

Early Childhood Care And Education Policy Implementation Analysis: The Case Of Debre Tabor City

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How to cite this article: Nigus Worku Tigabu (2024) Early Childhood Care And Education Policy Implementation Analysis: The Case Of Debre Tabor City. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 12238-12248.

Abstract

The study set out to examine how ECCE policy was being implemented in Debre Tabor City. Utilizing an exploratory sequential design, the study methodology was mixed methods. Using a stratified sampling procedure, ten pre-primary schools were chosen. Using questionnaires and interviews, data were gathered from preprimary education teachers (N = 21), school principals (N = 10), school supervisors (N = 10), parents (N = 10), WEO (N = 1), REB (N = 1), and MoE (N = 1) in both quantitative and qualitative formats. A crosscase analysis method was used to examine the qualitative information gathered from the interview, observations, and document reviews. The statistical test known as the Kruskal Wallis was utilized to assess the quantitative data that was collected via the questionnaire. Ultimately, the outcome was compared to the ECCE policy guideline in order to determine if the policy is being applied appropriately. According to the study's findings, the ECCE policy was limited to the document. Basic amenities were mostly lacking in preprimary schools; these institutions were also not physically secure, had insufficient outdoor and indoor space, poor quality learning and play resources, and a large percentage of their teachers lacked a qualification. Inadequate funding, a lack of collaboration with stakeholders, a shortage of resources and facilities, a shortage of highly qualified labor, and a lack of parental involvement all hindered the effective implementation of ECCE. Ultimately, it is determined that even with the advancements made thus far, the ECCE policy's execution is beset by enormous obstacles. Lastly, it is suggested that the government concentrate on rural areas, allot sufficient funds at all levels, facilitate training for all ECCE staff through the WEO and REB, and encourage responsible stakeholders to collaborate. It is also advised that the REB set up a center for ongoing professional development with complete educational support where teachers can routinely discuss their experiences.

Keywords: Analysis, ECCE, Implementation, Policy, Pre-primary School, Preschool

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

All national efforts to advance its growth must start with education. It is essential for creating the skilled, knowledgeable, capable, and socially adept workers that a nation needs in a variety of fields. In order to fulfill these important duties, education at all levels must be of a high caliber.

As a starting point, giving careful consideration to early childhood care and education is on

one of the most crucial things to do in regards to having an excellent education.

In addition to fostering the growth of cognitive, social, emotional, and motivational abilities, early childhood education also serves as a roadmap for further learning and success. This, in turn, adds to the "human capital" that supports the community's economic prosperity (Bennett, 2011). The standard of early childhood education and care plays a critical role in helping realize this. The establishment of a "National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)" in Ethiopia in 2010 gave early childhood education a boost and was based on four pillars. Under the Ministry of Health, the first two pillars are parental education and a thorough program of early child health and stimulation focus on children from the perinatal period until age three. The third and fourth pillars have been more targeted for children aged 4 to 6, comprising of non-formal school readiness (notably Child-to-Child) initiatives and the establishment of pre-schools of various kinds, including community-based pre-schools, private pre-schools, and pre-schools attached to primary schools (MoE, MoH, and MoWA, 2010). Similarly, after ECCE had received a policy boost, it was incorporated in ESDP IV by getting high priority. Accordingly, during the period from 2010-15, the Government of Ethiopia, through the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureaus, has supported the large-scale implementation of pre-primary education, in all areas of the country, via a combination of government, community, non-governmental (NGO), church and private sector initiatives. From a level of just over 340,000 in the 2009/10 academic year, enrolment reached over 3,000,000 in 2014/15. Students are enrolled across Child-to-Child schemes, multi-year kindergarten programs, Accelerated School Readiness courses, and a one-year O-Class 'reception' year (MoE, 2015).² In addition to the above, to overcome the problems that were faced during the implementation of ESDP IV regarding ECCE, the Ministry of Education set ambitious targets for its next five years plan (2015/16-2019/20), which were elaborated in its fifth Education Sector Development Program (MoE, 2015). The Education Sector Development Program Five (ESDP V) has been leading national planning and implementation in the education sector and highlights pre-primary education as a priority, with the goal: "to provide all children with access to pre-primary education for school preparedness". Similarly, in Amhara, ECCE as the first formal setup in the educational pathway is acknowledged to help children age four to six. Its goal is to support children's achievement in the elementary grades by fostering their social, intellectual, emotional, and physical development. As a result, the recently created three essential ECCE policy documents—a national policy framework, a strategic operation plan, and guidelines—have been approved and act as a cornerstone for ECCE's responsibility to solve fundamental concerns in the area. By comparing what is in place to the policy guidelines specified in the national policy framework of the 2010 ECCE policy, this study assesses the state of implementation of the ECCE policy.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The government created an ECCE Strategic Operational Plan and Guidelines during the first year of ESDP IV. The plan promotes the provision of ECCE by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, and private investors.

Thanks to these initiatives, the gross enrolment rate for pre-primary increased to 34% in 2013–

14. Approximately 25% of the students are enrolled in three-year kindergarten, with the remaining students in one-year O-Class and Child-to-Child programs.

This surpasses the predetermined ECCE objective for ESDP IV, which was set at 20% from an initial baseline of 6.9% (MoE, 2015).

In 2015, the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia set ambitious goals for the five years starting in 2015/16 and ending in 2019/20. These goals were detailed in the Ministry of Education's

fifth Education Sector Development Program (MoE, 2015), which was the result of persistent efforts to achieve even higher achievements and close the implementation gap regarding ECCE observed during ESDP IV. With the objective of "to provide all children with access to preprimary education for school preparedness," ESDP V has been spearheading national planning and execution in the education sector and emphasizes pre-primary education as a priority (MoE, 2015).

The nationwide program's execution will conclude in the upcoming year (2019/2020). As a result, this study made an effort to compare the objectives of the 2010 ECCE policy guideline and ESDP V with the practical trends and significant obstacles of ECCE. The present researcher was motivated to carry out this evaluation study in order to find out how well the government had executed the ECCE policy as outlined in the ECCE policy framework ten years after it was passed. Moreover, having examined and looked at some studies about the advantage and nature of early childhood care and education programs, there were some studies conducted in Ethiopia. For instance, Woodhead, Ames, Vennaman, Abebe, and Streuli (2009), conducted a study on Challenges for early childhood and primary education in Ethiopia, India, and Peru. Findings from the study revealed that the opportunity to attend pre-school education is almost entirely restricted to urban children in Ethiopia. Nearly 58 % of children in urban communities had attended pre-school at some point since the age of 3. In contrast, less than 4 % of rural children had attended pre-school education and for many rural communities even accessing basic primary schooling remains elusive. Also, in those few cases where rural children did access preschool, they did so later (average around 55 months) than their urban counterparts (48 months). Besides, the researcher recommended that in Ethiopia, to fill the gap in ECCE provision, especially in offering educational equity to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, requires highly targeted investment in quality programs, and giving attention to rural as well as urban communities. However, after this researcher recommended the above, there was no study conducted in the rural areas of the country to investigate the practical trends of ECCE in rural areas and still it is abandoned which needs in-depth investigation.

However, a study on the current state of preprimary education conducted across the nation in 2014 by Mamo, Admasu, and Amogne revealed that the program's implementation was inadequate because it was not in line with the pre-primary education standard as intended.

Because: teachers /personnel were both restricted in number and not qualified for the required level; inadequate provisions and lack of financial assistance; too little parentschools partnership, and insubstantial responsibilities of administration organizations (WEO, preprimary schools). Additionally, Yigzaw and Abdirahman (2017) studied the problems and methods of Jijiga City Administration's public and private preschools. The study's conclusions showed that all of the sampled preschools had belowaverage preschool practices, that the principals, teachers, and parents had little understanding of the preschool's value, and that the teachers were unable to use local stories because they were not from the community. To the best of the current investigator's knowledge, no study has been done on early childhood education (ECCE) in rural areas of the nation. The aforementioned researchers only looked at metropolitan areas and neglected to analyze policy implementation analysis. Fedlu (2018) also discovered that the early childhood care and education (ECCE) policy in Addis Ababa focused solely on access while researching its implementation and problems.

The bulk of the centers lacked suitable facilities, and the curriculum failed to take special needs students' needs into account. Textbooks for students were lacking, and most teachers lacked the necessary credentials. The annual school program ended in two terms, the organization of PTA meetings differed from KG to KG, children's health and nutrition received little attention, and most center locations were unsuitable. The aforementioned studies primarily addressed the topic in its whole and concentrated on the nation's cities.

Furthermore, they did not look into policy implementation analysis in comparison to the 2010 national ECCE policy framework's policy guidelines. Moreover, there is no former study conducted around the study area regarding ECCE. This is one of the reasons that motivated the researcher to conduct a study on the ECCE policy implementation against the standards set in the Ethiopian national policy guideline of ECCE in general and in the region in particular. Hence, this study was focused on pre-primary schools that were attached to government primary schools of the rural area, and it filled the gap by revealing the status of policy implementation of ECCE in the selected area.

1.3. Research Questions

1. To what extent did the ECCE policy Framework and standard guidelines get implemented?
2. To what extent did responsible stakeholders discharge their roles and responsibilities in implementing the ECCE policy?
3. What, if any, were the key impeding factors in the implementation of the ECCE policy outlined in the ECCE policy framework?
4. How the WEO has managed to implement the ECCE policy ten years after its enactment?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The main objective of the study is to analyze the extent to which ECCE policy framework of 2010 was being implemented in selected pre-primary schools of Debre Tabor city of South Gondar Zone of Amhara Regional State.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

1. To examine the extent to which the stakeholders have discharged their role and responsibilities in implementing the ECCE policy.
2. To suggest possible means with a view of improving the implementation of Pre Primary education in the selected city with reference to the findings of the study.
3. To identify the main challenges encountered during the implementation of the ECCE policy.
4. To examine the extent to which the WEO has managed to implement the ECCE policy ten years after its enactment.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The study's researcher feels that by identifying implementation issues and working together to take prompt corrective action, schools, WEO, REB, and MoE may be able to expand the use of best practices to additional areas. The findings could help schools; WEO, REB, and MoE make informed judgments on their longterm planning. Other researchers may be able to do extensive research on different aspects of this difficulty with the assistance of the researcher.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study's focus was on Debre Tabor City's early childhood care and education policy implementation analysis from the perspective of the ECCE policy guidelines from 2010. There are 55 pre-

primary schools in Debre Tabor City that are connected to government primary schools. It was not possible to include all pre-primary schools due to the vast population.

As a result, only 10 Government Pre-Primary Schools and WEO were included in the study. The Early Childhood and Early Childhood Education (ECCE) policy, in contrast, is based on four main pillars: parental education, health, and early stimulation (birth to three years old); non-formal school readiness initiatives, such as Child-to-child programs, community-based pre-schools, private preschools, and preschools attached to primary schools (MoE, MoH, and MoCWA, 2010). However, the third pillar, or preschool program, and more especially preschools connected to primary schools, were the only topics covered by this study. Furthermore, only teachers, principals, parents, Woreda education authorities, REB, and MoE participated

in the study, despite the fact that there were many stakeholders involved in the execution of early childhood care and education programs. Lastly, the study's temporal scope was restricted to analyzing ECCE policy guidelines ten years after they were passed, which included analyzing how the policies were implemented during ESDP IV and V.

1.7. Operational Definition of Key Terms

Analysis: refers to a detailed examination of the ECCE policy guideline in Ethiopia against its implementation.

Early Childhood Care and Education: is used interchangeably as 'pre-primary Education', and 'Pre-school' to refer to a program for children from age 4 to 8 to make them ready for regular school, and also it involves both care and education.

ECCE Policy: in this study refers to the ECCE policy guidelines designed by MoE in 2010.

Policy Implementation Analysis: refers to a detailed examination of the third pillar (pre primary education) of the 2010 ECCE policy framework in Ethiopia against its implementation.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses a number of topics pertaining to the research methodology used in this study and its justification. The research site, research design, data sources, sample techniques, data collection tools and processes, data analysis methodology, and ethical considerations are among the challenges.

3.1. Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in Amhara Regional State South Gondar, Debre Tabor, which is situated 666 kilometers north of Addis Ababa. The study area was chosen since it is the researcher's workspace, which improved the conditions for data gathering.

Furthermore, in terms of preprimary education, the chosen city would be more accessible, have more experiences, and have better facilities than the other cities that did not receive funding from the Education for Sustainable Development initiative. Furthermore, while some research on ECCE has been done across the nation, no prior research on the subject has been done in this city. Thus, the researcher made the decision to carry out an analytical investigation on the government pre-primary schools in this specific area that were connected to primary schools.

3.2. Research Design

This study's main goal was to compare Debre Tabor City's ECCE policy execution to the 2010 policy paper. An exploratory sequential mixed method design was employed to achieve this goal.

A mixed research technique that takes a pragmatic perspective on the research paradigm, the exploratory sequential mixed method design gathers, analyzes, and interprets both qualitative and quantitative data in turn. It is a followup method that involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative data individually. This mixed methods study addressed the difficulties associated with early childhood education and the implementation of policies as a suitable methodology since it could offer more thorough and comprehensive responses to the fundamental research issues than a single approach could. Since responsible stakeholders were involved in the implementation of the ECCE policy, the first phase of this study involved a qualitative exploration of their engagement, for which qualitative data were gathered by observation, interview, and document review. The construction of a questionnaire to gather information from PPE teachers, school principals, and school supervisors of sampled PPSs was guided by the findings of the qualitative study. In addition, the study's

second phase, which was based on the findings from its first qualitative phase, provided a quantitative account of the main obstacles to the ECCE policy's implementation. In general, the study used a mixed research methodology, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection and analysis.

As a result, the researcher used a mixed research approach to deepen knowledge and validate results from several sequentially collected data sources. Accordingly, Creswell (2009) claimed that it is preferable to combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies while doing social and educational research. Combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies can help to overcome the unique constraints of each approach while maximizing the strengths of each. It might also go beyond the constraints of a single technique to offer more thorough and comprehensive responses to the fundamental research topics.

3.3. Sources of Data

3.3.1. Primary Sources of Data

The primary sources of data for the study consisted of pre-primary school teachers, principals, parents, school supervisors, WEO experts, ANREB experts, and MoE experts.

3.3.2. Secondary Sources of Data

On the other hand, for the secondary sources of data, the minimum standard stated in the 2010 ECCE policy guideline, and Regional Pre Primary Education Standard guidelines were used as the cornerstone of the reference of information for the study. Besides, in this study, ESDP IV, ESDP V, instructional materials, children's attendance records, and teachers' profiles were the other essential sources of data.

3.4. Population, Samples and Sampling Techniques

There were 55 government Pre-primary schools attached to primary schools in Debre Tabor city. These schools were arranged under 10 school clusters. By using each cluster as strata, out of 55 government pre-primary schools, to have a representative from each cluster, 10 pre-primary schools meaning one pre-primary school from each cluster were selected through a simple random sampling technique. In the sampled pre-primary schools, there were 21 pre-primary education teachers. From them, 10 teachers were selected for an interview through a purposive sampling technique. Besides, one expert from MoE, one expert from REB, and one expert from WEO were included for the interview using a purposive sampling method due to their vast experience in the area. For the interview, from sampled pre-primary schools, all 10 school principals were included through an availability sampling technique. Besides, from the total members of PTA of sampled pre-primary schools, to get reliable data from parents, 10 parents who have at least a child in the respective pre-primary school were purposively selected for interview. On the other hand, for the questionnaire, all available 21 teachers, all 10 school principals, and all 10 school supervisors in the selected pre-primary schools were included through the availability sampling technique. Overall, 33 numbers of informants for an interview and 41 informants for the questionnaire were included in this study.

Table 1: Target population, sample and sampling technique

Respondents	Target Population	Sample	Sampling Technique
Pre-primary Schools	55	10	Simple random sampling technique
School principals	10	10 for both interview and questionnaire	Availability sampling technique
School supervisors	10	10 for the questionnaire	Availability sampling technique
Pre-schools teachers	21	10 for an interview	Purposively
		all 21 for questionnaire	Availability sampling technique
Experts from MoE		1	Purposively
Experts from REB		1	Purposively
Experts from WEO	1	1	Purposively
Parents	All parents who are members of PTA	10	Purposively one parents from each sample schools

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1. Interview

Most people are more willing to talk than to write. The key informant interview method enables researchers to explore in-depth understandings, facilitate the free exchange of ideas, and lends itself to acquire more queries that are complex and attaining detailed responses. The informants have firsthand knowledge and experience and are, therefore, best placed to comment on problems (Carl et al., 2004). Thus, an interview was used to obtain in-depth and detailed information from the participants. Accordingly, for interview, questions that were related to the implementation of the 2010 ECCE policy guidelines for preschools (4 to 6+) which include regarding target group, physical environment, learning materials and equipment's, scheduling activities, the content of the curriculum, teaching and learning methodology, assessment, human resource, the participation of parents and communities, health and nutrition, monitoring and supervision, regarding challenges' structure of the program, management of the ECCE program, partners' role and roles of government were developed by the researcher. The interview was held with the MoE, REB, and WEO experts at their offices, with ECCE teachers, principals, and parents at pre-primary schools. For MoE, REB, and WEO, the same interview guide was used in order to cross-check the trustworthiness of information obtained for the study. Besides, for pre-primary school principals and teachers, the same interview guide was used. Another type of interview questions was prepared and used for parents accordingly. With the WEO, pre-primary school principals, teachers, and parents the interviews were conducted at two various times with locally appropriate language including Amharic based on the interest of interviewees and documented by an audiotape recorder. With the MoE and REB, the interview was conducted once.

3.5.2. Observation

Each sampled pre-primary school outdoors materials and space including the appropriateness of place were taken into consideration. Furthermore, attention was paid to whether the school compound had enough space/field to play or not, whether the school had enough latrines or not, whether the school had enough water supply or not, the accessibilities of resting and feeding room, whether the wall of classroom was equipped 26 with teaching aids or not and the availabilities of basic outdoor play equipment such as balance, merry go round, swings, slides, ladders, and locally made outdoor games. Besides, indoors learning materials including

exploratory materials (puzzles, matching games, playing cards, etc.), various books, classroom space, whether the classroom had enough light or not, and the teaching-learning process in the classroom was observed. The observation was conducted for one hour in each sampled school at two various periods by preparing the details of the observation checklist that enabled a researcher to have a good view of all possible dimensions of sampled pre-primary schools. The observation checklist was prepared by the researcher.

3.5.3. Document Review

Document sources serve as a useful tool in yielding information that is important in explaining social or educational practices. Rooted in this, to ensure how comparable and reliable the data collected through the aforementioned methods from the research site, and hence to make triangulation/cross-checking, document review yet found to be another means of data collection. Related issues with the research problems of this study were reviewed in the policy materials ESDP IV, instructional materials, children's attendance records, and teachers' profiles were reviewed. To examine the exposure of children to pre primary school before they entered grade one, the documented attendance of pre-primary schools and grade one attendance of each year starting from 2017 were reviewed.

3.5.4. Questionnaire

Since the study was conducted through exploratory mixed-method design, findings generated from the qualitative study informed the development of a questionnaire. Consequently, for the questionnaire, questions that were related to the key impeding factors in ECCE policy implementation were developed by the researcher. The type of questions included was closed-ended items and only one open-ended question. Accordingly, the format for items was based on a Likert scale. The Likert scale was valued as strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). For informants (teachers, school principals, and school supervisors), the same questionnaires were prepared and used in order to cross-check the trustworthiness of information obtained for the study. The questionnaire was structured into two main parts. The first part included demographic questions; while the second part included questions that were related to the key impeding factors in ECCE policy implementation.

3.6. The Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The instruments for data collection were initially developed based on the qualitative result of the current study and review of related literature in order to achieve its validity in securing relevant information for the study. The instruments which were prepared in the English language were given to experts in English so as to check the grammatical clarity of the items. Then, it was shown to the advisor in order to comment on their appropriateness to gather relevant information for the research. Certain modifications and amendments were made based on the comments obtained from the advisor. After this, the questionnaires were translated into Amharic. In order to check the reliability of the instruments, the pilot test was carried out in two selected pre-primary schools. Then, the times were seen carefully to check if they needed any modifications. To this end, four questions from the questionnaires were modified, two were cancelled and one new question was added. After making the necessary modifications, the instruments were retyped and administered.

3.7. Data Collection Procedure

Before collecting the data, the researcher explained his mission and the purpose of the research to the respondents of the study. After permission was secured, the researcher arranged the time and place to get the participants with the school principals. Participants were informed about the objective of the study and asked to participate as scheduled. In the first phase, qualitative

data was collected. Accordingly, the required data were collected step by step through prepared interview guides, observation checklists, and document review on the basis of a previously organized pertinent literature review so as to get the necessary information. The interview guide was semi-structured, accordingly, other important questions were generated during the interview and leading questions were introduced ahead of the scheduled time. Ample time was allowed to satisfactorily probe the issue. The recordings of interviews on tape were performed since it was convenient and obviate the necessity of writing during the interview, which may be distracting to both the interviewer and subject (Best and Kahn, 2006). The observation was made according to the checklists prepared in advance. Therefore, an observation was conducted in both the classrooms and outdoor play areas that supplemented the interviews and assisted comparisons with the standard adopted in the region. After the qualitative data were collected and analyzed, the quantitative data were gathered to substantiate findings from qualitative data sources which were conducted through interviews and observations. This quantitative data could help the researcher to identify the key impeding factors in ECCE policy implementation.

3.8. Method of Data Analysis

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed manually. The relevant portion of the interview was transcribed and summarized since transcribing every word, exclamation, or pause that occurred in the interview was not needed (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Since the study was conducted through exploratory mixed-method design, the qualitative data were collected and analyzed first. Accordingly, collected data through interviews, observation, and document review were analyzed by using a cross-case data analysis method. The cross-case analysis used was variably oriented in which variables were compared across the sampled pre-primary schools. Hence this section attempts to answer the first and second research questions of this study. The cross-case analysis is a method that facilitates the comparison of commonalities and differences in the events, activities, and processes that are the units of analyses in case studies. Cross-case analysis enhances researchers' capacities to understand how relationships may exist among discrete cases, accumulate knowledge from the original case, refine and develop concepts, and build or test a theory. Furthermore, cross-case analysis allows the researcher to compare cases from one or more settings, communities, or groups. This provides opportunities to learn from different cases and gather critical evidence to modify policy (Baxter, 2008). Hence cross case analysis was employed in which the sampled pre-primary schools were compared in the areas they suggest the same action of implementation, and where they differ. Accordingly, pertaining to observation, after the end of each session, the researcher wrote detailed notes of direct observation based on the checklists as soon as possible. The researcher recorded the major activities, facilities, and general situation form a strong basis for analysis and interpretation of collected data. After the qualitative data were collected and analyzed, the questionnaire was administered and sorted out by using SPSS (statistical packages for social science version 20). To identify the response of the majority ranks and mean ranks were used; and this section aimed to answer the third research question of this study. To determine the mean rank deference of informants (teachers, school principals, and school supervisors) a Kruskal Wallis H test analytical tool was used. The Kruskal Wallis test is a nonparametric statistical test that assesses the differences among three or more independently sampled groups on a single, none normally distributed continuous variable. None normally distributed data (e.g., ordinal or rank data) are suitable for the Kruskal Wallis test and it is an alternative to the One Way ANOVA when the assumptions for ANOVA aren't met (Kruskal and Wallis, 1952). Besides, the demographic characteristics of respondents were analyzed by using percentage and frequency distribution. Generally, the data obtained through a semi-structured interview guide, observation guide, and document review were presented and analyzed through qualitative methods according to pre-primary school implementation

domains. Themes and sub-themes were generated as the analysis could progress. Finally, the quantitative data were analyzed by quantitative analyzing tools.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Research involves collecting data from people, about people (Punch, 2005, as cited in Creswell, 2009, p.132). Writing about these anticipated ethical issues is required in making an argument for a study as well as being an important topic in the format for proposals. Researchers need to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems (Israel and Hay, 2006, as cited in Creswell, 2009, p.132). Ethical considerations can take various forms depending on the nature of particular research activities. In this study, the researcher tried his best to meet ethical considerations, took appropriate steps, for instance, the researcher took formal permission from the university regarding undertaking data collection and he adhered to the ethical form 30 provided by the university. Moreover, the researcher took formal permission and approval of respondents for taking part in this data collection activity and no force or compulsion was posted on any respondent for responding to the interview. The purpose of this study was conveyed to all participants and the anonymous nature of this study was also maintained throughout research so that the respondents responded with ease without any fear of implications.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data. Based on the nature of the research questions and data collected, both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used. The study was conducted by categorizing it into ECCE policy implementation, the involvement of responsible stakeholders in ECCE policy implementation, and challenges encountered during ECCE policy implementation. Therefore, next to the demographic characteristics of respondents, in the first part of this section, an analysis of ECCE policy implementation is presented. In the second and third part of this section, analyses of data regarding taking part of responsible stakeholders in ECCE policy implementation and impeding factors during the implementation of ECCE are discussed respectively.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

In the interview and questionnaire, factual items that were asked for the identification of sex, age, educational standard, and professional experience, and the like were made. The results are in the table below.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of parents who were interviewed

Variable	Category	Respondents			
		Parents		Total	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Sex	M	7	70	7	70
	F	3	30	3	30
	Total	10	100	10	100
Age	24-27 years	1	10	1	10
	28-32 years	2	20	2	20
	33-37 years	2	20	2	20
	≥38 years	5	50	5	50
	Total	10	100	10	100

The main purpose of early childhood care and education policy was to deliver quality preschool education services to all children of the country. Since the enactment of the ECCE policy, significant progress has been achieved in Ethiopia in terms of access particularly in urban areas whereas some progress in the rural areas achieved with),%enormous challenges. For example, before 2010 the gross enrolment rate was below (5 and during ESDP IV (2011-2015) gross enrolment rate was raised to 34%. But now it has reached to more than 45%. However, there are still continuing challenges that impede the proper implementation of the program. Though the policy is comprised of useful approaches to make the service available to all children of the country, still there is a high gap between rural and urban areas regarding access to the program and it fails to address the quality part. One indicator is the document which states that the service is delivered by using the existing government resource (e.g. Government elementary schools). However, the expansion of the PPS attached to government schools in the Debre Tabor city by itself is a footing step forward for the equity and accessibility of children with low-income families and disadvantaged children that highly contributes to the slogan of EFA, which depicted the beginning of ECCE. On the other hand, all studied pre-primary schools in the Debre Tabor city do not have their own administration exclusively, all of them are located in the site that is not suitable for preschool children, and even though there is a variation from preschool to preschool, all of them encountered a high shortage of educational inputs and facility. In-outdoor learning environments, materials, and equipment, as well as their organization, were found to be inadequate/non-existent. The classroom space provided per child was inadequate due to the teacher-child ratio per classroom was large. The tables, chairs, benches, and shelves for use were not child-sized and comfortable; the cleanness, attractiveness, and stimulating of the classroom were not suitable; and the appropriateness of windows, doors, and decorations; was too little. Qualification of teachers is below the requirement and caregivers are not assigned. Although the preschool policy urges an annual program with three terms for preschool education, none of the government pre-primary schools applied this approach. Priority is not given to vulnerable students and for students with special needs. Furthermore, there are no clear and strong criteria to facilitate the enrolment of children of economically poor families for the service. On the other hand, the emphasis is not laid on the health and nutrition of preschool children. Particularly there is no workbook for students and the syllabus is unavailable. Moreover, schools do not use local game materials and the major problem concerning outdoor play is a shortage of playfields. The organization of PTA is not uniform from preschool to preschool and in the majority of them, the PTA was both for preschool and primary school. The curriculum materials in the studied PPSs were inadequate and the content lacks relevance to children's environment. Besides, curriculum implementation was not similar throughout PPSs; teaching methods were mostly dependent on direct teaching other than important methods (student-centered). The teaching method seems a teacher-centered approach. Teacher's preparation and utilization of instructional materials found to be inadequate. Furthermore, the tradition to collect and use real objects was very poor. Besides, there were acute shortages of fitting instructional materials in most PPSs. Assessment and record-keeping techniques in PPSs were found to be the least used. Appropriate assessment techniques that provide a complete picture of children both in the in-out door environments were not used. Test and daily attendance, as well as class participation, were the most commonly used assessment techniques. The existence of Parent-PPSs partnership to assist children's learning in the studied area was inadequate. Most of the parents seem to be unaware of the benefits of PPE for the holistic development of their children. The school management failed to take guiding responsibilities about the parent-school partnership. Professional commitment to communicate with parents and an attempt to share responsibilities for children's educational attainment seems negligible, for parent participation was found to be less effective. That by no means encourages parents to participate in the education of their

children directly. In general, parent involvement was found to be insignificant. Stakeholders did not fulfill their responsibilities; no coordination among the three organizations (MoE, MoH, and MoWA), integrated service was not delivered at the grassroots level, there were no preschool experts in the education offices; all PPSs were under the administration of elementary schools. In the main office of the Education Bureau, there was no ECCE department. The lack of budget, lack of co-operation with stakeholders', inadequate availability of materials and facilities, inadequate skilled human resources and lack of parental involvement impeded proper implementation of ECCE. The literature agrees that if countries invest in the childhood education program they can gain good economic returns, reduce poverty, and can increase opportunities for parental and community mobilization and empowerment. Moreover, countries can also use it for cost savings and reduction of poverty. Therefore, to realize this, the government body together with all stakeholders has the responsibility to work hard so as to resolve the challenges and improve the practice of preschool programs in the country and specifically in the rural areas. To that end, the researcher provided the following recommendations.

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