, this study may contribute to the development of the country (Ethiopia) by pinpointing the challenges of preschool policy implementation in Ethiopia and thus improve the quality of early childhood education for young children. It also contributes to the world of academia by filling the knowledge gap in the literature.

**Are there any negative consequences for you if you participate in this research?**

There will not be any kind of possible harm to the participants as the results of this study. There is no such foreseeable risk or side effects that bear on the participants.

**Will the information that you convey to the researcher and your identity be kept confidential?**

The information that you provide here as a participant, will strictly be kept confidential. You have the right to claim that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research teams will know about your involvement in this research or your name will not be appeared anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conferences and proceedings.

The data will be transcribed by the researcher himself and it is the full responsibility of the researcher to keep confidentiality. To check the reliability and validity of data, my research supervisor may have access to raw data. Your responses may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly including the transcriber and members of the research ethics review committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you permit for other people to see the records. A report of this study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group interview, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this response, I advise you not to disclose personal sensitive information in the focus group.

### **How will the researcher(s) protect the security of data?**

Your responses on interviews will be stored by the researcher for five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *in the department of psychology (researcher's office)* for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Finally, the stored document will be permanently deleted from both the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.



### **Will you receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?**

There is no payment effected for participating in this research. Participating in this study will not incur your cost as well.

### **Has the study received ethics approval?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the *College of Education* (Unisa) on October 16, 2019. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

### **How will you be informed of the findings/results of the research?**

You must be informed of the final research findings which will be accessible at the end of 2020. You will be contacted through the following address:

Name: Biniam Birru Aberra, Mobile number: +251 925633940 or

Email: [biniam22birru@gmail.com](mailto:biniam22birru@gmail.com)

If you require any further information about any aspect of this study, please contact:

BINIAM BIRRU ABERRA                      Dilla University  
Department of Psychology              Dilla, Ethiopia              P.O. Box: 419

The address of my supervisor is as follows:

Name: Professor EM Lenyai, E-mail: [lenyaem@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lenyaem@unisa.ac.za) or [ellenoge@gmail.com](mailto:ellenoge@gmail.com)

Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Research Ethics Review Committee in the College of Education, [motlhat@unisa.ac.za](mailto:motlhat@unisa.ac.za)

Thank you for reading this information sheet and taking part in this study

**Best regards**



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Biniam', written over a light-colored background.

Biniam Birru Aberra

**Appendix- 14: Participant information sheet for policy experts**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Title: The implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.**

**Dear policy expert,**

My name is Biniam Birrub Aberra and I am researching under the supervision of my supervisor Professor EM Lenyai, a research professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education towards a DEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *the implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia*.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

I am conducting this research to investigate how the preschool policy is implemented at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. The findings of this study are important in outlining strategies for strengthening the quality of early childhood education and care to benefit society at large.

**Why are you invited to participate?**

You are purposely selected to participate in this study. Your selection is based on your being a parent/ guardian of a preschool child experience and exposure you have on the issue of preschool policy implementation about the contexts of your school. In this study, there will be a total of 38 participants.

**What is the nature of your participation in this study?**

This study involves individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation and document analysis. The main instrument of data collection for this study is the interview. You are invited to participate in a focus group interview. For the focus group interview, the interview guide will be read to you by the researcher and. you will be motivated to react to the questions raised. You will also be expected to reflect on your

experiences of preschool policy implementation from your experienced perspective. This may take nearly 90 minutes. The focus group interviews involve videotaping to make a valid transcription. Information will also be obtained by observing one section from each preschool using an observation template. Videotaping will also be made while observing. This will take nearly 30 minutes. Evidence about policy implementation will also be obtained through document collection and analysis at various times. Data obtained through observation and documents will be used to triangulate the data obtained through interviews.

**Can you withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you have no obligation to give consent for participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason before starting responding to the interview. However, it will not be possible to withdraw once you have responded to the interviews.

**What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?**

There is no kind of material and/or financial reward because you participate in this study on an individual basis. But, at the country level, this study may contribute to the development of the country (Ethiopia) by pinpointing the challenges of preschool policy implementation in Ethiopia and thus improve the quality of early childhood education for young children. It also contributes to the world of academia by filling the knowledge gap in the literature.

**Are there any negative consequences for you if you participate in the research?**

There will not be any kind of possible harm to the participants as the results of this study. There is no such foreseeable risk or side effects that bear on the participants.

**Will the information that you convey to the researcher and your identity be kept confidential?**

The information that you provide here as a participant, will strictly be kept confidential. You have the right to claim that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no

one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research teams will know about your involvement in this research or your name will not be appeared anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conferences and proceedings.

The data will be transcribed by the researcher himself and it is the full responsibility of the researcher to keep confidentiality. To check the reliability and validity of data, my research supervisor may have access to raw data. Your responses may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly including the transcriber and members of the research ethics review committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you permit for other people to see the records. A report of this study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group interview, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this response, I advise you not to disclose personal sensitive information in the focus group.

**How will the researcher(s) protect the security of data?**

Your responses on interviews will be stored by the researcher for five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet *in the department of psychology (researcher's office)* for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Finally, the stored document will be permanently deleted from both the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.

**Will you receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?**

There is no payment effected for participating in this research. Participating in this study will not incur your cost as well.

### **Has the study received ethics approval?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the *College of Education* (Unisa) on October 16, 2019. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

### **How will you be informed of the findings/results of the research?**

You must be informed of the final research findings which will be accessible at the end of 2020. You will be contacted through the following address:

Name: Biniam Birru Aberra mobile No: +251 925633940 or

Email: [biniam22birru@gmail.com](mailto:biniam22birru@gmail.com)

If you require any further information about any aspect of this study, please contact:

BINIAM BIRRU ABERRA                      Dilla University  
Department of Psychology              Dilla Ethiopia              P.O. Box: 419

The address of my supervisor is as follows:

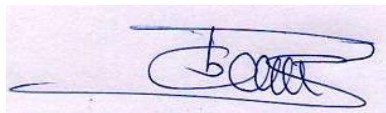
Name: Professor EM Lenyai, E-mail: [lenyaem@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lenyaem@unisa.ac.za) / [ellenoge@gmail.com](mailto:ellenoge@gmail.com).

Alternatively, contact the research ethics chairperson of the Research Ethics Review Committee in the College of Education, [motlhat@unisa.ac.za](mailto:motlhat@unisa.ac.za)

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for taking part in this study.

Best regards

UNISA |  university of south africa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Biniam Birru Aberra'.

Biniam Birru Aberra

**Appendix- 15: A letter requesting parental assent for minors to participate in a research project.**

**Dear parent/guardian**

Your child\_\_\_\_\_ (name of child) is invited to participate in a study entitled *the Implementation of preschool policy at school-based Grade R classes of schools in the southern region of Ethiopia.*

I am undertaking this study as part of my doctoral research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to investigate the nature of preschool policy implementation at school-based Grade R classes in the southern region of Ethiopia. I am asking permission to include your child in this study because I planned to make audio/video recordings during a classroom observation. I expect to have more other children participating in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her permission to take part in creating and taking audio-video recording during a classroom observation. The purpose of creating audio-video recording is to analyze the nature of classroom conditions and interactions of the teacher and learners.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this observation that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her images/pictures will never be used for other purposes and not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only. There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will receive no direct benefit for participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are to improve the quality of early childhood education and care of young children. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not

affect him/her in any way. Similarly, you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The observation will take place during regular classroom activities from October 20, 2019, up to November 2019 with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher. In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the classroom observation and you and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter (If your child is unable to give assent, you will also sign on the behalf of your child). If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password-locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

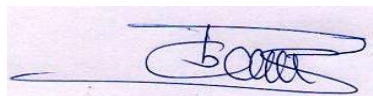
If you have questions about this study please ask me or my study supervisor, Professor EM Lenyai, Department of Early Childhood Education, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is +251925633940 and my e-mail is [biniam22birru@gmail.com](mailto:biniam22birru@gmail.com). The e-mail of my supervisor is [lenyaem@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lenyaem@unisa.ac.za) (e-mail) or [ellenoge@gmail.com](mailto:ellenoge@gmail.com). Permission to undertake this study has been granted by the institute of education and behavioural sciences (Dilla University) and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

You are deciding allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the classroom observation. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's name                      Parent/guardian's signature:                      Date

Biniam Birru Aberra  
Researcher's name (print)



Researcher's signature

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