

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The first part of this chapter presents a general background to the research topic: An evaluation of the instructional strategies pre-school teachers use to present reading readiness activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. Chapter one accounts for the researcher's choice of the topic under study. The chapter also explains the research problem. Besides, research questions and corresponding research objectives are presented. The chapter proceeds to explain the significance of the study, delimitation, limitations and the definition of terms used in the dissertation. Chapter one also describes the theoretical framework on which this study is anchored.

### **1.2 Background to the Study**

Pre-school education is a phenomenon that is appreciated by a lot of people. In the United States, it was originally conceptualized as a time for children to develop literacy and social skills as well as prepare for the transition to formal schooling usually considered to begin with the first grade (Adams, 1990). Zambia, like most countries in the world, shares this view. Zambia's commitment to the provision of pre-school education is highlighted in the National Policy on Education (1996), which states that the government will provide education materials and maintain standards in pre-schools. The belief according to this policy is that pre-school education helps to lay the foundation for improved reading in children's later school years. In a bid to ensure that this policy statement is implemented, a consortium of organizations namely; United Nations International Children's Emergence Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank (WB), Christian Children's Fund (CCF), and the Red Barna (Norwegian Save the Children) among others have been in dialogue with the government to pay attention to Early Childhood Care and Education Development (ECCED), particularly in the growth and development of practices and improved early learning preparedness of Zambia's children for formal school (Akinware, 2002). A study conducted by the Ministry of Education (MoE) entitled "Child Development Assessment in Zambia; A Study of Developmental Norms of Zambian Children Aged 0 – 72 Months" (2006), has revealed that early interventions can alter the reading course of children about to transition to Grade one, yet have been deprived of the opportunities for the acquisition of reading skills. Intervention into such situations can take the form of presenting RRA to children within the pre-school

setting in an effective way before they are enrolled in a Grade one class. The perception that pre-schools are well organized to influence the reading development of children seems to be the justification for the increasing demand by a cross section of the Zambian populace for the government to ensure that pre-school education becomes an integral part of the Zambian Government mainstream education system. While there are no quick answers to optimizing reading achievement among pre-school going children, an extensive knowledge base exists about the reading readiness skills that pre-schoolers must acquire in order to learn to read (Adams, 2004). The knowledge base about the skills, therefore, provides a basis for effective instructional strategies that should prevent predictable early reading failure among pupils. Therefore, in designing effective instructional procedures for pre-schoolers, teachers should have the learners' reading readiness needs in perspective if desired results are to be attained. Miler (1927) for instance, calls for the teacher to focus on the teaching learning process as opposed to focusing on the product. His argument is that no two pupils would learn the same way using the same strategies, even if what was to be learnt was the same thing and to the same extent. In line with the foregoing, there was need to evaluate the extent to which instructional strategies used by pre-school teachers effectively contributed or did not to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading in selected pre-schools in Kabompo and Solwezi Districts of the North Western Province of Zambia.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Concerns about low reading levels among school going children have continued to manifest in various studies conducted despite the rolling out of pre-school programmes in Zambia (Kelly, 2000). It is also clear that the Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) that pre-school teachers are required to engage pre-schoolers in to prepare for Grade one reading are well documented (Adams, 2004). However, what we do not know is the extent to which the instructional strategies used by pre-school teachers to present RRA effectively contribute to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. Given the importance of reading in a pre-schooler's life and the reports about continued manifestation of low reading levels, there was need to evaluate the instructional strategies that pre-school teachers used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. Stated as a question, the problem this study wished to address was to what extent are the instructional strategies pre-school teachers use to present RRA effectively contribute to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading?

## **1.4 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the extent to which instructional strategies used by pre-school teachers to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) effectively contributed to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

## **1.5 Main research objective**

Evaluate the extent to which instructional strategies used by pre-school teachers to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) effectively contribute to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

### **1.5.1 Specific objectives**

- i. Identify the instructional strategies pre-school teachers use to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.
- ii. Establish the extent to which the instructional strategies pre-school teachers use to present RRA effectively contributes to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.
- iii. Assess the levels of pre-schoolers' performance in RRA using the Early Learning Observation Rating Scale (ELORS).
- iv. Examine the teaching and learning materials used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.
- v. Establish the levels of competence of pre-schoolers in their oral use of the language of classroom instruction (LoCI).
- vi. Establish the professional qualifications of the pre - school teachers offering RRA.

## **1.6 Main research question**

To what extent do the instructional strategies used by pre-school teachers to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) effectively contribute to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading?

### **1.6.1 Specific questions**

- i. What instructional strategies do pre-school teachers use to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading?
- ii. How effective are the instructional strategies pre-school teachers use to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading?
- iii. What are the levels of pre-schoolers' performance in RRA using the Early Learning Observation Rating Scale (ELORS)?

- iv. How appropriate are the teaching and learning materials used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading?
- v. What are the levels of competence of pre-schoolers in their oral use of the language of classroom instruction (LoCI)?
- vi. What are the professional qualifications of the pre - school teachers offering RRA?

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

Considering the role an effective teaching learning process plays in preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading and the reports showing that reading levels in Zambia among primary school going children are getting lower, knowledge about the instructional strategies that help to prepare pre-schoolers effectively for Grade one reading is important. This study is therefore significant in the sense that it has generated information that has filled up the existing knowledge gap on the extent to which the instructional strategies pre-school teachers use to present RRA effectively contribute to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The study offers teachers and other educationists a standard for judging the extent to which learning to read outcomes were achieved or not in the pre-schools under study. The evaluation also helps to validate the whole teaching learning process in terms of the criterion of instructional strategies to be used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The findings of the study should, therefore, be directed towards the improvement of the teaching learning process through regular feedbacks and critical decision making about how pre-schoolers should be effectively taught. It is thus, hoped that this study will give insight to teachers and curricular developers on what takes place in pre-schools during the teaching and learning process as far as instructional strategies used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading is concerned. The research findings might also yield material for publication in a journal for wider use by scholars and education providers. Besides, findings from this study are likely to input and influence the formulation and implementation of a policy on the provision of pre-school education.

### **1.8 Delimitation of the study**

The study had the following delimitations; firstly, it focused on the extent to which the instructional strategies used by pre-school teachers to present RRA effectively contributed to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. Secondly, it was limited to interviews, lesson observations, document analysis and assessment. The study was restricted to four pre-schools in Kabompo and Solwezi Districts, two District Education Standards Officers in Kabompo

and Solwezi District and two Early Childhood Care and Education Development (ECCED) Curriculum Subject Specialists at CDC in Lusaka.

### **1.9 Limitations of the study**

The researcher experienced a number of limitations during data collection. Out of the three colleges offering Early Childhood Care and Education Development (ECCED) teacher education services, data were collected only from two colleges; Kitwe College of Education and Zambia Pre-schools Association College in Lusaka. Another limitation experienced was the small sample size. This was so because pre- schools in the research sites were staffed by a small number of teachers and were characterized by small pupil enrolment. Therefore, the findings of this study should not be generalized to pre- schools elsewhere.

### **1.10 Definition of terms**

**Pre-school** - school for children aged between three and six years, before the recommended age of seven years by the Zambian government for a child to enrol in a Grade one class.

**Pre-school Education** – Education for children which consists of specifically designed educational experiences to stimulate, support and sustain emergent skills in a child before entering Grade one

**Reading** - an activity that is characterized by the translation of letters into words and sentences that have meaning to the individual.

**Reading Readiness** – the point at which a child is ready to learn to read and the time during which a child makes a transitions from being a non – reader to a reader (earliest stage in a child’s life when they acquire reading related skills before they can read conventionally).

**Reading Readiness Activities**- games and other performances that pre-schoolers and teachers engage in that aid pre-schoolers learn to read as they transition from being non - readers to becoming conventional readers.

**Early Childhood Care and Education** - level of education (informal, non formal and formal) that a child undergoes before he or she attains the compulsory age (seven years) of entry into Grade one in Zambia.

**Kindergarten** - German term (literally, children's garden) for school for children between the ages of four and six years upon graduating from Nursery School and immediately before they enter formal education.

**Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** - the range of skills that the child cannot perform unaided but can master with adult assistance or assistance from more knowledgeable others (MKO).

**Language of Classroom Instruction (LoCI)** - the language through which learning and teaching is carried out in a classroom.

**Literacy:** The ability to read and write and do elementary arithmetic.

**Reception** – term used in the Zambian context to refer to an education level for children between four and six years, where they are prepared for Grade one work. It is the equivalent of kindergarten in the USA.

**Independent Reading** – A method of instruction in which pre-schoolers select familiar and unfamiliar texts to read to themselves or with a partner

**Shared Reading** – A method of instruction in which the teacher uses enlarged books or text that all pre – schoolers can see (e.g., overhead transparencies, commercial and class made big books, posters, charts and murals)

**Letter Recognition** – The ability to name a letter that is displayed, or find a letter in a group of letters that have been displayed

**Sight words** – A word that a child recognizes and reads instantly without having to sound it.

**Word knowledge** – the ability to use word identification strategies to read partially familiar or unfamiliar words (see word identification)

**Word Wall** – An independent list of words, displayed prominently in the classroom, that teachers use to help children recognize high frequency words when reading and spell those words correctly when writing

**Phonemic Awareness** - The ability to hear, identify and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words

**Phoneme** – The smallest part of spoken language that makes a difference in the meaning of words. English has about 44 phonemes. Sometimes one phoneme is represented by more than one letter.

**Phonics** – A method of instruction that teaches children the relationship between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language.

## **1.11 Theoretical Framework**

Kombo and Tromp (2006), define a theoretical framework as a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories; derived from and supported by data or evidence. A theoretical framework accounts for or explains phenomena. In other words, it attempts to clarify why things are the way they are based on theories (Ibid). The fundamental question this research attempted to answer was to what extent do the instructional strategies used by pre-school teachers to present RRA effectively contribute to preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading? This study employed Vygotsky's Social Cultural Theory (SCT).

### **1.11.1 Socio Cultural Theory (SCT)**

Vygotsky's theory relies on three things: culture and society, language, and the Zone of Proximal Development. In each category, he speaks about the influence that each aspect has on the child as he or she is being raised.

### **1.11.2 Culture and Society**

Culture plays a big part in Vygotsky's theory. He believed that the social environment around an individual played the largest part in their development. A person could not develop the way he or she had without learning from others in the social environment they were raised in (Vygotsky, 1978). Development according to Vygotsky is an active process whereby the child transforms socially shared processes into internal constructs (Vygotsky, 1978: 34). Children are immersed in culture and society and thereby construct knowledge based on experience within that context. Vygotsky's Social Cultural perspective has informed research on parent – child and child - teacher interactions. In this study pre-schools have been perceived as prototypes of homes. As a result the researcher employed vygotsky's Social Cultural Theory (SCT) to establish the nature of interactions that took place in the classroom between the pre-schoolers and the teachers or among the pre-schoolers themselves and how the interactions affected the process of learning to read in preparation for Grade one reading.

### **1.11.3 Language**

Language according to Bruner (1985) is the major means by which we internalize thought; it makes even thinking a possibility. Bruner theorized that speech (language) can take the intrapersonal and interpersonal functions. The interpersonal function of language expresses simple thoughts and emotions. It is what is heard for instance from children every day when they ask for a glass of water or a toy. What Bruner means by language taking the

intrapersonal and interpersonal functions is that once the child acquires language, he or she can use it not only to communicate with others but direct speech inward to guide their thought and behavior. As to whether or not pre-school teachers took advantage of these strategies to facilitate classroom literacy practices in the research sites was a knowledge gap this study intended to fill up.

#### **1.11.4 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

Vygotsky defined ZPD as “ the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or collaboration with more knowledgeable others (MKO)” (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the ZPD there is emphasis on a more skilled peer or adult facilitating cognitive development. When the child has problems learning or performing an activity within the ZPD, Vygotsky would say the cause is either the kind of assistance being offered to the child is not sufficient or the skill is outside the ZPD (Ibid). Another point of view that the Zone of Proximal Development can be looked at from is the potential to do something. Everything that is learned without assistance and used after it is learned is someone’s “independent performance” (Bruner, 1985). Anything that is learned by being taught or physically shown is what is called “assisted performance.” It is further observed that whatever is learned can be used over and over with ease. Arising from the foregoing, this study attempted to establish how pre-school teachers dealt with reading readiness skills that were part of pre-schoolers’ “independent performance” and those that were part of pre-schoolers’ “assisted performance” during classroom language and literacy lessons.

#### **1.11.5 Scaffolding**

According to Bruner (1985), in teaching, more support should be offered at the beginning stage of the activity, skill or concept formation. If the support is withdrawn early, the child may have incomplete or incorrect understanding. On the other hand, if the support is offered for too long, the child will not be encouraged to move on to learning new skills/concepts. There being no empirical evidence how this was conducted in the pre-schools under study, the researcher attempted to establish whether or not scaffolding as a teaching strategy was employed by pre-school teachers to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. Chapter Five of this study discusses this in detail.



## **1.12 Outline of the Dissertation**

This study is organized into six chapters. The first chapter sets the scene by explaining the general conceptualization about pre-school education. Chapter one also focuses on the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, and significance of the study. Included in this chapter are the delimitation, limitations, operational definition of terms and the theoretical framework.

Chapter two reviews the literature that was consulted during the research. The main thematic areas under this chapter include literature related to; evaluation studies, language of classroom instruction, professional qualifications of pre-school teachers, teaching and learning materials, instructional strategies used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) and assessment of learners.

Chapter three describes the research methodology. This comprises a description of the research design, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods and data analysis in addition to issues of validity, reliability and research ethics.

Chapter four deals with the presentation of the research findings and these are divided into various themes derived from each of the research questions. The first part in this chapter is the introduction. Thereafter, the researcher presents the research findings under each theme. Findings on sub themes emerging from the main ones have also been presented. Chapter five discusses the research findings and has been organized following the pattern in chapter four.

Finally, chapter six presents the conclusion, recommendations and summary of the research findings. In addition, chapter six suggests topics for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the main themes of the topic under study. The chapter has been divided into sub sections. The main themes discussed under each sub section are literature related to evaluation, instructional strategies used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA), assessment of learners, teaching learning materials, language of classroom instruction and professional qualifications of pre-school teachers. The first sub section is a review of the literature on evaluation.

### **2.2 Literature related to evaluation**

Scriven (1991: 139) defines evaluation as “the process of determining the merit, worth or value of something, or the product of the process.” He further states that the evaluation process normally involves the identification of relevant standards, merit, worth or value. Arising from the foregoing, this study attempted to evaluate the teaching learning process in selected pre-schools of Solwezi and Kabompo Districts with particular focus on the instructional strategies pre-school teachers used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. It was clear that these pre-schools had been operating for some years. Besides, the RRA the pre-school teachers were expected to present to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading were well documented. However, the extent to which set standards regarding preparing the pre-schoolers for Grade one reading were being met was not clear. Since, the pre-schoolers’ success in terms of learning to read depended on how the teaching learning process was conducted, it was vital to subject it to an evaluation in order to establish the worth or value of what took place and the extent to which set standards regarding the instructional strategies used were being met.

Descy (2004) has contributed to an understanding about the role of evaluation in education establishments by observing that the increased demand for improved performance and greater effectiveness has led to the growing demand for evaluation. He further states that every education establishment has a responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of the service it provides. This study has demonstrated that one such service provided by the education establishment (pre-schools) is preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. Since the teaching learning process particularly the instructional strategies used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading was not being monitored and no study had been

undertaken in the research sites in question to establish the extent to which set standards were being met, this study was deemed necessary as it would generate information that would fill up this knowledge gap.

Glascier (2004) identifies four dimensions (also referred to as stages in the evaluation process) from which evaluation can be approached. These include; context, input, process and product.

### **2.2.1 Context**

Here the evaluator must take stock of the written terms of what the learners will be able to do after receiving the learning experience. In this study, learners were expected to carry out Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) correctly after being exposed to set standards of instructional strategies.

### **2.2.2 In put**

This refers to a description of activities and resources that are used to achieve desired objectives. It also refers to an examination of strategies and procedures used to achieve desired objectives. According to Glascier (Ibid.) this helps stakeholders in making critical decisions about how the teaching learning process should be structured. However, in this study, the value or worth of the teaching learning materials for instance that were being used by the teachers and pre-schoolers was not known hence the need to evaluate them.

### **2.2.3 Process**

This has to do with examining how the teaching learning process is being implemented. It entails monitoring how the process is performing; auditing it to make sure it is following required standards and identifying defects in the procedures used to implement it (Glacier, 2004: 10). There being an information gap on how the pre-schoolers were being prepared for Grade one reading, it was anticipated that this study would provide feedback to key stakeholders (teachers, lecturers, curriculum developers etc) about any defects if at all there were any that hindered achievement of set objectives. This would thus enable them make critical decisions on whether or not to make modifications to the manner in which the process should be implemented.

### **2.2.4 Product**

This has to do with determining and examining the general and specific outcomes of the process under evaluation. It can also be viewed as a stage in the evaluation process where the

evaluator attempts to determine the merit, value or worth of the standards used to bring about intended outcomes (Ibid.).

Pausen et al (2002:14) recognizes the important role evaluations play when he says “learning from existing evaluations is key to the development of a new framework as they are a basis for future decisions”. Thus assessing the instructional strategies pre-school teachers used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading was deemed necessary as it would provide a basis for future decisions. As the situation stood, any decision made about instructional strategies to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading lacked empirical evidence and consequently its reliability would be questioned.

Acknowledging the importance of evaluations, Pausen et al (2002) suggest two forms of evaluations; formative and summative evaluation. For the purpose of this study, aspects of the formative evaluation were used. Pausen et al (2002: 16) define formative evaluation as one that focuses on assessing a programme quality, implementation and impact to provide feedback and information for internal improvement. The goal is to provide feedback to improve practice while the programme or intervention is in progress rather than waiting until the programme is over and you find out that the programme or intervention was not being implemented as intended and did not have the results it was designed to achieve. The issue at the core of this study was to assess the teaching learning process particularly the instructional strategies that were being used to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading and establish their worth in achieving desired results. In a situation where this exercise was not undertaken, it would be difficult to determine whether or not desired results of the instructional strategies teachers were using were being achieved.

### **2.3 Literature related to instructional strategies and their role in preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading**

One of the strategies that have been identified to play a critical role in enhancing children’s reading readiness is interactive engagement (Nielsen, 2003). In a report entitled “Early Reading Strategy the Report of the Expert Panel on Early Reading in Ontario”, Nielsen (2003:12) observes that:

*Phonological sensitivity and letter knowledge skills are highly predictive of later reading success. Although children need direct*

*instruction to gain these skills, the skills are not reached through drills, but by engaging children in fun, interactive and age-appropriate activities.*

Furthermore, Nielsen (2003: 12) observes that:

*literacy development can be greatly enhanced by simple interactions. Repeated reading of rhymes, poems or stories with rhyming words helps children notice sound patterns. Clapping out syllables in their names or characters in books helps children begin to separate sounds in words. Other fun games include searching for things on a page that begin with a particular sound e.g., “b” or singing songs.*

While there is evidence that these strategies have worked in Canada and produced desired results as reflected in the report above, we were not sure how similar strategies were being applied in the pre-schools under study and their worth in bring about desired objectives (preparing pre-schoolers to learn to read/ for Grade one reading).

Research has also revealed that children learn to read as they actively engage with adults in reading situations. One such activity is what Marrow (1990) refers to as interactive dialogue during story book reading. Marrow observes that adult mediation appears to play a key role in literacy growth of pre-schoolers. This position is shared by other scholars such as Serpel et al (2005: 96) who observed in their Baltimore Early Childhood Project that shared book reading both at home and school provided an intrinsic literacy motivation. The frequency of the activity and the nature of the interactions surrounding it were related to the children's motivation for reading and their reading competencies. It, therefore, follows that in a situation where interactive dialogue during story book reading was not frequently conducted, pre-schoolers' motivation and acquisition of reading readiness skills was going to be affected. While the Baltimore study attests to this factor, we did not know whether or not teachers in the pre-schools under study engaged their pre-schoolers frequently in interactive dialogue during story book reading. Furthermore, we did not know how the teachers employed the strategy in question to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

Edwards (1989) identifies one major type of pre-school story book reading which he refers to as shared book reading. He explains that this is a practice where children join in or share the reading of a big book or other enlarged texts while guided by a teacher or other experienced readers. Edwards (1989: 47) observes that the activity should include among other things directing children's attention to the story, asking questions and permitting them to explore the text. He further notes that teachers should label or describe the pictures and connect items in

the book to the children's real life. While the information just alluded to demonstrates that these techniques yielded results, it could also be argued that in situations where they were not employed it would impact differently on the pre-schoolers' ability to acquire reading readiness skills. As to whether or not these techniques were part of the literacy practices to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading in the pre-schools under study was one of the questions this study sought to answer.

Another strategy that has been noted to contribute to pre-schoolers' reading readiness is story telling. In their Baltimore Early Childhood Project, Serpell et al (2005) observed that frequent participation in storytelling and other related oral language experiences, was related to pre-schoolers' narrative production. Consequently, they recommended the use of frequent and varied oral language experiences for children as a means of enhancing their acquisition of reading readiness related skills. This position is consistent with Gunn et al (1994) who also observed that through exposure to oral language, pre-schoolers develop listening comprehension and vocabulary. When hearing a story repeatedly told for example, children are not just memorizing the words but actually learning about the meaning of words and how words tell a story (Gunn, 1994:57).

Barker, (2002: 246) suggests that singing and listening to music has the potential for fostering phonological awareness. Explicitly put, he observed that;

*“because songs typically include rhymes, these experiences provide an opportunity for children to become attuned to the sounds of words hence phonological awareness contributes to reading success”.*

This position has also been advanced by Serpell et al (2005: 78) who demonstrated that knowledge of rhymes and alliteration contributes to reading both by increasing sensitivity to phonemic differences and by preparing children to recognize the similar spelling patterns shared by words that rhyme. This is contained in their Baltimore Early Childhood Project's findings which revealed that children's knowledge of nursery rhymes was a strong predictor of word recognition.

The studies alluded to above have all demonstrated the important role that oral language related activities play in preparing pre-schoolers for success in learning to read. It thus entails that in pre-schools where oral language activities such as rhyming, singing, listening to songs are not part of the classroom literacy activities, pre-schoolers will be denied the opportunity to enhance their ability to learn to read. As to whether or not these activities were part of the

classroom literacy practices in the pre-schools under study was an issue that the researcher anticipated would affect pre-schoolers' ability to learn to read.

In a study conducted by Church (2010) it was found that pretend play provided children with a microcosm for life that encouraged them to take the skill they had learned in classrooms and apply them to meaningful life activities. Explicitly put, Church (2010: 53) says;

*Among the many skills a child learns in pretend play is that words give him or her means to re-enact a story or organize play. This process helps the child to make a connection between spoken and written language.*

Arising from this study, Church recommended that a pre-school's physical environment should have a play corner with theme appropriate materials such as kitchen utensils, food containers, old telephones and clothes. As to whether or not the practice advanced by Church was part of the strategies employed by teachers in the pre-schools under study was something that we needed to establish as it could either have a positive or negative impact on the process of preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The findings on this issue have been presented in Chapter Four and Five of this dissertation.

### **2.3.1 Approaches for presenting Reading Readiness Activities (RRA)**

Over the past years much research has been conducted on how children learn to read and the most effective approaches for supporting reading achievement. Recently, there has been a convergence of evidence about the knowledge and skills children need in order to learn to read. This evidence should inform practice about effective reading instruction in helping pre-schoolers learn to read. However, this has generated a debate among scholars about what constitutes appropriate literacy instruction to help pre-schoolers learn to read. The debate revolves around two basic views about literacy development; a skills – based (also referred to as teacher centered approach) or reading readiness perspective, and a child - centred or emergent literacy perspective (Clay, 1991).

#### **2.3.1.1 Reading readiness perspective or skills based approach**

Nielsen (2003) observes that teachers who adopt the reading readiness perspective to literacy development generally tend to utilize a skills – based approach (teacher- centered approach) to teaching literacy. The skills - based approach is based on a behavioural model of instruction that views teaching as the transmission of knowledge emphasizing the learning

outcome rather than the learning process (Ibid.). Instructional strategies used in classrooms where the teacher employs the skills based approach tend to be teacher- centered and whole group oriented. They focus on the development of skills such as alphabet recognition and letter - sound correspondence (Ibid.). Literacy Instruction is usually based on the pre-packaged basal materials with specific learning objectives (Clay, 1991). Reading readiness workbooks and phonics worksheets are utilized along with large group instruction in letter-sound correspondence (Ibid.).

Nielsen (2003) observes that teachers that employ the teacher-centered approach to literacy development expose their pre-schoolers to an explicit and systematic phonics programme. The pre-schoolers in turn appear to have better word recognition skills, and score better on assessment that measure alphabetic knowledge and letter – sound recognition (Ibid.). In an effort to demonstrate the effective literacy instructions arising from the Skills Based Approach, Nielsen (2003) made reference to a research that was conducted in Canada in which students in four first grade classrooms were offered literacy instruction using the Skills Based Approach and later subjected to assessment. The students were assessed at three separate intervals throughout the year in alphabet recognition, word recognition and letter-sound knowledge. At the end of the study, students who during the first assessment scored lower in the areas alluded to above, after being exposed to the structured phonics approach registered progress on the measures of alphabet recognition, word recognition and letter-sound knowledge compared to those in the control classrooms that were not. The information cited here shows that the Skills Based Approach to preparing pre-schooler for future reading success is an instruction model that has produced positive reading readiness results. Pre-school education in Zambia is viewed as an intervention measure to save children from facing reading difficulties when they transition to formal schooling. However, there was no empirical evidence about the extent to which teachers in these schools used the Skills Based Approach as an instruction model to realize desired reading readiness behaviours in the pre-schoolers hence the need to conduct this study.

### **2.3.1.2 Emergent literacy perspective or process based approach (child centered approach)**

Clay (1999) unlike Nielsen (2003) argues that emergent literacy development begins at birth and develops through the child's interactions with language and print. She considers literacy development as a process of constructing an understanding of meaningful reading and writing experiences through language interactions with adults and more able others (Clay, 1999). In a



classroom in which the teacher upholds an emergent literacy perspective to literacy development, Clay notes that children proceed at their own pace in literacy development and instruction is generally based on the children's interests. Therefore, teachers adopting the emergent literacy view are more likely to utilize a child-centred approach to literacy teaching (Ibid.). Teachers employing the child-centred approach to literacy development use demonstrations, reading aloud in groups as well as individually and use the listening stations with books and audiotapes for children to listen to (ibid.). The foregoing elucidation demonstrates the significance of these literacy practices in preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. In pre-school classrooms where teachers did not employ these practices, we did not know how they could prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. Similarly, there was no empirical evidence that teachers in the pre-schools under study employed them to enhance pre-schoolers' emergent literacy development. This study therefore attempted to establish the extent to which these strategies were employed to bring about desired emergent literacy behaviours among pre-schoolers. This was done against the belief that when an intervention is put in place there is need to assess its implementation to provide feedback and ascertain whether or not it is being implemented as intended and whether or not it is producing the results it was meant to achieve.

#### **2.4 Literature related to teaching learning materials used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA)**

The significance of using appropriate teaching learning materials in the teaching learning process in order to achieve desired results is a subject that has received attention from scholars. For instance, Minett (1989: 17) who has written on the subject of using appropriate teaching learning materials in pre-schools emphasizes that when developing teaching learning materials, attention should be given to, among other things, their relevance to pupils' culture, colour, attractiveness, size of the font, size of the pictures and the themes. Minett further observes that pictures are a good teaching learning resource but that they should be well spaced, coloured and attractive (Ibid.).

Writing on using culturally appropriate teaching learning materials, Allen (2008: 10) argues that for teachers and writers of the language materials, among other things when developing the materials must bear in mind relevance of the content of their materials to pupils' own language and ensure authenticity of the materials both linguistically and culturally. This is

essential if pre-schoolers have to understand the instructions and explanations because communication takes place in culturally appropriate ways in specific real contexts with confidence, enjoyment and enthusiasm.

In Zambia, the government has shown commitment that it shall develop a curriculum and teaching materials for use in pre-schools through the policy document entitled “Educating our Future” (1996). However, we do not know the extent to which this policy has been implemented. This coupled with lack of studies documenting or assessing the appropriateness of teaching learning materials being used in the pre-schools under study in terms of the culture of the pre-schoolers among other factors makes the situation full of uncertainties as to how the process of effectively preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading could be addressed. The need for such studies could be acknowledged especially with the growing emphasis on the significance of pre-school education as the foundation for children’s future success in reading. This gap in knowledge prompted the researcher to assess the teaching learning materials being used in the pre-schools under study to establish whether or not they were suitable for pre-schoolers’ acquisition of reading readiness skills in preparation for Grade one reading.

## **2.5 Literature related to language of classroom instruction**

Simwinga (2009) observes that it is not possible to talk about literacy without talking about language because language constitutes the vehicle through which literacy is developed. This statement demonstrates the significance of language as the medium through which Reading Readiness Activities can be presented. Simwinga’s observation is consistent with Bruner (1985: 23), who says that language is the main means by which we internalize thought; it makes even thinking a possibility. In order for literacy instruction to be conveyed, a medium known as language is required. Its use takes either the interpersonal or the intrapersonal function. At the interpersonal level, a pre-schooler may use language in the classroom to communicate with either the teacher or a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) to express thoughts and emotions. On the other hand, at the intrapersonal level, the child uses language in the classroom to direct speech inwards to guide his or her thought and behavior. Arising from the foregoing, we can deduce that for meaningful teaching and learning to take place, pre-schoolers should be competent in the language of classroom instruction. In a case where pre-schoolers are not competent in the language of classroom instruction there is likely to be no meaningful learning taking place. As to whether or not pre-schoolers in the pre-schools

under study were competent in the language of classroom instruction was a question this study attempted to answer because it would have consequences on the extent to which pre-schoolers were going to absorb the instructions teachers offered to prepare them for Grade one reading.

Commenting on the significance of language in communication, Banda (2012) likens it to a vehicle that transports goods and people. He states that;

*Language transports “goods” like knowledge, ideas, beliefs, theories, traditions, values, taboos, and generally the culture of people using that language. Switching vehicles on the way may pose either dangers of losing some; if not all your goods you intended to carry or may offer a better mode of transport to carry all your goods safely. In a similar way, switching languages, especially mother tongue or language of play to a second language, may pose a danger of failing to communicate anything at all or may offer an opportunity to achieve better results (p.21).*

Relating Banda (2012:21)’s observation about the switch of languages to this study, it was anticipated that switching languages among pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study would have similar consequences to those that Banda alludes to above. However, it was not clear whether or not pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study had been subjected to switching languages. In a situation where that was true, we did not know whether or not switching languages by the pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study posed any dangers or opportunities in terms of their ability to effectively absorb given literacy instructions. There being a knowledge gap, it was anticipated that answers to these questions would inform practice regarding provision of effective literacy instructions to pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study.

Commenting on the language of classroom instruction, the Zambia Pre-school Association Syllabus (1996: 3) observes that;

*Whatever language the child has started using before they enter pre-school should by all means be encouraged until that language is mastered. Thereafter, a second language can be introduced to the child; as much as possible, the language used for classroom instruction should match that which is spoken in the child’s home. Since the goal is to encourage self-esteem, it is recommended that children be thoroughly familiar with basic skills in their first language before beginning the systematic study of a second language. Introducing new languages will have a negative effect on the child’s first language.*

Banda (2012: 36) also comments on the need to use mother tongue in education. He argues that:

*It is through his [/her] mother tongue that every human being first learns to formulate and express his [/her] ideas about himself [/herself] and about the world in which he [/she] lives. Every child is born into a cultural environment; the language is both a part of and an expression of that environment. Thus acquisition of this language, his [/her] mother tongue is a part of the process by which a child absorbs the cultural environment; it can, then, be said that this language plays an important part in moulding the child's early concepts. He [/she] will, therefore, find it difficult to grasp any new concept which is so alien to his (/her) cultural environment and that it cannot readily find expressions in his [/her] mother tongue.*

In an effort to establish whether or not the instructional strategies pre-school teachers used to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading were producing desired results, it was necessary to find out the language used for classroom instruction in the pre-schools under study and whether or not pre-schoolers were competent in the language in question. It was assumed that the language of classroom instruction could have an impact on the preparations pre-schoolers underwent for Grade one reading.

Banda (Ibid) further observes that in Norway, as in the rest of the Nordic countries, the mother tongue is used throughout the education system up to the university level and many students in these countries do not have any difficulties using English as they have a solid foundation in their mother tongue. This study attempted to establish whether or not the Zambian education system starting with the pre-school sector like the Nordic countries allowed the use of the mother tongue as language of classroom instruction. If this was not the case then how competent were the pre-schoolers in the language of classroom instruction. Therefore, by establishing whether or not pre-schoolers were competent in the language of classroom instruction, implied that language of classroom instruction would either be deemed an impediment or leverage to pre-schoolers' acquisition of reading readiness skills in preparation for Grade one reading.

## **2.6 Literature related to professional qualifications of pre-school teachers**

The belief that high quality pre-school education produces substantial long term educational, social and economic benefits has been acknowledged by the National Institute of Early

Education Report (2004: 17). The report revealed that the benefits occur only when teachers are professionally qualified to teach; depend to a greater extent on the teachers' competence, arising from the training they have received. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that teacher professional qualifications offer high leverage for enhancing the standards of learning and teaching in a pre-school as demonstrated below;

*Better educated teachers have more positive, sensitive, responsive interactions with children, provide richer language and cognitive experiences and are less authoritarian, punitive and detached. The result is better social, emotional, linguistic and cognitive development for the child* (The National Institute of Early Education Report, 2004:18).

It has also been noted that;

*the more informed and knowledgeable they are , the more teachers are able to deal with complexities of literacy teaching as they respond to the how, when, why, of instruction* (The National Institute of Early Education Report, 2004:18).

In a study of 521 classrooms conducted with the aim of assessing the relationship between teacher quality and pupils' outcome measures, it was found that the percentage of teachers with a four year college degree was related to pre-school classroom quality as measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rate Scale (ECERS) and to teacher warmth, attentiveness and engagement (National Institute of Early Education Report, 2004: 13).

The foregoing studies demonstrate that teacher professional qualification is key in enhancing better results among pre-schoolers. Arising from the information cited above, this study attempted to establish the qualifications of teachers in the pre-schools under study. It was anticipated that teacher professional qualifications would have an impact on the type of instructional strategies pre-school teachers employed to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. As things stood, it was not clear whether or not the pre-school teachers teaching in the pre-schools under study had undergone any early childhood teacher education training to equip them with the necessary pedagogy to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

Despite the emphasis on professionally qualified pre-school teachers shown above, research conducted in the USA has shown that pre-schools vary in terms of teacher professional qualification requirements because standards vary across different agencies that sponsor and regulate them (National Institute of Early Education Report, 2004: 7). The consequence is that pre-school education is less effective than it should be. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, every state has its own set of qualifications for individuals wishing to work

as pre-school teachers (Ibid). While some pre-school jobs may only require a High School Diploma, other positions require a College Degree or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. In France on the other hand, most three to four year old children attend pre-schools in which teachers are required to have an equivalent of a Masters Degree (National Institute of Early Education Report, 2004: 8).

Akinware (2002) has identified that in Zambia, pre-school teacher education programmes range from certificate, diploma to degree. Despite the provision of pre-school teacher education programmes, it was not clear in the case of the pre-schools under study what qualifications the pre-school teachers had. In a situation where teachers were not qualified, it would be difficult to know how they could effectively teach. Therefore, this study sought to establish whether or not pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study had the relevant professional qualifications to respond to the how of preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading particularly, the instructional strategies they employed to deliver their lessons.

## **2.7 Assessment of pre-schoolers**

There are many reasons why children undergo assessment; among these is the desire to know how well children are learning; if they are making progress and meeting proficiency benchmarks and if they are being taught effectively (The National Association for the Education of Young Children Report, 2005). Lonigan (2006) recognizes assessment as a central component of Early Childhood programme and prescribes its use for a variety of purposes. He recommends that assessment be used for decision making regarding teaching learning, identifying children's needs, improving education and intervention programmes. The foregoing elucidation entails that data from assessment can provide valuable information for planning and this means that teachers and other Early Childhood Education providers can use assessment results to adjust and individualize curricula and teaching approaches, methods and strategies in a bid to achieve desired results (Ibid.).

Despite the above given information demonstrating the significance of assessment in the provision of pre-school education, it was not clear whether or not assessment was part of the teaching learning process in the pre-schools under study. In cases where the pre-schoolers were not subjected to assessment it would be difficult to determine whether or not the teaching learning process was yielding desired results and whether or not teachers were teaching effectively. Considering the importance of assessment in the provision of pre-

school education, an assessment of the pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study was conducted to establish how well or poorly children were learning i.e., whether or not they were making progress and meeting proficiency benchmarks in preparation for Grade one reading.

Lonigan (2006) has proposed a range of instruments and techniques that assessors can employ to assess learners. These include structured one – on – one child assessments, standardized assessments, portfolios, rating scales and observation (Ibid.). On the basis of the instruments and techniques proposed above, this study adopted the rating scale to assess the pre-schoolers in ten Reading Readiness Activities that were perceived essential for preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology that was used to collect data; what was done and how it was done. The explanation focuses on; research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, data collection methods and data collection instruments among other things.

### 3.2 Research Design

This study was conducted using qualitative methodology. Kombo and Tromp (2006) define qualitative research as a form of study that seeks to describe and analyze the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied. They further posit that in qualitative study, feelings and insights are considered important. Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 3) further indicate that “qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. They further indicate that it involves interactive techniques such as observations, discussions and interviews. Similarly in this study, the researcher attempted to assess the teaching learning process with particular focus on the instructional strategies teachers employed to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. This was done by interpreting the phenomena in its natural setting and the views the respondents brought forward about the phenomena under study, hence the choice of the qualitative methodology. The thrust of this study was to ascertain the extent to which the process/phenomenon was conforming to set standards in a bid to achieve desired results.

The research design used in this study was a case study. Yin (1994: 19) indicates that a research design is “an action plan for getting from here to there.” This entails that a research design acts as a guide through which a researcher is taken when conducting research. However, the choice of the research methods mainly depends on the purpose of the study. This is an evaluation research. According to Patton (1990:11) evaluation is defined as a study:

*When one examines and judges accomplishments and effectiveness of a policy or programme and that this examination of the effectiveness is*



*conducted systematically and empirically through careful data collection and thoughtful analysis.*

Banda (2012:66) distinguishes between two types of evaluation research and these are: (1) *basic academic* research and (2) *applied* research. He argues that the purpose of basic academic research is to generate theory and discover truth, while applied research, on the other hand, is to inform action, enhance decision-making and apply knowledge to solve human and societal problems. This study made use of applied research. Since the presentation of Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) in pre-schools using instructional strategies was an ongoing process that had not been subjected to an evaluation, this evaluation was initiated to inform action, enhance decision making and apply the knowledge generated to solve the problems of low reading levels that were being experienced in schools. It made use of what Weiss (1998) calls *process* evaluation. In other words, this was a study of what went on within the teaching learning process with particular focus on the implementation of reading readiness instructional strategies.

Mugenda et al., (1999) define a case study as an in depth investigation of an individual, group, institution or phenomenon. When using a case study to design an evaluation, Descy (2004) observes that it can be a complex activity. However, he justifies the use of a case study to evaluate a process because it seeks to follow the programme implementation, intervention or impact on an individual, group or organization. He argues that;

*the use of a case study is an excellent way to collect anecdotal evidence of programme effectiveness, to increase understanding of how an intervention is working in particular settings and inform a larger and more rigorous study to be conducted later. However, when evaluating a complex or larger programme or intervention a mixture of designs can work together (Descy, 2004:12).*

Therefore, for purposes of this study, a case study was employed to collect evidence about how poorly or well pre-school teachers implemented instructional strategies to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. Bearing in mind that the teaching learning process had specific practices through which desired results could be achieved, these were regarded as the focus of the evaluation.

Farrukh (2011) observes that classroom observations are the most common forms of evaluation of teachers and the teaching learning process. In trying to achieve continuous improvement in the teaching learning process, teachers and other stakeholders should engage in a whole range of quality monitoring processes. The monitoring process can be defined as having three

specific stages; what areas of the activity to be considered and which quality indicators to be used as a focus; how the desired information is to be collected and methods of receiving information about the process or the activity.

Arising from the foregoing, this study employed the Farrukh Teaching Evaluation Model to evaluate the instructional strategies used in the pre-schools under study. This model is made up of three stages which are arranged in form of questions. Firstly, what do we want to know? In this study this included the identification of the instructional strategies that pre-school teachers used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA). This was expressed in terms of how well or poorly the instructional strategies were implemented to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The types of instructional strategies advanced in the literature review that enable pre-schoolers to acquire reading readiness skills were used as indicators or specific standards of practice that teachers were expected to employ in the teaching learning process. This provided reference for defining the areas to be evaluated. In other words, these standards of practice were used as the focus for the evaluation. Secondly, how can we find out? This was done through analyses of documents that teachers used to present instructions to the pre-schoolers to enable them acquire reading readiness skills. The documents in question included lesson plans, schemes of work, pupils' work books, storybooks, syllabi and related materials. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with teachers, District Education Standard Officers, lecturers of teacher colleges of education and curriculum specialists about the teaching learning process in general, instructional strategies, language of classroom instruction and teaching learning materials among other themes. Besides, lessons involving RRA were observed to ascertain; the types of instructional strategies pre-school teachers used to realize desired learning to read outcomes, the challenges, and/ or opportunities teachers faced when giving the instructions and how well or poorly the teachers met specific set targets and indicators.

### **3.3 Target Population**

Best and Kahn (2009) define target population as consisting of specific group of subjects to whom the researcher plans to generalize their findings. The target population in this study comprised all the pre-school teachers and pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study. However, Head Teachers, District Education Standard Officers (DESO), Early Childhood Care and Education Development (ECCED) subject specialists, and Lecturers of ECCED in Colleges of Education were included in the study as informants.

### **3.4 Sample size**

Best and Kahn (2009) posit that there is no fixed number or percentage of subjects that determine the size of an adequate sample. It may depend on the nature of the population of interest or the data to be collected. The researcher drew his sample from four pre-schools in Kabompo and Solwezi Districts. The sample comprised eight pre-school teachers and 60 pre-schoolers

### **3.5 Sampling procedure**

Kombo and Tromp (2006) define sampling procedure as a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group is representative of the characteristics found in the entire group. Convenience sampling was used to select the sample for the research. This method was based on using people who were a captive audience at the time of the study (Ibid). Therefore, the study used pre-school teachers and Pre-schoolers that were present in the schools at the time of the research as its sample in order to evaluate the instructional strategies pre-school teachers used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

The research also collected data from a category of interviewees called informants. Cohen et al (1994) define informants as people that have in-depth knowledge about the case under study by virtue of their professional role, power, and access to networks, expertise or experience. Consequently, Pre-school Head Teachers, District Education Standards Officers, ECCED subject specialists, and Lecturers of ECCED were interviewed because of the belief that they were either experienced or knowledgeable in matters of how pre-school teachers should present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading and thus would reveal rich data about the phenomena under study.

### **3.6 Data collection methods**

The study used both primary and secondary sources to generate data that were used to answer the research questions. The following methods were used to collect data;

#### **3.6.1 Observation**

During the research, classroom practices were observed with particular focus on how language and literacy lessons were taught; instructional strategies teachers used and the

teaching learning materials used to facilitate the teaching learning process. The data collected from lessons observed were recorded on lesson observation checklists.

### **3.6.2 Interviews**

Patton (1990: 283) says that:

*Interview guides provide topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Thus the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular area, to word questions spontaneously and to establish a conversation style but with focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined.*

In this study, Semi-Structured Interview Guides were used to elicit data from the interviewees namely; Pre-school Head Teachers, District Education Standards Officers, Early Childhood Care and Education Development (ECCED) subject specialists and Lecturers of ECCED. This was done with the view of finding out the interviewees' opinions, assumptions and knowledge about how pre-school teacher should present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. Data from interviews were then triangulated with data collected from lesson observation to guarantee validity and reliability of claims arising from the study.

### **3.6.3 Assessment**

On the basis of Lonigan (2006) proposed range of instruments and techniques that assessors can employ to assess learners, this study used the rating scale technique to assess the pre-schoolers' performance in ten Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) that were perceived essential for preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The objective was to establish how well or poorly pre-schoolers performed in each of the ten RRA. The assessor asked pre-schoolers to perform activities that were outlined on a Reading Readiness Activity Sheet and thereafter rate the children's performance as excellent, fair or poor. The results of the pre-schoolers' performance in the RRA were recorded on each Child's Reading Readiness Activities Assessment Form.

### **3.6.4 Document analysis**

Weiss (1998: 260) holds that documents are "a good place to search for answers. Documents provide a useful check on information gathered in an interview." Weiss further adds that

when “techniques fail to resolve a question, documentary evidence can provide a convincing answer.” The researcher analyzed documents ranging from: syllabus, schemes of work to storybooks. This was done in a bid to establish whether or not documents being used in the pre-schools to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) were appropriate to support the teaching learning process, particularly preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

### **3.7 Data collection instruments**

The following data collection instruments were used;

#### **3.7.1 Lesson Observation Checklist**

This was used to guide the researcher assess the techniques, strategies, methods and approaches pre-school teachers used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

#### **3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interview Guide**

This was used to guide the researcher during the interviews with Pre-school Teachers, School Managers, lecturers, ECCED Subject specialists, Education Standard Officers.

#### **3.7.3 Reading Readiness Activity Sheet**

This document was used to guide the researcher on the type of activities to focus on during assessment of the pre-schoolers’ ability to perform RRA. It consisted of ten RRA that were initiated in the classroom. The results from this assessment were then entered onto the Child’s Reading Readiness Activities Assessment Form.

#### **3.7.4 Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) Assessment Form**

This was used to record the levels of performance by pre-schoolers in Reading Readiness Activities. The researcher circled on the child’s Reading Readiness Activities Assessment Form the level of the child’s performance in each activity using three scales of rating; 1 for excellent performance; 2 for fair performance and 3 for poor performance.

### **3.7.5 C heck list**

This comprised a list of prepared questions that guided the researcher during the document study.

### **3.7.6 Document Study Checklist**

This was used to record data obtained from the study of documents such as storybooks and syllabi among others that were used by teachers to prepare lessons.

## **3.8 Data collection procedure**

Data collection started with the researcher's acquisition of permission from authorities in charge of the research sites. This was followed by making appointments with concerned parties regarding when and where the interviews and lesson observations would take place. At each research site, the researcher followed the same sequence in the collection of data. The first activity that was conducted was lesson observation. This was followed up with an interview of the teacher in order to address gaps arising from the observations made during the lessons taught. The third stage involved administering a Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) assessment to establish pre-schoolers' abilities to perform RRA. The assessment was administered with the assistance of the pre-school class teachers at the research sites. The researcher wrapped up his study at each research site by interviewing the Head Teacher.

## **3.9 Data analysis**

Hammerley & Atkinson (1995: 156) suggest that in analyzing qualitative data the initial task is to find concepts that help "make sense of what is going on". Patton (1990: 284) also suggests that data analysis starts during data collection and that this continues throughout the study. The qualitative approach was used to analyze data that was collected from lesson observations and interviews. The study comprised six research objectives with six corresponding research questions. Thus on the basis of each research question, the data collected were put into identified themes and sub themes after which interpretations and discussions were made. The lesson observations and interviews were transcribed and this helped to find out the pre-schoolers' and teachers' proficiency or inadequacies in key areas that the study focused on such as instances of code switching and differentiated instructions. The data collected from assessment of pre-schoolers in ten RRA were analyzed manually to establish whether or not the pre-schoolers had made progress towards attaining proficiency in

performing RRA and oral language use. Therefore, in trying to achieve this objective, some quantitative techniques such as percentages were used to analyze the data that were collected from the assessment of pre-schoolers.

### **3.10 Credibility and Reliability**

In a bid to address issues of credibility and reliability in the study, the researcher used more than one research method (triangulation) to collect data. Lincoln and Guba (1994) also attest to this approach (triangulation) as one of the ways a researcher can achieve credibility and reliability of his or her research claims.

### **3.11 Reflection on ethical issues**

In order to adhere to research ethics, the researcher took the following measures; firstly, when he arrived at a research site, he sought permission from relevant authorities to conduct a research at that institution. The authorities were briefed on the importance of the research and the procedures the researcher would use to collect data. The researcher also ensured that participation in the research was voluntary. Participants were asked to fill in an Informed Consent Form to demonstrate their willingness to participate in the study. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants in the study were assured that pseudo names would be used on semi-structured interview guides, Reading Readiness Activities assessment forms and lesson observation check lists; all data collected from the research would be treated with utmost confidentiality. During visits to the research sites to collect data, the researcher also ensured minimum disruption of the smooth running of the activities of the institutions and individuals participating in the research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the study arranged according to the main and sub themes derived from research objectives and their corresponding questions. The presentation of findings also takes into account attitudes, views, suggestions, and assumptions of the various categories of respondents that participated in the research. This helped to validate what information they brought forward since they were either categorised as either designers of learning and teaching materials, teacher trainers or implementers of education policies (Miles et al., 1984). Besides, it made it easier to counter check where the views of various respondents in the study departed or met and the attitudes each group had for the other and the topic under study (Banda, 2012).

### **4.2 Findings on instructional strategies used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) and their role in achieving desired results**

Research question number one wanted to establish the instructional strategies pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study employed to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. On the other hand, research question number two wanted to assess the effectiveness of the instructional strategies teachers used in achieving desired results. The findings on these two research questions are presented below.

The research findings showed that the instructional strategies used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading were limited and biased towards drills. The specific details of findings on the research questions alluded to above revealed the following;

#### **4.2.1 Interactive dialogue during shared storybook reading**

Findings from lesson observations revealed that pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study poorly employed interactive dialogue during shared storybook reading as a strategy to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. They only employed the “say” technique that required that the teacher asks pre-schoolers questions on the story read to them loudly. However, the pre-schoolers were not availed an opportunity to look at specific features of the storybook such as the cover, title, directionality of print or table of contents. Secondly, the pre-schoolers were not shown objects, pictures or words on a page from the storybook. The study also found out that the type of storybooks the pre-school teachers used for shared



storybook reading were not big enough for all the pre-schoolers to see or be shown the pictures in the storybook in a single turn.

This is demonstrated in a lesson that was observed at Forest pre-school in which the teacher gathered the pre-schoolers around her on a mat and read aloud a story to them with the title “Baby Moses”. The teacher had only one text book with which to perform this activity. The flow of the lesson was interrupted by pre-schoolers quite often because of their anxiety to see the pictures in the storybook. After reading the story to the pre-schoolers, the teacher asked them wh-questions.

### **Story excerpt (Baby Moses)**

*Once upon a time, there was baby Moses. Baby Moses was in danger. So his mother hid him in a basket and floated it in the river. The king’s daughter found the basket and looked after the little boy. Now, baby Moses was safe.*

### **Excerpt questions asked by the teacher (arranged in the order they were asked)**

1. *What have we learnt from the story?*
2. *Who can tell us the story from its beginning to the end?*
3. *Who was in danger?*
4. *Who hide baby Moses in the basket?*

### **Model Answers**

1. *Baby Moses was in danger; his mother hide him in a basket; King’s daughter found Moses and looked after the baby*
2. *Answers will vary, however pupils must show chronological arrangement of events*
3. *Baby Moses*
4. *The mother*

The research revealed that pre-schoolers had no difficulties answering questions that required two word answers. However, data collected demonstrated that they had difficulties answering questions that required answers in form of explanations.

#### **4.2.2 Interactive dialogue during independent storybook reading**

Interactive dialogue during independent storybook reading was not employed by teachers in all the lessons that were observed in the pre-schools under study. Data gathered from interviews also confirmed that this was a very rare classroom literacy practice due to limited numbers of storybooks.

### **4.2.3 Story telling**

The data collected in this study revealed that story telling was a well exploited instructional strategy by teachers in all the pre-schools. All the teachers that were interviewed indicated that they read stories to their pre-schooler on average three times per week. However, they did not engage pre-schoolers themselves in telling stories as a form of classroom literacy practice. During lesson observations, the researcher listened to three different stories at three different pre-schools read to the pre-schoolers. One of the stories has been reflected in the excerpt entitled “Baby Moses.”

### **4.2.4 Singing and listening to music**

It was established that singing was one of the instructional strategies that were well and widely employed by pre-school teachers in all the pre-schools under study. One of the teachers interviewed said that;

*Singing is a well established literacy practice among my pre-schoolers. I have taught them to sing songs on subjects ranging from numbers, names of days of the week, months of the year to names of letters of the alphabet among other themes. While some of my pupils struggle to learn the words, once I arrange some melody and hand motions, my pupils will not stop singing. Besides, I use songs to settle my pupils down from a seemingly intense activity without compromising or loss of learning time.*

However, it was noted that none of the pre-schools under study had equipment such as audio cassettes and related accessories that could be used to expose pre-schoolers to listening to other people’s songs other than their own singing.

### **4.2.5 Pretend play**

The findings showed that pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study did not employ pretend play as an instructional strategy to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading; their classrooms lacked designated places for pretend play activities and were not stocked with materials to support pretend play such as costumes.

### **4.2.6 Teacher centred lesson (skills based approach)**

The study revealed that teachers used direct instruction and drills to present RRA to pre-schoolers. This strategy seemed to have worked very well for the teachers and pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study. The teachers were able to model the pupils’ behavior during activities such as recognition of names of letters of the alphabet. In all the lessons observed,

the teachers were heard mentioning the alphabet letter names and this was followed by asking pre-schoolers to repeat after them. Most often the pre-schoolers were heard providing chorus responses. One instance was where the teacher read out names of letters of the alphabet specifying their case. Pre-schoolers were in turn asked to repeat after the teacher as demonstrated below.

*Teacher: All of you say capital letter “A!”- The teacher does this while pointing at letter “A”*

*Pupils respond in chorus form: Capital letter “A!”*

*Teacher: All of you say small letter “a!”- The teacher does this while pointing at letter “a”*

*Pupils respond in chorus form: small letter “a!”*

The research also revealed that teachers relied on the question and answer technique to engage pre-schoolers in the identification of alphabet letter names and the objects they stood for. This technique worked well for teachers because their desired objective was achieved. This is demonstrated by the correct responses pre-schoolers gave during the question and answer session.

The excerpt below confirms this claim.

*Teacher: who can show us letter “f” on the chart? (paraphrases the question) which one is letter “f” on the chart?*

*Pre-schooler: One pre-schooler is asked by the teacher to go in front of the class to point at letter “f”. The pre-schooler goes to the chart and points at letter “f”.*

*Teacher: what does letter “f” stand for?*

*Pre – schoolers: Several hands go up.*

*Teacher: yes, Sianga (referring to one of the pre-schoolers)!*

*Sianga: fish.*

#### **4.2.7 Child centred approach (process based approach)**

The findings of the research established that the child centred approach to presenting Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) was lacking among the pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study. In all the lessons observed, teachers did not design their literacy instructions to enable pre-schoolers proceed at their own pace in the RRA that took place. Features such as

demonstrations, reading aloud in groups as well as individually and use of the listening stations with books and audiotapes for children to listen to were lacking.

#### **4.2.8 Pre-schools Reading Readiness Principles**

The study showed that family involvement in trying to support pre-schoolers' preparation for Grade one reading was a well-established reading readiness principle in the pre-schools under study. Despite varying from one pre-school to the other, the pre-school teachers and their head teachers revealed that they had school principles that aimed at facilitating presentation of RRA to pre-schoolers after they knocked off from school to reinforce concepts learned in class. All the pre-school teachers interviewed said that the most frequently endorsed practice was through giving homework to pre-schoolers.

When asked how it was done, one of the teachers at Kilimanjaro pre-school told the researcher that;

*We give our pre-schoolers tasks daily to take home so that guardians take part in their children's language and literacy development. The tasks range from writing upper and lower case letters of the alphabet to writing numbers. The parents are required to sign in the child's book against the work done. We cannot work in isolation if our objectives have to be achieved. Children spend substantial period of time at home with members of their families. I believe that they too apart from the pre-school teacher must actively participate in offering the child guidance in tackling activities that will prepare it to become a successful reader in future.*

#### **4.2.9 Utilization of library services**

The study found out that pre-school teachers did not use libraries as means to present reading readiness (RRA) to pre-schoolers to prepare for Grade one reading. None of the pre-schools had a library building. However, a bookshelf with some storybooks was noted in a classroom at Kilimanjaro which the pre-school teacher said were meant to avail pre-schoolers an opportunity to play with print. However, the study established that this facility was poorly utilized evident in the negative responses obtained from pre-school teachers when asked whether or not they conducted independent storybook reading.

#### **4.2.10 Frequency Reading Readiness Activities are presented to pre-schoolers**

Findings from interviews with pre-school teachers on how often they conducted language and literacy lessons revealed that it was fairly done. Details are contained in the following;

**Table 4.1: Frequency Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) were presented**

Frequency (in days) RRA were presented to pre-schoolers	Once per week	Twice per week	Three times per week	Four times per week	Five times per week
Number of Teachers interviewed	Nil	Four (4)	Nil	Nil	Four (4)

The lecturers and Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) subject specialists interviewed informed the researcher that Language and Literacy Lessons must be conducted every day as the case is with English Language Lessons at Basic school level. One of the Early Childhood Care and Education Development Curriculum specialists interviewed said that;

*“The whole teaching and learning process in pre-schools revolves around language because it happens to be the conveyor of ideas. Thus the ideal and expected practice is that pre-schoolers are given sufficient opportunities on a daily basis through which they can be exposed to this very important tool for communication to facilitate effective acquisition of various essential academic skills.”*

### **4.3 Findings on assessment of pre-schoolers**

Research question number three aimed at establishing the levels of pre-schoolers’ competence in Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) in the pre-schools under study. The findings from the assessment showed that while the pre-schoolers were familiar with performing some RRA, they (pre-schoolers) struggled in performing others. Table 4.2 shows the pre-schoolers’ scores in ten different RRA they were assessed.

**Table 4.2: Pre-schoolers' assessment results in Reading Readiness Activities**

RRA Code	Number of pre-Schoolers Assessed	Level of performance by pre-schoolers in each of the activity they were assessed on		
		Excellent	Fair	Poor
AWHQ	60	10	30	20
WC	60	25	30	05
ILA	60	40	15	05
SV	60	50	10	Nil
DAR	60	50	Nil	10
IMS	60	10	20	30
IWR	60	10	30	20
KPB	60	35	15	10
DP	60	10	30	20
DCS	60	20	05	35

**KEY:**

AWHQ = Answering Wh- Questions, WC = Classify words under categories: food, drink, utensil; ILA = Identify letters of the Alphabet, SV = Sounding Vowels; DAR = Deducing answers to riddles; IMS = Identify Missing Syllables, IWR = Identifying Words that Rhyme; KPB = Knowledge of Parts of the Book, DP= Directionality of Print; DCS = Discriminate Consonant Sounds

The research findings revealed that the levels of pre-schoolers' competence in the RRA ranged from; excellent, fair to poor. Despite variations in individual pre-schoolers' levels of competence, at least all of them exhibited some reading readiness behaviours. Below is the narration of the data contained in the table;

**4.3.1 Answering wh-questions on a popular class story**

Based on pre-schoolers' scores in answering wh-questions, it was found out that 33% of the pre-schoolers were incompetent in this activity; 17% were competent while 40% were rated fairly competent.

#### **4.3.2 Word classification**

Findings from the study revealed that 42% of the pre-schoolers were competent in the area of vocabulary; 50% were fairly competent while 8% were incompetent.

#### **4.3.3 Identify uppercase letters and lower case letters**

The data on pre-schoolers' ability to match lower and upper case letters of the alphabet revealed that 67% of the pre-schoolers were competent; 22% were fairly competent and 11% were incompetent.

#### **4.3.4 Sounding vowels**

The findings of the research showed that 83% of the pre-schoolers were competent in sounding vowels while 17% of the pre-schoolers were rated fairly competent.

#### **4.3.5 Guessing the answer to a riddle**

The study revealed that 83% of the pre-schoolers were competent in giving answers to riddles yet 17% were fairly competent.

#### **4.3.6 Identifying the missing syllable**

The research established that 17% of the pre-schoolers were competent in identify missing syllables in given incomplete words; 33% were fairly competent while 50% were incompetent.

#### **4.3.7 Identifying words that rhyme**

The data collected on this sub theme showed that 17% of the pre-schoolers were competent in identifying words that rhyme; 50% were fairly competent while 33% were incompetent.

#### **4.3.8 Knowledge of parts of a book**

Findings on this sub theme showed that 58% of the pre-schoolers were competent in identifying the parts of a book; 25% were rated fairly competent yet 17% were incompetent.

### **4.3.9 Directionality of Print**

The study revealed that 17% of the pre-schoolers were competent in holding a book; 50% of the pre-schoolers were fairly competent while 33 % were incompetent.

### **4.3.10 Discriminate consonant sounds**

Based on the data collected, we can conclude that 33% of the pre-schoolers were competent in discriminating consonant sounds in given words; 25% were fairly competent yet 42% were incompetent.

## **4.4 Findings on teaching and learning materials**

Research question number four wanted to establish the appropriateness of the teaching and learning materials pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The findings of the study showed that the teaching and learning materials used varied depending on the reading readiness activity under consideration and the pre-school under study. However the study established that most of the teaching learning materials were inappropriate as far as the language and culture of the pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study was concerned. The detailed description of the teaching learning materials that were available in the pre-schools under study is given below.

### **4.4.1 Classroom reading readiness print display**

At Kilimanjaro pre-school, the study established the presence of the following print materials; alphabet letters wall chart, alphabet magnetic letter blocks, pupils' name cards, high frequency words e.g., boy, girl, chair, table, door, pot, cup etc, a chart of numbers from 0 to 9, a chart of shapes (triangle, rectangle and square), chart of colours (red, black, green, blue and pink), a chart of vowels (a, e, i, o, u) and some empty/used boxes and sachets of items such as; corn flakes, milk and tennis biscuits .

On the other hand, the research revealed that at Forest pre-school there were inadequate print materials displayed in the classroom. The classroom had only two charts displayed on the wall; a letters of the alphabet wall mat and a letter "C" picture – word chart (with three pictures; caterpillar, clover and coat, each accompanied by its word equivalence ).

The study further established inadequate print materials display at Victoria pre-school classroom. The following print materials were displayed in the classroom; letters of the



alphabet chart, high frequency words such as boy, girl, chair, dog and cup and a chart of colours (white, red, black, green, blue and brown).

At Spring pre-school, the research revealed a variety of print materials that were displayed in the classroom. These included; pre-schoolers' name cards, a variety of charts displaying; letters of the alphabet, colours, shapes, vowels, and high frequency words such as boy, girl, book, chair, and cup.

#### **4.4.2 Document analysis**

The researcher analyzed documents ranging from Syllabi, Wall Charts, Storybooks, picture books to schemes of work etc to establish whether or not the materials were linguistically and culturally appropriate for pre-school teachers' use to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The findings from document analysis revealed the following;

##### **4.4.2.1 Storybooks**

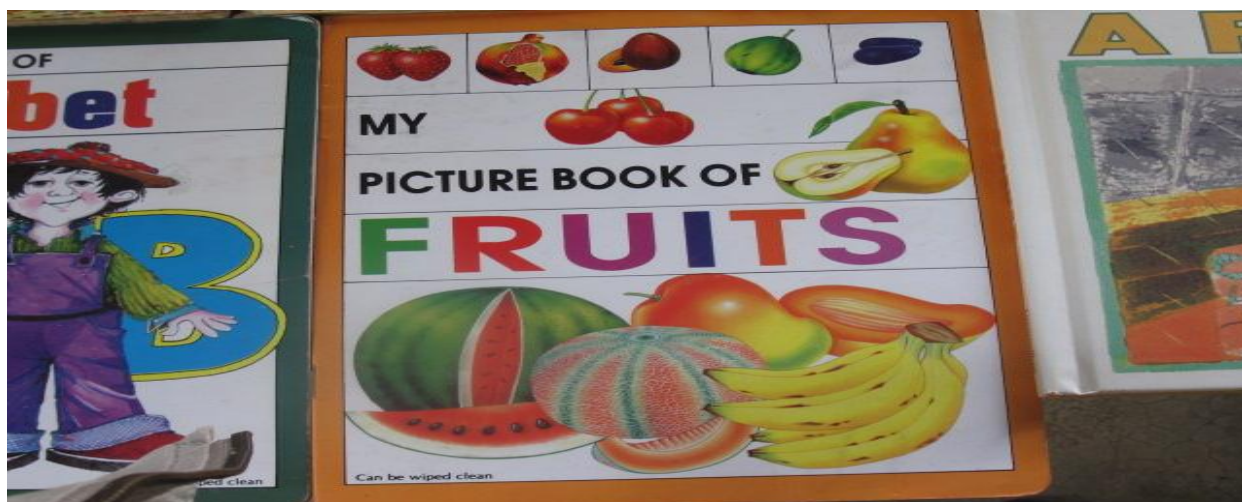
The pre-schools had inadequate storybooks when measured on a one to one pre-schooler-storybook ratio. Some common storybook titles in the pre-schools under study included; "How we Work", "Pig Cannot Wait", "The Bernstein Bears and the Bad Habits", "My Picture Book of Alphabet". They covered a number of topics ranging from alphabet letters, word and picture association, to stories teaching about good and bad morals, good and bad habits and patience. The books' font ranged from fourteen to sixteen. This study also established that the settings of all the books analyzed were not Zambian. One of the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) subject specialist interviewed on the relevance of storybooks used in the pre-schools told the researcher that they were not appropriate as far as the culture and language of the pre-schoolers was concerned.

##### **4.4.2.2 Picture books**

The study revealed that picture books in use in the schools were designed in such a manner that the pictures that appeared in the books were accompanied by written texts; names of the picture. The pre-school teachers also revealed that most of the pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study were able to establish a link between the pictures and words/names that represented them. The exact titles of picture books found in the pre-schools included; "My Picture Book of Fruits", "Fun with Words and Pictures", "My Picture Book of Alphabet". The books' font size was appropriate for pre-schoolers. It ranged from fourteen to sixteen and the words were accompanied by colourful pictures.

The research findings further revealed that 100% of the picture books that were stocked by the pre-schools were not produced within Zambia; they were either of American, British, Canadian or Australian origin. Consequently, the pictures contained in the books in most cases depicted objects and names that were not familiar to the pre-schoolers; for example, the disadvantaged rural ones. This is evident in the photograph below.

**Figure 4.1: Picture books photograph taken at Kilimanjaro pre-school**



#### **4.4.2.3 Workbooks/sheets**

This study revealed that none of the pre-schools under study had workbooks. However, at Forest and Kilimanjaro pre-schools there were some locally designed worksheets (i.e., hand written). The worksheets were made out of A4 paper. They contained drawings of a car, coat, cot and cat with the equivalent name written under each drawing. The font for names of objects was big enough for the pupils to see. The drawings were designed in such a manner that pre-schoolers were offered an opportunity to colour them, an activity that they were seen to perform fairly well though with minimal supervision.

#### **4.4.2.4 Syllabus**

The study revealed that among the four pre-schools only Kilimanjaro had a copy of a syllabus produced by the Pre-Schools Association of Zambia. The syllabus lacked specific details on Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) pre-schoolers were required to cover. This demonstrates that the syllabus was inappropriate for teaching pre-schoolers to learn how to read.

It was also found out that the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) had a draft copy syllabus for Early Childhood Care and Education Development (ECCED). This syllabus

contained a chapter on Literacy and Language whose general objective was developing listening, speaking, pre-reading and pre-writing skills. Some of the specific outcomes under the pre-reading (i.e., Reading Readiness) section were;

- i. Identify the back and front cover of the book
- ii. Follow the book from left to right , top to bottom on a printed page
- iii. Sing rhymes
- iv. Recognize all the letters of the alphabet and their sounds

#### **4.4.2.5 Schemes of work**

Findings from interviews with teachers revealed that only teachers at Kilimanjaro and Springs pre-schools had schemes of work. This document outlined the work the teacher planned to cover for the given term. Despite varying in terms of wording, the schemes of work had similar formats. They contained columns with headings ranging from serial number, week number, topic to be taught, references to comments. The schemes covered work on English alphabet letters (A-Z) among other topics.

#### **4.4.2.6 Word/Name/Flash cards**

The research findings established that two of the schools under study had Name Cards for their pupils. It was also established that the pupils' names were written on pupils' belongings such as bags. In all the four pre-schools under study, the use of flash cards was evident. The flash cards mainly depicted three to four letter words such as; cup, boy, girl, chair and book.

#### **4.4.2.7 Picture - Word Charts**

The research findings showed that the picture – word charts in the pre-schools under study were in appropriate for preparing pre-schoolers to learn how to read. They contained items that were unfamiliar to pre-schoolers. Some of the pre-schoolers that were asked whether or not they knew or had ever seen items such as; Chickoo, Pear (Fruit native to Europe), Whale (Big ocean mammal), Unicorn, Quitt and Pomegranate (Fruit native to tropical Asia) in their real state responded in the negative. The photographs on the next page are part of the picture-word chart that was found at Kilimanjaro pre-school. They illustrate the claim made above.

Figure 4.2: Picture – Word chart photographs taken at Kilimanjaro pre-school



#### 4.4.2.8 Wall charts

Findings from this study revealed that Kilimanjaro, Forest and Spring pre-school had each an approximately 2m x 1.5m long alphabet chart displayed on the wall, low enough for the children to see at eye level. The letters were well spaced and printed in a variety of colours. However, Victoria pre-school lacked an alphabet wall chart. The study also revealed a display of charts of names of the days of the week, names of months of the year and numbers from 0 to 9 displayed on the walls at Kilimanjaro and Spring pre-school.

## **4.5 Findings on language of classroom instruction**

Research question number five sought to establish how competent the pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study were in the language of classroom instruction. The study found out that the pre-schoolers were incompetent in the language of classroom instruction. They had difficulties expressing themselves consistently in the language of classroom instruction (English) during oral activities; consequently some of them resorted to code switching to “Luvale” (one of the languages spoken by the natives in the research site; Kabompo District) to put across their views. The data from interviews and lesson observations confirms this claim.

### **4.5.1 Findings from interviews**

The District Education Standards Officers (DESOs), Early Childhood Care and Education Development (ECCED) Lecturers and ECCED subject specialists interviewed noted that there was a mismatch between the language of classroom instruction in a pre-school and in a New Break Through to Literacy (NBTL) Grade one class in a school run by the government. One of the respondents observed that;

*“Pre-schools in Zambia are privately owned and proprietors of these institutions dictate that English must be used as the Language of Classroom Instruction because of the high-status tag Zambians attach to it. The pre-school teacher is as a result required to religiously implement the school language policy. Yet, when the pre-schoolers transition to Grade one, they are exposed to NBTL, a programme that requires that mother tongue be used as Language of Classroom Instruction.”*

### **4.5.2 Findings from lesson observation**

The findings of the study revealed that pre-schoolers were not familiar with the language of classroom instruction demonstrated by cases of code switching noted during lesson observations. In one of the lessons observed at Forest pre-school, the teacher pointed at an object in a picture-word chart displayed on the wall. She then asked the pre-schoolers to mention the name of the object in the picture; she specified that it had to be a name that began with the letter “c”.

*Teacher: What is this?*

*Pupil 1: It is a “Chingolongochi”*

*Pupil 2: No, teacher! It is a “lyungu”*

*Pupil 3: No teacher, it is not a Lyungu. It is a Caterpillar.*

#### 4.6. Findings on professional qualifications of pre-school teachers from School

##### Managers

Research question number six attempted to establish the professional qualifications of pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study. The data generated by this study showed that 79% of the pre-school teachers were not professionally qualified to teach at pre-school level. The specific details are shown in table 4.6.1 below.

**Table 4.3: Highest Qualifications of Teachers**

School	Number of teachers	Professional Qualifications			Academic Qualifications	
		ECCED Diploma	ECCED Certificate	Primary School Teachers' Certificate	School Certificate	General Certificate of Education (GCE)
Kilimanjaro	4	1	1	1	1	0
Forest	5	0	1	2	2	0
Victoria	2	0	1	1	0	0
Spring	8	0	0	6	2	0
Totals	19	1	3	10	5	0

Responding to whether or not pre-schools should be staffed with teachers with the relevant professional qualifications, one of the Education Standards Officers interviewed said that;

*“There is urgent need for government to put in place pieces of legislation to regulate the operations of pre-schools in order to maintain high standards. This should encompass the need to employ qualified teachers among other things. Failure to address the existing problems in the provision of pre-school education through legislation will mean a weak education foundation as far as acquisition of language and literacy skills and children’s holistic cognitive development is concerned”.*

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the discussion of research findings. The study evaluated the instructional strategies pre-school teachers used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The discussion of findings presented in this chapter emanates from interviews held with pre-school teachers, School Administrators, District Education Standard Officers (DESOs), Early Childhood Care and Education Development (ECCED) Curriculum Subject Specialists and Lecturers of ECCED. Furthermore, the discussion is based on lessons that were observed at the pre-schools under study. This chapter presents an analysis and interpretation of data. It also explains what was discovered on the basis of each research objective and corresponding research question of the study. In doing this, areas of consistency or inconsistency between the findings of this study and what other scholars have said about the main themes of this study have been highlighted. The discussion of research findings is categorized under the following themes; instructional strategies pre-school teachers used to present RRA and their role in achieving desired results, language of classroom instruction, professional qualifications of pre-school teachers, teaching and learning materials among other things that were part of the evaluation process of the instructional strategies pre-school teachers used to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

### **5.2 Instructional strategies used to present Reading Readiness Activities**

The results of the study revealed that all the lessons observed favoured the skills oriented approach. This is contrary to Clay (1999) who prescribes that the most effective way to present literacy instruction is through a pupil centred approach that encourages active learner engagement in the teaching learning process. Teachers in the pre-schools under study failed to design effective reading readiness instructions to suit the different literacy needs for individual pre-schoolers in their classes particularly in view of the substantial heterogeneity within the classrooms. Therefore, the teachers' use of the "one size fits all" approach to delivering reading readiness instructions noted in the pre-schools under study was ineffective as shown below.

### **5.2.1 Teacher - Centred lesson (Skills based approach)**

Findings from the study revealed that teachers heavily depended on drilling as a teaching technique to engage pre-schoolers in Reading Readiness Activities (RRA). Instructions to equip pre-schoolers for example with the knowledge of alphabet letter names were mainly delivered through drills. Rarely were they embedded in nursery rhymes for instance in order to capture pre-schoolers' interest. This is contrary to Adams et al, (1990)'s view that Kindergarten students should read and hear lots of nursery rhymes, common and poems. Children enjoy these immensely, and they have built –in opportunities for practicing hearing and producing different sounds and rhyme patterns. The use of drilling as a teaching technique neglected the need by the teachers to exploit the pre-schoolers' potential to examine the meaning of the concepts they learnt. This was taken as clear evidence of the teachers' reliance on the behaviourist approach to learning and their interpretation of teaching as mechanistic drilling and learning as mechanistic habit formation along the lines of Skinner's (1968) prescription.

It was also found out during the study that classroom activities were characterized by teachers directing the flow of the entire teaching learning process by either asking questions that required pre-schoolers to remember facts or giving instructions that resulted into modelling the behaviour of pre-schoolers in order to achieve desired skills/habits. The teachers' concern in the lessons observed was the pre-schoolers' ability to carry out given instructions regardless of whether or not the pre-schoolers understood the facts and the context in which the instructions were presented. The lessons observed lacked features such as sharing and scaffolding as prescribed by Bruner (1985). This is also contrary to Morrison's (2005) observation that warmer and more responsive teacher-child interactions are associated with stronger student outcomes. Besides, it was inconsistent with the literature which postulates that the most effective way to present literacy instruction is through a pupil centred approach that encourages active pupil engagement in the learning process (Arnold, 2003). Thus the lack of sharing and scaffolding seemed to have negatively affected the outcomes of the teaching learning process. This was evident in the pre-schoolers' poor scores in the assessment in RRA such as discriminating consonant sounds, identification of words that rhyme and identification of missing syllables in given words.



One area of agreement between this study and Musonda's (2011), study is that just as the parents in her study did not appreciate that games could be relevant to literacy behaviour development, this study also revealed that teachers in the pre-schools (i.e., homes believed to be prototypes of the pre-schools and parents believed to be prototypes of teachers) under study did not seem to appreciate the important role of games in literacy behaviour development. This could be the more reason why they did not create opportunities to imbed games in their reading readiness lessons. In addition, the study showed that classrooms did not have designated places for pre-schoolers' pretend play activities such as drama.

Furthermore, the research findings demonstrated that teachers presented Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) without taking into account the individual pre-schoolers' reading readiness weaknesses and/or strengths. All the teachers did not tailor their reading readiness instructions to meet individual pre-schooler's needs. In other words, they did not vary the content they taught, the process in which they taught it and the products they expected from an individual pre-schooler. Teachers' failure to employ differentiated instruction to implement reading readiness objectives seems to suggest that it was the cause of the pre-schoolers' poor scores in the assessment conducted. The teachers merely applied the "one size fits all" (Teacher-centred) approach in the presentation of RRA to the pre-schoolers. This shows that pre-school teachers poorly designed reading readiness instructions. The teachers' failure to take into account the weaknesses and strengths of each pre-schooler; the potential to equip each pre-schooler with new skills or consolidate already existing ones seems to suggest the reason why pupils enrolled in a Grade one class are subjected to RRA which are similar to those prescribed to be offered in pre-schools.

Arising from the foregoing, this study acknowledges that some pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study might have learnt better through a child centred approach while others might have learnt better through a teacher centred approach or through a combination of the two. Therefore, how teachers and individual pre-schoolers interact in a classroom and the instructional strategies teachers employ to help individual pre-schoolers, a group of pre-schoolers and the class as an entity should be modified to meet specific learning needs for that particular target group at that given time. For instance, not all pre-schoolers in the classrooms under study benefited from the teacher centred approach during the presentation of alphabet letter names, a thing some of the pre-schoolers might have already been familiar with. The teachers should have through a child-centred approach engaged pre-schoolers already familiar with names of letters of the alphabet in different activities that call for the

pre-schooler's attention as individuals and require working independently or with fellow pre-schoolers.

Apparently, the presentation of lessons on the concept of alphabet letter names was a routine in the pre-schools under study yet teachers did not vary the level of support offered to learners. This is inconsistent with Brunner (1985:18) who recommends that when scaffolding, more support should be offered at the beginning of the activity, skill or concept formation, if the support is offered for too long, the child will not be encouraged to move to learning new skills or concepts. The pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study did not seem to vary the support offered to pre-schoolers. They tended to spend more time teaching names of letters of the alphabet even when the pre-schoolers seemed to have had enough support for the activity. It was therefore assumed that the teachers' tendency would not encourage pre-schoolers to learn new skills or concepts. In the long run, this would impact negatively on preparing the pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

Findings from this study established that rhyming, games and tongue twisters that aim at enhancing phonological awareness were not characteristic of the classroom practices. This is consistent with Musonda (2011) who found out that despite the existence of Zambian Languages games and tongue twisters, pre-school teachers did not use them. It should be pointed out that the mismatch in the language policy in education might be the major impediment to pre-school teachers' use of Zambian Languages tongue twisters and rhyming games during the presentation of RRA. Despite all the teachers that were interviewed acknowledging the importance of rhymes and tongue twisters as essential forms of RRA, there seemed lack of appreciation for their utilization in lessons taught to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The lack of appreciation of this useful resource firstly could be attributed to lack of subject content (i.e., tongue twisters) by pre-school teachers. Secondly, it might be attributed to pre-school teachers' lack of appropriate pedagogical knowledge to teach at that level; apply appropriate instructional strategies to suit pre-schoolers' understanding of concepts. Thirdly, it could be attributed to none availability of printed or locally made teaching and learning materials on tongue twisters as the case was in all the pre-schools under study. It was therefore, assumed that these factors led to the ineffective presentation of RRA using a variety of instructional strategies and techniques to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

The study also showed that there was no single instance during classroom lessons where a pre-school teacher showed pre-schoolers where to start reading a book from, reading from left to right or anything related to concepts of print. This was inconsistent with the view expressed by curriculum subject specialists and lecturers that a single reading readiness lesson should be broken down into letter recognition, phonological awareness and oral language activities. The teachers however, did not offer a variety of Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) that could fit within the prescribed breakdown of a Reading Readiness lesson. For instance, during RRA such as storybook reading, the teachers could have provided an opportunity to exploit the Zone of Proximal Development by offering assistance (provide a mentoring approach) as more knowledgeable ones to enable pre-schoolers learn about the parts of a book or directionality of print in order to ensure that whatever was learned could be used over and over in future with ease. This finding was inconsistent with Adams (2004) who observed that although pre-schoolers are not taught to read as such, throughout kindergarten and first grade, teachers constantly review the elements of books and the concepts of print.

Additionally, the research findings showed that some of the teachers lacked knowledge about application of the subject matter. The findings from lesson observations revealed that knowledge about the subject matter was the main problem for pre-school teachers without any professional qualification in teaching. It was therefore believed that it would be unfair to place very high expectations on pre-school teachers without any professional qualifications to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to pre-schoolers in an effective way that guaranteed children's acquisition of reading readiness skills to prepare for Grade one reading.

### **5.2.2 Pre-schools Reading Readiness Principles**

The study established that family involvement as a means of preparing pre-schoolers for Grade one reading was a well established reading readiness principle in the pre-schools under study. This was consistent with Nielsen (2003)'s view that parents and care givers are the child's first teachers and parents are key in helping pre-schoolers acquire essential reading readiness skills. Since communication between the parents and pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study aimed at improving pre-schoolers' performance in RRA was carried out on a daily basis, it was assumed that the role by pre-schoolers' guardians to reactively engage in their pre-schoolers' RRA on a daily basis contributed to the pre-schoolers' familiarity or

acquisition of reading readiness skills to prepare for Grade one reading. One of the teachers at Kilimanjaro pre-school alluded to this point of view when she stated that:

*We give our pre-schoolers tasks daily to take home so that guardians take part in their children's language and literacy development. The tasks range from writing upper and lower case letters of the alphabet to writing numbers. The parents are required to sign in the child's book against the work done. We cannot work in isolation if our objectives have to be achieved. Children spend substantial period of time at home with members of their families. I believe that they too apart from the pre-school teacher must actively participate in offering the child guidance in tackling activities that will prepare it to become a successful reader in future.*

### **5.2.3 Utilization of library services**

The study found out that pre-school teachers did not use library services as means to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. None of the pre-schools under study offered any library services to pre-schoolers to prepare for Grade one reading. This is inconsistent with one of the pre-school teacher's belief in the pre-schools under study. The teacher observed that libraries are well suited to address the literacy needs of children because they act as economic equalizers. They provide a literacy rich environment to children regardless of their economic status or background. This study, therefore, assumes that pre-school teachers' failure to utilize library services as one way of complementing the teaching learning materials that were inadequate in their schools could have had a negative effect on pre-schoolers' familiarity with RRA, particularly pre-schoolers from economically disadvantaged families that could not afford to purchase reading readiness materials for their children.

### **5.2.4 Frequency Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) are presented to pre-schoolers**

It was established that the frequency RRA were offered in the pre-schools under study was fair. However, a mismatch between what was considered the ideal practice and the actual practice in the pre-schools under study was noted. This was inconsistent with the view expressed by curriculum subject specialists and lecturers that reading readiness lessons (broken down into letter recognition, phonological awareness and oral language activities) must be presented daily to learners. It was therefore assumed that the mismatch discovered in the frequency RRA were presented to pre-schoolers to prepare for Grade one reading,

particularly the low frequency, might have had a negative effect on pre-schoolers' familiarity with RRA.

### **5.3 Assessment of pre-schoolers**

The research findings revealed that the levels of pre-schoolers' performance in the RRA ranged from; excellent to poor. The findings particularly showed that pre-schoolers were familiar with identification of names of letters of the alphabet, sounding vowels and deducing the answers to riddles. This might be attributed to the knowledge they acquired possibly through memorization or association as the case might have been evident in the limited nature of instructional strategies teachers used to present the activities in question to pre-schoolers.

On the other hand, the findings from the assessment in which pre-schoolers performance in ten RRA was found out, suggest that pre-schoolers were not familiar with identifying missing syllables in given incomplete words, identifying words that rhyme in a pair of words, discriminating consonant sounds in given words and demonstrating the left to right directionality of print and concepts of print in general. This could be attributed to lack of broader based application of assessment such as using its findings as a means to plan daily reading readiness instruction (i.e., teaching approaches and strategies) or use its findings in adjusting the topics (RRA) to be presented to pre-schoolers. The most seemingly focus for assessing pre-schoolers was to provide feedback on each child's progress to parents at the end of the term. This is contrary to the views of Lonigan's (2006) that using assessment based procedures connects students' learning with assessment and allows for curriculum modifications based on students' needs. In the case of the pre-schools under study, the pre-school teachers revealed that report forms for pre-schoolers' end of term assessment were sent to parents/ guardians, a practice that though well intended, failed to avail teachers and parents a common platform to discuss a pre-schooler's progress, achievements or failures and possibly agree on ways to complement each other's efforts to address the pre-schooler's reading readiness needs before the child transitioned to Grade one.

### **5.4 Teaching and learning materials used to present Reading Readiness Activities**

The study found out that pre-school teachers were faced with a challenge of teaching using materials that were culturally and linguistically inappropriate. Commenting on the significance of using culturally appropriate teaching and learning materials, Allen (2008) observes that writers of language materials among other things must bear in mind relevance of the content of their materials to pupils' own language and ensure authenticity of the

materials both linguistically and culturally. However, this study showed that teachers were not being helped by Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) and Ministry of Education (MoE) in ensuring that culturally appropriate materials were developed. The situation might have been more heightened for the teachers without any special professional qualifications. Allen (2008: 13) observes that though teachers without relevant professional qualifications are not treated as “out-patients” and yet the reality for their condition is that they require treatment in the “intensive care”. This is a task that should not be ignored if desired reading readiness results are to be achieved. The teachers as “out patients” need teacher’s Reading Readiness Activities hand books, pre-schoolers’, work books, rhyme and tongue twister books among others materials with a lot of culturally appropriate Reading Readiness Activities (RRA). More importantly, they require professional training; in the “intensive care” in order to be immersed into “the what and how” of teaching at the level of pre-school. The lack of teachers’ RRA handbooks for instance might account for the lack of variety in the choice of instructional strategies the teachers in the pre-schools under study employed.

The findings of the study also showed that the text books and other teaching and learning materials in the pre-schools under study were not in a familiar language; most of the picture – word charts that the teachers used contained items that were not reflective of the Zambian culture. Some of the pre-schoolers that were asked whether or not they knew and had ever seen items such as; Chickoo, Pear (Fruit native to Europe), Whale (Big ocean mammal), Unicorn, Quitt and Pomegranate (Fruit native to tropical Asia) contained in the charts in real life situations, responded in the negative. Though it can be argued that the use of these foreign cultural elements can help pre-schoolers develop an understanding and appreciation of other people’s cultures, Allen (2008:17) argues that ideally, pupils should be able to communicate in culturally appropriate ways in specific real contexts with confidence, and do so with enjoyment and enthusiasm. This was apparently lacking in the pre-schools under study.

## **5.5 Language of classroom instruction**

Findings of this study showed that there was a mismatch between the language pre-school teachers used for classroom instruction in the pre-schools under study and what the pre-schoolers were going to be exposed to in the government schools in a New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL) class (Banda, 2012). In this research, respondents revealed that since the pre-schools under study were privately owned, their proprietors dictated that English be the language of classroom instruction (LoCI) because of the high-status tag attached to it which

came with economic gains to the proprietors of the pre-schools. This revelation is contrary to Nkoshla (2010) who argues that the main objective of the first cycle of education is the acquisition of reading, writing, thinking and speaking skills which is best done in an indigenous language of pupils. However, pre-school teachers in the pre-schools under study used English language to deliver reading readiness instructions to pre-schoolers.

The findings of this study have further revealed that for a pre-schooler that transitioned from a private school into a government run Grade one class, they were subjected to a three phase language switch. In Phase One; they are required to switch from the mother tongue at home (for most children) to English at the pre-school. In Phase Two; they switch from English at pre-school to mother tongue when they enrolled in a Grade one class in a government run Grade one class (Banda, 2012). Hence we see a mismatch between the language of instruction in a pre- school classroom and a Grade one classroom run by the government, particularly for children who do not speak English as a first language, which was the case in all the pre-schools under study.

Despite Nkoshla (2010) and Banda (2012) emphasizing that children be thoroughly familiar with basic skills in their first language before beginning the systematic study of a second language; the findings of this study showed that this proposition differed from the reality in the pre-schools under study. The findings from lesson observations showed that some teachers rebuked pre-schoolers that code- switched or mixed; a strategy that could have helped them form bridges between the known (the mother tongue) and the new (English). Furthermore, the observation by Banda (2012) that both Code-Switching and Code- Mixing are common features in the language use pattern in Zambia are met in classrooms was a point of agreement between Banda's views and the finding of this study in which pre-schoolers were noted switching codes from Luvale to English in a lesson observed at Forest pre-school. This, therefore, entails that any reading readiness programme to succeed, the language policy followed must support it. Generally, respondents in the research sites visited were of the view that the same notion should be applied to the reading readiness programme for pre-schoolers.

## **5.6 Professional qualifications of pre-school teachers**

This study has demonstrated that when pre- school teachers are qualified, pre-schoolers benefit, because the teachers are more informed and knowledgeable to deal with the complexities of literacy teaching; as they respond to the how, when and why of instruction. Findings of this study revealed that the level of the teachers' professional qualification was a

factor in the presentation of Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading. The researcher found out that pre-school classrooms that had teachers with pre-school professional qualifications or some teaching background were surrounded with materials which made it possible for the teachers to initiate Reading Readiness Activities that could help prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

However, this study acknowledges its limitations in view of the argument that teacher qualifications influence the quality of teaching. This is consistent with one of the standard officers who revealed that teacher qualification alone could not guarantee effective teaching. Other factors such as poor pay, work conditions, large classes could block effective teaching irrespective of the teacher's qualification. Even in the light of the latter argument, this study's findings are in agreement with Nielsen (2003) who observes that professionally prepared teachers are generally necessary for effective pre-school teaching. Therefore, the lack of pre-school pedagogical knowledge by some of the teachers in the pre-schools under study might have impacted negatively on the quality of teaching learning process that they conducted. Despite, the evidence on the value of professional qualifications for pre-school teachers advanced above, proprietors of the pre-schools under study and public policy in Zambia has not yet recognized the value of well qualified Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCED) teachers. For this reason, the pre-schools under study employed personnel without relevant ECCED qualifications. This revelation posed a danger to the provision of quality pre-school education in the pre-schools under study.



## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study. This study was an evaluation of the instructional strategies pre-school teachers used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading in selected pre-schools in Kabompo and Solwezi Districts of the North Western Province of Zambia.

### **6.2 Conclusion**

The study has revealed that the approach used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) to pre-schoolers was ineffective. It was clear that few teachers had the necessary pedagogical knowledge in teaching at pre-school level to enable them present RRA to pre-schoolers using effective instructional strategies. The teachers merely applied the “one size fits all” (Teacher centred) approach in the presentation of RRA to the pre-schoolers.

It was also found out that a large proportion of the teaching and learning materials that were being used in the pre-schools to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading were culturally and linguistically inappropriate. They depicted scenes, animals, and foods that were of western origin. As a result most pre-schoolers particularly the disadvantaged rural based were not familiar with them. The study also showed that there were inadequate text books in the pre-schools and in some cases none particularly reading readiness teachers’ handbooks. In addition, pre-schoolers in the pre-schools under study were not familiar with the language of classroom instruction consequently they resorted to code switching in a bid to form bridges between the known (the mother tongue) and the new (English).

From the foregoing, it is therefore advisable that the recommendations advanced below aimed at closing up the gaps that have been uncovered through this study are implemented in order to provide quality pre-school education to all Zambian Children of pre-school going age. Quality pre-school education should not be made a preserve of the privileged few. This is tantamount to a violation of the rights of the child contained in the United Nations charter

on children's rights to which Zambia is a signatory. The government thus should ensure that truly "quality pre-school education is made an equalizer of the opportunities of preparing **all children** for Grade one reading".

### **6.3 Recommendations**

In view of the findings advanced by this study, the following recommendations have been made;

#### **6.3.1 Language of Classroom Instruction**

The recommendation in the policy document (Educating Our Future, 1996) that the mother tongue should be the language of classroom instruction and language of initial literacy for the first four years of primary school education should be revised and extended to pre-schools. Particularly, the government should incorporate pre-school education into its mainstream education system and implement the language policy alluded to above so that the mismatch, which is currently in existence between what is happening in the privately owned pre-schools and the government owned Grade one classes as far as the language of classroom instruction and language for initial literacy is harmonized.

#### **6.3.2 Instructional strategies used to present Reading Readiness Activities (RRA)**

Pre-school teachers should use differentiated instruction; they need to tailor their instructional strategies to meet individual pre-schoolers' reading readiness needs. They should vary the content they teach, the process in which they teach it or the products they expect from their pre-schoolers because no two pupils would learn the same way using the same strategies, even if what was presented was the same RRA and to the same extent. Some may learn better through a child-centred approach while others may learn better through a teacher-centred approach or through a combination of the two. Furthermore, pre-school teachers should conduct assessment regularly for purposes of planning daily reading readiness instructions and adjusting the type of reading readiness content to offer in view of the learning to read needs of individual pre-schoolers.

#### **6.3.3 Regulating the operations of pre-schools**

There is need for the government through the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE) to regulate the operations of pre-schools; focus

should be on monitoring and improving the teaching standards. The MESVTEE should have a directorate specifically to manage issues of Early Childhood Care and Education Development (ECCED). There is need to have standard officers who are trained in issues of ECCED to monitor and ensure provision of quality pre-school education.

#### **6.3.4 Professional qualifications of pre - school teachers**

The Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE) should come up with legislation that commits all proprietors of pre-schools in the country to employ only personnel with relevant Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications as teachers.

#### **6.3.5 Teaching learning materials**

There is also need for the MESVTEE to come up with appropriate syllabi for the pre-school sector that must be operational. Furthermore, MESVTEE should provide an enabling environment in which Zambians can generate culturally friendly materials such as teachers' handbooks, rhyme, tongue twisters and story books for use to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading.

#### **6.3.6 Assessment of pre-schoolers**

There is need for pre-school teachers and Early Childhood Care Education curriculum developers (CDC) to use assessment for broader based application such as planning daily reading readiness instruction strategies or adjusting curriculum. The assessment instrument used in this study can be administered on a wider scale to test its reliability, validity and possibly strengthen it for use on a wider base in pre-schools.

### **6.4 Suggestions for future studies**

**6.4.1.** Conduct comparative study on the reading success in a Zambian language in a Grade one class between children with pre-school background and those without.

**6.4.2** Conduct research on pupils who have had English as language of classroom instruction in pre-schools to ascertain their reading levels in a Grade one class where the language of initial literacy is not English.

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### Appendix 1: Sample

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Name of pre-school</b>	<b>Number of pre-schoolers</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>
1.	Victoria	07	2
2.	Forest	20	2
3.	Springs	19	2
4.	Kilimanjaro	14	2
Total		60	08



## **Appendix 2: Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) Lesson Observation Guide**

This guide will be used to observe how the pre-school teacher presents RRA; focus will be on techniques, strategies, methods and approaches employed by the teacher during the lesson. The data gathered using this instrument will be used to triangulate the one gathered using the semi – structured interview guide.

<b>Area of Observation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Comments</b>		

### **A. Learning and teaching Environment**

1. Is the classroom well organized and stimulating for Reading Readiness Activities to take place?
2. Is there an attractive pictorial alphabet frieze displayed in the classroom?
3. Are months/days names displayed in the classroom?
4. Are any high-frequency words displayed in the classroom?
5. Are there any poems/rhymes/tongue twister displayed in the classroom?
6. Does the classroom contain empty vessels clearly labeled (i.e., empty vessels of items popularly consumed in the pre-schoolers' homes e.g., snacks, detergents, pastes, drinks etc)?

### **B. Practices/Activities Related to Reading Readiness**

1. Do the pre-schoolers hold the book in the correct manner (i.e., not upside down)?
2. Can the pre-schoolers tell that the words in a story go from left to right across the page?
3. Can the pre-schoolers tell that a story is read from top to bottom and not from bottom going up?
4. Do the pre-schoolers follow the words they are listening to in the story book as the teacher reads the story to them?
5. Does the teacher point at words as he/she reads them out to the pre-schoolers?
6. If a rhyme appears repeatedly in the story, does the teacher ask the pre-schoolers to "read" it after hearing it a few times?
7. Does the teacher ask pre-schoolers about their favorite themes or pictures in the story read to them?
8. Does the teacher read each letter in the child's name with the child?
9. Are the pre-schooler's possessions labeled with their names tags?

10. Does the teacher periodically ask the pre-schoolers to read their name as he/she points at the label?
11. Does the teacher say each letter in the child's name as he/she writes the child's name in order to enable the pre-schooler associate the written word with the oral one?
12. Do the pre-schoolers have opportunity for independent reading?
13. Do the pre-schoolers have opportunity for shared reading?
14. What is the language of classroom instruction?
15. Is there any code switching or code mixing on the part of the teacher during the lesson?
16. Is there any code switching or code mixing on the part of the pre-schoolers during the lesson and outside?

**C. Teaching / Learning Materials/Resources**

1. Does the classroom contain materials such as costumes for engaging pre-schoolers in drama, language materials, music materials, and more?
2. Is there a variety of books (picture books, picture story books, traditional literature, rhyme books, poetry books etc) in the schools?
3. Are there enough reading materials to meet the cultural background of pre-schoolers?
4. Are the teaching materials being used by the teacher suitable in terms of the pre-schoolers' culture?
5. Does the teacher provide the pre-schoolers with books that are suitable in terms of font size?
6. Do the books used for reading have pictures accompanying the graphemes?

**D. Teacher's knowledge on how to present the subject matter**

1. Does the teacher scaffold the pre-schoolers during the classroom activities involving problem solving; help the pre-schoolers turn the pages of a story book as they listen to the teacher read the story to them?
2. Does the teacher create activities to develop oral language through songs, poems, movement games and stories – typically does the teacher recite a fairytale or ask pre-schoolers to recite any?
3. Does the teacher encourage the pre-schoolers to ask questions on the story read to them?
4. Does the teacher discuss with the pre-schoolers what they have seen in the story read to them?

5. Does the teacher employ any of the following techniques/strategies when presenting RRA; group work, role play, problem solving, games, songs, drills, interactive dialogue, field trips, modeling etc?
6. Does the teacher use illustrations that the pre-schoolers are familiar with; is there evidence of contextualized presentation of the subject matter?
7. Does the teacher apply any of the following approaches to present RRA; differentiated instruction or “a one size fits all”?

**Appendix 3: Semi – Structured Interview Guide for Pre – School Teachers**

This interview will be a follow-up on the classroom Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) observation and will be used to counter check data obtained during the lesson observation.

The interview will seek to find out the following:

**Pre-schoolers’ Reading Readiness**

1. Do pre-schoolers that have been at the pre - school for more than two years know that print/a book is for reading?
2. List down at least four (4) behaviors that a pre-schooler is likely to exhibit when given a book;
  - a. ....
  - b. ....
  - c. ....
  - d. ....
3. Are the pre-schoolers able to name/sound the vowels?
4. Are the pre-schoolers able to practice left to right eye movement when given print materials?
5. Are the pre-schoolers able to sound syllables?
6. Are the pre-schoolers able to recognize letters that form given words?
7. Are the pre-schoolers able to read storybooks or any other materials that capture their interest?
8. Are the pre-schoolers able to identify missing syllables or letters in given words?
9. Are the pre-schoolers able to read formed words (e.g. words on flash cards)?
10. Are the pre-schoolers able to recognize and name letters of the alphabet?

**Curriculum**

- a) What is the structure of your pre - school curriculum, syllabus, schemes of work, and pre-schoolers’ school daily routine?
- b) What are the main RRA contained in the pre – school Language and Literacy syllabus?
- d) State the Reading Readiness Activities you offer pre-schoolers to help prepare them for Grade one reading?
- e) What instructional strategies do you use to present RRA to prepare pre-schoolers for Grade one reading?
- f) How do you treat pre-schoolers that have low abilities to comprehend concepts presented to them during a Language and Literacy lesson?

**Classroom Reading Readiness Environment**

- 1. What factors guide you as a teacher in arranging the classroom environment to help pre-schoolers acquire reading readiness behaviors as you prepare them for Grade one reading?
- 2. How do you arrange the classroom sitting to help the pre-schoolers learn to read?
- 3. Do you give each child at least one alphabet book, story book or picture book, rhyme book for independent reading (e.g., Dr. Seuss’s ABC book , Joseph Slate’s Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten)?
- 4. Do you give each child magnetized alphabet letters of their own to play with?
- 5. State the main Reading Readiness materials stocked in your school that you use to present RRA to pre-schoolers?
  - a. ....
  - b. ....
- 6. How do you use each Reading Readiness material?
  - a. ....

- b. ....
- 7. Does your classroom have a reading station or corner for pre-schoolers' independent reading?

**Classroom Practices**

- 1. How often do you conduct Reading Readiness lessons?
- 2. Do you as a teacher conduct independent/shared reading and how often?
- 3. Do you read to the pre-schoolers? If the answer is yes, how often?
- 4. Do the pre-schoolers read to one another? If the answer is yes, how often?
- 5. What kind of materials do pre-schoolers use for reading purpose?
- 6. Do you play music in your lessons to enhance pre-schoolers' ability to learn how to read?
- 7. What do you do to help pre-schoolers with low reading readiness levels?
- 8. What instructional strategies do you use to present RRA?
- 9. How do you collaborate with guardians to enhance pre-schoolers' reading readiness behaviors?
- 10. Is there any library in the school or your town?  
.....
- 11. Do you take the pre-schoolers to a public library? If your answer is yes, how often do you do it?
- 12. Do pre-schoolers borrow books from the school or public library?

**Thank you for accepting to be interviewed.**

## Appendix 4: Semi – Structured Interview Guide for Pre – School Manager

**Date:**

.....

### Section A: Personal Details

1. Name of School: .....
2. Name of Administrator: .....

### Section B: Pre-schoolers' Profile

1. How many pre-schoolers does your school have? .....
2. Classify the number of pre-schoolers by gender;
  - (a) Girls .....
  - (b) Boys .....
7. What is the age-range of the pre – schoolers enrolled in your school?.....

### Section C: Teachers' Profile

1. How many teachers do you have in this school? .....
2. Classify the number of teachers in your school by gender;
  - a) Males
  - b) Females
3. Classify your teachers' highest qualifications by gender;

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Total</b>
GCE			
School Certificate			
ECCED Certificate			
ECCED Diploma			
ECCED Degree			
Others (specify)			

3. For how long has each one of the pre-school teachers been teaching in the pre-school sector?

**Section D: Teaching and learning materials**

1. State the Reading Readiness materials that are in stock in your school;
- a) .....
- b) .....
2. State any Reading Readiness materials that are lacking in your school.
- a) .....
- b) .....

**Section E: School culture on teaching language and literacy; Reading Readiness**

Does your school have any guiding principles/philosophy regarding pre-schoolers' acquisition of reading readiness behaviours in order to prepare them for Grade one reading?

If your answer is yes, briefly explain;.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Thank you for accepting to be interviewed.**



**Appendix 5: Semi – Structured Interview Guide for DESO, Lecturers, and**

**CDC ECCE Subject Specialist**

**Date:**

.....

**Personal Details**

1. Name of institution at which the interviewee works

.....

2. Rank of interviewee .....

**Policy issues regarding pre – school education**

1. Is there any policy on pre – school education that is fully operational?

.....

2. Kindly try to exemplify your answer

.....

.....

.....

3. What is the recommended language(s) of classroom instruction in pre – schools?

4. In your opinion, is the language of classroom instruction (LoCI) appropriate for pre-schoolers to effectively understand concepts they are taught?

**Consideration of issues of quality in the provision of pre – school education**

1. Are the teachers handling the pre – school classes trained? .....

2. What is the government recommended minimal qualification of a pre – school teacher?

.....

3. Is there a national pre – school curriculum that guides the operations in the pre – schools? Kindly, exemplify the current state of affairs;.....

4. Is there any Language and Literacy syllabus in the country that guides teachers on what Reading Readiness Activities to offer pre-schoolers to help prepare them for Grade one reading? .....

5. If the answer for question 3 is no, explain how the offering of Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) in pre - schools across the country is harmonized with Grade one language and literacy syllabus?.....
6. How often should language and literacy lessons/ Reading Readiness Activities be offered to pre-schoolers? .....
7. What instructional strategies are recommended for teachers to use in order to enhance Reading Readiness behaviors among pre-schoolers? .....
8. Are the teaching and learning activities in the pre – schools monitored by authorities from MoE? .....
9. If your answer for 8 is no, give reasons.....
10. What reading readiness materials e.g., teacher’s hand book or pre-schoolers’ storybooks are used in pre – schools?  
.....  
.....
11. Are the materials used developed in Zambian? Are the materials culturally and linguistically suitable for teaching pre-schoolers? .....

**General pertinent issues in the provision of Pre – school education**

In your opinion, between teachers with an ECCED qualification and those without, which category will effectively present RRA to pre-schoolers to prepare them for Grade one reading? .....

**Thank you for accepting to be interviewed**

## Appendix 6: Reading Readiness Activity Sheet

This activity sheet consists of ten Reading Readiness Activities to be initiated in the classroom. The researcher will use the items to assess the pre-schoolers' levels of performance. The results from this exercise will then be entered onto the Child's Reading Readiness Activities Assessment Form.

S/N	Category	Activity	Answer
1.	Riddle	1. Listen to this riddle; I am thinking of an animal that is furry. It has two legs. It barks. What is it?	Dog
2.	Rhyme	1. Listen to the following words and tell me the ones that rhyme ; fan-pan, bill-hill; dog –dig;	fan-pan and bill-hill
		2. Listen to the following set of words and tell me if they rhyme or not; dog-fog, tent-top, pig –wig, pat-pin , ten-pen, heaven-seven, kate-coat, plate-kate	Dog-fog rhyme Tent-top do not rhyme Pig-wig rhyme Pat-pin do not rhyme Ten-pen rhyme Heaven- seven rhyme Kate-coat do not rhyme Plate-kate rhyme
	Rhyme	3. Show different objects to the pupil and mention their names (can, hat, pan, block and sock). Ask the pre-schoolers which of the objects rhyme.	Can, pan rhyme Block, sock rhyme
3.	Syllables	1. Ask pre-schoolers to mention the missing sound segment; ice - __, grand _____, rab____, li	Cream, son, bit, on
2.	Discriminating Beginning consonants	1. Tell me in which of the following words you hear the sound “l” at the beginning; lamp, ball, girl, doll , lake,	Lamp, lake

3.	Vocabulary	1. Let us play a word game. I will name something on a dinner table. Tell me if it is something to eat , something to drink or something we use to eat; fork, cup, spoon, plate potato, pot, knife, milk , bread, water	Things to eat are; bread and potato Things to drink are milk, water Fork, spoon are used to eat
		2. Match picture to concept/word (three to four letter words)	Cat , dog, girl, boy, cup, pot
4.	Uppercase and lowercase letters	1. Give the child a bag containing 20 magnetic letters; ten lower and ten uppercase letters and ask them to match the letters	Answers will vary
5.	Answering wh questions	1. Ask the child some wh-questions from the popular class story book (two one word answer questions and two questions whose answers require explanations/descriptions)	Answers will vary
6.	Sounding vowels (a,e,i,o,u)	1. Provide the child with a chart of vowel sounds and ask them to produce the sounds of the letters in the chart	/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/
7.	Knowledge of parts of a book	1. Provide the story book often read to the class; pre-schoolers asked to identify the front, back cover and book title.	Establish if child is able to identify front, back cover and title of the book
8.	Reading from left to right, top to down	1. Provide the story book that pre-schoolers often use for pretend reading. Ask the child to hold the book correctly and “read” the story.	Establish if child knows how to hold the book correctly, pretends to read from left to right and top to down

## Appendix 7: Pre – schooler’s Reading Readiness Activities (RRA) Assessment Form

The researcher will assess each pre-schoolers’ level of performance in RRA by engaging them in individual Reading Readiness Activities. The researcher will circle on the child’s RRA Assessment form the level of the child’s performance in each activity using three scales of rating; 1 for excellent performance; 2 for fair performance and 3 for poor performance, depending on an individual child’s competence in a particular activity.

### Pre-schooler’s Reading Readiness Activities Assessment Form

<b>Name of Pre-school:</b>				
<b>Name of Pre-schooler</b>				
<b>Date:</b>				
S/N	Reading Readiness activity/ Behaviour	Circle the level of the child’s performance in each activity they have been assessed		
		Excellent	Fair	Poor
1.	Answering questions on a popular class story	1	2	3
2.	Match picture to word concept (e.g., cup, cat, jar on a picture-word chart)	1	2	3
3.	Identify and match uppercase letters and lower case letters (A-Z)	1	2	3
4.	Sounding vowels (a,e,i,o,u)	1	2	3
5.	Deduce the answer to a riddle	1	2	3
6.	Clapping the number of syllables in a word	1	2	3
7.	Identifying words that rhyme	1	2	3
8.	Knowledge of parts of a book	1	2	3
9.	Reading from left to right, top to down	1	2	3
10.	Discriminate consonant sounds	1	2	3

### KEY

- ❖ The number 1 on the RRA Assessment Form stands for excellent performance; meaning the child performed the activity correctly without **ANY** help from the assessor.
- ❖ The number 2 on the RRA Assessment Form stands for fair performance; meaning the child performed the activity correctly after being offered some cues by the assessor.
- ❖ The number 3 on the RRA Assessment Form stands for poor performance; meaning the child performed the activity wrongly (or did not respond) despite being offered some cues by the assessor.

## **Appendix 8: Check list**

The questions contained in this document will be used to analyse the teaching learning materials being used in the pre-schools under study to establish whether or not they can enhance pre-schoolers acquisition of reading readiness skills

- a. Do the documents include a good portion of words the pre-schoolers can decode using phonic skills?
- b. Are the documents in large print and with colorful photographs to attract pre-schooler's attention to explore the contents of the print?
- c. Are the documents easily seen by the pre-schoolers during guided reading?
- d. Do the documents include the repetition of high-frequency words?
- e. Do the documents aid pre-schoolers learn the sounds that letters of the alphabet make (e.g., "M makes the mmmm sound")?
- f. Do the documents aid pre-schoolers learn to sing or say the alphabet?
- g. Do the documents aid pre-schoolers associate letters to words and graphic representation?
- h. Do the documents aid pre-schoolers to learn new words?
- i. Is the story book, pre-schooler ratio suitable for pre-schoolers' independent reading?

## Appendix 9: Document Study (Analysis) Check List

### Pre-school documents supportive of Reading Readiness Checklist

This instrument is designed to;

1. Establish whether or not documents (teaching and learning materials) supportive of reading readiness are available in the pre-schools.
2. Assess the content of the documents to establish whether or not they provide a range of opportunities for the teachers and pre-schoolers to engage in Reading Readiness Activities to promote reading readiness behaviors.

**Name of pre-school:** .....

**Date:** .....

S/N	Title of Document /Material	Available (Tick “√” Symbol)	Not Available (X-Symbol)	Content	Assessment  (State Areas of Weaknesses or Strength)
<b>FOCUS ON PRE-SCHOOLER MATERIALS</b>					
1	Empty vessel /used materials;			e.g., contains print/labels for pretend reading	e.g., big labels /font and attractive
	• Cereal boxes,				
	• Detergent paste boxes				
	• Milk cans				
	• Sachets,  • Tooth				

	Paste tube				
2	Calendar				
3	Time table				
4	Alphabet wall chart				
5	Alphabet letters, names and picture books				
6	Magnetized alphabet letters  Wooden -plastic alphabet letters				
<b>FOCUS ON TEACHER- PRESCHOOLER MATERIALS</b>					
7	Rhyme book.				
8	Story books				
9	Picture strip book.				
10	Activity book (specify)				
11	Posters				
12	Signs and Symbols				
<b>FOCUS ON TEACHERS' MATERIALS</b>					
13	Syllabus				
14	Teacher's Hand book				



15	Schemes of work, weekly forecasts				
16	Lesson plans				
17	Other teacher created materials  (specify)				

**Appendix 10: Schedule of activities conducted: Solwezi, Kabompo, Kitwe and Lusaka**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Institution</b>
14/02/2012	Lecturer	Kitwe College of Education
22/02/2012	ECCED Subject Specialist	CDC, Lusaka
22/02/2012	ECCED Senior Subject Specialist	CDC, Lusaka
05/04/2011	School Manager/Teacher	Victoria- Solwezi
14/04/2012	Teacher/ School Manager	Springs- Solwezi
12/04/2011	Teacher/ School Manger	Springs- Solwezi
18/03/2011	School Manager/ Teacher	Kilimanjaro- Kabompo
17/03/2011	School Manager/ Teacher	Kilimanjaro- Kabompo
15/01/2011	School Manager/ Teacher	Kilimanjaro- Kabompo
04/02/2012	DESO	District Education Office - Kabompo
08/02/2012	DESO	District Education Office- Solwezi
14/02/2012	Lecturer	Kitwe College of Education
12/04/2011	Teacher	Victoria- Solwezi
06/04/2011	Teacher	Victoria- Solwezi
12/01/2011	School manager/Teacher	Forest- Kabompo
14/02/2012	Teacher	Forest- Kabompo

## **Appendix 11: Consent Form**

The researcher will seek consent of the respondents to participate in the research by explaining the purpose of the study and the procedures that will be followed to collect data. The respondents will be issued a consent form and requested to read its details and then append their signature to it as a sign that they are willing to participate in the study.

### **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 what, if any, Reading Readiness Activities are taught in pre – schools and how the reading readiness instructional process is conducted in Pre - schools. The researcher is interested in looking at the teaching methods, curriculum, learning and teaching 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 will be 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.....

Name .....