

Strategies for better provision and implementation of pre-primary education in Zanzibar, Tanzania

Ali Chai Ali¹, Ignasia Renatus Mligo², Laurent Gabriel Ndijuye³ and Ali Juma Hamad²

¹Zanzibar Economic Brigade, Zanzibar, Tanzania

²The University of Dodoma, 1 Benjamin Mkapa Rd., 41218 Iyumbu, Dodoma, Tanzania

³United Arab Emirates University, P.O. Box 15551, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

Abstract. This study explored the strategies for effective provision and implementation of pre-primary education (PPE) in Zanzibar, Tanzania, using the case study design. The target population was regional education and district educational officers, pre-primary school head teachers, pre-primary school teachers, quality assurance officers from the Ministry of Education, and parents and/or guardians. A total number of 32 participants were recruited, whereby 18 were pre-primary teachers, 6 were pre-primary head teachers, 4 were quality assurance officers from the Ministry of Education, and 04 were parents and/or guardians. The study employed semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with PPE head teachers, PPE teachers, quality assurance officers and focus group discussions with teachers. All data was analysed thematically. The study found several effective strategies for better provision and implementation of PPE in Zanzibar, such as teachers' professional development, broadened access to quality, improving the provision and distribution of teaching and learning materials, school inspections, parental involvement, employing qualified teachers and in-service training as well as the building of more classes. The study concludes that the Zanzibar government, under the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, should consider effective strategies for better provision and implementation of PPE in order to achieve quality education and be competitive in the global economy. The study recommends that professional development (PD) training for PPE teachers should be conducted, maintained and handled by PPE experts. For further study, the study recommends the intervention needed for developing teaching and learning modern materials for PPE in Zanzibar. Also, the study suggests that another study is needed to enhance teachers' professional development in using modern materials for pre-primary schools in Zanzibar.

Keywords: pre-primary education, teacher quality, strategies for quality pre-primary education, parental involvements, pre-primary quality assurance

1. Introduction

The concept of pre-primary education (PPE) is the foundation level of all formal education provided before primary education worldwide [25]. It plays crucial roles in young children as it enables them to lay their educational foundation for future development, improves self-confidence, and provides a strong base for lifelong learning and learning abilities, including cognitive, physical and social development [36]. PPE is a period for children's brain development which is highly influenced by both the environment and the people surrounding them [34]. Urban [42] noted that PPE emerged as a field of study (formally and informally) during the period of philosophical movement (enlightenment period) that dominated the world of ideas in European countries with high literacy rates in the 18th century.

ORCID: 0000-0001-8897-9994 (A. C. Ali); 0000-0003-0063-2043 (I. R. Mligo); 0000-0001-7712-6814 (L. G. Ndijuye); 0009-0002-7775-4655 (A. J. Hamad)

Email: alichai1986@gmail.com (A. C. Ali); isemligo1@gmail.com (I. R. Mligo); lgnd@uaeu.ac.ae (L. G. Ndijuye); alihamadjuma1984@gmail.com (A. J. Hamad)

Educational
Dimension



© Copyright for this article by its authors, published by the Academy of Cognitive and Natural Sciences. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons License Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

It continued to grow through the 19th century as a basic education and became the norm in the Western world. The idea came to America during the Industrial Revolution when infant schools were set up in churches, factories, and private homes to care for the young. The motives were to enable women to participate in the labour market, thereby contributing to economic growth [42]. PPE is a global concern, and this level of education contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Target 4.2 of SDG 4 states that “by 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education” [1].

1.1. An overview about pre-primary education

Globally, PPE provision and implementation has grown as a priority to both developed and developing countries [36]. Countries and especially their governments implement various programmes such as developing qualified teachers, preparing curricula for engaging learners, having classroom and related structures, instruction materials (text and supplementary books) and formalising the level of education [8]. Also, there is evidence that PPE provision and implementation differ from one country or region to the other [43]. In Japan, young children are taught the traditional culture and values of being Japanese so as to make children embrace their nation by becoming patriotic and respective citizens. In China, children are engaged in learning experiences that enhance them to preserve the traditional culture and values, such as being proud of their nation and society [9]. In the United States of America (USA), PPE is driven by a market economy and by mandates such as No Child Left Behind. As a result, schools in the USA are overwhelmed by pressure to push academics as their main agenda [8]. This indicates that the PPE curriculum may differ from one country to another, but it should focus on the needs and competition of the global market economy.

In the United States of America Marshall and Castillo [17] narrates that PPE is a crucial time for children. It is, therefore, very important that the education that young children receive is of the highest level by creating an effective and appropriate classroom and school environment conducive to their learning. The study adds that it is necessary to employ teachers who are well-qualified in PPE as well as parents should get involved in the learning activities of their children. In line with this, a study by Ordu [27] in Nigeria insists that teachers who work with young children in PPE school settings should ideally have knowledge of early childhood development to support the learning of young children. To support this argument, a study conducted by Ashari and Baharuddin [7] in India recommends that there is a need to consider the quality in terms of teachers and resources to realise the provision of pre-primary education as a fundamental right to young children. This would help to improve the provision of PPE. Another study in Germany revealed the same situation that to improve the provision of PPE, the government should furnish pre-primary classes with relevant facilities, including books, tables, chairs, teaching and learning materials, and qualified teachers [31].

A further study conducted by Gichohi [12] in Kenya proves that there is a need to develop parent-teacher connections through reports and conferences. This occurs when parents and teachers work together to teach a child. In this scenario, teachers have the time and resources to provide progress reports to parents. The study adds that there should be an open-door policy for teachers to talk to parents to allow them to discuss their concerns for the benefit of their children. Another study by Ndijuye and Tandika [24] in Tanzania revealed that parents' involvement in the learning of their children has a significant contribution to children's development across school periods and later in life. This study brought to light that stakeholder inclusion in pre-primary

education has an effect on the implementation of different learning programs in PPE. A study conducted in Singapore by Ali and Mustapha [4] found that the provision and implementation of PPE faced various challenges, such as increasing enrolment rate and low income of parents to support their children in PPE. This means that the provision and implementation of PPE need special strategies that may support teachers and pupils in the teaching and learning process.

In the context of Zanzibar, the government has pursued the goal of ensuring access to and provision of PPE since PPE was declared part of basic and compulsory education in 2006. At the moment, Zanzibar has clear policy directives on pre-primary education [30]. This policy drew on the Zanzibar Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, commonly known as MKUZA I development strategy (2007-2010), which acknowledged the critical importance of early childhood care and development and the need for holistic approaches to cover care nutrition, health and education. To achieve this policy goal, the government called for partnerships with communities and NGOs to establish pre-primary schools both in urban and rural areas [32]. However, quality standards in terms of teachers' qualifications, resources, learning environment and service providers differ between PPE schools, which results in different implementations [5]. Therefore, the need to understand strategies for better PPE provision is essential because leaving the current state unexplored would make children enrolled in PPE less beneficial in education.

While it can justifiably be that PPE is an important milestone in young children's growth and development. However, its provision differs between countries due to different strategies and priorities settled [27]. Studies have evidenced that strategies for better provision and implementation of PPE have been researched and documented in different contexts for a long time. Yet, in the Zanzibar context, little is known. This is very unfortunate. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap of knowledge by establishing strategies for better provision and implementation of pre-primary education in Zanzibar.

1.2. Research question

1. What are effective strategies for better provision and implementation of Pre-Primary Education (PPE) in Tanzania, particularly in Zanzibar?

1.3. History and policy context of pre-primary education practices in Zanzibar

Historically, PPE in Zanzibar started before independence [22]. Missionaries established pre-primary education schools where they taught secular and Biblical truth to young children [18]. Madrassa schools were also installed along the entire area of the Islands (Unguja and Pemba) to teach the Quran and to read and write Arabic scripts. According to Samuel Hall [32], during the colonial period, few children were enrolled, and services and education provided to many young children were very poor. This was mainly because of the lack of adequate colonial government intervention and coordination. Also, the curriculum content and methodology among pre-primary schools differed significantly and were often unsuitable for young children. Again, there were no adequately organised training programs for the teachers, and there was no written policy document governing pre-primary education ever existed, no nationally agreed standards for PPE, and the majority of teachers were untrained [5, 32].

Soon after independence, pre-primary education in Zanzibar expanded greatly country-wide [22]. Zanzibar adopted an open-door policy where various stakeholders were invited to establish PPE centres, including private sectors, religious organisations and communities. The intention was to enable so many Zanzibarian young children to have access to PPE and attain the goal of education for all. The aims of PPE settings

were to serve the critical purpose of preparing young children for primary education. Again, several initiatives to ensure the best pre-primary education practice, including training of pre-primary school teachers and mobilisation of local communities in a pre-primary education school programme to improve the care, health, nutrition and education of young children were introduced [32]. The adoption of the 2006 Zanzibar Education and Training Policy, followed by the 2012 PPE guidelines, outlines a comprehensive framework encompassing policies for PPE services and programs for young children in Zanzibar [32]. Zanzibar has clear policy directives on pre-primary education [30]. This policy drew on the Zanzibar Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, commonly known as MKUZA I development strategy (2007-2010), which acknowledged the critical importance of early childhood care and development and the need for holistic approaches to cover care nutrition, health and education. Zanzibar Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty I (MKUZA I) set a target for an increase in pre-primary school enrollment. To achieve this, the ZEDP called for partnerships with communities and NGOs to establish pre-primary schools, especially in rural areas. The subsequent MKUZA II in 2010 called for speeding up this process with universal access to pre-primary school education with the development of the minimum standards for a conducive learning environment which is gender-sensitive and child-friendly [5].

Furthermore, the Zanzibar Government is determined to ensure that the young children in the Islands acquire the necessary and basic education to address the issues of dropout rates among primary pupils, poor developmental delays to children, learning problems and behavioural difficulties [19]. This is believed to provide a strong base for lifelong learning and learning abilities, including cognitive and social development [5]. This situation has been stipulated clearly in the Zanzibar Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (ZSGRP III), commonly known as MKUZA III.

The strategy indicated that in order to enhance children's early experiences, which affect their future emotional and social development, teachers, caregivers, and educators should understand the need to invest in young children and create a more positive experience which supports learning and helps children to perform better. The strategy also insists on a conducive teaching environment, which enables the children to extend the learning experience from the class to actual activities happening in their surroundings. The strategy emphasises the need to involve the educational stakeholders in PPE so as to help enhance social relationships and promote a sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Therefore, it can be said that both ZSGRP III and the Education Policy of 2006 in Zanzibar have prioritised PPE that enables young children to get early experiences and stimulation. Currently, PPE in Zanzibar is governed by the 2006 Education Policy, which considered the overall context of Vision 2020 as a concrete, comprehensive education policy. The provision of educational services, mainly teaching and learning practices, are guided by the PPE curriculum of 2012, which underscores that a child is born with the potential for learning; hence, the learning environment needs to be prepared and systematically organised with actual life activities so that they can observe and discover things as they interact with it [39]. While there is such guidance regarding teaching and learning practices, Mtahabwa [21] informs that the provision of PPE in Zanzibar does not match the expectations. Different expectations versus actual practices require stakeholders' engagement to reveal their course. Importantly, to realise what causes the differences is a question of significance as other countries seem to have a more explicit focus on their PPE provision than it is in Zanzibar. The gap between policy stipulations and actual provision is evident in some studies [5, 32].

Furthermore, sustainable development goals (SDGs) have also set goals and targets that the member states must meet through the localisation approach. Among the goals that are important for young children include goal number 4, target 4.2, which states

that “by 2030, countries should ensure that all young girls and boys have access to quality PPE and development so that they are ready for primary education” [41]. SDG 4, which aims at ensuring equitable education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities at its target 4.2, is more relevant under this context. This implies that member states are required to ensure that they initiate and implement interventions that will enable children and other target groups to develop their skills and, hence, increase opportunities for quality education. Therefore, this study aimed to establish strategies for effective provision and implementation of PPE in Zanzibar to enhance PPE provision as an anchor of localisation of global SDGs.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Design

The study used pre-primary education as a single case study, which was explored in multiple sites with multiple sources of evidence. Since the study establishes strategies for better provision and implementation of pre-primary education in Zanzibar, the pre-primary school setting was the case to focus on.

2.2. Population and sampling

The study used a purposive sampling method to select the study participants based on their knowledge, participation and experiences in PPE [10]. Therefore, a total number of 32 participants were recruited, whereby 18 were pre-primary teachers, 6 were pre-primary head teachers, 4 were quality assurance officers from the Ministry of Education, and 4 were parents and/or guardians with children attending PPE schools in Zanzibar. While participants’ diversity did not aim at the generalizability of findings, it provided a comprehensive, synthesised, and holistic view of the strategies used to provide PPE in the Zanzibar archipelago.

2.3. Data collection methods

The study was conducted in Zanzibar, Tanzania. Qualitative research methods (interview, focus group discussion and documentary review) were used to collect qualitative data in this study. The aim of this study was to understand teachers, head teachers and quality assurance officers’ views on how to improve the provision and implementation of PPE in order to get a better understanding [10]. Interviews were conducted with PPE teachers, head teachers, quality assurance officers, parents and/or guardians. Focus group discussion was only conducted with teachers. The proceedings of group discussion and interviews were recorded by using a tape recorder. Thereafter, they were recorded in Kiswahili and then translated into English. Data were analysed following a thematic analysis framework, in which theme and subthemes were identified and illustrated using participants’ quotes.

2.4. Ethical considerations

The study adhered to the ethical issues and fundamental principles in conducting research. Among the ethical issues observed in this study were: first, the researcher obtained research clearance letters from the concerned authorities. Second, the researcher prepared a consent form and requested participants to sign accepting their participation after assuring them that the information was used for research purposes only. Third, the participants were assured that confidentiality would be maintained during and after the data collection. For that matter, the researchers did not use their names to present participants’ views to ensure anonymity and protection. Reflexivity and transparency strategies were employed to mitigate power dynamics between participants and researchers. For every research step, the researchers questioned and re-questioned their motives and objectives of conducting this research [26], thus being as transparent as possible throughout the research process.

3. Research findings and discussion

3.1. Effective strategies for better provision and implementation of pre-primary education in Tanzania, particularly in Zanzibar

The study explores effective strategies for enhancing the provision and implementation of PPE in Tanzania, particularly in Zanzibar. During the analysis, the results were grouped into six sub-themes, as described below.

3.1.1. To improve teachers' professional development

This is the first sub-theme that emerged from the data analysis in this section on improving teachers' professional development (TPD). It was reported by study participants that many teachers teaching in PPE were less qualified, such that they needed frequent professional development. Teachers emphasised that for a long time, fewer efforts were allocated to support PPE teachers' training and skills. This was made clear by one teacher who said:

In our school, there are only three teachers with two classes. There is only one qualified teacher who has also attended seminars and workshops. The remaining teachers are untrained and do not participate in any professional development. Some pre-primary schools are taught by four-leavers, six-leavers, and primary school teachers who are not trained and qualified to teach in PPE. I think teachers need professional development away from the school to improve their teaching abilities and performance in learning descriptive writing. (Interview with female teacher 2 from school B, May, 2023)

The above quote indicates that some teachers in PPE are less qualified to teach pre-primary classes, and they have not attended any professional development. Also, few qualified teachers present in school were found to direct other teachers on how to teach. But, they need professional training to improve their working abilities. A study conducted in Tanzania by Komba and Mwakabenga [14] concurs with these findings that aligning teachers with the changes in teaching through professional development is a commendable thing. However, a study by Akinrotimi and Olowe [3] in Nigeria points out that attending a course or getting a certificate is not in itself continuing professional development evidence. However, the transfer of training knowledge into real teaching and learning practice is more critical in the delivery of knowledge. Another study by Bartan [8] contradicts the current study findings that PPE teachers do not have knowledge and understanding regarding professional development. A study conducted by Fairman et al. [11] suggests that teachers' professional development (TPD) is one of the strategies that may enhance teachers' knowledge and skills. This study found that TPD may support the provision and implementation of PPE in Zanzibar.

3.1.2. Availability of teaching and learning materials, and other facilities

Findings show that teaching and learning materials are key components to the provision and implementation of PPE. This is because they help teachers deliver their subjects in an impressive way, which facilitates the easy attainment of teaching objectives. But, the supply is not satisfactory. This finding implies that the need to supply teaching and learning materials and other school resources is unavoidable for better teaching and learning in PPE. In this regard, one of the teachers from school A added:

Our school has a great shortage of manila sheets and marker pens. I think the government is not committed because it does not supply teaching

and learning materials adequately. Also, there are few chairs and tables compared with the number of children in the class. Children are sitting on the floor. I think if the school has enough teaching and learning materials as well as other facilities, the provision and implementation of PPE can be improved. (Male teacher from school A, FGD, May, 2023)

The results unveil the shortage of teaching and learning materials in PPE schools. A few facilities, like chairs, are not enough and do not match the increasing number of pupils enrolled in PPE schools. As a result, pupils stay on the floor. This leads to difficulties in the effective implementation of PPE. The findings of this study concur with findings conducted by Segerholm and Hult [33], who found that teaching and learning materials and facilities are crucial while teaching and learning in pre-primary schools. A study conducted by Papadakis and Kalogiannakis [29] found that mobile learning via touch screen tablets enhances children's letter names, sound knowledge, and phonological awareness in pre-primary schools.

Similarly, Papadakis, Alexandraki and Zaranis [28] established that tablets increase child engagement in a range of activities such as playing games, sound knowledge, letter names, and phonological awareness. Tandika and Kumburu [37] in Tanzania emphasises that in a PPE school environment with the availability of required teaching and learning resources. Then, the learning is joyful, child-centred, playful and activity-based. However, a study by Samuel Hall [32] observed that a shortage of resources challenges many pre-primary schools in Zanzibar. The study found that the availability of digital tools such as tablets may support the provision and implementation of PPE. The study concludes that the availability of modern teaching and learning materials may increase students' motivation and interest and enhance the provision and implementation of PPE in Zanzibar.

3.1.3. Availability of effective pre-primary education school inspections

During the interview with teachers, head teachers and QAO, it was found that teachers are inspected once a year. In some schools, teachers are inspected for nearly two years, while in other schools, teachers' inspections do not take place. Participants narrated that in recent years, school inspections have not been taking place more effectively in such a way that teachers can work continuously for one or two years without being inspected to check the regulations that exist for maintaining standards in PPE. In the same concern, one of the headmistresses from school C was quoted as saying:

I have been working in this school as a headmistress for eight years. Most of the time, school inspectors come after every two years. Sometimes, it took several years. When they arrive, they only observe teaching in the class. They do not move around to watch the availability of teaching and learning materials, school environment and playing ground for children's play, as well as teacher's interaction with children. I think proper PPE provision and implementation can be adequate if we have proper inspections in schools. (Interview with headmistress from school C, May, 2023)

From the quotes, it can be said that PPE school inspections are not effectively taking place due to the lack of a sufficient budget and limited quality assurance officers who do school inspections regularly. School inspectors only rely on classroom teaching and put less focus on other school factors such as playgrounds, the presence of teaching and learning materials, and the school environment. The findings of this study support the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in Zanzibar, which

insists on school inspection in Zanzibar to ensure better provision and implementation of quality PPE [30].

Also, a study conducted by AlKutich and Abukari [6] in UAE that PPE school inspection is one of the most challenging aspects of education. This study found that school inspection offers policy and decision-makers accurate information about the current state of education for better provision and implementation of the program. Moreover, Hofer, Holzberger and Reiss [13] in the Netherlands points out that effective PPE School inspections guarantee that schools meet the legal requirements of the state to ensure proper implementation of education programs. In the same vein, a study conducted in the United Kingdom by Bartan [8] study findings which revealed that teachers believed school inspections have a positive impact on teachers' classroom performance, more specifically in teaching and learning strategies which provide them with the skills they need. The study found that school inspection plus the availability of supervision may enhance the provision and implementation of PPE in Zanzibar.

3.1.4. Parental involvement in both social and classroom activities of their children's learning in school

The findings show that the involvement of parents in various activities at schools is one of the strategies that enhance the provision and implementation of PPE in Zanzibar. This is because the study notes that some parents are highly involved and participate in school activities such as school meetings and helping their children's school work at home. Also, parents' involvement was found to help them to know the strengths and weaknesses of their children in learning for improvements. However, the study notes that parents were hardly involved in classroom activities to see how their children were learning. The following response from one of the guardians illustrates this point:

] My dear researcher, parents play a great role in the learning of their children. They are involved in school meetings to discuss the progress of their children. Also, they help their children with their schoolwork. More importantly, they prepare their children ready for school. But, I have never seen parents being involved in classroom activities to see how their children are learning with teachers. I think there is a need for parents to be involved in classroom activities even twice a year. (Interview with male guardian, May, 2023)

The quote above shows that when parents get involved in classroom activities, they can be in tune with what is happening in their child's classroom activities. This can make them able to establish a connection between what is learned at school and what takes place at home. The findings of this study relate to a study conducted by Papadakis, Alexandraki and Zaranis [28], which reported that parental involvement is crucial to preparing the home environment as a stimulus for the development of a child. A study conducted in Tanzania mainland by Mlilo [20] found that the involvement of parents in children's learning builds a strong connection between teachers and parents. In a similar vein, a study conducted by Segerholm and Hult [33] in Sweden points out that parents' involvement in the learning of their children creates a partnership between schools and families, which helps in providing the best education for children.

Further study by Akinrotimi and Olowe [3] in Nigeria confirms that parents' participation in classroom activities indicates parents share the responsibility with teachers to teach their children and work together to achieve educational goals. Similar views were made by a study conducted by Kurtulmus [15] in Turkey, which found that when a parent comes into the classroom, they support children's learning ability. Further,

the study found that in some countries like Turkey and China, parents are involved in both school social and classroom activities [9, 15]. Unfortunately, the situation is contrary in Zanzibar PPE, where the PPE policy guidelines are silent. In that situation, this study found that teachers not only learn about a family's culture in education but also that families see what a child is learning in pre-primary schools.

3.1.5. To employ qualified teachers and train unqualified employed teachers

Teachers' qualifications have been found by this study to be an important factor for quality teaching and learning in PPE. During the interviews, study participants reported that in Zanzibar, there are so many unqualified teachers in PPE, which somehow affects the proper implementation of the program. To overcome the situation, it was suggested that the government and user institutions employ qualified personnel in PPE. The following quote from the headmistress of school A illustrates this point of view:

One of the common problems facing is that many teachers in PPE are professionally unqualified. For example, in my school, I have Form Four leavers, Form Six leavers and primary teachers teaching in pre-primary classes. Such teachers lack important knowledge and skills in handling, careering and managing PPE children effectively. In this view, I think there is a need to employ qualified personnel in PPE for better implementation of the program. (Interview with headmistress from school A, April, 2023)

The above quote depicts the presence of unqualified teachers in pre-primary schools in Zanzibar. Such teachers were found to lack the necessary knowledge and skills required for the effective implementation of PPE. This could be interpreted that such teachers get neither pre-service nor in-service training. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Komba and Mwakabenga [14] in Tanzania that teacher qualifications contribute to the improvement of pedagogical quality, accompanied by better child learning and outcomes. This is to say that teachers with suitable qualifications in PPE support children's learning and provide better care to children.

However, the findings of this study contradict the data from the Ministry of Education in Zanzibar [40] show that currently, PPE teacher preparation in Zanzibar involves a two-year program leading to an award of a Diploma for PPE teachers from SUZA. Also, the Aga Khan Foundation provides short training to PPE teachers [2]. Another study by Fairman et al. [11] emphasises that PPE teachers need a range of skills to give children opportunities to try new things, ask questions, play games, and interact with teachers and other children. This is evidence of how much effort has been made by the government and other development institution partners to increase the number of qualified teachers for PPE schools in Zanzibar.

However, the study by Samuel Hall [32] in Zanzibar reveals that the required qualifications for someone to become a PPE teacher were not clear, and yet the policy is silent. Some countries like the USA and China prioritise teacher qualification to ensure better teaching and learning in PPE [9]. Unfortunately, the situation is contrary in Zanzibar because untrained teachers are found in PPE schools [32]. Therefore, this study found that qualified teachers are one of the effective strategies that may support the provision and implementation of PPE in Zanzibar. The study has also noted that poor allocation of qualified PPE teachers to primary and secondary schools increases the shortage.

3.1.6. To build more classes in pre-primary education schools

The findings of the study show that class size is a significant factor in pupils learning in PPE. It was reported that the shortage of classrooms led many pupils to concentrate

in one class; hence, it is difficult for a teacher to teach effectively. It was also spelt out that classes with many pupils limit teachers' control, supervision and management. In that situation, pupils might misbehave and experience poor development in learning. Based on this argument, it was suggested by study participants to build more classes such that each class may accommodate the required number of pupils for better control, management, teaching and learning. In this regard, a teacher from school A raised the following concern:

In my class, there are eighty-four pupils. It is difficult to move in the class because of many pupils who are in a small space. When it comes to marking their books, it took me three to four days. Ooooh.... sometimes I fail to identify whose pupil is able to write and read. Suppose I am asked what to do. I can suggest building more classes so that each class can accommodate the required number of thirty-five for better control of the class and teaching. (Interview with female teacher from school A, June, 2023)

The study results stress the need to build more classes in PPE schools in Zanzibar. The study notes that it is difficult for teachers to manage a large class size well with many pupils at a time. The findings of this study concur with the study by Solheim and Opheim [35], who emphasises that large class sizes reduce the time for teachers to engage with individual learners. Also, a study by Laitsch, Nguyen and Younghusband [16] reported that it is very hard for teachers in large class sizes to pay attention to weaker learners and do remedial teaching. It is also tough for teachers to give one-on-one attention, and the workload of making assignments is much greater and more difficult. This could be interpreted that teaching and learning in such classes were not effective. It appears to argue that Zanzibar has got a long way to achieve SDG goal 4 targets 4.2 [1]. In that sense, the need to build more classes in PPE schools is unavoidable for better teaching and learning.

However, studies conducted in Tanzania mainland by Ndijuye, Mligo and Machumu [23] and Tandika and Kumburu [37] have consistently confirmed the lack of enough classrooms in many PPE schools. This study found that many PPE schools involved in the study experienced a shortage of classrooms. Consequently, many pupils concentrate in a single class, which makes it difficult for teachers to handle, manage and teach effectively. It appears to argue that the lack of enough classrooms in Tanzania has existed for so long. This implies that the best strategy is to build more classes to accommodate the required number of pupils in one class to promote better provision and implementation of PPE. The same findings were also revealed in the study by Tandika and Ndijuye [38]. Therefore, it makes sense to argue that the need to build more classes for effective provision and implementation of PPE programs is high and worthwhile at this time in Zanzibar.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This study explored strategies for better provision and implementation of pre-primary education in Tanzania, particularly in Zanzibar. It was found that the availability of effective teachers' professional development, school inspection, parental involvement, qualified teachers, and a small number of pupils in the class may lead to better provision and implementation of PPE in Zanzibar. Based on those findings, the study concludes that the Zanzibar government under the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training should consider effective strategies for better provision and implementation of PPE to reach quality education and to be competitive in the global economy. Also, there is a need to build more classes for pre-primary schools to accommodate the legible number of pupils in one class. This can help to make the

teacher able to control and manage the class well for better teaching and learning in PPE classes. The study recommends that professional development training for pre-primary school teachers should be conducted and maintained. PPE experts should handle such training. This would improve the knowledge, skills and performance of teachers on pedagogical skills to ensure supportive teaching in PPE for better learning of children. Also, it is recommended that Quality Assurance Officers should constantly monitor the quality of pre-primary education in order to ensure that schools meet the required standards for better teaching and learning in PPE. For further study, the study recommends the intervention needed for developing teaching and learning modern materials for PPE in Zanzibar. Also, the study suggests that another study is needed to enhance teachers' professional development in using modern materials for pre-primary schools in Zanzibar.

Acknowledgments: The study would not have been possible without support from the quality assurers, head teachers, and teachers from selected pre-primary schools in Zanzibar.

References

- [1] 4.2 by 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education – Indicators and a Monitoring Framework, 2016. Available from: <https://indicators.report/targets/4-2/>.
- [2] Aga Khan Foundation, 2025. Education. Available from: <https://akf.org/what-we-do/education/>.
- [3] Akinrotimi, A.A. and Olowe, P.K., 2016. Challenges in Implementation of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria: The Way Forward. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(7), pp.33–38. Available from: <https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/view/29359>.
- [4] Ali, A.A. and Mustapha, S.A., 2019. Decision-Making Processes of Low-Income Households: Towards Early Childhood Care and Education in Singapore. *MEN-DAKI Policy Digest 2018*. Singapore: Research and Planning Department, pp.37–51. Available from: <https://www.mendaki.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/MENDAKI-Policy-Digest-2018.pdf#page=40>.
- [5] Ali, A.C., 2022. *Assessment of the Practices on the Provision of Early Childhood Education in Zanzibar: Experiences from Pre-Primary Schools in Mjini Magharibi Region*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Dodoma, Tanzania.
- [6] AlKutich, M. and Abukari, A., 2018. Examining the Benefit of School Inspection on Teaching and Learning: A Case Study of Dubai Private Schools. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(5), pp.37–48. Available from: <https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/view/41127>.
- [7] Ashari, Z.M. and Baharuddin, M.K., 2017. Play based pedagogy in pre-school: A meta analysis research. *Man In India*, 97(12), pp.237–243. Available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318866292>.
- [8] Bartan, M., 2020. The use of storytelling methods by teachers and their effects on children's understanding and attention span. *Southeast Asia Early Childhood Journal*, 9(1), p.75–84. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.37134/saecj.vol9.1.6.2020>.
- [9] Choi, J. ah, 2017. Why I'm not involved: Parental involvement from a parent's perspective. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(3), pp.46–49. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721717739593>.
- [10] Cresswell, J.W. and Cresswell, J.D., 2018. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 5th ed. SAGE Publications, Inc. Available

- from: https://spada.uns.ac.id/pluginfile.php/510378/mod_resource/content/1/creswell.pdf.
- [11] Fairman, J.C., Smith, D.J., Pullen, P.C. and and, S.J.L., 2023. The challenge of keeping teacher professional development relevant. *Professional Development in Education*, 49(2), pp.197–209. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1827010>.
 - [12] Gichohi, G.W., 2015. Stakeholder involvement in Schools in 21st Century for Academic Excellence. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3(2), pp.13–22. Available from: <https://www.ijern.com/journal/2015/February-2015/02.pdf>.
 - [13] Hofer, S.I., Holzberger, D. and Reiss, K., 2020. Evaluating school inspection effectiveness: A systematic research synthesis on 30 years of international research. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 65, p.100864. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2020.100864>.
 - [14] Komba, S.C. and Mwakabenga, R.J., 2019. Teacher Professional Development in Tanzania: Challenges and Opportunities. In: H. Şenol, ed. *Educational Leadership*. Rijeka: IntechOpen, chap. 3. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.90564>.
 - [15] Kurtulmus, Z., 2016. Analyzing parental involvement dimensions in early childhood education. *Educational Research and Review*, 11(12), pp.1149–1153. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR2016.2757>.
 - [16] Laitsch, D., Nguyen, H. and Younghusband, C.H., 2021. Class Size and Teacher Work: Research Provided to the BCTF in their Struggle to Negotiate Teacher Working Conditions. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 196, pp.83–101. Available from: <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cjeap/article/view/70670>.
 - [17] Marshall, E. and Castillo, C., 2001. Section Two - Quality in Early Childhood Education. *Early Childhood Assessment and Teacher Training - ECATT*. Available from: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/m/a/os/41176.htm>.
 - [18] Mbiye, A.S., 1996. Pre-primary education versus primary education. *Papers in Education and Development*, 17, pp.39–51.
 - [19] Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2017. Zanzibar Education Development Plan II 2017/2018–2021/2022. Available from: https://www.globalpartnership.org/node/document/download?file=sites/default/files/zedp_ii_zanzibar.pdf.
 - [20] Mlilo, I., 2018. Enhancing Young Children's Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in Tanzania. In: Şenay Çetinkaya, ed. *Contemporary Perspective on Child Psychology and Education*. Rijeka: IntechOpen, chap. 2. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.71265>.
 - [21] Mtahabwa, L., 2010. Provision of Pre-Primary Education as a Basic Right in Tanzania: Reflections from Policy Documents. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 11(4), pp.353–364. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2010.11.4.353>.
 - [22] Murphy, P., Rawle, G. and Ruddle, N., 2016. *Zanzibar Education Situation Analysis*. (Final report). Oxford: Oxford Policy Management. Available from: https://web.archive.org/web/20170304111038/https://moez.go.tz/eLab/docs/Zanzibar_Education_Situation_Analysis_Final%20Report_sent.pdf.
 - [23] Ndijuye, L.G., Mlilo, I.R. and Machumu, M.A.M., 2020. Early childhood education in Tanzania: Views and beliefs of stakeholders on its status and development. *Global Education Review*, 7(3), pp.22–39. Available from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1272578.pdf>.
 - [24] Ndijuye, L.G. and Tandika, P.B., 2019. Timely promotion as a motivation factor

- for job performance among pre-primary school teachers: Observations from Tanzania. *Erken Çocukluk Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 3(2), p.440–456. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.24130/eccd-jecs.1967201932129>.
- [25] OECD, 2019. *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed*. PISA, Paris: OECD Publishing. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en>.
- [26] Onwuegbuzie, A.J., Leech, N.L. and Collins, K.M., 2012. Qualitative Analysis Techniques for the Review of the Literature. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(28), p.56. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1754>.
- [27] Ordu, U.B.A., 2021. The Role of Teaching and Learning Aids/Methods in a Changing World. *New Challenges to Education: Lessons from Around the World*. Sofia: Bulgarian Comparative Education Society, BCES Conference Books, vol. 19, pp.210–216. Available from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED613989.pdf>.
- [28] Papadakis, S., Alexandraki, F. and Zaranis, N., 2022. Mobile device use among preschool-aged children in Greece. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27(2), pp.2717–2750. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10718-6>.
- [29] Papadakis, S. and Kalogiannakis, M., eds, 2020. *Mobile Learning Applications in Early Childhood Education*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global Scientific Publishing. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1486-3>.
- [30] Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar and Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2006. Education Policy. Available from: https://clr.africanchildforum.org/policy%20per%20country/tanzania/zanzibar_education_2006_en.pdf.
- [31] Rückschau: Bundesprogramm „Kita-Einstieg“, 2022. Available from: <https://www.fruehe-chancen.de/themen/integration-und-inklusion/rueckschau-bundesprogramm-kita-einstieg>.
- [32] Samuel Hall, 2018. *Watoto Kwanza: Improving access to and quality of early childhood education in Zanzibar*. (Final evaluation). Dubai Cares. Available from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/united-republic-tanzania/watoto-kwanza-improving-access-and-quality-early-childhood-education>.
- [33] Segerholm, C. and Hult, A., 2018. Learning from and Reacting to School Inspection – Two Swedish Case Narratives. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 62(1), pp.125–139. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1212257>.
- [34] Shonkoff, J.P. and Phillips, D.A., eds, 2000. *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.17226/9824>.
- [35] Solheim, O.J. and Opheim, V., 2019. Beyond class size reduction: Towards more flexible ways of implementing a reduced pupil–teacher ratio. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 96, pp.146–153. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.10.008>.
- [36] Tal, C., 2018. The challenge of implementing small group work in early childhood education. *Global Education Review*, 5(2), pp.123–144. Available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326610177>.
- [37] Tandika, P. and Kumburu, S., 2018. Challenges Teachers Face and Strategies Deployed in Teaching Reading Skills in Public Primary Schools in Tanzania. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences*, 5(1), pp.52–59. Available from: <https://www.academia.edu/42873369>.
- [38] Tandika, P. and Ndijuye, L.G., 2022. The question of university graduates' employability: are the students aware of the employers' preferences. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 12(3), pp.588–603. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-05-2021-0101>.
- [39] The United Republic of Tanzania and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2016. *Curriculum and Syllabus for Pre-Primary Education*. Dar es Salaam:

- Tanzania Institute of Education. Available from: [https://maktaba.tetea.org/study-aids/primary/Syllabus%20-%20Awali%20-%202016%20\(English\).pdf](https://maktaba.tetea.org/study-aids/primary/Syllabus%20-%20Awali%20-%202016%20(English).pdf).
- [40] The United Republic of Tanzania and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2023. *Teacher Education Curriculum for Diploma in Pre-Primary Education*. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Institute of Education. Available from: <https://www.scribd.com/document/697234562>.
- [41] United Nations, 2025. THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development. Available from: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.
- [42] Urban, M., 2009. *Early Childhood Education in Europe: Achievements, Challenges and Possibilities*. Dublin: Education International. Available from: <https://repository.uel.ac.uk/item/86383>.
- [43] Yang, W. and Li, H., 2022. The role of culture in early childhood curriculum development: A case study of curriculum innovations in Hong Kong kindergartens. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 23(1), pp.48–67. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949119900359>.