
EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PREVENTION OF CHILD NEGLECT: THE CASE OF KAWALE 2, T/A TSABANGO IN LILONGWE

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ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Development (ECD) provides an important foundation for children's cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and educational development. In Malawi, Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs) are important platforms for implementing ECD programmes and preparing children for formal schooling. However, challenges continue to affect effective curriculum implementation. This study assessed the implementation of the ECD curriculum in public CBCCs in Chinsapo under Traditional Authority Malili in Lilongwe District. The study focused on the extent of curriculum implementation, challenges experienced by caregivers, and the contribution of community participation. A descriptive case study design employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches was used. The study involved 30 participants comprising caregivers, supervisors, parents, and community leaders selected through purposive and simple random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis and analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Findings showed that curriculum implementation was largely partial and inconsistent, with 60% of centres demonstrating partial implementation, 25% full implementation, and 15% low or irregular implementation. Key challenges included inadequate teaching materials, limited caregiver training, high learner-caregiver ratios, weak supervision, poor working conditions, and limited community participation. Nevertheless, community involvement supported resource mobilisation, infrastructure development, learner attendance, and incorporation of local cultural values.

KEYWORDS: Early Childhood Development, ECD curriculum, Community-Based Childcare Centres, curriculum implementation, caregivers, community participation, Chinsapo, Malawi.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a critical foundation for lifelong learning, health, behaviour, and holistic human development. The early years are characterised by rapid cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development, making the quality of experiences during this period essential for children's later educational and social outcomes. Investment in ECD contributes to improved educational achievement, health, social wellbeing, and economic productivity (UNICEF, 2019). In Malawi, ECD has become an important government priority aimed at improving school readiness, strengthening human capital development, and contributing to the reduction of intergenerational poverty (World Bank, 2021).

Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs) are important platforms for delivering ECD services in Malawi, particularly within communities where access to formal preschool education is limited. The ECD curriculum implemented through CBCCs seeks to promote holistic child development through structured play, early learning activities, health and nutrition programmes, psychosocial support, and social interaction. However, the existence of a curriculum does not necessarily guarantee effective implementation. Its success depends on caregiver capacity, availability of teaching and learning resources, supervision, appropriate learning environments, and community involvement (Mkandawire & Munthali, 2020).

1.2 Background of the Study

The Government of Malawi introduced the National Early Childhood Development Policy in 2003 and revised it in 2019 to strengthen access to and quality of early childhood care and education (Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, 2019). CBCCs constitute an important component of the national ECD system and primarily provide services to children between three and five years of age. Through appropriate early learning experiences, CBCCs are expected to prepare children for formal primary education by developing foundational cognitive, language, physical, social, and emotional competencies.

UNESCO (2020) recognises quality ECD programmes as important in promoting school readiness and reducing repetition and dropout during the early years of primary education. Chinsapo, under Traditional Authority Malili in Lilongwe District, provides an important setting for examining ECD curriculum implementation. The area has experienced population

growth and increasing demand for early childhood services, resulting in the establishment and expansion of CBCCs.

Despite increased access, concerns remain regarding the quality and consistency of ECD curriculum implementation. Previous studies have identified inadequate teaching and learning materials, limited caregiver training, high child-caregiver ratios, weak supervision, and inadequate community support as significant challenges affecting ECD provision in Malawi (Phiri, 2021; Moyo & Nyirenda, 2022). UNESCO (2022) further emphasises the importance of community participation and government support in ensuring effective and sustainable ECD programmes. These concerns demonstrate the need to assess curriculum implementation at community level and identify areas requiring improvement.

1.3 Problem Statement

Although Malawi has made progress in expanding access to ECD services, effective and consistent curriculum implementation remains a concern. Some CBCCs continue to experience shortages of teaching and learning materials, inadequate caregiver training, limited supervision, and challenging working conditions. These factors may prevent caregivers from translating curriculum requirements into meaningful learning experiences for children. UNICEF (2021) reported substantial gaps in ECD resources and caregiver training in Malawi, while the World Bank (2023) highlights the importance of quality early learning environments in promoting children's developmental and educational outcomes.

Community participation also remains important because communities contribute resources, infrastructure, learner attendance, and local knowledge to ECD programmes. However, limited community involvement may affect the sustainability and effectiveness of CBCC activities. The problem addressed by this study was therefore the inadequate and inconsistent implementation of the ECD curriculum in public CBCCs in Chinsapo. Understanding the extent of implementation, challenges experienced by caregivers, and contribution of community participation is essential for developing appropriate interventions to improve ECD service delivery.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 Main Objective

The main objective of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of ECD curriculum implementation in public CBCCs in Chinsapo under Traditional Authority Malili, Lilongwe District.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the extent to which the ECD curriculum is implemented in public CBCCs in Chinsapo.
2. To determine the challenges experienced by caregivers in implementing the ECD curriculum in Chinsapo.
3. To examine the role of community participation in supporting ECD curriculum implementation in Chinsapo.

1.5 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is the ECD curriculum implemented in public CBCCs in Chinsapo?
2. What challenges do caregivers experience when implementing the ECD curriculum in Chinsapo?
3. What role does community participation play in supporting ECD curriculum implementation in Chinsapo?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is significant to the Chinsapo community because it provides evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of ECD curriculum implementation within local CBCCs. The findings may assist caregivers, community leaders, education authorities, and other stakeholders in identifying interventions related to caregiver training, teaching resources, supervision, and community support.

The study also contributes to policy and practice by providing evidence that may guide government departments and non-governmental organisations in strengthening ECD service delivery. Academically, the findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on ECD curriculum implementation in Malawi and may provide a useful reference for future researchers. More broadly, improving ECD quality contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2023).

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section reviews literature on Early Childhood Development (ECD) curriculum implementation, with particular attention to curriculum delivery, Community-Based

Childcare Centres (CBCCs), caregiver capacity, community participation, monitoring and evaluation, resource availability, and curriculum relevance. The review draws on evidence from Malawi and other Sub-Saharan African countries to establish what is known about effective ECD provision and identify gaps that justify an assessment of curriculum implementation in public CBCCs in Chinsapo under Traditional Authority Malili, Lilongwe District.

2.2 Definition of Terms

2.2.1 Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Early Childhood Development refers to the multidimensional development of children, particularly during the early years when significant cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development occurs. ECD is influenced by nutrition, responsive caregiving, early learning, health, protection, and supportive environments (UNICEF, 2019; UNESCO, 2020). Evidence indicates that experiences during early childhood have long-term implications for learning, health, behaviour, and social development (Black et al., 2017; Britto et al., 2017). Investment in quality ECD programmes is therefore important not only for individual child development but also for human capital development and reduction of social inequalities (Heckman, 2017; UNICEF, 2021). ECD should consequently be understood as a multisectoral process involving education, health, nutrition, social protection, families, and communities.

2.2.2 Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation refers to the process of translating curriculum policies, objectives, content, and guidelines into actual teaching and learning practices. It involves instructional delivery, selection of appropriate teaching strategies, assessment, classroom organisation, and creation of supportive learning environments (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; Moyo & Nyirenda, 2022). Effective implementation depends on caregiver competence, availability of teaching materials, supervision, institutional support, class size, and community involvement (Fullan, 2019). Professional development and collaborative planning can further enable caregivers to adapt curriculum content to children's developmental and contextual needs while maintaining national standards (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In resource-constrained settings, however, inadequate training and materials may create a gap between the intended curriculum and what is actually implemented.

2.2.3 Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs)

CBCCs are community-based facilities that provide early learning, care, nutrition, and psychosocial support to young children, generally between three and five years of age in Malawi (Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, 2019). They are

particularly important in low-income and underserved communities because they increase access to early learning opportunities and promote community ownership. Community participation in CBCC governance, resource mobilisation, monitoring, and child support can enhance programme sustainability (Mkandawire, 2019). However, CBCCs continue to experience challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited teaching materials, weak feeding programmes, and insufficient caregiver training (Phiri & Matola, 2022). Strengthening CBCCs is therefore important for improving school readiness and reducing inequalities in early learning opportunities.

2.2.4 Caregiver Capacity

Caregiver capacity refers to the knowledge, skills, qualifications, attitudes, and training required to implement ECD programmes effectively. Competent caregivers are better positioned to understand child development and apply child-centred, play-based, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate teaching strategies (UNESCO, 2018). Training also improves lesson planning, classroom organisation, interactive learning, and responsive caregiver-child relationships (Britto et al., 2017; Tibategeza & Hartell, 2017). Continuous professional development through refresher training, mentoring, and in-service programmes is important for maintaining and strengthening these competencies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In Malawi, inadequate caregiver training remains an important barrier to effective curriculum implementation (Kholowa & Mvula, 2020).

2.2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) refers to systematic processes for tracking programme implementation, assessing resource use, reviewing teaching practices, and determining whether intended child development outcomes are being achieved. Monitoring provides continuous feedback on programme activities, while evaluation assesses the effectiveness and outcomes of interventions (UNESCO, 2018). Effective M&E strengthens accountability, supports evidence-based decision-making, identifies training and resource needs, and helps ensure compliance with ECD standards (World Bank, 2021). In CBCCs, effective supervision is particularly important because many centres depend on community-based caregivers who may have limited professional support.

2.3 Empirical Evidence

2.3.1 Curriculum Implementation in Early Childhood Development

Empirical evidence shows that effective ECD curriculum implementation depends on the interaction of caregiver preparedness, teaching resources, learning environments, supervision, and stakeholder support. Studies in East Africa indicate that regular supervision and

availability of instructional materials improve curriculum fidelity and learning experiences, although supervision alone cannot compensate for severe resource shortages (Makena & Njuguna, 2023; Mwangi & Kamau, 2020).

Evidence from Malawi similarly indicates challenges in translating national ECD policies into practice. Phiri (2021) found that unclear caregiver responsibilities, inconsistent training, and weak support systems affected curriculum implementation. Moyo and Nyirenda (2022) further emphasise the importance of trained personnel, appropriate resources, and supportive management. These findings suggest that curriculum implementation is not simply a technical process but is influenced by institutional and community contexts. However, limited evidence exists on how these factors interact within semi-urban CBCCs such as those in Chinsapo.

2.3.2 Caregiver Capacity and Professional Development

Caregiver capacity is consistently identified as a major determinant of ECD quality. In Malawi and other Sub-Saharan African countries, many caregivers lack formal qualifications, structured career pathways, and opportunities for continuous professional development (ADEA ICQN-ECD, 2017; Kholowa & Mvula, 2020). Limited training may affect caregivers' ability to use play-based approaches, organise learning environments, assess children, and respond to different developmental needs.

Studies indicate that trained caregivers demonstrate stronger pedagogical practices and are more capable of supporting children's cognitive, language, and socio-emotional development (Britto et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2022). Banda (2025) also reports that unclear roles and limited professional support in CBCCs can result in inconsistent teaching practices and partial adherence to curriculum requirements. Professional development, therefore, requires not only initial training but also mentoring, supervision, refresher courses, and access to appropriate instructional resources.

2.3.3 Community Involvement and Stakeholder Engagement

Community involvement is important for the sustainability, relevance, and effectiveness of ECD programmes. Parents, caregivers, traditional leaders, community committees, and other stakeholders can contribute through decision-making, resource mobilisation, infrastructure development, monitoring, and support for children's attendance (UNICEF, 2021; Connelly et al., 2024). Evidence from Southern Africa suggests that CBCCs with active community committees tend to benefit from stronger local ownership and greater resource mobilisation (Kaunda & Chimombo, 2019; Firelight Foundation, 2023).

Community involvement can also ensure that curriculum implementation reflects local cultural values, languages, and children's experiences. This is particularly relevant in semi-urban communities where social and cultural conditions may change rapidly. However, the extent to which community participation directly supports curriculum implementation in Chinsapo remains insufficiently documented.

2.3.4 Monitoring, Evaluation and Resource Provision

M&E and resource availability are closely connected to curriculum quality. Effective monitoring provides feedback on teaching practices, caregiver performance, resource utilisation, and children's progress, enabling stakeholders to identify and address implementation gaps (Makena & Njuguna, 2023). Adequate classrooms, teaching materials, play equipment, and nutrition support are equally important for creating appropriate learning environments.

Evidence from Malawi indicates that many CBCCs experience shortages of infrastructure, learning materials, supervision, and nutrition support (Firelight Foundation, 2023). Such constraints can limit caregivers' ability to implement developmentally appropriate activities even when they possess relevant knowledge and skills. Assessing the availability and use of resources alongside supervision is therefore essential in determining the effectiveness of ECD curriculum implementation.

2.3.5 Curriculum Relevance and Cultural Adaptation

Curriculum relevance is influenced by the extent to which learning experiences reflect children's cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic environments. Context-responsive curricula that incorporate local languages, cultural practices, and children's everyday experiences can increase participation and improve learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2022; Pangeti et al., 2023). Conversely, weak alignment between curriculum content and classroom realities may reduce learner engagement and limit the effectiveness of early learning programmes.

In Malawi, evidence suggests that gaps may exist between national curriculum expectations and actual practices within CBCCs, particularly where caregivers lack adequate resources and professional support (Banda, 2025; Phiri, 2021). Community participation can help address this gap by enabling local stakeholders to contribute knowledge and culturally appropriate learning resources. This is particularly important in Chinsapo, where diverse social and cultural characteristics may influence children's learning experiences.

2.4 Literature Gap and Conclusion

The reviewed literature demonstrates that effective ECD curriculum implementation depends on several interconnected factors, including caregiver competence, teaching and learning

resources, supervision, community participation, and curriculum relevance. Existing studies provide substantial evidence on the importance of these factors in Malawi and other Sub-Saharan African contexts. However, there is limited empirical evidence examining how these factors collectively influence curriculum implementation in semi-urban public CBCCs.

Most existing studies focus broadly on access, caregiver training, or general ECD quality, with less attention to the actual extent of curriculum implementation and the interaction between caregiver capacity, community participation, monitoring, and resource availability within a specific semi-urban setting. This study addresses this gap by examining ECD curriculum implementation in public CBCCs in Chinsapo under Traditional Authority Malili. The study therefore provides context-specific evidence that can inform caregiver development, community engagement, supervision, resource provision, and policy interventions aimed at improving the quality and sustainability of ECD services in Malawi.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to investigate the implementation of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) curriculum in public Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs) under T/A Malili in Lilongwe District. It describes the research design, methodology, study setting, target population, sampling techniques, sample size, research instruments, pilot study, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The methodology was designed to generate credible and context-specific information on caregiver capacity, community participation, monitoring and evaluation, resource availability, and curriculum relevance.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research design supported by a descriptive case study approach. Qualitative research was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information about participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges regarding ECD curriculum implementation. The descriptive approach enabled examination of existing curriculum implementation practices without manipulating the study environment (Kothari, 2014). A case study approach was also appropriate because it allowed an in-depth investigation of ECD curriculum implementation within the real-life context of CBCCs under T/A Malili (Yin, 2018).

3.3 Methodology

The study employed multiple data collection methods to obtain comprehensive information. Structured questionnaires were used to collect information from parents concerning ECD services, resource availability, and curriculum implementation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with caregivers, supervisors, and community leaders to obtain detailed perspectives regarding curriculum delivery, challenges, and community involvement. Document analysis was also conducted using curriculum guidelines, training manuals, CBCC records, monitoring reports, and relevant policy documents. The use of multiple sources enhanced the credibility and completeness of the findings.

3.4 Research Setting

The study was conducted in public CBCCs located in Chinsapo under T/A Malili in Lilongwe District, Malawi. The area is a rapidly growing semi-urban community with diverse socio-economic conditions and varying levels of caregiver training, infrastructure, and educational resources. The setting was selected because these contextual conditions may influence the implementation of ECD curriculum activities.

3.5 Target Population

The target population comprised caregivers, CBCC supervisors, parents of children enrolled in the centres, and community leaders involved in ECD activities and governance within the study area.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

The study employed purposive and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select caregivers, supervisors, and community leaders with relevant knowledge and experience of ECD activities. Simple random sampling was used to select parents to provide an opportunity for eligible participants to be selected fairly.

3.7 Sample Size

The study involved 30 participants. These comprised caregivers, supervisors, community leaders, and parents of children attending the selected CBCCs. The sample was considered adequate for generating detailed qualitative information within the case study context.

3.8 Research Instruments

Data were collected using structured questionnaires, semi-structured interview guides, and document analysis checklists. These instruments were designed to obtain information relevant to the research objectives and to allow comparison of information from different sources.

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with 10 participants, comprising five parents and five key stakeholders from CBCCs outside the study area. The pilot tested the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the research instruments. Feedback obtained was used to refine the instruments before the main data collection.

3.10 Data Analysis

Quantitative information obtained from questionnaires was summarized using frequencies and percentages. Qualitative interview and documentary data were analyzed thematically through coding, categorization, and identification of recurring themes. The findings from different sources were compared to strengthen the credibility of the study.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, protection from harm, and respect for participants. Permission was obtained from relevant authorities before data collection, and participants were informed of their rights and the purpose of the study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study on the implementation of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) curriculum in public Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs) in Chinsapo, under Traditional Authority (T/A) Malili in Lilongwe District. The findings are organized according to the three research objectives: to determine the degree of ECD curriculum implementation, examine challenges faced by caregivers in implementing the curriculum, and assess the role of community participation in curriculum implementation. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

4.2 Response Rate and Distribution of Respondents

The study targeted 30 participants comprising caregivers, CBCC supervisors, parents, and community leaders. All targeted participants participated in the study, resulting in a 100% response rate.

Table 4.1: Response Rate of Study Participants

Category of Respondents	Targeted	Actual	Response Rate (%)
Caregivers	12	12	100
CBCC Supervisors	4	4	100
Parents	10	10	100
Community Leaders	4	4	100
Total	30	30	100

Source: Field Data, 2026

The 100% response rate indicates that complete data were obtained from all selected participants. This strengthened the completeness of the findings and reduced the possibility of non-response bias. Caregivers formed the largest respondent group because they were directly involved in curriculum delivery and therefore had first-hand knowledge of classroom practices, teaching resources, training needs, and implementation challenges. Parents provided information concerning children's participation and learning, while supervisors and community leaders contributed perspectives relating to management, monitoring, and community support.

4.3 Findings on Degree of ECD Curriculum Implementation

4.3.1 Level of ECD Curriculum Implementation

The findings showed that the ECD curriculum was implemented at different levels across the selected CBCCs. Most centres demonstrated partial implementation, while a smaller proportion reported full implementation.

Table 4.2: Level of ECD Curriculum Implementation.

Level of Implementation	Percentage (%)	Description
Full implementation	25	Curriculum generally followed as prescribed
Partial implementation	60	Curriculum followed inconsistently with adaptation and improvisation
Low/irregular implementation	15	Curriculum rarely followed systematically
Total	100	

Source: Field Data Analysis, 2026

The findings indicate that **60% of the CBCCs demonstrated partial implementation**, suggesting that curriculum activities were taking place but were not consistently delivered

according to prescribed guidelines. Only 25% demonstrated full implementation, while 15% showed low or irregular implementation. The results therefore suggest a gap between curriculum expectations and actual classroom practice.

4.3.2 Objective 1: Degree of Implementation of the ECD Curriculum in Government Nursery Schools

4.3.2.1 Partial and Inconsistent Curriculum Implementation

The study found that although caregivers attempted to follow the ECD curriculum, implementation was often inconsistent. One caregiver explained:

“We try to follow the curriculum, but most of the time we just teach what we know because the guide is not always used properly in our daily lessons.” (Respondent 3, Caregiver)

Another participant stated:

“Sometimes we plan lessons, but due to lack of materials we end up changing activities on the spot.” (Respondent 5, Caregiver)

These findings suggest that curriculum implementation was influenced by the availability of resources and caregivers' ability to translate curriculum guidelines into practical classroom activities.

4.3.2.2 Limited Use of Teaching and Learning Materials

Inadequate teaching and learning materials were identified as an important factor limiting curriculum implementation. Caregivers reported shortages of books, toys, charts, and other instructional materials. One participant explained:

“We don't have enough learning materials like books and toys, so we depend on improvised things like stones and bottles.” (Respondent 2, Caregiver)

Although improvisation enabled caregivers to continue teaching, excessive reliance on locally available materials may restrict the range and quality of learning activities.

4.3.2.3 Variation Across Schools

The study further revealed differences in curriculum implementation between CBCCs. These differences were associated partly with caregiver training and institutional support. One participant observed:

“In schools where caregivers are trained, children learn better because they follow the curriculum more strictly.” (Respondent 7, Supervisor)

This finding highlights the importance of caregiver knowledge and professional capacity in effective curriculum implementation.

4.4 Objective 2: Obstacles Faced by Caregivers and Teachers in Implementing the ECD Curriculum

4.4.1 Inadequate Teaching and Learning Resources

Resource shortages emerged as one of the most significant challenges. Caregivers indicated that the absence of books, charts, toys, and other materials made it difficult to conduct planned activities effectively. One caregiver stated:

“It is difficult to teach properly when there are no charts, books, or learning toys. We just improvise most of the time.” (Respondent 1, Caregiver)

This finding demonstrates that adequate instructional resources are important for translating curriculum requirements into meaningful learning experiences.

4.4.2 Inadequate Training and Professional Development

Limited access to refresher training also affected caregiver confidence and competence. One respondent explained:

“We were trained long ago, and there are no refresher courses. Sometimes we are not sure if we are doing the right thing.” (Respondent 4, Caregiver)

The finding suggests that continuous professional development is necessary to maintain and strengthen caregiver competence in curriculum delivery.

4.4.3 High Learner–Teacher Ratios

Overcrowding was another challenge affecting curriculum implementation. A participant stated:

“We have too many children in one class. It becomes hard to give individual attention to each child.” (Respondent 6, Caregiver)

High learner-caregiver ratios may limit individualized attention and reduce opportunities for caregivers to respond to children's different developmental needs.

4.4.4 Poor Working Conditions and Low Motivation

Caregivers also reported poor working conditions and inadequate support. One caregiver explained:

“We work very hard but the support is very little. Sometimes we feel discouraged.” (Respondent 8, Caregiver)

This finding indicates that caregiver motivation and working conditions are relevant to sustainable curriculum implementation.

4.4.5 Communication and Language Barriers

Some caregivers experienced difficulties in balancing local language use with English during instruction. One participant explained:

“Sometimes it is difficult to balance local language and English when teaching small children.” (Respondent 9, Caregiver)

This highlights the need for teaching approaches that are appropriate to children's linguistic and cultural contexts.

4.5 Objective 3: Role of Community Involvement in Facilitating ECD Curriculum Implementation

4.5.1 Provision of Learning Materials

Parents and community members contributed locally available materials for classroom activities. One caregiver stated:

“Parents help us with materials like sand, bottles, and boxes which we use in class activities.” (Respondent 10, Caregiver)

Such contributions helped CBCCs address some of the resource constraints affecting curriculum delivery.

4.5.2 Contribution to Infrastructure Development

The community also contributed to infrastructure development. A participant explained:

“The community helped us build this classroom. Without them, we could not manage.” (Respondent 11, Supervisor)

This demonstrates the importance of community participation in creating an enabling environment for ECD provision.

4.5.3 Promotion of Learner Attendance

Community participation was also associated with improved learner attendance. One respondent observed:

“When parents are involved, children come to school regularly without missing classes.” (Respondent 12, Caregiver)

Active parental involvement can therefore contribute to children's consistent participation in ECD activities.

4.5.4 Integration of Cultural Values

Caregivers reported incorporating local songs, stories, and cultural practices into learning. One caregiver explained:

“We include local songs and stories because children understand better when learning is linked to their culture.” (Respondent 13, Caregiver)

This suggests that community participation can strengthen the cultural relevance of ECD learning.

4.5.5 Strengthening School–Community Collaboration

Strong collaboration between CBCCs and surrounding communities was perceived to improve curriculum implementation. A supervisor stated:

“When the community and teachers work together, everything becomes easier for the children’s learning.” (Respondent 14, Supervisor)

The finding demonstrates that effective ECD curriculum implementation requires cooperation among caregivers, parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders.

4.6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Overall, the findings demonstrate that ECD curriculum implementation in Chinsapo CBCCs is occurring but remains largely partial and inconsistent. The finding that 60% of centres demonstrated partial implementation suggests that the existence of curriculum guidelines alone does not guarantee effective classroom delivery. Inadequate teaching and learning materials, limited caregiver professional development, high learner-caregiver ratios, poor working conditions, and language challenges were major constraints.

The findings further demonstrate that caregiver capacity is central to effective curriculum implementation. Centres with better-trained caregivers were perceived to implement the curriculum more consistently. This indicates that regular professional development, supportive supervision, and access to curriculum guidance could improve implementation.

Community participation emerged as an important compensatory mechanism. Parents and community members provided learning materials, supported infrastructure development, encouraged learner attendance, and contributed local cultural knowledge. However, community contributions should complement rather than replace adequate institutional and government support for ECD services.

4.7 Summary of Findings and Discussion

The findings established that ECD curriculum implementation in Chinsapo CBCCs was predominantly partial, with 60% of centres demonstrating partial implementation. Major challenges included inadequate teaching and learning resources, limited caregiver training, high learner-caregiver ratios, poor working conditions, and language barriers. Despite these challenges, community participation contributed significantly through provision of learning materials, infrastructure development, promotion of attendance, integration of cultural practices, and strengthening of school–community relationships. Overall, improving ECD curriculum implementation requires greater investment in caregiver capacity, teaching

resources, supportive supervision, and sustained collaboration between CBCCs and surrounding communities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section presents the conclusions and recommendations arising from the study on the implementation of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) curriculum in public Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs) in Chinsapo under T/A Malili, Lilongwe District. The conclusions are based on the findings presented earlier and are aligned with the three study objectives. Recommendations are provided to strengthen curriculum implementation, improve the quality of ECD services, and enhance stakeholder participation.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The study assessed the implementation of the ECD curriculum in CBCCs in Chinsapo. It focused on the degree of curriculum implementation, challenges faced by caregivers, and the role of community participation. A mixed-methods approach was used, involving questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The study involved 30 respondents comprising caregivers, supervisors, parents, and community leaders, achieving a 100% response rate. Findings showed that although the curriculum was being implemented, implementation remained largely partial and inconsistent due to resource shortages, inadequate caregiver training, weak supervision, and limited community participation.

5.3 Conclusions Based on Research Objectives

5.3.1 Conclusion on Objective One: Degree of ECD Curriculum Implementation

The study concludes that ECD curriculum implementation in Chinsapo CBCCs is generally partial and inconsistent. Although caregivers attempt to follow curriculum guidelines and conduct learning activities, only a limited proportion of centres demonstrate full implementation. Shortages of teaching materials, variations in caregiver competence, and inadequate institutional support contribute to differences in curriculum delivery.

The partial implementation may limit children's access to consistent learning experiences and holistic developmental opportunities. Strengthening resources, caregiver capacity, and supervision is therefore necessary to ensure that CBCCs implement the curriculum according to expected standards.

5.3.2 Conclusion on Objective Two: Challenges Affecting ECD Curriculum Implementation

The study concludes that curriculum implementation is constrained by interconnected challenges, particularly inadequate teaching and learning materials, insufficient caregiver

training, high learner-caregiver ratios, poor working conditions, and weak supervision. These challenges reduce caregivers' ability to plan and deliver appropriate learning activities and provide individualized attention to children.

The findings further indicate that addressing one challenge in isolation is unlikely to produce sustainable improvement. A coordinated intervention involving training, resource provision, supportive supervision, and improved working conditions is required.

5.3.3 Conclusion on Objective Three: Role of Community Participation in ECD Curriculum Implementation

The study concludes that community participation makes an important contribution to ECD curriculum implementation through provision of learning materials, infrastructure support, promotion of attendance, and integration of local cultural practices. However, participation remains inconsistent and is affected by limited awareness, economic constraints, and weak coordination.

Strengthening parent, community leader, and CBCC management involvement would increase local ownership, resource mobilization, accountability, and sustainability of ECD programmes.

5.4 Overall Conclusion of the Study

Overall, the study concludes that ECD curriculum implementation in Chinsapo CBCCs is taking place but remains only partially effective. Caregivers and communities demonstrate commitment to children's education, but inadequate resources, limited training, weak supervision, and insufficient community participation undermine effective implementation. Improving ECD services requires coordinated action by government, education authorities, CBCCs, communities, parents, and development partners. Investment in ECD should therefore be treated as an important component of improving children's school readiness, development, and future educational outcomes.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education should increase financial and technical support to CBCCs, particularly through provision of appropriate teaching and learning materials. It should also strengthen supervision and establish regular refresher training and continuous professional development for caregivers. Clear standards for curriculum implementation should be reinforced to promote consistency across centres.

5.5.2 Recommendations to District Education Authorities

District education authorities should conduct regular monitoring and provide timely technical support to CBCCs. They should facilitate caregiver training, strengthen coordination among ECD stakeholders, and establish networks through which caregivers can share experiences and effective practices.

5.5.3 Recommendations to Community-Based Childcare Centres

CBCC management committees should strengthen community resource mobilization, maintain teaching materials, improve record keeping, and promote joint planning involving caregivers, parents, and community leaders. Effective management of available resources should also be prioritized.

5.5.4 Recommendations to Caregivers

Caregivers should participate in available professional development opportunities and make effective use of locally available materials to supplement teaching resources. They should also strengthen communication with parents and apply child-centred approaches that promote active participation and holistic development.

5.5.5 Recommendations to Parents and Community Members

Parents and community members should participate actively in CBCC meetings, activities, and resource mobilization. Community leaders should promote awareness of the importance of ECD and encourage community support for infrastructure, learning materials, attendance, and children's development.

5.5.6 Recommendations to Development Partners and Non-Governmental Organizations

Development partners and NGOs should support ECD through caregiver training, provision of learning materials, infrastructure development, and community mobilization. Partnerships with government and communities should be strengthened to promote sustainable improvements in ECD quality.

5.6 Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies should examine the relationship between caregiver training and children's learning outcomes, resource availability and curriculum implementation, and supervision and ECD programme quality. Research could also investigate parental attitudes towards ECD, compare public and private ECD centres, and assess the long-term developmental outcomes of children attending CBCCs. Further studies should also examine effective community-based resource mobilization strategies for supporting ECD programmes.

