

Experiences and perspectives of children and staff on play, learning,
healthcare and program implementation

A qualitative study of an ECCD program in Urban Zambia

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this work to the following people;

My wife and son, you have endured my absence during this period of my studies.

My mother, you dedicated your life to raise me and be a person I am today.

My late Dad and Brother Wilson, for believing in me that I can go far places and urging me that all things are possible.

To my sister Jean for your unconditional support that saw me through the entire secondary and university education.

To the rest of brothers and sisters, I for your encouragements, support and love shown during this period I owe you this.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore and generate knowledge about cantered based ECCD as it is experienced by Orphans and Vulnerable children and staffs (adults) from the urban setting. This study was conducted at an ECCD Centre located in Garden compound in Lusaka, Zambia.

The social studies of childhood formed an overarching theoretical framework of the entire research process and supported by the children's right perspective. In addition, the social exchange theory and norm of reciprocity shed light on the interdependent of parent- child relationship in relation to reciprocity and perceptions.

The empirical material for the study was collected between June and August 2013 with seventeen participants of which twelve were children and five were adults. Qualitative participatory methods; individual drawings, observations, interviews, focus group discussion and informal dialogues were employed.

The study revealed that Children's everyday life at the centre revolved around two intertwined activities; play and learning however, children have preference for play over learning. In addition, it was revealed that education and care cannot be separated. The study also revealed diverse perceptions of play, healthcare and learning which have different policy and projects implication. The study brought to light that children are social actor with agency. In addition it was revealed that gendered play in early learning centre is instantaneous, momental and contextual. The study further revealed direct and indirect benefits of ECCD. Moreover, ECCD provides an arena for both formal and informal learning to children. However, lack of policy has affects the implementation of ECCD. The study also revealed that Local cultural practices in ECCD centre help children to transition smoothly between home and the centre and helps in maintenance of cultural heritage. The Use of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) more than the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child (ACRWC) in implementing ECCD has been influenced by donor funding. Finally, the study revealed multiple challenges that staff encounter in implementing centre based ECCD. The study revealed ambivalences surrounding the practice of ECCD resulting from a lack of policy framework. Therefore, I argue that ECCD policy should be built on Zambian culture and practices, a model that the local people and program implementers will identify themselves with and should include children's views to meet their needs.

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List of acronyms

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AU: Africa Union

COMMESA: Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa

CRC: Convection on the Rights of the Child

CSO: Central Statistics Office

CUE: Centre for Universal Education

ECCD: Early Childhood Care and Development

EFA : Education For All

FGDs: Focus Group Discussions

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

IMF: International Monetary Fund

MECCDF: Mulumbo Early Childhood Care and Development Foundation

MMD: Movement for Multiparty Democracy

MOE: Ministry of Education

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

NOSEB: Norwegian Centre for Child Research

NTF: National Task Force

OVCs: Orphans and Vulnerable Children

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SAPs: Structural Adjustment Programs

SNDP: Sixth National Development Plan

UN: United Nations

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNIP: United National Independence Party

WHO: World Health Organization

YPCE: Young People Children and Education

ZANEC: Zambia National Education Coalition

1 Chapter One: Introductory Overview of the Study

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is about the experiences and perspectives of children and staff on play, learning, healthcare and program implementation in urban Zambia. It focuses on children's everyday life at the centre, children's and adults' experiences and perspectives of play, learning and healthcare, as well as staffs' reflection on ECCD policy, children's rights conventions, cultural practices and implementation of Centre Based ECCD programs.

Over a decade or so, the world has been caught in the storm by a shift in contemporary educational discourses that move ECCD closer to the forefront of national education policy agendas (Thomas & Thomas, 2009). The shift in education discourses has resulted in significant policy attention which is focusing on children's access to early childhood care and education, especially in the majority world contexts (Vennam, Komanduri, Cooper, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2009) to which Zambia seems to be falling behind other countries. The country has not finalized the ECCD policy which has been lying in shelves for years awaiting cabinet's approval.

The need for ECCD policy cannot be overemphasized and enactment of this policy in Zambia is long overdue. Organizations working in the field of ECCD have been lobbying the government for years to have the ECCD policy in place. They believe that ECCD enhances children's development both during the early years and later on. Therefore, early attention that take a holistic approach to meeting children's needs in the early stages of their lives becomes very critical for optimal development (Evans, Meyers, & Ilfeld, 2000). Bellamy (1999) adds that learning does not begin when a child grows up but begins when the child is born. Thus, if ECCD is to become relevant and effective in improving young children's welfare and their development for the future (UNESCO, 2006), project planners and policy makers need to consider holistic approaches that combine nutrition, healthcare and education to help enhance the various domains of childhood.

Research in the developed world has revealed several benefits of ECCD to children. Baruth and Duff report that;

recipients of early education: (a) indicate greater interest in words, letters of the alphabet, numbers, being read to as well as interacting with books and other printed materials; (b) score higher in reading skills at the end of standard one; (c) learn faster, show greater auditory

discrimination and superior motor coordination while in standard one; (d) are socially better adjusted and well-adjusted to the school environment during the first three years of school; (e) show better attitude, health habits, play behaviour and game participation during their first year of formal education; (f) perform better in reading, music, social science, language and arithmetic, and (g) have parents who show a better relationship with the school

(Baruth & Duff ,1980 in Mwamwenda, 1985, p. 522)

ECCD is also believed to play a fundamental role in the promotion and protection of children's right to survival, growth, development and participation. Evans et al. (2000, p.2) argue that ECCD encompasses a number of things which include “all the supports necessary for every child to realize his/her rights to survive, protection and to care that will ensure optimal development from birth to age eight”. Therefore, ECCD should be promoted and children should have access to it so that they experience the aforementioned benefits.

However, because of high poverty levels which skew governmental attention to other developmental projects, many children in the developing world have limited opportunities and access to good healthcare and nutrition that are critical for optimal development¹ which in turn has multiple effects on their future. UNICEF (2006, p. vii) report that;

200 million children under five in the developing world are not fulfilling their potential for development. Because of poverty, under nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and learning environments that do not provide enough responsive stimulation and nurturance, children are developing more slowly, or failing to develop critical thinking and learning skills. This limitation in early development contributes to late school entry, poor school performance, and ultimately, limitations for success later in life.

In sub-Saharan Africa to which Zambia belongs, ECCD has not received much attention by both governments and national citizens. The level of attention and participation varies from one country to another. Statistics in the region indicate huge disparities of ECCD gross enrolment rate among countries. For instance Hyde and Kabiru (2003) report that Mauritius has a record of 90.31% in enrolment while Democratic Republic of Congo has less than 1%. They further argue that the majority of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have enrolment rate less than 10%.

When it comes to budget allocation, ECCD has also received very little consideration. Greater efforts are directed towards formal education at the expense early childhood

¹ optimal development refer to children's ability to acquire culturally relevant skills and behaviours which help children function effective in their current context, adapt successfully when context change and bring about change(Evans et al., 2000, p. 1)

programs. Hyde and Kabiru reports that “In most African countries the allocation for ECCD is even lower - less than 0.01% of the Ministry of Education budget” (Hyde and Kabiru , 2003 cited in Arnold, 2004 p.1).

The ECCD situation in Zambia is not different from rest of the Sub-Saharan Africa countries. Low levels of budget allocation have been noted. Based on a four years government budget allocation analysing, ZANEC (2013) reports that in 2008, ECCD was only allocated 0.036% of the total Ministry of Education budget while in 2011, only 0.005% was allocated. The low level of budget allocation to ECCD which has raised concerns among practitioners of ECCD could be attributing to different government priorities in national programs amidst different social problems and poverty levels. However, the government expresses consciousness by recognising the significant impact of ECCD in the lives of poor children; cutting the numbers of repeaters, dropouts and influencing the future intellectual development of the child (Black, 1996; Mwamwenda, 1985). In the Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) the government also acknowledges that ECCD is a key effective strategies in poverty reduction as it enhances the chances of breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty (ZANEC, 2012).

ECCD which is holistic in nature is relatively new in Zambia. Most early childhood programs undertaken in the country were predominantly offering pre-schooling characterized by limited access and very formal. Considerations for a holistic approach in ECCD dates back to 1990's with the ratification of the UNCRC of 1989 with particular attention to article 24, 28, 29, 31 and launch of the Education For All (EFA) movement at the World Conference in Jomtien Thailand (1990). These actions were followed by the Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All (EFA) which was developed at the World Education Forum in 2000. The Dakar framework encouraged the expansion of early childhood care and development activities to include family and community interventions, especially for poor disadvantaged and disabled children. Since then, there has been a growing need to provide learning opportunities for everyone worldwide from infancy to adulthood (Matafwali, 2007; UNESCO, 2006; Zuilkowski, Fink, Moucheraud, & Matafwali, 2012) which emphasises holistic development of the child (Marfo et al., 2004; Woodhead & Moss, 2007).

Despite the aforementioned actions taking place, ECCD in Zambia has not much been emphasized and prioritized. This is evidenced in the minimal participation of government and its citizens in early childhood education. To begin with, the implementation of ECCD has been flawed by the absence of a policy framework and low access. The service provision has

also been relegated to the private sector as well as poor and meagre allocation of funds (ZANEC, 2012, 2013). The relegation of the ECCD service delivery to the private sectors by the government has serious implications for the poor. Children from the poor and rural households may continue to have less access to ECCD services as most of the services run by the private sectors involve a fee (ZANEC, 2012).

The participation rates among citizens in ECCD have been a source of concern. Akinware (2000) reports that the 1999 Zambia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey revealed low levels of ECCD participation with only 6% of the children (3-5 years) attending organised learning activities either in kindergarten or community childcare programmes. The current statistics also indicate low level of children's exposure to early childhood programs in Zambia with only 17% of children attending primary school reported to have had an experiences of Early Childhood Care and Education(ECCE) (UNESCO, 2010 in Zuilkowski et al., 2012). In addition, the quality of ECCD service has been questioned and regarded to be low while the learning environment and curricula have been reported to be inappropriate and inadequate (Matafwali, 2007; ZANEC, 2012; Zuilkowski et al., 2012)

With regard to research, much of the knowledge generated on ECCD has been on rural experiences with scanty or no urban experiences at all. When it comes to source of knowledge or information, adults have been used as key informants. Children have been marginalised and denied an opportunity to contribute to the knowledge generation concerning their personal experiences pertaining to matters that affect them like ECCD.

Hence the concern of this study, it endeavours to involve children alongside adults in exploring and generating knowledge on ECCD experiences and perspectives from the urban setting.

1.2 Historical overview of pre-schools and ECCD in Zambia

The development of pre-schools in Zambia dates back to the pre-colonial times when traditional education took the centre stage. Sandlane (1989) states that traditional education in Zambia had been on the scene until 1880s, when the missionaries entered the country and decided to focus on the education of Africans. Prior to colonial time and after, traditional education was very informal with close family members and the community playing a key role in the upbringing and education of the child. This informal education has not completely disappeared from the scene. Research reveals that even in recent years;

The community as whole takes responsibility for raising the child. As a child grows a variety of people are involved in their care, socialization and education. Caregivers include siblings, grandmothers, other relatives and eventually the community.

(Evans, 1994, p.23).

Traditionally, the provision of education was embedded in the cultural values of the society with old members of the family or society taking the key role or centre stage in the delivery of informal education. Snelson adds that;

It was a common practice in all tribes that grandparents would spend the evenings narrating stories to their grandchildren around the fire. This is the part which children enjoyed most because they would repeat the loved stories amongst themselves, and today this is the pan taken by grammar books and comprehension exercises. Their education wouldn't be complete if it did not transmit societal values such as obedience to adults and knowledge as to how to behave

(Snelson, 1970 in Sandlane, 1989, p.19).

The informal education was not conducted for fun but had a purpose of imparting life skills in children's lives and wider society. Kelly holds that;

Through informal education a child acquired a substantial vocabulary before going to school, a daughter learnt child care and cooking from helping and observing her mother, a son picked up occupational skills from his father, and children and adolescents learnt from their peers

(cf. Kelly, 1999 cited in Banda, 2008, p. 29)

Grandparents were pivotal in taking care and educating their grandchildren. They sang for them, played with them and taught them about daily routines, such as cooking and gardening (Akinware, 2000).

The formal provision of early childhood education in Zambia is believed to have taken shape when Day Care Nursery Act of 1957 was enacted. However, the provision of education was still characterized by racial segregation. This marked a major milestone towards the recognition of the importance of early childhood care, development and education (*ibid*). It facilitated the establishment of registration and regulation of day care nurseries in Zambia. The government later established nurseries and pre-schools through the Ministry of Local Government and Housing. The nurseries and preschool were situated and run in social welfare centre popularly known as 'olo feya'² among the locals for the children in urban areas and other local districts(Sichelwe et al 2004 cited in Nalwim, 2009). The welfare centres existed until early 1990s when the new government took over under the Movement

² 'olo feya' was a local name directly translated from English which meant the social welfare centre

for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). It was during this period that the early learning was abandoned and later revived with the government relegating the provision of early learning to the private sectors. This was evident when the new education policy 'Educating Our Future' of 1996 was developed and enacted. It stated clearly that the provision of early learning was not the responsibility of the government (Ministry of Education, 1996). This could be attributed to the policy reforms the government undertook when it implemented the proposed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. SAPs demanded the cutting of expenditure to the public sector thus the government could not maintain the funding to the public sector and institutions such as early learning centres had a setback. Black (1996, p. 243) explains that;

In many African countries, the long years of debt and structural adjustment had led to heavy reductions in educational expenditures and eroded the physical fabric and quality of schooling. In 1990s, it was estimated that one half of school-age children in Africa were not in school, and all the signs in the first part of the decade were that this negative trend was continuing

Since 1957 the education system in Zambia has undergone different reforms and on top the reform agendas was to get rid of racial segregation in school. Sandlane (1989, p. 33) Explains that;

The first major attempt at reforming the Zambian education system was undertaken in April 1966 when the Education Bill was passed by Parliament. Among other changes brought about were the abolition of racially segregated schools and the introduction of non-fee paying school registration in mission controlled and public schools.

Six years later, the abolition of racial segregation was followed by the formation of the pre-primary school association. The formation of the association was followed by several attempts at formulating syllabi for pre-schools although they were mainly for pre-primary school teacher training (Sandlane, 1989).

ECCD came to the fore after Zambia took part in the Jomtien Conference. After this conference, the government established a National Task Force (NTF) to initiate and monitor Educational for All (EFA) activities and programs. At that time, the Department of child affairs in the Ministry of sports, youth and child development was given the responsibility of co-ordinating the activities relating to the development of policy on ECCD. It worked closely with Zambia Pre- School Association to co-ordinate ECCD activities (UNESCO 2000 cited in Banda, 2008). Unfortunately, the ECCD policy remains unfinished until this day.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education was mandated with the responsibility of being in charge of ECCD in Zambia. This led to ECCD being integrated in the education sector as a subsector within the education policy as reflected in the fifth national development plan (MOE, 2007 cited in Nalwim, 2009). Despite integrating ECCD as a subsector into the education sectors, the education policy does not commit the government to providing ECCD but only commits it to providing trainings for pre-school teachers, developing curriculum materials and monitoring standards which still fall short of expectations.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

ECCD refers to a full range of health, nutrition, early education and stimulation as well as social service programmes that provide for the basic holistic needs of children from birth to age eight (Evans et al., 2000). Meeting these broad ranges of children's needs requires a high level of government involvement and commitment which is not really the case for Zambia. The provision of ECCD is in the hands of private institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (ZANEC, 2012). Most of these NGOs and institutions operate in the rural areas of the country such that much of the knowledge that has been generated is based on rural experiences with adults being the major source of knowledge.

In addition, like most African countries, holistic ECCD is a relatively new discipline in Zambia. It is characterised by a lack of policy framework and very limited researches have been undertaken to generate local based practices for well-informed policy formulation. Hyde and Kabiru (2003) argue that Centre Based ECCD programs in African raise concern because they tend to be heavily influenced by western culture and sometimes not relevant to the local needs of the children and society. Current ECCD programs seem to have practices that ignore the positive and relevant aspect of the local culture; local values, beliefs and aspirations that the local people can identify themselves with. As a result, some parents perceive certain practice in ECCD centre as a waste of time and this becomes a big challenge to the implementation of ECCD. Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999) argue that culture, context, and diversity are central concerns that have led to the development of several different critical streams of work within early childhood care and education in the 1990s. Therefore, for Zambian people to benefit from ECCD, 'western' conceptions of the construct must not simply be adjusted for use but must blend with the local practices or realities (Nsamenang & Cameroon, 2007). Besides, the very people that ECCD is meant to benefit (the children) must initiate a form of ECCD that is unique to their context and needs through participation in the

knowledge generation that can inform ECCD practices. For this reason, it is important to undertake local studies to contribute towards the generation of local knowledge and practices for informed policy development and project planning by involving both children and adults who are direct and indirect beneficiaries of ECCD.

Furthermore, little is known about ECCD experiences in urban areas in Zambia. This can be attributed to lack of systematic studies on how children as well as adults experience Centre Based ECCD from the urban setting. Therefore, this study aims to contribute towards filling this knowledge gap through an assessment of how urban Centre Based ECCD is experienced by children and adults at an ECCD centre situated in Garden Compound in Lusaka.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The development of good and sound policies relies heavily on the broad spectrum of relevant information available. The fact that a holistic approach to ECCD in Zambia is relatively new and many interventions are undertaken in rural areas by NGOs, not much is known about its effects, experiences, relevance, quality or challenges in urban areas. Besides, there is no ECCD policy in place that guides the implementation of ECCD despite the government acknowledging its importance. Therefore, this study contributes to the generation of knowledge about ECCD experiences by children and adults in the urban context which is relevant for a balanced and informed policy making process and project planning by the government as well as NGOs aimed at improving children's welfare and development. Besides, the study contributes towards the creation of awareness of local experiences of ECCD in the country. The study may also motivate other scholars to undertake further studies on the same phenomena. Moreover, the study contributes to current ongoing scholarship on ECCD discourse aimed at promoting children's welfare and development.

It is imperative to note that there are many stakeholders involved in the implementation of ECCD programmes and one group of stakeholders in ECCD services is the children themselves. Taking into consideration of their point of view is very cardinal and Katz refers to children's involvements as the bottom-up perspective on quality. She argues that the children's experience of a programme is a determinant of the programme's effects (Katz, 1993 cited in Evans, 1996). Over the years, there has been a growing demand for getting children's viewpoints in matters that affect them. In the social studies of childhood, Prout and James (1997) argue for taking children's point of view into consideration and giving them a voice in research in their own right. Very limited researches have been conducted in

the field of ECCD where children have been employed as key subjects of the study alongside adults in Zambia. In the past years it has been more common to use adults as source of knowledge. However, with emergency of children's rights and the social studies of childhood, children have been getting involved in research alongside adults as informants to captures their perspectives and experiences of different phenomena that affect them. It is against this background that this study is aimed at generate knowledge about Centre Based ECCD as it is experienced by children and staffs (adults) in urban Zambia by using both Children and adults (staffs) as key informants. It is pivotal that both perspectives; rural and urban experiences of children and adults are documented so that formulation of policies on ECCD is informed by practical experiences in the respective settings. The incorporation of both perspectives in policy formulation is likely to contribute to the development of meaningful policies that would address specific needs and rights of the children in both contexts.

1.5 Research aim, objectives and Questions

The main purpose of the thesis is to explore and generate knowledge about Cantered Based ECCD as it is experienced by Orphans and Vulnerable children (OVCs) and staffs (adults) at an ECCD centre located in Lusaka, Zambia. This study sought to answer the main research question: How do children and adults experience Centre Based ECCD programs in urban Zambia? Therefore, the research objectives of the study are;

- To explore children everyday life and social practices at the centre
- To explore children's and staffs' experiences and perspectives of play, learning, and healthcare at the Centre
- To explore staff's reflections and experiences of ECCD policy and implementation of Centre based ECCD program.
- To explore the local cultural practices that has been incorporated in the ECCD program.
- To understand how Centre Based ECCD programs are designed and implemented to meet children's needs and rights in regard to education, health care and play
- To identify challenges associated with centre based ECCD in urban setting

The aforementioned main research question is answered through the following set of questions;

- What are the children's everyday life and social practices at the centre?
- What are the staffs' and children's experiences and perspectives of play, learning, and health care at the centre?
- How are children recruited on the ECCD program?
- What are the benefits of ECCD?
- What are the staffs' experiences and reflections of ECCD policy and ECCD program implementation?
- How is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) used in the implementation of Centre Based ECCD?
- How are Centre based ECCD programs designed and implemented to meet children's rights and needs in education, healthcare and play?
- Are local cultural practices incorporated in the ECCD Programme? How?
- What challenges do staffs encounter in implementing Centre Based ECCD programs?

1.6 The structure of the thesis

This thesis is organized into eight chapters. In chapter one, I have presented the Introduction in which I looked at the historical overview of preschool and ECCD in Zambia, the problem statements, the significance of the study, as well as the aim, objectives and research questions of the study. In chapter two, I will present the country profile of Zambia and study context. In this I will look at the geographical location of Zambia, its demography, socioeconomic context and the political backdrop. I will further look at institutions and child related policies in Zambia that are relevant to ECCD. I will end the chapter with a description of the Garden compound, the ECCD centre and Mulumbo Early Childhood Care and Development foundation (MECCDF) which formed the context of my study. I will then present chapter three of the thesis that covers the theoretical and conceptual framework. In this chapter, I will discuss the main theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning my study. I will first look at the general overview of the social studies of childhood. Then I will focus on the key concepts and theoretical perspectives that informed my empirical study namely actor oriented

perspective and children's agency, children's right perspective, social exchange theory and norm of reciprocity. I will end the chapter by conceptualizing ECCD and play. Furthermore, the methodology in chapter four will highlights the methods I employed to gather data from the field, my role in the field, how data was analysed and the ethical consideration as well the limitations and challenges of the study. In chapter five I will present the findings of the study with focus on the experiences of play, learning and healthcare from children and adults' perceptive. In Chapter six I will present reflections on the implementation Centre Based ECCD program. After analysing and interpreting data in chapter five and six, I will turn to discuss some of the findings in chapter seven. In this chapter I will engage with various scholarly work and theoretical and conceptual framework. For instance I will employ the actor oriented perspective and children agency in understanding children's action on the playground and I will use the social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity in understanding adult's perception of play and learning. Finally, in Chapter eight I will present the concluding remarks and recommendations by highlighting the main issues arising from study and further research needed.

2 Chapter Two: Country Profile and Study Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the demographic, socioeconomic and political backdrop of Zambia the country where I conducted my study. It further presents the study context by describing the local area where the research was undertaken. In addition to the local context of the study area, this chapter highlights some institutional and policy frameworks that support and promote the wellbeing of the children in Zambia.

2.2 Geographical location of Zambia

Zambia is one of the Sub-Saharan African countries located in south-central Africa. It covers an area of 752,612 square kilometres. The country is landlocked and surrounded by eight neighbouring countries namely Angola, Namibia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, United Republic of Tanzania, Malawi, Botswana and Namibia (see to the right the map on Zambia³).

Figure 2-1 : Administrative Map of Zambia



2.3 Demography

According to the Central Statistical Office (CSO), Zambia has an estimated total population of 13 million people as recorded in the 2010 National population census (CSO, 2012). Males constituted 49.3 percent and females 50.7 percent of the total population. The country has a youthful population with 45.4% of the population falling below the age of 15 years and 20.8% between the ages of 15 and 24. Despite the rural urban migration, rural areas still remain highly populated than urban areas.

The country has rich cultural diversity. It has 73 ethnic groupings that are spread across the country. These ethnic groupings have diverse cultural values and practices but share similarities.

³ Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zambia,_administrative_divisions_-_en_-_colored.svg

2.4 Political backdrop

Zambia is a former British colony that got its independence in 1964 under the United National Independence Party (UNIP) with Dr David Kenneth Kaunda as the first Republican president. The UNIP government reigned for 27 years until 1991 when the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) took over under Dr Fredrick T.J., Chiluba who later died a few years after he left the presidential office. Under the UNIP government early learning centres were in operation and they were situated in social welfare centre. The government played an active role in providing early learning services. However, during the MMD era, the provision of early learning was initially abandoned and later revived but relegated to the private sector. The government only took the supervisory and capacity building role for pre-school teachers. It began the process of developing ECCD policy which to date has not been approved by cabinet. The MMD reign came to an end in 2011 when the current government under Patriotic front took over under President Michael Chilufya Sata. The current government has taken another dimension towards the promotion of ECCD in the country. It is currently undertaking some ECCD pilot project in some rural schools of the country with a view of integrating early learning in basic schools in 2014. Constitutionally, Zambia is a democratic country with multi- parties. The multiparty democracy was introduced in 1991 under the MMD government. The country is a member of different regional and international organizations which include the African Union (AU), United Nations (UN), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Sothern African Development Community (SADC). In addition, Zambia is a signatory to different international Human rights instrument which include the UNCRC and ACRWC.

2.5 Socioeconomic context

The Zambian economy has gone through thick and thin over the years. A few years after Zambia got its independence, it was among the wealthiest countries in Africa when copper was doing well at the international market. The economy started declining in 1972 during the economy crisis when copper prices started falling at the international market and the oil prices started rising. In order to sustain the economy, the country was forced into borrowing heavily. In 1980s, the government undertook some reforms including the attempt to implement Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) between 1983 and 1985. These were later abandoned as they did not yield the expected results. Despite the government undertaking some reforms, the economy continued to decline while the poverty level was rising and the

debt was swelling. The new government was therefore forced to accept the IMF/World Bank's proposed SAPs once again in the 1990s. This led to the introduction of liberal economic policies with the private sector playing a key role in running of the economy while the government had to cut the expenditure to the public sector. The new policy measure also failed to yield positive results.

In the face of economic struggle, the government has strived to improve the economy for the betterment of its citizens. In recent years the country has scored some success in the economy. CSO (2012) reports that in 2010 the country recorded a real GDP growth of 7.6 percent which is the highest level recorded since 1972. The CSO further reports that between the year 2000 and 2010 the annual inflation rate declined from 30.1 percent to 7.9 percent. The country's economy is divided in various sectors which include the mining, agriculture, construction, transport and communication sectors. Copper is the major export commodity for the country. Despite the economic struggles, Zambia remains one of the countries in southern Africa endowed with rich natural resources such as copper, emeralds, zinc, lead and cobalt. The country also boasts of some of nature's best wildlife and game reserves which are a source of tourism.

Although there has been a slight improvement in the economy, poverty levels in the country still remain high with the majority of the population living in poverty. 60.5% of the Zambian population fall below the poverty line with 42.3% of them living in extreme poverty (CSO, 2012). The poverty levels are higher among the rural population. The 2010 National census estimated that 77.9 % of rural population are living in extreme poverty compared to 27.5 % of the urban population (*ibid*).

With the high level of poverty in the country, the levels of unemployment have also remains high. A very small proportion of the population is in formal employment. The majority of the population are in informal sector and depend on agriculture, service and sales occupation for their livelihood. The people's livelihood in rural areas is skewed towards agriculture while in the urban areas people depend more on sales and service occupation; small business of selling food stuff in local markets , electrical and hardware, groceries and working as maids.

Amidst high level of poverty and unemployment, HIV and AIDS remain the country's most significant public health challenge. Until 1984, AIDS was unknown to the Zambian population. Since then, the country has seen a rapid rise in the number HIV cases. CSO (2005) estimates that in 1985, 0.8% Zambians were living with HIV and the WHO (2011)

recently reported that 14% of the adult Zambians are living with HIV and AIDS. The high prevalence level of HIV and AIDS are skewed towards the urban areas with WHO further reporting that 20% of the urban population has HIV and AIDS compared to 10 % of the rural population.

Not only is HIV and AIDS a national public health challenge but also a cause of orphanhood among children in the country and its impact cannot be overemphasised. Reports indicate that Zambia is currently facing the challenges of caring for 1.3 million orphans aged between 0 to 17 years of age (UNICEF, 2009 cited in Kirkpatrick, Rojjanasrirat, South, Sindt, & Williams, 2012). Besides, WHO (2011) reports that Zambia has the highest number of orphans and vulnerable children in Africa and 50 % of the 1.3 million orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) are due to HIV and AIDS. The unfortunate part is that most of these children are left in the hands of impoverished grandparents who cannot afford to take them to fee paying schools, offer them better nutrition, thus limiting their opportunities for school and other life opportunities.

Education is highly valued among the citizens in Zambia because of the role it plays in transforming people's lives. This is evident for families that afford to take their children to colleges and universities. The government has strived to improve the education levels in the country, which is demonstrated in the reforms undertaken in line with the international treaties and rights conventions. For instance, the current education Act of 2011 provides for the provision of free basic education. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the main provider of all formal education in the country. It is guided by the education policy of 1996 'Educating Our Future' which has over the years been amendments to improve the provision of education to the Zambian citizens. ZANEC (2012) reports that in 2002 the government declared free primary education for grades 1-7 which is in line with the Jomtien and Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All (EFA) goals.

The reforms in education sectors have made some impact in improving the literacy levels in the country. CSO (2012) reported in the 2010 national population census that the national literacy rate were standing at 70.2 %. However, there were variations between rural and urban areas with the urban areas (83.8%) having higher literacy rates compared to the rural areas (60.5%). Men (73.2%) also remain a more literate group compared to women (67.3%).

Despite statistics showing 70.2% national literacy rates, the level of school attendance among of the population aged 5 years and older still remain low. Reports indicate that only 34.2 %

reported of the children aged 5 years and older are attending school. Furthermore, by 2010, the national net primary and secondary school attendance rates were 71.6% and 45.5 %, respectively. Rural areas record lower primary school attendance rates compared to urban areas (66.9 % and 79.6%, respectively) (CSO, 2012).

Early childhood learning in Zambia emphasise the education aspect as reflected in the education policy document and sixth National development plan. Zambia being a signatory to the children rights conventions, acknowledges that early childhood learning is a right. It is undeniable that the government acknowledges the importance of ECCD. ZANEC (2013). reports that ECCD remained particularly visible in the national planning documents and the Ministry of Education strategic plans and annual work plans since 2004. In the education Act of 2011, the government recognizes that “every person has a right to, enter alia, early childhood care, development and education” (ZANEC, 2013 p.7). However, the situation of ECCD in the country leaves a lot to be desired. Despite the improved participation rate of 6% reported in 1999 (Akinware, 2000) and the 17% reported in 2010 (UNESCO, 2010 cited in Zuilkowski et al., 2012) the levels of ECCD participation remain very low in the country. In addition, there is no policy framework for ECCD and the current education policy does not commit government to providing ECCD services. Consequently, the performance of the ECCD subsector has remained rather dismal on account of among other things, poor coordination and absence of policy framework (ZANEC, 2013). Furthermore, ECCD in Zambia is poorly provided and those who are managing to provide it, the quality of the service is still poor and low and the learning environment and curriculum often inappropriate and inadequate (Matafwali, 2007; ZANEC, 2012; Zuilkowski et al., 2012)

2.6 Institutions and Child related policy frameworks in Zambia

As earlier mentioned, ECCD in Zambia is under the responsibly of the Ministry of Education which provide professional services to pre-school education by training teachers, developing curriculum materials and monitoring standards. The Ministry works closely with the Ministry of Local Government and Housing which is responsible for the inspection of infrastructure. In the area of healthcare, the Ministry works with the Ministry of Health while on matter of child development affairs, it works closely with Ministry of Labour, Sports, Youth and Gender. In the subsequent sections, I will present different policy framework that play an important role in the implementation of ECCD in Zambia.

2.6.1 ECCD Policy

Zambia has no ECCD policy in place but ECCD has been integrated as sub-sector in education sector. The draft policy of ECCD has not yet been approved by cabinet. However, the absence of the policy framework has not totally hampered the provision of ECCD services to Zambian children. Those involved in the provision of ECCD are currently supported by other legal frameworks such as the National Child Policy, the 1996 Education Policy, UNCRC and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR) to which Zambia is a signatory. Over and above, the Education Act of 2011 acknowledges children's right to early childhood care, development and education (ZANEC, 2013). ECCD in Zambia takes more an inter-sectorial approach with different ministries playing different roles in meeting children's needs. The Ministry of Education which host the ECCD as a subsector focuses on education but depend on other ministries on health care aspects, and child development affairs (Ministry of Sport Youth and Child Development, 2006; ZANEC, 2013).

2.6.2 National Child policy

This policy is one of the child policies in Zambia that provides long term guidance and a framework for the development and implementation of the required child development and welfare intervention. It operates through a coordinated and multi-sectorial approach. At the heart of this 2006 policy is the right based approach to programing. It takes recognisance of the child's right to survival, to develop and to be protected. The policy aligns itself with the UNCRC to which Zambia is a signatory. Child development has been the basis for government intervention and analysis for looking at the welfare of the child (Ministry of Sport Youth and Child Development, 2006).

In addition, the policy takes into account of the fact that the children are the building block of the country and that the majority of Zambian children suffer socio-economic problems that negatively affect their growth and development. These socio-economic problems include poverty and hunger, illiteracy, vulnerability to HIV and AIDS infections, lack of access to ECCD, malnutrition among others. Therefore the National child policy provides that guidance to improving the welfare of the children by responding to the context, rights and needs of the children.

Embedded in the National child policy is children's right to develop with focus on ECCD. The policy acknowledges that ECCD plays significance role in the life of a child because of

its ability to improve the child's habits, attitude and intellect as well as general skills in readiness for school and general integration into society at large (Ministry of Sport Youth and Child Development, 2006). Therefore, the government through this policy aims to promote and support integrated ECCD.

2.6.3 Child health week policy

There are different health care policy frameworks that look at the wellbeing of children in Zambia but of interest to my study is the Child health week policy. It is an integrated component of the nutrition sector under National health policy. The National health policy which is a legislative and institutional framework is designed to ensure good delivery of health services and the desired coordination of the various levels and actors. The child health week policy falls under this policy and dates back to 1999 with children under the age of five as the main targets. It provides for the one week free health services; vitamin A supplementation, growth monitoring and promotion, vaccinations, deworming as well as the promotion and intermittent treatment of insecticide-treated mosquito nets twice in a year (Fiedler et al., 2012). The provision of health services under the child health week policy are undertaken in the months of June and December every year.

2.7 The Study Context

This section will present the context of my study. It briefly describes the main features of my research site and provides brief information concerning the organization I did research with.

2.7.1 Garden Compound

This study was undertaken at an ECCD centre situated in Garden compound. The compound is one of the low income neighbourhoods and among the oldest compounds located in the north of Lusaka. It shares boundaries with both low income area such as Chaisa and Chipata compound and high income areas such as Roma Township, Thorn Park and Olympia Park Township. The area is highly populated and people live in very crowded settlement. Most of the places have insufficient land with building structures constructed very close to each other. It is characterised by different socioeconomic problems such as unemployment, difficult access to potable water and sanitation to mention a few. The compound has a big market where trade takes place but some people still use makeshift shops in their homes usually in front of the house. For their survival, people in this compound depend more on sales and

service occupation which sometimes do not earn them much. The language commonly used in the areas is *Chinyanja*⁴.

2.7.2 The ECCD centre

The centre hosts a total number of 50 orphans and vulnerable children between the age of three and eight. The children come from the surrounding area of the compound. In term of infrastructure, the centre uses a small single hall that belongs to the local authorities. Due to limited available halls, there are no separate rooms for different age groups. Attached next to the centre are two halls that have been transformed into a health centre and council officers. In front of the structures there are remains of the old police post that was burnt down by the community a few years ago. The police post was burnt as a result of the community protest when one of community members who were arrested was one day found dead for allegedly being beaten by the police. The centres together with the other structures occupy an approximate area of 225 square metres. It has a very small space in front approximately 5 by 10 square meters which is also used as car park for people visiting the council offices and the health centre. As a result the centre does not have enough children's play space. Besides, the building belongs to the local authorities who granted permission to Mulumbo Early Childhood Care and Development foundation (MECCDF) the organization that runs the centre. This foundation is not permitted to alter any structured and this has made it difficult to improve children's play infrastructure.

2.7.3 Mulumbo Early Childhood Care and Development foundation (MECCDF)

The centre where I undertook my study is among the nine centres in the country run by MECCDF. MECCDF is a local Non-governmental organization(NGO) founded in 2001 to supplement government's efforts in the provision and expansion of ECCD services with special attention children between the ages of 0– 8 year old. Since its establishment, the organization has been focusing on providing Home-Based services to low-income communities to ensure good care, protection and development of their children. Over the years the organizations has grown and extended services to centres which offers services among others learning, play and counselling.

However, the foundation is donor driven; the cost of the running programs is covered by donor agencies. It runs ECCD programs to provide opportunities to children to play, interact,

⁴ Chinyanja is one of the local official languages in Zambia. it is mainly spoken in eastern and Lusaka province.

and develop foundational skills. The centres are coordinated by trained caregivers who are recruited from the local community.

The ECCD programs run by the Foundation can be grouped in to two categories and these include Home Based ECCD and Centre Based ECCD. The Home Based ECCD focus on children aged 0-3 with caregivers playing a fundamental role in conducting home visits. Caregivers provide antenatal advice and services to pregnant women. They also provide support and guidance to parents on nutrition and parenting issues. Through the Centre Based ECCD, the Foundation offers ECCD services to children aged 4 -8, focusing on empowering children with skills that will lay the foundation and help them easily adapt when they transition to formal schools.

3 Chapter Three: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will presents and discuss the theoretical and conceptual frameworks employed in my study. Social actions and social activities that human being portray are so diverse and complex that it is sometimes difficult to explain them with our personal understanding. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks provide us with explanations, predictions and guides to the understanding of these social action and activities or phenomena that we study. In addition, they also help us in the generation of ideas. Wilson and Chaddha (2009) explain that the theoretical insights inform the interpretation and analysis of data uncovered.

The chapter will begin with an overview of the social studies of childhood in which I will also present the discourses or approaches to the study of childhood. I chose to begin with an overview of this theory in order to understand how children are constructed in society and how they are theorised in research. Then, I will present the discussion of the social actor perspective with focus on children's agency. After discussing social actor perspective, I will turn to the discussion of the children's right perspective which will be followed by the social exchange theory and norm of reciprocity. The chapter will end with the conceptualization of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) and play.

3.2 The Social Studies of Childhood

The Social studies of childhood form an overarching theoretical framework of this study. It aims at including children as social subjects both theoretically and methodologically in research (Christensen & James, 2000a, 2000b ;James et al., 1998; Mayall, 2002; Prout & James 1990; Qvortrup et al. 2004 cited in Nilsen, 2005). It informs the aim of the study and guides the research questions and the methodology. With focus on the actor oriented perspective, the social studies of childhood guides the theorising of children and explains some of the finding in this study.

The Social studies of childhood contests the pre-sociological and psychological theories' conventional view of children as human becoming rather than being, who were being shaped into fully human adult through the process socialization (Woodhead & Montgomery, 2003). In particular, the Parson's socialisation and Piagetian child development theory which viewed adults as mature, rational and competent whereas children were viewed as unfinished products or incomplete hence not full human beings (Jenks, 1996 cited in Tisdall & Punch,

2012). For example, Emile Durkheim saw childhood as a period of growth in which children in both the physical and moral sense did not exist but were being made, developed and were formed, implying that children were still in the making (cf. Jenks, 1982). Furthermore Christensen and Prout argue that the;

sociological approach, implicitly informed by psychology, assumes naturalness, universality and rationality, thus maintaining constructions of the child as 'progressing from simplicity to complexity, from irrational to rational behaviour, from a stage of biological immaturity, passing through a developmental process and moving into a fully developed human status as adult

(Christensen and Prout, 2005 cited in Janzen, 2008, p. 291).

Lee (2001) describes the pre-sociological and psychological theories as the dominant framework. Prior to the 1980s, majority of research and theorising of children and construction of childhood, subscribed to this dominant framework. Its conceptualization of children as incompetent, irrational and incomplete resulted in approaches to research that denied children an opportunity to be heard and in turn privileging adults' views over children's on matters that affected them (Mathews , 2007 cited in Lundy & McEvoy, 2009)

It's against this background that the social studies of childhood emerged and deconstructed the concept of childhood (Holloway & Valentine, 2000b) and offered a different perspective to the understanding of childhood. It argues for the recognition of children's agency and rights something that the dominant framework neglected (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Therefore, childhood is understood to be socially constructed. This means that childhood has different meaning in different societies. What constitute childhood depends on the local cultural context of a given society in a given period of time. In this manner, social construction of childhood entails a suspension of a belief in or a will acceptance of it's taken for granted meaning (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Jenks 2004 in Kehily, 2008). This means that the things we see are not what they appear to be but that they are socially constructed(Punch, 2003). Unlike the dominant framework, the social studies of childhood recognises children as social actors with agency, active subjects and holders of rights (Qvortrup 1994; Mayall 2002 cited in Tisdall & Punch, 2012).

With regard to how children and childhood should be studied in research, James et al. (1998) presents four discourses or approaches; socially constructed child, the tribal child, the minority group child and the social structured child.

The socially constructed child approach does not view children as universal category. It presents an understanding that the views of children and childhood differ from one society to

another. Childhood can never always be the same everywhere or perceived as universal. The way childhood is socially constructed or understood is contextual (Jenks , 2004 in Kehily, 2008; Punch, 2003);it is bound by culture and social setting of given society hence the existence of the diversity of childhood in different societies. I employed this discourse in my study to understand diverse perceptions of play and what constitute childhood.

The tribal child approach has been described as a politicised version of social constructed child and brings out the power relations and systems of stratification that exist between children and adults (James et al., 1998). Children are conceptualised different from adults and Punch (2003) argues that since tribal child discourse perceives the children's cultural world to be separate from adult's, with children acting with autonomy and abiding by their own rituals and rules, this approach fits well the exploration of children's play. This discourse takes children's views in research seriously as children are recognised to have competence and agency (James et al., 1998). I employed this discourse to understand children's agency on the playground.

In the social structured child discourse, children are viewed as a structural category and a constant feature of all social worlds (James et al., 1998). Childhood is viewed as a structural form that will always be there in any society (Qvortrup, 2009). This entails that children move in and out of childhood something that Alanen (2001)describe as the transient period of life. James et al. (1998) further argue that childhood manifest differently from one society to another but possess uniform characteristics within a particular society. Hence childhood is regarded as a universal category like any other structures in society and it is shaped by socioeconomic factors that exist in the place where the children live (Qvortrup, 2009). Children are viewed as social actors and citizens with rights.

The minority group child is described as a politicised version of the social structured child (James et al., 1998). In this discourse, children are presented as rights- claimers. This implies that children have same rights in society as adults (Kjørholt, 2004). In research, children are viewed as competent and active subjects. Similar to women who have been treated as a minority group placed at the periphery of society, children are also studied as minority group that have been discriminated, exploited and marginalized at various levels and degree (James et al., 1998). Using the words of Hardman, children can therefore be categorised as ' a muted group' (Hardman, 1973 cited in James & Prout, 1997)

The social studies of childhood provide a platform for children to be heard on matter that affect them. Prout and James (1997) argue that the attempt of the ‘new paradigm’ is to take children’s point of view into consideration and gives them a voice. In view of this, Alanen (2001) explains that in the first 2 decades also, the social studies of childhood advocated and argued for the study of children in their own right and from their own perspectives. This meant taking children seriously as research units and approaching them as social actors. Thus in recent years we have witnessed a shift towards acknowledging children as experts in their own lives (Clark, 2005) and increasingly children are being engaged as subjects of research through the use of participatory research methodologies (Kellet & Ding,2004 cited in Lundy & McEvoy, 2009).

This alternative conceptualisation of children and childhood influenced the methodological choices of this study by regarding children as key informants and active participants alongside adults in the research process.

3.3 The social Actor Oriented perspective

This perspective perceives children as people worthy of study in their own right and not just receptacles of adult teaching (Hardman,1973 cited in James & Sherrard, 2009). It argues for children to be given a voice to be heard in research as key informants and theorising them as active subjects in research (Nilsen, 2005). Therefore, the insight that children are social actors with agency is one key element of the Social studies of childhood under the social actor perspective which influenced this study. Maynard and Thomas (2009) add that this perspective has produced a great deal of stimulated research in which children are seen as participants.

Agency is an important theoretical concept in this study. It takes into account of the quality which enables children to initiate intentional actions in meeting their play needs. James and Prout and James (1997) describe children’s agency as the ability to be active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live. Agency simply entails children’s ability to act independently in their social world (James & James, 2012)

In my study, I use the concept of agency to answer different questions pertaining children experiences of play at an ECCD Centre. What determined children choices of friends and social belonging in play grounds? How do limited play facilities affect children play and what do children do in such environments or circumstances? Are children passive or active in the

construction of play space? These questions are answered in the subsequent analysis chapter. The actor oriented perspective acknowledges that children are active in the construction of their own experiences which demonstrate their agency. They negotiate institution and space they encounter while creating their experiences (Panelli et al 2002 cited in Klocker, Robson, & Bell, 2007).

The consideration of children as social actors in their own right and active research participant created an environment in which their views and actions were meaningfully incorporated in my study (Klocker et al., 2007). For some time, children were invisible in many studies which only considered adults views but now there is considerable momentum towards giving children a voice and involving them in research (Kirby, 1999; Mathews and Limb, 1999 cited in Matthews, 2003). Qvortrup, Bardy, Sgritta, and Wintersberger (1994) reflect that in the past, giving children the opportunity to speak for themselves in research was seen to be violating the rules of good scientific behaviour but now children's agency is acknowledged and children have been incorporated in research (Smith, 2000, 2002).

3.4 Children's rights perspective

The children's rights perspective is a second theoretical perspective employed in this study. It is founded on the norms, principles and standards of the international human rights system. Rights entail legal entitlements that address the special need for protection and care for children. They can be defined as "claims or entitlements that derive from moral and/or legal rules" (Freeman, 2007 cited in Te One, 2011, p. 41). Children's rights under the UNCRC are spread across 45 articles which delineate a range of provision, protection, and participation rights for children popularly categorized as the 3Ps (Alderson, 2000; Berthelsen & Brownlee, 2005). Similar rights though not equivalent have also been enshrined in the ACRWC. The African charter on the rights of the child reflects more of the situation of children in African countries; cultural context, social economic situations and socio-political conflict (Tine & Ennew, 1998). Both conventions are guided by the same principle; Best interest of the child, Non-discrimination, survival and development and participation but their application is contextual.

3.4.1 The Protection, Provision and Participation rights (3Ps)

Children's safety is of paramount importance in ECCD. The conventions provide protection rights which encompass children's right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, drug

abuse, all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, abduction, sale or trafficking in children, special attention and protection to children in times of war and refugee children, respect of minority children and prohibition of the death penalty for children. In this study, the perspective provides an understanding of how children's protection rights are met through Centre Based ECCD.

ECCD is regarded as a right of every child. The General Comment (Number 7) of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child provides guidance to States parties on rights in early childhood. It provides for the provision of early childhood education to children regardless of their sex and age (Woodhead & Moss, 2007). The children's rights conventions cover a broad spectrum of provision rights which includes healthcare, education, adequate standard of living, nutrition, clothing, adequate housing, social security and the right to have a name, a nationality and an identity. For the purpose of this thesis, focus is on education, healthcare and play rights. Healthcare and nutrition, education, play and leisure reflected in Article 24, 28 & 29, 31 of the UNCRC and Article 14, 11, 12 of the ACRWC respectively are important provision rights that all children ought to have in ECCD centres. However, funding, poverty, low level of appreciation of ECCD among others make it difficult for children in poor countries to attain their provision rights enshrined in the conventions. The study explored how children's right to education (learning), healthcare and play are met through Centre Based ECCD.

Children's participation rights were significantly considered in this study. Participation rights entail the involvement of children in different spheres of life or matter that affect them (Smith, 2002 cited in Berthelsen & Brownlee, 2005). However, Morrow admits that "defining children's participation is not straightforward (Morrow, 2011, p.10). On a broader perspective, participation rights encompass among other things the right to freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion and association. These participation rights are enshrined in Article 12 and 13 of UNCRC (1989) and Article 7 of the African Charter. For instance the UNCRC state that;

To the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.' (Article 12) and the right 'to the child freedom of expression [including] freedom to seek, review and impart information and ideas of all kind... through any other media of the child's choice (Article 13)⁵

⁵ UNCRC,(1989).United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. <http://www.unicef.org/crc/> .

While the ACWRC in Article 7 state that every child who is capable of communicating his or her own views should be allowed to express his or her opinions freely⁶

Since ECCD is a matter that affects children, the study employed children as key informants alongside adults. Shier highlights five levels of understanding children's participation rights and these include: (1) children being listened to; (2) children supported to express their views; (3) children's views being taken into account; (4) children involved in decision-making processes and (5) children sharing power (Shier, 2001 cited in Berthelsen & Brownlee, 2005). The participation rights influenced the choice of methods employed to extract children's views and experiences while taking their views seriously and supporting them to freely express them.

Boshier (2005) explains that the UNCRC reconceptualises children as citizens who are rights claimers with autonomy as well as social participants in their own right. Children are no longer thought of as objects or properties of their parent who should wait to exercise their rights in adulthood but they are regarded as human beings who are entitled to the same degree of respect as adults. This perspective is compatible with theoretical developments in the social studies of childhood (Boshier, 2005 cited in Smith, 2007).

However, the individualist approach embedded in the UNCRC in which children are regarded as rights claimers with autonomy is problematic and not easily applicable to many Sub-Saharan setting (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2013). In Zambia like many other African countries children do not exist as individuals but belong to the wider society which includes the extended family and the significant others. Hence the value of individualism does not exist but that of relatedness which is cultural and embedded in the societies of many countries in the global south countries (Boyden, 1990; Njungwe, 2009; Obibi 2003 in Woodhead & Montgomery, 2003). Therefore, participation in relation to children's right is a "highly contextualized concept, in that it is practiced in diverse ways in differing places and spaces, and its meaning and interpretation vary according to its contexts" (Lister, 2008 in Morrow, 2011, p.10). The problem associated with rights discourse lies in its roots in Neo-liberal ideologies which award children individual rights and view them as autonomous and free individual thereby neglecting the values and norms held by societies in which the children live (Kjørholt, 2004 in Abebe & Kjørholt, 2013). Therefore, Abebe and Kjørholt (2013)

⁶ ACWRC. (1999). African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. .

http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/Charter_En_African_Charter_on_the_Rights_and_Welfare_of_the_Child_AddisAbaba_July1990.pdf

argue that it is imperative that cultural sensitive approaches are applied if the children's rights conventions are to serve the intended purpose.

This study took a cultural sensitive approach in engaging children while giving them a platform to take part in matters that affect them as informants. The children were not completely separated from adults watch during interviews but were regarded as competent subjects and social actors with rights to participate in society and be able to voice out their views on ECCD a matter that affect their lives.

Like the social studies of childhood, the UNCRC also challenges the traditional attitudes and perceptions highlighted in the pre-sociological and psychological theories by recognising children as subject of rights, entitled to be involved in decisions and actions that affect them (Lansdown, 2004 cited in Schiller & Einarsdottir, 2009). Therefore, viewing children as holders of rights involves incorporating the concept of children as agents and social actors, and including their perceptions on their own lives and experiences (Smith, 2007)

I employed the children rights perspective because it fits well with the social studies of childhood as it recognize children's agency and competency as well as acknowledging children as experts in their own right (Clark, 2005; Smith, 2007). Pascal and Bertram (2009) explain that since the ratification of the UNCRC, children's right to have a voice, and to have their opinions heard, has led many providers and practitioners in the field of early childhood to seek ways to involve children's perspectives in the evaluation and development of practices. This study gave children alongside adults a voice to express themselves on how they experience Centre Based ECCD program in their own right.

3.5 Social exchange theory

The social exchange theory is built on the fundamental principle that people in social situations chose behaviours and actions that maximise their likelihood of meeting individual and family needs (Chibucos, Leite, & Weis, 2005). It illuminates our understanding of social interaction or family relationships such as parent-child relationship in relation to decision making. The relationship that exist between parents and children is viewed to be interdependent and contingent (Blua , 1964 cited in Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This entails that people's decisions in social relationships are influenced by the likely benefits they see in a given situation. People have expectations that when an investment is made, it should be able return benefits later on. Chibucos et al. (2005, p. 138) argue that "human behaviour is motivated by the desire to seek rewards and avoid potential cost in social situation".

Therefore, people tend to withdraw from actions that have no likelihood of yield positive benefits.

Individuals that constitute social relation are not viewed as passive actors but regarded as rational actors and reactors in social exchange in which there is sense of interaction that generate obligations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). They make decision based on what they see they can get out of a given cause of action. In this view, relationships or situations that are likely to produce more benefits influences people's level of commitment and increases chance of an action or social relation to be maintained. At the heart of this theory is the concept of reciprocity⁷ which is believed to be universal. Chibucos et al. (2005) argue that social life requires a degree of reciprocity on part of actors in the social relationship.

I employed this theory to shed light in understanding parent's perspectives of learning (schooling) in relation to children's play in ECCD centre.

3.6 Norm of reciprocity

Gouldner (1960)'s norm of reciprocity is an important concept and fundamental construct in social exchange theory (Wu et al., 2006). He regarded reciprocity as "cooperative i.e. mutually gratifying pattern of exchanging goods and services" (Wallace, 1980, p. 28). He saw the norm of reciprocity as a general basic tendency that can be found in most human societies throughout history (cf. Perugini, Gallucci, Presaghi, & Ercolani, 2003, p. 252). Norm of reciprocity is defined as "a set of socially accepted rules regarding a transaction in which a party extending a resource to another party obligates the latter to return the favour" (Wu et al., 2006, p. 378). In this view, reciprocity defines certain actions and obligations as payments for benefits received and demands that people help those that helped them (Wallace, 1980). However the meaning of reciprocity cannot be the same everywhere. It is contextual; the ways in which the concept is applied varies among different people and in cultures (Gouldner, 1960; Wikhamn & Hall, 2012).

3.7 Defining Early Childhood Care and Development

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) refers to a full range of health, nutrition, early education and stimulation as well as social service programmes that provide for the

⁷ reciprocity refer to responding to a positive action with another positive action, rewarding kind actions

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reciprocity_\(social_psychology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reciprocity_(social_psychology))

basic holistic needs of children from birth to age eight (Evans et al., 2000). It entails the provision of services that respond to young children's basic needs for cognitive stimulation, early learning, nutrition, and basic health (Jaramillo & Tietjen, 2001).

The concept of care was employed in this study to imply the provision of supportive services for children which include among other the provision of health services that contribute to growth of the child and safe environment. Evans et al. (2000, p. 3) explain that "Care is an integrated set of action that ensure for children the synergy for protection, and support of their health, nutrition, psycho-social and cognitive aspect of development". They further argue that care is embedded in the culture of the people and encompasses what the adults and significant others in the life of a child are able to provide; safe environment, healthy supportive and affectionate inter action appropriated modelling stimulation, protection and time.

Early childhood is relative term that occupies different meaning to different settings and context. Its definition varies from one country to another as well as in different regions. The definition of early childhood is largely dependent on the local traditions and the national policies pertaining to children development and education. However, it is regarded as an important period of human development that involve a succession of developmental transitions, including changes in children's physical, cognitive and emotional capacities (Vennam et al., 2009). A broader definition that covers a wide range of age groups has been presented by UNSECO who state that "early childhood commonly refers to the period from birth through 8 years of age" (UNESCO 2006 cited in Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011, p. 113). This working definition is in line with UNCRC Committee on rights of the child. However, the education policy in Zambia, regard early childhood is as a period from birth to the age of six , the age prior to compulsion education (MOE, 2006 cited in Thomas & Thomas, 2009)

Despite having a legal definition of early childhood in Zambia, children aged 7 and 8 still find themselves receiving early childhood services due to their different circumstances. This makes it difficult to define early childhood using chronological age. A strict adherence to chronological age would deny vulnerable children from poor families an opportunity to experience early childhood care, education and development programs. In accordance with the education Act of 2011, ECCD in Zambia means 'the care, development and education of child from birth to the prescribed school entry age' (ZANEC 2012, p.5). The definition of ECCD in Zambia is skewed towards education.

3.8 Play and childhood

Literature on the concept of play suggest that play is a relative activity that has no universally agreed definition (Pramling Samuelsson & Fler, 2010). Fromberg and Bergen (2006) attribute this to the shifting function of play in different settings. Different scholars have defined and theorised play in many different ways. Despite the differences, general agreements have been made concerning play that it is pleasurable and enjoyable, is characterised by freedom and spontaneity, elicit active engagement by players, and it occurs in separate space and time from other activities (cf. Schwartzman, 1978, pp. 326-327).

Play is regarded as a universal feature of childhood in every society and Schwartzman (1978, p. 290) argue that “young children play in one way or another in all societies of the world”. The activity is interwoven in the social life of children and this makes it a quintessential developmental activity of childhood (Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2000).

Although play may be a universal feature of every society, people’s views and interpretation of the concept differ from one culture to another and from one society to another. Play is viewed to have both temporal and spatial diversity (Sutton-Smith, 2009). It is a condition that changes in different contexts (Fromberg & Bergen, 2006) as such, Schwartzman (1978, p. 4) argue that “perceptions of play are intimately related to one’s culture”. This makes play a cultural concept; it has different meaning to different people culturally and historically (Boushel, Fawcett, & Selwyn, 2000; Marfo & Biersteker, 2011; Sutton-Smith & Pellegrini, 1995).

Play relates to activities that children engage in whether informal or organised. It is characterised by thinking and activity that has symbolic meaningful, active, enjoyable, pleasurable, voluntary, rule governed, episodic but crucial to the process of learning and development of the child (cf. Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Pramling Samuelsson & Fler, 2010).

The importance of play cannot be overemphasised. Play has multiple functions and is believed to have significant contribution to children’s cognitive, social, academic, and psychological development (Youngquist and Pataray-ching 2004, in Fromberg & Bergen, 2006). It also lays a foundation for thinking, writing, and other forms of literacy (Fromberg & Bergen, 2006). In addition Schwartzman (1978, p. 328) explains that;

Children at play learn how to be sensitive to the effect of context and the importance of relationships; they develop the capacity to adopt and ‘as if’ set towards objects, actions, persons,

and situations, and they continually explore the possibilities of interpretation and reinterpretation and with this the creation of new possibilities

Marfo and Biersteker (2011, p. 74) also state that “through play children learn social roles, cultural values and norms, as well as skills and competencies necessary for survival and productive community memberships”. Therefore, play has an important role in different domains of childhood.

Because of the ambiguity surrounding play, it is difficult to interpret it using one approach. Schwartzman (1978) advocate for the use of multi-perspective approach in defining play. Therefore, in this document I will use functionalist and materialist approach as well as play a childhood right.

Functionalists are concerned with the role that play has in the life of the children. They view play and games to have distinctive functions in relation to the development of the child’s sense of self (cf. Schwartzman, 1978, p. 100). Therefore, play does not just give children some fun experiences but also provide them with an opportunity of imagining themselves with various social roles which help them to build their own character and performs the function of enculturation⁸, socialization (Schwartzman, 1978) and education exercise (Fortes,1938 in Schwartzman, 1978). Furthermore, it promotes creativity, intellectual growth and social skills (Smilansky,1968 in Schwartzman, 1978).

The materialist approach focuses on material objects that children use in play and the type of environment or context in which activities take place (Mtonga, 2012). It views the environment or context in which children interact to have influence on how children play. For instance Johnson established that play grounds that lack facilities encourage social contact but may also be a source of conflict among children (Johnson, 1935 in Schwartzman, 1978). Furthermore, the context or environment shapes children’s play preferences. Parten state that Children tend to play in small groups which changes as children grow up. In addition, playing groups tend to be unisex (Parten, 1933 in Schwartzman, 1978).

The conceptualisation of play as a children’s right has been enshrined in children’s rights conventions since they were enacted (Kernan, 2007). Play is not just something that children need to experience but it is an entitlement. Both in the UNCRC (Article 31) and ACRWC (Article 12), provisions have been made to ensure that children’s right to play is recognised. Since play appears interwoven into the fabric of children’s everyday life, it represents a

⁸ enculturation is a process of learning a culture in all its uniqueness and particularity while socialization is regarded as the set of species wide requirement and exactions made on human beings by human society (cf. Mead, 1963 Schwartzman, 1978, p. 106)

primary form of engagement in everyday life which reflect the CRC articles on participation (cf. Lester & Russell, 2010). It presents children with the platform of expressing themselves.

4 Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and elaborates on the methodological approach of my study. It elaborates on the research design and describes the methods employed to explore children's and staffs' experiences of urban Centred Based ECCD in Zambia under Mulumbo Early Childhood Care and Development Foundation (MECCDF) in Garden compound. It outlines the procedures undertaken in the study beginning with the perspectives on doing research with children. The chapter proceeds describing the research design and the choice of my field site and informants. This is followed by the description of how I entered and accessed the field. It further elaborates on research informants, ECCD centre, sample size, sampling procedures, sources of data, and my role as a researcher. The other aspects addressed in this chapter include how I left the field, data analysis, ethical considerations, challenges and limitations of the study.

4.2 Doing Research with children

Since 1980s, when the 'new paradigm' or the social studies of childhood emerged, there has been a growing interest in valuing children as human beings, competent, active participants and social actors (James et al., 1998; James & Sherrard, 2009; Lee, 2001) rather than human becoming as well increasing emphasis on children participation in research (Alderson and Morrow, 2011; Ennew et al., 2009 cited in Fossheim 2013). This has resulted into different ways of theorising children whose views are highly considered as informants in matters that affect them in research. As argued in theoretical and conceptual framework, rights discourses and the social studies of childhood calls for children to be seen as social actors and subject of rights who should be studied in their own right. Consequently, children have over the years been involved in research. Clark, Moss, and Kjørholt (2005) argue that listening to children today is often inscribed in the rights discourse, constructing children as competent social actors with right to be listened to and to have a say in matters that affect their lives. Furthermore, Langsted (1994) asserts that "involving children at different points in this process affirms children as competent social actors, the expert in their own lives and therefore valid sources of data" (Langsted, 1994 cited in Crivello, Camfield, & Woodhead, 2009, p. 52). The social studies of childhood's view that children are active social actors and subject has been strengthened with the ratification of the UNCRC (1989) in particular Article 12 and 13. The two articles focus on children's right to express their views freely in all

matters affecting them in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (*Article 12*) and the right of the child to freedom of expression (*Article 13*).

Therefore, the methodology of this study has been influenced by the above perspectives. Kjørholt in Fossheim (2013, p. 26) argues that;

Participatory approach in child research is closely connected with the main theoretical perspective of our childhood studies programme. The program is theoretically anchored in the interdisciplinary perspectives on social studies of children and childhood, seeing children as individual rights holders and competent social actors and childhood as a social and cultural phenomenon varying with time and space.

She further argues that these perspectives are closely related to the UNCRC. Participatory approaches empower children by bringing their voices to the fore. Thus in this study, I focused on exploring and generating knowledge on the experiences of urban Centre Based ECCD with children and adults as key informants.

4.3 Research design

This study employed an ethnographic inspired qualitative approach. Traditional methods and techniques were used with both children and adults to gather data. In addition, task based, child focused participatory methods and techniques in research were used with children in this study. The following were the main methods of data collection employed in this study;

- Individual drawing
- Semi -structured interviews
- Participant observations
- Focussed group discussions

The aforementioned methods of data collection employed were supported with informal dialogues and field notes. The methods were employed to explore children's and staff experiences of urban Centre Based ECCD program at an ECCD centre. This approach was chosen to get in-depth knowledge about the subject matter (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I chose to use task based, child focused participatory methods such as individual drawing with children because they are user friendly and they empower children to express their views freely. Desai and Potter (2006, p. 118) explain that participatory methods “seek to investigate and give voice to those groups in society who are most vulnerable and marginalized in development decision and implementation”. Thus I decided to use participatory, child focused methods with children.

4.4 Choices of Field site and informants

My study was undertaken in the heart of Lusaka in Garden compound at MECCDF run ECCD centre. The selection of my field site was based on the prior knowledge provided by the program at this foundation; the organization I worked with during my study. I had two sites options, Lusaka and Kabwe to conduct my study. I chose the Lusaka site because it presented to me a typical urban area where I would get an urban perspective on ECCD. Besides, logistic issues were a contributing factor in choosing the Lusaka site. I only collected data from one ECCD centre for my study. I chose to use one centre because it is the only centre being run by the foundation in Lusaka. As earlier mentioned in the statement of the problem, most of the organizations are running ECCD centre operates in rural areas. Consequently, my entire study was conducted at this ECCD centre situated in Garden compound one of Lusaka's low income neighbourhoods and among the oldest compounds located in the north of Lusaka. It is against this background that Garden compound was among the areas chosen by the organization I did my study with as an appropriate place to implement non-fee paying Centre Based ECCD program.

During data collection, I decided to observe and do individual drawings with all the 50 children under the program but only 12 children's drawings were considered for my study. The children at the ECCD centre are aged between 3-8 years and they all come from the surrounding areas of Garden compound.

I picked 12 key informants both boys and girls that took part in the individual drawing, interviews and focused group discussions. I decided to choose both sexes in order to have an equal gender representation of views and have some diversity in the group. The sample of my study constituted children aged between 5 and 8 years as shown in the age and sex distribution table below.

Table 4-1 Age and Sex Distribution of Child Participants

Age and Sex distribution of Child participants			
Years of participants	Number of Boys	Number of Girls	Total
5	1	1	2
6	2	2	4
7	2	2	4
8	1	1	2
Grand Total	6	6	12

I also decided to use 3 staff members from the secretariat and 2 caregivers at the ECCD centre who took part in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. Out of the 5 adult participants that were purposively selected for this study, 4 were females and 1 was male. In total, I had 17 (12 children and 5 adults) informants for my study.

4.5 Entering the field and Access

The fieldwork for this study was undertaken between 6th June and 9th August 2013 in Garden Compound. For the study to be undertaken, I needed to gain the co-operation of a range of different 'gatekeepers' (Valentines 2005 in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). These include the organization and the parents/guardians who are entrusted with responsibility of taking care of the children enrolled at the ECCD centre. Fraser (2004) argue that access to children might be gained through gatekeepers that is, those who control access. Access was established through the use of the introduction letter from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology(NTNU) via the Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB) to the 'gatekeepers'; MECCDF and the information letter to the parents of the sampled children to which they all consented.

Prior to sending information letters to the parents/guardians of the children, I spent the first days of my study interacting with the children and caregivers at the ECCD centre building rapport and fostering friendship with my would be informants (Abebe, 2009). I was introduced to the caregivers by the program coordinator whom in turn introduced me to the children. After being introduced at the ECCD centre, I explained the purpose of my stay to the care givers and the children. During the early days, I spent more time at the centre because I needed to learn about what goes on at the centre and the everyday schedules so that I could plan well on how to fit into the existing on-going program. I provided the children with detailed information of what would be taking place during the study and the study expectations. In the subsequent days, each time the need arose for explaining the purpose of study, I explained to the children. The process of interaction and access between the children and I took place both in class and outside class at break time. We played games and sang songs together as well as shared meals. I made observations of the children both inside and outside class and events were recorded in my field notes. After observations, I held informal dialogues to get in-depth information on what goes on at the centre and to get clarity of what was observed. The observation process helped me take note of some of the children that later

became my informants. Only those children that expressed interest in the study were selected and they had information letter sent to their parents for consent.

4.6 Research informants, ECCD Centre, sample size and sampling procedures

The study targeted children who are categorised as orphans and vulnerable children and adults that have experienced Centre Based ECCD. Therefore, the sampling of informants was purposively done. Hutz and Koller (1999) argue that sampling is an important element of research. It helps to decide whom to study and determine how representative your sample is for your study. Because of the nature of my study, a small but carefully thought sample of 17 was purposively recruited. The participants were chosen the basis that they had ECCD and could provide vital information for this study. In addition, the selection of participants was based on the level of comprehension concerning the purpose of the study, the age (5 – 8years) of the child and willingness to be part of the study. The period the child had spent at centre was also a contributing factor in the selection of participants. Prior observations made and the informal dialogues held with children also facilitated the selections of children as informants. DeWalt and DeWalt (2010) argue that observations provide the context for sampling in research.

4.7 Sources of data

To extract the Centre Based ECCD experiences of children and adults, qualitative research methods and techniques that are aligned with participatory research approach were employed. The multiple methods and techniques used, provided in-depth insight of the experiences of children and staff pertaining to Centre Based ECCD. Accordingly, individual drawing, participant observation, semi-structured interview and focus group discussion coupled with informal dialogues were employed as main methods of data collection.

4.7.1 Individual drawing

Individual drawing was the first tool I employed with children. It was undertaken in a classroom with 50 children including those that were not part of the study. I chose to include children that were not part of the study to keep everyone busy so that there is no interruption during the task. Besides, I did not want to create an atmosphere where non-participants would feel discriminated for not taking part in the study. However, only 12 children's drawings were used for my study. This method was used to explore children's everyday life and social practices and experiences of play and learning at the centre. It is an important tool for

gathering data with children because it gives an opportunity to children to express their views freely. The children I talked to expressed a high level of confidence when explaining what was in the drawn picture. Clark and Moss (2011) argue that individual drawings are creative, fun and encourage children to be more actively involved in the research and also gives children time to think about what they wish to portray (Young & Barrett, 2001). Furthermore, Individual drawings helps in dealing with children's linguistic ability, speech and language difficulties, and shyness of children (Punch, 2002). It is imperative to understand that children have different competencies and some may be less confident in articulating themselves verbally in interviews which are traditional social science research methods (Desai & Potter, 2006). Therefore, individual drawing provided an alternative to the traditional methods as it has its own advantages. "This technique may also enable children to gain more control over the interview, since it gives children an opportunity to draw as much or as little as they like and also gives them time to reflect on their own ideas" (Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010, p. 183). Therefore, not only are individual drawing funny and creative but also allow children with limited literacy to participate in the research (Clark and Moss, 2001 cited in Crivello et al., 2009)

The children were given an A4 plain paper, drawing pencil and colouring pencil to undertake the task at hand. They were asked to drawing a picture of themselves in response to the five main questions; (1) What do you do when you come to the centre, (2) What do you play and learn at the centre, (3) Where do you play and learn and with whom, (4) How do your play and learn at this centre or school, and (5) what do you like the most when you come to the centre The individual drawing exercise was received with excitements by the children who really took control of what they wanted to portray in the drawing. I concur with the argument made by Clark and Moss (2011) and Punch (2002) about the use of drawing with children. Through drawing, children are able to express themselves freely and capable of interpreting their own drawings (Young & Barrett, 2001). After children completed their drawings, I sought their interpretation by asking them to tell me a story of what was in the drawn picture. Seeking children's interpretation of the drawings was done on one-to-one basis between each child (informant) and I (the researcher).

However, children with limited exposure to the visual imaginary world were limited to drawing what was around them when it came to individual drawing. I concur with Bradley (1995) cited in Punch (2002) who argues that Lack of contact with visual imagery influences the type and limited range of visual images that children produce. When asked to draw themselves and what they do when they come to school, some younger children both participants and non-participants to the study, reproduced pictures of apples, a hand, and oranges that were displayed in the classroom (see picture to right by Lameck(M/5⁹).



Figure 4-1 drawing by Lameck (M/5)

The older children expressed a high level of visual imaginary which gave me an opportunity to gather quality data. Suffice to mention that the quality of drawing from both the younger and older children, did not affect the process of data collection as the children themselves were in control of their personal drawings and capable of interpreting them.

4.7.2 Participant observation

Observations in this study started from the very first day I stepped my foot at the ECCD centre. Participant observation is defined as “a form of observation that involves ‘watching, listening, reflecting and also engaging with the children in conversation’” (Mayall, 2000 cited in Fargas-Malet et al., 2010, p. 186). I spent 4 weeks of observing both caregivers and the children. I observed how they went about with their daily business; how they interacted, how learning was conducted, and how the playing took place.

I reported for fieldwork at the centre around 8 - 9 am in the morning and I left the centre around 2 pm after the children left the centre respectively. In the early days, I went to the centre from Monday to Friday and i later reduced the days to Monday, Wednesday and Friday. During and after long hours of observations, I took time to reflect and write down the observed events in my field notes book.

Participant observation undertaken at the ECCD centre aimed to obtain and understand the patterns of children’s everyday practices and experiences that would not be possible to note using interviews. Participant observation gave me an opportunity to get deeper insights into the unspoken words, and the complexities of different meaning making process (Kjørholt in Clark et al., 2005; Fossheim 2013). Mauthner (1997) argues that observations allow you to

⁹ Names used are pseudo names and the Letter in the brackets represents the sex of respondent while the number is the age.

see what children chose to do at particular times, how they make choices and whom they chose to be with in a particular activity. I spent time to observe the children pertaining to learning and play as well as how ECCD is practiced every day at the centre in order to gather more information that would not be possible using other methods. Ennew (2009) argues that watching what children actually do and how they do it, provides valuable information throughout any research process. I chose to use participant observation because it allows you to watch, listen and, reflect and engage with the children in conversation (Mayall, 2000 cited in Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). Furthermore, O'Leary (2009, p. 209) postulate that "Observations invite you to take it all; to see, hear, smell, feel and even taste your environment. It allows getting a sense of a reality and working through the complexities of social interaction"

In addition, I employed participant observation to help me reduce power imbalance as there were not much direct contact between the children and I, the researcher. Nigel and Claire (1998, p. 336) also acknowledge the importance participant observation and argue that "ethical problems in research involving direct contact with children can be overcome by using participatory approach" .

In the initial stages of observations, children seemed to wonder what I was doing. Sometimes they would whisper in each other's ears and look direct at me and laugh. As time went by, children did not mind my presence in the classroom and their play ground as they went on with their daily business. In the end I became a regular participant in the children's playground.

4.7.3 Semi- structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both adults and children. I chose semi-structured interviews because of the advantages they have over the other methods. They made me understand themes of the everyday experiences of ECCD from the subjects own perspective (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, McCracken (1988) argues that interviews take you in the life world of informants to see the content and patterns of daily experiences and experience the world as informants do. To ensure that vital areas of my study were addressed and I was kept focused on the conversations by employing interview guides. A digital voice recorder was utilized to capture the interviews after consent was sought from participants who all consented individually.

4.7.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews with children

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 child participants. The aim of semi-structured interviews with children was to explore their personal experiences pertaining play, learning and healthcare at the ECCD centre as well as their everyday life at the centre. The interviews undertaken with children took approximately 20-25 minutes. In the early minutes of the interviews, children seemed to take much notice of the recorder, however with time, the children forgot about it and went on to tell their experienced stories. All the interviews with children were conducted in vernacular language (*Chinyanja*). I chose to use vernacular language because the children and I could all speak the language and it was easy for the children to articulate issues in their own local language. The interviews were conducted in a classroom, an environment the children were very familiar with. The classroom was selected because it was the only available space where we could hold interviews and provided a certain level of privacy. Prior to the interviews, children were asked if they were okay with the location of the interviews and they seemed to be okay with it. The children were also provided with the research details; the purpose of the study, how some questions were similar to the earlier tool (individual drawing) and how they differed. The children were advised to feel free to express themselves in answering questions and they were told that there were no wrong or right answers (Punch, 2002) about personal experiences of Centre Based ECCD because they were experts of their own experiences in their own right (Clark, 2005).

Interview guides were employed during semi-structured interviews. I divided the interview guide into four main focus thematic areas; everyday practices, learning, play and healthcare (see appendices). The four thematic areas guided the questions asked to children. I asked children to describe their everyday life at the centre, to tell me about what they do when they come to the centre, what activities they played and which one they liked the most, what they learn and how they learnt and finally to describe their experiences of healthcare at the centre. However, I did not follow the sequence of the questions during the interview. I could jump some other questions and ask other questions not in the guide and rephrase some questions to ensure that children understood what I was asking.

I combined Semi-structured interviews and individual drawing at the beginning of each interview. I decided to bring drawings to interviews with children so that they can be used as visual stimuli. Drawings have many advantages in research with children as they can be used as a good ice-breaker, act as prompts and as triggers for remembering or for eliciting discussion (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010) I chose to combine the two to empower children with

their own work and make them feel relaxed during the individual interviews. Furthermore, Zartler and Richter (2012, p. 2) argue that “it seems easier for children to talk about a visual prompt than something abstract”. The discussions over individual drawing slowly invited us into interviews. By the time the interviews were being undertaken, children were at ease, relaxed and did not seem to be timid with me. This could be attributed to rapport built and friendship fostered in the earlier days of the study. Below is an excerpt of one of the interview which individual drawings were used as visual stimuli. It was translated from vernacular to English. The names used in the interview and the rest of document do not represent the actual names of informants.

Table 4-2 Extract of children’s interview Excerpt

<p>Me: Tell me something about what is in the picture that you have drawn?</p> <p>Chimwemwe: this is a cup, dish, chair, apple, eggs and a tree</p> <p>Kondwani: there is a car, stove, and a ball</p> <p>Boris: here a boy is coming out of the classroom and the girl is opening the door, then we go out and play football.</p> <p>Me: what else is in the picture that you have drawn?</p> <p>Chimwemwe: this is me...Pointing at the drawing</p> <p>Kondwani: there is also a house</p> <p>Boris: a helicopter, cup, car, a man,</p> <p>Me: among the things that you have mentioned in drawing, which ones do you do at school?)</p> <p>Chimwemwe: I climb a tree...to pick mulberry</p> <p>Kondwani: playing</p> <p>Boris: when we come to school..?... We start with prayers and then we write</p> <p>Me: tell me something about learning, what do learn when you come to school?</p> <p>Chimwemwe: ‘Kulemba’¹⁰, colouring and tests</p> <p>Kondwani: We draw small cars and write numbers</p> <p>Boris: we draw cars, phones, people, drums, and church</p>
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However, some children had vocabulary limitation to some of the interview questions asked. They found it difficult to understand certain words and had difficulties in expressing some of the words to answer the question at hand. I concur with Clark et al. (2005) when they argue

¹⁰ ‘Kulemba’ is a local word interpreted by children as writing or drawing.

that children would be barred from answering questions if only one traditional method like interviewing was employed, especially with children who have limited verbal skills.

The process of conducting both Interviews and recording or note taking at the same time can at times be challenging and time consuming when doing research with children. This task did not go well for me in the first interviews. The flipping of pages as I quickly took notes made some children uncomfortable. I was using a small book such that pages quickly got full with my write ups. I recall one child getting sceptical, and scared at the same time. She wondered and asked me if she was the only one going to fill my note book with responses. The taking of notes prolonged the interviews such that at the end of the interviews, the children confessed that they were tired. Thus, in the subsequent interviews, I decided to do away with note taking since I was using digital voice recorder which made the recording and storage of every conversation easier. Longhurst (2003) states that tape recording allows you to focus fully on the interaction instead of feeling the pressure to get the participant words recorded in you note book.

During the interview, I was considerate of the interview place and sitting arrangement. I tried to ensure that the interview context did not affect the children. The one -to-one interviews were held in a very familiar environment (class) to the children when everyone was outside on break or lunch. For each interview, we sat on small chairs a situation which created an atmosphere of being at the same level with the child. Matthews (1998) argue that the context of the setting has a significant bearing on communication; researchers should not only pay attention to what is said but also the meeting place. He suggests that when doing interviews, researchers should try to sit at the level of children in a quiet and comfortable place.

Some of the interviews were conducted beyond normal school set time at the centre due to overrun in time. As a result, I decided to buy some drinks for the children to keep them from being hungry at lunch time and maintain their energy levels so they could be in right frame of mind with high level of concentration during the interview.

4.7.3.2 Interviews with adults (project staff and caregivers)

I conducted 5 interviews with adults from two different settings. Two interviews were conducted at the ECCD centre while 3 interviews were undertaken at the secretariat. All the interviews with adults were conducted in English since all the adult participants could speak the language. The interviews were aimed at explore their experiences and perspectives of children's play, learning and healthcare. in addition, to explore staff's personal experiences

of how the programme is designed to meet children's rights and needs, the challenges faced by centre based ECCD and to examine the cultural practices that have been incorporated in the programme. An Interview guide was employed to guide the conversations on the informant's experiences and perspectives. Interviews with adults proved to be very pivotal as they brought out a number of revelations pertaining to ECCD. McCracken (1988) explains that interviews are the most revealing tools of inquiry because they can help you to see the content and patterns of daily experiences of informants.

All the adults were asked about their role in the implementation of ECCD, the importance of ECCD to Zambia, children's everyday life at the centre, how the program is designed to meet children's needs and rights, and challenges associated with Centre Based ECCD. The interviews also focused on the application of the children's rights conventions in implementing ECCD. It was easy to undertake interviews with adults since all the adults could speak English. The interviews with adults took approximately 40-45 minutes to be completed.

4.7.4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

In addition to the interviews, participant observation and individual drawing, I conducted 2 focus group discussions in two different settings. One discussion was undertaken with children while the other one was with adults. The focus group discussions were aimed at facilitating the exchange of ideas, views and capturing participant's opinion on issues relating Centre Based ECCD as well as generating new information and validating information gathered using other methods. I decided to do focus group discussion to allow for a variety of responses and openness on informants' views. Its undeniable that FGDs play a significant role in reducing the pressure of one informant responding to every questions and they create a safe peer environment that help in redressing the power imbalance that exist between an adult and a child in a one-to-one interview as children are familiar with a replicated class type small group setting (Hennessy & Heary, 2005; Mauthner, 1997)

4.7.4.1 Focus Group Discussion with children

The first focus group discussion was conducted with a group of 10 children consisting of 4 boys and 6 girls. The other two children did not take part in the discussion as they were unavailable at the time of the group discussion. The children were once again informed of the purpose of the study and I assured them of the confidentiality and anonymity of their identity in the report. The focus group discussion took place on an outdoor environment where

children usually spend their time playing during break. We sat in a circle on the floor where we had laid down some big manila papers. I decided to use the set up because children were very familiar with this space and this helped them to relax as well as reduce the existing power imbalance. The discussions were captured using the digital voice recorder. The same interview guide that I used during interviews with children was also employed to gather their views during the FGDs. I used it to keep the discussions in focus and get more insight on a number of issues that individual children raised during interviews. During the study, I took time to write down some of the issues raised during semi-structured interviews, informal dialogues as well as observations and I asked them during the focus group discussions. I decided to employ the same interview guide used during on-to-one interviews for the purpose of information triangulation pertaining to the children's experiences of play, learning and healthcare. The focus group discussion lasted 40 minutes.

FGDs with children did not go without challenges. Some of the children wanted to be the only ones to be answering questions while others watched. Girls were very vocal and dominated the on-going discussions more than the boys. Only one boy tried to challenge the girls. I concur with Mauthner (1997) that in the mixed sex pair interviews there is some competitiveness of gendered power relationships between children. Moreover, some children kept on repeating the same things so that their voices could be captured in the digital voice recorder. To avoid the dominance of some individual children during the discussion and to save time, I decided to be picking at participants to get everyone's response and to ensure that diverse views were captured. At times I felt like children felt patronised by picking at them however, it worked well and ensured that everyone participated in the conversations. Mauthner (1997, p. 21) argue that "One of the researcher's tasks as facilitator of a small group is to ensure that each participant gets their say". Only in circumstances where those that had not given a response could not provide any, the discussions were left open. My major role in the discussions was to facilitate, observe and keep the deliberations in focus.

4.7.4.2 FGDs with adults (caregivers and Project staff)

The second focus group discussion was held at the Foundation's secretariat with adults. The discussion was planned to be done with 5 participants but ended up with 3 members of staff. The other two left the office for emergency stakeholders meetings. However, this did not affect the quality of data collected despite missing their valuable contributions. The three staff that remained for the FGD included caregivers who operate at the grassroots and the

officer in mainstream of the project implementation. Participants were reminded and informed of the purpose of the study and confidentiality of the information gathered as well as anonymity of their names in the final report. The discussions went on smooth since everyone could speak English and could understand it. I maintained same the roles I played during FGDs with children; facilitating, observing and keeping the discussions in focus. The FGD with adults was aimed at obtaining staffs' and caregivers' opinions on how the program is designed to meet children's rights and needs, how they felt about incorporating local practices into the project, how they were applying the child rights conventions, their experiences of policy and the challenges they face when implementing Centre Based ECCD programs.

4.8 Field notes

During fieldwork, I kept notes of the observed events that were impossible to capture using interviews or the digital voice recorder. After a long day of observations, interviews, and individual drawing I sat down reflecting on the observed events and expanded the notes taken during the event. The field notes helped me remember the unspoken words of my informants during data analysis.

4.9 Informal dialogues

Informal dialogues were held before and after observations, interviews, individual drawing and discussions with my informants. It was an important tool and technique in building rapport and refreshing with informants as I collected data informally. In the morning when I arrive at the centre I would hold informal dialogues with staffs and children before venturing into the task of the day for the study. The dialogues were held both in class and outside class. The conversations could start with topics that were not even related to my study but I would slowly introduce my study interest and proceed with the process of data collection. Adults informal dialogues focused on reasons why some children remained for extra time at the centre, children's play, learning and health care, and reflections on programs. With children informal dialogues focused on discussing the food they eat at the centre, reasons for staying for extra hours at the centre and their play at the old burnt cars.

4.10 My role in the field

From the first day of data collection, I strived to identify myself with roles that would give participants an opportunity to freely and fully participate in the study. As a novice researcher

in the field of childhood studies I had to assumed different roles during the study. In the early days of the study, the children and other people around the centre found it funny and illusion when they noted some of the roles I adopted. One of the role I adopted was that of ‘the least adult role’ (Christensen, 2004). I advised my informant from day one that they were experts of their personal experiences and no one else would have a better understanding of it apart from them. Despite playing the roles that were meant to make my informants feel free to express them and interact with me, I still remained an adult who was interested in learning from children and adults about their experiences of Centre Based ECCD. Hence, I also assumed the role of a learner. I recall one day when I was talking to a child at the centre, the child started laughing at me when I expressed ignorance on one of the songs she was singing. She said “so ba Aaron you don’t this song ‘*Ndundu Ndundu, ndu(knock! knock! knock!) Chaiwala, Chaiwala eh, chaiwala (special one! special one!) ... Child laughs, chaiwala ndu chwaila, chaiwala ndu...’...*”she laughed and later taught me the song and how they dance it. This empowered the child, realising that she can teach an adult researcher like me who was interested in their experiences.

Undertaking a study in the context where children are perceived as recipients of adult instructions and knowledge means that power differential very much exist. My study was conducted at an ECCD centre which has a school type of setting where children are under the custody of caregivers who give the children instructions, and resolve conflicts among children. Children sometime called me teacher and this made me feel like someone with so much authority over the children which would reinforce the power differential between us. To help redress or reduce the power imbalance as well as foster good and close relationship with the children, I doped the non-authoritarian role. I did not attempt to correct children when they did something wrong but referred matters of conflict among children to caregivers for immediate management. This role helped me become close to the children and they considered me as a friend such that whenever they saw me coming, they would run towards me and hug me, telling me what they wanted to do in that day.

I managed to create a friendly environment and relationship with the children because of the methods and techniques employed that empowered them to take control of the study as experts of their personal experiences and make me the researcher as a learner. The level of interaction between us and the trust built definitely made a difference in the whole process of the study.

4.11 Leaving the field

After completing my study with both children and adults, it was time for me to exit the field. In the last days of my study, I went to the ECCD centre less frequent as I was busy collecting data via policy and document analysis. I visited the centre and foundation's main offices and bid farewell to everyone. Saying goodbye to the people that I had spent time with and gotten used to was not an easy thing but I had to do it because my time to be in the field had come to an end. It was time for me to leave Zambia and return to Trondheim in Norway to continue with my academic studies. To bid farewell in a light moment, I organised a small party for the children to appreciate them for the time they spent answering my questions and doing drawings away from the normal daily schedules at the centre. The party was well timed as it was set for the last day of their term calendar. During the party, I explained to the children and caregivers that I had completed the mission for my visit and thanked them for being nice and supportive during my stay. Prior to the party, I visited the foundations secretariat to bid farewell and I was requested to make my report available to them after completing my studies. I promised to give them a copy of my thesis report once I was done with my Mphil childhood studies.

4.12 Data analysis and interpretation

The process of data analysis started in the field when I made observations, took notes, made reflections and held informal dialogues. The interviews conducted during fieldwork were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim and data was analysed qualitatively. Children's interviews were transcribed from vernacular to English. It is imperative to understand from onset that there are no prescribed procedures for doing qualitative data analysis therefore, I neither present a formula nor recipe of analysing qualitative data in this study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). However, data from the field was analysed using the thematic framework analysis approach which was employed to classify and organise data according to key themes, concepts, and emergent categories (Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003; Zulu, Kinsman, Michelo, & Hurtig, 2013). During the process of data collection, I took time to write some notes after making reflections on what was going on and aligned them with research themes. After completing my field work I transcribed my interviews verbatim. Then I developed codes and categories after a thorough process of reading the printed interview transcripts and repeated listening to the recorded interviews. Single words and short phrases that captured participant's views were developed and assigned as codes. Prior to

developing words and phrases for coding, participant's quotes or sentences that caught my attention were highlighted with colours. Categories in the data were derived from the review of participants' responses across the questions asked. The categories were cross checked with interview transcripts to ensure that they were corresponding with responses across the interviews. The process was very demanding as there were many themes emerging from the data that required to be put into similar or related groups. Research questions and participant's responses provided the base for developing categories. I concentrated on identifying, summarising, and retaining the patterns and similarities and differences on emerging data. Similar or related data were grouped together as categories which allows inter and intra category comparison during data analysis. Not only did I consider the similarities or how related data was, but also the commonalities that existed. The process of coding and categorising data was demanding due to the richness of data and the search for words and phrases that were used as codes. Later on, data from interviews were triangulated with other sources such as the information gathered through informal dialogues, observations, and individual drawings.

Over and above, individual drawings had been thoroughly analysed whilst in the field together with the children (informants). The Children were asked to interpret what was in the drawings and drawings were latter analysed according to the themes and organised them under relevant themes. Much attention was paid to children's narratives and interpretations on the drawings and Individual drawings illustrated children's experiences of play and learning.

The whole process of data analysis involved moving back and forth between data and summarizing similarities and differences identified in the data collected as well as my interpretation of what informant meant.

4.13 Ethical considerations

Ethics are important elements of every research. "The ethics of undertaking social research are complex but are particularly so when working with children" (Desai & Potter, 2006, p. 57). Ethics can be understood as sets of moral principles relating to what is right or wrong. In research they imply "the application of systems of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote good, to be respectful and to be fair" (Sieber, 1993, p. 14). Ethics were thought of during the planning process, in the field and after my field work. From the beginning when I arrived at the ECCD centre where I conducted my study, I

explained myself about how the extracted information from the study will be treated and how people's name will be protected. Key ethical issues that were central to this study with children included Access & informed consent, privacy & confidentiality and power differential.

4.13.1 Access & informed consent

My study involved young orphaned and vulnerable children aged 5-8 year who are under the custody of MECCDF and their parents/guardians. I needed to gain the co-operation from these 'gatekeepers' (Cohen et al., 2007; Fargas-Malet et al., 2010) to get access to the children. Therefore, I wrote an application letters for attachment to MECCDF and attached the ethical clearance form plus other document from the university. Besides, as earlier mentioned, information letters containing the research study details were sent to the parents/guardians of the sampled children requesting for their permission to allow their children to be part of the study and they all consented

Informed consent entails informing the research participants about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design as well as of any possible risks and benefits from participating in the research project

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 70)

In the process of obtaining consent, the children were not left out. Consent was obtained using a separate form (see appendix). Ennew (2009) argues that children must be informed and asked as individual and researchers must not rely on parents or teachers to say that consent has been granted. I explained to the children the details of the study; the topic, the purpose, methods to be involved and their right to withdraw so that they can make an informed decision. Boyden and Ennew (1997) and Ennew (1994) state that;

First gaining consent is vital, particularly when dealing with children. It is important that the details of the research are explained at a level understandable to the child so that they can make an informed decision to take part.

(Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Ennew, 1994 cited in Young & Barrett, 2001, p. 150)

After explaining the research details to them, 12 children consented without being forced to take part in the study. Fargas-Malet et al. (2010, p. 177) argue that "Informed consent should be freely given (without coercion, threat or persuasion) by children who can make an appropriately informed decision".

Overall Access to the children was facilitated by MECCDF whom at that time had the physical custody of the children and had a close link with children's parent/guardians who had the legal custody.

4.13.2 Privacy and confidentiality

Anonymity of names during the report writing and confidentiality of information obtained during the study were among the things that were highly considered and assured when explaining things to participants before and during the actual study. Privacy and confidentiality are aimed at protecting the participants taking part in the study. Fraser (2004) explains that confidentiality entails taking considerable care not to pass information to people connected to the respondent in whatsoever manner and letting out or disclosing information only in way that protect the identity of the source. Participants were assured that their real names will be replaced with pseudo names so that no one will be able to trace their identity. Besides, they were informed that the information gathered from them will be held in confidence. After the transcription of interview data, all the real names were replaced with pseudo names, interviews were erased from the digital voice recorder and the field notes were destroyed in accordance with the ethical requirements.

Obtaining exclusive private spaces was a challenge during the study. The research setting was a centre with a single room. The same room that was allocated for conducting interviews and drawings was the room where the other children accessed their drinking water and water for washing their hands. Besides, caregiver kept the medical kit and their daily essential. Therefore, time and again, children and caregivers would pop in and that would sometimes interrupt the children's interviews in process of data collection as participants would want to see what was happening on the other end of the room. Moreover, they would sometimes overhear our conversations. So whenever someone entered the room, I had to pause the interview recording though it prolonged the period of interviewing. In my views, the popping in of caregivers into the interview room was more to do with the security of the children since the children were left in their care. Alderson and Morrow (2011) argue that because of cultural values in the global south children are not allocated private or separate spaces hence making it difficult to maintain the privacy and confidentiality. Therefore, it was difficult to negotiate privacy and keep total confidentiality.

4.13.3 Power differential

Power differential was another ethical issue encountered during my study. This is due to the cultural values that exist in society where I undertook my study. Cultural values demand children to show respect for anyone who is older than them (Poluha, 2008 in Abebe, 2008). Desai and Potter (2006, p. 34) report that, “Whenever working across cultures, or within own culture, power imbalance between the researcher and the researched are common place”. The nature of my research setting enforced the power differential as children sometimes called me teacher Aaron just like they called caregivers who had authority over them like any other adult at the centre (Abebe, 2009). However, the rapport built and friendship fostered as well as the use of multiple participatory methods; drawings, observations, and informal dialogues helped in redressing and reducing power imbalance. As the research proceeded, children considered me as a friend even if they called me teacher it did not mean anymore but just as a given title.

4.14 Challenges and limitations

My study focused on the experiences of children and project staff (Adults) pertaining to Centre Based ECCD from an urban perspective. The main areas of focus in the study included children’s experiences of play, learning and health care as well as staff’s experiences of the ECCD program implementation.

There were 50 children enrolled at the centre and the challenge I had was picking 12 children out of 50 without creating a feeling that I was discriminating the remaining children. This forced me to engage all the children in Individual drawings though only 12 drawings were considered for my study.

The study was undertaken only at one ECCD centre and I could not generalise the results of the study to other context. Besides, it’s was difficult to find other organization that were implementing ECCD programs in an urban setting.

Time was also a limitation in the study. The empirical material of the study collected with a period of 2 months. Time could not allow me to look at the other broader aspects of ECCD and other emerging issues from interviews and discussions. Besides, I only had 1 month 2 weeks to collect data because the centre was preparing to go on a calendar break.

The other challenge to this study was to have everyone available for the focus group discussion with both children and adults. There are unforeseen circumstances that rose when members of staff that were supposed to be part of the discussion had to attend emergence

stakeholders meeting. It was something that was not planned. However, this did not prevent the discussion from happening but created a situation where the views of other participants were not captured.

Last but not the least, finding written material to review concerning ECCD in Zambia was a challenge. It was difficult to find published materials on ECCD and reports on research that has been undertaken hence the significance of this study in generating knowledge in urban based ECCD. However, international joint research report and other African context literature provided relevant related information on Zambia.

5 Chapter five: Experiences of children’s play, learning and healthcare

In this chapter I will analyse the experiences of children concerning play learning and health care. In this, I first focus on everyday life and daily routines, children’s everyday activities and social practices at the ECCD centre. Then the chapter will proceed with analysing the experiences of play, learning and health care from both children and adult perspective.

5.1 Everyday life and daily Routines at the Centre

This section presents an analysis of the children’s everyday life and daily routines at the ECCD centre. It gives the description of the everyday life of children that can be described as a typical weekday at the centre. As part of the study I sought to understand the everyday life with respect to what children do or the activities of the day from the time they arrive at the centre until the time when they go home.

Drawing on observations, school schedule, interviews, informal dialogues and practical experiences of children enrolled at the centre, the study revealed that a typical day of a child at the centre revolves or is organised around two major activities; play and learning. Chewe (M/8) narrated “when we come to school, we learn and write. We also draw and play”. The description that was given by both the children and caregivers concerning what children do at the centre highlighted play and learning as the two key activities. In Addition, all the children that took part in the study called the centre as a school. This indicates children’s perceptions of the centre as a school. Their perception of the centre could be attributed to their custodians sentiments who maybe referring to the centre as a school when they prepare them to come to the centre.

Everyday life at the centre is guided by a weekly written planned learning schedule show in table 5-1 below.

Table 5-1 Weekly learning Schedule at the centre

Day	Subjects		
Monday	Mathematics	B	Religious Education (RE)
Tuesday	English	R	Science
Wednesday	Creative art	E	Stories
Thursday	Social studies	A	English
Friday	English	K	Physical Education (PE)

Source: field work, July. 2013

Every day children start their program at 08:00 am and end their day at noon (12:00 pm). The weekly learning schedule dictates how a typical day at the centre will be and also shapes children's morning life at home. For instance, children leave their homes early in the morning with packed food in their lunch boxes. Some of the children explained that they eat their breakfast at home while some eat on their way to the centre in fear of being late for school. This signified how the centre shapes children's everyday life at homes. The study revealed that some of the children leave their home without food as they come to the centre. For instance, Jacob (M/6) narrated that "Me, I don't come with food. My friends come with the food and eat with them." Some of the children also shared the same view and Suwi (F/45¹¹) one of the members of staff narrated that "the challenge here is that sometimes the children come to the centre without eating. If you call the parents to ask why it is so, they will tell you 'I don't have money to buy food'".

The above remark reflects the poverty situation of some of the children's families and indicates the diversity of childhood experiences in Zambia. Some parents cannot afford to provide all the meals that a child may need in a particular day. However, that does not hinder children from coming to the centre and have experiences of early learning. Whilst making observation, I noticed that the children at the centre shared food among themselves. Those who had food gave part of their food to those who did not have. This gave me an indication that children at centre informally learn morals and values independent of adult intervention. They develop and embrace some of the values and morals concerning sharing which are embedded in the local practices of a typical Zambian tradition society. Their ability to act by sharing food when they realise that their friends have no food, demonstrate that children are social actors.

The dialogues held with the children indicated that this value of sharing gave some children encouragement to come to the centre the next day even when their parent could not provide for them. The children indicated that even if they came to school without food, they knew that they would find some friends that came with food and they would have something to eat. This suggests that ECCD provide an arena for informal learning where children develop relationships and learn empathy and generosity.

During break times I undertook informal dialogues with the children and some revealed that they were not living with their biological parents. For instance John (M/6) told me that his

11 The letters in the brackets represent sex of the participants; F-female and M-male while the number is age of the participant. the name outside the bracket are pseudo names ; do not represent the real names of participants

biological parents were deceased and the guardians he was living with were not working but doing a small business in a makeshift shop. The shop did not earn them much as such they could not give him money or food when coming to centre. This view was also shared by some of the children I talked to. The Children's narratives suggested that the impoverished life situation of some of their guardians/parents made it difficult for them to be given money or food when going to the centre. However, most of the children narrated living with their biological parents who managed to give them some money or food when coming to the centre.

As part of the everyday routine, some children are dropped at the centre every morning by their siblings and parents/guardians while others arrived together with their older siblings and friends. I also noted that the older children that had young siblings at the centre took up the responsibility of care and safety of their siblings. When coming to centre and going back home, the children would hold hands when crossing the road with the older children leading the way. This indicates how important child-child care is embedded in our traditional society. It reflects traditional practices that teach children at early stage of life to take up adult caretaking roles. In the vein, Nsamenang (2009) argues that sibling caretaking role is valued in African culture as it primes and facilitates children's transition into adult roles from an early age. Even at a tender age children seemed to switch between adult and child roles. Similarly, Punch (2003) presents the experiences of Bolivian children on how they switched roles by taking on adult responsibilities and their own age 'appropriate' role.

The children at the centre are left in the hands of adult trained caregivers who play the caring role and teaching children every day. When they arrive at the centre, they are received and directed into their classroom. Once they are in class, they take their bags in front and leave them with the care givers to keep for them. Then the children take up seats in readiness of what the day will offer them. Children's typical day at the centre can be divided into three major sessions; first class, break time, and second class activity as described in the subsequent sections below.

5.1.1 First class -indoor activity

The first part of the day at the centre starts with morning greetings. Every morning before proceeding with the lessons, children stand upright and greet the caregivers that they call 'teachers'. Standing upright when doing greetings in class is a symbol of respect for elders. This reflects the hierarchical power that exists between children and adults. Children are

expected to respect adults and greet them as embedded in the traditional culture. By so doing, children are being oriented to societal values where they are expected to develop morals and have respect for anyone that is older than them. Poluha(2008) state that “Children [in Africa] are expected to learn and to show adults great respect, and younger children should also respect their older siblings” (Poluha, 2008 cited in Abebe, 2008). These kinds of social practices are a reflection of the social construction of a ‘good’ child in the Zambian society. Greeting of elderly people has become a custom at the centre such that each time someone elderly comes to visits, children have to stand up and greet.

After the morning greetings children engage in a prayer which is usually guided by one child and the rest of the children recite it. Morning prayers are part of their religious education and immediately after the children finish reciting the prayer, the caregivers introduces the lessons for the day in accordance with the aforementioned weekly learning schedule (see table 5-1 above). Sometimes before the lessons start, children engage in singing and dancing. They do a few songs and dances, and then later the caregivers begin to teach the children in the first session¹². Prior to the break time, children once again engage in a prayer to bless the food they are going to eat. I observed and noticed that it did not matter whether one had food or not to pray, children were very confident when reciting the prayer. I believe the belief in the value of sharing food was a key factor to this confidence as children were very enthusiastic about going out for break. After finishing the prayer, children approach their caregivers to collect their food from the bags they leave with caregivers when they arrive at the centre. After collecting their food, the children run out of their classroom full of joy and enthusiasm. This situation suggested that children enjoyed and loved break time. Furthermore, it suggests how children appreciate environments and periods of time which are not organised by adults. Similarly, Blinkert(2004) argue that “Children value spaces that are free from adult sanctions and where they get a sense that they belong” (Blinkert, 2004 in Lester & Russell, 2010, p. 38).

5.1.2 Break time–outdoor activity

Break time usually means eating time, but this is not the case for children I researched with at the centre. Break time present children with an opportunity to both eat and play. In spite of the fact that children spend few hours at the centre, they do not spend the whole day learning until the time to go home. At 10:00 am children are allowed to break off from lessons to

¹² First session is the learning period before children’s break time. While the one after break is the second session.

partake of their food they bring from their homes. During break time, I noticed that children exercise the freedom of choice concerning the activities they want to engage in and decide whom they want to be with at that particular moment. The freedom of choice reflects children's participation rights enshrined in the children's rights conventions. "Children's play represents a primary form of participation, being interwoven into everyday life" (Meire, 2007 cited in Lester & Russell, 2010, p. ix). Not only do children share the power of freedom of choice but they are also supported to exercise this freedom by allowing them to play and make choices without adult interference.

The nature of play that children engage in at the centre is something I describe as free style play¹³. In this kind of play, there are no orders and strict rules that govern how children play contrary to what happens in the classroom where children have to follow the caregivers' instructions. Each child decides what he or she wants and how to do it. Therefore, I argue that free play empowers children to exercise their participation rights and also provide children with an opportunity to exercise their agency.

The children spend one hour in outdoor environment playing and partaking their meals during the break time session which ends at 11: 00 am in good time for the second class session.

5.1.3 Second class - indoor activity

This class session held after break is the last activity of the day before children go home at 12:00pm. Before the lessons begin, children engage in some activities such as dancing, singing, body shakes, and games to help them remain active for the rest of the hour. Figure 5-1 shows a photo of children and caregivers dancing and singing after children come from break and just before the last lesson session of the day begins. The aforementioned strategies invited children into the second learning session in accordance with the schedule of the day. Before going home at noon, the children once again engage in a closing prayer. Children's engagement in repetitive prayers reflects how religious teachings have been integrated in the everyday social practices at the centre. During



Figure 5-1 photo of children and caregivers dancing after break

¹³ By Free style play I imply mean unstructured rule less play where children as individual and groups engage in different play activities at the same time.

the study, the caregivers suggested that religious teachings like prayers help children know things about God and fearing him. In addition to fearing God, social practices that demonstrate children respecting the elders help them develop and embrace society morals that lead children into 'good' citizens/children. This suggests how ECCD informally shapes children into good citizens and learning norms that will help them adapt into society governed by norms. Therefore, I argue that being at the centre, adhering to tight schedule and centre rules, the greetings and respect for the elders and payers represents the construction of a 'good' child/citizen. "good citizens are children who conform to social norms and group behaviour defined as appropriate by the authority" (Aitken, 1994 in Holloway & Valentine, 2000a, p. 213)

After reciting a prayer, children collect their bags from the caregivers and run out of the class room and go home. The children are picked up by their parents/ guardians and older siblings. Likewise, those that happen to come to the centre with their older sibling also leave together to go home.

5.1.4 Children's everyday activities/ social practices

As noted earlier, children's everyday activities at the centre are mostly shaped by a written weekly timetable or schedule¹⁴ which is decided by caregivers. The schedule stipulates what children are supposed to learn on a particular day, how much time they have for play and so forth. However, caregivers sometimes do not always strictly follow the schedule. In between lesson they bring in play activities. Interviews held with staff revealed that on each day children learn different subject matters as show in the weekly learning timetable.

I noted that creative art is one of the subjects children participate in at the centre. It involves the use of locally available resources where children make different play objects. Clay is the mostly used material in this subject. Children's comments during discussions suggested that they enjoy taking part in this subject. They explained that creative art was something they also do at home.

In the subsequent paragraphs, I will present some of the common everyday practices and activities that children experience at the centre. It's worth mentioning here that despite children learning in the same room, learning at the centre has different focus for different age groups. For children aged between 6-8 years old, learning is focused on preparing children for formal school; learning the art of counting, writing, speaking English to mention a few

¹⁴ weekly learning planned schedule on page 59

while for children aged 3-5 years old, the focus is on play, drawings and somewhat alphabetical letter citing. The use of the same room is due to limited room facilities at the centre. The foundation does not own the building; it belongs to the local authorities.

Both children and adults shared similar views on the activities that children engage in at the centre. Kondwani (M/7) narrated that “when we come to school we learn how to write and draw and play. We play football. We also play with toys cars and dolls that are there... [Pointing at the boxes where the toys are kept].” The above remark indicates that play is one of the everyday activities that children engage in at the centre. The staff also narrated that children at the centre mostly learn through play which makes it a significant element of everyday activities at the centre. At the centre, children play with toys, dolls and different types of games that will be explained in the subsequent sections under the theme children’s play experiences.

Another important everyday activity at the centre is learning. Children learn how to write their names, naming things, counting, citing the alphabetical letters, drawings and colouring. Learning at the centre is conducted in both English and local (vernacular) languages such as *Chinyanja* and *Bemba*¹⁵. Interviews held with the caregivers explained that local languages are the mostly used at the centre because they believe that it is easier for children to understand English when they have initially had an experience of local languages. This understanding could have led the current government to pass a policy to introduce local languages in lower primary school than beginning with English from first grade including early childhood (LusakaTimes, 2014; Saluseki & Mulenga, 2014). Caregivers suggest that children grasp concepts in local languages faster which allow them to easily connect with English concepts.

Apart from learning and play, I noticed that children at the centre engage in religious education practices. In the morning before classes start, before break and before going home children have to conduct prayers. This can be attributed to Zambia being a Christian nation such that issues pertaining to Christianity cannot be excluded from everyday life and social practices at the centre. The observations made in the classroom suggest that children enjoyed taking part in prayers. The children competed amongst themselves to get the lead role in reciting the prayer.

¹⁵ *Chinyanja* and *Bemba* are two of the official local language in Zambia. *Chinyanja* is mostly use in the eastern and Lusaka province while *Bemba* is use in the northern and Copperbelt regions of the country.

5.2 Experiences of Play, Learning and Healthcare

The following sections provide the analysis of experiences of play, learning and health care from the children and adult perspective. I begin by looking at children's perspective of play at the centre where I present their understanding of play, the activities they engage in at the centre, their favourite games/activities, gendered play and children's agency in creating their own play experiences. Then I proceed by looking at children's learning and healthcare experiences. This section ends with a look at adult's perspective of aforementioned areas. As earlier explained in the methodological chapter, individual drawings that were employed in this study posed some challenges especially with younger children. The drawings were aimed at gathering children's views concerning the research subjects. However, children showed different capacities of expressing themselves with the older ones being very elaborate while the younger ones had very limited visual imaginary. Some young children's limited visual imaginary were demonstrated in the manner that they reproduced drawing that were hanged on walls of the hall in their classroom. Thus, Individual drawing were not only used as a method in this study but also as a technique; visual stimuli. The tool was triangulated with interviews and focus group discussions. Besides, some children during interviews had a tendency of giving short answers which meant there was need to probe more with follow up questions. For this reason, I decided to use long excerpts as displayed in the subsequent section to ensure that children's points were clarified and more information was gathered.

5.2.1 Children's Perspectives

5.2.1.1 Children's play

Play is one of the major activities that children engaged in at the centre. By children's play in this document I refer to physical and social activities and game activities¹⁶ that children engage in at the centre (Schwartzman, 1976). As part of the study, I sought to explore children's experiences of play at the ECCD centre. I wanted to gain knowledge of the play activities children engage in and their view point of play. When asked what they called play, children described a range of activities they engage in. For instance, Chimwemwe (F/6) explained that "play is like singing songs, playing with dolls, playing with toys". This view was shared by many children interviewed. Their perspective and understanding of play revolved around activities they do when they come to the centre. Children's understanding of play was similar to that of adults interviewed but their perceptions varied considerably.

¹⁶ Game activities refer to games and toys as well as other physical activities children engage as well as imitations (Schwartzman, 1976)

During individual drawings and interviews, I asked the children to describe what they do when they come to the centre. Figure 5-2 on the right is one of the drawings produced by a six years old participant that depict children everyday activities at the centre. Below is an excerpt of Chimwemwe (F/6)'s interpretation of her drawing;



Figure 5-2 Children's drawing of everyday activities at the centre by Chimwemwe (F/6)

Me: Tell me something about what is in the picture you drew?

Chimwemwe: There is a hand, a school, john playing football, children learning in class, a car the one outside and that's me standing here.

Me: You said there is a car, what is it doing there?

Chimwemwe: Boys play there.

Me: What else is in the picture that you drew?

Chimwemwe: A doll that I play with in class, here (pointing at the picture) we are going out for break with my friend.

Me: What about the hand there?

Chimwemwe: Sometimes we draw the hand. Teachers write on the board and we also write in our books

Me: Are these the only thing you do when you come to school?

Chimwemwe: no there are many [things]

Me: So tell me, what else do you do when you come to school?

Chimwemwe: Uh.We play in here (Class), singing songs, pray before break, playing with dolls, and others playing with toy cars....

The remarks in the above dialogues and those of others children indicate that when children come to the centre they engage in multiple activities which include play. Chimwemwe drew a boy playing football and a doll that she described to be playing with. The drawings produced by children mostly depicted peers in free play activities, and outdoor structures. Most of the drawings produced by most of the children portrayed and focused on outdoor play activities than learning activities just like Chimwemwe's drawing. Only 3 children out of 12 portrayed a class room set up with caregivers teaching them. This suggests that play is children's favourite activity at the centre.

Children's liking for play was also evident in the conversation held during interviews. Ruth (F/8) narrated that "when we come [to the centre], we learn, eat, and play with friends. We run around while holding each other and play. We also play *chidunu*¹⁷ (local game), and *kabisha-bisha* (hide and seek)".

Children's comments and my own observation during play time suggested that children enjoy free play time and a variety of games/ activities that they take part in at the centre. Children's play at centre took two faces; those initiated by caregivers and those initiated by the children themselves. Even though caregivers initiated play activities, children took control of the activity once they became familiar with its proceeding. Among the play activities/games that children engage in at centre include football, dancing, singing, *chikwempe* (skipping), *ichiyenga*¹⁸, *topa*¹⁹, playing with dolls and toys, *kabisha-bisha* (hide and seek), *chidunu*, *nsolo*²⁰, and other local games. Fridays and every day break time are most active play times at the centre. During break times, children enjoy high level of autonomy when it comes to the choice of games or activities, friends to be with, groups to associate with as compared to activities organised by adults where they have to abide by the rules set forth.

5.2.1.2 Children's favourite games and activities

There were a number of activities children talked about during the study. However, very few of the mentioned activities stood out as the ones they enjoy the most at the centre. In the focus group discussion, favourite games and activities at the centre were highlighted. The excerpt below is an extract from the focus group discussion held with the children.

Me: What do you like the most when you come to centre?

Chimwemwe (F/6): Me, teacher Aaron, Writing and drawing (*Kulemba*)

Mary (F/6): Singing, dancing, writing and drawing (*Kulemba*) and *waida*²¹.

Ruth (F/8): Playing football and *waida*

Jacob (M/6): Coming to school and playing football

Lameck (M/5): Playing football and touch game

¹⁷ Chidunu is a local game where one person is given the task of finding others who go in hiding. When he or she sees one of the friends in hiding has to count up to ten and will continue to do that until all are found. When all have been found, the first person to be seen gets the task of finding the others.

¹⁸ Ichiyenga is game that involves moving stones from hole and put them back intelligently while throwing one stone in the air and catching it before it drops. When moving stone back in the hole, the play is not allowed to touch or shake one stone that will remain after all the stone have been put back in the hole.

¹⁹ topa is a local game that involves singing and jumping on one leg while holding the let up

²⁰ Nsolo is a local game that involved moving stones intelligent from one hole to another whilst counting.

²¹ Waida is local game where girls use elasticated robs one at one end and the other one at the other end. the two rap around the waist while the one in the middle will lifting the leg entangling herself each time the two holding it lift it high.

Maria (F/7): Playing football and *chikwempe*

Chewe (M/8): Playing *ichiyoto* (also known as *ichiyenga*), writing and drawing (*Kulemba*)

Boris (M/7): Playing with toys and playing football

Gertrude (F/5): Playing with toys and *chikwempe*

Musa (M/6): Playing football, writing, drawing (*Kulemba*), and chidunu

Kondwani (M/7): Playing games and football

During one-to-one interviews, children also expressed the liking of the same activities and games. Therefore, the findings suggest that children mostly enjoy play at the centre. Among the activities that children enjoy most playing include football, *waida*²² and *chikwempe* children also explained that they enjoyed '*Kulemba*' (writing and drawing). In my view, children enjoy these play activities because they are very familiar to them as they also do them in their homes and neighbourhood when they are not at the centre.

This is not to say that they do not enjoy doing the other activities in which they took part. For instance the singing and jumping to the song *amama banityola kwendo* (oh mama, they have broken my leg) where children lifted one leg while jumping with one and also the play of let us make a big circle and let us make a small circle sent children in a lot of excitement when they participated. Football is one of the most favourite games liked by both boys and girls though it is a boy dominated activity and similar finding were reported by Punch (2003) among the Bolivian children. Children's liking for football was evident in the choices they made when asked what they wanted to play during physical education on Fridays. Most of them opted to play football and got very excited when caregivers produced the soccer jerseys.

The Children's actions and comments suggest enjoyment of playing football. When playing football, children associate themselves with popular football players by calling themselves by names of those popular players in the country and overseas. The liking for football can be attributed to Zambia being a footballing nation and the influence of television when the national broadcaster airs major football tournaments. The excitement expressed by children, their comments and play experiences on the playground suggest that children perceive play as fun. In relation to children's favourite activities, my findings coincide with Matafwali (2007)'s findings that play and learning are the favourite activities in ECCD centre in Zambia. In contrast to Matafwali finding on children's preference for learning, my findings

suggest that children have preference for play over learning. Based on the triangulation of data source; interviews, focus group discussion and individual drawing that mostly depicted outdoor structure and activities than indoor activities, it was revealed that play is the most like and preferred activity by the children at the centre. Similar findings were report in Ghana (Adjei, 2012) and in England (Ceglowski, 1997). Furthermore, based on a case study school, Kernan (2007) argues that the majority of the junior Infant pupils report play as most favourite thing at school and in particular free play. By citing many scholars in the field of childhood, Kernan further report that

National and international studies indicate that children at the transition from early to middle childhood years value free-time and the spontaneity and freedom of play outdoors in contrast to the predominant character of their school day which they view as being under adult control and surveillance.

(cf. Corsaro,2005; Devine, 2002: Mayall, 2002, in Kernan, 2007, p. 7).

5.2.1.3 Gendered play on the playground

During the study, children at the centre showed some gender²³ differences and preference regarding play. As mentioned earlier under the theme everyday life and daily routines at break time, children played in small groups according to their sex; boys on their own and girls on their own. Even the activities children engaged in hinted some gender differences and preferences. For instance, the boys spent time playing with the old burnt cars that they imagined they were driving while girls played *chikwempe* or *waida*²⁴. Interviews held with children also revealed children's perception of certain activities in relation to gender. Kondwani (M/7) narrated that "we play with toy cars when we come here. Girls play with dolls" and Gertrude (F/5) also stated "we girls play *chikwampe*²⁵ (skipping) and *waida*. But we also play football. When we are in class we play with dolls and the boys play with toy cars."

The above remarks reflect children's gender awareness and division in play spaces. Most of the children shared the same views when they were asked about what they like playing. Girls perceived toy cars as suitable for boys while dolls as suitable for girls. The boys also had similar perceptions. Similarly, Roopnarine, Johnson, and Hooper (1994) in their book *children play in diverse culture* state that boys and girls play evolves separate type with girls

23 Gender " to refer to cultural and social phenomena- divisions of labour, activity, and identity which are associated with but not fully determined by biological sex." (Thorne & Luria, 1986, p.176)

25 *chikwempe* is a local name for a skipping game where two children hold a long rope at each end and wipe it round while either one or two others jump the rope

playing with dolls while boys construct or replicate 'modern' objects like cars and trucks, military weapons and vehicles.

However, when some children initiated other play activities like let us make a big circle and let us make a small circle at break time, gender differences and play became less defined. The children could abandon their gendered grouping and play activities and join others. During this activity, children freely mixed and played together. Therefore, I deduced that gendered play in ECCD centres is instantaneous, momental and contextual; one minute, the children are playing according to their sex, another minute they are playing together (mixed gender). Children's experiences of playing football, let's make a big circle and let us make a small circle²⁶ at the ECCD centre attest to children's demonstration of momental and contextual gendered play. In addition, the tendency to switch between play activities without hesitation demonstrates that play is instantaneous when it comes to gender division. Similar findings were reported by Thorne and Luria (1986, p. 178) in elementary schools in the United States and they argued that:

Gender segregation is not total. Snapshots of school settings would also reveal some groups with a fairly even mix of boys and girls, especially in games like kickball, dodge ball, and handball, and in classroom and playground activities organized by adults. Some girls frequently play with boys, integrating their groups in a token way, and a few boys, especially in the lower grades, play with groups of girls

Therefore, children's gendered play is not permanent but fluid; changes depending on the situation. This demonstrates that gendered play and division are also contextual. When children played structured activities like football where caregivers (adults) controlled the events, gender differences became very minimal or less defined. Children had to abide by adults rule on the playground. However, even under the control of adults, I could still observe gender differences when either a boy or girl challenges their counterpart. When celebrating the challenge, the boys or girls could do a high five with a colleague of the same sex. Gender differences were more defined or prominent when children engaged in free style play because they had the freedom to choose whom they want to play with and how they wanted to play. Thorne and Luria (1986, p. 178) share the same view about boys and girls in elementary school and argue that;

The separation of girls and boys in friendships and casual encounters - is central to daily life in elementary schools. A series of snapshots taken in varied school settings would reveal extensive

²⁶ Let make a big circle and let's make a small circle is a game children play in a circle. they move in and out of the circle while holding hands

spatial separation between girls and boys. When they choose seats, select companions for work or play, or arrange themselves in line, elementary school children frequently cluster into same-sex groups

This section attested to the fact that gendered play exists among young children in early learning centre. The gender differences that exist among children in the early learning centre are momental and contextual because children frequently change groups they belong to depending on the kind of games they play.

During break time, age did not matter in the way that children grouped. Their groupings were not influenced by adults but the children themselves made choices whom to be friend with and play with at that time.

5.2.1.4 Children's agency in creating their own play experiences and social relations

Agency was analysed in relation to children's life situation in an environment or on the playground that has inadequate or limited play space and no play facilities. In addition, I analysed agency in relation to children's social relations; creation of relations, choice of whom to play with and which group to belong to on the play grounds.

With regard to the life situation in an outdoor environment characterised by limited play space and lack of play facilities, children demonstrated their ability to think and act independently and used their initiative to create their own play experiences. At break time when boys come out of the classroom, they would go into an old burnt car situated a few metres away in front the class and imagined they were driving it as they played. Even the girls I talked to during the study were very aware that boys use the burnt cars for playing. For instance, Lucy (F/7) narrated "Boys also get into that car outside (pointing to the old burnt car outside the class room) and drive it". I argue that the children's (boys) use of old burnt cars demonstrated children's creativity and resourcefulness in creating their own play experiences.

In addition to boys creativity and resourcefulness during break time, both boys and girls engaged in free style play in which they exercised agency in choosing whom to play with and which group to belong. Children made choices on their own without adult interference.

5.2.1.5 Children's learning experiences and perspectives

To gather information about children's experiences and perspectives of learning at the centre, interviews, informal dialogues and observation were employed. The observations made

indicated that children at the centre learn through play, songs and direct instruction from caregivers. At break time, I held dialogues with some children to explore why they were attending the early learning centre's activities. The children shared with me what they want to be when they grow up and after finishing school. Their comments suggest that they perceive learning as 'good' and as an upward career 'trajectory' or means to meet their future aspirations such as becoming doctors, teachers, police officers and drivers. They believe that these aspirations will position them to help their parents and siblings in future. Similarly, Serpell (1993) argue that younger children in Zambia regard schooling primarily as a vehicle or way of gaining access to formal-sector employment. Children's perception could be attributed to their parents' influence concerning what they want them to be when they grow up.

When asked what they learn when they go to the centre, children gave several response as show in the excerpt below.

Me: Tell me something about learning, what do you learn when you come to school?

Chimwemwe (F/6): We do learn about writing and drawing (*Kulemba*) and colouring....teacher writes on the board and then we write those things (Pointing to some of the works in class) in our books.

Ruth (F/8): We write and draw (*Tima lembe*) cars, pan, people, the sun, the moon, cattle, house, and the dog. We also learn mathematics. Some of the things we do them on our own, but many things are instructed by our teachers.

Mary (F/6): When we come to school we write and draw (*tima lembe*) people, houses, fish bananas and apples.

Musa (M/6): We write and draw (*tima lembe*) numbers and letters, cars, houses, people and many things.

The comments made by the children suggest that children's learning at the centre revolve around writing, drawings, colouring, and reading, citing the alphabetical order, naming things, and counting. Caregivers play a significant role in children learning at the centre; they instruct what children do, and they decide what is to be learnt on a particular day. During the discussions and interviews with children, I constantly noted children's use of the word '*Kulemba*' that can be translated as writing in English. However, children's use of the concept had multiple meaning. They used the same word to mean both writing and drawing. It occurred to me that children have limited vocabulary which sometimes makes them find it difficult to use exact words in certain situations. Drawing in Zambia language has its own

word different or separate from the word writing. In Bemba drawing is *'Ukelenga'* while writing is *'Ukulemba'* and in Chinyanja writing is *'Kulemba'* while drawing is *'Kulenga'*. Children's failure to differentiate words that mean writing from drawing by using *'Kulemba'* can also be attributed to caregiver's limitations to the use of local words when instructing children. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that caregivers should have a strong conceptual understanding of local words if children are to build a strong understanding of local languages that they translate into foreign concepts like English.

With regard to the language of instruction at the centre, children narrated that they learn both in local languages and some English. They expressed satisfaction with how caregivers taught them in local languages since they are conversant with it. During classes, I noticed that the level of participation was minimal for some children when English was used but whenever a caregiver used vernacular the level of participation was almost total. This suggests that the use of local languages is appreciated by children. Besides, the children themselves use vernacular at home and at break when talking to friends at the centre which makes the use of local languages important in early learning centre. It empowers children to participate during lessons. Therefore, I argue that the use of English in early learning centres may have serious implication for children that lack exposure thus it may become a source of social stratification among children within the centre.

5.2.1.6 Children's health care

Health care²⁷ is an important element of ECCD and plays an important role in determining the health life of children. Daniels (2001, p.2) argues that "Healthcare (including public health) is special because it protects normal functioning, which in turn protects the range of opportunities open to individuals." children's drawing and interviews revealed a number of healthcare service children access at the centre. Below is an extract from Chimwemwe's interpretation of the figure 5-2 on page 67 of this chapter.

Me: What about this small house in the corner?

Chimwemwe: that's a clinic

Me: What about the clinic, do you go there?

Chimwemwe: I go there when am sick... Sometimes they give me medicine.

²⁷ Healthcare is the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease, illness, injury, and other physical and mental impairments in humans (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_care). For the purpose of this document shall imply treatment and prevention of diseases, provision of food (feeding program) and children's growth monitoring

Me: What kind of medicine do they give you?

Chimwemwe: Sometimes for deworming and injections too.

Me: Do you like it?

Chimwemwe: Uh...i fear injections, but I like the other medicine, the one for deworming.

Me: Why do you like it?

Chimwemwe: I don't get sick from worms in the stomach.

In the above dialogue, like other children, Chimwemwe expressed knowledge about the preventive healthcare services the centre offers. The study indicated that children at the ECCD centre have access to healthcare services; growth monitoring and disease prevention through immunization. However they are not on the feeding program since the organization quit the program due to non-availability of funding. Consequently, children come with their own food from home. As mentioned earlier, Maria (F/7) also narrated that “I come with food from home. My mom makes it for me”. This view was shared by the majority children that I interviewed. The non-availability of feeding program has some implications for children who come from very poor families. This means that they will continue to depend on other children whose parents afford to give them food or money when coming to the centre. Like the earlier case of Jacob (M/6), he depends on friends and relatives at break time because his parents do not give him food when coming to the centre. During classes, I observed and noted that the children who shared their experiences of having no food when coming to centre, showed low levels of participation. However, they became active during break time.

With regard to the provision of health care services, child narrated having had access to healthcare services. The provision of healthcare service has been an integral part of the programs run by the foundation in its entire centres including the one in Garden. During the interviews Ruth (F/8) explained that “Doctors come to the next room at the clinic. Once they came here and gave us some medicine for deworming.... I liked it because it prevents us from being sick in the stomach.” Most children that had been at the centre for some years shared the same view and were much aware of the healthcare services the centre offered and knew the significance of the treatment they were receiving from Doctors when visited. Very few children narrated to have had no access to health care services. This was attributed to the fact that they had joined the centre recently.

5.2.2 Adult's (Staff) Perspectives

This study did not just focus on children's perspectives pertaining to play learning and healthcare, adults' view point was also taken into account. Data was gathered through individual interviews, informal dialogues and FGDs from 5 staffs. The aim was to get their (adult) perspectives on children's play, learning and health care. The staff's comments suggested satisfaction with children's experiences of play, learning and healthcare at the centre. They also revealed that at the centre children's engaged in multiple activities such as creative art, dancing and singing, play, writing and drawing just to mention a few that meet their needs. The staff's remarks also suggested that play and learning were two interwoven activities as well as learning and healthcare such that concentrating on one was difficult because the two complement each other in giving children a unique experience at the centre.

5.2.2.1 Children's Play

Everyday life of the children at the centre revolves around play as children at the centre learn through it and have their needs met. Not only does play contributing to meeting children's physical needs but also plays a key role towards the children's intellectual abilities, social and physical development. Matafwali (2007, p. 8) states that “ play is an important vehicle for children's social, emotional, and cognitive development, as well as a reflection of their development”. Therefore, play cannot be excluded or ignored in early learning centres.

As part of my study, I wanted to gain knowledge concerning play from the adult's perspective. When asked about their understanding of play and its significance, the staff explained play in term of activities and games that children engage in at the centre. For the staff, play itself signifies freedom to children as well as the socialization. The Significance of play was situated in the role it plays in children's physical growth, learning and development as well as its contributions to the others areas of children needs or childhood domains. Dorothy (F/32) explained;

Play, I think in the Zambian context, we have those different games that teach different things; we have games that teach counting, stories which teach morals, we have games that help the child grow physically. That is through play. When they are playing with the building blocks, they are learning how to coordinate and put things together. Play also helps to coordinate and balance. So the play they use is supposed to target certain development domains not just playing. It should be able to help if it's the intellectual part, emotional part, social part, and the physical and that's the play that is supposed to be at the centre.

Furthermore, Suli (F/28) defined play in term of interaction and explained that “Play is mainly interaction with other people. You get to interact with friends. In short you socialize”.

The above comments made by the staff suggest the difficulties associated with defining play as there is no universally agreed definition of play (Schwartzman, 1976). However the staff’s comments suggests that play relates to the activities that children engage in which are contextual. Schwartzman (1978, p. 4) argue that “perceptions of play are intimately related to one’s culture.” and Boushel et al. (2000, p. 57) also state that [play] is a cultural concepts and means different things to different people” .

In his book children’s games and play in Zambia, Mtonga highlights how difficult it is to define play. He provides a general definition that scholars share which refer play to “ a wide range of activities that individual participate in willingly and a list of games, sport, imitative and creative activities, exploration, joking and make-believe as a prime example.” (Harris & park,1983; Bruner, Jolly, Sylva,1976; Herron & Sutton-Simith,1971 in Mtonga, 2012, p. 16).

From the adult perspective, it was very clear that the significance of play cannot be overemphasised when it comes to children’s learning despite some children parents underestimating its importance. The staff interviewed explained that children need time to play because it helps them to interact with friends (socialize) and enhances their intellectual, emotional, social and the physical development. Suli (F/28) explained the importance of play by saying that;

Play is important in the sense that it stimulates [children’s] physical growth and also their emotion growth. It’s important for children because they interact with their friends, they will know how to relate with people. They will get to develop in terms of balancing up through the same games they play

Despite the importance attached to play on the lives of children, the staff bemoaned lack of appreciation and acceptance among some parents. Dorothy (F/32) explained;

I think the challenge we have is the understanding because even us we have a challenge where the parents for the children attending our centre say, ‘Iam just wasting time bringing this child [here], when they come here they just play. This child can’t even write’. Because for them [parents], they want them [children] to start writing’, to know science and whatever [they expect the child to learn]. So the understanding of ECCD is what has been a challenge for Zambia.

This view was shared by all the staff in the study. Their remarks suggested a lack of appreciation by parents concerning what play does in the life of children which contrast

children's perceptions of play as fun. For The staff play is perceived as learning and a pedagogical tool; a way of learning to count, good morals, teaching and coordination In contrast, the comments made by staff about parent's perception of play suggest that they perceive play as waste of time. Parents expect children to focus on formal learning that defined their future in which they also see family benefit. Similar finding were reported in Ghana (Adjei, 2012). Furthermore, Lester and Russell (2010, p. ix) argue that " adults' attitudes towards children's play vary: some ignore it, or dismiss it as a waste of time; some curb play as something dangerous or subversive, while others appropriate it as a learning or socialisation mechanism".

In my view, the ECCD centres appear to be very new or alien to some people in Zambia. The centres are mistaken for pre-school centres which in nature are formally organized and whose focus is mainly on school readiness. Dwelling on the staff's comments about parents perception of play, I deduce that parents see children's attendance of ECCD as the beginning of formal learning and start of a child's bright career which should manifest in term of formal activities such as knowing the art of writing, speaking English to mention a few. Thus, this lack of acceptance and appreciation of play when employed in ECCD centres on part of the children's parents. Like many African countries, the focus on formal schooling in Zambia can be traced back to the colonial era (Marfo & Biersteker, 2011). In addition, ECCD in Zambia lacks local practices that people can identify with and lack of policy to guide what should constitute ECCD contributes to people perception of ECCD centres in relation to pre-schools and formal schools. Tizard and Hughes (2008) share similar findings concerning perception of play and state that parents are often puzzled by or even hostile to priority given to play in early learning centres

Furthermore Dorothy (F/32) added that;

From the age especially those that come to the centre, from 3 to about 8 the only way they learn is through play. And I think it has been proved scientifically because of their low concentration levels. Because they can't sit for a long time teaching them how to read and write, they will get bold: so the play is for a purpose. As the caregiver is doing that it should enhance one part of development.

Above remarks indicate that play is used at the centre because of the role it play in different development domains of the child (hood). It promotes socialization and stimulates active participation of children in centre activities. During interviews, the staffs further disclosed that children play in both outdoor and indoor environments when they are at the centre.

With regard to children favourite games and activities, staffs shared the similar accounts with children. They also revealed children's liking for football, waida, chikwempe, writing and drawings (learning and play). Their comments also suggested children's preference for play. To emphasise children likes for play activities, Suwi (F/45) narrated "children sometimes refuse to go home ... especially if they are playing football they don't even want to go home. They will be like 'teacher no! no! no, we want to play'". Some say when they go home they don't do anything".

The above remarks, suggest that children enjoy more play time when they are at the centre. This can be attributed to the fact that when children are at home their parents engage them in a number of errands that disrupt their play games and activities. This does not imply that children do not find time to play when they are at home. However, ECCD centres offer them an opportunity to use the materials that most of the children's homes cannot afford. Suffice to mention here that the children recruited at the centre are orphaned and vulnerable children. Most of them have parents that cannot afford to buy the toys and other material the centre offers. Hence, when the children are at the centre, they have an opportunity to use the available materials.

5.2.2.2 Children's Learning

Learning is one of the major activities children do at the centre. As earlier mentioned, learning and play are two interwoven activities at the centre. Therefore they both form an integral part of everyday activities that children encounter at the centre. When I asked the staff what children learn at the centre Suwi (F/45) narrated;

At the centre, they have creative art, they have singing time, and usually most of the learning is through play and songs. They draw, they colour, they play outside, they mould. So it's not really about them doing the actual writing and actual reading. Usually the activities are done through play and songs. They learn how to write, how to sing alphabet letters ABDC...to Z and know how to count and read. Sometimes I write on the board even if it's 2 and put some dots and they start repeating what you wrote.

The above remarks indicate that that songs and play are the key strategies the centre uses when teaching children at the centre. The learning is done through play and songs which are combined with direct instructions from care givers. Tizard and Hughes (2008) state that play is generally regarded the educational context per excellence of the early years of learning. The staff suggested that learning through songs last long in children's memory and through play not only do children have funny but also acquire the necessary skill associated with child

development. For instance, they narrated how children learnt so fast and remembered alphabet letter through a song. The staff highlighted that children at the centre learn among other things drawing, writing, counting, reading, citing the alphabetic order creative art (moulding) which are important elements for preparing children for formal school. It was clear from the staff's comments that learning for children aged 6 and 7 at centre was more skewed or oriented towards preparation for formal (primary) school. During the interviews, Dorothy (F/32) explained;

They [Children] learn through play. We also have books, and a board and chalk; they learn how to write numbers especially those that are almost going to primary school from six to eight. They learn how to write their names, they learn how count from 1 up to 10, naming like different types of animals we have, you know such things that will prepare them for primary schools.

The above comments indicate that as children become older (6-8), the focus of attention changes and becomes more of coaching children to adapt to formal kind of learning. The children at centre not only learn how to count or ready, but also learn about morals. During the study, I noticed that learning at the centre is a combination of spiritual, academic, play, creative art, storytelling and others aspects that are important and contribute to various domains of child development. Dorothy (F/32) stated that;

They [Children] learn morals. When I talk about morals they learn that Zambia being a Christian nation, they learn that there is God and that is through prayer. I think they learn to respect one another, they learn how to count, they learn how to name things, and they also learn how to read. Yeah! They also learn how to say things like thank you, sorry and so forth.

The above comments suggest a construction of a 'proper' or 'good' child by adult. They expect children to show morals; fearing and respecting God and elders as well as showing appreciation by learning to say thank you.

Regarding the language of instruction, the staff interviewed shared the same view with children. They revealed that in all the activities that children learn at the centre caregivers employ both local languages (*Chinyanja and Bemba*) and somewhat English. However, *Chinyanja* is the language mostly used at the centre. This is attributed to *chinyanja* being the formal language used in the capital city. When asked why staff used more vernacular language over English, Bridget (F/40) explained;

When you use the local language the child will understand, because that is someone's mother tongue. The child will understand it better than where you are just using English which is a foreign language but if you use their language even when you are showing them something, they

will be able to understand it better. Even in maths, they understand better when you use *Chinyanja*.

The above remarks by the Staff suggested that children's level of understanding is better when caregivers use local languages to teach them before introducing English concepts. It was a general shared view among staffs that children in early learning centre grasp and understand things better through the use of local languages as it gives them the connection of things they know already. Similarly, Brooker and Woodhead (2010, p. 35) argue that "for young children starting school or preschool, learning in their first language or mother tongue provides the link which enables them to build on their prior knowledge and gain in knowledge and skills". I also noticed that when care givers used English the level of participated dwindled among children something that gave me an indication that children preferred learning in vernacular than English.

5.2.2.3 Children's Health care

As part of the study, I sought to gain knowledge of the healthcare services the centre provided to children and how these services were provided. The staff at the ECCD centre indicated that healthcare was one important component of ECCD. Because of the importance attached to healthcare, the centre through Mulumbo Early Childhood Care and Development Foundation (MECCDF) has established a good working relationship (network) with the Ministry of Health to ensure that children have access to free health care services. Suffice to say, this ECCD centre is strategically located next to the health centre which makes it easy to know of the healthcare programs running at a particular period of the year and for the children to access health care services.

When asked what health care services the centre was offering and how it was offering them to the children, Dorothy (F/32) explained;

Our caregivers are not experts; they are not trained expert in medical issues, so we work with the health centres. So when there is child health week activities, our children go to the (health) centres where there are trained health personnel who conduct these activities like immunization and deworming. We have a good networking with the health clinic so when they have the child health week, they [children] go for growth monitoring, then deworming and vaccination. Sometimes we are provided with scales and those rulers so that can be measure children's heights.

These comments indicate that the centre offers preventive healthcare. The preventive healthcare services offered include immunization, growth monitoring and deworming which

are of paramount importance in ECCD programming because they promote good health and contribute to the positive development of the child. Thapliya (2002) also Shares the similar view on the importance of healthcare and argues that good health care is a fundamental human right and it plays a critical role for survival, optimum growth and development of children thereby fulfilling that purpose of ECCD and that is having a positive effect on child's developmental status.

In order to ensure that children have access to free healthcare services, the above remarks reveal the importance of networking. The staffs explained that they have established networks with the Ministry of Health which is mandated by the government to provide healthcare services to children for free. Not only does the centre work with Ministry of Health but also involve parents in the process of providing healthcare to the children. The centre is constantly in touch with the parents of the children and encourages them to take their children for under five clinics. It undertakes a number of activities that ensures that parent are involved in the provision of healthcare services. Bridget (F/40) explained that

The caregivers talk to the parents [of the children], they sensitize the parents so that they can allow their children [to take part in healthcare programs]. For now it is just the normal under five [healthcare services] they ensure that parents take their children for [under five healthcare programs].

The above remarks suggest that parents/guardians play an important role in ECCD. They are the legal custodian of the children and their involvement and awareness of the value of ECCD services is likely to yield great results in ECCD. They have the power to either allow or stop children from participation in ECCD programs. Thus, their involvement in ECCD is vital. Evans (1993, p. 19) shares the similar arguments on the importance of parents in healthcare for the children;

since parents are the policy makers in most areas of their children's lives, their involvement in the design and operation of an early childhood care and development centre increases the likelihood of continuity of experience between the home and school for the child. This same argument is being made for parental and community involvement in the implementation and management of child care programmes in developing countries. The general consensus is that the greater the level of community involvement, the more likely it is that the programme will meet community needs and become an integral part of community life.

If parents are to be flexible and accept to allow their children to participate in ongoing programs, they must be informed and involved.

Drawing on staff comments above, it is clear that children's experiences of healthcare involve growth monitoring, check-ups, vaccination and deworming. The staff also explained that they teach children how to maintain hygiene both at the centre and at home. Suwi (F/45) stated;

We teach children on health matters especially on subject of science, we tell them to live a hygienic life and caution them about cholera. We advise them to wash their hands with soap after leaving the toilet not to just go straight on to eat. We also advise to wash hands after eating and also remove the plate after eating rather than leaving them dirty. We also talk about bathing and looking clean and cutting hair. Actually at the times when children are coming here, you can see the way they look, through our teaching you will notice some change, for example, if the child was not bathing, you start to notice some change an indication of the difference from the time the child was in the compound and now at school.

The above comments made by staff suggest that health talks on hygiene have been an integral part of healthcare services at the ECCD centre. Their comments further suggest that health talks promote positive change among the children. Caregivers explained that health talks with children have been yielding positive results as they noted some changes among children in terms of bathing, clothing to mention but a few. The ECCD services rendered at the centre suggest an Edu-care approach²⁸. The centre is not only concerned with children's learning or the provision of education, but also put care as an integral part of ECCD provision hence making the two intertwined. Therefore, you cannot really draw a distinctive line or meaningful distinction between care and education for young children (Smith, 1993).

²⁸ By Edu-care approach entails no education without care. Not ignoring one of the two in the provision of ECCD

6 Chapter six: Experiences of implementing ECCD program

This chapter presents the analysis of the staffs' experiences of implementing Centre Based ECCD programs. It begins by looking at the benefits of ECCD and the recruitment of children on the program. In the follow up section, it presents an analysis of the application of the UNCRC and ACRWC in the implementation of ECCD and how Centre Based ECCD program ensure that children's needs are met and that their rights are ensured. This is followed by how the Foundation running the centre ensures continuity of ECCD activity both at the centre and children's homes. The chapter also presents local cultural practices that have been incorporated in the ECCD program at the ECCD centre. Thereafter, proceeds with staffs' reflections on ECCD policy in Zambia and examine what inform ECCD practices. The chapter end with a look at the challenges the staff face in implementing centre based ECCD at the centre.

6.1 Why Early childhood Care and Development (ECCD) for Zambia

This section presents an analysis of the benefits of ECCD from the urban setting or perspective. Data for analysis was drawn from interviews, focus group discussions, with adults and informal dialogues with children and adults as well as observations. ECCD has been perceived as a foreign practice by some people in Zambia and Hyde and Kabiru (2003) view the influence of western culture on African Centre Based ECCD as a source of concern. They argue that some of the western culture that have infiltrated into local practice of ECCD are sometimes not relevant to the needs of the children and society. As a result, the local people fail to identify themselves with some of the practices which in my view can be attributed to lack of local conceptualization of ECCD.

As part of the study, I sought to gain knowledge on the benefits of ECCD to Zambia from the people that have experiences of implementing such programs. All the staff that participated in the study had vast experiences and long years of implementing ECCD from both urban and rural settings. Their remarks indicated that ECCD is important to Zambia in a number of ways despite the challenges that need to be addressed if the full benefits are to be realised. The benefits of ECCD revealed by the study relates to empowerment of women, promoting school readiness and child protection. These benefits can be grouped into two major categories: manifest function; children's school readiness and latent function; parenting vs. livelihood and enhancing child protection.

6.1.1 Manifest Function of ECCD –Direct Benefits

6.1.1.1 Promoting school readiness

Promoting Children’s school readiness is one of the intended reasons staff remarked and justified why ECCD is beneficial to Zambia. They emphasised that it plays a significant role in improving the social, physical, psychological and intellectual abilities of children thereby enhancing their readiness for formal schooling. It also helps children to develop a high level of self –assurance and confidence. Dorothy (F/32) explained the effects of ECCD on children and remarked that;

The first things are that when the children are enrolled at our centres, they learn to be assertive. They develop social skills, because they interact with different children. They are also confident because they are able to speak in class and they are able to ask the teacher questions. They are also prepared for primary school because it’s not difficult when it comes to go to primary school... They learn how to write their names, they learn how to count from 1 up to 10, naming like different types of animals we have, you know such things that will prepare them for primary schools

The above remarks highlight my informants’ observation and reflection on the importance of ECCD. They suggest that children that pass through ECCD centres develop or acquire skills that enhance their writing, speech and level of peer interaction. I also observed and noticed that children at the centre asked caregivers very intelligent questions and expressed themselves with a lot of confidence which is pivotal in children’s formal school when they transition from ECCD centres. In the same vein, Young Lives research reports that [early learning centres] are seen as a place where children may acquire knowledge that will be further developed at primary school, such as letters and numbers and skills necessary for writing and counting (Ames, Rojas, & Portugal, 2009) and Matafwali (2007) also shares the similar argument.

During data collection children also showed a high level of control of what they were doing and even when they wanted to know what I was doing at the centre, they asked me bold and intelligent questions. Furthermore, Suwi (F/45) added that “when children come here, they change. Even when a child goes to a government school, they [the school teachers in primary schools] appreciate us so much and they say that the children [from our centres] are intelligent”.

It was clear from the staff’s remarks that one of the key focuses of ECCD has been that of preparing children for formal schooling. This is also evidenced on the emphasis that National

development plans and education policy puts on ECCD which is skewed towards the provision of education. The staff in my study indicated that the children that have passed through ECCD centres portray greater signs of intelligence, social interactions, which gives them an edge over others that have no experience of ECCD when it comes to enrolment in formal schools. Based on research in Jamaica, Peru, Colombia and Turkey, Young and Mustard (2008) also report similar findings and state that children that have an experience of ECCD score high in intellectual aptitude tests. They argue that “[ECCD] programs encourage young children to explore and they facilitate the social interaction that prompted cognitive development” (Young and Mustard in Garcia, Pence, & Evans, 2008). Furthermore Garcia et al. (2008) shares a similar view and argue that not only does ECCD programs enhance children’s school readiness but also increases the enrolment and completion of primary and secondary school. Therefore, not only is ECCD important in promoting school readiness for the children but also in motivating them to continue studying.

6.1.2 Latent function of ECCD -Indirect Benefits

Having looked at the direct benefit of ECCD, I will now turn to look at the indirect benefits in the subsequent sections. I will first present the interplay of parenting or child rearing roles and the need to maintain livelihood in relation to the importance of ECCD. Thereafter, I will look at how ECCD enhances child protection.

6.1.2.1 Parenting vs livelihood

During the study I noted that some children remained at the centre when others left the place to go home at noon. Caregivers explained that some parents had made special arrangements to help them care and teach the children during the afternoons whilst they attended to work. They explained that in the absence of parents and other siblings at home in the afternoon meant that, there was no one who could take care of the children. The children also shared similar sentiments and explained that, they had no one to take care of them at home in the afternoon because their parents had to go for work and their older siblings had to go to school. I realised that with the extended family becoming weaker and weaker in the urban areas (Ministry of Sport Youth and Child Development, 2004) and working parents coupled with rising economic demand in the country, people are struggling to strike a balance between parenting and livelihood roles. For those that have managed to have their children enrolled at the centre, were managing to find time to attend to their work. This highlights one of the indirect benefits of ECCD. It signifies how important ECCD is becoming in

empowering working parents especially mothers with time to attend to other businesses by providing afterschool care. Therefore I argue that not only does ECCD benefits children but also empowers the working parents with time to attend to work related activities in society. Similarly, Singh and Sood (2009) argue that the level at which women are entering the labour market to supplement their household income, changes in family structures, and relations among others bring childcare to the fore and emerges as an important concern in discussions on child development. The aforementioned factors pose several challenges to the care and protection of young ones thus generating an increased demand for quality substitute care for young children.

Furthermore, Garcia et al. (2008, p. 372) reveal similar findings in Kenya where mothers who were involved in paid work struggled to provide the needed care of their children during working hours. They assert that “the custodial role of [ECCD] centre frees female household’s members for other activities and allows mothers to enter the labour market”.

Therefore I argue that ECCD is beneficial and significant for both children and working mothers or parents who are torn between means of survival and child rearing. Over the years, women’s roles in a poverty stricken economic country like Zambia have diversified. The diverse economic roles coupled with the breakdown of the extended family pose great challenges to poor mothers and other working parents who need to take care of the children and put food on the table for the children through work. Combining work and child rearing can be very challenging and ECCD centres come to the rescue of these working parents who are striving to maintain their livelihood while playing their parenting roles. Similarly, research by Deutsch (1998a, p. 2) in Rio de Janeiro revealed the significance of ECCD for the working parents and argued that;

Child care programs offer both immediate and longer-term benefits which have drawn the attention of social policy makers. Custodial care allows the ever growing percentage of mothers in the labour force and offer alternatives for taking care of their children while working.

Therefore, the benefits and significance of ECCD cannot be overemphasised. Women play key roles in labour market and their parenting roles cannot be compromised. ECCD centres provide that alternative for providing substitute care or afterschool care to children.

6.1.3 Enhancing child protecting

One area of focus of ECCD is to help children grow, learn and develop in a safe environment with adults ensuring that safety. With the current changes in family structure in urban Zambia; break down of extended families and emergence of nuclear families, providing total home care for children is becoming a challenge. Children are sometimes left in the care of older siblings and sometimes alone at home. When children are left without the care of an adult, it increases the level of vulnerability thereby allowing perpetrators of abuse to take advantage of the situation. When asked why they think ECCD is important to a country like Zambia, Suwi (F/ 45) explained;

[ECCD is] important to Zambia because if you let these children in the street, they start stealing, they start beating others, some are defiled because they are left alone at home so the abusers take advantage. ...some say 'our parents send us to go and buy them beer'. They do a lot of things which they are not supposed to be doing of which when they are here, they cannot experience or do

It was the general view among the staff that ECCD centres enhance children protection because children at the centre are left in hands of professionals (caregivers). On the other hand, caregiver expressed scepticism on the behaviour of some 'uneducated' parents who send their children to places such as bars that are perceived as 'improper' for children.

Based on prevailing case trends of child abuse in the country, the participant suggest that children that spend much of their time at home without adult care were likely to become victims of child sexual abuse. Chomba (2011) reports that approximately 20% of the children between the ages 0-10 years are at high risk of being abused in Zambia. The majority cases of abuse happen in the neighbourhood where the children live when they are left without the care of adult supervisor by both known and unknown people. Therefore, ECCD centre reinforces child protection, thereby upholding the children's protection right enshrined in the child rights conventions. Burudi and Poipoi (2012) in Kenya also shared the similar views and agreed with the Ministry of Education and Bernard Van Leer Foundation's observation that children in early learning centres are provided with adequate physical safety and social security especially during the time of the day when parents are at work and there is no one at home to provide care to them.

The above comments also indicate the conventional view of adults concerning the street. It suggests how adults construct the street as a 'dangerous' and 'wrong' place for children. They believe that the street imparts bad morals on children such as stealing and fighting. This

could be attributed to societal values concerning parental responsibilities. The fear to be labelled as irresponsible adults by society puts pressure on parents to ensure that their children do not spend their everyday life on the street. Similarly, Matthews, Limb, and Taylor (2000) argue that the construction of the street as dangerous and unsafe space emanate from moral panic in society. However, we cannot assume that when children go to the street, they engage in 'bad' habits because for some children the street remains an important part of their everyday life, a place where they return some autonomy over space and it offers them play space where their play needs are met (cf. Mathews et al. in Holloway & Valentine, 2000a; Matthews et al., 2000). Therefore, children perceive the street as a social and play space. The staff's comments also suggest that ECCD centre are 'proper' place where children should spend their time under the care or supervision and protection of an adult.

6.2 Participatory Approach to child recruitment on the program

Child recruitment or enrolment is one of the important elements of the implementing process for ECCD program. It provides the base for the program to get kick started. Without the children whom the program targets, there cannot be an ECCD program. As part of my study, I explored how children are recruited on the program. I noticed that the organization attaches high value on community involvement when it comes to program implementation. To begin with, caregiver that coordinate activities at the ECCD centre are recruited on the basis that they come from the community where the centre is situated. Dorothy (F/32) narrated;

You know, the services we offer are community based, and the caregivers who are coordinators at each particular centre come from within the communities. They do know which children are the most vulnerable, because our target group are the vulnerable children. So our care givers with the help of the parents do the identification of the children who attend our [ECCD] centres.

The above remarks indicate that caregivers' knowledge of the community where the centre is situated is a key factor in child recruitment at the centre. Caregivers are recruited from the community where the centre is situated for the purpose of building a strong linkage between the ECCD centre and the community and vice versa. The caregivers do not work in isolation when it comes to recruiting children; the community members such as parents of the children are involved at various stages of the recruitment process.

Bridget (F/40) shared the same view and explained what is involved in the recruitment process;

It's not the secretariat which does that. That power is given to the caregivers, the coordinator and his people at the centre. They are the ones that are living in that community. We can go and open a centre even before we open a centre. First we do a sensitisation, what we call a sensitization meeting, awareness so that people know what we are taking to them. The parents will be there, maybe from the health, RDC²⁹ all these people are there. Then we sensitise them. If there are happy with what we have given them or what we are offering, and they offer to be part of process, then, they will be the ones running [things] and they will be the people that will be mandated to go and recruit the children. Because they live with them, they know them better, they know the parents. So they are the ones who recruit the children it's not the secretariat.

The remarked made by the staff indicates the involvement of different stakeholder such as parents, people from the health sector, education sectors, from the council, local influential leaders inter alia in the process of recruitment. This entails participatory approach to child recruitment. Different stake holders are called out during awareness raising meetings and sensitised on the services that will be offered at the centre. The participatory approach was based on the involvement of the community from the onset of the program to promote a sense of belonging, acceptance and sustainability of the project. A good foundation of the project lies in the sense of belonging that the community attaches to the project and value of the services offered realised by community. The aforementioned purpose of involving the community, gives encouragements to parents/guardians within the community to allow their children to be part of the program. Similarly, Nair and Rekha Radhakrishnan (2004, p. 234) assert that;

A top to bottom approach in providing ECCD services, need to be and ought to be substituted by a community based ECCD program if greater percentage of children are to be brought into the ECCD programs and also for its greater sustainability.

Furthermore, Suwi (F/45) added that;

We sensitise parents, telling the goodness of ECCD and some observe from their colleague that have children at our centre and ask where their child learn from, and they tell them about this place. Then the parent to the children will bring their friends and tell us that their friend is interested in bringing their child here also.

Suwi's comments and those shared by other staff, highlight the importance of awareness campaigns or meetings in attracting more community members to participate and bring their

29 RDC stand for Residential Development Committee. it is a local community committee that works with the council on community development projects.

children to the centres. I noted that one factor that attracts people to the ECCD centre where I did this study lies in the fact that they do not charge any fee and they allow children to come to the centre in their personal clothes. I strongly believe that such practices not only encourage poor parents to send their children to school but also give an opportunity to the children from poor families to attend and experience organised early years of learning without parents thinking about the cost of sending their children to an early learning centre amidst poverty conditions.

The main target for MECCDF led ECCD centres are orphans and vulnerable children between the ages of 3 and 7 years old. However, children aged 8 are also taken on board in order to give them an opportunity of early learning as their parents strive to find places and raise resources to send them to formal schools. The staffs shared the same view on the criteria for recruiting children on the program. Dorothy (F/32) remarked that;

Since caregivers stay in the communities where the projects are running, they do know which children are the most vulnerable, because our target group are the vulnerable children. So our care givers with the help of the parents do the identification of the children who attend our ECCD centre.

Furthermore, Suwi (F/45) also added and shared the same sentiment by saying that;

We go [from] door to door in the field, and then we start talking to the parents door-to-door. So that's how we recruit them. We recruit children between 3 to 7 years. Sometimes we recruit those who are single orphaned, double orphaned, even those who have their fathers and mothers but they are vulnerable. So those are the type of children we recruit.

Suli (F/28) further explained that “since [care givers] stay with the children in the community, they know who is the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged and they will get the most disadvantaged”.

The staff's use of vulnerability and orphanhood as criteria for recruiting children on the program, made it necessary to explore more on what they meant by orphans and vulnerable children. Dorothy (F/32) explained that;

Vulnerability is very difficult to define but what we look for is children who come from low income families and our care. ..Our programming is very inclusive, we have children with disabilities, and they are also included. We also look at orphans, those as a result of HIV/AIDS and any other illnesses. So we have both double and single orphans and those are a priority in our programme.

Dorothy's view was shared with Suli (F/28) who explained that vulnerable children "might have parents quite alright or even [be] orphans. They might have parents but maybe their parents do not work and they are sick due to HIV and AIDS. Those are the one we consider to be vulnerable".

The above remarks from staff indicate that children that are considered for recruitment are those whose parent cannot afford to take them to fee paying centre or struggling to do. The children recruited include both single and double orphaned children, children that are differently abled (different disabilities) and those whose parents cannot afford fee paying centre. These children are all categorised as vulnerable.

6.3 Application of the UNCRC and ACRWC in Centre Based ECCD program

This section analyses and examines the application of the two conventions on rights of children in ECCD programs. As part of the study, I wanted to find out if the children's rights conventions were applied in the implementation of ECCD and if yes, how they were applied. During interviews and focus group discussion, the caregivers showed little understanding or knowledge of applying the conventions although by practice they applied the conventions in their programs. Caregivers could not provide responses on how they were applying the convention but referred to some senior personnel at the foundation for explanations. However, the leaders at the foundation were very conversant with the UNCRC as they talked more about it than the African Charter. When asked if they were using any convention in their programs, Suli (F/28), one of the senior staff at the foundation explained "we are mostly using the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. It's the one I have seen in most of our caregivers' manual".

What came out vividly from the staff remarks was that the main convention applied in their ECCD program was UNCRC. The ACRWC was not mentioned by staff as being used. The UNCRC provisions have been integrated in different aspects of the programs including the training manuals. The knowledge and use of the UNCRC over the ACRWC can be attributed to the influence of donors' orientation and funding conditionality where they only talk about the UNCRC. Woodhead and Montgomery (2003) argue that through aid projects which demands that recipient [organization]to adopt particular policies, a certain form of political philosophy, based on the language of human rights and the value of liberalism is being exported from the 'western' world.

Despite staffs not mentioning the African Charter on the rights of the child, it was actually being applied in their programs. The African Charter calls for the consideration of cultural heritage on inspiring the rights and welfare of the children. For instance in Article 11 it is clearly stated that the education of the child shall be directed towards the preservation and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures while Article 12 calls for the recognition of the children's right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities (ACRWC, 1999). The organization has incorporated some local cultural practices in the ECCD program that I will discuss in the subsequent section. These practices that have been incorporated reflect the provisions enshrined in the African Charter. Therefore I argue that both the UNCRC and African charter were being used in meeting children's needs and rights.

In relation to the absence of the ECCD policy in Zambia, the staff revealed that the UNCRC to which Zambia is a signatory was being used in advocating for the enactment of the ECCD policy and the provision of ECCD through programming. They singled out several Articles of the UNCRC that were being employed in their program to ensure that children enjoy their entitlements; right to education, health and play. These include Article 28 (right to education), Article 31 (right to leisure, play and culture), Article 24 (right to healthcare) which are also reflected in Article 11, 12 and 14 of the African charter on the rights of the child respectively. The application of conventions was explained during the focus group discussion;

Me: Tell me how you use the conventions in implementing ECCD under your institution?

Suwi (F/45): We give them [children] education, and when someone is sick we take them to the hospital.

Dorothy (F/32): We know that a child has a right to play, no wonder they are allowed to play. Play is a very important component of our programming. So we just encourage them to play with nature outside. We also believe that we are big promoters of safety that every child must be protected from harm and exploitation from any other form of abuse. So we do have child protection issues incorporated

The above remarks indicate that the UNCRC informs much of the provisions of ECCD services to the children at the ECCD centre. Despite the challenges associated with lack of adequate land for putting up play structures, staffs expressed satisfaction with the provision of early learning services for children.

The caregivers emphasised children's participation rights when making decisions on what children wanted to do during physical education and fun time (dancing and singing) in class. Children were given an opportunity to choose the songs they wanted to sing and dance as well as deciding what they want to play during physical education period. However, the participation rights were not in total because caregivers still controlled some parts of children's play in the classroom. Importantly, children were allowed to play freely and they made choices of where they want to play and whom they wanted to play with. The centre recognises that play is a right that children are entitled to and giving them the freedom to play fulfils their right to play. In addition, the children have access to learning and they are provided with health care services. All these service reflect upon the rights of the child provided in both the UNCRC and African Charter.

6.3.1 Meeting children's rights and needs via Centre Based ECCD

Children have many needs which range from social, emotional, physical, education or academic and health to mention a few. Understanding these broad ranges of issues that affect children, help us understand how best we can meet these needs and ensure their rights. As part of my study, I sought to gain knowledge on how Centre Based ECCD programs ensure that children's needs and rights are met.

The interviews and discussion held with staff indicated that it is difficult to meet all the children's needs at once. When asked how ECCD program ensures children's right, Dorothy (F/32) described and elaborated on different ways the organization strives to meet the different needs of the children and ensure their rights at the centre;

I think we try our best to ensure that needs are met though we can't do everything. So in terms of their social, spiritual, the physical even the health needs... we do nutritional demonstrations sometimes with the parents just to help them learn how to give good nutrition to the children.... For the physical needs, we provide toys and things like balls, skipping ropes just to help them exercise their bodies. Social also they sing and interact, for the intellectual part we try as much as possible to train our care givers so that they should be able to impart knowledge to the children. Intellectually, children should be able to say what their name is as they prepare for primary school, letter naming maybe ABCDEF..., even counting. So we have tried to make it that way

The above remarks suggested a holistic approach where the centre engages in different activities that ensure that children's needs and rights are met. In line with Article 31 of the UNCRC and Article 12 of the African charter, the organization has put in place deliberate

time on schedule for children to engage in play. For instance, children are given an hour break to partake of their food and engage in free play or uncontrolled play. Dorothy (F/32) explained that;

I think for us we know that according to science and research the best way children learn is through play and the fact that the convention on the rights of the child also reassures us that every has got the right to play, so we try to incorporate it.... sometimes we play with them, but we let them do whatever they want to do. So I know that these children are free to do whatever they want to do at the centre and it's their right.

The above remarks indicate that the centre use play even though the community does not agree with noted benefits of play. During physical education on Fridays and every day during break time children are given enough time to engage in play activities which demonstrates staffs' consciousness.

The other way the foundation ensures that children's rights are met is by training caregivers to have basic understanding of children rights. Members of staff revealed that it's the organization's belief that when care givers have some basic knowledge of children rights, it becomes easier to enforce them even as they interact with children at the centre. However, as noted earlier, caregiver showed limited ability of interpreting the children's rights conventions into centre activities despite undergoing some training on children's rights. I do not intend to claim that caregivers did not know anything about children's rights. They just had difficulties in interpreting the conventions into programs.

In addition, the organization through its centres does not operate in isolation. It works closely with other institutions and organization like the Zambia police, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. These government ministries play a significant role in ensuring that both needs and rights of the children are met. Bridget (F/40) narrated;

In our trainings when we are training caregivers, issues of children's rights are key so they are taught and also when recruiting caregivers, usually we look for people who have influence in society; those whom the community will trust with their children and we also work in conjunction with the police; Victim Support Unit to ensure that even as children come to our centres, they are protected from abuse and harm. Our programing does cover issues of children's rights.

The above remarks reflect the importance of networking in ECCD to ensure that children's needs and rights are met. In my view, it's not possible for an organization to meet all the needs of the children. It calls for good working relationship with other institutions and organization to support each other in provision of services as reflected in the aforementioned remarks. Networking provides organization

with a platform for complimenting each other pertaining to the provision of service that one organization maybe lacking.

6.4 Ensuring continuity between the ECCD centre and children's homes

Understand how the foundation I was researching with ensured that there was continuity between centre activities and children's homes was another area of research that became of interest in my study. The discussions and interviews held with staff gave me an indication that there were many stakeholders involved in ECCD. Among the stakeholders involved include children, parents, caregivers and the community at large. Their involvement is of significance for the smooth running of ECCD programs. Dorothy (F/32) explained that;

We do not work in isolation. Our programming is very much aware of the importance parents, guardians, and the wider community plays in ECCD programing. So we do have specific activities for parents, we train them in parenting skills and we train them in ECCD. So when each time we are doing trainings or a capacity building workshop, we do incorporate parents because we know that they are the key. For us, they [children] are only at the centre for two hours but the rest of the hours that is 24 hours, they are at home. So we want the parents and the wider community to have knowledge in ECCD, parenting roles and practices, nutrition, child protection issues. So those are targets in term of trainings and capacity building...we incorporate parents so that that early childhood care and development is even done in their homes. Also that other children benefit because there are children who cannot be sent to the centres, like those below two years, you know, it's difficult. But at home especially the mothers, they are care giver, fathers are never at home... Sometimes we have visitations, the caregivers visit homes so that they are able to see and talk to parents that it's not just when the child is at school when they should learn but even in their homes, so there is that interaction

The above remarks indicate that parents' involvement in trainings, programs, and home visitations have been key strategies that the foundation has been using in ensuring that children enjoy the care and the learning they receive at the centre even when they go home. Parents are involved in training in order to keep them abreast with what is offered at the centre. They are trained in child development, how to prepared balanced diet food, how to breastfeed and hold the baby, how to maintain hygiene and how to protect the child. The training are followed by a series of monitoring visits by caregivers to keep track with how the trained parents are incorporating what they learn in the program in their own homes. Similarly, Landers (1992, p. 7) argues that;

Perhaps the most traditional view of family-school relationships is that in which parents function as liaisons between the child and programme. They interpret and in some cases help to maintain goals and activities the child has experienced. They provide a communication link between

home and school, teacher and child, society and family. As they fulfil this role, parents become informed and experienced in managing the relationships that directly benefit the child.

Therefore, parents remain a key factor in ensuring that children realise the full benefits of early learning from home and their involvement cannot be underestimated.

6.5 What local cultural practices have been incorporated in ECCD program?

This section presents an analysis of the cultural practices that have been incorporated in the ECCD program at garden centre. Data was gathered using interviews, observation, focus group discussion and informal dialogues. I decided to find out if the foundation has incorporated local cultural practices in its ECCD program and if so, to gain knowledge of what kind of practices have been incorporated and why have these practices been incorporated.

The study revealed a hybridization of local and foreign cultural practices at the centre. Not only has the centre introduced activities and games that are from the ‘Global North’ but has also incorporated games and practices that reflect the local Zambian traditional culture. The hybridization is vivid in the games and activities children engage in and the language of instruction employed at the centre. For instance, children sometimes play *Nsolo* which is a typical traditional game that plays a significant role in children logical thinking and counting. The game involves one picking stones intelligently from one hole to another whilst counting. Mtonga (2012) states that *Nsolo* is a widely used game throughout the African continent and the children that have had an experience of it in their early years tend to make intelligent calculations and learn to think logically and mathematically. At the centre, I noted that local games are mixed with ‘western’ games such as puzzles, building block games and toys during play time which do not originate from the local culture.

when asked what relevant cultural practices the centre has incorporated in its everyday activities, The staff narrated to have incorporated traditional activities such as the use of songs, traditional dances, storytelling and creative art as well as local games such as *Nsolo* and *Ichiyenga* which reflect practices that are common in Zambian tradition society but relevant to the development of different domains of childhood.

Suli (F/28) narrated that;

We have local games like *ichiyenga*; they put the stones and start playing them. Even *waida*, *chidunu* where some hides and the other one is looking for them. These are important because these children should know the tradition because those things we were using in our generation

we should also teach our children here at the centre that these were the things we were doing when we were young.....Apart from the dances and traditional songs they do, we also encourage parents to make local learning materials, aids. We realise that traditional is part and parcel of Early childhood so that there is a smooth transition from home to school.

The above participant's remarks reflect the value that the caregivers and the centre attach to oral traditional and other cultural practices. The remarks highlight some of the traditional practices common in the Zambian culture incorporated in the ECCD program. Their comments also suggest that the practices that have been incorporated are meant to ensure that traditions are maintained and transmitted from generation to another. Similarly, Serpell (1997, p. 589) argue that “ In many societies, schools are regarded both as instrumental vehicles for intergenerational transmission of culture”. The centre has deliberately put in place story-telling on its weekly schedule so that children can have an experience of telling stories and also listen to stories just like it used to be in the olden days when grandparents used to educate grandchildren through stories as they sat around the bonfire. In the same vein, Davidhizar and Lonser (2003) explain that traditions such as storytelling are powerful vehicle for communication, recreation, education and in passing cultural identity, hence providing a way of maintaining a cultural heritage.

The staff also explained that sometime the centre invites old members of the community or neighbourhood to come and share some stories with the children. Suli (F/28) narrated that “we usually encourage parents to come to the centre to come and tell stories to their children”. Children are also sometimes asked to learn stories at home so that they can come and share the stories with their colleagues. The storytelling reflects upon oral traditions that provided a pivotal role in passing on knowledge to the children by old members of the society. Storytelling has been acknowledge as a creative art form that has entertained and informed across centuries and cultures (Fisher, 1985 in Aiex, 1988) and Jirata (2013) state that oral tradition provide a platform for social interaction between children and adults and it's a means of children's informal and formal education as well as the media through which knowledge is transmitted within and from one generation to another. He further argues that story-telling enhance children's learning as children connect their local knowledge to their formal education as well as increasing their participation in speaking, listening and visualization of ideas in their learning activities. Therefore, it is an important tool for teaching children in early learning centres.

Creative art is another practice that has been incorporated in the program which is embedded in local traditions. It is imperative to understand that creative art is an important element of global discourses within ECCD. YPCE (2013, p. 26) state that “ creative arts experiences provide the context for children’s holistic learning and development”. It provides a platform for children to express themselves, become imaginative and develop high levels of interaction with peers as they enjoying having fun. Mtonga (2012) argues for the use of creative art and the introduction into school curriculum aspect of traditional plays and games appropriate for modern life. He reasons that the plays and games stimulate children’s intellect and promote practical skills which children can use even when they grow up. This would make ECCD practice relevant to local context. UNESCO and CUE (2013) also state that creative art is an important component of the culture and art domain. It has been identified as one areas of focus at early childhood level with creative, reasoning and problem solving as well as early critical thinking skills approach being advocated for children in early learning centres. For instance creative art expressions or activities are encouraged in the ‘western’ countries in the areas of music, theatre, dance as well as technology through the use of computers. Creative art and culture is situated within Article 29 and 31 of the UNCRC.

However, cultural context needs to be taken into consideration if creative art is to be relevant. My findings indicate that creative art, play and learning are intertwined. Children’s use of clay to mould toy cars, cups, pots, and babies as well as the use of plastics to make a soccer ball among others represents creative art within the Zambian context. Children use their intellectual abilities to coordinate different part of the things they mould using clay. Serpell (2010) State that observations in experimental research indicate that that the medium of clay elicits stronger cognitive performance by African children than the media of pencil and paper, or construction blocks. As children mould different things, they learn skills that they may use in future. For instance, the use of clay pots in Zambian traditional society for storing water and cooking. Not only do children learn but also play and have fun.

The general comments shared by children during informal dialogues and the observed experiences indicated that children enjoy participating in these traditional practices; songs, dances, creative art and story-telling.

Last but not the least, is the use of vernacular as language of instruction at the centre. Caregivers at centre use local languages - *Chinyanja* and *Bemba* - mixed with English when they are teaching the children. When I notice that vernacular was being used as well as the

aforementioned traditional practices at the centre, I sought to learn why such practices were incorporated in the program. Dorothy (F/32) explained that:

I think [incorporating traditional cultural practices] is key, because we believe that as our children are growing, they should have their identity and we are Africans we cannot run away from it. For us we believe that ECCD is not a foreign programming concept. It is something that our forefathers used to do and they have continued to do but may have not categorised it as ECCD. But you will find that they are very good and important practices that people used to do in the past and some are still doing them that we now consider as ECCD. We believe that in ECCD, there should be a smooth transition on what happens at home and what happens at centre so that children do not get confused. So we do realise that when children are not at the centre, they are at home, what they use is their local language. So at our centre we encourage that the children are taught in their local languages as well. We use English especially [with] those that are preparing for primary school, we start introducing them to English. We don't want them to be confused. When they go home it's different and when they come to the centre it's different. We are not trying to bring something foreign, or modern, we want to use what is in our culture which is good for children to continue.

The above remark indicates that ECCD is not really new or foreign in the Zambian traditional society, only that it was not holistic in its approach. The participants indicated that ECCD has been part of the traditional practices though people did not categorise it as ECCD. Its practices are not very different from what people practice in their culture and this includes the use of local languages that children understand better. "Through language, the child appropriates his/her culture, seeks the cooperation of others in his/her activities, integrates new experiences into an existing knowledge base and reflects on his/her actions" (YPCE, 2013, p. 35). Hence Serpell and Nsamenang (2014) argue for ECCD intervention programmes in African communities to be conceptualized in the local indigenous languages, including the training for program implementers. The significance of incorporating tradition or indigenous practices ensure that there is continuity or maintenance of good cultural heritage and smooth transitions between what children do at home and what they do at the centre as provided in the African Charter on the rights of the child. If ECCD is to be relevant to the local context, Serpell (2010) argues that the sociocultural context should not be ignored in the design of effective ECCD. Therefore, I argue that if ECCD continues to lack locally conceptualisation, the negative attitude and perceptions it is currently receiving will continue.

6.6 Staffs reflections on ECCD policy and what inform ECCD practices in Zambia

This section presents an analysis of the ECCD practices in relation to policy as experienced by the staff at the centre. I sought to explore and gain knowledge on what informs the ECCD practices. During the interviews, Dorothy (F/32) explained;

Unfortunate for Zambia, we are still struggling to have the ECCD policy, but we do have pieces of legislature that look at different issues of children. We have the child national policy and nutrition policy. We also have different child protection policies. So all those policies that we have as a country, guide what kind of work we do but it would have been very helpful and easy for us to work in this area if we had an ECCD policy. Like right now, the challenge we have is that we don't have a syllabus, we don't have standards for ECCD. So what we provide is just from our own experiences over the years, research, you get information from this material and other networks that exchange information on how ECCD programing should be done but because of lack of the policy, everyone does their own kind of programing.

The study indicates that there is no ECCD policy in Zambia that guides the implementation of ECCD. As a result the implementation of ECCD is much influenced by international rights instruments, foreign or western practices, foreign research and child related and supporting policies in Zambia as well as different NGOs such as Save the children, World Vision, Plan International, Childfund and UNICEF to mention a few.

Suli (F/28) also shared the same view and narrated how the practices at the ECCD centre have been so much influenced by Pre-schools³⁰;

Currently we do not have any policy on early childhood in Zambia but we have been advocating for that. There has been a draft national policy on early childhood since 2008, we are still pushing but the government has been slow in responding. It's really something else; there hasn't been any standard way of doing things like even with other stake holders that are doing early childhood. Mainly we get ideas from preschools like private schools.

The above remarks indicate how lack of ECCD policy has affected the implementation of ECCD in Zambia. Because of lack of policy framework, implementers of ECCD are borrowing ideas from more formal or structured institution such that ECCD centre are also becoming more structured where focus is on education and learning focuses on preparing children to entre first grade. Nalwim (2009) report that in Zambia pre-schools are using what she has labelled 'inappropriate curricula' with borrowed curricula ideas from South Africa,

³⁰ Pre-schools also known as Nursery schools in Zambia cover more formal education activities such teaching how to count, write, and speak English , cater for children only between 3 and 6, they are like an expansion of first grade in formal education

United States, Zambian basic school and the use of grade one material which reflect upon formal education. Furthermore, Garcia et al. (2008) argue that ECCD policies not only envision the best interest of children but also indicates the modalities to provide ECCD for the children which is lacking in Zambia. Because of lack of ECCD policy framework, no standard syllabi or curricula have been developed, ECCD centres are becoming more formal like pre-schools and there is an emergency or mushrooming of sub-standard early learning centre that are implementing early childhood programs haphazardly.

In addition, lack of ECCD policy has affected funding commitment to the ECCD sector. The staff narrated that lack of policy has affected the fund use and budget allocation to ECCD. The very small percentage of the total education budget allocated to the ECCD sectors is also difficult to access. Similarly, Matafwali (2007) observes that the moneys allocated to ECCD under the Ministry of Education is not used for intended activities and she attributes this to the lack of ECCD policy framework. Lack of policy framework has serious implication for the children. It leads to lack of financial commitment and divergence of ECCD fund to unintended activities. Consequently, ECCD services cannot be expanded and poor families cannot access early learning services as most of pre-school in Zambia require a fee. In the same vein, Matafwali (2007, p. 73) argues that

The implications of this crippling funding in this education sector therefore is that, most of the children in our communities, particularly the poor and the most disadvantaged are being denied access to the much needed ECCD services as the current demand cannot match the available resources

For this reason, the need for the ECCD policy cannot be overemphasised to deal with the prevailing situation.

However, lack of ECCD policy has not completely hampered institutions and organizations from implementing ECCD. For MECCDF, the programing of ECCD is informed by foreign experiences and research, staffs person experiences, the UNCRC and local child related policies such as, national education policy, the child health policy, and national child policy inter alia. The use of foreign experiences and research could be attributed to limited studies that have undertaken in the field of ECCD that would provide relevant experiences and lessons learnt that would help in conceptualizing ECCD in the Zambian context. Therefore, it can be argued that lack ECCD policy in Zambia has contributed to the substandard ECCD and emergency of uncontrolled, substandard mushrooming early learning centres in Zambia and lack of government commitment in terms of funding. Therefore, there is need to have the

ECCD policy to be enacted to correct the current haphazard implementation of ECCD if the children are to optimise the benefits of participating in ECCD.

6.7 Challenges the staff encounter when implementing Centre Based ECCD programs

This section of the thesis analysis presents the challenges encountered by staff when implementing Centre Based ECCD programs. Challenges are part and parcel of our successes in life. They are inevitable and they manifest differently according to the context of a given phenomenon. The remarks made by staff at the ECCD Centre revealed multiple challenges relating to staff turnover, caregivers voluntary work, land and play space, appreciation for ECCD, ECCD policy framework and funding.

6.7.1 Staff (caregivers) turnover

The high number of caregivers leaving the program was one of the challenges identified. Dorothy (F/32) remarked “the challenge is the turnover in terms of caregivers. You know these are volunteers, purely volunteers, as an organization we cannot afford to pay them in allowances or salaries because of the limited funds”.

The above remarks indicate that voluntary work has been one factor that has attributed to caregivers’ departure from the program. Caregivers leave and join other organization in search of salaried jobs. Like many other NGOs in Zambia,(Wilson, 2007) Mulumbo MECCDF runs ECCD centres through caregivers who have been working as volunteers. With the departure of some caregivers, a small number has remained at the centre. Consequently, caregivers have to work almost throughout the month which may amount to fulltime work requiring a salary. The foundation has inadequate funding to support caregivers in terms of salaries which in itself become a push factor. Suli (F/28) remarked “Caregivers are not paid and that is why we have some leaving for green pastures”.

In my view, the departure of caregivers has been exasperated by other organizations that have introduced high allowances paid to caregivers engaged in their programs. When caregivers who have been working for years without a pay hear that their friends are get huge allowances where they are working, they get an impression that they can highly benefit if they moved to those organization that pay allowances to its care givers.

6.7.2 Ambiguity of voluntary work

The ambiguity surrounding voluntary work was another challenge raised by staff during interviews and discussions. The study revealed that a number of caregivers initially accept to work as volunteer with a view of getting a paid job later on. Bridget (F/40) explained;

It's not easy to work with people who are doing voluntary work. In the beginning, you call them to your organization and say, can you come on voluntary basis? Then they say: 'No problem, I just want to learn, I will come'. But as time goes on, they change, they want a salary. Quite understandable, even when you look at our country, definitely one can't survive by only doing voluntary work. The problem I have seen is this syndrome of just receiving which also destroying our ECCD. Because the caregivers would say: 'okay, I will do it voluntary, this is our community, so I will also be contributing to our human support', but at the end of the day, they also want to be the beneficiaries. Instead of the children to be the beneficiaries, they don't understand that.

To affirm the sentiments shared by management, Daliso (M/42) explained that the term volunteer does not mean well. He remarked "there are many challenges; first, we are just volunteers, so that word, we are just working without something...we don't know when this volunteer ship will end, we don't know".

The above remarks suggest that caregivers join the organization on voluntary basis with a hope of turning the voluntary work into a salaried job. It reflects on local realities of how people really need money to survive. Caregivers have families that depend on them and spending most of the productive part of day at the centre without a pay becomes a problem in itself. It raises a lot of questions such as to; how do caregivers survive and support their households if they do not work for a pay? What do labour laws say about voluntary work? In my view, when caregivers get disappointed after noting that the organization is not in a position to offer them a salaried job, they leave for other organization that are in a position to pay high allowances that are somewhat equivalent to a salary. The problems associated with voluntary work in Zambia can be attributed to a lacuna in the labour laws or labour policies. They do not provide a clear cut picture about voluntary work. Wilson (2007, p. 69) states that "There is currently a lack of clarity in Zambian public policy on the role of volunteers in the provision of social welfare services, and tension exists between[the] state and NGO service providers". As a result, it is difficult to tell when voluntary work should come to an end or what conditions should volunteers enjoy.

6.7.3 Inadequate land and insufficient play space

The study indicates that finding land to use as children's play space is a challenge in urban areas. For instance, at the ECCD where I conducted this study, they use a small community hall located next to a former police post that was burned down the community. The foundation has been granted permission to use the hall by the local authorities but cannot put up play facilities because they do not own the land and the property. In addition, the area has very limited space to accommodate play facilities. During interviews Dorothy (F/32) narrated;

When you go to some of our centres [in rural areas] its better, but the one at Garden is small and the space for play is limited. We have centres [like the one] in Kabwe [located in rural set up] which have more spaces, they have seesaws, and facilities where children climb. So they do go play from outside.

The above remark indicates that inadequate land not only limits play space but also affect the development of play infrastructure at the centre. Making a comparison with other centres in the rural areas, Dorothy suggests that rural areas have adequate land that can be developed by putting up play infrastructure for children. Lack of play infrastructure which results from insufficient space in Garden compound limits children's opportunities to enjoy the same play activities as their peers enjoy in other centres. This is not to claim that children at this ECCD centre do not enjoy play time. The children have access to toys and other play materials that their counterparts have in other centres. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, the children have shown that they can be innovative in creating their own play experiences.

6.7.4 Lack of appreciation for ECCD

Lack of appreciation of what ECCD offers was also identified as a challenge staff encounter in implementing ECCD programs. The staff interviewed suggested that ECCD in Zambia has been received with mixed perceptions and is not much appreciated by some citizens. In addition, it lacks maximum support and participation by the government despite being acknowledged to be important. Suli (F/28) narrated;

ECCD is a concept that has not been adopted widely in Zambia. It's not appreciated much. There hasn't been so much funding towards the sectors. There is also lack of appreciation of ECCD. Like most of the parents wouldn't bring their children to the centre, they don't see any value in early learning.

As earlier noted, Dorothy's comment³¹ reveal some misconceptions people have about ECCD and the lack of appreciation and support for ECCD. They suggest some misunderstanding of what should constitute ECCD and what should be happening at an ECCD centre. Some people feel that play is something obvious that children can do when they are at home. As a result, ECCD is perceived by some parents/guardians as a sheer waste of time. Those that want their children to be in an ECCD centre, focus on children learning to speak 'good' English and to write and not engaging in play. The lack of appreciation could be attributed to a lack of awareness of the ECCD in the country and lack of ECCD policy framework that is embedded in local conceptualization of the ECCD that is supposed to determine minimum standards. Many institutions which offer ECCD services are doing it haphazardly with low standards and imitating pre-schools, as a result, there are fears that ECCD can become hijacked by the formal education system and become essentially a download of the extension of uninspiring primary schools (cf. Arnold, 2004, p. 23)

There has been high influx of substandard ECCD centres and preschools in urban areas which could have been controlled if the ECCD policy was in place. Consequently, those that have been disappointed by the services offered by one centre develop lack of appreciation of ECCD and feel that all the ECCD centres are the same because people cannot differentiate a pre-school from an ECCD centre and a primary school from pre-school; they all seem the same in the structures, material and content delivery (Nalwim, 2009). Similar findings were reported on lack of awareness on the importance of early learning and lack of prioritising ECCD by some parents in Egypt (Neugebauer, 2008).

6.7.5 Lack of ECCD policy framework for guidance and standardization

The staff in this study bemoaned a lack of ECCD policy framework in Zambia because it has resulted in a lack of standards among implementers and a haphazard way of implementing ECCD. Dorothy's (F/32) remarks³² and the comments made by other staff revealed how lack of policy framework which is supposed to define the quality of ECCD has affected the implementation of ECCD in Zambia. The remarks suggest that there are great disparities in terms of standard among implementers. Different organizations are following different curricula and some ECCD centres are very formal while others are informal in their approach. Besides, because of non-availability of the policy framework, the country has also witnessed a high influx of sub-standard ECCD centres which question the quality of services

31 see comments on concerning about play as waste of time and parents expatiations p.77

32 See Dorothy's Comment on lack of ECCD policy on p. 102

offered. As a result, it may become difficult to evaluate ECCD services where there are different standards.

6.7.6 Inadequate Funding

Funding was one of the biggest challenges mentioned in interviews and discussions by staffs. The majority, if not all the NGOs including MECCDF in Zambia are donor driven and funding comes with conditionality. Suli (F/28) narrated “there has been lack of funding for ECCD, even when you check out the money that’ is allocated for ECCD in the education allocation budget, the one for ECCD is only about 0.1%”. The lack of adequate funding has resulted into a number of challenges, such as failure to pay care givers allowances and incentives, to build proper play infrastructure and to expand ECCD services as well as maintaining nutrition or feeding programs. Daliso (M/42) also explained that because of lack of funding, the centre could no longer continue with the feeding program. Similarly, Neugebauer (2008) reports how lack of funding affect program implementation such that NGO quit the provision of ECCD services like the case of Bangladesh.

Besides, the remarks also suggest that there has been a lack of financial commitment from the government which is reflected in budget allocation to ECCD. The money allocated is too little and sometimes NGOs find it difficult to access the same money allocated by the government to the ECCD sector. This could be attributed to the lack of an ECCD policy which demonstrates the low priority consideration for ECCD. Aidoo in Garcia et al. (2008) argues that the absence of National policy concerning ECCD in countries like such as Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Zambia, demonstrates its low political priority and resource allocation. Therefore, the need for ECCD policy cannot be overemphasized if ECCD is to be standardized for quality purposes and evaluation of its efficacy.

7 Chapter seven: Discussion of the findings

This chapter presents the discussion of the findings from my study in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework and current debates by scholars on the same issues. The analysis revealed several issues that could be discussed, but I will focus on the key themes highlighted in the proceeding sections. I will first discuss adults and children's perspectives of play and learning. In this I will look at the diverse perceptions of play and learning at the centre. Secondly, I will discuss children's agency on the playground in relation to play and social relations. In this, I elaborate on different situations in which children demonstrate their agency and competence. Then I will conclude the chapter by discussing the benefits of ECCD emphasising both direct and indirect benefits.

7.1 Adults and children's perspectives of play and learning

As noted in the theoretical and conceptual framework, interdependence and reciprocity are important concepts within theories of social exchange in understanding family relations and decision making. Gouldner (1960) contextualizes reciprocity within culture by positing it as the social norm incurring obligation (Hansen, 2004). As the finding suggest, the parent-child relationship is interdependent and characterised by reciprocity. Children depend on their parents for care and support and likewise, parent in later life depend on children for care and support. In the same vein , Hansen (2004, p. 421) argues that "relations within a network of care for children operate via a culturally specific logic of reciprocity, which is premised on trust, obligation, and mutuality". Based on my analysis of children's and adults' perspectives of learning and play, I established that the interdependent nature of the parent-child social relationship and the reciprocity expectations shape parents' construction of play and learning (Schooling).

7.1.1 Perceptions of play and learning

As presented in the theoretical framework, it is difficult to define play because the concept is relative. It has no single meaning for different societies. Different scholars define it in accordance with their discipline. However, in this thesis, a general illumination of what play is has been provided. It is defined in relation to activities children participate in while having fun and learning. Pellegrini and Blatchford (2000, p. 46) view play as " what young children do and in some ways as an activity that defines children different from adult life" and Gleave and Cole-Hamilton (2012, p. 4) assert that " play is an innate childhood instinct, that is not

only enjoyable but also crucial to the processes of learning and development”. These definitions indicate that play is a common feature of childhood be it in the ‘Global South’ or ‘Global North’³³. Schwartzman (1976) Asserts that children play everywhere in the world. Hence play is a universal feature of every society and common feature of childhood.

Many benefits have been associated with play in the lives of children. Play is argued to be fundamental for all the domains of childhood; physical, intellectual, social and emotional (Hart 2000, cited in Tranter & Malone, 2004). However, its experiences and perceptions by both children and adults vary considerably from one society to another according to the culture of particular society. Boushel et al. (2000) acknowledge that play can only be understood within the cultural context. Therefore, Marfo and Biersteker (2011, p. 73).state that “ play is seen as a culturally defined construct, as exemplified by wide variations in the nature of play across cultures”.

Drawing from my analysis of adults’ and children’s accounts, I established that there are diverse perceptions of play. My adult informants (caregivers) who implement ECCD programs use play to teach children. They perceive play as ‘learning’ and a ‘pedagogical’ tool. This finding resonate with Pellegrini and Blatchford (2000) ‘s view that play can be used as an instructional mode; a way of teaching skills and concepts. On the contrary, the practitioner’s (staff and caregivers) perceptions of play do not coincide with that of the parents to children that come to the centre. My analysis revealed that many parents perceive play as a ‘waste of time’. This is reflected in parent’s perceptions regarding their expectations of children when they go to the centre. They expect children to learn how to write, count, name things and speak ‘good’ English. For the parents the aforementioned things symbolize or indicate the beginning of success worth of investment that will pay off in the future. This perception demonstrates the interdependence and expectations of reciprocity that shapes parents decision regarding children’s welfare and participation in ECCD. Like a local *Bemba* proverb say ‘*mayo mpampa naine nkakupapa*’ (mother carry me on you back and will reciprocate in the future). Parents invest time, and financial resources in a child to attend school with the hope that the child will transform the family situation in future. When they observe people in their neighbourhood that have sent their children to school live ‘well’ with support for their children, they become inspired to support and see to it that their children prosper as well. In this view, I argue that parents’ emphasis on schooling for a ‘good life’ in

³³ Global North/Global South is the North-South divide which categorise the world based on economic inequalities but a strict geographical categorization with the south having high level of inequalities(Rigg, 2007)

the future is not just in the best interest of the child but also in their best interest and that of the (extended) family.

I recall from my childhood experiences when I started school, whenever I came back home from school the first question my parents asked me was “what did you write at school, how did you perform? Of the things that you wrote, how many of those did you get right?” These are real life expectations that parents have over children’s schooling. As a result children’s engagement in play is perceived as a waste of time. Pellegrini(2008) presents similar perceptions and argues that “ playtime is perceived as a waste of time that could be spent on academic forms of learning” (Pellegrini in Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012, p. 20). these findings coincide with Adjei (2012)’s findings in Ghana.

In contrast, findings in United States, report concerns by parents that their children were missing out on the joy of free time and exploration due to the reduced free time play in early learning centres (cf. Miller & Almon, 2009, pp. 20-21). Gaskins (2008) argues that “Adults in the minority world³⁴ value play as having important consequences for learning and development and they encourage it by providing time, space, objects and play partners, including adults” (Gaskins in Lester & Russell, 2010, p. 28). This indicates how diverse perceptions of play are in different societies as well as the value attached to play and schooling. Brooker and Woodhead (2010, p. 24) State that “In traditional societies, play is viewed simply as a pastime for children or a preparation for growing up, whereas in many Western societies it is seen as the means for children to begin their school learning”. Therefore perceptions of play are situated in one’s culture practices (Schwartzman, 1978). In the ‘Global South’ play is perceived to be not as important as acquiring skills of writing, and speaking English for future academic progression and employment success. These expectation over children concerning school suggest a perception that schooling leads to future success hence it is primarily regarded as a vehicle or way of gaining access to formal-sector employment (Serpell, 1993). Similar findings have also been reported in India where parents perceive children’s learning of English to be associated with better opportunities in high education and the job market (Young Lives and Save the Children, 2014). Young Lives and Save the Children further argue that parent’s aspirations of a future better life than theirs are the reason they sacrifice to take their children to schools. This is not to claim that in the ‘Global North’, they don’t value children acquiring the necessary skills that help them to

34 Majority and minority world is an ordering of binary of the rich and poor or first and third worlds. the minority being rich countries and the majority being poor countries(Punch, 2003; Rigg, 2007)

adapt easily in formal school and life after school as parents value skills acquisition in the 'Global South'. Because "Schooling for children globally is seen as key to promoting individual welfare, success and a 'good life' as future adults" (Kjørholt, 2013, p. 245). Therefore, centres that engage children so much in play in the 'Global South' are not perceived as 'proper' early learning centre by many parents.

The study also revealed that children enjoy free play time especially during break time and physical education period. In contrast to adult perceptions, children perceive play as fun a finding that is consistent with the study by Miller and Kuhaneck (2008). These diverse perceptions of play and learning have serious policy and projects implication. It entails that policy makers and project planners in ECCD may be forced to structure ECCD centres more formal to respond to parents' concerns at the expense of children's enjoyment of play and the development of various domains of childhood. Consequently, ECCD programs in centres may move away from play oriented curriculum to focus on outcome and skills, more structured and school oriented curriculum with formal instructions, literacy, maths, English from early age (Kjørholt, 2013). She further argues that this shift in education discourse³⁵ may lead to situation where children, childhood and ECCD may be seen as a social investment. Similarly, Miller and Almon (2009, p. 11) argue that "Kindergartners are now under great pressure to meet inappropriate expectations, including academic standards that until recently were reserved for first grade" In the end, this may lead to a situation where one cannot tell the different between an ECCD centre and a primary school. ECCD centres may be seen as or become an extension of formal education (Matafwali, 2007). This can be attributed to lack of conceptualization of ECCD that one may call *Zambian* and the one that the local people can identify themselves with as well as relevant to the local context.

During informal dialogues with children, some narrated to me what they wanted to be when they grow up and the reasons why they described learning as 'good'. My analysis suggested that children perceive learning as 'good' and an upward trajectory or means to meeting their future aspiration which in turn would position them to help both their parents and siblings. Children perceptions somewhat coincide with parents expectations of children's formal learning at the centre. This perception reflects the interdependent social relationship between parents and children characterised by reciprocity as argued within the social exchange theory and norm of reciprocity. Parents invest time, resources and make sacrifices for the child with the hope that the child will reciprocate in the near future by taking care of and supporting

³⁵ discourse refer to the dynamic and shifting ways in which we understand, think and act regarding children's education (Kjørholt in Suzuki, 2014)

them. The Children themselves are also motivated by the aspiration of becoming somebody in the future that will position them in society to render support to both their parents and siblings as well as transforming their own lives.

7.2 Children's agency on the playground: play and social relations

Having discussed children's and adult's perceptions of play and learning, I now turn to discuss children's agency on the playground. Agency is one of the important concepts in the social studies of childhood because it positions children in society as social actors in their own right who have agency. Prout and James (1997) describe children's agency as the ability to be active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of people around them and the societies in which they live. Furthermore, agency is understood by Robson, Bell, and Klocker (2007, p. 135) as

An individual's own capacities, competencies and activities through which they navigate the contexts and positions of their life world, fulfilling many economic, social and cultural expectations while simultaneously charting individual and/or collective choices and possibilities for daily and future lives.

while James and James (2012) simply describe it as children's ability to act independently in their social world. The most important thing about agency is that it underscores children's capacities to make choices about the things they do and how they express themselves (James et al., 1998). The social studies of childhood illuminate our understanding of children's ability to act and think independently. Children are seen as active, thinking, rational individuals and social actors with agency (James & Prout, 1997). Drawing from my analysis of children's action on the playground, I established that children exercise and demonstrate high levels of agency.

7.2.1 Children's play and agency

Children's ability to act can be constrained by a number of factors such as gender, place, age or social structures in which they find themselves. In the case of children at the ECCD centre where I undertook the study, lack of play facilities and insufficient play space are factors that limit their play choices and at the same time compel them to exercise their agency. Robson et al. (2007) argue that children's creative and active agency manifest in many different ways depending on the circumstances and the context shaping the limitation within which children find ways to act. Its manifestation reflects the diversity of the challenges and situations that children face (Boushel et al., 2000). For the children at this ECCD centre, lack of play

facilities and insufficient play space present the context and circumstance shaping the limitation in which they find ways to act.

The children (boys) demonstrated agency in this environment by using their creativity, initiative and resourcefulness in identifying frames of old burnt cars to create play space and their own play experiences. Children's ability to think and act independently in this situation is consistent with the arguments within the social studies of childhood concerning agency. Children are seen as active and rational social actors with agency (James & Prout, 1997). This finding coincides with Chatterjee (2006) findings in Indian where both boys and girls used old cars to create their own play experiences. she states that boys and girl were observed by staff getting on the old car with one boy on the driver's seat and one girl on the passages seat while the other children climbed on top as passenger imagining they were driving (cf.Chatterjee, 2006, pp. 145-146). Similarly, the findings by Punch (2003) among Bolivian children demonstrate how children apply their agency by using readily available resources in their site to create their own play experiences

Children's initiative and creativity in the use of old cars also demonstrate how agency can be enhanced when children play without adult control or authority. This argument resonate with Pellegrini and Blatchford (2000, p. 20) argument that "generally environments that are highly structured by adults elicit lower levels of social competence from children than do less structured environments". If adults were present in the play space, they would have stooped children from using old cars with concerns of safety taking centre stage.

7.2.2 Social relations and agency

The playground also provided an arena for social interaction among the children at the centre. As previously noted some relationships were gendered while others were of mixed sex. In all these interaction children's competence and agency were manifested. In their peer to peer³⁶ interaction during break time both boys and girls demonstrated their competence and agency in creating and maintaining social relations as well as making choices about their social relations. Children's ability to act in the choices made concerning whom to play with and which social group to belong to, demonstrates that they are social actors and Morrow (2011, p. 11) argues that " the idea that children are social actors in their own right underpins the notion of children's agency. Children acted independently without adult interference on the

³⁶"Peer refer to individuals of equal status" (Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2000, p. 21) simply children of the same age group

playground. The above situations provide some of the many examples of how children in early learning (ECCD) centres apply their agency and competence.

This suggests an existence of a social structure which supports children to be creative or innovative. Creativity is possible because the existing structure provides opportunities for children to explore/enhance their agency or the capacity to transpose and extend schemas to new contexts. Such an inclusive structure could have in general positive implications on children's ability to confidently define their identity and abilities as the support from friends or significant others, play a major role in building one's identity through feedback processes

7.3 Direct and Indirect Benefits of ECCD Programs

The effectiveness of the given cause of action lies in results that it produces for the intended target subjects. According to Deutsch (1998b, p. 1)

The best [ECCD] programs aim to improve school readiness and reduce the risk of future social exclusion of children at risk through providing their families with support in the areas of custodial care for preschool children, child health and nutrition, early childhood education, and guidance and education on effective parenting techniques

Globally, a number of scholars have highlighted the benefits accrued to both children and parents resulting from participating in ECCD. Drawing on my analysis and interpretation of data from the field, the findings revealed that ECCD has both direct and indirect benefits.

Promoting children's school readiness was identified as one of the direct benefits of ECCD. Adult participants narrated that that ECCD helps children to acquire necessary skills that help them to easily adapt in primary (formal) school. In ECCD centres, children learn how to write, speak and interact with friends. While direct benefits of ECCD are evident in promoting school readiness, indirect ones have also been noted. The study suggested that ECCD enhances children's protection, and empower working parent especially mothers who are traditionally entrusted with role of caring for children with time to attend to work. Deutsch (1998b) shares the same view and asserts that indirectly ECCD increases working parents' participation in the labour force and earning possibilities for parents (usually mothers) of children who participate in child care programs. Therefore, "if child care services inherent in [ECCD] allows [parents] to work in market place, income gained can be counted as a benefit of the [ECCD] program" (Van der Gaag & Tan, 1998, p. 16).

In addition to empowering women with more time to attend work, the study also indicated that ECCD enhances children's protection. The ECCD centre is coordinated and supervised

by adult trained caregivers and when the children come to the centre, they are left in the hands of same adult care givers. It is undeniable that urban areas in Zambia are associated with busy labour market. Irrespective of the social class or education, the survival of families is dependent on the individual efforts to raise income whether in skilled or unskilled labour force. Working parents spend long hour away from home such that sometimes they leave younger children in care of fellow or older siblings and yet mothers are people that have traditionally been give the responsibility of taking care of children at home (Meherali, Karmaliani, & Asad, 2011). The poor economic situation of the country contest this traditional position of women to be just carers of children at home as such it pushes them into the labour market for the survival of their families. Consequently, they find little time to provide total care to their children. In the same vein, Nair and Rekha Radhakrishnan (2004, p. 230) state that “the challenging living conditions and long work hours undermine the capacity of these mothers to provide optimal care for children” whereby at times compromising children’s safety when left in the care of fellow siblings.

Caregivers’ and children’s comments during informal dialogues also revealed that working parents are sometimes faced with a catch-22³⁷ situation when older siblings in their homes attend afternoon school. On one hand, parents are expected to providing care to the children, on the other hand they are expected to attend work that help them raise income to support their families during the same period. As result of this dilemma, some parents have made special arrangement with caregivers take care of their children whilst they are working. I do not claim to generalise this finding since my study was undertaken at one ECCD centre but I wish to bring to the fore, an emerging important role ECCD is playing in providing substitute care for the urban working parents in Zambia. This finding suggests the emergence of afterschool care in early learning centres. However, it is imperative to note that afterschool care comes with its own cost. If one looks at the poverty situation in Zambia where the majority population (60.5%) fall below the poverty line with 42.3 % living in extreme poverty, it may be a challenge for poor families to afford such services especially for the urban poor and rural masses. Most of the early learning centres in Zambia are in the hands of the private sector and services are provided at a fee.

37 A catch-22 is Paradoxical situation from which an individual cannot escape because of contradictory rules or events often result from rules, regulations, or procedures that an individual is subject to but has no control over ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catch-22_\(logic\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catch-22_(logic))).

In addition, this finding may not be very relevant for the rural masses where the value of relatedness is very strong; people live as a collective and take care of each other including siblings that belong one of the family and community members. Njungwe (2009, p. 16) argues that “In traditional Africa, an individual is considered to be part and parcel of a group and depends on his group which is obliged to assist”. Therefore, the extended family, the neighbourhood and the community at large still remains strong in rural areas to provide that needed substitute care in an event that one of its members is away working.

8 Chapter eight: Concluding Remarks

The study was set out to explore and generate knowledge about Centre Based ECCD as it is experienced by Orphans and Vulnerable children and staffs (adults) from the urban setting of Lusaka. It was pivotal to explore these experiences to contribute towards the generation of knowledge for a balanced and informed policy making and project planning. In addition, to contribute to the creation of awareness concerning local experiences of ECCD. The study identified different social practices at the centre, diverse perception of play and learning and multiple challenges that the staff encounter when implementing ECCD programs. The study focused on the experiences of play, learning and healthcare from children's and adult's perspectives. It also focused on staffs' reflections on implementing Centre Based ECCD. In addition, it sought to know if local cultural practice had been incorporated in the program and how the ACRWC and UNCRC were applied in ECCD program.

General theoretical literature on ECCD in both African and western context is inclusive in the research questions within the ECCD discourse.

The main empirical findings of this study were grouped into two chapters; experiences of children's play, learning and healthcare and experiences of implementing ECCD program which were summarized within the respective empirical chapters.

8.1 Children's everyday life and social practices at the centre

Exploring children's everyday life and social practice was one of the endeavours of this study. The study revealed that children's everyday life at the centre is organised around play and learning. However the triangulation of data sources suggests that children have preference for play over learning. In addition, Observations of children's social practices revealed that it's not only formal learning that takes place at the centre but also informal learning. For example, when children notice that one of them has no food, they share the little food they carry when they come to the centre. This suggests that ECCD also provides an arena for informal learning among children, where children develop relationships and learn empathy and generosity. It was also revealed that social practices such as greeting adults and prayers helped children to learn and develop moral that help them to grow up in fear of God and have respect for adults in society which are central to Zambian society. Adoption and assimilation of some of key cultural norm and values at the centre is cardinal for smooth integration of children within the Zambian society as they grow up as these social practices denote the adult construction of a 'proper' child and 'good' citizens.

8.2 Experiences and perspective of play, learning and health care

The study sought to explore the experiences of play, learning and healthcare from children's and adults' perspectives. Analysis of empirical data revealed that perceptions of play and learning vary considerably. I found out that play and learning are intertwined and staff use play to teach children thus perceiving it as learning and pedagogical tool while the children enjoyed having free play time. The children perceived play as fun. In contrast, staff's comments concerning parents suggested that parents perceive play as a 'waste of time'. I established that parents' perspectives were not very supportive towards play as they viewed play as not preparing children with the right skills or competences to successfully undertake high education. They expected children at the centre to be learning formal things for example speaking 'good' English, counting, naming things and writing which act as benchmark for a good future career. I have argued that these perceptions have serious ECCD policy and project planning implication. Parent's perceptions and expectations may lead to ECCD curricula becoming very formal and ignoring the important contribution of play towards the social, physical and intellectual development of the child. Besides it may lead to changes in ECCD discourse with formal education as the main goal rather than laying the foundation thus ECCD centres becoming an extension or expansion of primary school. Therefore, I argue that play should remain an integral part of ECCD because of its various contributions towards the social, physical and intellectual developed of the child. These Findings provide the importance of getting children's views on matters that affect them. If policy and projects are to address or respond to the need of children, their experiences and perspectives must be considered because the efficacy of the policy and project will depend on children's experiences. The findings suggest the need for stakeholders to put in place measures or policies aimed at sensitising parents on the relevance of play at the centres

In relation to children's play on the playground, the study revealed that children are social actors with agency. Based on the observations of children's action on the playground I established that the challenges children face in different situations for instance on the playground compel them to exercise agency. I observed children using old burn cars to create play experiences to meet their play need. Children's actions on the ground contest the dominant framework conventional view that children are passive. Thus, I have argued that children are active social actors with agency in line with social studies of childhood's argument and the children's rights perspective. The children used their agency to create their own play experiences. The children also demonstrated that they are social actor through their

creation and maintenance of social relation and as well as the choices made concerning the group they wanted to belong to on the playground.

With regards to gendered play on the playground, the study revealed that gendered play in early learning centres is not permanent but fluid. The findings indicated children's tendency of switching play activities that are both gendered and unisex depending on the kind of game or play activity initiated within a short space of time. Gendered play became more defined when children played alone without adult control but become less defined under adult organized activities. Therefore, I have argued that gendered play in early learning centres is instantaneous, momental and contextual. It may therefore be important to promote more those games which allow for gender diversity if gender inclusiveness in play is to be enhanced.

Another important theme in this study was learning. The findings revealed diverse perceptions of learning. Based on the analysing of the empirical data, I established that children perceived learning as something good and an upward career 'trajectory' or means to meeting their future aspirations that will position them to help their parents and siblings. Children's perception of learning was attributed to parents' sentiments to children concerning what children should become when they grow up. On the contrary, the findings revealed that staff perceived learning as tool and strategy for preparing children for smooth transition from ECCD centre to formal schools. They explained that learning in ECCD centres help children to acquire social and academic skills that help them to easily adapt in primary school. Therefore I argue that ECCD centres should remain centred on laying the foundation for smooth transition than becoming formal and should focus on motivating children as they prepare to start formal school. Achieving this requires reorienting the perspectives of teachers through refresher training. Change in perspective is vital as it will enable the teachers to adequately meet and support the expectations of the children of what ECCD centre should provide. This is crucial for captivating interest in children in attending the ECCD centre.

In addition, the findings suggested that the provision of ECCD takes an Edu-care approach. Not only do care givers educate children on academic matters at the centre but also integrate health matters such as issues of hygiene in their lessons which reflects the idea that education and care are intertwined. With regard to healthcare, the study revealed that the centre offers preventive health care. Both children and the staff perceived healthcare as a preventive. In addition, the staff perceived healthcare as an important component of ECCD that requires participatory and multi-sectoral approach for the purpose of service complementation.

8.3 Child recruitment on ECCD program

The study revealed that children are recruited on the program using a participatory approach. Different stake holders are involved in the process of recruitment. The process of recruitment begins with the awareness of the services the centre will be offering. The awareness is undertaken to ensure that people understand the value of the program and identify themselves with program for its sustainability. The caregivers who coordinate activities at the centre and community members work together in the recruitment of orphans and vulnerable children who the main target of the program.

8.4 Benefits of ECCD

The study revealed that ECCD plays a significant role in promoting school readiness. Based on staffs accounts and observations I deduced that early learning centre help children to become confident, interact with friends easily and acquire basic academic skills that can help them adapt easily when to move to formal schools. The findings also suggested that ECCD helps parents to strike a balance between parenting roles and livelihood. When children are enrolled in ECCD centres, working parents manage to find time to attend to work thus I have argued that ECCD not only benefits children but also empowers working parents to join the labour force to meet the needs of their families. In addition, the findings suggested that ECCD enhances child protection during the period when parent are working. ECCD centres provide the substitute custodial role. By so doing, I argued that ECCD upholds children right to protection.

8.5 Staffs' reflections on ECCD policy

The study revealed that a lack of ECCD policy in Zambia has affected the implementation of ECCD. There is no uniformity in the manner that ECCD is implemented by different Organization and institutions. The findings indicate that there are no standard syllabi or curricula for ECCD and organizations that have developed their own, heavily borrow ideas from preschools and foreign curricula. As resulted ECCD centre are becoming a replica and an expansion of basic schools and preschools which have formal education orientation. Besides, the ECCD sector has not received much funding and organization implementing ECCD are finding it difficult to access the funds to expand ECCD services and deal with some of the financial challenges they face in implementing ECCD programs. I thus argue that, the government must enact the ECCD policy to standardize ECCD practices and avoid replication of formal education in early learning centre. Thereby focusing on supports that

are necessary for children to realise their right to survival, to protection, and to care that ensure optimal development (Evans et al., 2000).

8.6 Local cultural practices incorporated in the ECCD Program

The study suggested that ECCD has been part of the traditional practice in Zambia. However, the practices were not categorized as ECCD. The study revealed a number of local cultural practices that have been incorporated in the program which included the use of local languages when teaching children, introduction of local games such as *ichiyoto*, *nsolo* and traditional dance and songs as well as the use of storytelling. Based on staff's remarks, I deduced that local cultural practices play a significant role in the social, intellectual development as well as the smooth transition of child from home to the centre and vice versa. Therefore, I argue the practices and development of ECCD should be built on these relevant local cultural practices if ECCD is to remain relevant to local context. ECCD practices at the centre reflected cultural hybridization. Local culture games and activities as well as the languages have been blended with the western ones. Therefore, ECCD can be used in maintenance of cultural heritage and transmitting cultural value from one generation to another in line with the provisions of the African charter on rights of the child.

8.7 Application of UNCRC and ACRWC in the implementation of Centre Based ECCD

The study revealed that the children's rights conventions have been integrated in the ECCD programming through the rights based approach. The conventions have been translated into programming through provision of education, play and healthcare to orphans and vulnerable children for free regardless of their gender and disability which is in line with the first goal of the education international agreement which was reaffirmed during the Dakar forum in 2000 (Penn, 2004). The empirical material revealed that the UNCRC was the only convention receiving much attention in ECCD programs. According to the informants, the UNCRC had been integrated into the caregivers training manuals. I argue that the UNCRC has received much attention due to the influence of donors' orientation and funding conditionality where funders only talk about the UNCRC.

Despite the UNCRC receiving much attention, empirical data suggested that ACRWC was also employed as evidenced in the different local cultural practices that were incorporated in the ECCD program.

8.8 Challenges staffs encounter in implementing centre based ECCD programs

There were several challenges identified by the study that staffs encounter when implementing ECCD programs. Based on the findings, staff turnover came out as one of the challenges. It was established that caregivers have been leaving the organization because they were not being paid due lack of fund on part of the organization. In relation to staff turnover, is the ambiguity surrounding voluntary work. The study revealed that most of care giver joined the organization as volunteers with a hope that one day they get a paid job. However, the period when voluntary work would come to an end was not clear. As a result, those that find the situation not appealing decide to leave the organization and seek new endeavours. I established that this challenge results from the lacuna in the Zambian labour laws.

The third challenge identified by the study was land inadequacy and insufficient play space. Observations and comments made by staff suggested that finding adequate children's play space in a location where they are already established infrastructures was difficult. NGOs in the urban areas heavily rely on already established infrastructure for their projects. As a result play infrastructure cannot be developed especially if the owners of the properties cannot allow modification to be made on their properties.

Lack of appreciation for ECCD was the fourth challenge identified in the study. This related to misconception that people have on what constitute an ECCD centre. The findings revealed that parents expect ECCD centre to offer very formal education services such as children. Therefore, the use of play in ECCD centre is perceived as the waste of time and centres that consider play as an important activity are not perceived as proper places for their children. I have argued that lack of local conceptualization of ECCD has contributed to people's perception and misconception of what constitute ECCD. Therefore, more awareness is needed on the focus of ECCD and this can begin with the enactment of the ECCD policy.

Lack of ECCD policy was another big challenge that came out during the discussions. The study revealed that the implementation of ECCD in Zambia lacked standard guidelines to follow. As a result different organizations and institution are using different curricula or syllabi. Therefore I argue that the existing disparities may pose a challenge in evaluating the quality of ECCD. There is need to ensure that implementers of ECCD are doing uniform things as stipulated by policy but with room for innovations.

Last but not the last is the challenge of inadequate funding. The findings of the study indicated that ECCD program at the centre has been supported through donor funding which

is limited and comes with conditionality. As a result the foundation was struggling to secure funds to pay caregivers allowance and continue with the feeding program that was quit due to lack of funds.

Therefore, in my view, organizations and institutions implementing ECCD are doing a good job in providing children with opportunities to learn and play from an early age. They are upholding children's rights to survival, protection and development. However, there are a lot of ambivalences surrounding the provision of ECCD in Zambia which results from lack of ECCCD policy framework built on relevant local cultural practices that people can identify themselves with. This is reflected in the ECCD practices by different organizations. Therefore, I argue that ECCD policy should be built on Zambian culture and practices, a model that the local people and programs will identify themselves with and also include children's views to meet their needs.

8.9 Recommendations

This study documented a number of challenges that implementers of ECCD encounter. These include staff turnover, ambiguity of voluntary work, lack of appreciation of ECCD, lack ECCD policy, inadequate land and insufficient play space and inadequate funding. Am aware that NGO sometimes work in difficult circumstance, however, they should consider developing project sustainable measure such as income generating activities that will support care givers from the onset of the project.

The government should consider coming on board in the provisions ECCD by first enacting the ECCD policy and then share the responsibility of paying caregivers. The enactment of the policy is not only important for government commitment to funding of ECCD services but also to the standardization of ECCD practice and evaluation of ECCD efficacy.

By and large, the development of ECCD policy and ECCD programs must be built on relevant local cultural practices and incorporate children views if children's needs are to be addresses and remain relevant to local context.

8.10 Further research

In this thesis I have argued that lack of local conceptualization of ECCD had contributed to lack of appreciation of ECCD. But the question is, what childhood local cultural practice do people identify themselves with in adult life that needs to be incorporated in ECCD?

Therefore research is needed in local cultural practices that will help in contextualizing ECCD locally.

The study also highlighted the emerging indirect benefit of ECCD in providing afterschool care (custodial role). Further research is needed to establish the extent to which after school care is being used by working parents in urban areas.

8.11 Study limitation

The results of the findings could not be generalised to other contexts because the study was based on one ECCD centre. However, the study has offered valuable experiences and perspective on ECCD for policy and project formulation and improvements through a sample of children alongside adults. As result of this methodology, the study encountered some limitations which need to be considered. In the use individual drawings with the younger children, limited exposure to visual imaginary resulted into children reproducing drawings that were in the classroom. However, the use of combined methods and children's own interpretations of drawing provided valuable data for analysis.

Finding written and published material on ECCD in Zambia was a challenge. However, review of joint international research material and review of regional material provided valuable information that touched on Zambia.

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10 Appendices

Appendix 1: Individual Drawings guide

Draw a picture of:

- What you do when you come to the centre
- What you play and learn at the centre
- Where you play learn and with whom
- How your play with and learn at this centre
- Your favourite activities at the centre

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Children

Children's play learning and healthcare and Social practices

General issues

1. Tell me something about this place?
2. What do you call this place?
3. How long have you been at this centre?

Every day practices

4. Tell me about what you do when you come to this centre?
5. Could you please describe how your day is like at the centre?
6. If you had a sibling or friend who wanted to come to this centre, what would you tell them was the best thing about this place?

Play

7. Tell me about playing at the centre?
8. Could you please describe what you play at this centre?
9. How do you play and where?
10. What are your favorite activities or games you play at this centre?

Learning

11. Tell me about what do you learn when you came to the centre?
12. How do you learn at this centre?
13. Where do you learn from?

Health care

14. Tell me about the food and meal you have at the centre
15. Tell about your experiences with doctors when they come to your centre?

Thank you for your time and responses

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Staff

Staff perspectives of children's play learning and healthcare as well as reflections on implementing Centre Based ECCD programs

General issues

1. Tell me about your role at the ECCD centre?
2. For how long have you been working with Mulumbo Early Childhood Development Foundation (MECDF)?

Child recruitment and benefits of ECCD

3. What is your understanding of early childhood care and development?
4. Do you think early childhood care and development programmes are important in Zambia? Why?
5. Tell me about how children are recruited on your ECCD programme?

Every day practices

6. Could you describe how the children's everyday life is like at the ECCD centre?
7. Tell me about what children do when they come to this centre?
8. What inform the daily practices of ECCD at the centre?
9. If you had a friend or family member who wanted to bring a child to this school or centre, what would you tell them was the best thing about this place?

Play

10. What is your understanding of play?
11. Tell me why you think play is important for children at the ECCD centre?
12. Could you please describe what children play at this school or centre?
13. What local traditional games have you incorporated in your programmes and why?

Learning

14. Tell me about that children learn when they come to the ECCD centre?
15. How do children learn at the centre?
16. How do you ensure continuity or connectivity of what, and how children learn with their local knowledge and daily practices in their homes?

Health care

17. Tell me about how healthcare is provided to children at your centre?
18. Could you describe the healthcare services you offer to children at this centre?

Local knowledge and practices

19. What local knowledge and practices have you incorporated in your ECCD Programmes?
20. How do you feel about the how ECCD is currently practiced at the centre?
21. What do you think should be changed? Why?

Programme Implementation

Child recruitment and benefits of ECCD

22. What is your understanding of early childhood care and development?
23. Do you think early childhood care and development programmes are important in Zambia? Why?
24. Tell me about how children are recruited on your ECCD programme?
25. Could you describe how you ensure that children's needs and rights are met under the Centre Based ECC D
26. How do you apply the convention on the rights of the child under your program?
27. What are the challenges you face when running Centre Based ECCD?
28. What do you think can be done to solve these challenges

Thank you for your time and responses.

Appendix 4. Focus Group Discussion Interview Guide for Staff

Opinions about children's play learning and health and experiences of Centre Based ECCD programme

General issues

1. Tell me about your experiences of ECCD at Mulumbo Early Childhood Care and Development Foundation?

Every day practices

2. What are the everyday practices of early childhood Care and development at this centre?
3. What inform the everyday practices at centre?

Play

4. What is your understand of the term play?
5. What do children play when they come to this centre?
6. What local traditional games have you incorporated in your programme?
7. How do you feel about incorporating local knowledge and practices in ECCD?

Learning

8. What do children learn when they come to the ECCD centre?
9. How do you ensure continuity or connectivity of what, and how children learn with their local knowledge and daily practices in their homes?

Health care

10. Tell me about how Healthcare is provided at this centre?
11. Could describe the healthcare services offered to children at this centre?

Program implementation

12. What is your understanding of early childhood care and development?
13. Do you think early childhood care and development programmes are important in Zambia? Why?
14. Could you describe how your programme ensures that children's needs are met under the centre based ECC D
15. Tel me how you use the child rights conventions in implementing ECCD under your institution?
16. What are the challenges faces by centre based ECCD?
17. What do you think can be done to solve these challenges?

Thank you for your time and responses.

Appendix 5: Children informed Consent form



My name is

I have come here because I would like to learn from you how you play and learn at your school. I would like also to learn about the care and treatment you get when you are at the centre.



During the time that I will be learning from you, you will be doing some drawings and then I will be asking you to tell me a story about what will be in the picture.

I wish to promise you that everything that you tell me , will remain a secret between you and me. You do not have to tell me anything you don't want me to know. In everything that will be doing, there will be no wrong answers because you know better than I do.

When we start talking, you can ask me to stop if you don't want to continue. Your participation in the activities is for free and you do not receive anything in return.



You can circle the tick if you want to participate or you can circle the Cross if you don't want to participate



YES



NO

Appendix 6: Parental/Guardian informed consent form

Early childhood care and development; children and staffs’ experiences in urban Zambia.

My name is a student at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) where I am learning about children. I came here to learn from your children about their experiences of learning, health care and play at the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centre.

This study will take approximately 2 months. During the study, children will participate in drawings and one-to-one interviews. The aim of my study is to generate knowledge about children and staffs’ experiences of ECCD in urban areas.

There are no foreseeable and known risks associated with this study. In an event that the child feels stressed, the counsellor at the centre or caregivers will be informed immediately since all the activities under the study will be conducted at the centre.

I guarantee the privacy and confidentiality of the child in this study. No child’s identity will be revealed in any publication resulting from this study to ensure that the child’s right to privacy is respected.

There are no known immediate benefits to the child that would result from the child’s participation in this study. However, this study may help policy makers and organizations understand how ECCD in urban areas is experienced for good planning and policy formulations in this Country.

Your child has a right to withdrawal from the study at any time. The child also has a right not to answer questions that he or she does not want to answer. Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may allow your child to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. No child will be penalized for withdrawing from the study.

Please sign this form to acknowledge that you have read and understood the conditions set forth above and that you agree to allow my child to participate in this study

Signature of Parent/Guardian	Date
Signature of Researcher	Date

Appendix 7: Staff (adults) informed consent form

Early childhood care and development; children and staffs' experiences in urban Zambia

My name is a student at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) doing MPhil in childhood studies. I am here to do a study project and learn from your experiences of centre based ECCD.

This study will take approximately 2 months from. During this period I will be having one-to-one interviews and some focus group discussions with you on ECCD. The main aim of my study is generate knowledge about your experiences of ECCD in urban areas in Zambia. This knowledge may be beneficial for the organization for future planning as well as the government in policy formulation.

I guarantee your privacy and confidentiality in this study. Whatever will be discussed during interviews will remain in confidence. No staff identity will be revealed in any publication resulting from this study to ensure that your right to privacy is respected. Only pseudo names will be used to represent the views of individual staff.

You have a right to withdrawal from the study at any time. You have the right not answer questions that you do not want to answer.

Your Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time and you will not penalize in any way by your institution.

Please sign this form to acknowledge that you have read and understood the conditions set forth above.

Signature of Participant Date

Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix 8: Ethical Clearance Letter

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

NSD

Havsti lilegaten gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
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Anne Trine Kjørholt
Norsk senter for barneforskning
NTNU
Leiholt Allé 87, Pavillion C
7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 27.05.2013 Vår ref:34529 / 3 / HT Deres dato: Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 13.05.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

34529 *Early Childhood Care and Development: how children and staff experience centre based ECCD in urban Zambia. A case of Msalamba Early Childhood Care and Development Foundation programmes in Lusaka*

Behandlingsansvarlig NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig Anne Trine Kjørholt
Student Aaron Faro Mvula

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilrådning forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Erindringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pro.nsd.no/prosjekt/>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.06.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen


Vigdis Nantvedt Kvalheim


Hildur Thorarensen

Kontaktperson: Hildur Thorarensen tlf: 55 58 26 54
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Aaron Faro Mvula, Moholt Studentby, Herman Kragsveg 22-52, 7050 TRONDHEIM

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7034529 NSD SAS, Universitet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47 77 54 43 38, nsd@hiv.uib.no

Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 34529

According to the notification form there will be obtained verbal and written consent based on verbal and written information about the project and the processing of personal data. The Data Protection Official for Research finds the letters of information satisfactory according to the Personal Data Act, but there should be added information in letters to parents that they may see the interview guides before they decide whether to let their children participate.

The information will be registered on a private computer. The Data Protection Official for Research presupposes that the use of a private computer is in accordance with the routines for data security for NTNU.

There might be registered sensitive information relating to health, cf. Personal Data Act § 2, no. 8 c).

When the project is completed, by 15.06.2014, the data material will be made anonymous by deleting directly and indirectly identifying variables and audio-recordings will be deleted. In order for the data to be fully anonymised, all directly identifying data, such as names/reference numbers must be deleted, and indirectly identifying data in the remaining material must be deleted or changed.

Appendix 9 Letter of Introduction



NORSK SENTER FOR
BARNEFORSKNING

THE NORWEGIAN CENTRE
FOR CHILD RESEARCH

To whom it may concern

Our consultant:
Line Hellem
Higher Executive Officer
Telephone no.: +4773596357
E-mail: line.hellem@svt.ntnu.no

Dated:
2013-05-28

Our ref.:

Your letter dated:

Your ref.:

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

We hereby confirm that Aaron Faro Mvula, born 10 November 1981, is a student in the programme *Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies* at Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway. He will undertake his fieldwork and data collection from 6 June to 9 August 2013, in Lusaka, Zambia, on the topic:

*Early Childhood Care and Development: children and staff's experiences in urban Zambia.
A case of Mulumbo Early Childhood Care and Development Foundation programmes in Lusaka*

We would be grateful for any assistance given to him during this process. This includes granting interviews, assisting him in making appointments, handing out materials and making information accessible to him. We ensure that the information collected is treated confidentially, and that the fieldwork bears no costs on the institutions and persons visited.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Trine Kjørholt
Supervisor/Professor
Director of Norwegian Centre for Child Research



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