

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN SERENJE DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

**BY**

**BRIAN MALAMA CHEWE**

**A Dissertation Submitted to Chalimbana University in Partial Fulfillment of the Research  
Requirement for the award of the Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education.**

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**CHALIMBANA UNIVERSITY**

**LUSAKA**

**2023**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to the hard working family behind this success. My ever loving mother Queen Chombela Chewe who endeavoured throughout her life to up-bring me to where I am today, my lovely wife Audrey Nseluka Chewe who sacrificed her time and resources towards my academic achievement, my sons for being cheerful and allowed me space to work when they most needed me. Your patience has built this piece of writing.

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**AUTHOR’S DECLARATION**

I, Brian Malama Chewe do hereby declare that ‘Teachers’ Perceptions on the Integrated Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Serenje District of Zambia’ is my own piece of writing. All the works of other persons cited have been dully acknowledged and that this work has never been submitted or presented for any degree at any University for similar purposes.

Signature of author: .....

Date: .....

Signature of supervisor: .....

Date: .....

## **APPROVAL**

The Chalimbana University approves the dissertation by Brian Malama Chewe as a fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the degree of Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje District of Zambia. The objectives of the study were to: Explore the early childhood teachers' views about planning integrated curriculum in Early Childhood Education Centers; identify the challenges faced by early childhood teachers regarding integrated curriculum planning and establish the practices Early Childhood teachers can adopt to implement planning of the integrated curriculum in Early Childhood Education centers in primary schools of Serenje district. The study used a phenomenological design. The sample size was twelve respondents. Five respondents were ECE teachers from five primary schools; three were Resource Center Coordinators (RCC) from Provincial Resource Center while other two were Senior Education Officers (SEO) from Early Childhood Education Directorate and two officers from Collaborating Partners (CP) VVOB. The Study used convenient sampling to select participants. Interviews, classroom observations and document analysis were used to collect data that was analysed thematically. The study found that ministry of education curriculum policy for early childhood education did not support teacher perceptions on integrated curriculum varied among early childhood teachers, early childhood teachers positively perceived integrated curriculum, curriculum integration and teachers used integrated curriculum as an alternative to facilitate holistic learner development. The teachers faced challenges that included use of standalone subject syllabus; use of standalone scheme of work and inconsistency on what integration was based among others. Strategies that ECE teachers could adopt included collaboration during planning; integrated curriculum models to be used in structuring integrated lesson plans and use of puzzles, discussion, role play to implement learning through play approach in lessons. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education and its stakeholders work together to revise provisions of the early childhood pedagogical policy guidelines so that it reflects integrated approaches in order to efficiently facilitate the holistic learning through play process of early childhood learners. The Ministry of Education (MoE) to identify one model from among the ten integrated models by Fogarty (1991) to facilitate implementation of integrated approaches in ECE centers.

**Key words:** *integrated approach, integrated curriculum, perception*



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, theoretical framework, conceptual framework and definition of operational terms.

### 1.2 Background to the Study

Every educational system's foundation is its curriculum, but the difficulty of "how" to implement it undermines education quality, prevents the adoption of successful curricula, and makes educational innovations less likely to achieve their intended objectives (Karakus, 2021). The Ministry of Education (MOE) described the difficulty of curriculum implementation in numerous research-based reports (Ministry of Education, 2020). Research studies indicate that African nations have not lagged behind in discussing issues of curriculum development, implementation, and transformation. This was because of the complexity of curriculum, which led to curriculum undergoing vigorous transformation to suit the changing times and a resurgence of curriculum debates occurring over the past decades and in recent times (Vinz, 2022). For instance, scholarly studies showed that prior to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, there were several major education reforms to improve the education system in the country; however, these reforms did not yield the anticipated results, which led to the establishment of the Nziramasanga Commission also known as the 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET). The commission recommended the attachment of Early Childhood Development (ECD) classes to existing primary schools (Muzembe, 2021).

Comparably, in Zambia, curriculum development, implementation and transformation were demonstrated by a number of educational reforms from the post-independence era, such as Education Reform 1977, Focus on learning 1992, and Educating Our Future 1996, from which many recent educational reforms and implementation strategies had been derived (Kalinde,

2021). These recent implementation strategies included, among others, the current curriculum implementation strategies (MOE, 2021).

It was clear that Zambia's status quo was not immune to the Early Childhood Education (ECE) challenges that were present across all of Africa, including a lack of clear policy governing the provision of ECE services and inconsistent and dispersed ECE practices (Kalinde, 2021). Challenges in the planning and implementation process for college lecturers and ECE classroom teachers were highlighted in stakeholder meetings held with the ministry of education. These challenges included a variety of lesson plan formats for both colleges and ECE classroom teachers; unclear integrated lesson plans; omission of outcomes on the lesson plans and undirected activities in the lesson (MOE, 2020).

The Zambian Ministry of Education made the following efforts to demonstrate the need for curriculum changes and raise targets for quality education in ECE: revised the curriculum in 2013; reviewed and standardized the country's Early Childhood Education (ECE) provision by offering a national curriculum that focuses on the child's overall development and competence – based; a stronger partnership between ECE stakeholders and a transfer of ECE from the ministry of Local Government, where it was dormant, to the Ministry of General Education (MOGE) made ECE a mainstream component of education (MOE, 2021; MOE, 2020; Matafwali, 2013).

An integrated curriculum implied learning that was synthesised across traditional subject areas and learning experiences that were designed to be mutually reinforcing. Research also suggests that an integrated approach to learning was compatible with the way the brain functions. In another dimension, curriculum integration necessitates that the flow of knowledge be rearranged and was no longer defined by subject sequence; rather, it follows the rhythms and patterns of students' minds (Kane, 2015). The brain learns best in real-life, immersion-style, and multi-path learning. Fragmented and piecemeal presentation can forever kill the joy and love to learn (Jensen, 2016). Thus, students apply knowledge and skills within a meaningful context and not in a restricted manner as in the subject –based curriculum (Udvari-Solner and Thousand, 2016). Integrated knowledge and skills build the relationships that exist among all things. Students and teachers are encouraged to create a learning partnership working together to examine a theme from various perspectives.

The focus of this study was on the perception of ECE teachers about integrated lesson planning. This was because, based on the context of uncoordinated ECE practices (Kalinde, 2021; MOE, 2020), it was clear that practices vary among and within colleges and ECE centers country wide due to different factors and reasons unknown.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

There is an existing problem in ECE centers where lesson integration was concerned, as different teachers integrated according to what they thought was right. It is however, observed that there were varied planned lesson formats, uncoordinated practices during integrated lesson delivery and lack of pedagogical skills and knowledge exhibited in both lesson plans and delivery by teachers. It was unknown however, what caused this distortion (Ministry of Education, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2021; Kalinde, 2021). This therefore, interested and compelled the researcher to conduct a study about teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje District of Zambia. If this study were not concluded, these gaps would continue affecting the quality of ECE provision in the Zambian education system.

### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje district of Zambia.

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Explore the early childhood teachers' views about planning integrated curriculum in ECE centers in primary schools of Serenje district.
2. Identify the challenges faced by early childhood teachers regarding integrated curriculum planning in ECE centers in primary schools of Serenje district.
3. Establish the practices Early Childhood teachers can adopt to implement the integrated planning in ECE centers in primary schools of Serenje district.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do early childhood teachers describe integrated curriculum in Early Childhood Education Centers in primary schools of Serenje district?
2. What challenges do early childhood teachers face when developing integrated lesson plans in Early Childhood Education Centers in primary schools of Serenje district?
3. What strategies can early childhood teachers adopt to implement planning integrated approaches in Early Childhood Education Centers in primary schools of Serenje district?

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study establishes a clear justification for the study's importance by highlighting how it contributes to the body of knowledge in the field, how it advances practice, and why it would influence policy or decision-making (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It also communicates the significance of the problem for various groups that may benefit from reading and using the study. The study brought out experiences and challenges faced by teachers when using an integrated approach to integrated curriculum and instruction planning at the school level and would pinpoint factors to all stakeholders about what was lacking in the teachers' preparations and how teachers felt about the use of an integrated approach to instructional planning.

In order to improve practice, the study results were shared with the relevant parties. The study would also provide useful information for all educational stakeholders interested in the study, such as Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) officials, the Donor Community and the Ministry of Education generally, through an analysis of the successes and challenges faced by teachers in the implementation of the Early Childhood Education integrated curriculum in ECE centers. This study also added to the body of knowledge in the field of Early Childhood Education integrated curriculum implementation in Zambia. The finding from the analysis of teachers' experiences would provide guidance for curriculum implementation in the future and inform stakeholders on the kind of help or support ECE teachers' need.



## **1.8 Delimitation of the Study**

Delimitation in research refers to the boundaries of the research problem under investigation (Munhall &Chenail, 2015). The study therefore explored the early childhood teachers' views about planning integrated curriculum in ECE centers. Participation in this study was limited to teachers of ECE in the learning institutions that were visited.

## **1.9 Limitation of the Study**

Limitations of the study were those aspects of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the interpretation of the research findings (Munhall &Chenail, 2015). Since the study was qualitative in nature and had a small sample size, it was challenging to infer or make generalization of findings to other education institutions in Zambia. Additionally, the tools and techniques used for data collection could have some limitations that would have an impact on how data was analysed and disseminated.

## **1.10 Theoretical Framework.**

Theories are created by researchers to explain phenomena, make connections and predict the future. “A theoretical framework is a foundation review of existing theories that serve as a road map for the development of arguments you will use in your own work”. It demonstrates the relevance of the study and the foundation of its ideas by outlining the current theories that underpin it (Vinz, 2022). This study was guided by pedagogical theory (Rutto, 2017).The pedagogical theory provides the construct of how things should be thought, how teaching is done and how a learner can be brought to learn. Pedagogical theories could; therefore, stem from constructivism learning theories which provides a framework for constructivist teaching approaches (Rutto, 2017). The principles of the pedagogical theory include:

The first principle, situated practice, states that students' real world experiences and situating meaning- making in authentic context must be built on in the teaching and learning process. This principle was used in the study to understand findings from the first research objective because situation practice involves tangible activities (projects, practical) and social contexts of learning (learner interactions). This calls for constructivist preparation and modeling in classrooms of the

contexts in which “real life” was achieved. Use situated practice through tangible activities e.g. projects and social context to foster meaning- making in authentic context in for learning to take place.

The second principle is overt instruction. It is a teaching approach that involves identifying students’ specific learning needs and creates activities to address the needs. It is an approach that promotes active learning, learner engagement and motivation. Overt instruction helps learners focus on important features and gain experiences that allow them to understand systematic, analytic and cognizant explanations of different modes of meaning. It recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of the students and allows the teacher to plan and provide resources and tools to help the learners structure their learning.

The third principle is transformed practice and critical framing. This principle was used to understand the meaning of findings in the third objective of the research study because it bordered on reflection and applied these teachings in a new context, thus helped teachers to implement peer reflection during the planning process thus achieve integration of lesson activities. Critical framing emphasises the aspect of critique. Learners stand back from what they have learnt, view it critically in relation to its context, and are guided to analyze and question the ideologies at hand and their relevance. Thus, the aspect of critique is fostered through collaboration among teachers during the process of lesson preparation (planning). The aforementioned discussions were therefore, supported in the sense that collaboration as a strategy for example could be adopted to foster reflecting about integrated activities as teachers planned lessons.

### **1.11 Definition of Terms**

**Curriculum:** Curriculum is all the learning experiences planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals cited in (Mulenga, 2019).

**Curriculum Implementation:** This entails the teacher facilitating in the acquisition, by the learners, of the knowledge; skills; beliefs and attitudes outlined in the curriculum.

**Early Childhood Education:** This is an organized form of educational provision for children between the ages of three and six (Kalinde, 2021)

**Integrated curriculum:** Drake (2015) defines an integrated curriculum as a means of making meaningful connections between topics or skills that are usually addressed in different subject areas.

**Perception:** “Leibniz defined perception as “the expression of many things in one” (Kulstad, 2012); in other words, a sensation along with an image. In its relevance to this study, perception includes the meanings of knowledge, views, beliefs, attitude, value, feeling, thinking, and implicit theory.

**Play:** In the context of school, play is best viewed as a continuum with guided play on one end and free play on the other (Miller & Almon, 2017). It is typically perceived as playful learning, which is composed of both guided play and free play.

## **1.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter as covered the background of the study, the problem statement, the study’s purpose, the study’s objectives, the research questions that will be used to address the study’s objectives, the significance of the study, delimitation, limitations, theoretical underpinnings and the definitions of operational terms.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1. Overview**

This chapter will review literature of ECE teachers' views about planning integrated curriculum, challenges ECE teachers face regarding curriculum integrated planning, and teaching practices ECE teachers can adopt to implement the integrated curriculum and summary chapter. McCombes (2022) describes literature review as a survey of scholarly sources on a specific topic. It provides an overview of current knowledge, allowing the researcher to identify relevant theories, methods and gaps in the existing research.

#### **2.2. Early Childhood Education Teachers' Views about Planning Integrated Curriculum**

In a study conducted in Ontario Canada, by Boehme (2017) ECCE teachers and experts collaborated in a cluster to peruse and understand the new curriculum thereafter, design a plan to be followed for integrated activity planning. The study is a form of qualitative research. Data was collected through interviews, observations and document analysis on a population sample of six (4) ECCE teachers and 2 experts. The results from this cluster reveal that reading and understanding the curriculum document is vital to planning. Further, the study found that to communicate with the learners to identify what they know and what their life experiences have been, having read the curriculum document is very key in the planning process. This is because planning for integration is deemed an inquiry approach as teachers need to research what children know as a basis for development. The study was confined to collaboratively creating the model for integrated activities with a clear view of the curriculum objectives. The reviewed study sampled a total population of six (6) participants. This current study will sample a population of 26 participants: Eighteen (18) ECE teachers and eight (8) experts thus a gap in population sample.

In a similar study, in Canada, Drake (2015) investigated integrated planning. All the role-players in the Ontario model involved in the planning project, set aside time to meet after school for a period of two months to plan appropriately. The study used qualitative methods and data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions. The study used a total sample of 18 participants. Analysing of data was done through coding to analyse interviews and focus group discussions. It was established in the findings that the teachers realised the importance of making time available for the development of their planning strategies in the interest of young children, positively viewed collaborative planning, and developed planning strategies of integrated activities for teaching and learning. The model became known as Drake model, to Know/Do/Be (KDB). The study under review holds true to collaborative integrated planning. This study will explore ECE teachers' views about planning integrated lessons beyond just collaboration in the selected Zambian ECE centers of Serenje District and thematic data analysis will be used thus a gap in perspectives and data analysis.

In a study conducted in Korea, Kim & Bolger (2017) analysed pre-service teachers' changing attitudes about integrated STEAM pedagogy through developing lesson plans. In their study Kim & Bolger collected data through a survey. The study used quantitative methods. Data was obtained through open ended questionnaires and interviews. Data was analysed through coding to analyse questionnaires and interviews. The results show positive attitudes of pre-service teachers toward STEAM influenced by developing lesson plans. The findings also indicate significant improvement of awareness, perceived ability and value by participants. The related literature has a gap in the in perspectives, in the sense that the reviewed literature looked at integrating pedagogy in a single subject of science while in this study; the researcher will explore the pedagogy of integrating related content from various subjects into one lesson.

In Indonesia, a conducted study about implementation of integrated curriculum recommended academics and practitioners to extensively comprehend the nature of the ten curriculum models before making implementation tools and applying them in a classroom environment for learning (Akib, Imran, Mahtari, Mahmud, Prawiyogy, Supriatna & Ikhsan 2020). The study used qualitative method and collected data through interviews and document analysis on a sample of 10 participants. The findings of the study indicate three phases of integration: preparation, implementation and culmination stages. The findings also noted that learners' experiences and

learning activities will always be relevant to their level of development and selected activities can be adjusted to the interests and needs of learners. The gap in the reviewed literature lies in the concepts. The reviewed literature focused on the implementation of integrated learning while in this study the researcher will focus on the preparation stage of integrated lesson before applying it in the classroom for learners to learn.

Another study about negotiating a shared definition of curriculum integration, Hall-Kenyon and Smith (2013) focused on Teacher educators' perspectives. Data was derived from transcription of multiple, recursive conversations around topics and classroom incidences related to curriculum integration. The study is a form of qualitative research and allows educators to contribute to educational research through studying and improving their practices. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions on a sample population of 16 participants. The study findings indicated that continued differing notions of what it means to integrate academic subjects during instructional planning was apparent among teachers. The difficulty is underscored by the wide array of terms used when discussing the construct: inter-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, trans-disciplinary, fused, blended, connected, shared, thematic, networked, integrated, sequenced, webbed, immersed, unified, nested, coordinated and threaded. This affects planning quality of integration. The findings also point to teachers being limited to individual disciplines thus the study prompted them to value integration. The study under review focused on how teacher educators understood curriculum integration with regard to teaching and learning while in this study the focus will be understanding curriculum integration with regard to planning integrated lessons in ECE thus a gap in perspectives.

Review of the literature has noted another study in the United States of America; 'The Role of Integrated Curriculum in the 21st Century School' in which teacher perceptions, beliefs and practices in integrated curriculum in secondary schools is explored (Mohr & Welker, 2017). The study used mixed methods to collect data from a population of 55 participants. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Coding was used for data analysis. The findings of the study showed that teachers who are more likely to integrate into the curriculum also value 21st Century skills more than teachers who are less likely to. It was also found that the traditional paradigm of what schools ought to look like is reflected in the values of individual 21st century skills thus preferring practice of self-regulatory skills to digital skills linked to integrated

curriculum. There is a gap in methods in the reviewed literature because the current study will use qualitative methods and data will be analysed using thematic analysis.

In another study by Pollitt, Cohrssen and Seah (2020) the effects of play-based, spatial reasoning activities on educators' teaching practices and evidence-based planning and educator beliefs about mathematics in ECE was investigated. Mixed methods were used in investigating the research problem and twenty-seven participants were sampled in the research project. The research findings included three vital areas: the implementation of the activities by educators, educator beliefs about mathematics, spatial reasoning and mathematics teaching practice. The reviewed study used mixed methods while this study will use qualitative methods thus a gap in methodology. The finding focused on beliefs on single discipline and teaching activities while in this study the focus will be on planning integrated lessons at ECE.

A study by Sancar & Ozgelen (2013) of Mersin University from the republic of Turkey examined early childhood education (ECE) pre-service teachers' perception on factors affecting integration of educational computer games to their instruction in two areas: selecting and redesigning. The study was confined to ECE pre-service teachers and data was collected through open-ended questionnaires, interviews, ECE pre-service lesson plans on a sample of 26 participants. Analysing of data was done through coding to analyse open-ended questionnaires and interviews. Defined categories of experts analysed lesson plans and information about education computer games selected and redesigned. Study results showed differences between the ECE pre-service teacher's educational computer game integration decisions due to effects of course activities and game characteristics. The study under review used ECE pre-service teachers as study sample while this study will use ECE in-service teachers as study sample.

A study conducted by Drake & Reid (2018) in Ontario Canada, suggested integrated curriculum as an effective way to resolve the teaching of 21st century competences or capabilities (C21). In the study capabilities were identified as described in various jurisdictions and an overarching curriculum framework: Know - Do - Be (KDB) was presented. The study also explored models of integrated curriculum to investigate the effectiveness of curriculum integration. The study used mixed methods and data was collected through questionnaires and interviews on a sample of 100 participants. The study findings suggested clarification of competencies to help determine

pedagogical continuum for the teaching and assessing competencies across age levels and subjects. The study also indicated that Australia has begun developing definitions and performance criteria for general capabilities. Further, the study suggests an integrated approach to curriculum if not all the time, working with dynamic and relevant interdisciplinary themes is vital and reinforces our premise that teaching integrated skills with an integrated curriculum is effective pedagogy. However, the study under review used exploratory research studies while this study will use interpretive phenomenological studies thus a gap in design methods.

A study by Oluniyi and Olufemi (2013) on curriculum integration in Social Studies as predictor of academic performance in Social Sciences indicated that integrated curriculum is considered more effective on students compared to single subject approach. The introduction of Social Studies influenced the focus on integrated curriculum in the Nigerian school system. The study was conducted using survey research design while this study will use phenomenological qualitative research design. The study under review used a population sample of one hundred forty (140) students and focused on performance while this study will use a sample size of 26 participants and will focus on formulating integrated lesson plans or plan formats for integrated classroom instructions. Research findings for the study under review showed that there is a minimal gap of student performance impacted by integrated curriculum compared to that of single subject. It further revealed that Social Studies and Economics have a considerable related mean figure of - 54.25 for Social Studies and 55.67 for Economics thus a low mean difference of 1.41. The researcher therefore concluded that there is a relationship in integrated curriculum subjects.

A study conducted by Mutseekwa (2021) about integrating STEM practices in Science Teacher Education curriculum in Zimbabwe. The study used exploratory mixed method design in post-positivist paradigm. A total of one hundred twenty-six (126) participants were sampled in the study of which eighteen (18) were Science teacher educators and one hundred eight (108) were Science student teachers from a target population of two (2) secondary schools. Data collected was through the use of semi-structured questionnaires, follow-up interviews and document analysis. The findings of the study showed that science teacher educators coincidentally integrated STEM practices in Science lessons rather than planned. The critiqued study used a post-positivist paradigm while this study will use constructivism paradigm. The reviewed



literature focuses on infusion integration while this study looks at inter-disciplinary (subject) integration thus a gap in perspectives.

A study conducted by Chidarikire, Muza and Beans (2021) looked at the integration of gender equality and language diversity in Zimbabwe teacher education curriculum. The focus of the study was to explore the perceptions of lecturers about integration of gender equality and language diversity. The study used a qualitative phenomenological design. The study targeted a population of two (2) universities from which nine (9) participants were selected as study sample through purposive sampling. Data was collected using focus group discussions and it was analysed using thematic analysis approach. The study findings showed that gender equality lacked qualified lecturers to teach gender studies. The study also showed lack of scholarly materials that deal in gender issues. The gap in the related literature was that the study under review looked at integration of gender equality and language diversity in the teacher education curriculum while this study will look at inter discipline integration with regard to lesson planning. Also, the targeted population of the study under review was from universities while this study will target a population from ECE centers in primary schools thus a gap in population.

A study conducted by Machua (2014) in Kimbu county Kenya, focused on analysing the implementation of thematic integrated curriculum in selected schools in Thika East. The study used a descriptive qualitative design. Questionnaires, in-depth interview and document analysis were used to collect data. The findings of the study showed that administrators indicated an improvement in teaching after teachers were trained in NACECE/DICECE curriculum. The study recommended regular teacher supervision and teachers to attend continuous training. The study under review used a descriptive qualitative design. This study will use phenomenological design in qualitative approach therefore a gap in methods.

In a study conducted in Lesotho by Tafai (2017) investigated on teachers' concerns about the implementation of the new curriculum in Lesotho. The purpose of the study was to explore teachers' concerns in Lesotho primary schools on the adoption of the integrated curriculum. The study used concerns-based adoption model (CBAM) and stages of concern questionnaire (SoCQ) was used to collect data. The findings of the study indicated that primary school teachers in Lesotho were aware of the integrated curriculum though they required more information on its

implication on their practice. The findings also showed teacher collaboration, refocusing and personal adequacy on best practices for the implementation of the integrated curriculum. The study under review used quantitative approaches and a survey design in a positivism paradigm. This study will use a qualitative approach in a constructivism paradigm and a phenomenological research design will be used.

Samwimbila (2017) conducted a study that aimed at establishing teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of the Revised Social Studies Curriculum in selected secondary schools in Mufumbwe District, Zambia. The study's rationale for introducing revised curriculum to teaching instruction was to focus on issues and problems relevant to learners' experiences in the changing environment. Data collection was through face to face interviews and semi-structured interview on a sample size of twenty five (25) participants consisting of five (5) Social Science Departmental Heads and twenty (20) Social Studies teachers and thematic data analysis was used. The findings of the reviewed study revealed negative attitudes towards the execution of the Social Studies Revised Curriculum by teachers and departmental head teachers. The findings also showed the need for teachers to be provided with opportunities for them to participate in curriculum formulation and review. Unlike the current study, which is employing phenomenological design in qualitative approach, the study under critique used a descriptive design in qualitative approach in conducting the study. However, the focus of the study under critique was on implementation of teaching and learning process while this current study is focusing on integrated planning of classroom instructions at ECE therefore, a methodical gap forms the basis of conducting the current study.

A study conducted by Weldemariam, Chan, Engdahl, Samuelsson, Katiba, Habte and Muchanga (2022) focused on care and Social Sustainability in Early Childhood Education in transnational perspective Zambia inclusive. The study used a cross-national (Collaborative) inquiry approach to investigate the notion of care within ECEC policies and research discourse in Zambia and other four nations. The study reveals that care in the majority world (Zambia, Kenya and Ethiopia) is left out in the education policies while the minority world (New Zealand and Sweden) tends to include it in their policies. The results further showed that the majority of the world still includes the importance of care and sustainable development in their education policies. Secondary data and thematic analysis were used to analyse collected data. The study

under review leaves a gap in concepts. The study focused on how care and education is balanced in ECEC policies in Zambia while this current study will focus on integrated curriculum with regard to teachers' views and perspectives on integrated lesson plan in Early Childhood Education Centers in primary schools of Serenje District in Zambia.

Nakawa (2019) conducted a study in Zambia about guided play in an early childhood education (ECE) pre-mathematics classroom. The study used qualitative methods of data collection through use of semi-structured interviews, and observations. The total sample population was 28 participants. Data was analysed through thematic analysis. The reviewed study indicates a conceptual gap in that the study looked at the concept of usual single subject classroom curriculum. This current study will look at the concept of inter-discipline (subject) integration classroom curriculum with regard to teachers' views and perspectives on integrated lesson plan in Early Childhood Education Centers in primary schools of Serenje District in Zambia. The study under review revealed the applicability of guided play in mathematics in that it involved many physical activities such as dance, games and songs but it lacked mathematical content. The study recommended directing learning activities to subject-specific content to achieve meaningful learning. The study targeted a population of primary schools and four primary schools with ECE centre attachments were sampled. Lesson observations and interviews were used to collect data.

In another study conducted in Zambia by Matafwali (2022) that titled *Inclusive Early Childhood Education in Zambia: A Call for Policy Action*, focused on the effectiveness of a comprehensive inclusive early childhood education for promoting equal access for all children. The study used qualitative methods of data collection through the use of interviews as data collection tool. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse data. The study under review was underpinned by Niklas Luhmann systems theory. The study recommends that the government of Zambia and its supporting partners should formulate policies that support inclusiveness in ECE. There is a theory gap in the reviewed literature in that Niklas systems theory was used as a foundation for the study while this current study will use New Group London 1996 theory.

A study conducted by Mukaluka-Kalumbi (2020) about management of teaching experience at school level and linkage with knowledge perceptions in basic language constructs among early

childhood education pre-service teachers. A survey was used to conduct the study on a sample of participants consisting of twenty-four (24) fourth year student teachers. The reviewed study showed a methodical gap. The current study will use a phenomenological study approach instead of a survey. The study findings of the study under review showed that pre-service teachers' pedagogical practices can be improved if there is focused coordination between teacher training colleges and early childhood education centers.

### **2.3. Challenges Early Childhood Education Teachers Face Regarding Curriculum**

#### **Integrated Planning**

John (2015) looked at the National Curriculum Framework that was introduced in Trinidad and Tobago. Data collection was through face to face interviews and semi-structured interviews on a sample size of twenty five (25) participants and thematic data analysis was used. The teachers were interviewed, and the findings indicated that the introduction of themes was not the only support that teachers needed. Teachers were not trained to follow a plan while teaching. Further the study showed that learning resources were scarce in poor areas and teachers resisted implementing the new curriculum and it was thus ineffective. The study under review did not seek an alternative to the challenges of National Curriculum Framework while this study will implement an intervention to the challenges ECE teachers face regarding curriculum integrated planning thus a perspective gap.

In the study on best laid plans, Sias, Juth & Seifert (2017) employed qualitative methods to explore educational innovations in elementary teacher generated STEM lesson plans. Lesson plans were used as documents for data source and analysis through coding. The reviewed study showed thirty-nine (39) teachers as sample size. The findings of the study indicated the challenges of not integrating many content areas. The study shows that many lesson plans reviewed no attempt to integrate curriculum from outside content areas and even on content areas, lesson plans showed partial integration. No lesson plan had completely integrated content. There seems to be a methodical gap in that the reviewed study used 39 participants as sample size while the current study used 12 participants.

The reviewed study by Lyublinskaya & Tournaki (2014), focused on the development of Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) in mathematics and science of pre-service special education teachers for teaching mathematics and science via one course. The TPACK levels Rubric developed by Lyublinskaya and Tournak was used to assess participants' lesson plans created as part of the required course work submitted during the 5th and 12th weeks of instruction. Results of the study showed that after completion of the course, participants' TPACK scores for the lesson plans increased significantly. The study showed challenges of teachers not adequately prepared to teach with technology in their classroom and that teachers usually use technology for the transmission of information rather than a method of acquiring knowledge by students or pupils. The pre-service teachers being prepared to plan teaching technology in single subject lessons was also identified as a challenge. The study shows that most recent studies indicate that teacher preparation and training require courses that integrate the teaching of all components which include content knowledge on a subject matter, pedagogy skills and technology skills. The study under review used surveys in quantitative methods to carry out the study. The study used a hundred (100) pre-service teachers as a sample and a TPACK Rubric was used to analyse lesson plans. This current study will use phenomenological design through qualitative methods and a sample size of 26 participants will be used to explore ECE teachers' views and perceptions on planning integrated lesson plans.

The critiqued study of Dewi, Lengkanawati, & Purnawarman (2019), postulate challenges faced by teachers in designing classroom instructional plans: lack of integration knowledge and skills as foremost reason for teachers' inability to effectively teach technology in teaching and learning process. The study used qualitative methods to collect data through the use of interviews and focus group discussions. A multiple case study design was used in the study. In this related literature, the gap providing the basis for the current study is methodical: the reviewed literature used qualitative multiple case study approach and data was acquired through focus group discussions and semi structured interviews while this current study will use phenomenological qualitative study and data will be obtained through interviews, observations and document analysis to explore ECE teachers' perceptions on integrated curriculum.

The findings of the study under review suggest that an in-depth understanding of Analyse, Strategies, Implement and Evaluate (ASIE) Instructional Design (ID) Model, gives an impact on

classroom instructional planning. The study by Zain, Muniandy and Hashim (2016) employed questionnaires and mixed method approach on a sample of 105. The findings further revealed a negative impact of instructional design models in the classrooms suggesting that teachers did not frequently use the models in their instructional planning process. The study concludes that an integral (ASIE) Instructional Design ID Model developed by Zain and Muniandy (2014), is vital for instructors and teachers in the process of designing their lessons because it is purely for classroom use (Classroom –based ID Model) unlike other models designed for instructional system development (ISD) purposes and development of course ware (Product-based ID Model). The study under review analysed use of models in integrated planning. This current study will focus on teachers’ views on integrated curriculum in ECE. There is, therefore, a conceptual gap forming a basis for the current research.

Scholarly research by Negumbo (2016) was undertaken on the underperformance in integrated Social Studies in Grade 5-7 in Namibian primary schools. The study used qualitative methods for data collection through the use of interviews and focus group discussions. The sample size used was 30 participants. The results divulge that schools that participated were failing to implement the integrated curriculum because teachers were not qualified to handle the subject (Negumbo, 2016). The study under review was conducted in grade 5-7. The study also specifically looked at under performance in integrated Social Studies lesson a single discipline. However, this study will focus on inter-discipline integrated lessons in the ECE thus a conceptual gap.

In another study, Bawani, Mphahlele and Ramashego (2021) investigated the role of teacher training of reception teachers in implementing the pre-primary curriculum framework in Francistown. Upon realising the importance of ECD, Botswana implemented the pre-primary curriculum framework to guide ECD teachers in teaching children. Data was collected through interviews, document analysis and observations. Results of the study indicated that teachers still faced challenges such as supervision, lack of training, shortage of materials and policy inconsistency in the pursuit to implement Pre-primary Curriculum Framework in Botswana. The study concluded that policy transformation on conducting teacher training such as the use of a needs assessment protocol was needed for effective implementation on PCF in Botswana. To close the gap the study under review was underpinned by SCLT and CoP theories while this current study will be informed by Progressivism theory.

A study conducted by Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) investigated challenges in implementation of early childhood education in Nigeria and the way forward. The study employed qualitative methods. Data was collected through interviews, document analysis and observations. The study results indicated that ECE classrooms were found with unqualified teachers both in private and government pre-schools. The study did not investigate classroom instructional strategies which this current study will explore with regard to integrated lesson planning thus a conceptual gap.

Young children learn easily where teaching and learning activities are integrated according to their age. In a study conducted by Zama (2021) in South Africa, aimed at probing how ECE teachers learn to follow the guidelines of National Curriculum Framework, identify and bring together teaching and learning activities from six, Early Learning Developmental Areas (ELDA) proposed as subjects in the NCF. The study used qualitative case study to collect data through semi-structured interviews and data was analysed inductively using spiral data analysis. The results of the study indicated that lack of physical space, teaching and learning materials and lack of support from the department of basic education negatively impacted integrated planning process. The current study will use phenomenological study instead of a case study used by the reviewed literature.

A study by Nyimbili, Sakala and Mungala (2023) investigated the pedagogical practices teachers use to teach Cinyanja to the Tumbuka learners of Chusefu district. A descriptive phenomenological design was used on the population of teachers, administrators, and learners in Chusefu district who were randomly sampled. The study sample was 60, which included five (5) deputy head teachers, five (5) heads of department for the department of Literature and Languages, ten (10) teachers of Cinyanja, and forty (40) pupils in five secondary schools. Data was collected through interviews, classroom observation, and focus group discussion guides. The findings revealed that teachers avoided certain pedagogical practices they had little or no knowledge about. The common pedagogical practices they used included discussions, individual work, pair work, group work, translation and code-switching. The pedagogical practices they avoided included debate, research, project work, drama, sketch, play activities and simulations and role plays. In terms of pedagogical challenges that teachers faced, the study revealed that there were inadequate teaching and learning materials, low literacy levels among learners, L1 interference causing code mixing in the works of the learners, negative attitude of the learners

towards the subject and word for word translation when handling translation exercises. The study under review was relevant as it brought out the pedagogical practices used in first language classes. However, the study did not look at teaching ECE in the Zambian context and did not look at integration.

In a study conducted by Phosisi (2019) six primary schools were targeted to explore the challenges learners face while implementing the integrated curriculum in Leribe district of Lesotho. The study was conducted through qualitative methods. In-depth interviews were used to collect data and purposive and convenience sampling were used to determine the sample. The study also intended to explore challenges learners face through teachers views because it was believed that the learners were too young to provide relevant information. The study findings indicated learners faced with challenges of insufficient time, too much content, not repeating grades and insufficient resources in all grades to help learners adapt to the new curriculum. The study under review did not look at challenges teachers face in formulating an integrated lesson plan which this study will explore.

In a study conducted by Nhlapo, Moreeng and Malebese (2019) the focus was on the teachers' implementation experience of an integrated tourism curriculum. The study targeted high school population and data was collected from purposively selected teachers from three (3) high schools that denoted a sample. The findings of the study showed that teachers of Lesotho lacked adequate content knowledge to teach tourism with confidence and give relevant examples and illustrations to clarify concepts. The study also noted that the Lesotho College of education did not integrate tourism as a subject thus would be teachers had no knowledge about tourism. The study under review looked at challenges faced by teachers in implementing an integrated tourism curriculum of high schools in Lesotho while this study will look at challenges faced by teachers in formulating an integrated lesson plan in early childhood education in Zambia.

The purpose of the study conducted by Matee (2019) was to investigate opportunities and challenges of pilot implementation of integrated curriculum in the teaching and learning of English Language. The study was guided by constructivism paradigm and a qualitative case study was used. Purposive convenience sampling to determine a sample of twenty-four (24) English learners, three (3) English teachers and three (3) principals as study participants was



used. Data was collected through conversation interviews, focus group meetings and classroom observations. The study results showed integrated curriculum was less researched in Lesotho hence, more research in integrated curriculum is required in Lesotho to adopt integration of other subjects other than the pilot subject-based integration of English only. The study recommended curriculum developers to prescribe relevant teaching and learning resources and textbooks. The study under review used a case study while this study will use interpretive phenomenological study.

Selepe (2016) conducted a study about curriculum reform in Lesotho which focused on teachers' conceptions and challenges. The study used qualitative case study design to underpin the findings. The study used purposive sampling to determine the sample and data was collected using interviews, observations and document analysis. The findings of the study indicated that teachers lacked clarity about the reform, materials and teacher development for integrated curriculum implementation. The study also showed that teachers were overloaded especially when planning because teachers need to think of linkages, how and which topics are related. The gap that forms the basis for this study is that the study under review focused on implementation of integrated curriculum and its challenges while this study will focus on planning and pedagogy of integrated curriculum and its challenges thus a conceptual gap.

Nkhwalume (2013) conducted a study in Botswana about challenges of integrating Information Communication Technology (ICT) into mathematics curricula in the SADC region. The study used exploratory study in mixed method approach. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The study targeted a population of secondary schools both junior and senior in Northern, Central and Southern regions of Botswana. A total sample of thirty 30 teachers were selected as participants of the study. The findings showed that teachers faced challenges of insufficient resources, inadequate time allocated to mathematics lessons and lack of administrative support. In the critiqued study the targeted population was secondary schools while in this study the targeted population will be ECE centers in primary schools.

Mbulu (2015) conducted a study on lecturers' attitude towards team teaching in Social, Spiritual and Moral Education in the Primary Colleges of Education in Zambia. The results of the study disclose that lecturers had mixed views on the integrated curriculum in that they said they had no

problem with the integrated curriculum and yet they also lamented that the same curriculum was challenging to the students (Mbulo, 2015). The findings also suggest a major shift from traditional solo teaching to Team Teaching. The study under review looked at lecturers' attitudes towards the implementation of integrated curriculum. The study does not provide an intervention and was confined to colleges of education while this study will be experimenting on ECE class teachers in selected ECE centers of Serenje District thus a population gap.

The implementation of the revised curriculum in ECE in primary schools has revealed a lot of complications and challenges. A study by Mulenga (2019) in selected public universities in Zambia sought to establish the challenges in the training of ECE trainee teachers. The study used observation and interviews to collect data from lecturers. The findings were that most of the lecturers who were preparing teachers in public universities in Zambia taught in secondary or primary schools many years ago and had a very scanty knowledge on ECE and what is currently taught in secondary and primary schools. Inhibiting causes included shortage of teachers particularly those trained in ECE methodologies. The study by Mulenga sought to establish challenges in pre-service while this study sought to explore challenges faced by ECE In-Service teachers in curriculum integrated planning.

In a study conducted by Lungu and Matafwali (2020) about play based learning in early childhood education centers in Zambia, the focus of the study was on teacher perspective about play based learning. The study under review used a case study design in qualitative approach. Thematic analysis was used to interpret collected data through coding and grouping. There is a methodical gap in the reviewed literature in that this current study will use qualitative while the reviewed literature used qualitative approach. The study findings of the critiqued study showed that teachers were faced challenges due to lack of age-appropriate play infrastructure, lack of implementation guidelines on play based approaches and curriculum overload. The reviewed study recommended the ministry of education to provide guiding principles on implementation of play based teaching and learning in early childhood education.

Mate (2022) conducted a study about teacher's experiences in the implementation of early childhood education curriculum in selected public primary schools in Kitwe district Zambia. The reviewed study uses qualitative method. The study employed interpretive phenomenological

study design on a sample of twelve (12) purposively selected participants consisting of all teachers. The focus of the study was to explore the varied teacher experiences of implementing the ECE curriculum. The reviewed literature findings showed that primary schools had no ECE materials to implement the ECE curriculum, lacked trained ECE teachers and school management had no or little knowledge about ECE pedagogical content. The reviewed literature is similar to the current study in that both studies explore teacher perspectives. However, the reviewed study explored primary teachers' perspective on the implementation of the ECE curriculum while the current study will explore ECE teachers' perspective on the integrated curriculum with regard to integrated lesson planning. The research gap identified in the reviewed literature is conceptual gap. It forms the basis for the current study to be conducted.

A study conducted by Mulebwente (2022) about provision of early childhood education in selected government and private primary schools in Nkeyema district of Western province of Zambia, focused on policy and implementation. The reviewed study used a qualitative comparative analysis approach to analyse data collected through interviews, observations and document analysis on sample of 120 participants. The findings of the study showed that. A methodical gap exists between the reviewed study and this current study. The reviewed study used qualitative comparative analysis approach while this current study will use thematic analysis with the help of QDA. This forms the basis of conducting the study.

#### **2.4. Teaching Practices Early Childhood Education Teachers can Adopt to Implement the Integrated Curriculum**

A study by Li and Chen (2017) looked at Evolution of the Early Childhood Education in China. The study used descriptive qualitative survey design. Data was collected through class observations, interviews and document analysis on a sample of 100 participants. The findings of the study indicate emphasis on the social and cultural forces that have shaped the evolution and revolution of ECC in China. Further the findings indicate the practice of blending curricula modes such as trilingual immersion integrated curriculum as a result of combining theme-based integrated curriculum with an early trilingual programme in China. The study under review recommended a new theoretical framework to characterize the ECC reforms; culturally appropriate practice (sensitive to Chinese social ecology and culture and not overly dependent on

European or American ideas); contextually appropriate practice (not to implement a single quality standard due to regional differences especially between rural and urban and between Eastern and Western regions) and individual child appropriate practice (children in different areas may differ with respect to culture, schooling history and family background).

Additionally, Fisser and Thijis (2015) conducted a study in selected secondary schools in St-Louis. The study used qualitative method. Document analysis and interviews were used to collect data. Findings of the study suggested that teachers considered eight practices and 21st Century Skills. The practices included: creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaborating, digital literacy, social and cultural skills and self-regulation. The study under review was carried out in Secondary schools while this study will be carried out in ECE centers in Serenje District.

A study conducted by Janssen and Lazonder (2016) on supporting pre-service teachers in designing technology-infused lesson plans. The study used quantitative methods and a case study design. Data was collected through questionnaires, and document analysis. The study used a sample of 65 participants. The results showed that the group that received integrated support had more integrated pedagogical and content-related justifications and higher quality lesson plans than the group who received separate specific subject support. Both the current study and the study under review contain lesson integration concepts but differ regarding targeted population. The study under critique targeted pre-service teachers while this study will target in-service teachers.

A study conducted by Gokce, Akyel, Kocoglu and Mishra (2014) focused on the use of TPACK model to develop a technology integrated lesson plan and implementation. The study used mixed method and an exploratory design. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews on a sample of 50 participants. The results of the study showed that TPACK framework is a conceptual framework for effective technology integration. Gokce, Akyel, Kocoglu and Mishra (2014) study differ from this study in that it investigated both lesson planning and implementation while this study will focus only on lesson planning thus a gap in perspective.

In another related study by Janssen, Knoef and Lazonder (2019). The study investigated the information format in technology integration lesson plans and whether the integration support affects integration of information on lesson plans. The study used qualitative methods and collected data using interviews and focus group discussion. The study used 38 participants. The findings revealed a significant increase in the effective use of TPACK by pre-service teachers after designing an inquiry-based technology-enhanced lesson plan on the virtual platform. The study differs from this study in that the reviewed study investigated designing lesson plan on virtual platform while this study will look at traditional non-virtual practices employed by ECE teachers during integrated lesson planning thus a gap in perspective.

In a study conducted by Cevikbas, Konig and Rothland (2023) focus was on review of empirical evidence on how teachers' competence in lesson planning can be developed, challenges that may be faced during lesson planning and planning designs and practices that can be employed. The study used qualitative methods and collected data using interviews and document analysis. The study results showed that lesson planning is fundamental to the teaching of all subjects in school and teachers can acquire planning competence through training with initial teacher education and professional development. To close the gap this current study will explore teachers' perceptions about integrating all subject related concepts in a lesson plan, challenges teachers face when planning integrated lessons and practices at ECE level.

The critiqued study by Amalia (2019) aimed at identifying the integrated lesson as an alternative teaching strategy in pronunciation teaching of oral English. The study used 31 participants as samples. Observations and reading tests were used for data collection. The study was based on qualitative approaches. The results showed that integrated lessons coupled careful planning and preparation could give positive influence students' language comprehension and performance. To close the gap, this study will use 26 participants as samples, lesson plans for data collection and qualitative methods.

A study conducted by Lee and Lee (2014) focused on identifying how pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs for technology integration (SETI) can be improved during the coursework intervention and which of the course factors have the highest impact on SETI. The study used exploratory approaches under mixed methods design. The targeted population was a teacher

education at a university in Korea and sample size used was 136 undergraduate student teachers. Results showed increased prospective teachers' SETI and influence was from lesson planning practices. This study will use a sample of 26 participants and target population of In-Service teachers and other ECE personnel.

A study conducted by Babanazarovich (2020) focused on the importance of integrated lessons in teaching biology, forms, and methods and the methodology used in the teaching process. The study was based on qualitative methods. The study used interviews and focus group discussions to collect data. The results showed that the main goal of education integration is to create a good understanding of nature and society; the interdisciplinary disciplines must be carefully selected in order to guarantee interdisciplinary links in the learning process. The study showed that integrating biology with physics and chemistry ensures deeper understanding of nature by students thus creating a holistic theory of human and personality development. The results further showed the practices required in the structure of integrated lesson: accuracy, consistency of materials studied and logical relationship between them. To close the gap, this study will explore integration of interdisciplinary lesson planning while the reviewed study confined integration of biology with chemistry and physics only.

A study conducted by Srikoom (2021) on science teachers' professional development program for designing stem integrated lesson plan focused on how to integrate four (4) disciplines in a lesson. The study used qualitative methods of data collection. It used interviews, document analysis and observations on a sample of 104 participants from 38 schools. The results indicated that STEM-focused PD supports participants to design variety of STEM lesson plan with concern on how to integrate four (4) disciplines. Case study and content analysis through use of STEM lesson plan analysis rubric was used. The targeted population was teachers from secondary schools. To close the gap, this study will explore integration of interdisciplinary lesson planning while the reviewed study confined integration of four (4) STEM based disciplines only.

In Malaysia it is believed that Information Communication Technology (ICT) is one of the main elements in transforming the country's future development. A study conducted by Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015) aimed at analysing teachers' perceptions on effectiveness of ICT integration to

support teaching and learning process in the classroom. The study used quantitative research methods and a survey questionnaire was randomly dispersed for data collection. A sample of one hundred one (101) teacher participant from 10 secondary schools was used. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data. The study results showed that practicing ICT integration has a great effectiveness for both teachers and students. Professional development training programmes for teachers influenced successful quality learning for students. To close the gap, the reviewed study used quantitative methods on a sample of (101) teachers while the current study will utilise qualitative methods on a sample of 26 participants.

A study conducted by Zama (2022) in selected ECCE schools in South Africa explored and evaluated ECCE teachers' practices on the planning of integrated activities. The study used qualitative methods to collect data. The study used interviews and observations to collect data from teachers. The findings indicated that teachers require collaborating, taking part in Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Further the results suggested the practice of integration model and teaming. The study under review was similar to the current study because both studies explored teachers' practice in integrated curriculum. There seems to be a gap in the related literature in that the reviewed study was underpinned by interpretive paradigm and qualitative case study was used to investigate the problem. This current study is underpinned by pragmatic paradigm and phenomenological method approach will be used. Further, the study under critique was extended to primary classes while this study will be confined to ECE level only.

A study conducted by Ralebese (2018) looked at primary teachers' instructional and assessment practices in four (4) selected primary schools in Maseru area in Lesotho. Four teachers were possessively selected from schools in Maseru where New Integrated curriculum was implemented in Lesotho. Data was gathered using document analysis, interviews and observations. To analyse data descriptive content was used. The study used qualitative approach and both sense making and social cognitive theories underpinned the study. The results from teachers showed a lack of understanding of integrated lesson planning because they presented nonintegrated lessons and schemes were prepared in a compartmentalized manner. Instead results showed that teachers were more familiar with isolated planning and presentation of instructions and assessment in classrooms. Results showed teacher centred teaching and being in

full control of the learning activities. Hence, their practices were found to be unaligned with policy prescriptions. To close the gap this current study will be underpinned by progressivism theory while the study under review was informed by sense making and social cognitive theoretician.

A study by Bawani (2019) investigated the 2012 Integrated Early Childhood Development curriculum of Botswana. Data was collected using structured interviews, non-participant observations and document review. The research was guided by qualitative phenomenological approaches. A targeted population of three schools was interviewed and data collected was thematically analysed and further triangulated with data from documents and observations. The findings of the study revealed that effective implementation of integrated curriculum was negatively impacted by lack of supervision, teaching resources and other forms of support. Teacher training guidelines were made based on the findings of the study and the guidelines were informed by SCLT (teacher training) and CoP (formation of partnerships) theories. To bridge the gap, the study under review used observations to collection data to which this current study will not include.

Another study by Tondeur, Forkosh-Baruch, Prestridge, Albion and Edirisinghe (2016) looked at Responding to challenges in teacher professional development for ICT integration in education. The study reveals that teacher professional development is necessary in ICT integration in education. The study reveals practices such as training sessions or workshops in ICT integration, monitoring visits and working in teams were conducted to respond to challenges in teacher professional development for ICT integration in education. The study under review used samples from three (3) schools while this study will sample from (9) schools thus a population gap.

In a study conducted by Basil (2021) in Tanzania on early grade lesson preparation focused on teacher perspectives on lesson preparation and its usefulness in teaching and learning process. The study used descriptive and transcendental phenomenology in qualitative methods. A sample of 43 participants was used. Thematic content analysis analysed data that was collected through semi-structured interviews from a randomly sampled participants of in- service training programmes in Mufindi District Council and Mafinga Town Council of Iringa region, Tanzania. The reviewed study results showed that teachers were aware of preparation activities and lesson



planning was their main practice of executing selected learning activities through appropriate instructional strategies. The study concluded that teachers supported lesson planning to increase efficiency in teaching and learning. The study under review did not investigate integrated lesson planning as an appropriate instructional strategy in early grades which this study will explore. The study further used transcendental phenomenology in qualitative methods while this current study will use phenomenological design in qualitative methods.

A study conducted by Kanon and Kafanabo (2022) in Rungwe District in Tanzania focused on teacher competence in teaching integrated social studies subject in primary schools. The study used a qualitative case study design in an interpretive paradigm. Research data was collected through interviews, classroom observations and curricular and policy review. There seems to be a gap in the reviewed literature in that qualitative case study and interpretive paradigm were used. This study will use qualitative phenomenological design. The critiqued study examined primary teachers on integrated Social Studies as a subject while this study will examine ECE teachers on understanding inter-discipline (subjects) integrated planning of classroom instructions.

Effective lesson planning leads to effective curriculum policy implementation and good teaching. A study conducted by Kola (2021) at University of Limpopo in South Africa, focused on ways of improving lesson planning among third year pre-service teachers. Employed a qualitative study and collected data using focus group discussions, interviews and observations. The study results indicated that pre-service teachers fail to understand what influences selection of teaching methods and outline teaching and learning activities. Further the study showed that pre-service teachers require understanding the content to be taught before selecting teaching and learning activities. The study concluded that the action research helped third-year pre-service students to prepare appropriate lesson plans. The study under review seems to have conceptual gap in that the study did not look at planning an integrated lesson and did not indicate whether it is a single subject curriculum. This study will explore integrated lesson plans in integrated curriculum.

In a study aimed at examining the state of mathematics and science in Botswana's pre-schools, Bose, Tsamaase and Seetso (2013) used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study targeted a population of 26 pre-schools in Gaborone and used survey questionnaire and

observation techniques to collect data on a sample of 81 participants comprising 64 teachers and 17 administrators. Results of the study showed that pedagogy was vital then content for teaching mathematics and science at ECE. The study further indicated that mathematics and science corners present in ECE centers were not utilised instead, teachers engaged in outdoor mathematics and science activities. The study concluded that ECE teacher's professional training on knowledge, pedagogy, content and indoor science activities be provided. The study under review did not examine integrated lesson planning as a way of utilising available corners in ECE centers which this current study will explore. Further, the study used survey questionnaire in mixed method design while this study will use document analysis method approaches.

A study by Mwanza and Mkandawire (2013) was conducted in selected schools focused on establishing the experiences encountered by teachers of English Language when implementing the 2013 revised Senior English Language curriculum in Zambia. The qualitative mode of inquiry was utilised as data was collected through face to face interviews with 44 in-service teachers. Data was analysed thematically. The study recommended consultative practice among curriculum implementers. There is a sample population gap between the two studies: the reviewed study and this current study. The current study will use a sample of twenty-four (24) participants consisting of eighteen (18) ECE teachers, two (2) District Resource Centre Coordinators (DRCC), two (2) officers from the Directorate of Early Childhood Education (DECE) ministry of education, two (2) officers from the Directorate of Curriculum Development Centre (DCDC) while the reviewed study sampled forty-four (44) participants through qualitative inquiry mode.

McCoy, Zuilkowski, Yoshkawa, and Fink (2017) conducted a study titled Early Childhood Care and Education in Zambia. The study under review used qualitative methods and data was collected through interviews with a sample of forty-eight (48) primary school teachers and head teachers. The study results indicated that pre-service teachers fail to understand what influences selection of teaching methods and outline teaching and learning activities. Further the study showed that pre-service teachers require understanding the content to be taught before selecting teaching and learning activities. A methodical gap exists. The study under review employed mixed methods while the current study will use qualitative.

Kalinde (2016) conducted a study on Cultural play songs in early childhood education in Zambia. The study used an ethnographic research design was used in qualitative methods. Face to face interviews, observations and video recordings were used to collect data. The results indicated play songs played a pivotal role in cultivating learners' interest and mastery of concepts. The study was underpinned by Vygotsky's social cultural learning theory and African traditional education perspectives. The current study will be underpinned by pedagogical theory thus a theoretical gap exists, making it a basis for the conducting this current study.

The purpose of the study by Tembo and Nyimbili (2021) was to investigate the practicality using Nsenga language in the primary schools of Petauke district. The study used a mixed methods approach and collected data from 30 teachers from five primary schools using interview guide and a questionnaire. The study concluded that the teachers' perception on the implementation of the use of familiar language in selected Primary Schools in Petauke District was positive because the usage of Cinyanja as an instructional language was high in the primary schools due to the policy restriction while the usage of Nsenga as an instructional language was as high due to the sociolinguistic situation in the classrooms and this lead to the teachers and learners preferring to use Nsenga as their language of instruction. The realised benefits of the use of Nsenga in the teaching to the Nsenga learners provided the learners with the practical understanding of the content the teacher was teaching about. The other benefits were that teachers were forced to use Nsenga in their teaching because learners provided answers in Nsenga instead of the Cinyanja which was not familiar to them. The study under review is different from this study as the study was focusing on ECE and not primary schools in Serenje district.

Nakawa (2020) conducted a study in Zambia titled Proposing and modifying guided play on shapes in mathematics teaching and learning for Zambian preschool children. The study was centered on the implementation of guided play lessons on shapes in pre-mathematics classes. The reviewed study used qualitative design and data was collected through lesson observations and recordings. The results showed that the main lesson allowed learners to enjoy and created various shapes and learned mathematical concepts such as congruence, similarity and symmetry. There is a population gap in that the reviewed study sampled fifty- seven (57) participants while this current study will sample twenty-four (24) participants.

In a study conducted by Mulopa (2022) in Lusaka district Zambia, the focus was to evaluate factors affecting the implementation of annexed Early Childhood Education centers (ECEC) in Lusaka. The study under review employed case study design in qualitative methods. Data was collected through interviews from a sample of twenty-six (26) participants comprising of one (1) Education Standard Officer (ESO), five (5) head teachers, ten (10) teachers and ten (10) parents. Data was analysed using comparative methods. Results show that ECE centers had insufficient play materials, no trained or qualified care givers and supervisors had no ECE qualifications. There is a conceptual gap in that the study under review looked at implementation of annexed Early Childhood Education Centers (ECEC) while the current study will look at curriculum integration with regard to integrated lesson planning.

## **2.5. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has reviewed literature about ECE teachers' views about planning integrated curriculum, challenges ECE teachers face regarding curriculum integrated planning, and teaching practices ECE teachers can adopt to implement the integrated curriculum.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Overview**

This chapter outlines the methods that will be used in the field to collect and analyze data. The sub sections include: The research paradigm, research approach, research design, target population and sample size. The sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection methods, data analysis methods and ethical considerations are also presented.

#### **3.2. Research Paradigm**

In educational research, the term paradigm is used to describe a researcher's 'worldview' and it defines a researcher's philosophical orientation (Riazi&Candlin, 2014). Research paradigms consist of ontology, epistemology and methodology as principles or pillars of research (Proofed, 2023). This study was based on constructivism paradigm. Constructivism research paradigm is a view that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process. Constructivism paradigm was used in this study because the researcher wished to understand particular perceptions of ECE teachers on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje District of Zambia. In line with the aim of constructivism which posit that the researcher needs to understand particular situations or phenomena from the point of view of those who live in it, ECE teachers employ integration in delivering classroom instructions therefore, the study aimed understand the perception of ECE teachers about integrated approaches and clarity would be sort on why ECE teachers practiced particular practices. The other reason was to achieve quality and better analysis performance because of the ability of constructivism paradigm to consider a wider array of views and concepts in order to attain validity and truth. Further, also the advantage of combined strength of in-depth interrogation to obtain best understanding of the research problem. This research paradigm would give rise to phenomenology approach to research. That was to say the research employed qualitative methods.

### **3.3. Research Approach**

Determining a research philosophy would help to select the appropriate research approaches and methodology the researcher would use. Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). Further, the major three research approaches include qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches. This study, therefore, used a qualitative approach to explore the perceptions of ECE teachers on integrated curriculum with regard to planning. The qualitative research method captures the nuances, subjectivity and explanatory basis for participants' responses. This approach seeks to understand a persons' perspective of the world from their own view's point (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative study seeks to study phenomena in its natural setting as emphasised by (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative research examines factors that influence human behaviour. These include internal thoughts and intentions. Qualitative research regards reality and truth as that which people imagine. It uses descriptive data in its research reports and the investigation is holistic. Researchers believe in natural settings because context is crucial in understanding activities. Through this approach the researcher interacted with ECE teachers, district resource centre coordinators, principal education officers and senior education officers from both the directorate of ECE and CDC. By conducting research in schools, personnel involved in ECE curriculum implementation were reached. The researcher, therefore, conducted interviews and document analysis. This method was used because it looked for insights rather than statistical analysis.

### **3.4. Research Design**

Research design as the entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem to writing the narrative; it is not simply the methods, such as data collection, analysis, and reporting (Creswell, 2014). The research design used in this study was phenomenological qualitative design. Phenomenological studies are concerned with a rich and clear description of a phenomenon under study with regard to wide explanations of respondents' experiences. Therefore, the researcher used constructivist phenomenological study in order to get an in-depth understanding of a wider view of teachers' perceptions on integrated curriculum in the preparation of classroom instructions in early childhood education.

### **3.5. Target Population**

Population is a group of individuals with some common defining characteristics that a researcher can identify and study (Creswell, 2014). In this study the targeted population comprised of ECE teachers, District Education Board Secretary officials, ECE Directorate officials and collaborating partners in ECE.

### **3.6. Sample Size**

A sample is a number of individuals from a population, containing elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group. A sample is described as a group of individuals who will participate in the research and strictly select a representative of the whole group (McCombes, 2022). The number of individuals to be used in the sample is dependent on different factors including size, population variability and research design (McCombes, 2022). This study involved twelve participants. These were categorised as follows: Five ECE teachers from five ECE centers in selected primary schools, three District Resource Centre Coordinators (DRCC) from Serenje District Resource Centre DEBS offices, two ECE Directorate officials and two officers from ECE collaborating partners; VVOB. Therefore, the sample size was twelve participants.

### **3.7. Sampling Procedures**

Sampling procedure denotes the manner in which a sample for the study was selected. Since the study took a qualitative approach to exploring the perceptions of ECE teachers on integrated curriculum with regard to lesson planning, convenient sampling technique was used.

#### **3.7.2. Convenient Sampling**

Convenient sampling is a nonrandom sampling method that requires participants of a particular population that meet definite practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time or the willingness to participate and be included for the purpose of the study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). In this study, the researcher conveniently selected participants who were willing to participate in the research. Participants were selected

from the following pre-existing groups; ECE teachers; Five teachers from primary schools with ECE centers were sampled, ECE directorate; two Senior Education Officers from the Ministry of Education headquarters were sampled, from the District Education Board Secretary' office, three District Resource Center Coordinators were sampled and two officers from collaborating partners VVOB were sampled. The convenient sampling selection involved random selection. The selection used here however, was not to mean probability random. In convenience sampling, randomness does not give participants equal chance to participate in the research as probability random does (Price, 2013). Therefore, participants who were not accessible, knowledgeable and willing at the time of selection were excluded from forming part of the sample for this study. The rationale used on selecting convenience sampling technique in this study was because the population of some pre-existing groups like ECE directorate was finite. The other reason was that members of the target pre-existing groups were homogeneous.

### **3.8. Data Collection Instruments**

Data collection instruments in research refer to devices or tools used to collect data. They are the fact-finding strategies. Therefore, this study used interview guides, document analysis and teacher observations, a diary and recorder where possible.

#### **3.8.1. Semi-Structured Interview**

A semi-structured interview is a data collection method that relies on asking questions within a pre-determined thematic framework. However, the questions are not set in order or in phrasing. The use of semi-structured interview guides is efficient as responses are recorded immediately and probing for more information is solicited. This is an advantage that semi-structured interviews (open ended-questions) have over structured interviews (closed ended-questions) which are often employed in quantitative studies (Creswell, 2014). The semi-structured interviews provide a clear set of instructions for interviewers and can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data. Semi-structured interview guides are often used in in-depth interviews with respondents, especially key informants. Data collected through in-depth interviews with key informants could be used for a variety of purposes, including needs assessment, program refinement, issue identification, and strategic planning. In-depth interviews



are most appropriate for situations in which the researcher wants to ask open-ended questions that elicit depth of information from relatively few people as opposed to surveys, which tend to be more quantitative and are conducted with larger numbers of people. This method was used to get open-ended responses from school teachers, DRCCs from the District Education Board Secretary office (DEBS). The verbal responses given from these respondents were written down as a record for future reference in the research process.

### **3.8.2. Documents**

Documentation is a significant part of research because documents reveal what people do, did and what they value. This will occur in a natural setting so that data is presumed to have strong validity (Creswell, 2013). In this study therefore, documents used in planning process were analysed. For example, schemes of work, lesson plans and syllabi. This is because documents were prepared for records of daily work activities not for the purpose of research. The schemes of work and lesson plan were analysed because the researcher was interested to see the practices that teachers employed when planning. This helped the researcher to determine the planning model used in order to deduce the type of curriculum teachers intended to implement and deliver classroom instructions to their learners. The documents thus showed data in its most natural setting and the data was valid and free from the researcher's influence. In this sense validity and reliability was achieved.

### **3.9. Data Collection Procedure**

In the nature of qualitative research, data is collected from a participant's perspective in a natural setting and over an extended period of time (Creswell and Poth 2018). Based on the purpose of this study, the researcher collected data from respondents using interviews and document analysis. Teachers were interviewed. This was done to underpin the planning practices, perceptions and attitudes towards integrated lesson planning and elucidate the planning model used if any. Officials from CDC and ECE Directorate were interviewed to determine their input in the instructional planning process that teachers undertake in schools. The interviews consisted of questions eliciting detailed information about teachers' practice and interpretation of curriculum integrated planning. Guidelines were therefore followed in formulating interview

questions: open-ended, respectful, neutral and clarity of questions. The researcher also used familiar language to participants in formulating interview questions (Rischner & Merrienboer, 2013). This ensured the question's effectiveness. The researcher presumed participants had valuable knowledge and questions aimed at generating answers related to the objectives of the research. This was ordered to avoid educational approaches that lack sufficient scientific support and methodically sound empirical evidence. Finally, document analysis was done. This helped data understanding of analysed documents (Creswell, 2013). For example, Documents such as lesson plans, schemes of work, and syllabus to collect data on teacher practices during planning process.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

It is crucial in the data analysis process to organize, reduce, and finally analyze data. Data analysis is a well-organized application of statistical and logical approaches to explain, display, compress, summarize, and evaluate data. Data analysis helps researchers to reduce large data into small, understandable data (Choudhary, 2021).

#### **3.10.1 Thematic Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of text, such as interview transcripts (Kothari, 2019). Since the data obtained from the study was qualitative in nature, the researcher used thematic analysis to develop meaning from the collected data. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Kothari, 2019). The researcher followed six important steps in thematic analysis as follows:

Step 1 Familiarization: This means to get to know the data collected (Kothari, 2019). This involves taking a thorough overview of all the data collected before analyzing individual items. This involves transcribing audio recordings, reading through the text in field notebook and taking initial notes, and generally looking through the data to get familiar with it.

Step 2 Coding: This means highlighting sections of the text in the data - usually phrases or sentences and coming up with shorthand labels or “codes” to describe their content (Kothari, 2019).

Step 3 Generating themes: This involves looking over the codes created, identifying patterns among them and coming up with themes. Themes are generally broader than codes (Kothari, 2019).

Step 4 Reviewing themes: This is done to ensure that the themes are useful and accurate representations of the data. Here, the researcher returns to the data set and compares the themes against it (Kothari, 2019).

Step 5 Defining and naming themes: Defining themes involves formulating exactly what we mean by each theme and figuring out how it helps us understand the data. Naming themes involves coming up with a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme (Kothari, 2019).

Step 6 Writing up: This involves writing up the analysis of data. Like all academic texts, writing up a thematic analysis requires an introduction to establish the research questions, objectives and approach (Kothari, 2019).

### **3.11. Data Credibility and Trustworthiness**

This study adhered to all qualitative research approaches with regard to data credibility and trustworthiness. The ways in which credibility and trustworthiness was achieved is discussed in the sections that follow.

#### **3.11.1 Credibility**

The confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (McCabe, 2015). Credibility establishes whether or not the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants’ original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants’ original views (Graneheim& Lundman, 2013). To ensure credibility in the research findings, the

researcher adopted the following credibility strategies: prolonged and varied field experience, time sampling, reflexivity (field journal), peer examination, interview technique, establishing authority of researcher and structural coherence. In this study, credibility was achieved by strictly following research ethics and research procedure from the beginning to the end of the research project.

### **3.11.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents. It is the interpretive equivalent of generalisability (Creswell, 2013). Transferability in this study was achieved through a ‘thick description’ of the inquiry process and by using purposeful sampling.” Thick description involves the researcher elucidating all the research processes, from data collection, context of the study to production of the final report. Thick description helps other researchers to replicate the study with similar conditions in other settings. Transferability was further achieved through contextualization with other research studies bearing information related to this study and adding new data to the body of knowledge.

### **3.11.3 Dependability**

This is the stability of data over time and over conditions. Dependability can be compared to reliability in quantitative studies. In other words, dependability is an evaluation of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation. Dependability could be looked at as the researcher’s account of the changes built into any setting in addition to changes to the research design as learning unfolded (McCabe, 2015).

Dependability involves participants evaluating the findings and the interpretation and recommendations of the study to make sure that they are all supported by the data received from the informants of the study (McCabe, 2015). In this study, dependability was established by using an audit trail, a code-recode strategy, stepwise replication, triangulation and peer examination. Furthermore, dependability was warranted by making the research instruments reliable. The reliability of research instruments was achieved by conducting a pilot study to

determine whether the research instruments would elicit stable and consistent responses, and the necessary adjustments were made.

#### **3.11.4 Confirmability**

This is the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or collaborated by other researchers (Bowen, 2013). Confirmability is “concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings were not figments of the inquirer’s imagination but were clearly derived from the data” (Bowen, 2013). This was achieved through an audit trial, reflexive journal and triangulation. Additionally, confirmability was carried out through “bracketing” or “epoche.” This involves taking information from the participants as it came from the participants through verbatim reporting.

#### **3.12. Ethical Considerations**

These are sets of principles that guide the research design and practice. These principles include voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, potential for harm and results communication. The researcher adhered to all ethical issues in research. These procedures followed in the study are discussed as follows:

**Access to the Study Site:** This was by getting official authority and permission from the District Education Board Secretary’s Office (DEBS) in Serenje District. A conveyance letter of authority was delivered to all research sites to be selected purposively using data from the Serenje DEBS.

**Informed Consent:** This was first done by obtaining ethical clearance from the ethical committee of Chalimbana University. Consent was sought from Serenje DEBS. Furthermore, consent was sought from all respondents before any data was solicited from them. Consent forms for respondents were attached in the appendices.

**Voluntary Participation:** In this research, participation was purely voluntary, and all participants were informed that participation in the research was voluntary and therefore, they were very free to withdraw from the study at any time.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality:** To ensure maximum anonymity all respondents/participants and study sites were identified by pseudo codes. All data collected was not shared with any other person except the supervisor and examiners as need dictated. Confidentiality demands that whatever is collected and shared is not divulged to any unauthorized individual. Therefore, no unauthorized individual accessed the data. Respondents were informed that was purely an academic exercise and data collected was only shared with university officials when demanded.

### **3.13. Benefits**

The researcher assured the participants that their constructive contributions to the research were going to generate possible suggestions which could be useful in improving their experiences in the implementation of ECE curriculum in government primary schools.

### **3.14. Risk and Harm**

The researcher encrypted all data collected with a password to provide privacy and security to all data obtained. Respondents were also enlightened about the presence of a recording device if any would be required. In cases where the respondents refused to be recorded, data was written down in a field note book or diary which was secured and kept private. The participants were assured that there was no any form of risk that would be encountered as a result of their participation in this research.

### **3.15. Summary**

This chapter has described the research design and methods that were used in collecting the required data: The research design, research approach, research paradigm, target population and sample size including the sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection methods, data analysis methods and ethical considerations.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 Overview**

This chapter presents the findings of the study on teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje district in Zambia. Findings are presented using the research question as themes and further presented using the category of each participant who participated in this study.

#### **4.2 How do Early Childhood Teachers Describe Integrated Curriculum in Early Childhood Education Centres in Primary Schools in Serenje District?**

ECE teachers, Senior Education Officer (SEO), Resource Centre Coordinators (RCC) and Collaborating Partners (CP), answered this research question through interviews. This tool used to guarantee satisfactory detailed data collection and validity in the study so that all the perceptions and descriptions participants used to explain integrated curriculum that was presented in the study. Each category of participants presented its own views on the topic and subsequent questions asked.

##### **4.2.1 Findings from Interviews with Early Childhood Education Teachers**

The participants were asked to explain what they understood about the concept of integrated curriculum in ECE. The participants established that integrated curriculum is the combination of two or more subject content in one lesson. The participants were further asked on the integrated approaches they used to engage learners during the teaching and learning process. It was established that participants assumed that they used integrated approaches both at planning and implementation stages of the teaching and learning process. ECE teacher 1 said:

I can say integration is the teaching of all learning areas (subjects) together in one lesson because different subject concepts are combined in one lesson plan.

ECE teacher 2 said:

My understanding of integrated curriculum is that it is a combination of all learning areas, outcomes and activities so that they don't stand alone as subjects for the learning and teaching process. I have also noticed that other ECE teachers misunderstand integration. They assume that listing outcomes and subject content in one lesson plan and teach one learning area after the other is integration.

ECE teacher 3 said:

I can explain integrated curriculum in such a way that these are combined planned classroom activities from different subject content that should be taught to learners as one lesson. For example, if I have three learning areas on the time table, I will prepare the lesson plan in such a way that all the three learning areas are combined. This is to say the first step I write literacy, second step I write environmental science and third step I write mathematics.

ECE teacher 4 said:

Integration is combining one or two more subjects together. Integrated curriculum involves blending of subjects when planned and at the time of teaching. For example, literacy and mathematics is planned together in one lesson plan and taught as one lesson instead of two on a particular day.

ECE teacher 5 said:

In short, I can say integration is when a teacher marries the subjects that are on the timetable to come up with one. For example, if there are three



subjects on the time table and a teacher plans all the activities of the three subjects together in one lesson plan and taught as one lesson.

Participants were further asked on models used in planning integrated curriculum. Some participants established that there were several models used to plan integrated curriculum. The participants could not identify any model used in integrated curriculum. They specified that the individualized curriculum and the integrated one used the same models. The participants indicated that the models used in integrated curriculum included Seven Cs, schemes, weekly forecast and lesson. Teacher 2 said:

I would say there is learning through play (LtP) in the integrated curriculum and a lot of models are used in LtP for example, the Seven Cs; colourful, creativity, learner centered and many more. The tasks given to learners must not be stressful because they may not be able to carry out the tasks if they are stressed.

Teacher 1 said:

I have not come across any models used in integrated approaches, but we normally use teaching and learning aids (T/LA).

Teacher 3 said:

I don't think there is any model used particularly but mostly I use a syllabus, National Numeracy Framework (NNF), teachers' guide books and learner's books.

Teacher 4 said:

So far I have not used any model in the process of planning an integrated lesson. I basically follow the subject content as they are outlined in the syllabus.

Teacher 5 said:

Yes, I have used a model like Early Learning Developmental Standards of Zambia (ELDS) simply because the document has activities that can be used to plan an integrated lesson plan.

Participants were also asked on how they viewed ECE practitioners' understanding of the integrated curriculum. The participants recognised that practitioners like ECE teachers write one lesson plan where all learning areas of the particular day on the time table are combined. Participants were further asked on how they viewed other ECE practitioners' understanding about integrated curriculum. It was established that other practitioners like lecturers also understood integrated curriculum as writing of different subject content in one lesson with a list of outcomes as they appear in the individual subject syllabus. Teacher 5 said:

The practitioners like lecturers and standard officers showed similar understanding at the point when they commented or critiqued my integrated lesson plan and implementation of an integrated lesson after carrying out an observation.

Teacher 2 said:

As practitioners, ECE teachers we understood integrated curriculum simply by listing the individual subjects and activities in one lesson plan. This is seen and evidenced from how we plan and format the lesson plans. It is a list of standalone subjects and activities. With ECE teachers, this is how we understand integration.

Teacher 3 said:

With other practitioners for example, primary teachers think integrated curriculum is combining primary grades pedagogy with those of pre-

grades. They think the way they teach at grade 1 to grade 7 is the way we teach at early childhood level too.

Teacher 4 said:

Most teachers, both ECE and other sections, show uncertainty with how they understand integrated curriculum. For example, in some workshop I attended, I noticed teachers still had challenges explaining the planning process of an integrated lesson.

Teacher 1 said:

They understand that integration is the combination of subjects because they only write one lesson plan on which all learning areas of the day are written as shown on the time table.

Participants were further asked on the possibility of practicing integrated approaches in delivering classroom instructions to the learners in the context of Zambian curriculum framework. Participants established that the possibility is very high and favourable especially that the curriculum framework incorporates the use of play pedagogy in the teaching and learning process. Teacher 2 said:

It is very possible to integrate the activities during planning and implementation of the lesson. During planning, a teacher should select, combine outcomes and content knowledge that has related concepts and skills from the syllabus. Thereafter, create detailed integrated scheme forecast and plan a lesson using already integrated scheme forecasts.

Teacher 1 said:

It is very possible because learners are able to understand and acquire skills and knowledge when taught using integrated approaches such as learning through play.

Teacher 3 said:

Yes, it is possible to integrate instructions in the Zambian context because the curriculum framework incorporates play pedagogy and play can be best applied through integration.

Teacher 4 said:

It's very difficult to plan to use integrated approaches in the Zambian context because the syllabus supports standalone subject planning therefore, combining and putting together subject content is very challenging. Therefore, I would say it's possible but very challenging.

Teacher 5 said:

Yes, it is possible. The possibilities are that when planning a scheme forecast, we can consider related outcomes and subject content from various subjects for possible single lessons when planning lessons.

Participants were furthermore asked on how they viewed the general perceptions of integrated curriculum in ECE across stakeholders in the country. It was noted that participants viewed the general perception as negative. Teacher 3 said:

The stakeholders look at it both from a negative and positive point of view. The negative views include comments like “is this how you teach? I didn't see mathematics, science and other subjects separately taught.” The positive views include comments like “make more play materials in the learning corners.” This is to say those who have negative views don't

see integrated approaches working in the planning and teaching process at ECE while those with positive views think it can work.

Teacher 2 said:

Generally, integrated curriculum is very good in that it enhances LtP. This is where learners can freely play and have chance to explore and experiment a lot of objects. In so doing they acquire and learn various skills faster hence there is steady development of domains and milestones.

Teacher 4 said:

It's a good curriculum if provision is available in terms of the syllabus and other documentation to highlight more about how to plan for integrated activities in a lesson.

Teacher 1 said:

The general over view is that integrated curriculum lays a good foundation before they start formal learning. This is to say the integrated approach helps learners to acquire a variety and wider skills which help learners with future learning.

Teacher 5 said:

It's a good curriculum for the ECE because planning is all done at once and the prepared materials cater for a variety of concepts. This allows the teacher to have ample time to create manipulative play materials that learners interact with.

#### **4.2.2 Findings from Interviews with Senior Education Officer (SEO)**

The participants were asked to explain what they understood about the concept of integrated curriculum in ECE. The participants established that integrated curriculum is in twofold; the first one is the cohered national educational set of courses to be taught and learned in schools. The second one is the combined, fused, blended, merged and linked set of approaches and materials used in classroom instructional activities in the teaching and learning process. The participants were further asked on the views about how ECE teachers and lecturers understood integrated curriculum. It was established that participants viewed ECE teachers and lecturers not to have understood integrated curriculum because of the manner in which they planned and taught lessons using integrated approaches.

SEO 1 thought:

I know the concept of integrated curriculum is sometimes used interchangeably but from the Government Republic of Zambia (GRZ) perspective, we may not have defined what integrated curriculum is. Therefore, looking at the curriculum framework, we only have a curriculum that has different types of learning areas. From another perspective, integrated curriculum is a curriculum which embraces different methodologies in line with prevailing situations. It is the bringing in prevailing situations or cross cutting issues into already existing curriculum. For example, the occurrence of Covid and its issues can be taught in various learning areas to enhance behaviour change and awareness.

SEO 2 supposed that:

I understand the concept of integrated curriculum as curriculum that has combined all areas, all outcomes and activities so that they don't stand alone as subjects for the learning and teaching process. Personally, I noticed that lecturers and ECE teachers misunderstand integration. In

their view, they assume that listing outcomes and subject content in one lesson plan and teaching in the same order is integration.

Participants were further asked on any models used in planning integrated curriculum. Some participants established that there were several models used to plan integrated curriculum. The participants indicated that thematic model was one of the models used to plan integrated curriculum. They pointed out that this model uses a specific theme and integrates other learning areas in that theme at both planning and implementation stage of the lesson. SEO 2 said:

Yes, they are models that can be used in planning integrated curriculum. The model will guide what kind of integration the approach will follow, for example, a thematic model. This requires developing themes in which all related content will be combined and taught.

SEO 1 said:

Certainly, models can be used during the planning stage of integrated curriculum. These among others include fused and linked models.

Participants were also asked on how they viewed ECE practitioners' understanding of the integrated curriculum. The participants recognised that ECE teachers and lecturers misunderstood integrated curriculum. Participants established that the practitioners planned integrated lessons in the form of a list and teach in the same order with subjects showing as standalone. SEO 1 said:

I can simply say ECE practitioners did not fully understand integrated curriculum because in planning of an integrated lesson, they simply list different subject content in one lesson plan and teach continuously one subject after the other with linking points to every subject being taught.

SEO 2 said:

No ECE practitioners especially teachers and lecturers fully understand integration. I have said so because even when they write one lesson plan, the subject outcomes and activities are not integrated, they just list them on one paper. When it comes to lesson implementation, they also teach one subject after the other and the corners are also separated into individual subjects.

Participants were further asked on the possibility of practicing integrated approaches by teachers when planning and delivering classroom instructions to the learners in the context of the Zambian curriculum frame work. Participants established that the possibility is very high and favourable especially that the curriculum frame work incorporates the use of play. SEO 1 thought:

Yes, possibilities are available. However, teachers need to fully understand the aspect of integration both at lesson planning and implementation stage.

SEO 2 said:

It is possible to integrate subjects with reference to the 2013 revised curriculum. It's only that it requires more understanding not only by teachers but every stakeholder in the ministry of education. This can be done through pilots.

Participants were furthermore asked on how they viewed the general perceptions of integrated curriculum in ECE across stakeholders in the country. Participants noted that the general perception was positive, especially with teachers and lecturers. SEO 1 said:

There was willingness by teachers to use the integrated pedagogy and there was room to improve since some teachers try to implement what they think integration was.



SEO 2 said:

There was confusion around the concept of integrated curriculum. This is so because in areas where it was piloted practitioners seemed to practice integration differently from one another especially at lesson implementation level. The planning aspect also had nothing to do with integration.

#### **4.2.3 Findings from Interviews with Resource Centre Coordinators (RCC)**

The participants were asked to explain what they understood about the concept of integrated curriculum in ECE. The participants established that integrated curriculum is the combination of subjects into one lesson. The Provincial Resource Centre Coordinators (PRCC) 1 supposed:

My understanding on this matter of integration is that when subjects are not taught in isolation but together in one lesson then they are being integrated.

PRCC 2 thought:

Integration means blending of different learning areas. So, in relation to the ECE curriculum, I may not comfortably say the curriculum is currently integrated because when I look at the current ECE syllabus it has separate learning areas.

DRCC said:

My understanding of the concept of integrated curriculum is that this is a curriculum that has combined all the learning areas, all study areas and all out comes in such a way that they do not stand out as individual learning areas or outcomes.

Participants were asked on any models used in integrated curriculum. Participants could not identify any model used. They established that both the individualized curriculum and that of integrated use the same models such as schemes, weekly forecasts and lesson plans before teaching and learning takes place. DRCC said:

The same models used in the individualised curriculum were also used in integrated curriculum. For example, such as schemes of work, weekly forecast and the lesson plan before the teacher reaches the pupils.

PRCC 2 observed:

I may not specify the model but from my experience what I know is that an integrated lesson plan (ILP) would be prepared in such a way that the ideas drawn from learning areas are put together were by one cannot easily tell that this is science or social studies. What I mean is that the one reading may see the lesson as a numeracy lesson, yet the same lesson would give indicators of a literacy lesson and at the same time it would seem as an expressive arts lesson based on how it is developed.

PRCC 1 said:

At the moment we don't have a model that we use to plan and implement integrated curriculum. From the Zambian perspective, the 2013 revised curriculum does not talk about integration, but it incorporates play as a teaching and learning pedagogy.

Participants were also asked on how they viewed ECE practitioners' understanding of integrated curriculum. The participants established that practitioners have not fully understood integrated curriculum. PRCC 2 stated that:

As of now practitioners have not fully understood the integrated curriculum (IC). The teachers have the idea because in their lesson

planning, I have seen that they are using one lesson plan but yet they are not integrating the outcomes or subject content but instead they list them as individual subjects on one paper. Practically, that is not integration. The teaching also follows the same pattern of implementing tasks aligned to one outcome of a particular subject one after the other in that order. I have seen that teachers are struggling to understand the concept of integration.

PRCC 1 said:

Both lecturers and teachers understand that the subjects in ECE are not taught in isolation but through the strategy of learning through play (LtP) the activities are simultaneously taught across learning areas.

DRCC said:

As at now teachers and lecturers have not fully understood integrated curriculum. They have the idea but practically I have seen that teachers struggle to understand the concept of integration. For example, when planning teachers write all subject areas of a particular day on one lesson plan or paper but the outcomes and the subject content remain are not integrated.

Participants were further asked on the possibility of practicing integrated approaches by teachers when planning and delivering classroom instructions to the learners in the context of the Zambian curriculum frame work. Participants established that the possibility was very high and favourable. PRCC 1 noted that:

It was very possible at the planning and implementation stage to integrate because learners learn better if the subjects are not taught in isolation. Also, because the current curriculum frame work allows the play pedagogy to be used in the teaching and learning process. The play

approach was most effective when learning concepts were taught together than one after the other. This was evident when children were playing; they incorporated a lot of different concepts at once.

DRCC said:

It is very possible because already the 2013 revised curriculum accommodates LtP method. The LtP approaches are best delivered through integration. Therefore, it is very possible to use an integrated approach and right from planning teachers could integrate.

PRCC 2 supposed that:

Yes, it was very possible. For example, in a pre-mathematics lesson on shapes what could be required is to develop activities that would allow learners to manipulate objects and interact with the actual colours and shapes. With such a lesson in numeracy I would take it that a teacher would draw ideas from language when asking learners what colours the shapes have, pre-mathematics when identifying characteristics of shapes and expressive arts when drawing and colouring the shapes. Therefore, right from planning, a teacher could integrate the activities so that all the skills are encountered in a holistic manner.

Participants were furthermore asked on how they viewed the general perceptions of integrated curriculum in ECE across stakeholders in the country. Participants established that practitioners have a misconception about integrated curriculum because of how they plan and teach integrated lessons. DRCC thought:

Teachers have not fully understood the integration approaches, though the zeal to implement it showed that the idea was right. In ECE, there was a need to practice integrated approaches that were not yet fully

appreciated by stakeholders and our teachers because of the tediousness of integrating from an individualized curriculum point of view.

PRCC 1 said:

I would say integrated curriculum was working well because subject areas were not taught in isolation but combined. Teachers prepare learning corners in their classes where learners interact freely.

PRCC 2 believed that:

The general overview is that integrated curriculum in ECE was a good way to go. This could be so because the holistic way of teaching was very vital since learners at a tender age construct a number of ideas from a set up scenario in relation to various subjects. In that way learners acquire skills and develop in a wider manner.

#### **4.2.3 Findings from Interviews with Collaborating Partners (CP)**

The participants were asked to explain what they understood about the concept of integrated curriculum in ECE. The participants established that integrated curriculum could mean a set of combined courses taught and learned in a school system. Secondly, it can mean a set of approaches and materials used in classroom instructional activities in the teaching and learning process. CP 1 noted that:

I understood integrated curriculum as a curriculum that has a combination of aspects at the point of implementation that does not focus on one subject or learning area.

CP 2 noted that:

Integrated curriculum was the merging of subjects bringing them together instead of leaving them as standalone subjects.

Participants were asked on any models used in integrated curriculum. Participants established that thematic model is one of the models used in integrated curriculum. They specified that this model used a specific theme and integrated other learning areas in the theme at both planning and implementation stage of the lesson. CP 1 said:

There were many models used in an integrated curriculum but in this case, I would point out a thematic model. The model is used to help create themes in which other all learning areas are incorporated.

CP 2 said:

I can say that there were many models that could be used in integrated curriculum. Such models would include explicit modelling, team teaching and co-teaching.

Participants were also asked on how they viewed other ECE practitioners' understanding of integrated curriculum. The participants recognised that ECE teachers write one lesson plan where all learning areas of the particular day on the time table are combined. Participants also noted that practitioners have not fully understood integrated curriculum. CP 2 said:

The teachers still look at subjects as segmented components and standalone regardless of the effort of putting different subject content on one paper or lesson plan.

CP 1 said:

At the planning stage, teachers perceive the lesson plans that they plan as integrated though practical integration is not achieved. Teachers simply

list both subject outcomes and content as individual subjects on one lesson plan.

Participants were further asked on the possibility of practicing integration approaches by teachers delivering classroom instructions to the learners in the context of Zambian curriculum frame work. Participants established that the possibility is very high and favourable especially that the curriculum frame work incorporates the use of play. CP 2 said:

It is very possible for example; efforts were made by a named college of education and its collaborating schools to practice integrated approaches both at planning and implementation stage of the lesson. It proved working and learners were seen acquiring wider skills than before.

CP 1 said:

It is very possible. The 2013 revised curriculum is outcome based and cyclic in nature. The outcomes have possible links and relation in concepts. Therefore, selecting and grouping all related outcomes and merging different subjects and content to be taught in unified lessons.

Participants were furthermore asked on how they viewed the general perceptions of integrated curriculum in ECE across stakeholders in the country. It was noted that participants viewed the general perception as negative. CP 1 said:

This kind of curriculum is not yet appreciated and not being practiced. Stakeholders in the ministry of education do not support it. Also, I feel teachers have knowledge gap and skill of planning integrated activities.

CP 2 said:

I can say that this is an integration of learning areas in terms of planning and teaching though the approach is misunderstood by stakeholders in the ministry.

### **4.3 What Challenges do Early Childhood Teachers face when Developing Integrated Lesson Plans in Early Childhood Education Centres in Primary Schools in Serenje District?**

This research question was answered through interviews by ECE teachers, Senior Education Officer (SEO), District Resource Centre Coordinators (DRCC) and Collaborating Partners (CP). The tool was used to assure adequate detailed data collection in the study so that all the challenges faced by ECE teachers in planning integrated curriculum were presented in the study. Each category of participants presented its own views on the challenges faced by teachers in integrated planning and subsequent questions asked.

#### **4.3.1 Findings from Interviews with Early Childhood Education Teachers**

The participants were asked to bring out their views on the challenges they faced as teachers in developing integrated lesson plans. The participants established the following views: current syllabi used segments the subjects to standalone, scheme forecast still reflect individualised subject outcomes, no consistence on what integration is based, no collaboration during planning and not skilled in planning for integrated approach. Teacher 4 said:

It's a challenge to plan integrated lessons because the syllabi used currently are based on individual standalone subjects, so the outcomes are for individual subjects and not integrated subjects. Also, when a teacher plans, they just assume the flow of concepts would be in a particular manner without any reference. It is really guessing work to tell whether the tasks, content and outcomes are integrated.

Teacher 2 said:

The challenges that we face when planning integrated lesson plans include planning from schemes that are not integrated. When we scheme, we don't integrate. This makes planning a lesson very challenging



because the outcomes are not related especially that the subjects are just picked as presented on the timetable.

Teacher 3 said:

As teachers we face many challenges in planning integrated activities. For example, we do not have any reference materials like books that have already integrated concepts. Furthermore, even some books based on the current 2013 revised curriculum are not available for example, expressive arts.

Teacher 1 said:

In planning integrated activities, a lot of play materials are needed. Now that everyone is looking forward to low-cost materials, they are no longer low cost but expensive and scarce because prices are hiked. This is one other challenge.

Teacher 5 said:

Yes, the coming of National Numeracy Framework (NNF) has brought challenges. NNF is already planned just like literacy. Therefore, incorporating it with literacy is very challenging because the activities for both subjects are not flexible to realignment. Planning Integrated activities from standalone reference materials and syllabi require realignment of outcomes and activities.

Participants were furthermore asked on positive things they experienced using an integrated approach at planning stage of the lesson. They established that they were able to integrate using learning through play approach and locally produced teaching and learning materials. Teacher 1 said:

Learners are able to relate functionality and logic of a lot of objects from society through interaction and manipulation of teaching and learning aids. Also, learners acquire more skills even beyond what we teach just from the interaction with teaching and learning aids. During planning one positive is that time is well managed and utilized. Writing one lesson with integrated activities covering various learning areas allows more time for us teachers to look for materials to create interactive teaching and learning aids from low-cost materials.

Teacher 4 said:

Like the way I plan it myself, I develop activities that accommodate various concepts from various subjects to help my learners understand and acquire skills that they manage to connect and use across subjects.

Teacher 3 said:

In planning, using an integrated approach allows me as a teacher to develop activities that would help me connect to the second lesson. Also, it forces you the teacher to create teaching and learning aids that learners can manipulate in a playful manner and can be used for across the subjects. Using an integrated approach also helped me in coming up with ideas that would make learners understand the concepts because the perspectives are divergent due to integration.

Teacher 2 said:

The positive things that I have experienced are that learners were free to interact, manage own time and use symbols for transitioning from one activity to another.

Teacher 5 said:

The positivity is that an integrated plan requires less time during planning as compared to planning standalone lesson plans.

Participants were additionally asked on any negative experiences in using an integrated approach both in planning and teaching process and how to mitigate the negative experiences. They established that failing to balance learning areas in integrated lessons during planning was a major setback. They also established that in the lesson plan integration of activities does not clearly show. In mitigating the setbacks, participants noted conducting Continuing Professional Development (CPD) meeting, conducting mentorship in planning integrated lessons, access to already integrated curriculum and be trained in how to plan. Teacher 2 said:

One of the negative parts during planning is that integration of activities is not shown. All the steps and games that the learners should perform are not shown on the planed lesson but are only seen during teaching and learning process. Furthermore, I can say that the challenges faced during planning for play include considering learner performance ability in selection of activities for learners, referring to outcomes that are not integrated during planning for play approach and selection of play activities from a scheme forecast that is not integrated. I can say that the challenges can be resolved by firstly developing a detailed integrated scheme forecast by selecting outcomes from the syllabus that have similar concepts across all subjects and integrate them. It can therefore be possible to plan an integrated lesson.

Teacher 3 said:

Coming up with activities that would connect to the second lesson is a setback. For example, developing an activity that has the same or similar concept in literacy and connecting it to a mathematics lesson is a challenge. The challenges I face when planning for a play include lack of play materials, very little help is given to me as an ECE teacher in resource mobilisation. Resolving these challenges requires consented

effort. It should not be left to the ECE teacher only to mobilise for materials.

Teacher 1 said:

Yes, they are negative encounters during planning. Some activities like tours cannot be planned for due to finances and age of learners. Some learners are too young to be accommodated for such activities and if left out parents complain. Also reference books are very few and we completely do not have references that are developed with integrated activities already so that they provide guidance.

Teacher 4 said:

The only negative aspect is referencing material. The syllabus and the text books we refer to support individualised kinds of planning. So, it's a negative to the planning process.

Teacher 5 said:

During planning mainly, the undesirable thing is to plan without enough reference materials. Some subjects have completely no books for referring to when planning, for example, expressive arts.

Participants were further asked on how they can compare the individualized curriculum to an integrated one. It was established that participants preferred integrated curriculum to an individualized curriculum to be used in ECE classroom. Teacher 1 said:

Integrated curriculum does not consume a lot of time, but the individualized curriculum wastes a lot of time. Due to planning demand that individualised curriculum exerts on teachers, they are made to skip some subjects.

Teacher 4 said:

Though involved in planning, integrated approach offered children more exploration, as a result there is wider progress in developmental domains and milestones are stimulated than in individualized curriculum. Individualised curriculum is easy to plan compared to Integrated Curriculum in the sense that activities are easy to be outlined in the individualized curriculum however, the integrated curriculum help the learner in multifaceted skill development that learners capitalize on for future learning.

Teacher 3 said:

I would say integrated curriculum is far much better than the individualized curriculum. This is because in integrated curriculum, a teacher prepares only one lesson as compared to planning five or so lesson plans.

Teacher 2 said:

I can compare the integrated curriculum to that of individualised curriculum in such a way that the integrated curriculum is advantageous over the individualized curriculum. This is because the integrated curriculum does not exert a lot of pressure on the teacher in terms of writing unlike the individualised curriculum.

Teacher 5 said:

The individualized curriculum only focuses on separate subjects so takes a lot of time to plan for lessons while integrated does not require much time in planning.

#### **4.3.2 Finding from Interviews with Senior Education Officer (SEO)**

The participants were asked to bring out their views on the challenges ECE teachers face in developing integrated lesson plans. The participants established that teachers are unskilled in planning integrated lessons; the policy only allows planning standalone lesson plans and no collaboration during planning. SEO 1 said:

ECE teachers are not skilled and untrained in planning integrated approaches. Due to this challenge, outcomes and activities are not effectively integrated in the lesson plans.

SEO 2 said:

One challenge ECE teachers faced is inconsistency in the format used for planned activities. Others would include lesson series in the rationale while others would not, others would even completely omit the rationale. Other formats do not include learning area activities while others would include. The format for the daily programme also is in variety. Some ECE teachers include learning outcomes while others do not. These inconsistencies affect the quality of planned activities.

Participants were furthermore asked on positive things they experienced using an integrated approach. They established that they were able to integrate through learning and through play approach using locally produced teaching and learning materials. SEO 1 said:

It is a positive to have teachers willing and encouraged to plan using play pedagogy through an integrated approach especially that the 2013 curriculum does not show guidance on the aspect of integration.

SEO 2 said:

The positivity about this is that teachers manage to mobilise resources in order to create interactive play materials to be used in integrated lessons.

Participants were additionally asked on negative experiences they observed teachers in using an integrated approach both in planning and teaching process and how to mitigate the negative experiences. They established that in the lesson plan integration of activities does not clearly show. In mitigating the setbacks, participants noted building capacity in teachers on how to plan integrated lessons. SEO 2 said:

The challenge is that the Ministry of Education didn't do an analysis to check the views of teachers and even lecturers about how they appreciated the use of integrated approaches in delivering classroom instructions with regard to challenges and positives.

SEO 1 said:

The challenge is that there was little piloting and testing of the integration approach and see how much it amalgamated with other approaches and see the burnout rate of both the learner and the teacher. There is need to conduct more pilots and tests of the integration approach to see how best the learner can benefit by learning through integrated approaches.

#### **4.3.3 Findings from Interviews with Resource Centre Coordinators (RCC)**

The participants were asked to bring out their views on the challenges ECE teachers faced in developing integrated lesson plans. The participants established that teachers did not put in much effort in planning, they use syllabus that is not integrated, not working together and they lack skill and knowledge to plan integrated lessons. PRCC 1 said:

Currently, the challenge is that ECE teachers do not plan collaboratively.

PRCC 2 said:

One major challenge I have observed is that teachers do not take time to plan integrated ECE lessons. For me what I have observed is that the preparation of ECE lesson plans requires much effort to read. The teachers should be dedicated to ensuring that they put different pieces together I think that's were our teachers have not done a good job it is right at preparation stage that they are supposed to prepare for each and every learning area. Therefore, most of our teachers do not seem to be very creative at the preparation stage.

DRCC said:

Yes, there are challenges. One of the challenges includes not conducting CPDs with teachers in schools that are away from the Boma town due to transport challenges to use to reach teachers in far distant place. So, there is this gap were teachers in the Boma Township make progress because they access CPDs about integration while those in outskirts do not.

Participants were furthermore asked on positive things they experienced seeing teachers using an integrated approach. They established that teachers were able to integrate activities using learning through play approach and play materials. PRCC 2 said:

I have observed that some of our teachers are able to prepare the lesson plan and teaching and learning aids adequately. The prepared integrated lesson plans give a picture to the point that it is clear that quality teaching will be undertaken. Using integration approach in planning also gives teachers enough time for creating teaching and learning aids. I receive a lot of ECE teachers here at the resource centre inquiring about low-cost materials like boxes that may not be useful, so that they reuse them to create teaching and learning aids.

DRCC said:



The positive I have seen is that teachers are ready, and they are willing to learn and improve so once supported we can easily see an improvement and reach out to the rest of the teachers in skilling them on how to plan and use the integrated approach in teaching and learning process.

PRCC 1 said:

Positive things are there, for example integrated approach gives the teacher ample time to craft their play materials because they are only required to plan one lesson in which they would include all particular learning areas of the day.

Participants were additionally asked on any negative experiences they saw teachers using an integrated approach both in planning and teaching process and how to mitigate the negative experiences. They established that failing to develop integrated activities during planning was a major setback. They also established that in the lesson plan integration of activities does not clearly show. In mitigating the setbacks, participants noted conducting mentorship in planning integrated lesson, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) meeting, and access to already integrated curriculum. PRCC 1 said:

Writing skeleton lesson plans, planning without referring to syllabus and other reference books like teachers' guide are the challenges experienced by teachers during planning integrated activities. Also not planning at all is another challenge. Encourage them to refer to the syllabus during planning because the outcomes link to each other across subjects therefore the outcomes can be integrated. In addition, frequent monitoring and mentoring of teachers about planning of integrated lesson is another way to resolve the challenges of planning.

PRCC 2 said:

One major challenge I have observed is the teacher's way of delivering, they take one learning area after the other. According to me it shouldn't be the case, there should be no gaps to show one or two lessons. The teachers should plan and prepare in such a way that they are delivering only one integrated lesson with ideas well connected among particular activities covering skills and content from different learning areas. Learners should not have time to switch and realise that they are learning two or three areas which become a cognitive overload to the learners.

DRCC said:

The negative aspect I have observed is that teachers have no reference materials that show integration of activities and in their lesson plan they still mention subject areas and show that the subjects are still standalone meanwhile their efforts are towards integrated lesson planning therefore, there is that mix-up and confusion.

Participants were further asked on how they would compare individualized curriculum to an integrated curriculum. The study established that participants preferred integrated curriculum to an individualized curriculum to be used in ECE classroom. PRCC 1 said:

Individualised curriculum was taking too much teachers' time when planning while the integrated curriculum gives enough time for teachers to craft play materials and prepare for their class. This is because a teacher in an integrated curriculum is simply required to plan one lesson.

DRCC said:

I would say the integrated curriculum may be better than individualised curriculum because in actual sense learners at ECE level learners do not learn concepts separately. So once they are taught as one, it would help the teacher to plan and the learner to apply skills across subjects as they acquire them.

PRCC 2 said:

According to my experience, for children the integrated curriculum is better because the package is broad, and learners learn that way. So, at the beginning I would go for an integrated curriculum and then move on to individualised curriculum as children move on to higher grades.

#### **4.3.3 Finding from Interviews with Collaborating Partners (CP)**

The participants were asked to bring out their views on the challenges ECE teachers faced in developing integrated lesson plans. The participants established that teachers have a negative attitude towards planning, knowledge gap about integration and lack of support. CP 2 noted that:

Teachers have fewer skills to plan for integration approach to teaching. Also, stakeholders in the ministry do not appreciate the meaning of integration as an approach to teaching, thus negative attitude towards integrated curriculum.

CP 1 said:

The major challenge teacher's face towards planning is negative attitude. Teacher spends less time planning integrated lesson and mobilizing low cost materials for crafting teaching and learning materials.

Participants were furthermore asked on positive things they experienced seeing teachers use integrated approach. They established that teachers were able to integrate using learning through play approach and locally produced teaching and learning materials. CP 1 said:

The positive thing is that teachers managed to use learning through approach and they produced teaching and learning materials that learners could interact with.

CP 2 said:

One positive is that teachers endeavoured to plan using integrated approach in collaborating schools and there was team planning among themselves. Also, lecturers' team planned in order to create confidence.

Participants were additionally asked on any negative experiences in using an integrated approach both in planning and teaching process and how to mitigate the negative experiences. They established that failing to balance learning areas in integrated lessons during planning was a major setback. They also established that in the lesson plan integration of activities does not clearly show. In mitigating the setbacks, participants noted conducting Continuing Professional Development (CPD) meeting, conducting mentorship in planning integrated lessons, access to already integrated curriculum and be trained in how to plan. CP 1 said:

I would highlight one negative; teachers fail to balance learning areas in integrated lessons during planning. Also, the other negative is that integration of activities in the lesson plan does not clearly show.

CP 2 said:

I think the teachers are not out going in creating activities that would accommodate integration of activities. To resolve these challenges consistently bring together all stake holders in the ministry in order to build capacity about integration approaches. Also, to be consistent in communicating issues and way forward about integration approaches.

Participants were further asked on how they can compare the individualized curriculum to an integrated one. It was established that participants preferred integrated curriculum to an individualized curriculum to be used in ECE classroom. CP 1 said:

Integrated learning is better because children learn more, and development is quicker than when children learn independent subjects.

CP 2 said:

Integration is better than individualized approach as learners learn better in a holistic manner.

#### **4.4 What Strategies can Early Childhood Teachers Adopt to Implement Planning Integrated Approaches in Early Childhood Education Centres in Primary Schools in Serenje District?**

This research question was answered through interviews by ECE teachers, Senior Education Officer (SEO), District Resource Centre Coordinators (DRCC) and Collaborating Partners (CP). The research question was also further answered by analysing documents planned by teachers and lesson observation. These tools were used to guarantee adequate data triangulation in the study so that all possible strategies in planning integrated curriculum are elicited by participants. Each category of participants presented its own views on the possible strategies to be adopted by ECE teachers in integrated planning and subsequent questions asked.

##### **4.4.1 Findings from Interviews with Early Childhood Education Teachers**

The participants were asked to elicit their views on strategies ECE teachers can adopt in planning integrated lesson plans. The participants established the following strategies: collaborative planning and CPDs on integrated planning. ECE Teacher 2 said:

I can say that majorly we can adopt collaboration and CPDs in order to help each other to develop quality integration in our lesson plans, as teachers we need collaboration strategies for example, WhatsApp groups, research, inquiry communication and physical team planning.

ECE teacher 4

I would say strategies such as collaboration and inquiry can be adopted by us ECE teachers during planning in that they help scrutinize and critic

each other's thoughts. So being alone and planning alone would just make teachers stuck in their own ideas.

Teacher 3 said:

The strategy that I could employ as an ECE teacher that would help in planning is research using the internet. The internet has vast amounts of information that can be adapted and used to plan integrated lessons.

Teacher 1 said:

I would say the strategy of consulting each other and forming working groups would help us improve planning integrated lessons. This is because consulting each other helps sharpen each other's' skills and creates confidence.

Teacher 5 said:

We can employ LtP approach in integrated planning through adopting strategies such as songs, puzzles, storytelling and games to enhance integration of subject content in planned integrated lesson.

Participants were also asked on the importance of teacher collaboration during integrated planning in ECE, the support received from the Ministry of Education and supporting partners to enhance integrated planning. The participants established that collaboration enhanced planning skills, shared ideas about ways of planning integrated lessons. Participants also established that the ministry of education does not directly support integrated planning other than encouraging teachers to use learning through play. Teacher 4 said:

There are a lot of ways in which collaboration takes place for example, planning for CPDs as a zone and a district. However, I am alone here at school as an ECE teacher, so I don't receive a lot of help from the

teachers in the primary section during CPDs. In fact, if it is an ECE CPD then I am always the one offering the advice. We received support from the ministry through a meeting about how to go about an ECE class, however, not direct information about integration.

Teacher 2 said:

It is very important to collaborate during planning because it sharpens planning skills. Also, teachers with challenges are helped and they are eventually upscale their integration skills. We also received support in learning through and reference books for ECE, but no direct support is given towards integration both at planning and teaching stages.

Teacher 3 said:

Collaboration during planning helps teachers to share ideas in so many areas for example, crafting play materials, subject content and outcomes that can be combined for acquisition of particular skills.

Teacher 1 said:

Teacher collaboration has helped teachers and I very much because there is exchange of ideas about planning, stopping procrastination and creating time to plan.

Teacher 5 said:

The importance of teacher collaboration is that it brings about different ideas of planning, delivery and crafting play materials.

Participants were asked too on the support received from ministry towards enhancing integrated planning, choice of approaches and planning models during planning. The participants

established that they have not received any direct support from the ministry to enhance integrated approaches. They also established that integrated approaches, though not supported, offer wider learning, stimulation to learners, builds capacity to both teachers and learners on how concepts are linked to each other and limits teachers from skipping subject content. Participants could not, however, recognise any model used during integrated planning. The participants referred schemes, daily program and lesson plans to models. Teacher 1 said:

I think I am more comfortable with the integrated approach because it allows a teacher more time to create interactive play materials for the learners. During planning I used models like house, car, hospital and play Park.

Teacher 2 said:

I would go for an integrated approach because this approach supports learning through play. The planning models that we use are those that support learning through play such as puzzles, traditional games, and songs. We also bring in gender responsive pedagogy where learners can know that what a boy can do even a girl do. This helps to break traditional barriers such as only a boy can drive.

Teacher 3 said:

At the moment there is no support received from the ministry of education to directly support integrated curriculum. In my choice between the two, I would adopt the integrated approach because it helps me as a teacher to come up with ideas to connect to other subject content. About the models, I can say at the moment there is no model that I can use in planning integrated curriculum.

Teacher 4 said:



I would say I have not received any direct support about integrated planning. I would adopt the integrated approach due to the relationship to the manner of life and learning process of children in society. For the planning models, I don't know any model for planning integrated curriculum so I wouldn't use any.

Teacher 5 said:

Yes, we receive support in terms of finances for ECE. These finances help in buying resources and materials to help the teacher to plan. With choices about approaches to use, I would choose integrated approach over individualised approach because it uses less time in planning. For the models I would use the syllabus, and other referencing materials such as NNF.

#### **4.4.2 Finding from Interviews with Senior Education Officer (SEO)**

The participants were asked to elicit support offered to ECE teachers to enhance integrated planning and their views on strategies ECE teachers can adopt in developing integrated lesson plans. The participants established that they do not completely offer direct support about integrated curriculum because there are a lot of gaps that the ministry required to bridge if teachers are to be supported. For example, knowledge gap among teachers about how to integrate activities and material production that can guide about integration approach. They also established the following strategies: play pedagogy (puzzles, role and pretend play), explicit modelling, collaborative planning and use of planning models for example, thematic model. SEO 1 said:

Currently there is only one police which supports planning independent learning areas therefore, going by that we do not provide any support towards planning integrated lesson plans. We are, however, aware that in some schools the teachers plan using integrated approach and we have

educated those that we found planning integrated lessons on how they should go about it.

SEO 2 said:

I am currently not aware of any support that ministry offer to teachers to encourage them in planning integrated lesson plan.

Participants were further asked on methodologies and teaching strategies teachers would use to support integration of ECE classroom instructions. It was established that participants proposed play methods. SEO 1 said:

There are several methodologies that support integrated approaches for example; discussions, journals, storytelling, debuts joy phonics, group activities and field trip.

SEO 2 said:

In the first place I have not been involved so much in monitoring the teachers using integrated approaches. Therefore, I cannot recommend any strategy.

Participants were as well asked on the importance of teacher collaboration and on planning models that could be used during integrated planning in ECE. The participants established that collaboration enhanced planning skills, shared ideas about ways of planning integrated lessons. Participants also established that ministry of education does not directly support integrated planning other than encouraging teachers to use learning through play. SEO 1 said:

If there is something that teachers need is collaboration. Once the teachers understand the models and we agree on what to use, collaboration would be very critical thus building capacity and strengthening integration through collaboration.

SEO 2 said:

My take is that teacher collaboration is very critical regardless of the type of curriculum being used. So, it does not matter whether it is integrated curriculum or not.

Participants were as well asked on planning models that can be used for integrated planning and which approaches, they would prefer to be used in ECE. The participants established that. SEO 1 said:

We can use several models when planning integrated lessons depending on how we want to integrate the learning areas. One example of a planning model that we can use is a thematic model. This model involves making themes in which different learning areas can now be incorporated and taught as one lesson under the particular theme.

#### **4.4.3 Findings from Interviews with Resource Centre Coordinators (RCC)**

The participants were asked to elicit their views on strategies ECE teachers can adopt in developing integrated lesson plans. The participants established the following strategies: play pedagogy (puzzles, role and pretend play) and collaborative planning. PRCC 1 said:

In planning an integrated lesson, the following methodologies can be adopted: Discussion, research and projects methodologies. These methodologies support integration

PRCC 2 said:

According to my experience, to be included in integrated lessons include; learner centered approaches where learning is at the centre such as learning through play as pointed out by Vygotsky.

DRCC said:

In developing integrated lesson plans teachers require to adopt strategies like collaboration and using a matrix to develop an integrated scheme from individualized syllabus. These strategies would help sharpen the structure, format and skill of planning integrated lesson plans.

Participants were as well asked on the importance of teacher collaboration during integrated planning in ECE, the support received from the Ministry of Education and supporting partners to enhance integrated planning. The participants established that collaboration enhanced planning skills, shared ideas about ways of planning integrated lessons. Participants also established that ministry of education does not directly support integrated planning other than encouraging teachers to use learning through play. PRCC 2 said:

The importance is that when you are sharing ideas you learn a lot. As shared already, the integrated planning regarding ECE lesson plan has not yet reached there, so if we have to achieve in that area we need to learn together. I will give an example of a catch-up program that we are following for a particular school just here in Serenje, they have a WhatsApp platform used for team planning before going into a classroom. So, for me it is a good idea to share as compared to one teacher sitting to plan because by team planning teachers would learn a lot. In receiving support towards integration, ministry guided that we need to pause and look at integration carefully so for now we are not receiving any support towards integration but there is support received towards enhancement of teaching and learning process in ECE for example, building of learning hats in ECE community schools in Serenje district took place.

PRCC 1 said:

There is professional growth and development as the teachers share skills and knowledge about integrated planning. In terms of support, we do not receive direct support towards integrated planning.

DRCC said:

This will quickly sharpen the skills and knowledge as they share and plan collaboratively. This is because knowledge shared is the best way of building capacity in one another and the best way of doing things.

Participants were asked too on the choice of approaches and planning models used during planning of integrated lessons. The participants established that integrated approach offers wider learning, stimulation to learners, builds capacity to both teachers and learners on how concepts are linked to each other and limits teachers from skipping subject content. PRCC 1 said:

In choosing between individualized and integrated approach, I would go for integrated approach because it is rich in content and allows a lot of time for craft work. In planning, models are not there but I can come up with something that supports learning through play such as simultaneous activities.

DRCC said:

I would adopt an integrated approach because from my experience I found that learners learn easily and for teachers it gives them more time to craft and prepare teaching and learning materials. Also in planning, I can say the model to be used should be that which reflect integration however, I do not one yet.

PRCC 2 said:

I would go for integrated approach if I am given a choice to choose between integrated and individualized. This is because learners learn in a broader manner hence; they acquire skills across subjects that they hinge on as they progress in their learning. For the planning model, cannot clearly figure out one but I feel the idea should be eminent from the curriculum.

#### **4.4.4 Findings from Interviews with Collaborating Partners (CP)**

The participants were asked to elicit their views on strategies ECE teachers can adopt in developing integrated lesson plans. The participants established the following strategies: play pedagogy (puzzles, role and pretend play), explicit modelling, collaborative planning and use of planning models for example, thematic model. CP 1 said:

In planning integrated lessons what should be considered first is the lesson approach that would be used in the teaching and learning process. Since the *Zambian curriculum framework* highlights the play approach to learning, teachers should then plan their integrated lessons with strategies such as group work, puzzles, free and guided plays where learners can interact with more materials that they can manipulate.

CP 2 said:

Teachers can use LtP as a method and strategy to support integration of ECE classroom instructions. Play is a way and life for children. Therefore, learning would not be stressful for children if taken in a playful manner.

Participants were as well asked on the importance of teacher collaboration during integrated planning in ECE. The participants established that collaboration enhanced planning skills, shared ideas about ways of planning integrated lessons. Participants also established that ministry of education does not directly support integrated planning other than encouraging teachers to use learning through play. CP 1 said:

Since they are challenges around integrated planning and lessons, solutions and motivation can be found through collaboration. Support is provided through capacity building and CPDs.

CP 2 said:

Collaboration enhances learning from each other through sharing ideas, skills and knowledge therefore it is very important for teachers to collaborate.

Participants were asked too on the choice of approaches and planning models during planning. The participants established that integrated approach offers wider learning, stimulation to learners, builds capacity to both teachers and learners on how concepts are linked to each other and limits teachers from skipping subject content. Participants also recognised thematic model during integrated planning. CP 1 said:

There are several models, but I would highlight models pointing to teaching and learning for example, explicit, teaming teaching, and co-teaching. For approaches I would say teachers should use integrated approach because it builds capacity of learners and teachers, protects teachers from being lazy because they are mandated to bring in different subject content unlike in individualized planning were learners can easily skip subject content.

CP 2 said:

I would prefer an integrated approach to be used in ECE because it offers learners holistic learning and wider acquisition of skills. It is a better way of learning for children because it is less stressful.

#### **4.4.5 Findings from Document Analysis with Early Childhood Education Teachers**

The participants were asked to avail themselves of their planned documents such as schemes of work, daily programmes and lesson plans. It was established that all the documents did not contain any integrated content. This was evidenced by analysing the schemes of work, daily programme and lesson plans. The documents indicated that the outcomes and content were listed as particular subjects as outlined in the ECE syllabus.

#### **4.4.6 Findings from Lesson Observations with Early Childhood Education Teachers**

The participants were asked to discuss the findings of the observed lesson. It was established that the focus areas (parts of the lesson) were achieved although the lesson activities were not integrated because teaching and learning followed the planned format of implementing the first listed subject and outcome on the lesson plan.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the findings of the study on teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje district in Zambia. Findings are presented using the research question as themes and further presented using the category of each participant who participated in this study.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 Overview

This chapter presents the discussion of findings in relation to the literature review and theory presented earlier in this study on teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje district of Zambia. The discussion was presented using the themes from the research objectives.

#### 5.2 How Early Childhood Education Teachers Describe Integrated Curriculum in Early Childhood Education Centres.

The collected data of the study uncovered that participants description of integrated curriculum varied. The study established that Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers recognised that integrated curriculum is the combination of two or more subject content in one lesson. It recognized that teachers also explained integrated curriculum as the combined, fused, blended, merged and linked set of approaches and materials used in classroom instructional activities in the teaching and learning process. Hall-Kenyon and Smith (2013) supported the findings of the study by talking about a shared definition of curriculum integration. He supposed that continued differing notions of what it means to integrate academic subjects during instructional planning was clear among teachers because early childhood teachers used a wide array of terms when discussing the construct: inter-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, trans-disciplinary, fused, blended, connected, shared, thematic, networked, integrated, sequenced, webbed, immersed, unified, nested, coordinated and threaded. This affected planning quality of integration.

The study further established that the possibility of integrating classroom instructions in the Zambian context in Early Childhood Education (ECE) was very high and favourable especially that the curriculum frame work incorporates the use of play pedagogy in the teaching and learning process. The findings of the study were in tandem with Boehme (2017) whose findings showed that reading and understanding the curriculum document is vital to planning. From this, Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers require to extensively read and understand both the

curriculum framework and the Early Childhood Education (ECE) syllabus if they were to make headways of implementing integrated curriculum in ECE. In addition, Nakawa (2019) revealed that the applicability of guided play in early childhood classes involved too many physical activities such as dance, games and songs without being attentive to academic skills that the curriculum intends to impart in Early Childhood learners. From the findings, the study therefore deduced that teachers' perceptions on integrated early childhood education curriculum were positive because they recognised that integrated curriculum provided holistic development of learners' developmental domains and milestones much needed for the future learning.

The findings of the study also established that the Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers and other practitioners for example; Early Childhood Education (ECE) lecturers combined all learning areas of the particular day on the timetable in one planned lesson. These results are in agreement with Mutseekwa (2021) whose study showed that teacher educators coincidentally integrated STEM practices in Science lessons rather than planned. Some participants recognized that Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers and lecturers misunderstood integrated curriculum and the study established that the Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers planned integrated lessons in form of a list and taught in the same order with subjects showing as standalone.

The study further established that Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers could not identify any model used in integrated curriculum. They specified that the individualized curriculum and the integrated one used the same models. The study, therefore, established that ECE teachers assumed that they used models of integrated approaches both at planning and implementation stages of the teaching and learning process. The results were in line with Zain, Muniandy and Hashim (2016) whose findings showed that teachers did not frequently use the Instructional System Development (ISD) models in their instructional planning process because it gave a negative impact on classroom instructional planning. Therefore, a Classroom-Based Instructional Design (CID) model was developed for instructors and teachers in the process of designing their lessons. Further support comes from Akibetal (2020) whose study recommends academics and practitioners to extensively comprehend the nature of the ten curriculum models before making implementation tools and applying them in a classroom environment for learning. The scholar

indicates that there were three phases of integration: preparation, implementation and culmination stages. This follows that; teachers should use models in developing integrated lesson plans. For example, a thematic model is one among ten integration models proposed by Fogarty (1991) that facilitates the structure flow of integrated activities in a lesson. The model allows a teacher to bring together subject content from various subjects under one lesson using themes. Other models may include Classroom-Based Instructional Design (CID) model. If such models were used, the Early Childhood Teacher was likely to effectively plan integrated lessons that foster learning.

The foregoing discussions were in line with the first principle; situated practice of the theory New London Group 1996 by Cazden, Cop, Fairclough, Gee, Kalantzis, Kress, Like, Luke, Michaels, & Martin (1996) which state that students' real-world experiences and situating meaning- making in authentic context must be built on in the teaching and learning process. The principle goes further to state that learners are taken through the processes that yield the desired knowledge, for example, projects, field trips and experiments. From the discussion, it was clear that ECE teachers were able to incorporate the principle into the teaching and learning process despite the principle not being reflected in the 2015 ECE curriculum. This was done by way of setting up learning corners with situated authentic various contexts that learners explored and experienced to make meaning. In this view, the principle therefore, covers what the teachers were implementing in classrooms because they knew it was theoretically relevant; hence, they were able to implement the inclusion of the integrated approaches in the classroom.

### **5.3 Challenges Early Childhood Teachers Face when Developing Integrated Lesson Plans in Early Childhood Education Centres**

The study established that ECE teachers faced the following challenges during planning: non availability of integrated syllabus, planned standalone schemes of work, no consistence on what integration is based, no collaboration during planning and not skilled in planning for integrated approach. The findings of the study were supported by Zama (2021) whose results divulged that lack of physical space, teaching and learning materials and lack of support from the department of basic education negatively impacted integrated planning process. This demonstrated that teachers lacked materials with already integrated activities on which to base their planning.

The study established that teachers lacked capacity to plan integrated activities or lesson plans. This resulted in ECE teachers to assume own flow of concepts when planning without any reference. It was really guessing work to tell whether the tasks, content and outcomes are integrated. These findings were also in agreement with John (2015) whose findings indicated that the introduction of themes was not the only support that teachers needed. Teachers were not trained to follow a plan while teaching integrated lessons and the study further showed that learning resources were scarce in poor areas. Another scholarly study in support of the study findings was Lyublinskaya & Tournaki (2014) whose results showed that most recent studies indicated that teacher preparation and training required courses that integrate the teaching of all components which included content knowledge on a subject matter, pedagogy skills and technology skills. The implication was that when planning ECE teachers should not guess the structure flow of integrated activities and content but instead employ models to help structure the lesson activities and content. This also implies that teachers require more Continuing Professional Developments (CPD) on integration approaches from ministry of education through the directorate of early childhood education.

Other results of the study established that the policy allowed Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers only to plan standalone lesson plans. This resulted in Senior Education Officers (SEO) not to give support to the Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher to enhance integrated planning skills. Bawani, Mphahlele and Ramashego (2021) agreed to the findings of the study when claims were made that policy transformation on conducting teacher training such as the use of a needs assessment protocol was needed for effective implementation on Pre-primary Curriculum Framework (PCF). In regard of the foregoing, the ministry of education through the directorate of early childhood education should come up with a flexible policy in form of statutory instrument (SI) to allow planning and implementation of integrated curriculum at classroom level.

The study further established that teachers did not put in much effort in planning. They used syllabuses that were not integrated, not working together and they lacked skill and knowledge to plan integrated lessons. The study of Dewi, Lengkanawati, & Purnawarman (2019) supported these findings when they indicated the foremost reason for teachers' inability to effectively

integrate technology in teaching and learning process was lack of integration knowledge and skills as in designing classroom instructional plans. This implied therefore, that Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers should enhance collaboration to improve skills and knowledge of integrated planning. Collaboration can be enhanced for example through use of opportunity links created through memorandum of understanding between In-service and pre-service structures, WhatsApp forums and Google meet to mention but a few.

The preparation of ECE lesson plans required much effort to read and collaboratively plan. Teachers should be dedicated to ensuring that they put different pieces together and be very creative at the preparation stage. This is evidenced by Drake (2015) whose study investigated integrated planning. His findings revealed that the teachers realised the importance of making time available for the development of their planning strategies in the interest of young children and developed planning strategies of integrated activities for teaching and learning. The strategy became known as to Know/Do/Be (KDB). Boehme (2017) additionally supports the study findings as he argued that reading the curriculum document was very vital in the planning process. This was because planning for integration was deemed an inquiry approach as teachers needed to research what children knew as a basis for development of lesson plans. In line with the above findings, ECE teachers should dedicate more time to planning and creating play materials for use in integrated activities or lessons. This could be done through creating a policy that mandated ECE teachers to meet at zone level during the midterm break to plan and create play materials.

The study also uncovered another major setback; ECE teachers failing to balance learning areas in integrated lessons during planning. This resulted in integration of activities not clearly showing when planned. The study is supported by Sias, Juth & Seifert (2017) who talked about challenges of not integrating many content areas. The argument was that lesson plans reviewed no attempt to integrate curriculum from outside content areas and even on content areas. Lesson plans showed partial integration and no lesson plan had completely integrated content. In view of the forgoing, Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers should use a matrix of mapping all related outcomes and subject content from various subjects. This will balance the learning areas that are integrated in a particular lesson thus alleviating the imbalance.

The study also established that another major challenge Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers' face towards planning is negative attitude. It is noted that teachers spend less time planning integrated lessons and mobilizing low cost materials for crafting teaching and learning materials. This results in activities not clearly showing and stands out at both planning and implementation stages. The findings are supported by Samwimbila (2017) whose results revealed negative attitudes towards the execution of the Social Studies Revised Curriculum by teachers and departmental head teachers. The scholar argued that there is the need for teachers to be provided with opportunities for them to participate in curriculum formulation and review. In view of the forgoing, Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers should dedicate the use of integrated models in lesson planning. This helps to structure the activities in a particular order as proposed in the model unlike using complete guess work when planning for integrated approaches.

Another challenge established by the study is planning for play activities. The study results indicate that ECE teachers are faced with the challenge of planning age appropriate play activities, play infrastructure, policy guideline on play based strategies and understaffing. These findings are supported by Lungu and Matafwali (2020) whose results show challenges such as curriculum overload, lack of age-appropriate play infrastructure and lack of implementation guidelines on play based approaches. The scholars recommended that Ministry of Education should provide guiding principles on implementation of play based teaching and learning in early childhood education. In this regard, the implications are that ECE teachers should be capacity-built with the skills of crafting play materials through Continuing Professional Development (CPD). There should also be wide distribution of 'Tool Kit' a booklet published by ministry of education to help Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers craft and plan for play materials.

The study established that participants preferred integrated curriculum to an individualized curriculum to be used in ECE classroom because they noted that integrated learning is better because children learn more, and development is quicker than when children learn independent subjects. They further indicated that Integration is better than individualized approach as learners learn better in a holistic manner. The participants established that there is no policy to support integrated planning approach in ECE other than the revised curriculum mentioning the use of

play approach to teaching ECE. These study findings are upheld by Mulebwente (2022) when he talked about policy and implementation in ECE. The scholars' study findings highlighted that there were no guidelines on ECE implementation in both government and private schools and non-availability of ECE trained teachers. In this light, a flexible policy and identification of one model from among the ten integrated models by Fogarty (1991) will help facilitate implementation of integrated approaches in Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers.

The discussion presented are opposed to the second principles overt instruction and critical framing of the theory New London Group by Cazden, Cop, Fairclough, Gee, Kalantzis, Kress, Like, Luke, Michaels & Martin (1996) which states that learners construct knowledge from what they already know. The principle further posits that teachers and instructors are required to identify learners' specific needs for additional consideration. From the discussion, it is clear that teachers were unable to incorporate the principles in to the teaching and learning process because they could not create learning activities which had incorporated knowledge and skills that learners already knew, they could not identify learners specific needs for additional considerations and they had challenges in guiding learners to critical framing a principle that states that learners stand back from what they have learnt and view it critically in relation to its context and are guided to analyze and question the ideologies at hand and their relevance. In this regard, the principle comes to disagree with how teachers ended and conclude the learning activities created in authentic and social context because they could not manage to ask common sense reflective questions that would allow learners to stand back and critically reflect on the learning experience in terms of relevance and ideologies. This, therefore, entails that although learners were aware of the principle situated practice they were not aware of the principles overt instructions and critical framing hence they had challenges in planning for the integrated approaches hence affecting also the implementation part of it. Consequently, understanding the principles overt instruction and critical framing as the theory proposes provides teachers with how to deal with the challenges of planning integrated lessons.

#### **5.4 Strategies Early Childhood Teachers can Adopt to Implement Planning Integrated Approaches in Early Childhood Education Centres**

The study established that strategies like collaborative planning and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on integrated planning to be adopted to implement planning integrated approaches. Participants suggested that majorly, collaboration and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) can be adopted in order to help each other to develop quality integration of lesson plans for example collaboration strategies such as WhatsApp groups, research and inquiry forums and physical team planning. The findings of the study are supported by Fisser and Thijis (2015). Findings of the study suggested that teachers considered eight practices and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. The practices included among them collaboration and cultural skills and self- regulation. In view of the above, ECE teachers have indicated willingness to use integrated approaches. The teachers can therefore be encouraged to adopt the available strategies so that they improve integrated planning skills and knowledge.

The study further established that participants further suggested that Learning through Play (LTP) approach in integrated planning can be taken on through adopting strategies such as discussions, journals, storytelling, field trips, debuts joy phonics, group activities songs, puzzles, and games to enhance integration of subject content in planned integrated lessons. The study findings are supported by Cevikbas, Konig and Rothland (2023) who indicated that teachers' competence in lesson planning can be developed through review of empirical evidence. The scholar also talks about challenges that may be faced during lesson planning, planning designs and practices that can be employed. The study results showed that lesson planning is fundamental to the teaching of all subjects in school and teachers can acquire planning competence through training with initial teacher education and professional development. In this light, ECE lecturers in colleges of education to be capacity belt with integration skills and knowledge so that students acquire integration skills during initial training. This will also help bridge the gap between happenings in the in-service structure and pre-service.

The study also established that participants suggested integrated curriculum models be adopted because they provide a road map on how integration of activities can be effectively done. Participants exemplified thematic model. It was argued that this model involves making themes in which different learning areas can now be incorporated and taught as one lesson under the particular theme. The findings of the study are supported by Li and Chen (2017) whose findings



indicated that the practice of blending curricula modes such as trilingual immersion integrated curriculum is because of combining theme-based integrated curriculum with an early trilingual programme in China. The scholar argued that ECC reforms; culturally appropriate practice, (sensitive to local context and not overly dependent on European or American ideas); contextually appropriate practice should be developed to achieve meaningful design of ideas for meaningful teaching and learning. In view of the above findings, implementing play pedagogy through integration approaches allows flexibility of contextual appropriate practice. Children come with them a variety of skills from society that can be incorporated as stepping stone or leverage to the next skill acquisition required. Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to plan integrated lessons and implement them as required to facilitate wider knowledge and skill acquisition.

It was also established that integrated approaches though not supported by Ministry of Education, offer wider learning, stimulation to learners, builds capacity to both teachers and learners on how concepts are linked to each other and limits teachers from skipping subject content. The study findings are supported by Janssen and Lazonder (2016) whose views suggest that infused integration help teachers in designing technology-based lesson plans. In the study the groups were given varied integrated support to see the implication. The results showed that the group that received integrated support had more integrated pedagogical and content-related justifications and higher quality lesson plans than the group who received separate specific subject support. This means that teachers require specific integration support with a system integration model already in place to show and guide the parameters of integration needed. In view of this thought, Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers should be helped to understand the models of integration so that integration of activities is in tandem with the particular model to improve integration.

The discussion presented are opposed to the third principle; transformed practice of the theory New London Group by Cazden, Cop, Fairclough, Gee, Kalantzis, Kress, Like, Luke, Michaels & Martin (1996) which states that using the three principles; situated practice, overt instruction, and critical framing all together encourages reflection. Furthermore, in the forgoing discussion ECE teachers were unable to use reflection and collaboration as strategies to help improve planning

skills and knowledge about integrated approaches. It is; therefore, clear that ECE teachers were unable to incorporate strategies like collaboration, integrated models in the process of planning integrated lessons. In this regard, the principle comes to disagree with how teachers structured their planned learning activities through guessing without using any model to guide the structure of the planned lessons. Consequently, understanding the principle transformed practice of the pedagogical theory New London Group 1996 provides teachers to appreciate strategies like using the integrated models to plan integrated lessons.

### **5.5. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented and discussed findings of the study on teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje district of Zambia. It has also highlighted major tenets of approaches that can ensure effective implementation of integrated approaches in Early Childhood Education in schools.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Overview**

The previous chapter presented the discussion of findings on teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje district of Zambia. This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

#### **6.2 Conclusion**

Conclusions of the study can be drawn from the previous presented discussion of findings in chapter five (5) on teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje district of Zambia. The following conclusions are made:

The first objective established the early childhood teachers' views about planning integrated curriculum in Early Childhood Education centers in primary schools in Serenje district of Zambia. The study discovered that teachers understood integrated curriculum as the combination of two or more subject content in one lesson. They acknowledged the possibility of integrating classroom instructions without altering the Early Childhood Education 2015 syllabus and the Zambia National Curriculum Framework (ZNCF). The Early Childhood Education teachers also recognised that integrated approaches help learners learn in a holistic manner hence learners acquire a wider range of skills simultaneously. The study concludes that Early Childhood Education teachers had positive perceptions about the integrated early childhood education curriculum.

The subsequent objective sought to establish the challenges Early Childhood Teachers face when developing integrated lesson plans in Early Childhood Education centers. The study established that the challenges included using the standalone subject syllabus; Early Childhood Education centers teachers struggled to plan integrated lessons using the standalone subject syllabus. They developed scheme forecasts that did not integrate subject outcomes and content and they prepared partially integrated lesson plans. The study also found that ECE teachers were not

skilled in planning integrated approaches; they simply listed the subject content from various subjects in one lesson plan. It was also found that the teachers did not collaborate during planning, and they did not receive any support about integration from the Ministry of Education. From these findings, it can be concluded that planning integrated lessons from the current syllabus was challenging. However, teachers appreciated the integrated curriculum. Therefore, a well-coordinated manner of developing integrated lessons using the current 2015 Early Childhood Education centers syllabus can be arrived at. That is to say, a matrix clustering all related outcomes and concepts across all subjects can be made in order to develop a common integrated scheme of work from which integrated lesson plans can be developed.

The last objective looked at strategies which early childhood teachers can adopt to implement planning integrated approaches in Early Childhood Education centers. The study established that integration strategies can be grouped in twofold: firstly, a group of strategies that can be used to improve planning of integrated lessons such as teacher collaboration during planning through collaboration links such as E-mail, WhatsApp, Telegram and Google meet. Secondly, a group of strategies like Classroom-Based Instructional Design (CID) model known as; Know/Do/Be (KDB) model, that involves a teacher creating activities initially known to the children and progress to unknown. In view of the foregoing, the study concludes that both strategies can be used to improve integrated planning.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Arising from the offered conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- A. Schools which piloted implementation of integrated approaches should be made centers of good integrated practices and help the teachers from these schools to upscale their integration skills. This will help make these schools cascade the integration knowledge and skills to other schools.
- B. Ministry of Education (MoE) through the directorate of early childhood education (DECE) to come up with a flexible policy and identify one model from among the ten integrated models by Fogarty (1991) which will facilitate implementation of integrated approaches in ECE centers.

- C. Ministry of education through District Resource Centers (DRC) and Colleges of Education to develop a common integrated scheme of work by use of a matrix that will map up related outcomes and subject content across subjects. This will help to develop integrated lesson plans.
- D. Revive already existing collaboration links and memorandum of understanding between In-service and pre-service structures in order to help reduce working gap and protocols that may hinder fast scaling up integration skills and use colleges of education together with their demonstration schools as master trainers to facilitate CPD meetings about integration approaches.

#### **6.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented conclusion and recommendations of the study on teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum of Serenje district in Zambia.

#### **Area of Further Study**

There is more room for future research about the study. The areas that the study did not exploit include the impact of integrated curriculum on the development of children aged zero to three years, the impact of integrated curriculum on academic performance to children aged three to seven years of age.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview Guide for ECE teachers

#### BIO-DATA

Respondent No.....

Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ]

Type of Programme Pursued: Diploma [ ] Degree [ ]

#### Objective one

1. What is your understanding of the concept of integrated curriculum in relation to ECE?
2. What models, if any, are used in an integrated curriculum? Kindly share your experiences.
3. How do practitioners in ECE conceptualize integrated curriculum?
4. How feasible is integration of curriculum or instruction in the Zambian context particularly in ECE? Share your experiences as a teacher.
5. What is the general overview of integrated curriculum in ECE?

#### Objective two (I SAID 5-6 QUESTIONS ONLY, REMOVE SOME)

1. What challenges do you face in the planning process of integrated curriculum as a way of promoting holistic development of the child?
2. What positive things have you experienced using an integrated approach to planning classroom instruction to ECE learners? Share your experiences.
3. What negative things have you observed using this approach in planning classroom instruction?
4. What challenges do you face during planning for play as a method aimed at supporting integration of instruction to learners?
5. How can these challenges be resolved?

#### Objective three

1. How do you compare an individualized curriculum to an integrated curriculum? Share your experiences.
2. What is the importance of teacher collaboration in integrated planning in ECE?
3. What kind of support do you receive from the Ministry of Education and supporting partners to enhance integrated planning? Share your experiences.
4. If you were offered a choice to plan for instruction, which approach would you adopt the traditional individualized method or an integrated approach?
5. What planning model can you use for integrated planning? Share your position.

**Note:** Extension questions will be included as needed to elicit more information and clarity.

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide for Resource Centre Coordinators**

### **BIO-DATA**

Respondent No.....

Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ]

Qualification of Respondent: Degree [ ] Masters Degree [ ] PhD [ ] Prof [ ]

Length of Service.....

Programme trained in.....

### **Objective one**

1. What is your understanding of the concept of integrated curriculum in relation to ECE?
2. What models, if any are used in an integrated curriculum? Kindly share your experiences.
3. How do practitioners (teachers and lecturers) in ECE conceptualize integrated curriculum?
4. How feasible is integration of curriculum or instruction in the Zambian context particularly in ECE? Share your experiences.
5. What is the general overview of integrated curriculum in ECE?

### **Objective two**

1. What challenges do you face in ensuring that teachers plan to use integrated curriculum as a way of promoting holistic development of the child?
2. What positive things have you experienced seeing teachers using an integrated approach to planning classroom instruction to ECE learners? Share your experiences.
3. What negative things have you observed seeing teachers using this approach in planning classroom instruction?
4. How can these challenges be resolved?
5. How do you compare an individualized curriculum to an integrated curriculum? Share your experiences.

### **Objective three**

1. What methodologies and teaching strategies would teachers use to support integration of ECE classroom instruction?
2. What is the importance of teacher collaboration in integrated planning in ECE?
3. What kind of support do you receive from the Ministry of Education and supporting partners to enhance integrated planning? Share your experiences.
4. If you were offered a choice to plan for instruction, which approach would you adopt between the traditional individualized method or an integrated approach?
5. What planning model can you use for integrated planning? Share your position.

**Note:** Extension questions will be included as needed to elicit more information and clarity.

## **Appendix C: Interview Guide for CDC and ECE Directorate officials**

### **BIO-DATA**

Respondent No.....

Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ]

Qualification of Respondent: Degree [ ] Masters Degree [ ] PhD [ ] Prof [ ]

Length of Service.....

Programme trained in.....

### **Objective one**

1. What is your understanding of the concept of integrated curriculum in relation to ECE?
2. What models, if any are used in an integrated curriculum? Kindly share your experiences.
3. How do practitioners (teachers and lecturers) in ECE conceptualize integrated curriculum?
4. How feasible is integration of curriculum or instruction in the Zambian context particularly in ECE?
5. What is the general overview of integrated curriculum in ECE?

### **Objective two**

6. What challenges do you face in ensuring that teachers plan to use integrated curriculum as a way of promoting holistic development of the child?
7. What positive things have you experienced seeing teachers using an integrated approach to planning classroom instruction to ECE learners? Share your experiences.
8. What negative things have you observed seeing teachers using this approach in planning classroom instruction?
9. How can these challenges be resolved?
10. How do you compare an individualized curriculum to an integrated curriculum? Share your experiences.

### **Objective three**

1. What kind of support do you offer as standard officers at CDC or ECE directorate at Ministry of Education to ECE teachers to enhance integrated planning? Share your experiences.
2. What methodologies and teaching strategies would teachers use to support integration of ECE classroom instruction?
3. What is the importance of teacher collaboration in integrated planning in ECE?
4. What best approach would you adopt between the traditional individualized method or an integrated approach?
5. What planning model can you use for integrated planning? Share your position

**Note:** Extension questions will be included as needed to elicit more information and clarity.



## **Appendix D: Letter of Consent to ECE Teachers**

My name is Brian Malama Chewe and I am a student studying at Chalimbana University pursuing a Master of Education in Early Childhood Education, Lusaka, Zambia.

The title of the research study is: *“Teachers’ perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje District, Zambia.”* You have been identified to participate in this research study because the research topic has a direct implication to the course you are pursuing. To gather data, I will use the following data collection methods which will include you in providing contribution to my study. Thus, interviews, observations and Focus group discussions will be used to solicit information from you.

### **Audio recording**

The researcher will record all proceedings with your permission on the subject matter. All information collected will be secured.

### **Reflections**

You will be asked to develop learner activities and reflect on your understanding of

Integrated planning and Teaching in Early Childhood.

Please note that:

- You will not be disadvantaged if you choose not to participate or if you choose to withdraw from the study at any stage.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, there is no financial benefit.
- Data collected will be used for research purposes only.
- Research findings will be discussed with you if you choose.
- The supervisor for my research study is Dr. .... His contact details are as follows: (cell), email:
- Should you have no objection to the conditions mentioned above, please fill in the space below.

I..... (Full names of participant) here  
by confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project.  
I consent to participate in the research study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the  
project at any time if I wish to.

## **Appendix E: Letter of Consent to CDC and ECE Directorate officials**

My name is Brian Malama Chewe and I am a student studying at Chalimbana University pursuing a Master of Education in Early Childhood Education, Lusaka, Zambia. The title of the research study is: “Teachers’ perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje District, Zambia.” You have been identified to participate in this research study because the research topic has a direct implication to curriculum interpretation and classroom instructional planning. To gather data, I will use the following data collection methods which will include you in providing contribution to my study. Thus, interviews will be used to solicit information from you.

### **Audio recording**

The researcher will record all proceedings with your permission on the subject matter. All information collected will be secured.

Please note that:

- You will not be disadvantaged if you choose not to participate or if you choose to withdraw from the study at any stage.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, there is no financial benefit.
- Data collected will be used for research purposes only.
- Research findings will be discussed with you if you choose.
- The supervisor for my research study is Dr. Friday Nyimbili. His contact details are as follows: 0967050978 (cell), email: nyimbili2012@gmail.com
- Should you have no objection with the conditions mentioned above, please fill in the space below.

I..... (full names of participant) here by confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I consent to participate in the research study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time if I wish to.

## Appendix F: Permission Letter

Chalimbana University,  
Private Bag E1.  
**Lusaka.**

7<sup>th</sup>December, 2022

The District Education Board Secretary,  
Serenje District Education Board,  
**Serenje.**

Dear Sir:

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY IN GOVERNMENT PUBLIC  
ECE CENTRES: MYSELF.**

Refer to the captioned matter.

The researcher writes to seek your permission to conduct a study on the research topic entitled: *“Teachers’ perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum in Serenje District, Zambia.”* The researcher wishes to inform your office that for the intention to interact and share experiences with the current students on teaching experience in these public centres. I may also extend my focus to in-service teachers in these stations just to share their experiences. Furthermore, I wish to inform you that this exercise is purely academic as a partial fulfillment for the award of a Master’s degree in early Childhood Education by the university.

The researcher looks forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely

Brian Malama Chewe (MED-Student)

## Appendix G: Time Plan

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITY	FEB 2023	FEB-MAR 2023	MAR-APR 2023	APRIL-JUN 2023
Development of Research Topic and proposal.				
Submission of proposal for approval.				
Pretesting instruments (piloting interviews).				
Data collection.				
Data analysis				
Report writing				
Submission of report for examination				

## Appendix H: Proposed Budget

S/N	Description of item	Quantity	Unit price (ZKW)	Total (ZKW)
1.	Reams of paper	03	100	300
2.	Pens	04	5	20
3.	Transport (Fuel)	4 trips	200	800
4.	Printing of proposal	2	150	300
5.	Binding of proposal	2	40	80
6.	Printing research instruments			200
7.	Printing of research reports	4	300	1200
8.	Binding of reports	4	500	2000
9.	Food/ snacks and drinks			350
10.	Contingency money			500
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>K5, 750</b>