EMERGENT LITERACY SUPPORT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN SELECTED PRESCHOOLS OF KASEMPA AND SOLWEZI DISTRICTS OF ZAMBIA

BY

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DECLARATION

I, THOMAS MWAPE ZIMBA, declare that this dissertation:

a) Represents my original work;

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ABSTRACT

This study examined emergent literacy support in early childhood education. The study focused on preschool classroom practices, which operationally defined included the classroom environment, literacy instruction programme, instructional materials and regular classroom activities. The objective of the study was to find out the extent to which preschool classroom practices supported the continuation of emergent literacy in preschool children, particularly in Kasempa and Solwezi districts of Northwestern Province, Zambia.

26 preschool teachers and 8 preschool administrators drawn from 8 preschools in Kasempa and Solwezi districts constituted the sample. A total 680 preschoolers were part of the classroom environments in which naturalistic observations were conducted.

The data were collected through questionnaires for preschool teachers, designed to capture preschool teachers' knowledge of emergent literacy and classroom practices. Questionnaires were also administered to preschool administrators and these were designed to capture the schools' profile on their teachers, philosophy on literacy instruction and availability of teaching and learning materials. For the naturalistic observation of actual classroom sessions, data were gathered with the aid of a Classroom Literacy Checklist. Further data were collected using semi-structured follow-up interviews to fill in any gaps from questionnaires and observations.

The findings were that all the preschools investigated had low literacy support as a result of limited language and literacy opportunities for the children and paucity of learning and play materials. Lack of the preschool teachers' appreciation of emergent literacy rendered them unable to fully provide environments and practices that support emergent literacy.

DEDICATION

To my wife Mary and children, Tionge and Peggy; for faithfully enduring the long periods of absence during my studies and for showing unflinching faith and support towards my pursuit of academic brilliance.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 General

This chapter is an introduction to the investigation into emergent literacy in early childhood education. The chapter begins with a background to the term emergent literacy: how there was a shift from reading readiness to emergent literacy and briefly discusses features of emergent literacy. The chapter then discusses developments in research on emergent literacy in general and then narrows it down to the Zambian scenario. After this, there is the presentation of the problem being investigated, the purpose of the study, the objectives and the specific questions through which the objectives are addressed. The chapter ends by giving operational definitions of terms as employed in the study.

1.1 Background

The concept emergent literacy was introduced in 1966 by a New Zealand researcher Marie Clay in her doctoral thesis entitled *Emergent Reading Behaviour* but the term was coined by two prominent linguists William Teale and Elizabeth Sulzby in 1986. The term was used to describe the behaviours seen in young children whereby they imitate adults' reading and writing activities, even though the children cannot actually read and write in the conventional sense. The development of the emergent literacy perspective can be traced from the reading readiness perspective.

In their review of the literature on literacy development, Teale and Sulzby (1986) note that from the late 1800s to the 1920s the research literature on reading and writing focused only on the elementary school years. In the 1920s, however, educators began to recognize that the early childhood and preschool years were a period of preparation for reading and writing. In 1925, the National Committee on Reading of the United States of America published the first explicit reference to the concept of reading readiness. This term gave rise to two different lines of research on preparing children for reading (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). While one group believed that reading readiness was the result of maturation (nature), the other thought that appropriate experiences (nurture) could accelerate readiness.

From the 1920s into the 1950s the dominant theory was that reading readiness was the result of biological maturation. From this perspective, it was believed that the mental processes necessary for reading would unfold automatically at a certain period of time in the child's development (ibid.). Researchers argued that good practice would provide an environment that did not interfere with the predetermined process of development in the child. In this way, educators and parents were advised to postpone the teaching of reading until children reached a certain age.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, the dominant theory shifted from reading readiness as maturation toward readiness as the product of experience. Proponents of this viewpoint argued that if children had the appropriate experiences, their reading readiness could be accelerated. In response to this shift in thinking, educators and parents were encouraged to use more direct instruction and structured curriculum in early childhood programmes in order to prepare children for reading. In reading

readiness programs children were considered ready to read when they had met certain social, physical, and cognitive competencies (Morrow, 1997).

Starting in the 1970s, researchers began to challenge traditional reading readiness attitudes and practices. Traditionally reading and writing have been viewed as processes that are difficult for children to learn. Children were considered knowledgeable about literacy only when their reading and writing approximated adults' reading and writing. Children who could identify written words without picture clues were considered readers. Similarly, children who could spell words so that adults could read them were considered writers. This definition of reading and writing was based on what adults could do. Reading readiness suggests that there is a point in time when a child is ready to begin to learn to read and write. In contrast, emergent literacy suggests that the development of literacy is taking place within the child. It also suggests that it is a gradual process and will take place over time. For something to emerge it needs to be there at the beginning (the child's own natural learning ability), and things usually only emerge under the right conditions (Hall, 1987). The emergent literacy perspective also posits that there are continuities in children's literacy development between early literacy behaviours and those displayed once children are able to read independently.

In the four decades since Clay's introduction of this term, an extensive body of research has expanded the understanding of emergent literacy. According to current research, children's literacy development begins long before they start formal instruction in elementary school; it begins at birth and continues through the preschool years even though the activities of young children may not seem related to reading and writing. Early behaviours such as "reading" from pictures and "writing"

with scribbles are examples of emergent literacy and are an important part of children's literacy development. With the support of parents, caregivers, early childhood educators, and teachers, as well as exposure to a literacy-rich environment, children successfully progress from emergent to conventional literacy. In other words their growth from emergent to conventional literacy is influenced by their continuing literacy development, their understanding of literacy concepts, and the efforts of parents, caregivers, and teachers to promote literacy. It proceeds along a continuum, and children acquire literacy skills in a variety of ways and at different ages. Children's skills in reading and writing develop at the same time and are interrelated rather than sequential. Educators can promote children's understanding of reading and writing by helping them build literacy knowledge and skills through the use of engaged learning activities. As children are moving into conventional literacy, they pass through different periods of development in their efforts to become successful readers, just as they did at the emergent level.

Over the past ten years, the concept of *emergent literacy* has gradually replaced the notion of *reading readiness*. Consequently, it has a significant impact on the way the teaching of literacy in early childhood programmes is approached. The theory of emergent literacy developed from research in the fields of child development, psychology, education, linguistics, anthropology, and sociology. It has virtually redefined the field of literacy and made educators, teachers, and parents aware that the term reading readiness no longer adequately describes what is happening in the literacy development of young children (Teale, 1986).

The theoretical and research-based knowledge of child development in general and of literacy development in particular provides an understanding of the literacy acquisition of young children and suggests strategies that can help children become successful, confident readers and writers. Research conducted on emergent literacy indicates that support to children's emergent literacy in early childhood education facilitates easy literacy development in children. Parents, caregivers, and teachers need to ensure that young children are exposed to literacy-rich environments and receive developmentally appropriate literacy instruction. Such environments and experiences have a profound effect on children's literacy development by providing opportunities and encouragement for children to become successful readers. Thus a preschool should be an environment that supports the continuation of emergent literacy. In order for a preschool to promote the continuous emergence of literacy, it must be an environment where there is a high variety of authentic literacy activities. It must also be an environment that affords learners opportunities to engage in purposeful literacy activities which are acknowledged as valid literacy behaviour.

In the Zambian context emergent literacy is a fairly new phenomenon. Its practice is dependent on what teachers know and believe about it and this also is dependent upon the training that preschool teachers undergo. Against the background of emergent literacy, the concern of early childhood educators should be "valuing the knowledge children have than with replacing it by highly dubious and narrow models of what literacy is and how it functions" (Hall, 1989: viii). Little is known regarding literacy teaching in preschools in Zambia. This study, therefore, attempts to find out the extent to which classroom practices in preschools in Zambia, with special reference to Kasempa and Solwezi, support the continuation of emergent literacy in children.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although the theory of emergent literacy has been in use for the past four decades, it is not known to what extent emergent literacy is appreciated and supported in early childhood education in Zambia. While research has been conducted in other parts of the world, there has been no investigation into its practice in Zambia's preschools. Thus the problem that was being investigated was that we do not know the extent to which classroom practices in Zambian preschools, and with particular reference to Kasempa and Solwezi, support the continuation of emergent literacy in children.

1.3 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to find out the extent to which classroom practices in preschools in Kasempa and Solwezi support the continuation of emergent literacy in children.

1.4 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

This study sought to achieve the following objectives:

(i) To ascertain preschool teachers' knowledge of emergent literacy in children.

(ii) To establish the extent to which the classroom environment supports the continuation of emergent literacy.

(iii) To establish what literacy instruction programme is in place and the extent to which it supports emergent literacy.

(iv) To find out teaching and learning materials that are available in preschools and the extent to which they support emergent literacy.

(v) To establish classroom literacy practices that obtain in preschools and the extent to which they support emergent literacy.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Main Research Question

To what extent do classroom practices in preschools in Kasempa and Solwezi support the continuation of emergent literacy in children?

1.5.2 Sub-Questions

i) What do preschool teachers know about emergent literacy?

ii) To what extent does the classroom environment support emergent literacy?

iii) What literacy instruction programme is in place and to what extent does it support emergent literacy?

iv) What teaching and learning materials are available and to what extent do they support emergent literacy?

v) What classroom literacy practices are employed and to what extent do they support emergent literacy?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study was premised on the fact that it focused on one critical area of education namely early childhood education. While a lot of research has been

done on the basic and high school sectors of education in Zambia, very little has been done on preschool education. It is indisputable that good early childhood education is a precursor to the other levels of education. This study sought to investigate the extent to which classroom literacy practices in early childhood education in Zambia support the continuation of emergent literacy. Such a study has not been explored before in Zambia. This study, therefore, is significant in that it might provide valuable data on early childhood teachers' knowledge of emergent literacy and the extent to which classroom practices support the continuation of emergent literacy. It is hoped that such data might be useful to policy makers such as the Ministry of Education and preschool curriculum designers. In this way, it might provide data on which future curricula for early childhood educators' training can be based. It is also hoped that the study will stimulate further research into emergent literacy practices in Zambian preschools, which is currently lacking.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

During this study, the researcher met initial suspicion, unease and resistance primarily because it is unusual for preschools to have research conducted on them. Particularly for the research site, this study was unprecedented. As such people were not willing to participate in the study. The other challenge experienced was limited number of respondents. This was due to the nature of preschools; they are manned by a small number of personnel, in some cases by only two to three teachers. Therefore, there were limitations in terms of sample size. Coupled with this was the fact that the study could not accommodate a very large sample because the demands of a naturalistic

observation. Another limitation was that the findings from this study could only be interpreted within the context of the study areas and thus not generalisable.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was premised on the emergent literacy perspective in an attempt to find out the contribution of preschool practices to the development of literacy in young children. According to this view children's literacy development begins long before formal school and is nourished by social interaction with caring adults and exposure to a literacy-rich environment and literacy materials such as storybooks, crayons, pens, pencils and paper. Literacy-rich environments, both at home and at school, are important in promoting literacy and preventing reading difficulties. In literacy-rich home environments, adults provide children with occasions for daily reading, extensive talking or writing, language play, experimentation with literacy materials, book talk, and dramatic play. In literacy-rich classrooms, teachers incorporate the characteristics of literacy-rich home environments, but they also use grouping for learning, developmentally appropriate practices, and literacy routines; in addition, they have classroom designs that continue to encourage reading and writing (Johnson, 1999). This study sought to find out if classrooms are such literacy-rich environments as support the continuation of emergent literacy.

1.9 REFLECTIONS ON ETHICAL ISSUES

In order to abide by research ethics a number consideration were taken into account during this study:

To begin with this study was not undertaken just for the sake of carrying out research; it is claimed to have value in that it is expected to contribute to the body of academic knowledge. This is especially so considering that no such study has ever been undertaken in Zambia before. When the researcher arrived at each site, he first sought permission from school authorities and briefed them on the value of the research and the procedures used. The researcher also assured the administrators that participation by staff and pupils would be voluntary, hence the informed consent forms were given to participants before participating in the study. As a way of maintaining confidentiality, no names were used on questionnaires but rather serial numbers. Further participants were assured that the data obtained would not be disclosed to any other persons. To respect the research site, the researcher ensured minimum disruption to the flow of the school routine. Thus administering of questionnaires and interviews was only done outside the class hours. Finally the researcher took full responsibility for the conduct of the study and as far as foreseeable, its consequences.

1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following operational definitions, relevant to this study, are explained as they were used in the study:

- ***Conventional literacy*** – children's knowledge about literacy when their reading and writing approximates adults' reading and writing; reading, writing and spelling of a text in a manner that is generally accepted and understood.

- ***Emergent literacy*** – the perspective that literacy development is taking place in a child way before formal schooling begins; it refers to the early literacy behaviour of children whereby they imitate adults' literacy behaviour

- ***Environmental print*** – refers to print found in children's environments such as on billboards, road signs, food packs, clothing labels, etc, and is usually the first print children recognize.

- ***Invented spelling*** – children's way of spelling words different from the conventional spelling.

- ***Literacy development*** – the process by which reading and writing skills develop in an individual

- ***Literate behaviour*** – any of children's behaviour exhibited as a result of coming into contact with literacy, for example pretend writing and reading.
- ***Literate home*** – a home where literacy is part of everyday experience
- ***Preschool*** – under school-age school, in other words a school for children below the age at which compulsory school begins. In this context it means school for children before they enter Grade 1.
- ***Pretend reading*** – children's literate behaviour whereby they imitate conventional reading such as holding a book as if they are able to read.
- ***Pretend writing*** – children's literate behaviour whereby they imitate conventional writing, for example scribbling or writing in the air.
- ***Reading readiness*** – perspective that there is a point in time when a child is ready to begin to learn how to read and write.

- ***Reception*** – a classroom for children aged between 4 and 6, immediately before they enter Grade 1. It is the equivalent of kindergarten in the United States of America.
- ***Shared book reading*** – this refers to the practice aimed at enhancing young children's language and literacy skills and their appreciation of books. Typically, it involves children joining in or sharing the reading of a big book or other enlarged text while guided by a teacher or other experienced readers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is a review of some of the available literature on emergent literacy, and particularly those regarded as having significance to this study. The review also endeavours to relate similar studies to the present one and in this regard provide justification for the present study. The chapter begins with a general overview of emergent literacy studies and then reviews studies on specific dimensions of emergent literacy.

2.1 Overview of Emergent Literacy Research

The term emergent literacy, first used in 1966 by Marie Clay, is used to describe behaviours seen in young children when they use books and writing materials to imitate adult reading and writing activities, even though the children cannot actually read and write in the conventional sense (Johnson, 1999). Review of research reveals numerous but complementary definitions of emergent literacy. Researchers agree that emergent literacy (a) begins during the period before children receive formal reading instruction, (Teale & Sulzby, 1987; van Kleeck, 1990); (b) encompasses learning about reading, writing and print prior to schooling (Sulzby & Teale, 1991); (c) is acquired through informal as well as adult-directed home and school activities,

and (d) facilitates acquisition of specific knowledge of reading. Research in emergent literacy differs from research in conventional literacy as it examines the range of settings and experiences that support literacy, the role of the child's contributions (i.e., individual construction), and the relation between individual literacy outcomes and the wide range of experiences that precede those outcomes.

Research shows that there is general agreement amongst scholars that although most preschool-age children cannot read and write in the conventional sense, their attempts at reading and writing show steady development during this stage (Hiebert, 1988). Gunn et al. (1994) note that reading research in this developmental period has focused on discrete skills that are a prerequisite to reading, such as letter-sound correspondences and letter naming. In contrast, the emergent literacy perspective takes a broader view of literacy and examines children's literacy development before the onset of formal instruction.

Research also highlights the dimensions of emergent literacy. Children begin school with diverse experiences and understandings of print, that is, what it is, how it works, and why it is used. These experiences and understandings give rise to general literacy-related knowledge, as well as specific print skills and oral language competencies. Through exposure to written language (for instance, storybook reading and daily living routines) many children develop an awareness of print, letter naming, and phonemic awareness. Additionally, through exposure to oral language, preschool children develop listening comprehension, vocabulary, and language facility. These initial understandings about print are particularly important

considering that children who are behind in their literacy experiences upon entering school become "at risk" in subsequent years. For example, Scarborough et al. (1991) quoted in Gunn et al (1994) examined the relation of preschool development to later school accomplishment using parental reports about literacy activities in children's homes during their preschool years and assessments of reading achievement. They found that by the time poor readers entered school they had accumulated substantially less experience with books and reading than those who became better readers. Similarly, Ferreiro and Teberosky (1986), cited in Gunn et al. (1994), found that children who entered school without understanding the link between their oral language experiences and formal instruction did not advance at the same rate in learning to read and write as children who did make the connection.

One other aspect that comes out of literature has to do with the characteristics of the research in this area. Literature reveals that to date, emergent literacy research comprises more descriptive and correlational studies than experimental investigations (Teale & Sulzby, 1987). It has been argued that this emphasis on descriptive research is typical of an area of emerging interest as such a phase is important for identifying the features and dimensions of the phenomenon of interest (Gunn et al., 1994). One area, phonological awareness, has been the subject of extensive experimental research, and has drawn more attention and examination at the experimental level. This is reflected in both the level of sophistication and the detail of findings.

To learn about the role of family environment and literacy development, researchers have relied upon descriptive research in the form of naturalistic observations.

Ethnographic studies, for example, have described literacy artifacts in preschool children's environment and provided details about the literacy events to which they are exposed and in which they participate. Such studies are useful as they have provided information about the literacy experiences of children from various cultures and backgrounds. Some examples of ethnographic observation are those cited in Hiebert's (1988) overview of emergent literacy research, including studies examining the role of word games (for example Tobin, cited in Hiebert, 1988), storybook reading (for example, Snow & Ninio, cited in Hiebert, 1988), and chalkboards (Durkin, cited in Hiebert, 1988) in familiarizing children with the functions of literacy.

A second type of naturalistic observation has looked more specifically at the nature of adult-child interactions surrounding literacy events (Teale & Sulzby, 1987) to ascertain how adults foster literacy development. One example is a longitudinal study of the relation between preschool literacy development and later school achievement. Here Scarborough et al. (1991) interviewed middle-class parents about adult reading, parent-child reading, and children's solitary book activities in the home. Similarly, Hildebrand and Bader (1992) quoted in Gunn et al. (1994) investigated the family literacy-related activities of 59 parents of children ages three to 5 ½ to determine the contributions parents make to the home literacy environment.

A third type of research has moved beyond descriptive methodologies to determine which aspects of preschool literacy experience best predict reading achievement. For example, Dickinson and Tabors (1991) administered the *School-Home Early*

Language and Literacy Battery Kindergarten (SHELL-K) to a sample of five-year-olds to identify the components of their language and literacy development and the experiences that contributed to those components.

Like has been the trend with other studies on emergent literacy cited above, this study mainly employed naturalistic observations of live classroom sessions to establish what literacy artefacts were present in the environment and the children's interaction with them. The observations also targeted literacy activities such as children's experience with book reading, storytelling, play related activities and other literacy practices in the classroom. This was done with the aid of a *Classroom Ethnography Checklist*, adapted from other observation checklists.

Available literature also points out some factors in the support of emergent literacy as discussed below.

2.1.1 The Role of the Environment In Children's Emergent Literacy

Literature on early childhood literacy support has drawn attention to the role of the environment in the support of emergent literacy. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) quoted in Neuman et al. (2008) have pointed out that the environment includes not only physical settings but also psychological settings as well. According to theoretical assumptions of ecological psychology, environment plays a central role in learning and behaviour (Gump, 1989). The organization, structure and complexity of the setting influence patterns of activity and engagement. Studies by Morrow (1990), Neuman and Roskos (1992) and Vukelich (1994) quoted in Neuman et al. (2008) have revealed the powerful impact of access to literacy tools on young children's

involvement in literacy activities. These studies indicate that in settings carefully constructed to include a wide access of literacy tools, books and playthings, children read more and this results in higher literacy improvement.

Studies by Fernie (1985) and Neuman and Roskos (1990) cited in Neuman et al (2008) show evidence of behavioural consequences arising from the way the environment is arranged. Some materials seem to encourage more sustained activity than others and invoke children's attention at different levels. Materials that involve children in constructive activity tend to generate more language than 'pull toys'. Some materials, like block building, elicit greater social interaction and cooperation while others, like puzzles, encourage more solitary and/or parallel play. The placement of objects influences children's engagement in play. Children become more involved in sustained play when objects are clustered together to create a schema or meaning network. For example, in a study by Neuman and Roskos (1993) quoted in Neuman et al (2008), placing props associated with mailing letters together in a play setting (envelopes, writing instruments, stamps, stationery) led to longer play episodes that when these props were scattered throughout the room.

Associated with access to literacy tools and arrangement of literacy tools is the visibility of literacy targets in the preschool classroom environment. An observation tool like the *Early Language and Literacy classroom Observation* (ELLCO) targets visibility of literacy-related materials such as books, alphabet, word cards, alphabet puzzles and writing equipment (Smith & Dickinson, 2002 cited in Neuman, et al. 2008).

Research further shows that one important component in a preschool environment is the availability of a library or reading corner. One study (Morrow and Weinstein, 1986) examined the impact of creating library corners in early childhood settings. The corners were specially constructed to include a clear location with well-defined borders, comfortable seating and cozy spots for privacy, accessible and well-organized materials. Morrow and Weinstein found that there was a significant rise in use when reading corners were made more visibly accessible and attractive. Similarly other studies (NAEYC, 1997; Barclay et al., 1995) have recommended an environment for reading and writing that is comfortable and inviting. The studies conducted by Barclay et al and NAEYC further indicate that environments that are supportive of early writing are those that make available and easy access to a variety of writing materials such as paper, pencils, crayons, markers, magnetic and white boards and slates.

In the current study, observation targeted among other things, selection and arrangement of literacy tools and visibility of targets such as books, alphabets, numbers, month names, day names, children's work and high frequency words. It also sought to establish whether the classrooms in the study areas had a reading corner well stocked with a variety of reading materials.

2.1.2 Children's Experiences Related to Development of Knowledge about Print

Barbara Bush (1995), founder of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy has observed that children who grow up in print-rich environments learn to read more easily that those who do not. Equally, Gunn et al. (1994) in their synthesis of research have found that through exposure to written language (for example through

storybook reading and daily living routines like reading road signs, instructions on labels and so on), many children develop an awareness of print, letter naming, and phonemic awareness. Experiences with print (through reading and writing) help preschool children develop an understanding of the conventions, purpose, and functions of print. These understandings have been shown to play an integral part in the process of learning to read. These initial understandings about print are particularly important considering that children who are behind in their literacy experiences upon entering school become "at risk" in subsequent years (Mason & Allen, 1986). For example, Scarborough et al. (1991) examined the relation of preschool development to later school accomplishment using parental reports about literacy activities in children's homes during their preschool years and assessments of reading achievement. They found that by the time poor readers entered school they had accumulated substantially less experience with print than those who became better readers. According to Baker et al (1995) in their Early Childhood Project, which addressed the issue of contexts in which children become literate, much of the children's everyday contact with print comes through participation in daily routines such as assisting with food preparation and shopping. "This gives them opportunities to interact with food on product labels, to attend to adults reading recipes or package directions, or assist in measurements" (Baker et al.: 241).

Research has shown that it is possible to accent and highlight literacy activities in a preschool classroom by "littering the environment with print" (Harste et al., 1984, p. 43). The print environment should have among other things alphabets, numbers, names of colours, months and days, extracts from books and magazines, and display of children's work "a practice that is held to enhance the academic self-esteem of

students by according recognition to their academic achievements" (Serpell et al., 2005; 201). Further children must be provided with opportunities to draw and print with markers, crayons and pencils (Serpell et al, 2005). These recommendations from findings are consistent with what other researchers have found and recommended. For example, some studies have recommended that in order to expose children to rich print, adults must deliberately let children help with tasks that involve print, for example writing shopping lists (NAEYC, 1997; Barclay et al, 1995). In the school environment this means letting children experiment with various writing experiences. Another recommendation is that adults must provide a warm and accepting environment by responding to questions and comments about print such as on packages at the grocery store, road signs, and menus at restaurants (Barclay et al., 1995; NAEYC, 1997).

In relation to this study what is coming out of research review is that in order to support emergent literacy in early childhood settings, the environment should be print-rich and the children should be able to interact easily with the environmental print. In this connection, this study, therefore, focused on the print-richness of the environment and the extent to which the children were supported to interact with the environmental print.

2.1.3 The Role of Storybook Reading

In much of the literature, storybook reading or reading aloud to children emerges as a key component in facilitating early literacy acquisition (Hiebert, 1988; Morrow et al., 1990; Teale & Sulzby, 1987). For example, Morrow et al. (1990) noted that numerous correlational studies have documented the relationship between reading to

children and subsequent success on reading readiness tasks (citing Burrough, 1972; Chomsky, 1972; Durkin, 1974-75; Fodor, 1966; Irwin, 1960; Moon & Wells, 1979). Further, substantial evidence documents that children who are read to acquire concepts about the functions of written language in books (Hiebert, 1988). Children also learn that print differs from speech (Morrow et al., 1990) and that print, not pictures, contains the story that is being read. By reading to children, parents can help their children develop an understanding about print at an early age as they learn to make connections between words and meaning (NAEYC, 1997; McMahon, 1996). Research evidence further reveals that, storybook reading in school can also have positive effects such as, enriching children's vocabulary and story comprehension.

Storybook reading takes on additional significance when one considers findings indicating that most successful early readers are children who have had contact at home with written materials (Hiebert, 1988; Teale & Sulzby, 1987). This therefore means that by the time poor readers enter school, they have had substantially less experience with books and reading than those who become better readers. Scarborough et al. (1991) asked parents of preschoolers about the frequencies of adult reading, parent-child reading, and children's solitary book activities in the home, and compared those responses to the children's reading achievement in second grade. Their findings indicated that the children who became poorer readers had less experience with books and reading than children who became better readers. Moreover, children entering school with meagre literacy experiences, or less exposure to books and reading had much to learn about print and were easily

confused if they could not map words onto their oral language or could not recognize or distinguish letters (Dyson, cited in Mason & Allen, 1986). Without sufficient storybook reading experience in early childhood - whether at home or at school - children may be missing a key part of the initial foundation of reading (Morrow et al., 1990).

Research further shows that beyond storybook reading, what affects children's knowledge about strategies for, and attitudes towards reading is the nature of the adult-child interactions surrounding storybook reading. Storybook reading should include among other things, directing children's attention to the story, asking questions, and permitting them to explore the text (Edwards, 1989). Thus in storybook reading teachers should label or describe the pictures and connect items in the book to the children's life.

One major type of preschool storybook reading is shared reading, which refers to the practice of children joining in or sharing the reading of a big book or other enlarged text while guided by a teacher or other experienced readers. According to Serpell et al. (2005), shared book reading both at home and school, provides an intrinsic literacy motivation. The frequency of this activity and the nature of the interactions surrounding it, are related to the children's motivation for reading and their reading competencies. This position is supported by other studies (NAEYC, 1997; McMahon, 1996) which show that by engaging children at an early age in shared book reading and allowing children to observe those around them engaged in reading activities, adults can help foster a lifelong passion for reading that leads to benefits in all areas of development as the children grow older.

In this study therefore, one major concern on classroom practices was to examine how much reading experience the children had in the classroom.

2.1.4 The Role of Oral Language

According to Serpell et al. (2005), expert consensus gives considerable emphasis to the importance of oral language to the development and support of literacy. Through exposure to oral language, preschool children develop listening comprehension, vocabulary, and language facility (Gunn et al, 1994). Children learn how to attend to language and apply this knowledge to literacy situations by interacting with others who model language functions and as they observe others around them engaged in literacy activities (Idaho Center on Developmental Disabilities, 1996; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). For example, when hearing a story repeatedly, children are not just memorizing the words, but actually learning about the meaning of the words and about how words tell a story. Thus one important oral practice in the support of emergent literacy is storytelling. This is because frequent participation in storytelling and other oral activities with a storyline is related to preschool children's narrative production (Serpell et al. ibid). Therefore, Serpell et al. in their *Baltimore Early Childhood Project* recommend frequent and varied oral language experiences. This should include children recounting experiences and describing ideas and events that are important to them.

Another aspect of oral language supported by research is interactive dialogue during storybook reading. While access to print in storybook reading may facilitate literacy acquisition, it has been suggested that how the adult reads to the child is also

important (Morrow et al., 1990). General consensus has been reached on the key role that adult mediation appears to play in literacy growth (Mason & Allen, 1986; Morrow, 1990; Morrow et al., 1990). Thus, the language and social interaction between a parent (or older sibling) and child during shared book experiences may aid in developing language skills, familiarizing the child with conventions of print and serving as a model of reading (Morrow et al., 1990). In a review of recent studies on the importance of verbal interactions during storybook reading Mason and Allen (1986) found that the quality and quantity of interactions, not just the presence of reading materials and a story time routine shaped early reading development. They described the effects of verbal interactions in a study comparing early readers with non-early reader. Early readers talked more frequently about literacy with family members. Because storybook reading is a social activity, children encounter an interpretation of the author's words, which is subsequently shaped by the interpretation and social interaction of the child and the adult reader (Morrow et al., 1990).

The current study focused on establishing the extent to which oral language practices were employed. These included activities such as storytelling, language games, teacher-pupil oral interactions and teacher scaffolding of children's oral language.

2.1.5 The Role of Music

Singing or listening to music has the potential for fostering phonological awareness. "Because songs typically include rhymes, these experiences provide an opportunity for children to become attuned to the sounds of words" {Baker et al.; 246). In emergent literacy rhymes are important because phonological awareness contributes

to reading success. This is the same position advanced by Sonnenschein et al. (1996); they cite a study by Bryant et al. (1990) which shows that knowledge of rhyme and alliteration contributes to reading both by increasing sensitivity to phonemic differences and by preparing a child to recognize the similar spelling patterns shared by words that rhyme. Bryant et al. (1989) found that "there is a strong relation between knowledge of nursery rhymes at age 3 and success in reading over the next 3 years, a relation that appears to be mediated by the higher levels of phonemic awareness that are fostered by rhymes" (Sonnenschein et al., 1996: 6). This is consistent with the position of the *Baltimore Early Childhood Project* (Serpell et al., 2005) that preschool children's knowledge of nursery rhymes has been found to be a strong predictor of word recognition. In the same connection McMahon (1996) recommends the reading of books that have rhyme, rhythm, or repetition such as nursery rhymes since the sound of the language is especially important to children who cannot yet focus on pictures very well. In this study therefore, the research sought to establish the extent to which music and rhyme related activities were employed in teaching preschool children.

2.1.6 The Role of Play

According to Bergen (2001) research on the relationships between play and cognitive development gives some support to play-based curricula in programs for children under age 5. Apart from children's free play one important aspect of children's play in emergent literacy terms is pretend play. Because pretending involves language use and takes place in social contexts, the findings of many recent studies of pretend play shed light on the social and linguistic competence vital for school success (Bergen, 2001). According to Church (2010) pretend play research

has shown that pretend play provides children with a microcosm for life that encourages them to take the skills they have learned in classroom lessons and apply them to meaningful life activities. Among the many skills children learn is to understand the power of language. Halliburton (2006) says it is a way of communicating through words and action. In addition, by pretend-playing with others, a child learns that words give him the means to reenact a story or organize play. This process helps the child to make the connection between spoken and written language — a skill that will later help him learn to read. Research findings on children's play recommend that a preschool environment should have a play corner with theme-appropriate materials such as kitchen utensils, food containers, old telephones, old clothes, and so on (Church, 2010).

This study sought to establish whether play was an integral part of classroom activities and whether the environment has play corners with appropriate materials to foster pretend play.

2.1.7 Using Developmentally Appropriate Activities

Research shows that developmentally appropriate activities support emergent literacy. The readiness activities common in many preschools and kindergartens are not supported by the research on emergent literacy and how children learn. There is a tendency for preschools to offer one of two types of programs. Some tend to be play centers where the curriculum does not include natural reading and writing activities. Others utilize formal academic instruction inappropriately (Freeman & Hatch, 1989). According to research it is not developmentally appropriate to shove the first grade program down a notch or two into kindergarten and preschools and expect to make it work. The typical formal reading and writing instruction of first grade is inappropriate for young children (Bredekamp, 1987).

Researchers in Harste's (1984) study brought the book corner to the center of the room and added a writing table with pencils, pads of paper, envelopes, and stamps. By doing this they found that children spent 3 to 10 times the amount of time they normally did in direct reading and writing activities. If they had assumed that children needed to be taught specific lessons in reading and writing before they could engage in them, then there would be no need to provide print related activities. But when they provided books, paper, and pencil activities for these young children they found that children had an almost natural affinity for them.

These researchers challenge teachers of young children to provide open-ended activities so that the children can "demonstrate, use, and build upon the knowledge already acquired about literacy" (Harste, et al. p. 44). A model of teaching and learning that builds from the child can provide the essential foundation for how reading and writing should be taught from the emergent literacy perspective. This perspective assumes that when a child arrives at school he/she already knows a great deal about language and literacy. Even at the age of two or three a child is treated as one who has specific ideas about what written language is and has information about how the processes of reading and writing work. The instruction can then build on what the child knows and it supports the child's continued growth in reading or writing. The role of the teacher in the emergent literacy perspective becomes one of setting conditions that support self-generated, self-motivated, and self-regulated learning. This is in contrast to the traditional classroom where reading and writing are directly taught in a formal setting.

Another developmentally appropriate approach is to ensure that literacy activities operate on the pleasure principle. For example, most research recommends a preschool classroom that is comfortable and inviting. This is particularly so with reading activities because emergent literacy research shows that children who learn that reading is fun are more likely to continue reading and learning (Graves & Wendorf, 1995).

In this study therefore, the researcher sought to establish the extent to which play-related teaching was employed as opposed to formal direct instruction. The study examined whether the classroom practices and environment operated on the pleasure-principle and whether they supported child-regulated learning through provision of easy access to a variety of reading and writing materials.

2.2 Conclusion

The reviewed literature on emergent literacy suggests that early childhood literacy experiences affect successful reading acquisition along several dimensions. These literacy experiences are, in turn, influenced by social contexts and conditions as diverse as the individual literacy outcomes they help to shape. The challenge for the preschool or elementary classroom teacher appears to be: they are charged with designing and delivering literacy instruction that not only builds on what the individual child knows, but also accommodates the diverse individual literacy backgrounds present in the classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was used in the study. This comprises the research design, data collection procedures and instruments, and data analysis. The methodology employed was designed in such a way as to provide answers to the research questions.

3.1 Research Design

This study was mainly qualitative as the researcher sought to interpret his observations and the respondents' views to establish the extent to which practices in the target preschools support the continuation of emergent literacy. However, the study also employed some quantitative elements in the design. The study was also naturalistic because there was no systematic manipulation of any process during observation. Rather the researcher observed live classroom practices in the preschools as the teachers and learners went about with their activities.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Population

All the preschool teachers and principals in Kasempa and Solwezi constituted the population. Kasempa is more or less a rural town while Solwezi is urban. These two towns were selected because they may not have too many preschools to make it difficult to have a representative sample. A very large sample may not have

been feasible because the classroom observation method which was employed required an average of a day per respondent.

3.2.2 Sample Size

The sample for the study was drawn from eight preschools in the two study areas, namely Kasempa and Solwezi Districts in North-western Province. The sample size comprised 26 preschool teachers and 8 preschool administrators. 680 preschoolers were part of the classroom environments where the naturalistic observations took place. Information on the preschoolers at the study sites and the sample structure for the preschool teachers are presented below as Table 1 and Table 2, respectively:

Table 1: Information on Preschoolers at the Study Sites

Level of Children	***Age Range***	***Total***
Baby Class	2-4	202
Middle Class	4-5	264
Reception	5-7	214
		680

Table 2: Sample Structure for Preschool Teachers in the Study Areas

Highest Qualification	*Males*	*Female*	*Total*
Untrained	1	6	7
Certificate	0	15	15
Diploma	0	2	2
Primary Teacher's Cert	0	2	2
Totals	1	25	26

Table 2 above shows that out of the 26 respondents, 17 of them (65.4%) had undergone formal preschool teacher training and 2 of them (7.7%) had undergone basic teacher training while 7 (26.9%) were untrained.

3.2.3 Sampling Techniques

Samples were chosen on a non-probability basis on the understanding that respondents would be available, easy to access and ready to participate in the study. As such convenient and purposive samplings were used. This is because the researcher selected samples according to what was logistically convenient and feasible. Bearing in mind the period in which the study was to be undertaken, the preschools that were selected were those that were not in hard-to-reach areas. This was in line with Ghosh (2006) who says convenience sampling is used when the universe is not defined and when administrative limitations make it difficult for the researcher to randomly select samples. Since purposive sampling is used to target a group of subjects

a researcher believes to be reliable for a study (Kombo and Tromp, 2006), in this study it was used to select the eight schools in the study area. The use of this sampling technique was aimed at ensuring that only well-established preschools were targeted.

3.2.4 Pilot Testing

A pilot is a trial run used to test a process to discover any unanticipated flaws before full implementation. According to Cohen et al. (2007), pre-testing a questionnaire is crucial to its success as it serves to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire. Wilson and McLean (1994) explain that among many other things, a questionnaire must be piloted in order to gain feedback on the validity and operationalization of the questionnaire items. Thus piloting helps to eliminate ambiguity in wording, check the readability levels of the target audience, check the time taken to complete the questionnaire and whether the questionnaire is too short or too long, too easy or too difficult.

In this study the pilot was carried out on 12 subjects drawn from three preschools of Lusaka district. On the whole the exercise showed that most of the instructions and questions in the questionnaire were clear but some were ambiguous or difficult for the target audience. These were accordingly adjusted. Although the exercise of filling in a questionnaire took an average of 20 to 25 minutes, participants preferred to take them home and most were only able to return them after three to four days.

3.2.5 Data Collection Instruments

The following instruments were used to collect data:

3.2.5.1 *Classroom Literacy Checklist*

The Classroom Ethnography Checklist was used as a classroom observation instrument. It was used to check for classroom practices in terms of literacy-richness of the environment, reading practices, variety of literacy activities, authenticity of literacy activities and teachers' usage of children's knowledge of literacy. It was adapted from other literacy observation checklists such as the *KS1 Format* and the *National Centre for Learning Disabilities 2004 Literacy Environment Checklist* developed by Groover J. Whitehurst (Ph.D.). These observation instruments are designed to assess whether literacy environments in preschools provide a range of quality literacy experiences and a print-rich environment which are important factors in the facilitation and support of literacy learning.

3.2.5.2 *Questionnaires*

These were of two types, those for teachers and those for administrators. The questionnaires for the teachers sought to elicit information on their training and knowledge of emergent literacy. The questionnaires for the administrators sought to elicit information on the school profile, instructional materials and the school's ethos on literacy development. Questionnaires were given on the first day of research at each preschool. The idea was to give respondents three

to five days of answering the questionnaire, based on findings from the pilot test.

3.2.5.3 *Interview Schedules*

Interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators as follow-ups to help fill in gaps or clarify any matters from questionnaires and observations. For the teachers these were done soon after each observation. For administrators these were conducted at least twice in each school, one of which was on the last day of the research at each particular preschool.

3.2.6 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection exercise was undertaken over a period of eight (8) weeks, translating to one (1) week per school. The actual procedure began with lesson observations while at the same time questionnaires were distributed to teachers and administrators. During the lesson observation, the researcher checked on relevant parts of the observation checklist and made comments in the checklist where it was applicable. The researcher also noted any other relevant points as part of findings from observations. After each lesson follow-up interviews were carried out to seek understanding of what was going on during the lessons. Some respondents were still followed-up even days after their observed lessons to clarify any inconsistencies arising from the questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with each administrator to understand the school's philosophy on literacy instruction, the school profile, the nature of instructional materials available and routine classroom activities.

3.3 Data Analysis

Since this study was mainly qualitative, data analysis (particularly preprocessing) began during the data collection stage. During lesson observations the researcher made class profiles by recording the children's level, age range and enrolment. The researcher was also doing a dairy on each lesson observed. Another thing the researcher did at this stage was to ensure that the data were internally consistent. For example, the researcher would make follow-ups with informants to clarify any contradictions and gaps in the questionnaires or interviews. Data preparation then followed and this included summarizing and organizing the data according to categories. At the final stage the researcher sought to make interpretations of the questionnaire responses, observations and interview responses.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the classroom practices in the eight preschools of Kasempa and Solwezi. These findings are presented under the following thematic categories:

(i) Preschool teachers' knowledge of emergent literacy

(ii) Preschool classroom environment

(iii)Preschool curriculum

(iv)Instructional materials in preschools

(v) Classroom literacy practices

The above categories provide answers to the research questions in this study which were:

(i) What do preschool teachers know about emergent literacy?

(ii) To what extent does the classroom environment support emergent literacy?

(iii) What literacy instruction programme is in place and to what extent does it support emergent literacy?

(iv) What teaching and learning materials are available and to what extent do they support emergent literacy?

(v) What classroom literacy practices are employed and to what extent do they support emergent literacy?

4.1 Preschool Teachers' Knowledge of Emergent Literacy

Preschool teachers' knowledge of emergent literacy was investigated using the questionnaire, classroom observation and follow-up interviews.

4.1.1 Findings from questionnaires

Section B of the questionnaire was directly investigating emergent literacy. Question 1 sought to find out if the respondents had heard of the term emergent literacy. A total of 26 preschool teachers in eight different preschools were sampled. The results showed that 22 respondents (84.6%) had not heard of emergent literacy while only 4 respondents (15.4%) claimed they had heard of it.

Although Respondents 10, 11, 13 and 15 claimed that they had heard of emergent literacy in Question 1, their responses in Question 3 seemed contradictory. Question 3 was probing when literacy emerged in children. Table 3 below presents the findings on this question.

Table 3: Respondents understanding of when literacy emerges in children

When literacy emerges	*Implication of response*	*No*	*%*
When a child is born	Literacy is innate	0	0
Before a child enters school	Emergent literacy	1	3.9
When a child enters school	Reading readiness	8	30.7
After a child enters school	Reading readiness	17	65.4

Table 3 shows that only 3.9% (1 respondent) believed in emergent literacy while 96.1% of the respondents believed in reading readiness. This number included the four respondents who had claimed to have heard of emergent literacy.

In spite of the respondents tending to believe in reading readiness, findings showed that the respondents noted elements of emergent literacy. All the respondents indicated that children did imitate reading and writing activities. These included reading around the classroom displays, tracing, colouring and drawing, pretend writing, pretend reading, pretend play and doing "what the teacher has taught."

Further, investigations were carried out on the respondents' appreciation of emergent reading by asking them whether children knew anything about reading when they just entered preschool. Table 4 shows the three responses with their implications:

Table 4: Respondents' appreciation of emergent reading

Response	***Implication of response***	***No***	***%***
Yes	Emergent literacy noted/appreciated	3	11.5
No	No emergent literacy noted/appreciated	16	61.5
Somehow	Emergent literacy possible in some children	7	26.9

Table 4 shows that 61.5% had not noted (or did not appreciate) emergent reading while only 11.7% had noted or appreciated emergent reading. 26.9% took middle ground indicating that this depended on the children's background. These respondents singled out children from literate homes or homes where English was used as knowing something about reading.

4.1.2 Findings from observations

Observation was the major technique for data collection and was done using the Classroom Ethnography Checklist. Part 9 of the checklist targeted teachers' knowledge of emergent literacy in five areas, examined along a rubric of 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). The findings are summarized in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Respondents' knowledge levels of emergent literacy

Score	*Knowledge level*	*No of subjects*	*%*
1	Very poor	9	34.6
2	Poor	8	30.8
3	Average	7	26.9
4	Good	2	7.7
5	Very good	0	0

Table 5 shows that only 7.7% of the respondents had good knowledge levels of emergent literacy with regard to their classroom practices. 26.9% had average knowledge levels while the majority (65.4%) had poor knowledge levels.

The five areas that were investigated as well as the results obtained are shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Areas of emergent literacy knowledge investigated

Question No	Area investigated	Score out of 26	Percentage
1	Whether teacher reinforces literate behaviour when displayed at 'wrong time'	7	26.9
2	Whether teacher makes use of children's literacy knowledge from home	11	42.3
3	Whether teacher recognizes that children have differences in literacy development	26	100
4	Whether teacher engages children in rich dialogues	8	30.8
5	Whether teacher reinforces any display of literate behaviour	2	7.7

Table 6 shows that all the respondents recognized that there were differences in literacy development levels among the children. The table further shows that most respondents had poor knowledge of how to reinforce children's display of literate behaviour.

4.1.3 Findings from follow-up interviews

The follow-up interviews were conducted after each lesson observation. Each of the 26 respondents was asked whether children had any idea about reading and writing. The follow-up interviews revealed that 65.4% did not think children had any idea about literacy when they just entered preschool. Only 11.5% thought children knew something about literacy while 23.1% took middle ground. These gave home background as the determining factor.

The interview also showed that respondents 10 and 11, who had indicted in the questionnaire that they had heard about emergent literacy, did not see the difference between literacy and emergent literacy while respondents 12 and 15 admitted they had actually not heard about emergent literacy.

The respondents were also asked about four emergent literacy behaviours regarding children just coming to preschool. The findings are presented in Table 7:

Table 7: Respondents' awareness of emergent literacy behaviours

Emergent literacy behaviour	***Responses***	
	No	***%***
Whether children knew that a pen/pencil was for writing	Yes = 26	100
	No = 0	0
Whether children knew books are for reading	Yes = 18	69.2
	No = 8	30.8
Whether children knew how to hold a pen/pencil	Yes = 24 (but with problems of grip)	92.7
	N0 = 2	7.7
What a child would do when given a book	Tear book = 2	7.7
	Turn pages = 19	73.1
	Scribble in it = 5	19.2

Table 7 above shows that most of the respondents felt that children knew something about literacy before any formal teaching. The majority of the

respondents were aware of the emergent literacy behaviours targeted. However, generally the respondents seemed to hold the perspective of reading readiness. Most of them clearly said it was only around 6-7 years that the average child can begin to learn to read and write. Thus they did not seem to consider the emergent literacy behaviours (prewriting and pre-reading skills) as part of literacy. Respondents did, however, sound contradictory about emergent literacy. For example, one respondent explained that children do not come with any knowledge of literacy when they come to preschools, but are aware of the existence of literacy in the environment!

4.2 Preschool Classroom Environment

The concept of a preschool classroom environment may refer to three main aspects, namely the physical environment, psychological environment and literacy environment (print environment). The physical environment refers to the building that houses the classroom while the psychological environment is the deliberate selection and arrangement/display of objects in such a way that it provides literacy benefits to the children. In this study the focus was mainly on the psychological and literacy environment, though reference was also made to the physical environment.

4.2.1 Findings from questionnaires

The questionnaire investigated what the respondents considered when arranging a preschool classroom environment. Seven aspects were targeted and the results are presented in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Aspects of the classroom environment respondents consider

Aspect	*Implication*	*Non Response*	*Positive Response*	*%*
Attractiveness	Object should be colourful/room should be well lit and inviting	14	12	46.2
Space Organization	Arrangement must facilitate free and easy interaction among children and with literacy objects	23	3	11.5
Visibility	Literacy objects should be at children's eye-view and big enough to be seen	19	7	26.9
Arrangement	objects should be clustered together to create schema or meaning network	26	0	0
Variety	There should be a variety of literacy materials such as charts, numbers, colours, week days, months, books, toys and the alphabet	25	1	3.8
Accessibility	It should be easy for children to interact with literacy objects	14	11	42.3
Relevance	Literacy materials should be relevant to what the children are learning	17	9	34.6

Table 8 above shows that the aspect that most respondent considered when arranging a literacy environment was attractiveness (46.2%) followed by

accessibility. None of the respondents considered arranging literacy objects into a meaning network while variety ranked among the lowest aspects (3.8).

4.2.2 Findings from observations

The environment was further investigated with the aid of the checklist, which investigated 14 aspects of classroom literacy support. Table 9 below shows the results for the 14 aspects of literacy support that were targeted:

Table 9: Aspects of literacy support in a preschool classroom

No	*Aspect of literacy support*	*Score*	*%*
1	Attractiveness of classroom	11	42.3
2	Labelling of working areas	1	3.8
3	Reflecting range of Zambian culture	0	0
4	Providing natural reading/writing environment	0	0
5	Availability of reading area	0	0
6	Display of books correctly	0	0
7	Availability of variety of books	2	7.7
8	Provision for opportunity to borrow books	2	7.7
9	Attractive pictorial alphabet frieze	24	92.3
10	Display of day/month names	20	77.0
11	Display of high frequency words	4	15.4
12	Display of extracts from shared reading	0	0
13	Display of children's own work	7	26.9
14	Display of literacy targets at children's height	11	42.3

Table 9 shows that the most common aspect of literacy support in the preschool environments was having an attractive pictorial alphabet frieze (92.3%) and

display of day and month names (77%). Aspects of literacy support that were lacking were correct display of books, availability of reading area, display of extracts from shared reading and having literacy objects that reflect a range of Zambian culture.

Along a rubric of low support (0-5), average support (6-10) and high support (11-14), all the classroom environments fell within the low support category as presented in Table 10 below:

Table 10: Literacy support of classroom environments

Score	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*
No	2	1	3	6	12	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
%	7.7	3.8	11.5	23.1	46.2	7.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 10 above shows that none of the 26 classroom environments investigated had all the 14 aspects of classroom literacy support. The highest score out of 14 was 5 while the lowest was 0.

4.2.3 General Observations on the Physical Environments

The researcher observed that most of the physical environments were not suitable for preschool classrooms. For example, in the case of the Kasempa preschools, three of the four schools were using rented houses as schools while the fourth was using a dilapidated council structure. All the Solwezi schools were using constructed schools but these fell short of appropriate designs that would accommodate a suitable preschool environment.

It was also observed that the environments did not have sufficient literacy targets due to limited space, unavailability of resources or lack of innovation on the part of the teachers. Generally all the environments were too restrictive, making it difficult for the children to interact with the literacy targets. This was because of the following reasons:

(i) The classrooms were too small to allow for easy movement.

(ii) There were too many children in some classes leading to overcrowding. Statistics revealed the following classroom enrolments:

Table 11: Enrolment patterns in the preschools

Size of class	*Comment*	*No out of 26*	*%*
1-15	Very favourable	5	19.2
16-25	Favourable	11	42.3
26-35	Unfavourable	2	7.7
Above 35	Very unfavourable	8	30.8

Table 11 above shows that 10 of the 26 environments (38.5%) had unfavourable enrolment patterns. The most unfavourable enrolments ranged from 39 to 70 children per class.

4.2.4 Findings from follow-up interviews

Follow-up interviews with teachers revealed that teachers had some knowledge of how a preschool literacy environment ought to be although the observation checklist placed all the sampled classroom environments in the low literacy support category. Four major aspects were identified as needed when arranging a preschool literacy environment: attractiveness (26), relevance (20), age-appropriateness (19) and authenticity (17).

11 of the trained preschool teachers (representing 42.3% of the sample or 64.7% of the preschool trained teachers) were able to point out that a preschool classroom needed to have learning corners. Among the corners pointed out were the reading corner and corners for pretend play. The respondents indicated that the reading corners should have a wide range of reading materials while corners for pretend play should have authentic objects.

The respondents attributed the gap between their knowledge of how a preschool environment ought to be and what actually obtained in their classrooms to the following:

(i) Lack of resources to build standard preschools

(ii) Lack of resources to furnish preschool classrooms with appropriate environments

(iii) Having preschool managers/proprietors who are ignorant of preschool education

4.3 Preschool Curriculum

4.3.1 Findings from questionnaires

Part E of the questionnaire for preschool administrators targeted issues of the curriculum in the preschools. Two of the eight schools referred to the 'Straight into English' policy (that is, using English to teach literacy from the time the children enter preschool). One of the administrators indicated that the school had no philosophy regarding the teaching of literacy to preschool children while the rest could not articulate any philosophy.

4.3.2 Findings from interviews

Findings from interviews showed that all the eight preschools were following the 'Straight for English' policy, although teachers used local languages in situations where a new child could not understand English.

Findings further revealed that there was no unified syllabus for preschools. Some of the schools were using what they called Zambia Preschool Association (ZPA) Early Childhood Education Syllabus while others used adaptations from the ZPA and other sources. Most respondents were not conversant with the literacy instruction programmes used in their schools. However, phonics seemed to be the basis of the literacy instruction programmes at the research sites. One respondent clearly explained that the literacy instruction was based on phonics because once this is mastered children become independent learners.

4.4 Instructional Materials in Preschools

4.4.1 Findings from questionnaires

Part D of the Questionnaires for Preschool Administrators investigated instructional materials. The commonly identified materials as used in the sampled schools were flashcards, word cards, alphabet friezes, charts of various kinds (number, alphabet, colour, shape, animal, etc), storybooks and building blocks as the most common toys. The respondents identified the following instructional materials as lacking in their schools: readers, audio equipment for teaching phonics (CDs, tapes, stereo), workbooks, play parks and sports equipment.

4.4.2 Findings from observation

Parts of the checklist investigated instructional materials in the 26 preschool environments. The checklist targeted nine aspects whose findings are presented in Table 12 below:

Table 12: Instructional materials in the preschool environments

Aspect checked	*No out of 26*	*%*
Availability of a variety of books	2	7.7
Availability of sufficient reading materials	0	0
Availability of books for practicing phonics	0	0
Availability of books related to other subjects	10	38.4
Availability of books with high frequency words	5	19.2
Whether books are in large print and colourful	16	61.5
Availability of magnetic literacy letters, number	0	0
Literacy tools for practicing alphabet, e.g. templates, stencils, stamps and other toys	3	11.5
Materials for pretend play e.g. puppets, dolls, toys	0	0

Table 12 above shows that all the 26 environments did not have sufficient reading materials, books for practicing phonics, magnetic literacy letters and numbers nor did they have materials for pretend play. Overall the table shows a paucity of literacy instructional materials.

Findings from observations further revealed that only one of the eight schools sampled had a play park. Playthings were lacking in almost all the eight schools, the commonest toys being building blocks. In some cases, the lack of playthings in the schools led to children scrambling and fighting for the few toys available. Authentic objects for pretend play, slates, magnetic literacy tools, jig-saw puzzles, colouring and painting materials, modelling clay and plasticine were virtually absent in all the schools.

4.4.3 Findings from interviews

Findings from interviews revealed that none the preschools had requisite instructional materials. The materials were lacking in terms of type, quantities and variety. The most available materials were charts, flashcards and building blocks. Only three of the eight schools had a limited number of books. The respondents identified picture and storybooks, magnetic alphabets and numbers, jig-saw puzzles, literacy objects for pretend play such as puppets and dolls, and generally toys, as some of the materials lacking in the schools.

4.5 Classroom Literacy Practices

4.5.1 Findings from questionnaires

Reading was one major aspect investigated by the questionnaire. The 26 respondents were required to indicate whether they read to the children and whether children read to one another and how often this was done in a week. All the respondents indicated reading to the children between 2 to 5 times in a week and 20 indicated that children read to one another. The responses for reading lessons per week are given in Table 13 below:

Table 13: Reading lessons per week

Lessons per week	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
No	2	0	3	8	1	12

Table 13 above shows that 12 of the 26 respondents indicated have reading lessons daily while 2 indicated that they did not have any reading lessons at all.

Respondents indicated that children read from charts, flashcards, word cards, alphabets and pictures, the most common practices being reading from charts and flashcards.

4.5.2 Findings from observations

The observation checklist investigated literacy practices, targeting 28 aspects. Along a rubric of low support (1-9), average support (10-19) and high support

(20-28), the findings from the 26 classroom environment are represented in Table 14 below:

Table 14: Support from classroom literacy practices

Rubric	*Implication*	*Score*	*%*
1-9	Low support	11	42.3
10-19	Average support	15	57.7
20-28	High support	0	0

Table 14 above shows that all the 26 environments did not have high support literacy practices while the majority fell in the average support bracket.

The literacy practices that were present in almost all the environments were: literacy activities providing pleasure to the children; playful use of language; teachers using age-appropriate activities and teachers reading or referring to the environmental print. Punctuating lessons with music was one practice that was observed in all the environments.

Literacy practices that were absent or hardly practised were: children having active roles in shared book reading; supporting children to read around the classroom; independent and shared book reading; having a variety of writing materials; children having easy access to writing materials; providing independent activities for children working alone and sending materials home for parents to read with their children.

4.5.3 *Findings from interviews*

Respondents who were trained preschool teachers alluded to the 'pleasure principle' in teaching children, hence the need for play-related teaching. The respondents also pointed out the need to have a variety of activities for the children, using authentic materials and ensuring that children were always engaged in activities. A few respondents explained that some of these practices did not always obtain in their classrooms because of lack of requisite materials and personnel and in some cases over-enrolment.

Music was one practice that all the 26 respondents identified as an important component in teaching preschool children. The respondents identified three major reasons for its importance: providing pleasure, motivating children and facilitating language learning.

Findings on reading practices revealed that phonics was the most common approach to teaching reading. This entailed teaching letters of the alphabet first [in some schools capital letters first and then small letters while in others the reverse], then progressing to sounds and small words. Reading was mainly done from charts and flash cards. Reading from books was only expected in reception or Grade 1. The concepts of independent reading and children reading to one another were absent. Only 9 out of the 26 respondents practised shared book reading.

Regarding writing, the interviews revealed that all the 26 environments practised pre-writing skills in varied ways. These included pretend writing,

scribbling, colouring, tracing and copying out written material. Writing names was generally reserved for reception classes.

4.5.4 Overall Findings

An overall assessment of the environment, classroom literacy practices and literacy instructional materials was done using the Classroom Ethnography Checklist. The assessment was done along a rubric of very high, high, low and very low supportive literacy elements. These findings are shown in Table 15 below:

Table 15: Overall findings on classroom literacy support

Score	*Implications*	*No out of 26*	*%*
44-57 (very high)	Classroom literacy environment has most necessary supportive elements	0	0
30-43 (high)	Classroom literacy environment has many supportive elements	0	0
15-29 (low)	Classroom literacy environment has few supportive elements and needs improvement	19	73.1
0-14 (very low)	Classroom literacy environment has very few supportive elements and needs a lot of improvement.	7	26.9

Table 15 shows that all the classroom environments fell below the high supportive literacy elements bracket, meaning that they all needed a degree of improvement.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This study sought to find out the extent to which classroom practices in preschools support emergent literacy. The study employed naturalistic observations of live classroom sessions and this was complemented by questionnaires and follow-up interviews. The study has established that there is low support to emergent literacy in the study areas. Below is a discussion of the specific findings.

5.1 Discussion of the Main Findings

This section provides a discussion of the findings on classroom practices that obtained in the study areas and relates them to their support to emergent literacy. The section is divided into five sections, each discussing the findings in relation to each of the five objectives of the study.

5.1.1 Preschool Teachers' Knowledge of Emergent Literacy

The study has revealed that none of respondents had ever heard of the term 'emergent literacy'. In spite of this, the findings have also revealed that all the respondents have noticed elements of emergent literacy in children when they just enter preschool. The study has further shown that respondents have high awareness levels of children's emergent literacy behaviours.

However, the study has also revealed that generally, the respondents' appreciation of the children's emergent literacy was very poor. One area major area where this was evident was with regard to knowing how to reinforce children's display of emergent literacy (for example if a child got a book and began to turn pages or if a child stood up and began to 'read' around the room).

This apparent disparity between the respondents' high awareness of emergent literacy behaviours and their low appreciation of emergent literacy can be attributed to the respondents' training. It was clear that preschool teachers are not taught about emergent literacy, hence the respondents did not regard emergent literacy behaviours as a developmental stage in literacy learning. Generally all the respondents tended to subscribe to the reading readiness perspective.

In relation to the purpose of the study, these findings suggest that preschool teachers in the study areas cannot provide the necessary support to children's emergent literacy if they are ignorant of emergent literacy as a developmental stage in children's literacy learning.

5.1.2 Preschool Classroom Environment

This study has revealed that the classroom environments in the study areas have low literacy support. It has also established that the most common aspects of literacy support were the alphabet frieze and month and day names. This effectively means that the environments were not print-rich.

The study has further revealed that the preschool teachers had low knowledge levels of how a preschool environment ought to be. In cases where the respondents revealed high knowledge levels, there was a gap between this knowledge and what was obtaining in the classrooms. The findings established that this was due to paucity of resources and having proprietors/managers who were ignorant of preschool education.

These findings suggest serious implications on children's literacy development. First because preschool teachers and proprietors/managers tended to have low appreciation of what a preschool environment ought to be, they cannot provide the requisite environment that fully supports the continuation of emergent literacy. Secondly, because preschool children in the study areas have little exposure to a literacy-rich environment, they may not easily progress from emergent to conventional literacy.

5.1.3 Preschool Curriculum

This study has revealed that the study areas do not seem to have any clear philosophy regarding literacy instruction. As such the preschools did not have clear literacy instruction programmes. The study has also established that there is no common syllabus for preschools in Zambia. Preschools were using whatever they could lay their hands on. These findings show that it is difficult to measure the schools literacy instruction success when issues of syllabi are vague.

5.1.4 Literacy Instruction Materials

This study has revealed a paucity of teaching and learning materials in the study areas. The most commonly available instructional materials are flashcards, charts and building

blocks. The study has established that there is a lack of a variety of reading books, workbooks, literacy objects for pretend play, and generally playthings.

In view of the paucity of literacy instructional materials in the study areas, there is less support to children's emergent literacy as children do not have sufficient interaction with a variety of literacy objects. The other implication is that with the paucity of play things, the children spend less time on play related activities and do more of formal learning.

5.1.5 Classroom Literacy Practices

This study has revealed that using music is a practice widely employed in all the eight preschools. However, the study has also established that preschool children in the study areas have limited reading experiences. In almost all cases children seldom handle reading books as this is reserved for Reception or Grade 1 levels. This is because teachers do not see this as necessary since the children cannot read in the conventional sense. Further children are rarely read to and hardly engage in shared book reading. It has also been found that there are hardly any independent activities for children not working with an adult.

More formal learning as opposed play-related learning has been found to be a common practice. The implication of these findings is that preschool teachers in the study areas are not using developmentally appropriate activities to teach literacy to the preschoolers.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

By analysing the classroom practices, preschool teachers' knowledge of emergent literacy and the environments in the study areas, this study has established that the practices in the eight preschools do not provide sufficient support for the continuation of emergent literacy. A number of factors have militated against high support for emergent literacy. The first factor is the preschool teachers' lack of knowledge/appreciation of emergent literacy. This has arisen from the nature of training that preschool teachers undergo in Zambia. Coupled with this is the fact that some of the preschool teachers currently serving in schools have not undergone formal training. In this study almost a third of them were untrained. The other factor is lack of resources to construct appropriate structures for preschools and furnish them with requisite materials. This has been compounded by the fact that preschool education in Zambia is privately run and as such the Government has had no stake in it. The third fact is the very fact that Government has had no stake in preschool education. This has led to lapses in the registration of preschools and lack of serious and constant monitoring of preschools. As such there is no quality assurance in the provision of preschool education.

6.2 Conclusion

The results of this study are significant in two main ways: the results have indicated the need for capacity-building preschool teachers in the area of emergent literacy. The results have also demonstrated the need for Government's keen participation in preschool education.

As regards the need for capacity-building preschool teachers, the study has demonstrated that while preschool teachers may notice emergent literacy behaviours among preschool children, they cannot unwittingly provide the necessary scaffolding to emergent literacy if they do not have sound knowledge of the phenomenon. This, therefore, means that emergent literacy must be part of preschool teachers' curriculum.

The need for government's keen participation in preschool education arises from the fact that most of the inadequacies noted are a result of lack of stringent regulation and monitoring of preschool education. Stringent regulation will ensure that only individuals/institutions meeting the minimum standards are allowed to run preschools. On the other hand, constant monitoring will ensure that high standards are maintained in preschools. Another key way Government needs to participate in preschool education is through provision of grants or instructional materials. It is commendable that preschools are now falling under the Ministry of Education which has expert personnel to oversee the running of education provision in general and preschool education in particular. There is, however, need to come up with a directorate responsible for preschool education.

6.3 Recommendations for Policy Development

In view of the findings discussed above, the following are recommended for policy development:

(i) Preschool teacher colleges should incorporate emergent literacy into preschool teachers' curriculum.

(ii) In-service training in emergent literacy should be provided for serving preschool teachers by respective schools and colleges.

(iii) Government should put in place stringent measures for the establishment of preschools so that only individuals/institutions with the capacity are allowed to open preschools.

(iv) There should be regular monitoring of preschools by Ministry of Education standard officers to ensure they (preschools) conform to minimum standards.

(v) The Ministry of Education should ensure that a common syllabus which takes into account children's literacy developmental needs is urgently prepared and all preschools should be compelled to follow such a syllabus.

(vi) Government should consider giving grants to preschools in view of the fact that the lack of instructional materials can be attributed to lack of resources.

(vii) Government needs to carry out a thorough examination of preschool teacher training in Zambia.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Research

This study is not exhaustive but brings out many areas where further research may be necessary. Below are some of the areas where further research may be necessary:

i) A large scale research on emergent literacy practices in other parts of the country

ii) The nature/curriculum of preschool teacher training

iii) A study on the extent to which play-related teaching is carried out in Zambia

iv) An investigation into who are running preschools in Zambia (managers/proprietors)

v) A comparative study of literacy levels between Zambian children who have undergone preschool education and those who have not

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Informed Consent Form

Dear Respondent,

This serves to give you an understanding of the purpose of this research and procedures that will be followed. Further implications for your participation are explained. Finally you are being asked to sign this form to indicate that you have agreed to participate in this exercise.

Thank you in advance.

1. ***Description***
   This exercise is an educational research; the researcher is a student at the University of Zambia pursuing a degree in Literacy and Learning. This research is a major requirement for the researcher to complete his programme. Thus this exercise is purely academic.
2. ***Purpose***
   The researcher wishes to find out how literacy learning is carried out in preschools. The researcher is interested in looking at the classroom environment, curriculum, learning materials and classroom activities.
3. ***Consent***
   Participating in this exercise is voluntary. You are free to decline to participate in this exercise.
4. ***Confidentiality***
   All data collected from this research is treated with utmost confidentiality. Participants are assured that they will remain anonymous and untraceable in this research.
5. ***Rights of Respondents***
   All effort will be taken to ensure that the rights of participants are protected and respected. Participants are assured that they shall suffer no harm as a result of participating in this exercise. Participants are free to ask for clarification at any point of the exercise and to inform the research if they feel uncomfortable about any procedure in the research.

6. ***Declaration of Consent***

   I have read and fully understand this document. I therefore agree to participate in this exercise.

   ....

   Signature date

Appendix II

Questionnaire for Preschool Teachers

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to collect data on various aspects of literacy practices in preschools in Zambia. The data collected will help the researcher to compile a report which is a requirement for him to complete his programme of study. Be assured that the information you supply will be treated with utmost confidentiality and is purely for academic purposes.

Thank you for accepting to complete this questionnaire.

Date:

.....

Section A **Personal Details**

1. Name of School: .....
2. Gender:

Male		Female	

3. Level of education: (tick only one appropriate box)

Grade 9		Form II		Grade 12		Form IV		GCE		Any Other	

Specify if any other:..... .....

4. Where were you trained? .....
5. How long was the training?.....
6. What qualification did you obtain?.....
7. How long have you been teaching in preschool? .....

Section B: **Emergent Literacy**

1. Have you ever heard of the term emergent literacy?

Yes		No		**[tick one box]**

2. Give examples of any behaviour the children show to indicate their interest in reading or writing.

.....

.....

.....

3. From your experience as a teacher, when are children generally able to learn how to read and write?

When they are just born	
Before they enter preschool	
When they enter preschool	
Sometime after they enter preschool	

Give reasons for your choice above.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Do the children you teach imitate any reading or writing activities?

Yes		No	

[tick one box]

If your answer is **yes,** give some examples of what they actually do.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Section C: Reading Practices

1. Do the children know anything about reading when they just enter preschool?

Yes		No		Somehow	

[tick one box]

Give reasons for your answer: .....

.....

.....

.....

2. How many reading lessons do the children have each week? .....

3. Briefly describe what goes on in a reading lesson.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. What is the value of reading to the children? .....

.....

.....

.....

5. Do the children ever read to one another?

Yes		No	

[tick one box]

Give a brief explanation for your answer.....

.....

.....

6. Do you as a teacher ever read to the children?

Yes		No	

[tick one box]

If your answer is **yes**, how often in a week? .....

If your answer is **no**, any special reason? .....

.....

.....

7. Apart from books what other materials do the children read? .....

.....

.....

D. Classroom Environment

1. What factors do you consider when decorating the children's classroom? Briefly explain.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. How do the materials displayed in the classroom affect the children?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. How free are children to play with the materials displayed in the classroom?

.....

.....

.....

.....

E. Classroom Activities/Practices

1. List the major classroom activities and briefly describe them

a).....

.....

b).....

.....

c).....

.....

d).....

.....

e).....

.....

f).....

.....

g).....

.....

h).....

.....

2. What are the reasons for making the children sing nursery rhymes?

.....

.....

.....

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.....

3. What is done to the work (e.g. drawings) that children produce?.....

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.....

4. Is there ay difference noted between children coming from literate homes and those from non-literate homes? Explain.

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5. Explain how children who seem to be more knowledgeable than the others are treated.....

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Appendix III

Questionnaire for Preschool Administrators

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your permission to carry out a study in your school. This questionnaire has been designed as a way of assisting the researcher to understand the profile of your school. The data collected will help the researcher to compile a report which is a requirement for him to complete his programme of study. Be assured that the information you supply will be treated with utmost confidentiality and is purely for academic purposes.

Thank you for accepting to complete this questionnaire.

Date:

.....

Section A Personal Details

8. Name of School: .....
9. Name of Administrator: .....
   (NB: You need not write down your name if you are not comfortable)

Section B Children's Profile

1. How many pupils are in your school? .....
2. Classify the number of your pupils by gender

boys		girls	

10. What categories (levels) of children do you have in your school?

Preschool		Primary/ Middle Basic		Upper Basic	

(tick only one appropriate box)

11. How many preschool children do you have in total? .....
12. What is the age-range of the preschool children you have in your school?
    .....

Section C: Teachers' Profile

4. Have many teachers do you have in this school? .....

Males		Females		**[tick one box]**

5. Classify your teachers by their qualifications.

Qualifications	Gender	
	Males	Females
Grade 9		
Grade 12		
GCE		
Certificate		
Diploma		
Others (specify)		

Section D: School Instructional Materials

1. List the major teaching materials you use in the teaching of literacy in this school.

.....

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.....

2. Are there any major literacy teaching materials your school does not have? If your answer is yes, briefly list them.

.....

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Section E: School Ethos on Literacy Teaching

1. Does your school have any guiding principle regarding children's literacy development? If your answer is yes, briefly explain what it is.

.....

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.....

2. Briefly describe your school's literacy instruction programme.

.....

.....

Appendix IV:

Classroom Literacy Checklist

This document is aimed at counter-checking whether the classroom environment, instructional materials and classroom practices support the continuation of emergent literacy. The document will also help to verify responses in the questionnaires. The approach used is based on the **KS1 Format** and the **National Centre for Learning Disabilities 2004 Literacy Environment Checklist** developed by Groover J. Whitehurst (Ph.D.). Both instruments are designed to assess whether literacy environments in preschools provide a range of quality literacy experiences and a print-rich environment which are important factors in the facilitation and support of literacy learning.

Respondent's Code: ..... **School:** .....

Date: .....

	Category	Yes	No	Comments
1	Classroom Environment			
	• Is the classroom bright, well organised and inviting to walk in?			
	• Are resources and working areas clearly labelled?			
	• Do the resources reflect the range of families and cultures in Zambia?			
	• Does the classroom provide a natural environment for reading and writing?			
	Subtotal			
2	Book/Literacy Area			
	• Is there an area in the classroom designed for reading?			
	• Are there shelves for storing books with spines outward?			
	• Is there a variety of books (picture books, picture story books, traditional literature, rhyme books, etc)?			
	• Are children able to borrow books from the classroom library?			
	Subtotal			
3.	Print Environment			
	• Is there an attractive pictorial alphabet frieze displayed in the classroom?			
	• Are month/day names displayed in the classroom?			
	• Are any high-frequency words displayed in the classroom?			
	• Are there any poems/rhymes/extracts from shared book reading displayed?			
	• Do the displays include children's written work?			
	• Does the classroom contain everyday print for pretend play,			

	such as empty snack and biscuit packs, boxes and other labels?			
	Subtotal			
4.	Reading Materials/Activities			
	• Are there enough reading materials to meet the different ranges of children?			
	• Do the books for reading include a good portion of words the children can decode using phonic skills?			
	• Are the books included in displays and available resources related to other areas of the curriculum?			
	• Do the books for reading have text that includes the repetition of high-frequency words?			
	• Do the children in the class engage in shared book reading sessions with an adult at least four times a week?			
	• Do the children have an active role in shared in shared and guided reading?			
	• Are the children encouraged or supported to read around the room?			
	• Is the book/text easily seen by the children during guided reading?			
	• Do the children have opportunity for independent reading?			
	• Are the books in large print and with colourful photographs?			
	Subtotal			
5.	Writing Materials/Activities			
	• Is there a variety of pencils, crayons and other writing materials?			
	• Do the children easily access the writing materials?			
	• Do the children practice writing their own names?			

	• Are the children given age-appropriate activities that help them learn to write letters of the alphabet?			
	Subtotal			
6.	Classroom Literacy Activities			
	• Are the literacy activities providing pleasure for the children?			
	• Are the children able to participate in a variety of literacy activities?			
	• Do the children engage in authentic literacy activities			
	• Are the children encouraged to scribble and experiment with pretend writing?			
	• Are games, materials, and other activities are used regularly to help children learn to print the alphabet?			
	• Do the children engage in playful use of language?			
	• Do the children regularly engage in games and activities that help them break spoken words into sound parts?			
	Subtotal			
7.	Teacher/Helper Classroom Practices			
	• Does the teacher read and refer to the print displayed around the classroom?			
	• Does the teacher read to the classroom?			
	• Does the teacher use literacy examples/ illustrations that are familiar to the children?			
	• Does the teacher demonstrate a wide range of purposeful literacy behaviours?			
	• Do the teacher's efforts sustain discussion?			
	• Is the teacher a model of			

	literate behaviour?			
	• Is there a range of independent activities planned for children not working with adults in guided reading sessions?			
	• Does the teacher ask the children questions and encourage them to talk while reading picture books with them?			
	• Does the teacher sometimes sound out printed words when reading picture books to children?			
	• Does the teacher frequently introduce new words to children while reading picture books?			
	Subtotal			
8.	Instructional Materials			
	• Are literacy targets displayed at child-height?			
	• Does the classroom have any magnetic letters and phonograms?			
	• Are there literacy tools (e.g. templates, rubber stamps, alphabetic stencils) to children learn land practice the alphabet?			
	• Does the classroom have materials available for pretend play such as puppets, dolls and other toys?			
	Subtotal			
9.	Teacher's knowledge of Emergent Literacy			
	• Does the teacher reinforce the children's literate behaviour when displayed at the 'wrong time'?			
	• Does the teacher make use of the literate knowledge the			

	children come with from home?			
	• Is there any evidence that the teacher recognizes that the children's literacy development cannot be at the same level?			
	• Is there any evidence that the teacher engages the children in rich dialogues?			
	• Does the teacher frown upon any type of literacy behaviour the child display?			
	Subtotal			
10.	Teacher-parent Collaboration			
	• Does the teacher send home materials that encourage parents to read with their children at home?			
	• Does the teacher send home materials that encourage parents to help their children learn the letters of the alphabet?			
	• Is there a systematic way for feedback from parents on the children's homework?			
	Subtotal			
	Grand Total			

	Classroom literacy environment has most of the necessary supportive elements
30-43	***Classroom literacy environment has many supportive elements***
15-29	***Classroom literacy environment has few supportive elements***
0-14	***Classroom literacy environment has very few supportive elements***

Interview Schedule

This semi-structured interview will be a follow-up on the classroom observations and will be used to countercheck data obtained from questionnaires. The interview will seek to find out the following:

1. Emergent Literacy Knowledge

a) Do children know anything about reading and writing when they are just brought into preschool?

b) Answer the following about children when they are just enrolled into preschool:

Emergent Literacy Behaviour	*Response*
Do the children know that a pen/pencil is for writing with?	
Do the children know that books are for reading?	
Do the children know how to hold a pencil?	
What would a child do when given a book?	

2. Curriculum

- The structure of the school curriculum [syllabus, school day, schemes]
- Content of literacy instruction
- If there is any philosophy guiding the teaching of literacy

3. Environment

- What guides the teachers in arranging the classroom environment?
- How the arrangement of the classroom helps the children to learn literacy
- If/why children's work is part of the environment

4. Instructional Materials

- What reading materials are in the school
- How each type of reading materials is used
- How each type of reading materials contributes to learning literacy

5. **Classroom Practices**

- How often reading lessons are conducted
- Whether independent/shared reading are conducted and how often
- If teachers read to the children and the reason for this
- If the children read to one another and what kind of materials they read
- Role of music in teaching literacy
- How play is used to teach literacy
- How children with low literacy levels are helped
- What strategies are used in teaching literacy
- Home work, Teacher-Parent Collaboration
- Library – any for the school? Do children borrow books?