

**STAKEHOLDER'S PERCEPTION IN THE TRANSITIONS PROCESS OF
PRESCHOOL LEARNER'S IN GRADE ONE IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF
NAMWALA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated stakeholder's perceptions in the transition process of preschool learners' to grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District, Zambia. The study outlined the following as the objectives of the study: (i) To determine the stakeholder's perception in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in primary schools of Namwala District., (ii) To examine stakeholder's involvement in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in primary school of Namwala District; and (iii) To assess the barriers faced in the transition to grade one in rural areas of Namwala District. The study adopted descriptive research design using qualitative method to allow an investigation concerning the stakeholder's perceptions in the transition process of preschool learners to grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District. Data was collected using interview guide and classroom observation tools from the following participants 3 head teachers, 3 deputy head teachers, 3 grade one teacher, 5 preschool teachers, 6 parents and 2 world visions (NGOs). Primary data was supplemented with voice notes and analyzed using themes. The research findings established that teachers and stakeholders (parents and world vision) were aware of the transition of preschool learners to grade one. The study revealed that perception of stakeholders on the age to start preschool varied but within the range between 3-6 years. Both teachers and Stakeholders agreed for a child to start education journey through preschool for better foundation. The findings established that stakeholders were involved in the transition of preschool learners to grade one which increased collaborations among stakeholders and educators. Those barriers included long distance, inadequate preschool teachers, inadequate learning materials and non-conducive learning environment for ECE learners. The study made recommendations as follows: Teachers and other stakeholders to continue sensitizing parents on the importance of early childhood education. Government to consider employing ECE teachers. Government to construct ECE and grade one classrooms with improved learning environment.

key words: *Stakeholders, Perception, Transition, Preschool learner's*

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my work towards the Master of Early Childhood Education and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text.

NAME: **Harriet Siambihi**

Signature:

Date:

APPROVAL

On behalf of Chalimbana University (CHAU), I wish to confirm that I supervised Harriet Siambihi's dissertation. I further wish to state that to the best of my knowledge, I believe that the said student conducted this research work. I, therefore, approve that this dissertation by Harriet Siambihi be submitted in partial fulfillment for the award of Master of Early Childhood Education to Chalimbana University.

Supervisors Dr. Nyimbili Friday

Dr. Grant Mwinsa

Signature:

Date:

Internal Examiner: Date:

DEDICATION

This work is a dedication to my husband Pesh Maambo, my children Martin, Joseph, Rosinah, Natasha, my sisters Oden, Hildah, Patience and not for getting my Dad Mr. Daniel Siambihi for their understanding when they needed my attention, time and resources and my special thanks goes to Mr. Derrick Bwalya for being on my side for all times and also to everyone who took part in assisting me with the dissertation and most especially to all participants under Namwala District and surrounding Education facilities.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|---------------------------------------|
| DEBS | District Education Board Secretary |
| ECE | Early Childhood Education |
| UPND | United Party for National Development |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| HRH | Human Resource for Health |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, study objectives, research question, significance of the study, limitation, delimitation, theory and conceptual framework were discussed respectively.

1.2 Background to the Study

The transition of preschool learners to grade one in primary school is experienced by parents, teachers and world vision with a mixture of joy, anxiety and fear as the start of formal education is the foundation for learning and personal growth. Parents bring with them memories of their own lives, the experience of raising children, and imprints of relationships with preschool teachers and caregivers before their child enters first grade with a mix of anxiety and expectation. Teachers bring to the first grade, besides their professional expertise, their experiences of relationships with parents in the past, expecting to be able to construct a new and positive set of relations with the new class. While Children are happy but fearful, and still processing their separation from the preschool teachers and perhaps also from friends who remained behind, and they expect a positive experience as indicated by Breuer and Tal (2020).

Manas (2020) emphasized that the future of any society depends on its ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation and today's children will become tomorrow's citizens, workers, and parents. With the view of Manas on the future that depends on today's children, the researcher was moved to see learners who were doing well in preschool but as they transitioned to grade one they end up stopping schooling and sadly, the parents who used to take them to preschool just keep them home and start sending them to do business killing the future. Despite the painful situation Dockett and Perry (2001) suggested that positive and responsive relationships among learners, teachers and parents were vital to successful transitions and that effective transitions involve communities of individuals rather than individuals in communities who defined the nature of the future.

MOE (2022) under Education Statistic Bulletin 2020, indicates that Zambia's Education System consists of early childhood education (preschool), primary, secondary, and professional or

tertiary levels. Further, the report shows that Early Childhood Education (preschool) provides education for children aged 3-6 while the primary level runs from grades 1 to 7 (7-13-year-olds). Preschool is the initial exposure of most children to education that ranges from 3-6 years of age and thus plays a part in the establishment of lifelong attitudes toward school and education. After, the review from Lina (2014) who discussed the function of preschool class that was met to prepare children for compulsory school and so that the concept of the future could be important to preschool class activities by building knowledge and skills in a child at an early age. It is well known fact that any grade transition can be distressing for students and their parents or teachers, but the change is particularly more challenging for youngsters and their families as they move from preschool to grade one in primary school. The data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012) confirmed that 61 million children of primary school age were out of school in 2010 and Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for one-half of all out-of-school children worldwide and sadly, Zambia is in Sub-Saharan region were the highest number of out-of-school rate are higher.

A study conducted by Boeren (2019) that looked at Understanding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on “quality education” in all of its dimensions requires that countries seek to design education systems that address the learning needs of children and adults including women and men in all their dimensions and from a humanistic perspective should ensure that learners, of all ages and throughout life, are equipped with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and behaviours needed to help build justice, peaceful and sustainable societies. The global policy direction is concerned with the quality of education being offered to our Children in all member states and Zambia is inclusive. The question that may be raised is, in this era of free education policy implementation in Zambia which is being experienced with over-enrolment in all grades, especially in the grade one, is quality education and effective transition attainable?

The records in some studies conducted by Sichula, Kalinde, Mambwe, Kaluba, and Phiri (2019) praised stakeholders in Zambia, that they took part in early childhood education, and hold a special place in the preparation of early childhood education for school readiness and transition. While Children transitions from a relatively warm, caring, Child-Centred home or preschool environment to a potentially more intimidating and less flexible grade one classroom is also quite a struggle for many children and their parents and teachers (Sink, Edwards and Weir, 2007). Parents and other teachers or caregivers also have noted that the teaching methods, attitude, and

care used in grade one classrooms influence how their children perceive and experience the new learning environment. These perceptions and experiences have the potential to impact students socially, cognitively, and emotionally as well as educationally due to increased anxiety related to outcome-based classroom pedagogy. The two major approaches normally found in these classrooms are classified as “learner-centred,” using constructivist pedagogy, versus “teacher-centred,” using direct instruction methods.

In 2022, Zambia introduced the provision of free education as a pivotal objective within the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) framework to enhance development as education was the only key to National development and prosperous Zambia, (Sihubwa and Bowa, 2023). In the same vain as a country trying to offer equal opportunities to all citizens through education Harriet and Lehrer (2011), identified communication model as key for transition and encouraged effective communication to assist in the smooth transitioning of children into the first grade.

The study that was conducted in Zambia on boost for early literacy by Kabaghe, Mubanga, Ng’andu and Bus (2015), identified the purpose of preschool education was typically to provide experiences that foster literacy practices and thus is a boost for early literacy skills and success in first grade. While, a study by Chewe, Nyimbili, and Mwinsa (2023) on Teachers’ Perceptions and Strategies on the Integrated Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Serenje District of Zambia looked at integrated curriculum and strategies that were felt if used could improve integrated planning in early childhood centres in primary schools. From the conclusion of the study we say that teachers lacked the skill of planning integrated activities because of policy restrictions and no instructional materials that showed integrated activities which in turn affected learners. Another study by Nyimbili and Mwanza (2020) suggest that there are better benefits of using translanguaging than using the monolingual ideologies that are not progressive in such classrooms. The study tried to establish the importance of culture diversity that teachers needed to have in order for the be able to provide quality education to all learners regardless of their tribe This study revealed that monolingual do not support learner transition as experimented in Lundazi District readers and researchers may agree that similar to preschools in Western countries, the preschool curriculum in Zambia involves singing songs, hearing stories, and learning the alphabet thereby stimulating basic literacy skills such as rhyming, story comprehension, and letter knowledge. As a result, the Zambian situation lends itself to a natural

experiment for testing the importance of preschool as preschool attendance is not obligatory and only a small percentage of Zambian children go to preschool. Sadly, even those children after preschool not all that progresses to higher grades due to various reasons beyond learners. In the current study, we tested whether Zambian preschools create a better starting position for the transition of preschool learners to grade in primary education by focusing on the perception of stakeholders in the transition of preschool learners to grade in primary Schools of Namwala District and how transition was managed.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Zambia's education system consists of early childhood education (preschool), primary, secondary and tertiary level and preschool was the initial exposure to schooling (MOE 2022). In 2013 Ministry of General Education recruited 1000 early childhood teachers in readiness for early childhood education implementation policy in 2014 for transition preparation of a child to formal schooling in government schools. The goal of early childhood education is for teachers to prepare and provide equal opportunities to all school learners for improving and shaping their begging for better future (Anna 2015). The study problem was that, it was not known what stakeholder's perception on the preschool learners' transition process to grade one was in the primary school of Namwala district and how preschool learner transition was managed by stakeholders.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate stakeholder's perception in the transition process of preschool learners to grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District - Zambia

1.4 General Objective

The main objective of the study was to investigate stakeholder's perceptions in the transition process of preschool learners' to grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District of Southern Province.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

Objectives of the study were:

- i. To determine the stakeholder's perception in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in primary schools of Namwala District.
- ii. To examine stakeholder's involvement in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in primary school of Namwala District, and
- iii. To assess the barriers faced in the transition to grade one in rural areas of Namwala District.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What perception do stakeholders have on the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala district?
- ii. How are stakeholders involved in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala district?
- iii. What barriers do stakeholders face in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in rural areas of Namwala district?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Studies have been conducted on preschool learner's transition to grade one in primary schools mainly abroad. However, few studies have been published in Zambia as evidenced by limited literature in Zambia and none has been published for Namwala District. Therefore, the study aimed at providing a unique perspective and policy alternative in addressing the negative impact of the transition of preschool learners to grade one especially that Namwala district is rural set-up as future generations are determined during the transition period of children from home-preschool to grade one. Zambia is blessed since the New Dawn Government has effectively implemented a free education policy and many parents are just awaiting their children to reach grade one.

The findings of the study have contributed to the body of knowledge on the importance of preschool learner transition to every child in facing future tasks as preschool determines the future of every child hence, policymakers, teachers and all stakeholders to provide all the necessary requirement that enhances learning and prepare preschool learners adequately to face more challenging tasks as they transition to grade one and further grades. In addition to that, the study formed basis for further study on why grade one teachers and above are harsh to learners than preschool teachers as their action affects learners' transition. The study could inform policy

makers if adopted preschool to be mandatory to every child as a basic requirement entry to grade one to holistically enhance early child development.

1.7 Limitations

The researcher faced many challenges among them; limited time for data collection and compilations, movements when collecting data from respondent since the study was conducted in rural area, tools and methods of data collection used and addressing ethical issues of a research. The researcher addressed the identified limitations by getting ethical approval, permission from all authorities, developed consent forms and removed identifiers that could link the respondent and observed confidentiality on the data collected from participants.

1.8 Delimitations

The study was conducted in Namwala District from five (5) selected primary schools situated 167 km North-West of Choma town in the Southern Province of Zambia. The study adopted a descriptive research design using qualitative study method (Mohajan2018), with a sample size of 30 was selected using a stratified purposeful sampling method who have been in Namwala District not less than five (5) years. Further, interviews and observation tools were used Muhammad (2016). Data was analysed thematically by transcribing recorded interviews, coding, and presenting verbatim to maintain the meaning and quality of responses.

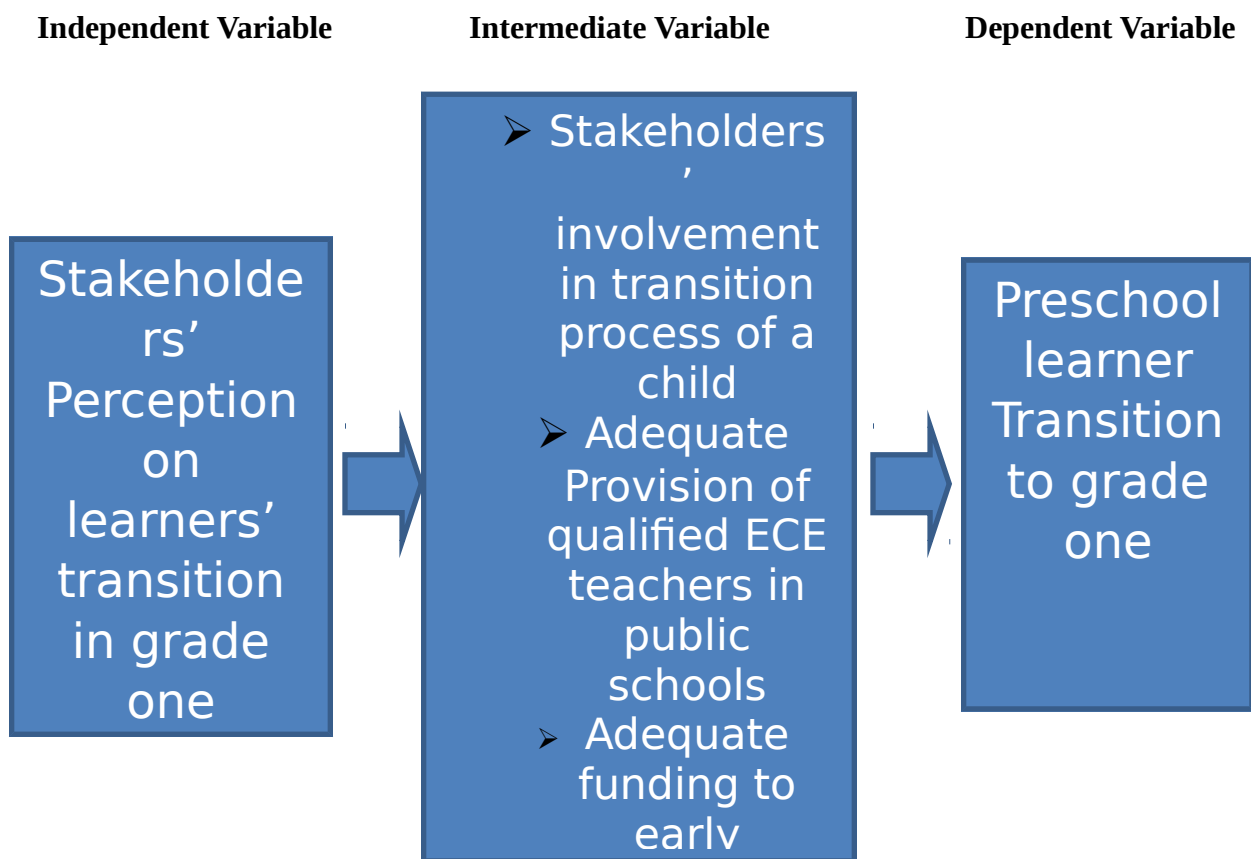
1.9 Theory of the Study

The study adopted Cognitive Theory of development by Paris, Ricardo, Rymond, and Johnson (2024) who looked at cognitive development that was developed by Jean Piaget as a pillar to human development. The four stages of development include sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational stage. The theory links the study to the subject matter and supports the topic under investigation. Cognitive theory in early childhood education has been found to have numerous benefits for children (human) brain development. Child development involves the development of the four domains which are required for an individual and that those steps of learning are acquired in stages as a child progresses from one level to another. This learning theory acts as a catalyst for transition of preschool learners to grade one as it enhances cognitive development, improve language skills and increase cultural awareness or diversity. Despite the successes and benefits of the theory to the study the theory could not be

effectively be applied in all areas in the similar way to confirm sequential learning. The theory assumed that every child development follows the same sequence but it did not provide solutions on how those children who don't follow the stages could be assisted. Further, not all who are successful in life started schooling in preschool.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

A study by Lois (2018) looked at conceptual framework as an essential component of research because it shapes the quality and scope of investigations. The researcher identified stakeholder perception on learner transition process to affect preschool learner transition to grade one positively or negatively and that was being influenced by intermediate variables such as stakeholder involvement, qualified teachers and financial support toward learning. Another study by Rajablu, Marthandan & Yusoff (2017) revealed that conceptual framework is a sketch of independent and dependent variables coupled with their assumed connection. While a study by Sakala and Phiri (2019) indicates that conceptual framework connects the independent variable to the dependent variable. Therefore, below is the assumed connection.



For the Government of Zambia to successfully implement an effective and efficient quality education, especially for early childhood education that fosters on the future of the next generation. There is a need for all stakeholders to ensure that: There is efficient and effective resource mobilization and support for every child, also provision of early childhood to be done by qualified teachers and enhances capacity through the provision of knowledge followed by constant monitoring and evaluation to both government and private schools providing early childhood education.

1.11 Operational Definitions

Stakeholders refers to parents and world vision who took part in the study; Transition refers to progression of a learner from preschool class to grade one; and perception is related to the way stakeholders and teacher view a child being in preschool and later transition to grade one. NGO refers to world vision in the study.

1.12 Summary of Chapter

The chapter gave an understanding of preschool learner transition to grade one, problem statement, research objectives, the significance of the study, and theories were established to answer the confusion under investigation. The next chapter focused on the existing body of knowledge on stakeholder transition perception of preschool learner to grade one.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter is presented as guided by research objectives and research questions comprising of the works, findings and gaps in each study. Literature review also included paying attention to the failures, successes and the lessons that may be learnt from other countries' educational system to enable efficient and effective decision making with the view to improve and reduce school child dropout in Zambia. The chapter is structure as follows; stakeholder perception, stakeholder involvement, and challenges faced by stakeholders in the transition of learners, literature gaps and Conceptual framework.

2.2 Stakeholder Perception in the Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade One in the Primary Schools

A study conducted by Stover (2019) looked at early childhood education in Germany by focusing on the origination of early Childhood education that could be traced as early as 1840 when Frederick Froebel gave the name “kindergarten” to the “play and activity” center that he had founded several years earlier in Bad Blankenburg. The study revealed how early childhood education moved from Germany to all countries in the world including Zambia and the movement did not follow the same missionary lines as the English “infant schools did. The study revealed that the approach taken to children’s learning reflects cultural understandings about the nature of children’s growth, as well as pedagogical insights arising from specific approaches to teaching and learning in the early years. The study under review did not provide any conclusion, however, it has provided the basis to explore the genesis of early childhood education system in Zambia.

A study by Breuer and Tal (2020) investigated on perspectives of teachers, children, and parents on the transition to first grade using an ecological systems approach to Parental Involvement in the Transition in Israeli. The study shows that a transition from preschool to primary school is an inevitable situation that can be experienced in various ways by children. The study reveals that transitions are challenging because they are often linked to changes in an individual’s appearance, activity, status, general functioning and in particular, social functioning as a child is entering first grade. Further the study revealed other factors that may affect a child to cope with

transition as child's family, educational frameworks and support or protection. The study found that educational institutions should provide opportunities for learning and the family to provide the scaffolding of support to the child in transition to complete the process of adjustment to first grade. Further parental presence in the school has a positive contribution as it creates a good interpersonal relation between parents and teachers. The study under review revealed that the school management was fearful of the involvement of parents in the school system, due to the failure of the school system to address the needs of parents and other groups. However, this study was not conducted in a Zambian primary school to which this study will be confined to in a Zambian context in Namwala District of Zambia.

Another study by Gouri (2020) conducted in the United States looked at childhood development in the early stage of child development using descriptive research design and collected data using a desk review tool. The study revealed that early childhood period is the basis for later success in life, as it is a period when a child's brain develops at a rapid rate creating plenty of opportunities for children's learning and development. The study found that a child can have a good start in life when he or she grows up in a caring and stimulating environment that meets his or her essential needs such as nutrition, health, and safety. The study concludes that investing in early childhood education enhances child development as today's children will become tomorrow's citizens, workers, and parents. Therefore, this study provided an avenue for the country to restructure the education system that includes early childhood education to invest wisely in children and families.

Lina (2014) looked at time for transition: the use of future in the transition from preschool class to first grade in Sweden using ethnography methodology. The analysis of data shows that the future was used in several different ways in the transition process. The study revealed that in preschool classes, the future in first grade was made relevant to both children and teachers. The study also revealed the function of a preschool class which is to prepare children for compulsory school which makes the concept of the future important to preschool class activities and transitions in general. The study concluded that the concept of the future was made an important part of the transition from preschool class to first grade. However, the study did not address the past, such as their prior experience of preschool class, in the same way as the future and the receiving end was made more important than the beginning which is preschool. The study relates

to this study as the situation is similar to what is prevailing in Zambia where more funding and employment is given priority from grade one to university level than early childhood education.

Mwamwenda (2014) conducted a study on early childhood education in Africa. The study examined African Union countries focusing on areas of expansion, enrolment, teachers, rural, and gender distribution in 15 countries using questionnaires. The study revealed that early childhood education in Africa began as early as the last three decades when African countries realized and embraced the fundamental importance of education. The study concluded by agreeing that Early Childhood Education has undergone tremendous changes in terms of growth and development in Africa and more schools for Early Childhood Education have been constructed in villages, rural areas, and urban areas. However, the study only interviewed educational government officials without visiting areas of study physically and meeting stakeholders such as parents, teachers and NGOs who provide and contribute to the education of early childhood education.

A study conducted by Mwamwenda (2014) looked at the genesis of early childhood education in Zambia. The study revealed that early childhood education commenced in 1957 when a law was passed in support of Early Childhood Education in Zambia but from 1977 to 1992 Education Policy in Zambia recognized early childhood education as part of Zambia's Education System. the implementation of early childhood education in public schools in Zambia was seen in 2014 when the government employed 1000 teachers in public primary schools in readiness for first enrollment in 2015. However, the study did not collect data from stakeholders providing preschool services in Zambia and rural other than from education government officials.

Another study conducted by Chewe, Nyimbili & Mwinsa (2023) looked at Teachers' Perceptions and Strategies on the Integrated Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Serenje District of Zambia with 12 participants comprised of five (5) ECE teachers, three resource centre coordinators, two Senior Education Officers (SEO) and two VVOB Collaborating Partners. The study adopted a qualitative methods approach using complete observation because observing and understanding linguistic diversity in a classroom needs the researcher to ensure that he or she becomes part of the learners and learns with them as well as from them. The study found that Early Childhood Education teachers' perceptions on the integrated early childhood education curriculum though varied were positive because teachers understood that integration provided

holistic learning and wider opportunities to explore practices, acquire knowledge and skills. The study concludes that teachers lacked the skill of planning integrated activities and that was so because of policy restrictions and no instructional materials that showed integrated activities to link skills and knowledge across subjects and the environment through situated practices. However, the study still has no policy guidelines on how the skill of planning integrated activities could be enhanced.

Another study by Petrakos and Lehrer (2022) investigated on Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions of Transition Practices in Kindergarten in Four of the six schools that took part in the transition from preschool to grade one during the first week. The study identified two areas of transition practices that could facilitate transitions; the first was **parent perception of transition practices and collaboration**: the study revealed that parents appreciated registration packets sent to them at home and parents were invited to visit schools where children were learning from. However, some parents suggested that some activities, such as asking the children to visit the class before the first day, should be optional as they were only necessary for some children. The second was **teacher perception of transition practices and collaboration**: The study also revealed that teachers practiced transitions by visiting classes with children early or before they started grade one. The study mentioned the importance of parents regulating their stress during transition. Further, the study under review shows that teachers perceived homework as a way of collaborating and training parents and children. However, this was not always welcome by some parents who felt they had many activities and a different role when their child came home. The study findings did not agree as both parents and teachers identified differences in parents' perceptions of transition based on whether their children were going to school for the first time or not. The study was not done in Zambian primary school.

Another study on education by Adesemowo and Sotonade (2022) supported early childhood education and transition to grade one as it looked at education as an essential process in human development and Schooling as just one of how education is been provided. The study revealed that education deals with the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted and is provided in three different ways thus formal, non-formal, and informal Education. The study concludes that from 0-6 years the education received was family-based and it is dominated by the mother who facilitates cognitive leaning to a child. Then, the Child is introduced to

Preschool for further mental and physical development and later transitioned to grade one. However, this study did not provide how transition can be done effectively but it provided an avenue to explore how curriculum for various levels of education can be designed.

2.3 Stakeholder's Involvement in the Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade One in Primary Schools.

A study conducted by Dockett and Perry (2001) looked at starting school: effective transition. The study revealed the following guidelines for effective transition to School Programs: first educators, parents, and children to effectively establish and maintain positive relationships between all parties. While transition programs focus on developing children's knowledge, understanding and skills. Secondly, the study revealed that effective transition programs recognise the role of the family and other educators and seek to collaborate in ways that build upon the child's experiences. Third, the study indicates that effective transition involves both orientation-to-school and transition-to-school. Orientation programs are designed to help children and parents become familiar with the school setting, while transition programs are planned and implemented by a team of people representing all those involved in the change. However, the study provided a scaffold for further studies in the Zambian environment to test guidelines on effective transition.

Another study conducted by Musonda and Matafwali (2023) in Chongwe and Lusaka looked at what Preschool and Grade One Teachers say about School Readiness and Transition from Early Childhood Education to Grade One. The study sampled preschool teachers, grades one and two teachers drawn from seven (7) preschools and seven (7) primary schools across the two districts in Zambia. The study revealed that indicators of successful transitions and school readiness were the ability to sound letters of the alphabet, the ability to count numbers, being able to hold a pencil and possession of some pre-reading skills. The concepts of school readiness and transitions are complex and this study did not achieve all delving factors related to the study. Therefore, the study has given the basis for further research on children's role in the transition process and how their pivotal role shapes their school readiness process.

In a study entitled 'Teacher Utilisation of Emergent Literacy Skills in the Teaching of Physical Education in the Primary Schools of Lundazi District,' by Tembo, Nyimbili, Namuyamba and Tambulukani (2018) in Lundazi agreed on the transition through the use of physical education in

learning process. The study employed a qualitative approach, sampled 4 schools and interviewed 20 teachers teaching from grades one up to grade four using an interview guide. The study revealed that Missionaries utilised the traditional games they found in the various communities by bringing them into the school system. For instance, the Roman Catholic missionaries in their schools in northern Zambia taught fishing and its better methods because the Bemba community was endowed with fish, which needed preservation. The idea of bringing the local curriculum into their new schools was to encourage the communities to appreciate and accept the new forms of education. Today, children play hide and seek, football and netball; they dance at night, wrestle amongst themselves, run around and ride bicycles. Behind these activities are the rules that make the children continue playing together and obeying when a rule has been obligated. Children control themselves in games without a referee and no fights are recorded. The study found that children valued play in their natural environment because it was through play that they grew mentally, physically, and develop socially acceptable behavior in society as children came to school with athletic knowledge. However, the study did not consider a preschool class from which this study is confined to be carried from.

The study by Tembo, Nyimbili, Namuyamba and Tambulukani (2018) concluded that teachers scaffolded learners upon the literacies they came with from home differently. Then, physical education is a subject and all the learners should play together and control each other in their conduct, emotions, thinking and language use. While the role of a teacher is to ensure that learners learn from each other the various social skills such as respect, emotional control, accepting defeat and self-control. Teachers of PE in this case are seen as the facilitators of cultural transmission. The findings of this study on physical education agree with a study conducted by Sichula, Kalinde, Mambwe, Kaluba, and Phiri (2018) who investigated stakeholder perspectives of Play-Based-Learners and their involvement in the implementation of play pedagogy in government schools in the three districts with total 31 schools broken-down as 14 schools were in Choma, 10 schools in Kabwe and 7 schools in Kapiri Mposhi. The study revealed that the involvement of parents and administrators in early childhood education demonstrated a collaborated effort in the transition. The study indicates that stakeholders were involved in the construction of early childhood education infrastructure facilities through the contribution of labor. However, the study had little involvement in the actual play-based learning

by parents, community and school administrators, thereby rendering gaps in strengthening the tripartite linkages of home, community and school in play-back learning.

Helen, Watson and Lum (2012) in Australia looked at Preschool children's transition to formal schooling: The importance of collaboration between teachers, parents and children were also supported by Dockett and Perry (2001) findings. The study revealed that teachers are the first point of call for a child while at school, therefore, it is logical that they act as the primary support for children as they adapt to formal schooling. The study acknowledged that a child's transition from preschool to primary school is not a single event of change that has only immediate consequences. Therefore, a child's success or failure in adapting to the changing context of formal schooling has the potential to shape their educational and social-emotional futures. Hence, to best aid this transition, it is proposed that a meaningful collaboration be developed between preschool teachers and primary school teachers, with a relationship based upon mutual trust and respect. However, the study proposed to conduct further investigation on exactly how successful implementation of teacher collaboration across the early years of schooling can be achieved for the best educational outcomes in children.

2.4 The Barriers Faced by Stakeholders in the Implementation of Effective Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade One in Primary Schools.

A study by Swaran, Wong, Lee, Mohinder, Maniam and Masa (2022) in Malaysia investigated on how preschool teachers carried out the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic using a qualitative approach and sampled eleven preschool teachers. The study revealed that all the pre-school teachers agreed that the Covid-19 pandemic had brought drastic changes and caused more anxiety and stress including to pre-school learners and parents. The study found that preschool teachers, learners and parents had little knowledge and experience in navigating the new norm which was learning via online and this caused stress to all in such circumstances. Therefore, the study suggested that pre-recorded lessons be prepared by preschool teachers for learners who have no internet access. While parents to be trained in managing educational activities during such outbreaks. However, the study only used interviews to gather data and no recordings were done for authentication of data. Sadly, the study under review was not conducted in Zambian primary schools hence the need to explore in Zambian environment.

Another similar study conducted on challenges faced by stakeholders in implementation of transition to grade one by Saradidu (2016) looked on problems faced by children during transitions from pre-school to primary school in India. The study used descriptive survey method. The finding of study was that delaying the transition to first grade caused frustration to pre-school learners and eventually leads to dropouts from school. However, the study did not provide the best way on how and when transition can be done to reduce frustration and dropouts.

A study by Nyimbili, Namuyamba and Chakanika (2018) in Lundazi district of Zambia conducted a study on the Use of Learner-Centered Techniques in the Teaching of English Language Secondary Schools agreed to the challenges faced during transition. The study findings revealed that the Zambian syllabus gives a guide regarding how teachers should teach in schools. Though, the Zambian education policy does not emphasize the usage of a specific teaching method for teachers but encourages teachers to be resourceful. The study concluded that teachers were not following the government policy on education strictly to teach learners using learner-centered techniques as teachers were not ready to welcome change. Further, the study also revealed that policy on education was contradicting with the reality on the ground regarding teaching and learning, as policy demands class enrolment to be limited to 45 learners per class yet the reality is over 80 pupils in one class especially in government schools. However, the study was not done in preschool class, but it is related to this study being in similar situation and environment.

However, some studies have suggested measures to be undertaken to improve the effectiveness of the transition of preschool learners to grade one in primary schools in Zambia. A study by Matafwali (2022) identified measures to be undertaken in improving transition of preschool learners to grade one when it looked on Inclusive Early Childhood Education in Zambia. The study revealed that Strengthening mechanisms for Continuous Professional Development of Early Childhood Education Teachers plays a vital role in the effectiveness and quality of knowledge inclusion as teachers must be qualified and skilled enough to comprehend the complexity of inclusive classrooms, use efficient delivery methods for the curriculum, and adapt to the learning environment and teaching. Secondly Strengthen mechanisms for family involvement. The study identified the first teacher in child development is a parent. Therefore, parents must be actively involved in ensuring that the inclusionary attitude is carried outside of

the classroom. The study concludes that family participation provides an aid in extending educational opportunities outside the classroom and play-based learning activities. The third mechanism is government to Increased funding. The study indicates that early childhood education received inadequate funding from the government, despite the strong justification for the long-term advantages of investing in young children. Therefore, the study recommends improved funding for early childhood to guarantee quality and equity in service delivery. However, the study was not conducted in Zambian primary school.

Another, study by Musonda and Matafwali (2023) in Chongwe and Lusaka looked at what Preschool and Grade One Teachers say about School Readiness and Transition from Early Childhood Education to Grade One. The identified regular Communication between Preschool and Grade One Teachers on addressing transition challenges. The revealed that about 80% of the teachers indicated that preschool and grade one teachers met often and that the meetings were planned. Further, the study shows that 20 % of the teachers interviewed mentioned that the meetings held on an adhoc basis, and the main topics discussed included agreeing what competencies or skills that the preschool teachers needed to focus on with their learners to better prepare them for grade one, the teachers also discussed how former preschoolers were performing in grade one. However, the study did not draw plans or schedule of meetings in addressing challenges. Though the study has given basis to explore on the effectiveness of such meetings.

2.6 Summary of Literature Review

A study by Gagnon (2017) agreed that a successful transition from preschool to kindergarten is a key component of school readiness. Yet, quite often this major step in a child's life is neither planned nor well-coordinated by parties involved. Thoughtful planning for this transition can have a positive impact on children, families, teachers, schools and communities that last well beyond the first weeks of school. The literature about both Zambia, Africa and beyond has been reviewed. From the studies reviewed above, many studies have been conducted on the perception and transition of early childhood education. However, no similar study has been conducted in Namwala District to provide the true picture on stakeholder perception, stakeholder involvement in learners' transition and challenges faced in rural areas Namwala District and other similar areas. The studies used various research methodologies to which the researcher felt some were

not adequately applied in studies. Therefore, the study on stakeholder's perception in transitions' process of preschool learner's in grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District - Zambia is worth to be undertaken.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Research methodology refers to procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena. Its aim was to give the work plan of research (Goundar, 2012). Therefore, this chapter discussed various tools that the researcher employed in the research process thus: research approach, research design, study population, sample, and sampling procedure, research instrument, data analysis and ethical consideration.

3.2 Research Approach

Research approach is classified into three categories thus qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method depending on the data one sought to collect (Taherdoost, 2022). The researcher adopted the qualitative approach because the study aimed at addressing practical issues and problems individuals were struggling with in their lives through focusing on their in-depth meaning and motivations which cannot be defined by numbers. Qualitative study was suitable because first-hand information was obtained from respondents.

3.3 Research Design

The study design is the use of evidence-based procedures, protocols, and guidelines that provide the tools and framework for conducting research and the choice of the study design adopted was descriptive research (Jilcha, 2019, Mohajan, 2018). Descriptive research design describes the reality of what exists within a situation such as current practices, progress and situations of different aspects of the research, and it is widely used in social science streams (Bryman, 2012). The study design was linked to the research under investigation as stakeholder perception of transition of preschool learners was a practice and practical activity done by stakeholders in a natural environmental setting of Namwala District. Goundar (2012) indicates that descriptive research attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme for example, living condition of a community, or describes attitudes towards an issue. Hence, the researcher found it fit to adopt the descriptive design as participants expressed their views on topic under investigation in order for the researcher to get in-depth and first-hand

information on how they view the transition process of preschool learners to grade one in primary schools of Namwala District.

3.4 Study Population

Target population constitutes a subset of the broader population being investigated by specific attributes directly relevant to the research inquiry Michael (2024). The target population in this research was the population of primary schools of Namwala District offering early childhood education and grade one situated 169kilometres - North west of Choma town. The study population consists of head teachers, teachers, NGOs and parents from primary schools of Namwala District.

3.5 Sample

Shukla (2020) defined sample as part of population that represents it completely- meaning, the units, selected from the population as a sample, must represent all kind of characteristics of different types of units of population. Other scholars like Pandey & Pandey (2015) looked at sample size as a small proportion selected for observation and analysis for the express purpose of representing the study population. However, Sarfo, Debrah, Gbordzoe, Afful, & Obeng (2021), argued against having a specific sample size but suggest that one of the most acceptable standards in qualitative research was to allow the data to reach data saturation. The study adopted the sample size of 30 who were divided into five strata thus five (5) preschool teachers and five (5) first grade teachers who have worked more than three years, five (5) head teachers, five (5) NGOs and ten (10) parents who have children from selected preschools from the five (5) selected schools in Namwala District.

3.6 Sampling Procedure

Sampling is the process of selecting a statistically representative sample of individuals from the population of interest Majid (2018). Stratified purposeful sampling was adopted because it consists characteristics of particular subgroups of interest and facilitates comparisons as it allows statistical generalisation to the large population as supported by Shaheen, Pradhan and Ranajee (2019). Only those who qualified to be participants was picked and divided into five strata thus headteachers, parents, preschool teachers, NGOs and grade one teachers.

3.7 Research Instrument

Mohajan (2018) and Sarfo, Debrah, Gbordzoe, Afful and Obeng (2021) in their studies indicates that qualitative research is a form of social action that stresses how people interpret, and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals, thereafter makes use of interviews, diaries, journals, classroom observations, and immersions; and open-ended questionnaires to obtain, analyze, and interpret the data content, and oral history. The researcher used two research instrument thus unstructured interview guide and classroom observation during data collection.

3.7.1. Classroom Observation Guide

Observation involves ‘seeing’ things and first-hand data is gathered through the observation of events, behaviours, interactions, processes and formally record the information Taherdoost (2021). The observation method was an appropriate technique for this study as it helped the researcher to evaluate teaching methods in the classroom environment from preschool teachers and grade one teachers. Through observation, the researcher uncovered factors that were important for preschool transition and the general understanding of the research problem Nyimbili (2023).

3.7.2 Semi-structured interview

The interview guide was constructed with questions based on the research questions to find out from stakeholders the relationship of the research variables Coughlan (2009). The tool had two (2) sections, where section A: Demographic information, section B: main research questions (stakeholder perception on preschool learner transition, stakeholder involvement in learners’ transition and barriers faced by stakeholders in the transition of preschool learners to grade one). In-depth interviews were useful because the researcher wanted detailed information about a person’s thoughts and behaviours to explore new issues in depth as interviews was used to provide context to other data, Bloom (2006). The researcher used this tool on all the respondents and applied classroom observation on preschool and grade one teachers to confirm their responses.

3.8 Data Analysis

The study adopted thematic data analysis and that was appropriate and supported by other researchers like Pandey and Pandey (2015) who looked at data analysis as the studying of organized material to discover inherent facts. The study by Majumdar (2018) revealed that thematic analysis is one of the most used data analysis techniques in qualitative research, as it analyses, identifies and finally report the most probable areas where major themes are generated from the data set. Another study by Rosairo (2023) argued that thematic analysis analyzes, interprets, and examines the intensity of certain words that have been used and classification of information using themes regarding the frequency, attention and emphasis. Qualitative data analysis was useful as it thoroughly, accurately, and systematically recorded using field notes and cell phone recording (Muhammad 2016).

3.9 Quality Assurance

The study used two strategies for data quality assurance and these are “authenticity” of the data and “trustworthiness” of the data analysis Sargeat (2012).

3.9.1 Authenticity of Data

A study by Sargeat (2012) referred authenticity of data to the quality of the data and data collection procedures the research sought or used. The authenticity of data in this research was measured by sample size of 50 picked through stratified purposeful sampling and participant selected from five primary schools offering early childhood education in Namwala District. Data was triangulated using multiple data sources from- stakeholders such as teachers, and parents who were interviewed using interview guide and participants expressed their views over transition perception.

3.9.2 Trustworthiness of the data analysis

Sargeat (2012) indicates that quality of data analysis depends on its trustworthiness of the analysis employed by the researcher. The researcher-maintained trustworthiness of the data analysis by including direct recorded self-expression from the respondents to maintain first-hand information and three (3) themes were generated according to research.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethics deals with moral problems related to the practice of research which refers to an inquiry into what is right and wrong, and what researchers ought to do Mirza, Bellalem, and Mirza, (2023). Before research was conducted, a researcher was required to get an introductory letter and ethical approval from ethical Committee of Chalimbana University and seek permission from all authorities like District Education Board Secretary. All individuals involved in the research were treated with respect and utmost trust regardless of age, sex, race, religion, political beliefs and lifestyle or any other significant difference between such persons and the researcher (Cacciattolo, 2015). Confidentiality and anonymity was upheld meaning all information collected during the course of this project was kept safe and secret, while anonymity was followed as no name, address, phone number, department or school was indicated that could link individual responses with participant's identities. Further, the voluntary informed consent was generated and respondents were made to sign before interviews were conducted, as doing so the researcher could not leave participants feelings vulnerable and avoid them being exposed in negative ways.

3.11 Summary of Chapter

The chapter outlined the systematic steps, procedures and processes ranging from research approach to ethical consideration undertaken by the researcher in order to investigate stakeholder's perception in the transition process of preschool learners to grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District of Southern Province. The chapter revealed that descriptive design and sample size of 50 was adopted using interview guide and stratified purposeful sampling used. The next chapter presents the research findings, and thematic analysis of data in order to answer research questions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the Stakeholder's perception in the transition process of preschool learners to grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District of Southern Province. Findings are presented using the research question as themes. Findings are further presented using the category of each participant who participated in this study. Each research question and category of participants have specific themes which emerged from the data and these have been used to thematize the responses from participants.

4.2 What Perception do Stakeholders have on the Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade one in Namwala district?

This research question was answered by teachers, parents and world vision officer through interviews and classroom observation. These tools were used to ensure there was adequate data its triangulation in the study so that all the perceptions' which stakeholder's have on the transition of preschool learners to grade one were presented in this study. Each category of participants presented own views on the topic and subsequent questions asked.

4.2.1 Findings from Interviews with Teachers

Teachers were asked what transition of preschool learners was and briefly explain its importance to a learner. Interview data showed that teachers viewed transition of preschool learners to grade one as the entire process that was undertaken by teachers and all stakeholders involved in migrating or moving preschool learner from lower level to another level. It was also noted that preschool transition to grade one had positive and negative effects to both teachers, parents and children themselves. Teachers indicated that the performance of a child could be built while the child is still young by providing all the necessary basic knowledge required by a child. Teacher 1 stated that:

I can define preschool transition as a change that take place in a learner from preschool class to grade one. During that period some children cry because of the change of learning environment and also having a new teacher whom they are not familiar with. I think preschool should be

mandatory and every child should pass through preschool in order to have such a feel at any early age.

Teacher 8 added that:

Preschool learners transition I can say is a moving of a learner from a pre-grade to grade one and the processes that are involved in transforming of a learner to reach the next level. I still support an idea of a child to start from preschool, it's very important because preschool lays a foundation for a child today and further studies.

Teacher 4 noted that:

My role is to ensure that a child progresses and from preschool to grade 6 a child should have acquired basics before grade 7. I think preschool transition is a process for quality control on a part of a learner, as a teacher I give assessments test to a child whom I feel should progress to next level which is preschool to grade one. In case a child doesn't qualify then how be able to advise parents and make a list for those to move to next level which is grade one. Preschool learner transition is the migration of qualified preschool learners to formal schooling in grade one.

Teacher 9 noted that:

In my view preschool learner transition starts when a child is in reception class, and I may mention that preschool is divided into two parts thus baby class and reception class” and my perception is that, preschool is the foundation to a child to acquire f the basic knowledge to a child and that knowledge is built on in grade one or higher grades.

Teacher 7 added that:

I can say transition is a process of moving away from one stage or grade to another and it includes all processes that are involved to allow a child

to transition to grade one. Let's say for example a child is in preschool and that child moves to grade one, that's transition. preschool that's where they learn basics and it refers to were the foundation lays. The perception that I have is that for him/her to go to grade one the basics have been given to a child and grade one it's just the building up on the basics that he/her acquired when in preschool.

4.2.2 Perception of Parents and World Vision (Stakeholders) on the Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade One

Parents were asked on what transition of preschool learners to grade one mean and also on how they feel for a child to move from preschool to grade one. Interview data showed that parents had ideas on what preschool transition was to grade one. Parent participants established that preschool transition was a movement of preschool learners to grade one. They acknowledged that, parents had a role in the transition process of their children and their roles are buying of uniforms, books and preparation of food for the child. Parent 20 said that:

*Madam me it's like when my child is in preschool this year and next year is going to grade one or let me just say preschool learner transition is moving from preschool class to grade one. Most of us parents when a child starts in grade one, we feel it's a period a child is going for more discipline, and he/she has to reduce some manners (**macheechee**) that was being done while in preschool.*

Parent 18 mentioned said:

Preschool transition I can say, when a child stops being in preschool and he/she goes to grade one. When preschool transition takes place parents need to buy new uniforms and no parent would want a child to fail to go to grade one. Me, my child is going to grade one that's why I brought her here at school.

World vision officers were asked about what transition of preschool learners was and the role they played in the transition of the preschool learners to grade one. The findings showed that world vision had new what preschool transition was about to a child. Further, findings showed that world vision was not only focusing on preschool but the entire early childhood education from preschool to grade four. The NGO had a view that foundation was more important and mattered the most in the holistic development of a child. They emphasized that the dropout levels or rates the country was recording is as a result of poor foundation made at early childhood level.

NGO 15 indicated that:

We as an NGO, we look at transition as an education career progression of a child from preschool class to grade one and further grades. The knowledge to be built on by higher education comes from this progression in a child. to take place we train teachers in early childhood education management and teaching methods, we also provide learning and teaching materials, builds schools and play parks for children between preschool to grade 4 in school so that the four domains in a child could be fully developed. And that child will acquire basic knowledge and skills needed for his/her life journey in higher grades.

NGO 16 added that:

Like any organisation we value education of a child and wish that child progresses well to higher education without dropping out on the way for things that could be prevented. To me working with world vision transition is a coordinated effort made by everyone involved from preschool to grade 4 which will set a stronger pillar for child development of the four domains that are required for a responsible future human being.

4.2.3 Teacher Perception on Preschool Start Age

Teachers were asked what age was recommended for a child to start preschool before going to grade one. Interview data showed that teachers insisted that 3 years and above was suitable for a

child to start preschool. When they were further engaged on the reason for suggesting 3 years of age, they indicated that at 3 years the four domains in a child need to start being developed from classroom setup by qualified teachers who are trained to manage ECE learners at an early stage of life. Teacher 8 mentioned that:

The way I understand preschool preparation for transition should start even before a child is born because a child can be trained in the womb maybe on how to recognize voices, laugh and how to show love and a child take it from there to the world. Further, a child should be prepared just from the word go when a child starts preschool up to the time a child gets into the next phase which is grade one. The best age for a child to start preschool for me is between 3 to 6 years because below 2years a child is not matured enough to be attended to in a classroom setup especially in government schools with lower standards of learning environments.

Teacher 10 mentioned that:

When we talk about preschool, one should know that it is divided into two classes, the first one is a baby class and the other is pre-grade, so depending on the age of a child and the capability of a child either to be in baby class or pre-grade. Hence, that's why the education system classifies in general that preschool ranges between 0-6 years and a child can be in preschool class. Each parent determines when they can take a child to school in preschool, but the normal age is at least not less than 3 years.

Teacher 7 observed that:

As a teacher as well as a parent, preparation of preschool learner transition should start when a child is in baby class and it has to continue in reception class and it's during this progression that a child is prepared to move to next stage of grade one. With that background or

understanding let me say a child should start preschool between 3 years to 5 years or let me just say 3 years is a better time to start preschool.

4.2.4 Parents View on Learner Age to Start Preschool Class

Parents were asked when and what age was suitable for a child to start preschool. The findings from parents indicate that at least a child should be 5 years old. Parents provided reasons and emphasized that at 5 years a child was old enough to follow some instructions from any one including the teacher and they do lessen work for a teacher. Parent 16 noted that:

I took my child to preschool when was 4 years old, and by now my child when he comes back from school is able to count 1 to 20 and reads some words, even if I write something is able to read. So, I think when he goes to grade one, he will be cleverer or do better.

Parent 18 noted that:

My first child who started preschool at the age of 5 years and in grade one is able to read and write than his friends who started from grade one, they still don't know how to read and write. As for me preschool helped my child to easily be familiar with words, sounds, colors and be mentally active. Thus, between 4 and 5 years a child is able to talk and follow some instructions from a teacher or anyone.

Parent 19 noted that:

I prefer a child to start preschool between 5 to 6 years instead of 3 to 6 years the reason is that at 3 years' child is very young to follow instructions from the teacher. For example, a teacher may tell a child of five years that don't be passing there because of this or that a 5-year child will follow instruction but if same instruction is given to a 3-year child he/she will be just standing at one point and start crying so assist teachers a child should be big to be managed by other people.

During the focused group parents were asked when their children started preschool and what age was appropriate for a child to start preschool. Only one parent said the child started preschool at the age of 7 years because where they used to stay was far from the school but the parent admitted that it was late preschool starting. The other two parents said their children started preschool at the age of 6 years while one parent at 5 years which they felt to be appropriate time for preschool learning.

4.1.5 View of Parents on the Benefits of Preschool to a Learner and Teachers

Parents were asked if there were any benefits for a child to attend and start school from preschool class. Participants established that there were many benefits to a child and a teacher in grade one. Parents acknowledged the importance of preschool to every child. During interviews revealed that preschool helps a child to be familiar with people, also in learning sounds and opening the mind of a child. Parent 16 observed that:

My child started from preschool when he was 7 years, he was not happy in the first days of his school but later he developed interest when he got used to friends and a teacher. In the begging, we gave him coins to enable him to be familiar with school and stop crying. The school environment was good, and we were lucky, also the teacher was good to him. He started to know how to read and write and whenever he came back from school, he was showing me what he learnt, and I was very happy though some sometimes the teacher could call me at school to see how he was progressing in class. Now my child is in grade one and doing well. So, preschool is good it helps children know some English words before grade one.

Parent 19 added that:

If a child learn from preschool and later goes to grade one it will be easy for a teacher in grade one because the child knows maybe a,e,i,o,u and few things they learnt from preschool. As for me, the goodness I saw from my child who started from preschool is that my child quickly was familiar

with the learning environment and did not give me problems as I saw from my friends whose children were refusing to go to school.

4.2.6 View of Teachers on Benefits of Preschool to a Learner

Teachers were asked what benefit was there for a child to attend and start school from preschool class. Interview data from teachers established that there were many benefits to a child as preschool acts as a pillar and lays a strong foundation for child development today and the future of a child is determined by the foundation which comes from preschool preparatory stage. Teachers wished if the government could make preschool mandatory to every child before he/she progresses to grade one. The findings showed that those learners who had a good foundation from preschool were performing well after being transitioned to grade one and further grades. Teacher 4 mentioned that:

Preschool learning is very-very important to a child because preschool helps a child to develop abilities at an early age than keeping a child home waiting for appropriate age to start grade one. Further preschool helps working parents instead of sending them to grandparents or hiring workers to take care of them at home without proper care or improving their learning skills, therefore, by bring them here at school saves parents in such situations.

Teacher 3 said:

We have records and I confirm that those children at this school who started from preschool they are doing better than those learners who didn't start from preschool. There are so many benefits for a child to pass through preschool as learners are assisted to know how to pronounce words and learn how to interact with others before going to grade one. From our records here at school, children's who start from preschool already know some basic things in classroom and are familiar with school arrangements than those children who just start in grade one from home.

Teacher 7 said:

Yes, I agree they do better, and you can't compare them to those learners who came directly to grade one. Children that attend preschool are far much better than those children that come direct from home without passing into preschool. Because when children come from preschool if they were well prepared, they already have basics.

4.1.7 Teacher Language Alternation in Classroom

Teacher participants were asked if all the learners were understanding the teaching local languages which were commonly used during learning in their classrooms as they taught learners. Teachers established that local languages that were commonly used during classroom sessions were Tonga, Illa and Nyanja which the teacher knew and was used for a child to understand during learning. However, English was also used in preschool teaching as most of the songs were done in English. During classroom observation it was established that preschool class had children from different backgrounds with their different mother tongue. Some children whose parents recently migrated to Namwala district did not understand Tonga which was mainly used during learning. It was observed that Illa and Bemba language was used by main learners this was so because of the fishing activities in Namwala. Some teachers like teacher 11 used to use Nyanja, English and sign language as a communicating language. Teacher 11 noted that:

I'm a qualified ECE teacher but still with some barriers in language alternatives during classroom. I know Tonga better than any language and a bit of Nyanja; I was brought up here and went to college and I have been employed here. When teaching, there are some children who don't know English or Tonga. So, I do use songs and interpret them into the language they can understand better. Through songs am changing and making them understand both English and Tonga.

Teacher 13 observed that:

I have 94 learners in one class and it's not all of them understands Tonga or English. Personally, as a teacher I'm struggling to make them understand my teaching. Though, a teacher should be resourceful meaning even if I can't speak that particular language, but I do understand, sometimes I use same learners who know that language to interpret to me or to the other learner. I' am very familiar with Tonga my mother tongue and a bit of Nyanja with just a concept of Ila.

4.2.8 Teacher- Preschool Learner Ratio

Teachers were asked on how many preschool teachers and early childhood learners were at each school. Teacher participants established that all the government school's teacher ratio standards were not adhered too. It was observed that in all the selected five schools, preschool teachers were just one at each facility while preschool learners were between 94 per class to 130 at each school against one teacher. Following the interview data, it was revealed that the quality of education was compromised due to unbalanced teacher-pupil ratio, child care was inadequate and preschool teachers were stressed with crowded classrooms. Teacher 6 observed that:

The total number of learners I have is 119 in preschool class and to manage such large number we have divided them into two groups or classes and one group comes in the morning and the other group comes in the afternoons.

Teacher 3 added that:

As we speak today, at this school we have over 100 learners and our expected population being a zonal center covers about 110 learners. Due to the big number with one teacher as a school, we have decided to divide them into two classes, but all are taught by the same preschool teacher since we only have one preschool teacher.

Teacher 13 also observed that:

I 'm having 94 learners which make me get tired as each child needs closer supervision, monitoring, attention and care that is required for stronger foundation. And the all 94 learners are expected to be transitioned to the next level which is grade one.

4.2 How are Stakeholders Involved in the Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade one in Namwala District?

This research question was answered by teachers, parents and NGOs through interviews and classroom observation. These tools were used to ensure there was adequate data triangulation in the study so that all stakeholder involvement in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala district were presented in this study. Each category of participants presented its own views on the topic and subsequent questions asked.

4.2.1 Findings from Interviews with Teachers.

Teachers were asked on the role they play in managing learner transition and how often teachers and the school management engage parents and other partners on preschool transition to grade one in Namwala district. Interview data showed that stakeholders in Namwala district were fully participating in the transition process of the preschool learners to grade one. Teachers established that there was positive stakeholder engagement and response from some stakeholders especially parents and world vision. Further, it was revealed that the school had programs on how stakeholders were engaged like parents and also transition facilitators who are preschool teachers and grade one teachers. Teachers using transition policy were able to come together before and after a child is moves from preschool class to grade one to review their performance. Teacher 10 noted that:

I have a role to play especially, when a child progress to grade one and incase his/her performance is not good the parent of that particular learner is called, and discussion are made on the best way on how that particular child could be helped. In such instances parents are involved

in the progression of their children. As a school we have a policy that continues assessment has to be given before a child moves to another level. Those assessments we give to our learners help us to identify where the child requires attention or help. When a child comes to my class I ensured that an assessment test on basic knowledge is accessed and parents are involved during the process and if a child has to repeat into preschool counseling is provided to a child and parent.

Teacher 3 said that:

Us teachers we meet to discuss the transition of children in each grade not only preschool. Through the transition policy parents, preschool teacher and grade one teacher are called before a child is allowed to progress to grade one to report on each child performance and if that child has to repeat into preschool counselling is provided to both parents and a child. Once that is done both the child is guided on how he/she should prepare for next year going to grade one.

Teacher 11 mentioned that:

I give home works to my learners and some parents help children to answer home works but others do not. The purpose of homework is to involve parents in the learning process and parents will understand their children. I feel giving children homework and parents sitting with their own child improve our relationship with parents and children.

Teacher 7 added that:

We are involved in fact very because we are part and parcel of the system as these learners graduate from preschool, they fall under what we call primary sector and from this primary sector because that's where a child moves from one grade to another with education, he/she needs to acquire. We meet with parents twice in a year and before transition we involve preschool teachers with parents and these parents are guided on

how ECE transition should go about. Some parents do follow ups, they come to school to check on their children and we discuss with them.

4.2.2 Findings from Teachers on Key Stakeholder Involved in Transition

Teachers were also asked on who are partners that have come on board to help the school and children on preschool transition to grade one in Namwala district. Interview data showed that parents were the key stakeholders and an NGO by the name of world vision was doing recommendable job in helping and supporting the schools through various activities such as training of preschool teachers, providing teaching and learning materials to school, setting up playparks in schools and new classrooms blocks, providing nutrition to our children and was involved in community engagements program to those children who left school. Teacher 4 noted that:

We are luck as a school we have stakeholders and one of them is world vision who has been supporting our school in various activities and children in many things and they have changed the face of the school. For example, washing hand facilities for learners and play parks for our learners were constructed by world vision. There are times they support and organizes orientations for our ECE teacher and lower grade teachers. The ward development committees have also come on board to improve our infrastructure. I may mention that a new school block will be constructed at this school through CDF funds which am confident will motivate our learners and enable teachers to provide quality education in a conducive environment.

Teacher 1 noted that:

Maybe I can talk about parents being the major stakeholders in the learner transition rather than teachers. I know we are all involved at school such as ECE teachers, Senior Teacher, deputy head teacher, lower grade teacher and the enrollment committee during learner transition period especially toward the end of term 4 and begging of term one on the opening day.

4.2.3 Parents Involvement in Preschool Transition of Learners

Parents were asked on how they were involved in the transition of preschool learners and who else helped them. Parents established that they took a leading role by providing books, uniforms, taking their children to school and providing community services to the school when required. Parent 21 also noted that:

As a parent we are involved in the preparation of a child because we ensure that we buy new uniforms, pack food for them so that as a child mix with friends is also happy like others in good uniform when a child go to grade one. Sometimes I help my child if the teacher gives homework to my child to read and write so that quickly the child knows what to do in class.

Parent 18 mentioned said:

We, as the owner of those children at school we provide labour to the activities or work of the school. As you are aware this year hunger situation in our homes, but the school has a feeding program and us parents with children, we made a timetable for cooking in a week or month and our children feel good when they see us at school.

Parent 20 added that:

Am happy that, her preschool teacher and friends helped my child to be familiar at school, there were times my child could go to school without food or a coin to buy food when we don't have anything to give, the teacher could ask him where is your food Mainza? and if he says he doesn't have the food, the teacher could give him food which made him be happy and wanting to be going to school every day.

4.2.4 World Vision Involvement in Learner Transition

World vision facilitators were asked on the services they were providing to the schools in Namwala district and how they were involved in the transition of preschool learners. The world vision established that they took a leading role by providing learning and teaching materials, trained teachers who provided early childhood education up to grade four, constructed school play packs and renovated ECE centers and provided community engagements and sensitizations to parents on school importance. NGO 16 mentioned that:

As an NGO we visit parents especially those children who have stopped school due to some reasons. The first step is to visit schools and after collecting data for example if in 2024 January the school enrolled 100 learners and by September 2024 the numbers have reduced to 90 and the school just say those 10 just stopped coming. Our vision is to check where they are and what they are doing. Now for us to make follow-ups we have created committees of the same parents because they know each other who go to educates them on importance of school and bring back school dropout children back to schools and provides support that a child requires.

NGO 15 added that:

We are key stakeholders in the learning of a child, who are very concerned with the foundation and progression of every child at an early age. We are involved and we provide material resources and services such as learning materials, play parks for early childhood education in training of teachers from preschool to grade four, provision of desks and nutritional food stuffs to learners.

During data collection the researcher observed that the schools formed two committees which focused on improving the welfare of the school and following parents who's their children stopped schooling due to various reasons the same committee was to involve such parents, and this committee was spearheaded by world vision's officers. While another committee was the school committee that was responsible for any developmental projects and running of the school. At one of the selected schools the researcher was privileged to attend stakeholder engagement

and the support from stakeholders was impressive. It's from that stakeholder engagement the study confirms that in Namwala district partners to the school came to support school programs. The researcher interacted with one of the committee members and was asked what motivated her to come for a meeting called by the school. In response she said it's our school therefore, the school needs our support and the decision that may be made on my behalf may affect me or my child who is learning at this school.

4.3. What Barriers Faced by Stakeholders in the Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade one in Rural Areas of Primary Schools of Namwala District?

4.3.1 Findings from Parents on Barriers Faced During Child Transition

Parents were asked on the challenges they were facing as key stakeholders in the transition of learners. The research data established that poverty among families made them fail to provide all school requirements to their children such as uniforms and food. Further, the research findings reveal that children whose parents migrated to Namwala had Language barrier at school. Parents also indicated that distance from home to school taking and picking of children was not allowing them to full support their children. Parent 18 noted that:

I don't work and as a family we depend on farming food for my child to take is among the challenges I have because when my son reaches school friends at school come with nice food in lunch boxes but my child if I have money, I do give coins. The main barrier is what to give my child when going to school and once I have nothing causing him refuse going to school without proper or English food. I'm his grade mother and his parents died.

Parent 22 observed that:

Many children refuse to go to school in grade one from preschool class just because sometimes the child feels unhappy because you find the same clothes a child was using in preschool is the same clothes a child goes with or start with in grade one. The child looks at friends in a new and different uniform a child next day stops or refuses to go to school.

So, because of some parents failing to buy school requirements for a child we are making children not progress to grade one freely.

4.3.2 Assumed Barriers Faced by Learners

Parents were asked if learners were also facing challenges going to school and what made some learners stop school. The finding shows that parents insisted that some teachers were very harsh to learners, and they were usually beating children.

Parent 17 added that:

Madam what I can say is that some grade one teachers are harsh to our children especially untrained teachers the reason I say so madam is that in preschool the child has no problem going for school but as he/she comes to know is going to grade one and a child heard that in grade one a teacher so and so beats and lessons are hard a child start crying and requesting to go to another school. The main barriers are the same teachers who don't want to care for our children at school.

Parent 20 said that:

I'm not sure, but the distance from home to school is a bit-bit far though I can't know in kilometers but its far that's what I can say. As for me, I usually take 30 minutes or more walking but for children since they play as they come to school it's 1 hour and above walking from school to our home. So, it's difficult for a preschool learner, especially who are very young to come to school on a daily basis alone.

Also, the researcher asked parents on possible solutions in addressing the said challenges. Interview data showed that a child who was the centre for transition had challenges to be available at school and some of the challenges caused by providers. Parent 22 observed that:

The solution to this problem is that the school to have same down uniforms but different shirts so that if a child goes to grade one, we parents just buy a shirt for grade one than every year to be buying

uniform. We are failing to buy new uniform so that, a child will not feel cared for.

Parent 17 said that:

I think the solution teachers to be trained and school management to talk to all lower grade teachers not to be beating children.

4.3.3 Barriers to Effective Transition Implementation Faced by World Vision

The world vision facilitators were asked on the challenges they were facing in implementing the transitioning of preschool learners to grade one. Interview data showed that learners, parents and teachers faced many challenges to adequately provide the needed transition practices. The findings established that poverty among families was a contributing factor, the school had inadequate structures and classroom space for early childhood education learners, there was inadequate funding and lack of seriousness with some school supervisors on adhering to policy implementation and some children were covering longer distances to reach to the nearby primary school. NGO 15 noted that:

With me what I have observed is that school supervisors have not yet accepted the government policy for introducing Early Childhood Education in government schools as the first entry point for formal schooling. The second one is that preschool learners have inadequate qualified teachers in all schools and worse in community schools, for example in most cases you find one teacher with over 100 learners, sure from that number a teacher can't provide quality education, thirdly government and community school has no conducive learning infrastructure designed for Early Child Education learners for a particular age group. In most schools where I have visited especially there are few learning and teaching materials for ECE learners and grade one, I still feel for some ECE learners for long distance covered by a 3-6 years child from home to a nearby primary school; and let me just cut short story, the people who are given huge responsibility the school

supervisors do not attach the needed importance to early childhood education.

NGO 16 also added that:

I have observed during child interaction some children still struggle with language barrier by a child from home where they use their mother tongue to interact with and when such a child comes to school finds other learners using different language and teachers also some are not familiar with many languages for example a child uses Ila at home and at school teacher or fellow learners uses mainly Tonga, Lozi or Bemba. The second barrier is care received from teachers in grade one is different with care provided while they were in preschool with their preschool teachers. With my analysis the high dropout rate in grade one and two is as a result of some school supervisors not attaching the importance of early childhood education and little care a child receives while at school.

The researcher also asked world vision facilitators on the possible solutions in addressing the said challenges. It was established that some solutions needed some coordinated efforts from all who are involved, especially parents and teachers. There was a need to continue lobbying for more support from other partners and local government through CDF. NGO 15 mentioned that:

The only solution is that the government employ more ECE teachers to bridge the gap on teacher- learner ratio. Further, government to strength Early Childhood Education centres through improved funding and also school management to receive training and equip them with tools required to run the Early Childhood Education centers.

NGO 16 noted that:

We have partnered with the government to continue providing development of teachers through capacity building even to the

community teachers to enhance quality of education to the learner. Further, we will continue engaging our partner government to see how conducive learning environment can be improved. Am happy to mention to you that we have formed parent committees at various schools who are following parents in community and sensitize on the importance of early childhood education especially to those whose children stopped school.

4.3.4 Barriers Faced by Teachers in Transitioning of Learners

Teachers were asked on the challenges they were facing in implementing effective transition of preschool learners to grade one at their schools. Teachers established that poverty among families who were living with some learners were failing to provide the minimum requirement for their children, inadequate conducive ECE learning structures, inadequate funding from the government and some parent's perception on early childhood education were failing to cooperate with teachers. Teacher 1 noted that:

I can assure you that there are so many challenges we are facing as a school in the provision of ECE during and after learners have been transitioned to next level. How just mention few among them are due to poor environmental classrooms set up for preschool class and grade one. Second children compare teachers especially when the learning environment change, for example, when a child is in preschool class there is sleeping time which is given to them but as they go to grade one children miss such activities, hence they feel lonely and not cared for. Some learners prefer teachers or compare grade one teacher with preschool teachers making them not willing to come to that class and eventually stop coming to school.

Teacher 5 observed that:

The challenge that we have is that even those children who come as 4 years old in preschool and they have done one year the parents feel that since ECE has become a prerequisite to grade one and for such parents

we do sensitization for them to accept. Also, another challenge is that when we summon parents, they don't all come. It is procedural that when the class teacher prepares a list for those going to grade one, we inform parents to apply but parents think when a child is in ECE class automatically go to grade one without them applying for admission to grade one and its only that they are luck that ECE is together with grade one here at this school.

Teacher 14 also noted that:

We try to do our best as teachers on each child but the current situation of overcrowding of learners make me not to concentrate on each child learning disabilities. I have 120 children alone divided into two classes so even if am to spend 5 minutes on each, the learning period will be over without achieving anything.

Teacher 4 added that:

The greatest challenge we are facing is that all parents would what all children to progress to grade one but our go is to ensure that the four factors that we need to see in a child are developed before they progress to grade one. But as for the parent they mainly wish to see their children going to the next level as such we have barriers to allow a child to progress to the next level without seen those four elements for example 1, their age, 2 academic standing, 3 learning ability and 4 reparation those are our major concerns as providers of early childhood education learner's transition.

Teacher 9 Mentioned that:

What I can say is early childhood education is less funded and during finance meetings we are given a very small portion; hence, having inadequate learning and teaching aids for ECE children in my class. Another challenge, preschool children have no specific desks, and the majority of my learners sit on the floor during learning period. The

school management does not fully support the ECE program in raising a strong foundation for children.

Teacher 7 noted that:

The barriers that could be there are that there instances the child has been in class and that child could not write properly and does not know how to read the basics in such instances a child is repeated into preschool so that a child can acquire the basics that are required to progress to next level. We have over 100 learners who are sprint into two classes, and we have only one preschool teacher already to us that's a barrier to quality education and learner transition.

Teacher 14 observed that:

We look at determinants before a child is transitioned to the next level and the major determinant is age of a child, just with this we are facing challenges especially for those children who stay with parents who are not their biological children. some parents don't even know the actual age of their children as many of them here in Namwala are kept by their grandparents and birth records are not with them, so it's very difficult to identify whether a child has attained right age to move to grade one or those who should continue in preschool.

The researcher also asked teachers on possible solutions in addressing the said challenges.

Interview data showed that parents faced many barriers and challenges. Teacher 9 said that:

I feel and suggest ECE to have its specific fund allocation in the budget and school management to be guided on how preschool should run as it is different from grade one and upward grades.

Teacher 5 observed that:

As a school we do sensitization to the parents, and we will continue engaging them on matters affecting their children and appropriate time for learner transition.

4.4. Summary of the Chapter

The chapter has presented the findings as they were coded from individual respondents of Namwala District who are teachers and stakeholders in the transition process of preschool learners to grade one. The study used three major themes as per research question and sub-themes were generated and presented qualitatively using questions that were asked during data collection and classroom observations.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Overview

This chapter presents the discussion findings in relation to the literature review and theory presented earlier in this paper of the study on stakeholders' perceptions in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District. The discussion is presented using themes from the research objectives.

5.2 Stakeholder Perception in the Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade One in the Primary Schools of Namwala District.

The study findings established that stakeholders were aware of the transition of preschool learners to grade one and the importance of preschool learning to every child was acknowledged by parents and world vision who were key stakeholders in the transition process of a learner. The study was lined with Watson, Helen and Lum (2012) who emphasized on the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents and children. Teachers were the first point of call for any child while at school and they acknowledged that a child's transition from preschool to primary school was not a single event of change that had only immediate consequences. Hence, a child's success or failure depended on adapting to the changing context of formal schooling which had potential to shape their educational and social-emotional futures. This study finding agreed to some extent on collaboration that existed between teachers, parents and world vision not with

children. However, stakeholders' perception differed between parents and world vision on the age a child is expected to start preschool in line with standard preschool age group between 3 to 6 years. Parents perceived preschool age to 5 years and above not 3 years as suggested by teachers who insisted to even before birth while world vision viewed preschool to start at an early age of 3 years and focused to care for preschool learners up to grade four.

The findings from the study established that preschool transition to grade one was not just a mere moving of any child from preschool class to the next level of learning but involved the entire process of mentorship, monitoring and evaluating of the learner's abilities, capabilities and the required age for each stage of learning/education. Musonda and Matafwali (2023) agreed to the finding as they indicate that successful transitions and school readiness includes basic acquisition of knowledge and skills such as the ability to sound letters of the alphabet, the ability to count numbers, being able to hold a pencil and possession of some pre-reading skills. These concepts were found appealing for school readiness and transitions. Therefore, the purpose of preschool learning is to equip a child with basic knowledge on sound pronunciation and early child interaction at an early age.

The study findings revealed that preschool learning and transition process was well known and appreciated by teachers and stakeholders (parents and world vision) as a foundation or building block of the existing acquired knowledge and skills from preschool class which was built on as they grow and progress to grade one and further education. These findings of the study were supported by Gouri (2020) who revealed that early childhood period is the basis for later success in life, as it is a period when a child's brain develops at a rapid rate creating plenty of opportunities for children's learning and development. This applied to preschool learning in this study that a child can have a good start in life when he/she grows up in a careering and stimulating environment that meets his/her essential needs such as nutrition, health, care and safety.

Further, the study established that children who started education from preschool did not face many challenges when they transitioned to grade one. The findings showed that the ideal age for preschool learning was between 3 to 6 years. Furthermore, findings indicated that parents suggested 5 years for a child to start preschool that was so because at 5 years a child was able to

follow instructions from teachers with less challenges. The finding of this study was in line with the findings made by Lina (2014) whose results were that the function of preschool class was to prepare children for compulsory schooling and that made the concept of the future important to preschool class activities and transitions in general. Adesemowo and Sotonade (2022) agreed as they acknowledged that Schooling was just one of how education was been provided and they agreed that from 0-6 years the education received was family-based and was dominated by the mother who facilitates cognitive leaning to a child. This study also found that the purpose of preschool learning was to prepare a child at an early age to schooling and future education journey and preschool learning was to be made mandatory for any child as entry requirement to grade one as it creates stronger foundation for a child in reading skills, writing and word pronunciation.

Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that world vision was helping in creating a very conducive learning environment to preschool learners up to grade four and this was so to reduce high dropout of learners if the foundation was to be set stronger. The findings showed that there were inadequate staffing levels for early childhood education against the number of learners. A study by Breuer and Tal (2020) agreed that if the school environment is not conducive for a child, a child tends to have anxiety and losses interest going to school. Therefore, conducive learning environment was important to each child in Namwala District, and it played a role in cognitive development of a child which reduced inevitability and promoted learning satisfaction. It is true that most learners who had dropped out of school were because of poor learning environment and economic standing of parents which learners were not happy and failed neglected by parents and teachers.

The findings established the importance of preschool learning in the development of a child brain which could be fully developed through four stages of cognitive development which was classified by Jean Piaget's as sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational stage. Jean took the four stages of development as a requirement step for a child to grows or progress in years in acquisition of knowledge as supported by Paris, Ricardo, Rymond, and Johnson (2024). Learning is a process that could be achieved through coordinated effort by all stakeholders. Teachers who did not allow children to proceed to grade one because age applied the cognitive theory of development as every child required to acquire learning

according to their age before transitioned to grade one has that enhanced cognitive development in a child.

5.3 Stakeholder's Involvement in the Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade One in Primary Schools.

The study findings established that stakeholders in Namwala District responded positively in participation in the transition of preschool learners to grade one. Parents and world vision worked hand in hand with teachers in the provision of educational services to a learner. The study revealed the acknowledgement of the role of the teacher, parents and other partners like world vision. The findings of Musonda and Matafwali (2023) identified regular Communication between Preschool and Grade One Teachers in addressing transitional challenges. This study did not agree that teachers used to hold adhoc meetings instead of planned meetings. Teachers in Namwala district used to have planned schedules of meeting on preschool transition with stakeholders and in few instances, parents were involved differently and that depended on the issue to be discussed. Hence, planed transition in Namwala District helped both teachers and parents to schedule their programs and addressed the challenges learners were facing at school in doing so transition was promoted in a coordinated way.

Stakeholders participated in school activities such as food preparation at school, visiting teachers to review the progression of learners and attending school programs during stakeholder collaborations between teachers, parents and other stakeholders. The findings agreed with the findings of Petrakos and Lehrer (2022) who identified transition practices that facilitated transitions such as teachers sent registration package to parents at home and invited them to visit schools where children were learning from. The study confirmed that stakeholders collaborated well with teachers in Namwala District and that facilitated transition process and built strong bond with teachers and learners to see their parents at school with teachers.

Further, the study findings confirmed that teachers were not stakeholders in preschool learner transition, but they were facilitators and implementers of the transition process of preschool learners to grade one. The study established that parents and world vision were the stakeholders who were actively involved in the transition of preschool leaners and world vision sponsored a number of programs such as construction of play parks and sensitizations outreaches to the

community and parents whose children stopped due to various reasons. The study was in line with a study conducted by Docket and Perry (2001) whose results identified guidelines for effective transition through establishing and maintaining a positive relationship with all parties such as educators, parents and children and recognizing the role of the family. With the findings of this study, we confirm that parents and all parties involved had a major role in learner transition to grade one.

Furthermore, the study findings established that world vision was contributing much on the preschool transition, and they took a Centre stage in facilitating preschool transition by creating play parks for learners, providing teaching and learning materials and training of early childhood teachers in schools. The established play parks provided physical education that enhanced and promoted physical health and child development. While training of teachers in early childhood education management enhanced effective and quality of education that was being provided to the learner for the developmental of four domains. The study was in agreement with Breuer and Tal (2020) whose results confirmed that a transition from preschool to primary school was inevitable to be experienced by children and preschool learner transitions were challenging to parents and learners. Therefore, this study identified factors that affected a child's ability to cope with during transition which are economic standing of the child's family and support from providers.

The findings of this study confirm on the processes a learner needs to undergo as described by Piaget's stage theory. Cognitive theory of development involves processes based upon actions and later progresses to changes in mental operations. This means the creation of play parks by world vision was preparing learners for physical exercise which was a requirement for cognitive development in early cognitive development of a child and that was achieved through stakeholder collaborations in the transition process of preschool learners to grade one.

5.4 The Barriers Faced by Teachers, Children and Stakeholders in the Transition of Preschool Learners to Grade One in Primary Schools of Namwala District.

The study established that distance from home to school was a challenge in preschool learning as parents had difficulties in bringing their children to school and picking them up on a daily basis as preschool learners were still very small to move alone. From the findings the transition age

and poverty levels among families were. Without actual or right age teachers failed to determine the suitability of a learner based on age for learners' transition from preschool to grade one as some of these learners were kept by grandparents who had no proper records for their children causing delay in the transition of some learners. The study findings identified teachers who were not providing the needed care to the children contributed to dropout of learners from school. The study was in line with Saradidu (2016) who viewed delayed transition to cause frustration to learners from preschool to first grade and lead to a child dropout of school. However, the findings of this study established that not only learners but also parents were getting frustrated for not transitioning their children to grade one. Hence school management was providing counseling to parents and children on how and when transition can be done to reduce frustration and dropouts of learners.

The study findings revealed that conducive learning environment contributes to learning outcomes. The learning environment and inadequate teachers was among major barriers to effective preschool learning and transition as schools had overcrowded learning environment between 94 to 120 against one teacher which translated to lower quality of education due to shortage of qualified preschool teachers. The study was supported by Breuer and Tal (2020) established that transition from preschool to primary school was inevitable situation to children and identified factors that affected learners to cope with transition and named them as child's family, educational frameworks and support or protection from providers. This has established that favorable school environment and home environment, qualified teachers and supplementary support from partners were factors for preschool transition as it acts as catalyst for learning and retention in a child learning process.

The study findings established that school supervisors were still resisting accepting preschool learners in government schools as they did not fully support ECE classes with needed importance and urgency. Further, findings showed that teachers some teachers had language barriers during teaching which reduced the concentration of young learners. However, teachers used other methods to make learners understand as they were the centre of learning. The finding was supported by Nyimbili, Namuyamba & Chakanika (2018) whose results agreed to this study as teachers did not follow the government policy on early childhood education strictly. School supervisors did not attach importance to government policy in creation of ECE centres in schools

leading to inadequate learning materials suitable for learners. Secondly, teachers were translanguaging in classroom as some learners were not familiar with Tonga though government policy was to teach in local language. Hence, learners were the best people to judge how learning was done by various teachers and preschool teachers were found to be more caring than grade one teachers.

Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed some measures to be undertaken to address the presumed challenges. The findings show that sensitization with parents was very important on the transition of learners. Teachers to receive training in early childhood education and government to strength policy level on preschool transition. The study was supported by Matafwali (2022) who identified measures as to strengthening mechanisms for Continuous Professional Development of Early Childhood Education Teachers, the use of efficient delivery methods for the curriculum, and strengthening of family involvement in. This study agreed to previous findings and identified parent-family sensitization on importance of ECE to families as a centre of transition. Stakeholders in Namwala formed early childhood education committees that comprised of parents and world vision and took a centre stage in sensitizing families on the importance of preschool learning to a child development.

The findings of the study show that preschool learners were stopping school just because of the school environment and economic standing of their parents. With that the study confirmed the link of cognitive theory that founded the study that when cognitive development is not well managed it creates future consequences to an individual child who fails to fit and stand the pressure of life at some point. Therefore, when Jean Piaget noted that children made major mistakes in decision making because of the quality not the quantity of intelligent which was equal to human development and knowledge acquisition in making informed decision referred to such were a child decides to stop school just for a baseless reason that may not cost his or her entire life. The theory talked about preoperational stage in child development which is between 2 to 7 years old and during this stage a child develop language and begin symbolic play. Paris, Ricardo, Rymond, and Johnson (2024) agreed as they talked about four stages of cognitive development in human development. The theory was important because it provided the basis to understand why preschool learning was important to every child in enhancing child development. Cognitive theory in early childhood education has been found to have numerous

benefits for human development as it enhances cognitive development, improve language skills and increase cultural awareness or diversity as a child progresses with schooling.

5.4 Summary of the Chapter

The study has discussed the findings of interview data as presented in three themes and sub-themes as per research questions. The finding of the study on stakeholders' perception on preschool learner transition was established and was linked to theory of the study and literature review findings. Preschool learning is very important to every child and it requires collaboration and total support from all parties involved.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Overview

In conclusion, stakeholders' perception in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala District was not different from other conclusion of previous studies. The study developed three objectives in chapter one and conclusion has been drawn based three on objectives as follows:

6.2. Conclusion

The study concludes that teachers were not stakeholders in the study but educators and implementers who played a major role in preschool transition. The study identified parents and world vision as key stakeholders in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala District and preschool transition was confirmed ranging from 3 years to 6 years. However, preschool learners required care to be extended to after being transitioned to grade one up to grade 4 or 11 years, as such grades lays the needed foundation for child development. In view of the above the study concludes that preschool transition should be mandatory, and since stakeholders had knowledge about transition process. The country policy and resources to be directed in investing in early childhood education to enhance child development and for the country to achieve the desired and responsible citizens and future leaders was more important to today's children as they will become tomorrow's citizens, workers, and parents.

The study also concludes that stakeholders were parents and world vision who took center stage in provision of required services to a child in preparation of learners for school transition. The stakeholders had a role to play in the transition such as parents provided uniforms, food and parental care to their children while world vision provided play parks, learning and teaching materials, training of teachers and sensitization of parents on the importance of early childhood education. Further, teachers played a major role in monitoring and evaluation on the progress made by learners and learning abilities. Teachers were meeting regularly with stakeholders on various platforms that required them to improve on child learning and transition. From these findings we conclude that parents still remain key players in child development and school transition to grade one and other levels of schooling.

The study finally concludes that poor transition practices in Namwala District led to many challenges that learners in grade one and above faced. Teachers provided monitoring to learners despite facing challenges from some parents who forced them to transition their children before meeting all required standards as per policy guide. Parents were also not applying for admission of learners to be transitioned to grade one despite sending them admission forms by the school and parents failed to provide right age for learners so that teachers could decide whether to transition to grade one or not that affected learners greatly. The study also noted that stopped school as a result of economic status of their parents who failed to provide uniforms and food while other learners stopped school due to distance from homes to schools. World vision also had their own challenges in implementing the partnership support to schools and learners. The major challenge was school supervisors who did not attach importance to preschool classes as they did not provide the needed support to preschool learners. The school environment was not conducive for both ECE learners and grade one and it calls for the government to fund and create classrooms that could be suitable for preschool learners to act as a boost to young learners.

The study concludes that the theory of cognitive development plays a role in the development of a child's brain which is developed step-by-step during schooling. The theory helped the researcher to understand child development and transition which teachers and stakeholder had to value. The study concludes that transition has to be undertaken step by step in line with age and learning capabilities to holistically develop a human being who will be a future leader, citizen

and parent as it determines the future of an individual. If transition is left unchecked or not done well at preschool level it may lead a child to face more challenges in grade one and above grades that would lead to child dropout of school.

6.3. Recommendations

The following are recommendations for Namwala District Education Board Secretary:

1. Teachers and the world vision to continue sensitization parents on the importance of early childhood education (preschool learning). This could facilitate imparting required knowledge and skills at an early age of a child and reduce learner school dropout as a child progresses to higher education.
2. The Government of Zambia to consider employing ECE teachers to enable preschool learner receive stronger foundation from qualified teachers and reduce teacher- learner ratio that have a potential to cause stress to teachers and lower the quality of education.
3. Government and supporting partners to construct ECE centers and grade one classroom with improved learning environment and learning materials. This could enable learners learn in a good environment that could be ideal for learners and learners will be motivated by good learning environment.
4. Government to make policy on preschool learning and every child to undergo preschool learning as mandatory before grade one so that every child would be given an equal opportunity to education from early stage of child development.

6.3 Chapter Summary

The chapter concludes that stakeholders' perception in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala District was that preschool learning was very important to every child and better citizen of tomorrow. Preschool learning still ranges from 3 years to 7 years old and care has to be extended up to 10 years when a child reaches grade four. The chapter has drawn some recommendations to address some gaps if government or other interested parties could adopt them.

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Appendix (i): Key Informants Unstructured Interview Guide

Section A: Personal Information

1. Your age:
2. Your gender:
3. Marital status:
4. Level of education:
5. Current position
6. How long have you been staying or working under Namwala District?

SECTION B-D: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Section B: Stakeholder perception on preschool learner transition,

1. What perception do stakeholders have on the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala district?

Section C: Stakeholder's involvement in learners' transition.

2. How are stakeholders involved in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala district?

Section D: Challenges facing stakeholders in the transition of preschool learners.

3. What barriers do stakeholders face in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in rural areas of Namwala district?

Appendix (ii): Key Informants: Classroom Observational Guide

Section A: Personal Information

- a. Your age:
- b. Your gender:
- c. Marital status:
- d. Level of education:
- e. Current position
- f. Duration of employment under Namwala District?

SECTION B-D: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Section B: Stakeholder perception on preschool learner transition,

1. What perception do teachers have on the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala district?

Section C: Stakeholder's involvement in learners' transition.

2. How do teachers involved stakeholders and learners in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in Namwala District?

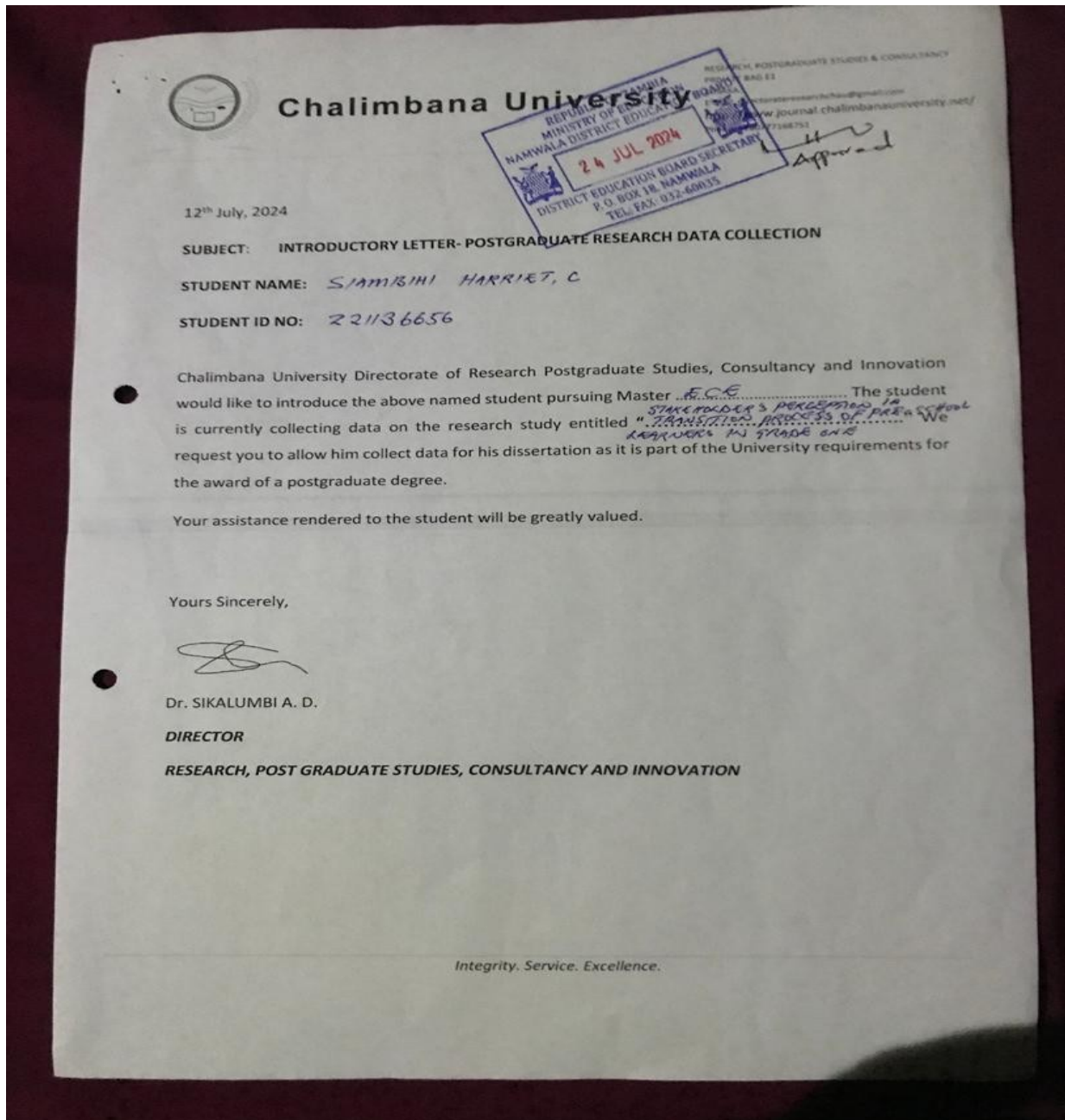
Section D: Challenges faced by teachers and learners in the transition process.

3. What barriers do stakeholders face in the transition of preschool learners to grade one in rural areas of Namwala district?


Thank you for your support, your time and your inputs

Name: Ms. Harriet Siambihi
Contact details: 0979323296
Email address:

Appendix (iii): Letter of permission to collect data.



Appendix (iv): Ethical Approval Letter

 **Chalimbana University**

Office of the Director
Directorate of Research & Postgraduate
Private Bag E1, Lusaka.
Email: researchethics@chau.ac.zm
Website: www.chau.ac.zm
Phone: +260 979 024363

Research Ethics Clearance Form 1c

ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Researcher: Siambihi Harriet


Supervisor: Dr. Nyimbili F.


Title of research: Stake Holders Perceptions in the Transition Process of Pre-school Learners to Grade one in Primary Schools of Namwala District of Southern Province.

Thank you for application for research ethics clearance by Chalimbana University Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research.

The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to an applicable national legislation, professional code of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Ethics approval is granted for the period July, 2024 to July 2025 on condition that the researcher will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved proposal by the supervisor. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date, July 2025.

Kind regards,

Dr. R. Chikopela
Chairperson
Research Ethics Committee


Dr. A. D. Sikalumbi
Director
Research, Innovations and Postgraduate

Integrity. Service. Excellency.

Appendix (v): Consent Form

(Translated into vernacular if necessary)

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Stakeholder’s perception in transitions process of preschool learner’s in grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District of Southern province-Zambia

REFERENCE TO PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET:

1. Make sure that you read the Information Sheet carefully, or that it has been explained to you to your satisfaction.
2. Your permission is required if tape or audio recording is being used.
3. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary, i.e. you do not have to participate if you do not wish to.
4. Refusal to take part will involve no penalty or loss of services to which you are otherwise entitled.
5. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of services and without giving a reason for your withdrawal.
6. You may choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study. If there is anything that you would prefer not to discuss, please feel free to say so.
7. The information collected in this interview will be kept strictly confidential.
8. If you choose to participate in this research study, your signed consent is required below before I proceed with the interview with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

I have read (or have had explained to me) the information about this research as contained in the Participant Information Sheet. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I now consent voluntarily to be a participant in this project and understand that I have the right to end the interview at any time, and to choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study. My signature below says that I am willing to participate in this research:

Participant's name (Printed):

Participant's signature: Consent Date:

.....

Researcher Conducting Informed Consent (Printed)

.....

Signature of Researcher: Date:

Signature of parent/guardian: Date:

Appendix (vi): Participant Information Sheet

Dear Respondent,

I am Siambihi Harriet a student, studying masters in early childhood education with Chalimbana University carrying out an investigation on Stakeholder's perception in the transitions' process of preschool learners in grade one in the primary schools of Namwala District of Southern province- Zambia.

Be informed that your identification and the information you will share shall be treated with high confidence. This is designed for my research project with no other intentions and it's purely for academic purposes as it is a requirement for partial fulfilment for the award of my Master early childhood education. However, the information could be used to improve preschool learners' transition practices not only in Namwala district but across Zambia.

I also request that this conversation be recorded for data verifications during the compilation period after data have been collected from respondents. The participation in this research is purely voluntary, therefore no direct benefit is attached to be a participant.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with the interview and you can contact me on the following cell phone number, 0979323296, if you have any further questions after the completion of the interview. The first part of the interview guide contains respondent details. The second part contains questions for the researcher.

Your cooperation and support will be highly appreciated by myself.

Yours Faithfully,

Siambihi Harriet