



## Preschool Teachers' Practice and Challenges of Early Childhood Care and Education Policy: The Case of Basona Worana Woreda, North Shawa Zone

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to assess preschool teachers' practice of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy and the challenges they face in Basona Worana Woreda. A mixed approach with an embedded design was employed in this study. The study was conducted at 65 preschools. Since the number of the target population was so reasonable (159), all preschool teachers and preschool principals were included using the comprehensive sampling technique. Questionnaire and document reviews were used for data collection. The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency, mean, and one sample T-test whereas the qualitative data gathered through document review were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The findings of the study revealed that preschool teachers' policy practice was at an average level, and the extent of their knowledge of responsibilities was above average and their knowledge about roles and implementation of tasks was below average. Among the many challenges that hindered the practice of the preschool teachers were children's inappropriate age, unqualified preschool teachers, less parent participation, inadequate outdoor materials, lack of enough skills to perform responsibilities, lack of interest in one's profession, lack of knowledge on policy, and lack of supportive curricular materials. It implies that there are significant gaps on preschools teachers in several aspects including the challenges they faced. As a result, upgrading preschool teachers' qualification, creating ECCE policy awareness, having continuous discussions with parents and preschool teachers, fulfilling materials, and providing intensive practical training on the use of teaching methods and assessing practice were recommended.*

Keywords: ECCE Policy, Knowledge, Policy Practice, Challenge

### 1. Introduction

The government of Ethiopia recognizes the importance of ECCE, as a critical developmental period that requires due attention and a great deal of investment thus, the national ECCE policy visualizes the nurturing and promotion of holistic

development and the active learning capacity of all children below seven years of age (Ministry of Education (MoE, 2010). Nevertheless, the implementation of the ECCE program needs the contribution of different stakeholders, as failure by one party can affect the role of others and the

achievement of the target goal of the ECCE policy.

For instance, those interested in the responsibility of supporting the learning and development of preschool children should have qualities such as: knowledge and skills related to holistic child development; ability to work well with children, parents, and others in the preschool setting; commitment to enhancing the development of young children; love and respect for all children regardless of their culture, ethnicity, or any other differences; be advocates of the rights and protection of the child and be holders of a training certificate in child development (MoE, 2010).

One of the primary stakeholders responsible for the preschool program is the preschool teachers who are key actors in the teaching and learning process as it is presented under the ECCE policy (MOE, 2010). This could be possible if and only if they are able to know their learners very well as learners, thereby cultivating an interest in retain what they learn (Msonde, 2009).

In harmony with the view above, the national ECCE guidelines clearly state that teaching methods in preschool must be child-centered, with children actively involved in the learning process (MoE, 2010). Moreover, Jackman (2001) stated that quality care and education require a teacher to know the developmental characteristics of children; and then that teacher will understand what needs to go into the framework of an age-appropriate classroom and age-appropriate activities. With regard to curriculum, the ECCE guideline (MoE, 2010) puts directions that shall be recognized by preschool teachers, accordingly, teachers should: use only government-approved curriculum, adapt the curriculum to local context; incorporate the curriculum with developmentally appropriate content and activities; target all aspects of child development; avoid emphasis

on only cognitive development; and do not use the curriculum of primary school.

The other important element in early childhood education is assessment and evaluation, here what will be assessed are the young children's behaviors, skills, competencies, preferences, and interactions (Shepard et al., 1998). In this regard, the Ethiopian MoE (2010) indicates the direction in which the assessment of early childhood education in Ethiopia should look. Moreover, informal assessment is characterized in the early childhood field, and early educators have observed and recorded children's behavior naturalistically through watching children in their natural environments as youngsters' carry out everyday activities (Slentz et al., 2008).

Besides, the ECCE guideline demands regular parent teacher association meetings, community support of inputs, community collaboration in preschool activities, child participation in community affairs, and support of parental education (MoE, 2010). In addition, professional knowledge is another important attribute that principals and teachers must possess (Kantz, 2002). Besides, MoE (2010) sets educational qualification standards and teachers in preschools are required to be certified by a specific institution in Ethiopia.

Despite the greater emphasis given on policy issues, there is research evidence that policy implementation is far from what is desired in policy document. For example, a review in a policy documents by Vargas-Barón (2005) revealed that although all education plans give some attention to early childhood education, most do not take the holistic approach to ECCE promoted by the Dakar Framework for Action. Further, UNESCO and UNICEF (2012) reported that despite the recognition of the contribution of ECCE towards broader social, economic, and education goals is being recognized, the

sector remains underdeveloped in several countries.

Thus, the challenges of ECCE policy implementation are diverse, and some studies have realized that the problem is related to preschool teachers. For example, Nielson (2006) stated that preschool teachers should be constantly alert and always searching for ways to extend the children's discoveries and enhance their learning. However, MoE (2009) reports indicate that ECCE teachers are not well trained for preschool teaching; they are not working in collaboration with families, and other professionals. Besides, a research conducted in some Sub-Saharan countries confirmed that the most worrisome is teachers' educational background, quality of teaching and learning, working conditions of the teachers and caregivers, and issues relating to salaries and wages, management and supervision of the teachers and centers in which they work as well as coordination of all those providing preschool services (Vargas-Barón, 2005).

Moreover, teaching methods are an important path that leads to the success of objectives (Libâneo cited in Adriana & Vilma, 2013). Further, provision that may not be well coordinated and/or regulated is another factor that hinders the implementation of ECCE policy (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2012). Besides, the availability of human and non-human resources is another critical factor that inhibits effective implementation of policies. For example, a study in Kenya confirmed that the implementation process of ECCE policy was hampered by several factors, including low financing and negative attitudes towards ECCE among senior ministries (Ngigi et al., 2015).

Moreover, in Ethiopia, there have been several studies conducted on the situation of ECCE, among them were: Yigzaw and Abdirahman (2017) conducted a study on the practices and challenges of public and private

preschools of Jigjiga City Administration, and the results revealed that preschool practices in all sampled preschools were found to be below standard. Similarly, Fedlu (2018) conducted research on the implementation and challenges of the policy set for early childhood care and education in Addis Ababa found out the ECCE policy emphasized only access.

However, all the researchers did not investigate policy implementation analysis against the policy guidelines stated in the national ECCE policy framework of 2010, and they focused only on the urban areas of the country. Moreover, the studies reviewed above and others never show the situation of teachers' practice in line with their roles and responsibilities as stated in the ECCE policy. Because their studies are general and they were unable to discover which part of the policy regarding preschool teachers did not implement and they were conducted in other areas that the findings could not be confidently generalized to Basona Worana Woreda.

Therefore, to fill those gaps, the researchers conducted this research entitled Preschool teachers' practice of ECCE policy and the challenges they face in Basona Worana Woreda. As the study focused on assessing the practice of ECCE policy by preschool teachers, it helped the preschool teachers in the study area to know the level of their awareness and implementation of tasks regarding the national ECCE policy. Moreover, the study gives evidence-based information to principals, the Woreda Education office and other concerned bodies about preschool teachers' strengths and weaknesses in practicing ECCE policy. All these were the reasons that motivated the researchers to conduct a study on the ECCE policy implementation against the standards set in the Ethiopian national policy guidelines of the ECCE. In accordance, the study tried to address the following research questions.

- To what extent do preschool teachers know their professional responsibilities in preschools?
- To what extent do preschool teachers know their professional roles in preschools?
- To what extent do preschool teachers implement the tasks stated in the national ECCE policy?
- What are the major challenges that hinder preschool teachers from practicing the ECCE policy?

**2. Methods**

**2.1. Research Design and Approach**

This study employed a descriptive survey design that aimed at describing the data obtained from the participants regarding the preschool teachers’ practice of ECCE policy in Basona Worana Woreda of the North Shawa Zone. The mixed research approaches of quantitative and qualitative (the embedded design) were chosen for this research. This design was chosen because the researchers wanted to focus on the quantitative data, yet the reseachers still understood how the qualitative data further supported the quantitative data. In this research, the quantitative and qualitative data were

collected simultaneously; however, the qualitative data were embedded within the quantitative data.

**2.2. Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The population of the study was 92 (M=23, F=69) preschool teachers and 65 (M=61, F=4) preschool principals who were working in the 65 preschools in the study area. All preschools do not have their own principals, particularly to those preschools attached to the primary school; therefore every primary school principal is at the same time responsible for the preschools. Moreover, only one preschool teacher was available at most of the preschools and a few preschools had two or three preschool teachers. As the target population was small enough to include all 92 preschool teachers and 65 principals, comprehensive sampling technique was employed. Accordingly, the total participants of the study that primarily designed to include were 157 (100%), however, the number of participants engaged in the study was 89% as the remaining 11% of participants were not available during the data collection stage using the questionnaire.

Table 1. Summery of Total Population and Samples of the study from each Unit

Unit	Target Population and total participants designed (100%)				Respondents of the study			
	M	F	T	%	M	F	T	%
Preschool teachers	23	69	92	100	23	58	81	88
Preschool principals	61	4	65	100	56	4	60	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>90</b>

**2.3. Data Gathering Instruments**

Instruments used for data collection were prepared by the researchers and employed in line with the research questions posed in the study. The required quantitative data were gathered from preschool teachers and preschool principals through the

questionnaire, while the qualitative data were collected through document review.

**Questionnaire**

Questionnaire pertains to closed-ended items and was designed to gather data from preschool teachers and principals. The items were developed based on the national ECCE policy and guidelines of Ethiopia (MoE,

2010). The questionnaire pertains to background information, responsibility related items (9), role related items (9), implementation related items (6), and challenge related (13) items. Each question had five alternative Likert scales ranging from 5= Very high; 4=High; 3=Medium; 2=Low to 1=Very low.

### **Document Review**

Document review along with the checklist prepared based on national ECCE policy was used to examine the reviewing minutes, portfolios, and lesson plans of the randomly selected preschools. Besides, the Woreda inspection report of the preschools organized in the first semester of 2012 E.C. was reviewed. The data obtained through document and checklist review was used to cross check the data gained through the questionnaire.

### **Pilot Study**

Since the questionnaire was self-made, the validity and reliability tests were crucial. Thus, the researchers tried to check content validity using two experts from the field of leadership before the questionnaire was dispatched to the target sample. Then, the researchers amended the structure and contents of the original questionnaire based on the feedback obtained from experts. After the researchers had made an equivalent Amharic translation to make easier for the respondents, then the version was re-checked again by language experts. Finally, piloting administered in order to get the necessary comments and feedback that help maximize the validity and reliabilities of the instruments. Then, the researchers administered the Amharic version of the questionnaire to 35 preschool teachers and 10 principals, who were selected randomly from the selected preschools. Hence, the questionnaires were distributed to 45 pilot respondents and the data obtained from them was analyzed using SPSS version 22 software to calculate the internal consistency

of items using Cronbach alpha. Then, the researchers computed the results under the reliability statistics and inter item correlation matrix. Accordingly, the item analysis scale for the four constructs namely knowledge of roles, knowledge of responsibilities, implementation of policy, and challenges were found to be reliable with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78, 0.83, 0.71, and 0.74 respectively.

### **2.4. Data Analysis Techniques**

The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire, after being ready by entering it in SPSS version 22 software, the data was analyzed using statistical methods such as frequency, mean, and one sample T-test. Regarding the qualitative analysis, data obtained from open-ended questionnaire and document reviews were analyzed and reported using narrative descriptions and themes along with the quantitative data analysis.

### 3. Results

Table 2. Preschool Teachers' Knowledge of Their Responsibilities

Items of Responsibility	N	Mean	SD	t-value	DF	Sig.(2-tailed)	MD
1. Familiarity with policy and guidelines	141	2.62	1.046	-4.268	140	.000	-.376
2. Use of the curriculum approved by the MoE	141	3.08	.942	.984	140	.327	.078
3. Responsiveness to holistic child devel't	141	2.61	.947	-4.891	140	.000	-.390
4. Work with parents, students, and others	141	3.43	1.023	4.940	140	.000	.426
5. Commitment to ensure child development	141	3.57	.995	6.859	140	.000	.574
6. No discrimination based on race, gender etc.	141	4.06	.777	16.267	140	.000	1.06
7. Respecting and protecting child rights	141	3.84	.867	11.461	140	.000	.837
8. Participating in CPD and self-learning	141	3.25	1.116	2.642	140	.009	.248
9. Having pedagogical and content knowledge	141	2.43	1.077	-6.332	140	.000	-.574
<b>Knowledge of Responsibilities (Total Mean)</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>.590</b>	<b>4.222</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.210</b>

$P < .05$ , Test Value ( $M$ ) = 3, Critical Value ( $CV$ ) = 1.977,  $SD$  (Standard Deviation),  $MD$  (Mean Difference,  $DF$  (Degree of Freedom)

The one sample t-test in Table-2 reveals that preschool teachers' knowledge of their responsibilities ( $M=3.21$ ,  $SD=.590$ ,  $t(141) = 4.222$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $MD=.210$ ) implies that there is a statistically significant mean difference from test value ( $M$ )=3. This means preschool teachers' knowledge of their responsibilities stated in ECCE policy was higher than the average. As shown in Table-2, out of nine items of responsibilities, (work with parents, students, and others,  $M=3.43$ ,  $SD=1.023$ ; commitment to ensure child development,  $M=3.57$ ,  $SD=.995$ ; no discrimination based on race, gender etc.,  $M=4.06$ ,  $SD=.777$ ; respecting and protecting child rights,  $M=3.84$ ,  $SD=.867$ ; and participating in CPD and self-learning,  $M=3.25$ ,  $SD=1.116$ ) implied that there is a statistically significant difference against the observed mean( $M$ )=3.

This implies the extent of preschool teachers' knowledge of responsibilities such as working with stakeholders, commitments to ensuring child development, indiscrimination, respecting and protecting child rights, and CPD participation were above average. However, some items of responsibility had a score lower than the average such as familiarity with policy and

guidelines, responsiveness to holistic child development, and having pedagogical and content knowledge.

Moreover, the researchers also tried to check if there was an ECCE policy document during document review time in some preschools but none of the preschool principals were able to show the exact policy document they had at hand; they had only text books, syllabus and other learning materials. In addition, the researchers have reviewed staff minutes and training reports to check if agendas were discussed regarding ECCE policy awareness and children's teaching. However, it was found that nothing was done in this regard. Therefore, the opinion of the majority seems acceptable, and this strengthens the result of knowledge of policy and guidelines, knowledge and skills of holistic child development, and pedagogical and content knowledge in one sample-test analysis, which was below average.

In general, as the document review result revealed, preschool teachers had not have enough knowledge of their responsibilities as expected under ECCE policy. It was evident that there was a lack of support and training



to capacitate them. Even the simple thing, creating access to policy document was harder to find and preschool teachers

appeared sequestered to develop knowledge of their responsibilities which may affect their commitments.

Table 3. Pre-school Teachers' Knowledge of Their Roles

Items	N	Mean	SD	T	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD
1. Planner and organizer	141	3.01	.837	.201	140	.841	.014
2. Being facilitator and resource	141	2.70	1.040	-3.40	140	.001	-.298
3. Being a model	141	2.68	1.295	-2.93	140	.004	-.319
4. Observer and assessor	141	2.84	.936	-2.13	140	.039	-.156
5. Supporter and prompter	141	2.70	1.054	-3.36	140	.001	-.298
6. Participant and tutor	141	2.96	.985	-.51	140	.609	-.043
7. Communicator	141	2.94	1.009	-.75	140	.454	-.064
8. Challenger	141	2.79	.932	-2.71	140	.008	-.213
9. Controller	141	3.06	.973	.78	140	.437	.064
<b>Knowledge of Roles(Total Mean)</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>.815</b>	<b>-2.12</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>.036</b>	<b>-.146</b>

$P < .05$ , Test Value ( $M$ ) = 3, Critical Value ( $CV$ ) = 1.977, SD (Standard Deviation), MD (Mean Difference), DF (Degree of Freedom)

The one sample t-test in Table-3 reveals that teachers' knowledge of their roles ( $M=2.85$ ,  $SD=.815$   $t(140)=-2.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $MD=-.146$ ) implies that there was a statistically significant mean difference from test value ( $M=3$ ). In other words, the teachers' knowledge of their roles was below the observed average level. More specifically, the following items (being facilitator and resource,  $M=2.70$ ,  $SD=1.040$ ; being a model,  $M=2.68$ ,  $SD=1.295$ ; observer & assessor,

$M=2.84$ ,  $SD=.936$ ; supporter and prompter,  $M=2.70$ ,  $SD=1.054$ ; and challenger,  $M=2.79$ ,  $SD=.932$ ) show that there was a statistically significant mean difference from the test value ( $M=3$ ) that means teachers' knowledge of their roles such as being facilitator and resourcefulness, being model, observer and assessor, supporter and prompter, and being challenger were below the observed average.

Table 4. Preschool Teachers' Implementation of Tasks

Items	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD
1. Implement various teaching methods	141	2.96	.443	-1.069	140	.287	-.040
2. Implementing assessment methods	141	2.51	.470	-12.232	140	.000	-.484
3. Working for all aspects of child dev't	141	2.87	.489	-3.122	140	.002	-.129
4. Use of appropriate materials	141	3.03	.661	.546	140	.586	.030
5. Involving parents in preschools	141	2.48	.592	-10.360	140	.000	-.517
6. Displaying expected behaviors	141	3.40	.461	10.299	140	.000	.400
<b>Implementation of Tasks (Total Mean)</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>.371</b>	<b>-3.942</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-.123</b>

$P < .05$ , Test Value ( $M$ ) = 3, Critical Value ( $CV$ ) = 1.977, SD (Standard Deviation), MD (Mean Difference), DF (Degree of Freedom)

Implementation of tasks was another crucial requirement of the policy expected of preschool teachers. The one sample t-test in Table-4 reveals teachers' implementation of

tasks  $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=.37$ ,  $t(140)=-3.924$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $MD=-.123$  indicates that there is a statistically significant difference against the observed value ( $M=3$ ). This implies that

preschool teachers' implementation of their tasks were below the observed average.

As it is noted in Table-4, with the exception of preschool teachers' use of appropriate materials and displaying expected behaviors were above the observed average, the remaining preschool teachers' tasks such as the use of various teaching methods, applying assessment methods, work on all aspects of child development, and involving parents were below the observed average. Besides, as realized during the document review of the Woreda inspection report (2012 E.C.), it was indicated that there was a greater gap in using a child centered approach and this affected child learning. In this regard, the inspection team commented as "There is a greater gap by being capacitated through training, teachers should deliver standardized education and care for children. Child centered teaching methods should be practiced."

In addition, 15 daily lesson plans were reviewed and the researchers realized that preschool teachers frequently selected song, group work and lecture as teaching methods. It is hard to find other methods while preschool teachers plan their lesson plans. In general, preschool teachers were unable to plan and implement child centered methods of teaching as the policy requested. Therefore, there was a serious gap in skill and knowledge of using child appropriate methods.

Moreover, the researchers observed in the document review that no continuous assessment process took place in a planned manner. Here, the preschool teachers' assessment practice did not cover all

developmental aspects such as emotional, social, physical, and cultural developments. Moreover, the preschool teachers' assessment did not apply a variety of child appropriate methods, and there was a problem of organizing assessment results. The only visible effort in this regard was the preparation of monthly test assessment results and registration of child history. Besides, the inspection report of Woreda in 2002 E.C. indicated that there was no organized portfolio that showed the progress of children and the comment says: "An organized portfolio that shows over all development of children have not been prepared yet. This should be done soon and the school administration must monitor it." Moreover, the Woreda inspection report strongly recommended paying attention and improving parent involvement should be in place. The comment added that preschool teachers should work closely and together with parents."

To sum up, the qualitative data analysis revealed that preschool teachers' implementation of their tasks encountered diverse problems. The implementation of each element of the tasks had encompassed many shortages such as; a lack of using alternate child centered methods, being unable to employ child appropriate assessment techniques, enhancing parent involvement, and focusing on all aspects of child development. Shortage of skills, lack of enough knowledge and lack of attention from educational management to capacitate preschool teachers were the problems that affected the implementation of the tasks. These evidences strengthen the quantitative results presented in Table-4 above.

Table 5. Extent of Teachers' ECCE Policy Practice (Knowledge + Implementation)

Items	N	Mean	SD	T	DF	Sig.(2-tailed)	MD
Knowledge of Responsibilities	141	3.21	.590	4.222	140	.000	.210
Knowledge of Roles	141	2.85	.815	-2.123	140	.036	-.146



Implementation of tasks	141	2.88	.370	-3.942	140	.000	-.123
<b>Policy practice (Total mean)</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>.410</b>	<b>-1.319</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>.189</b>	<b>-.046</b>

$P < .05$ , Test Value ( $M$ ) = 3, Critical Value ( $CV$ ) = 1.977,  $SD$  (Standard Deviation),  $MD$  (Mean Difference),  $DF$  (Degree of Freedom)

The preschool teachers' practice of ECCE policy has two components. The first is to have enough knowledge about roles and responsibilities, and the second is to implement pieces of tasks set out in the ECCE policy and guidelines. Accordingly, the average of the mean results of knowledge of responsibility, knowledge of roles, and implementation of tasks were analyzed in previous sections in order to identify the extent of policy practice.

As Table-5 revealed, the policy practice ( $M=2.95$ ,  $SD=.410$ ,  $t(140)=-1.319$ ,  $p>.05$ ,  $MD=-.046$ ) implies that there was no a statistically significant mean difference from the observed mean ( $M$ )=3. This means preschool teachers' ECCE policy practice was nearly at the observed average level.

Further, as observed in Table-5, preschool teachers' knowledge of their responsibilities ( $M=3.21$ ,  $SD=.590$ ,  $t(140)=4.222$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $MD=-.210$ ) implies that there was a statistically significant mean difference from the observed average value ( $M$ )=3 hence, above average, whereas knowledge of preschool roles ( $M=2.85$ ,  $SD=.815$ ,  $t(140)=-2.123$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $MD=-.146$ ), and implementation of tasks ( $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=.370$ ,  $t(140)=-3.942$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $MD=-.123$ ) imply that there was a statistically significant mean difference against the observed average value ( $M$ )=3 each, hence the results were below average. This indicates that preschool teachers were good at in their knowledge of responsibilities but fragile in their knowledge of roles and implementation of their tasks.

Table 6. Challenges that Hinder Policy practice by the Preschool Teachers

Items	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	MD
1. Lack of enough knowledge on policy	141	3.23	.790	3.52	140	.001	.234
2. Low interest in ones' profession	141	3.26	.787	3.85	140	.000	.255
3. Shortage of skills to perform responsibilities	141	3.40	.949	5.06	140	.000	.404
4. Lack of opportunity for professional dev't	141	3.08	.957	.968	140	.335	.078
5. Shortage of supportive curricular materials	141	3.16	1.046	1.85	140	.066	.163
6. Lack of supervision & support from manag't	141	2.93	1.046	-.81	140	.422	-.071
7. Lack of attention from the government	141	2.90	1.078	-1.09	140	.276	-.099
8. Inadequate indoor materials in the preschool	141	2.76	1.027	-2.79	140	.006	-.241
9. Inadequate outdoor materials in school	141	3.52	1.004	6.12	140	.000	.518
10. Low parent participation and follow up	141	3.58	1.184	5.83	140	.000	.582
11. Lack of enough personnel	141	3.62	1.092	6.78	140	.000	.624
12. Large class size	141	2.77	1.285	-2.16	140	.032	-.234
13. Prescence of under and over age children	141	3.88	.692	15.10	140	.000	.879

$P < .05$ , Test Value ( $M$ ) = 3, Critical Value ( $CV$ ) = 1.977,  $SD$  (Standard Deviation),  $MD$  (Mean Difference),  $DF$  (Degree of Freedom)

The one sample T-test analysis in Table-6 shows that prescence of under and over age children ( $M=3.88$   $SD=.692$ ,  $t(140)=15.10$ ,

$p < .05$ ,  $MD=.879$ ); lack of enough personnel ( $M=3.62$ ,  $SD=1.092$ ,  $t(140)=6.78$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $MD=.624$ ); low parent participation and

follow up ( $M=3.58$ ,  $SD=1.184$ ,  $t(140)=5.83$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $MD=.582$ ); inadequate outdoor materials in the preschools ( $M=3.52$ ,  $SD=1.004$ ,  $t(140)=6.12$ ,  $p<0.05$ ,  $MD=.518$ ); shortage of skills to perform responsibilities ( $M=3.40$ ,  $SD=.949$ ,  $t(140)=5.06$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $MD=.404$ ); low interest in ones' profession ( $M=3.26$ ,  $SD=.787$ ,  $t(140)= 3.85$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $MD=.255$ ); and lack of enough knowledge on policy ( $M=3.23$ ,  $SD=.790$ ,  $t(140)=.790$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $MD= .234$ ) implies that all those factors had statistically significant difference from the observed average value ( $M$ )=3, that means they were the major factors that hindered the practice of ECCE policy in the study area.

#### 4. Discussion

##### **Preschool teachers' knowledge of responsibility**

The present result revealed that preschool teachers' knowledge of their responsibilities under ECCE policy was above the observed mean. In relation to this, Jackman (2001) stated that quality care and education require a teacher to know the developmental characteristics of children, and then that teacher will understand what needs to go into the framework of an age-appropriate classroom and age-appropriate activities. However, the qualitative data indicated the need follow up and supervision in the study area. For instance, the Woreda Education Office exerted no effort to monitor and support preschools and their target was only enrolment despite UNESCO (2012) recommended the importance of following up on the implementation of policy. Accordingly, it said that monitoring and evaluation is an integral part of the policy cycle, consisting of compiling and analyzing information that enables actors to learn from each other's experiences. In addition to this, document review realized that there were no policy documents, no discussion to create policy awareness, no organized CPD portfolio, and no training report at all.

To sum up, preschool teachers had knowledge of their responsibilities. However, knowledge of policy, child development, pedagogy, and contents were below the observed average. Besides, their responsibilities were hardly expressed in their teaching practice. Above all, they were less committed to their responsibly and no professional engagement practice was shown in the study. In addition, there was a problem of supporting preschool teachers both at the school and Woreda levels.

##### **Preschool teachers' knowledge of their roles**

Preschool teachers' knowledge of their roles was studied based on nine items and analyzed using one sample T-test. According to the total mean of the nine items, teachers' knowledge of their roles was found to be below the observed average ( $M=2.85$ ,  $SD=.815$ ). Specifically, out of the nine items of roles, preschool teachers' knowledge of being a facilitator, observer and assessor, model, supporter and prompter, and challenger were found to have serious problematic issues. Regarding the importance of preschools teachers' role, Nielson (2006) stated that preschool teachers should be constantly alert and always searching for ways to extend the children's discoveries and enhance their learning. In addition, ECCE policy (MoE, 2010) stated that preschool teachers are key actors and played an indispensable role in the teaching and learning process.

To conclude, preschool teachers had a problem of knowing all the elements of their roles as expected in the policy. What one teacher knew was quite different from what other preschool teachers did. Therefore, the problem can be identified in two ways. The first was a lack of knowledge as expected in the policy, and the second was an inability to act as the level of their knowledge. In general, preschool teachers' knowledge of roles was below average. However, the

policy expected more from preschool teachers as they played key indispensable role in the teaching and learning process, hence the policy named them the first person responsible for the preschool program (MoE, 2010).

### **Preschool Teachers' Implementation of the Task**

Since teaching and learning are the result of diverse activities, ECCE policy (MoE, 2010) demands the implementation of these activities. These tasks were: the use of teaching methods, assessment practice, work for all aspects of development, use of appropriate materials, display of expected behaviors and working with parents. As one sample t-test analysis revealed, implementation of tasks was below the observed average value (see Table-4). When we look at each specific task, the use of teaching method was performed at an average level with ( $M=2.96$ ,  $SD=.443$ ). However, the use of field trips and oral reflection was one of those methods implemented below the observed average. As realized during the document review, methods like lecture, song, role-play, and group discussion were predominantly used in the classroom. Most of the class time was used by preschool teachers rather than by children and teachers had faced a challenge to make the learning process child centered. In addition, the Woreda inspection report of 2012 E.C. underscored that most preschools were categorized under level-1 to mean unfulfilled the level of using appropriate teaching methods.

However, literatures indicate that the teaching methods are the important paths that lead to the success of objectives. According to Libâneo cited in Adriana and Vilma (2013), teaching methods are the adequate means to accomplish objectives. Besides, the use of learner centered methods promotes knowledge base among learners as opposed to the use of teacher-centered ones. This is

because a learner determines what is salient for him or her and thereby cultivating the interest to retain what he or she learns (Msonde, 2009). In this regard, the policy guideline says teaching must be child-centered, with the children actively involved in the process (MoE, 2010).

Regarding assessment practice, the extent of implementation was below the observed average with  $M=2.51$  and  $SD=.470$ . As realized from the document review, continuous child development assessment and organized portfolio were totally absent and what was actually found was a monthly record of test and oral questions results scored through numbering.

However as indicated in the review literatures, informal assessment has characterized the early childhood field and early educators have observed and recorded children's behavior naturalistically through watching children in their natural environments as youngsters' carryout everyday activities (Slentz et al., 2008). Moreover, Shepard et al. (1998) added that it is more accurate to say what will be assessed is the young children's behaviors, skills, competencies, preferences and interactions than children.

With regard to displaying expected behaviors, preschool teachers performed above average level. Moreover, document review has confirmed that preschool teachers had less commitment. In this regard, Nielsen (2006) stated that teaching in preschool classrooms are challenging. It is physically demanding because there is rarely a moment to sit down. It is also mentally and emotionally demanding function that can not be successful otherwise.

In general, the implementation of ECCE policy was far from its wish and below the observed average, yet the use of teaching methods and appropriate materials were implemented at average where as assessment

practice and relating objectives with all aspects of development were below average.

### **Major challenges that hinder working under the ECCE policy**

There were many factors affecting preschool teachers' policy practice in the study area. The major factors that hinder preschool teachers were the presence of under and over age children, lack of enough personnel, low parent participation and follow up, inadequate outdoor materials in the preschools, shortage of skills to perform responsibilities, low interest in ones' profession, and lack of enough knowledge on policy. However, professional knowledge as one of the important attribute of teachers and principals (Kantz, 2002), and MoE (2010) set out educational qualification standard, accordingly, teachers in preschools are required to be certified from specific institution in Ethiopia.

### **5. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

Preschool teachers in Basona Worana Woreda practiced the national ECCE policy at the average level as preschool teachers policy practice (knowledge and implementation) in the Woreda was compared against the observed mean. Preschool teachers' knowledge of responsibility was above average as knowledge of responsibilities of the preschool teachers was compared against the observed mean although they did not cultivate their responsibilities as desired. Moreover, preschool teachers had low level of knowledge of roles especially in being a facilitator, model, supporter, and challenger. Furthermore, preschool teachers' implementation of the tasks was below the observed average and actual implementation of specific elements of task was different. The most commonly used methods preschool teachers employe in Basona Worana Woreda

were lecturing, songs, role-play, and group discussion. Assessing children was implemented below average level and continuous child development assessment and organized portfolio were totally absent.

Among the many factors that hinder the practice of the ECCE policy in Basona Worana Woreda were the presence of under and over age children, shortage of personnels in facilitating the supervision, monitoring and evaluation, low parent participation and follow up in the school activities, inadequate outdoor materials in the preschools, preschool teachers' lack of skills to perform responsibilities as expected, low interest in entertaining their profession by the preschool teachers, and lack of enough knowledge on the ECCE policy itself.

### **6. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were suggested.

- Preschool teachers in Basona Worana Woreda had lack of enough knowledge of the ECCE policy and guidelines, lack of knowledge about the importance considering holistic child development, lack of knowledge of pedagogy, lack of knowledge of roles, lack of knowledge of professional responsibilities, less attention was given to create awareness of ECCE policy along with unavailability of policy documents at the preschools. Therefore, preschool principals in the study area, Woreda and Zonal Education Bureau should work jointly and provide intensive practical trainings to preschool teachers about their roles, responsibilities, work on awareness creation on ECCE policy, pedagogy and child assessment techniques,
- Working with parents was found to be a serious problem in the study area. Therefore, preschool principals should undertake continuous discussion with

parents to engage them in the school activities.

- Learning materials are so essential for effective children learning and development. Hence, Woreda Education Bureau and the preschool principals should work toward fulfilling the necessary teaching and learning materials including capacitating preschool teachers to enable them the use of local resources.

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