

over time. And around 40% of the ECE teachers were continuing as it is, perhaps without any formal training in the first place; and without any subsequent training in ECE during their in-service tenure. It also revealed that only 22.5% attended Early Childhood content, and another 20% went through Teaching Methods content. Rest of them attended content related to nutrition, writing skills, work planning and cleanliness, without covering the basic topics on ECE and methodology, though each of these topics is also very important in its own standing.

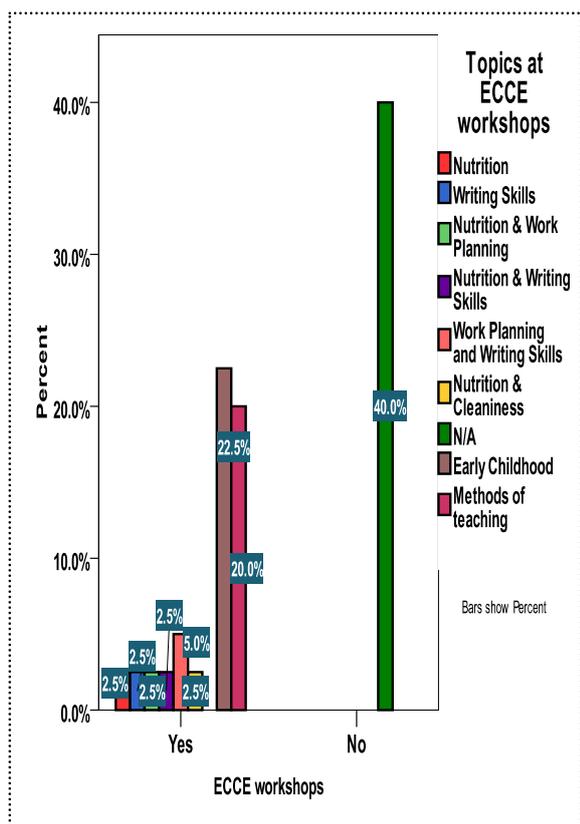


Figure 2. Workshops Attended

Next part of the study dealt with the questions regarding adoption of any ECE curriculum in the absence of a prescribed one. This was necessary in order to understand what was being done to provide rich stimulation to young children.

4.3. Adoption of ECC and E Curriculum

Literature revealed that the MOE in Botswana was bestowed with a responsibility of prescribing a standard ECE curriculum that would facilitate the overall development of young children [17]. However, that could not be made available. The results revealed that around 50% of ECE centres, who did not have any curriculum, used alternatives like adopting either a South African Curriculum or a combination of curriculum prescribed by other countries (Figure 3) [5]. This led to a heavy dependency on curriculum other than its own, and

perhaps was not culturally appropriate at all for the children who are growing up in Botswana!

On the other hand, the findings showed that as large as 38.5% of the ECE centres, who did not have any prescribed curriculum, did not bother to borrow any curriculum and as a result did whatever suited them the best. In addition, another 10.3% used self-made curriculum based on different themes or Montessori Method (Figure 3). This is alarming, as the picture clearly shows that almost 50% of them depended on their own knowledge and experience and another 50% depended on curriculum meant for children of other countries. It is even more disturbing as we saw earlier that almost about 50% of the teachers who were working in ECE centres were untrained. Thus what must be happening when the untrained teachers decide to develop their own curriculum for the young ones! And one wonders whether one can sit peacefully depending on the curriculum improvised by such untrained teachers?

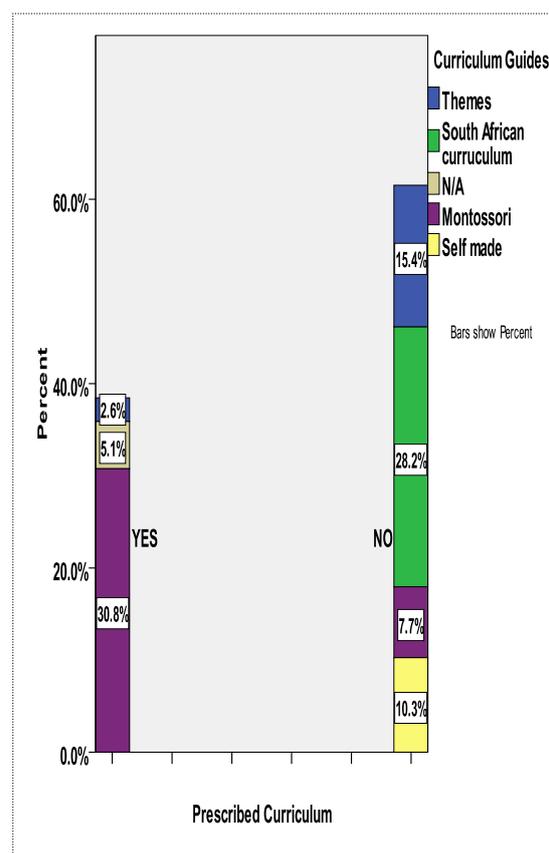


Figure 3. ECE Curriculum and Alternatives

Next pertinent questions thus, were what exactly were happening in ECE classrooms? And in order to find that out it became necessary to probe further, regarding the developmental aspects that were being promoted, the activities that were organised, and the materials that were used in the in the ECE classrooms! It also became necessary to find out the measures that were taken by the ECE teachers to provide a holistic development to the

young children. Because the introduction of an appropriate curriculum that caters to an overall development of young children is necessary for any ECE centre to achieve the desired outcome, i.e. nothing but a quality ECE programme!

4.4. Promotion of Developmental Aspects

The study also revealed that only about half of the respondents (54%) promoted holistic development that catered to all the aspects namely the physical, cognitive, emotional and social ones at tandem (Figure 4). The remaining, however, promoted only a combination of a few developmental aspects, neglecting some of the crucial ones completely at times that dealt either with cognitive, or physical, or social, or emotional aspects.

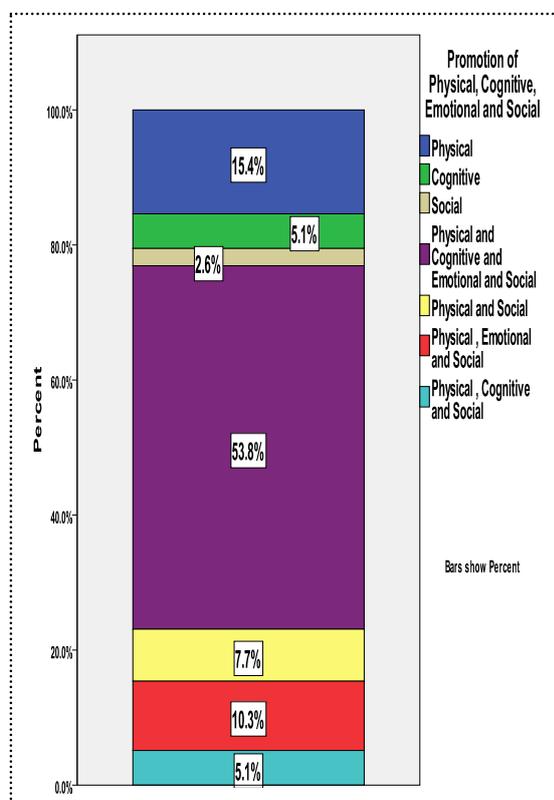


Figure 4. Promotion of Holistic Development

4.5. Activities Organised In the ECE Classrooms

It is worth mentioning here that almost all of them organised activities related to games, building blocks, gymnastics and activities requiring eye-hand coordination. This, no doubt, emphasised physical development. Colouring, art and music, free expressions were also given a lot of importance leading to physical, social and emotional development. Whereas, less than half of them

(46%) attempted arithmetic and pre-writing activities (Figure 5) that automatically catered to cognitive development and finer motor coordination. In other words the ECE teachers were heavily inclined to use activities in the classrooms that would enhance physical domain primarily.

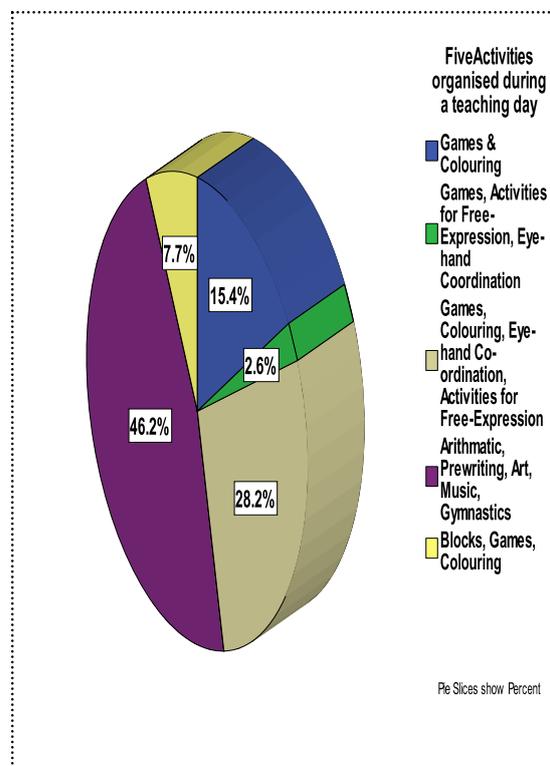


Figure 5. Activities Organised During Class

4.6. Indoors and Outdoors Materials Used

To understand whether a holistic development was taking place or not, it became necessary to explore the materials that were used by the ECE teachers in order to cater to all the domains of the young ones respectively. And it also became mandatory to find out what was provided, and how was that used in the ECE classrooms? So, the findings of the study established that consistent efforts were made to provide indoor materials for relevant activities almost every day. All the centres provided indoor materials like painting, clay, pictures, scissors, chart books, alphabets charts, building blocks, puzzles, toys, story books, logos, plaster seal, etc. It is worth noting here that the list of indoor materials too, perhaps, indicate that more emphasis was laid on development of motor skills. Although social, emotional and cognitive aspects were not neglected completely. The study also revealed that around 70% of them used outdoor materials every day on a regular basis. And the materials used were listed as Balls, Slides, Swings, Hoola Hoops, Seesaws, Climbing Rails and a few others. The emphasis was again more on physical

development as compared to the other domains (Figure 6). However, none of them mentioned of any Nature Corner, or Pet's corner that could have catered to the development of emotional and social domains. In other words, both indoors as well as outdoors materials were primarily used to enhance physical domains. Nonetheless it should also be mentioned here that the teachers made an effort to select materials, both indoors as well as outdoor, and used them regularly. However, their inclination towards the enhancement of physical aspects could perhaps be due to the absence of a prescribed curriculum. The introduction of an ECE curriculum with appropriate guidelines could definitely overcome this problem, and could lead to an enhancement of an overall development instead!

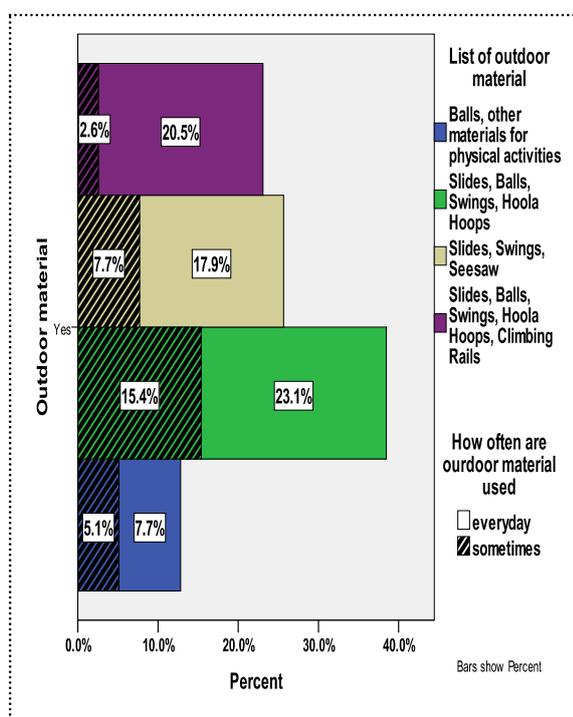


Figure 6. Outdoor Materials Used

4.7. The issue of a Holistic Development

In an ECE curriculum one expects a reflection of growth and learning in a holistic way that has interwoven emotional, social, cultural, physical and cognitive dimensions.

It is needless to say that an early childhood curriculum should recognise the central importance of emotions in a child's development. The development of emotional competence is an essential foundation for academic and social functioning. Curriculum goals, activities, teacher-child relationships need to be well planned. In an emotion-centred curriculum, children approach materials and activities with relish and are optimistic about their ability to figure out things and get help both from adults and other children whenever they

need it. In such a programme, teachers create relationships that support emotional development of a child. Programmes that lack emotional focus may restrict individual and culturally compatible interests and styles. Planned activities can encourage children to talk, write and play about important issues that might build a strong link between affective and cognitive developments. Selection of emotionally relevant activities by ECE teacher might ensure children's sustained powerful explorations resulting in cognitive academic and emotional benefits [9]. Activities that help in emotional expressions, like music and creative art forms could well occupy a substantial amount of space in a well planned ECE curriculum.

Research shows that children prefer to work in cooperation with one another and prefer to get help from peers rather than teachers [12]; [15]. They show more turn taking behaviour which form attachments with others and show participation in educational and cooperative play activities. Thus, to enhance social development, a skillful teacher should be guided by a curriculum to select appropriate tasks that would serve as catalyst for social interaction and conversations and encourage their growth by pairing children or guiding conversation among the children about their common pursuit [3]. Not only that, they need to be guided that the best way to help children and to develop healthy lifestyle attitudes as was behaviors is to provide children with love and nurturing that builds strong, positive self-images based on attributes other than appearance e.g., kindness, trying hard, sharing, doing well in sports or school, etc. [16].

Similarly, physical development is vital during early childhood, as children continue to expand their repertoire of physical skills, adding to those that were mastered during infancy. During early years the finer and gross motor skills of children are developed and they become interested in performing well in activities like writing and arithmetic. So the ECE curriculum should provide guidelines for planning appropriate tasks that would help them in composing text without being distracted by poor motor coordination and letter formation [7].

Children not only grow physically during early childhood, but grow mentally as well. Children of this age continue to advance their skills in observing and interacting with the world around them. They also make tremendous leaps in how they process, store, and use information [16]. Development of their cognitive abilities take to new levels of richness and reflectivity and the resulting thoughtfulness allows for greater sophistication in the related areas of social relationships and self-directed learning. Thus there is also a need to provide an appropriate ECE curriculum to the teachers that could guide them as how to provide cognitive development using appropriate curricular

activities, and encourage children's involvement in creative play, mastery learning, problem solving and conversation in order to prepare them to face challenges and make them proficient in applying cognitive skills [3]. And the ECE teachers must provide opportunities for development of cognitive abilities to facilitate a bootstrapping of learning by development, and of development by learning [20].

Both the Rumbold Report *Starting with Quality* and the Royal Society of Arts Report *Start Right* emphasized a high-quality education in early years and stressed that the major prerequisites for a "high-quality" education should be provision of an appropriate early learning curriculum [13]. They further recommended a curriculum based on eight main areas of learning: (1) aesthetic and creative, (2) human and social, (3) language and literacy, (4) mathematics, (5) physical, (6) science, (7) spiritual and moral, and (8) technology and said that these should be made available to all young children as it leads to lasting cognitive and social benefits in children. In other words, there is a need to provide an overall development that would guarantee the development of all the faculties of young children, in a holistic manner.

Unfortunately, the findings of the current study showed that about 54%, of the respondents i.e. only half of the ECE centres, that took part in the study, provided the desired holistic development to the young children. On the contrary, almost half of them neither encouraged holistic development nor were they worried about neglecting some of the most important domains like cognitive, or social or emotional aspects in actual practice. In addition, majority of them, primarily, catered to the development of physical aspect as compared to the other domains in a platter! Which means, the quality of the ECE programmes that are running in Botswana are in question! This raises a concern, because the quality ECE programmes needs an adoption of a model of learning that weaves together patterns of linked experiences and meaning. This integrated view of learning sees the child's whole context, the physical development, the emotional stability; the relationships with others, the cognitive skills and the child's immediate needs at any moment that would affect and modify how a particular experience could contribute to the child's overall development. This view of learning sees the child as a person who wants to learn and sees the task as a meaningful whole [22].

5. Conclusion

Thus, it is needless to say that efforts need to be made to provide an overall development to young children. And in order to that, the first move that we can take is to introduce an appropriate national ECE curriculum, that could at least provide guidelines both to pre-service as well as in-service ECE

teachers regarding activities and materials that can enhance and interweave physical, social, emotional, as well as cognitive domains and thus provide a holistic development ensuring an overall enrichment and growth [5]. And in the mean time, certainly, we need to prepare the ECE teachers through workshops and seminars, especially the ones who are not formally trained in ECE, and provide useful guidelines regarding the strategies of offering rich and stimulating activities, while using appropriate indoors as well as outdoors materials. This would not only equip the ECE teachers with the desired skills and knowledge, but would also enable them enhancing the development of all the faculties of young children that leads to a holistic development. Giving emphasis to physical development is definitely is very important, but neglecting cognitive, social, as well as emotional aspects would be detrimental at such a tender age. As any lapse such as this during early childhood period, would definitely lead to an unbalanced developmental process, as we know that each one of these developmental aspects is very important in its own right. And a quality ECE programme is expected to provide them at tandem with well planned activities, using both indoors and outdoors materials.

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