



# Exploring Teachers' Voices In Pedagogical Leadership: Insights, Challenges, And Advocacy In Zimbabwe's Early Childhood Development

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**Abstract-** This study aimed to examine the perspectives of teachers in pedagogical leadership in Zimbabwe's Early Childhood Development, a programme that caters to children aged three to five years. This is essential for children's overall development. Teachers' perspectives are essential to ensuring high-quality education. This study was guided by transformational leadership. The authors reviewed 59 relevant academic publications, policy documents, and reports on children, pedagogies, and leadership. Findings revealed that teachers advocated for quality education and policy reforms. Additionally, they provided supportive learning environments and advocated for partnerships with communities. Although teachers were found to be influential toward quality education, they faced challenges, including insufficient resource materials, limited funding, and inadequate training. Therefore, listening to the voices of teachers could lead to accessing staff development opportunities, engaging in policy-making efforts, and getting resources to improve learner outcomes. Although this study focused on Zimbabwe, it has global implications because teachers for early childhood existed in the international world. To ensure the development of teachers' leadership skills, continuous teacher training, the availability of financial resources, and regular review of policies were found to be important. The study recommends the implementation of a model that strengthens pedagogical leadership through continuous professional development, partnerships with stakeholders, provision of adequate resources, and teacher involvement in policy reviews.

**Keywords:** Early childhood, pedagogical leadership, teachers, Zimbabwe

## I. Introduction

Pedagogical leadership serves to shape quality in educating young children. Although there are several stakeholders who facilitate working with the early years, teachers were found to be key. This study examined the role of teachers as pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwean early childhood development. Teachers in Zimbabwe seemed responsible for evaluating the experiences and outcomes of young children. Their leadership in early childhood pedagogy is significant but remains an understudied area both in Zimbabwe and globally (Fonsen et al., 2022). This research intended to fill this gap by examining the roles that early childhood pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwe played in managing curriculum for young children.

Research has evidenced that young children's future outcome is a result of effective pedagogical leadership through establishing a strong base during the early years (Fu, 2022). This is an indication that ECD is critical to the children's future success. On the same note, Fonsen et al. (2022) found that young learners' programmes would be effective if led by pedagogical leaders. In the process of investigation, the authors



underscored the pedagogical leadership's experiences, challenges, and successes. As teachers exercised their duties, they faced a number of challenges, including insufficient resources, unfavourable learning environments, and limited opportunities for training (Mpu & Adu, 2021; Olugbenga & Olaniyan, 2022). Thus, the authors analysed the teachers' experiences, pertaining to challenges and successes in conducting pedagogical leadership. Nyarambi and Ntuli (2020) made observations that underlined the lack of expert knowledge to implement and assess young children's curriculum. In addition, Ngwenya (2020) mentioned resource challenges that hindered the effective implementation of the curriculum. Included in the resources were financial and teaching materials, to mention just a few. Although they have an essential role in the education of young children, the gap in limited resources and expertise among teachers compromises quality services.

It came into the realisation that early childhood in Zimbabwe was officially known as early childhood development (ECD). This programme was meant to cater to the learning, development, and care of children aged 0 to 8 years (Tshishonga, 2020). For this article, the term ECD was used. This study investigated insights, challenges, and advocacy in relation to teachers' voices in pedagogical leadership with a focus on early childhood. The article is structured into sections, including background, literature review in themes, theoretical framework, research questions, design and methodology, analysis of literature reviewed, conclusions, future research areas, and reference list.

## II. Background

In Zimbabwe, ECD is led by several legal frameworks and policies that guide teachers in pedagogical leadership. Viennet and Pont (2017) found that implementing and adhering to policies and legal frameworks enhances young learners' total development. Early childhood teachers in the United States were found to possess nurturing and advocacy roles for quality education (Bradley-Levine, 2018). The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) in Zimbabwe oversaw ECD and its implementation through the provision of policies. This MoPSE made significant strides in promoting ECD in schools nationwide, regulated by policies such as the Zimbabwe National ECD Policy. This policy provided a framework for the provision of quality education to young children. Other legal frameworks, including Statutory Instrument (S I) Number 106 of 2005 and relevant administrative circulars, such as the Director's Circular Number 12 of 2005, gave guidelines on implementing the curriculum. The curriculum framework in Zimbabwe emphasised critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, communication, creativity, technology literacy, and social and emotional development (Muyambo-Goto et al., 2022). This entails a strength, which made Zimbabwe applauded for the legal frameworks that aimed to give guidelines to ECD teachers.

Early childhood teachers were not only teachers but also played a nurturing role for children with developmental delays, in which they were found performing fairly well (Nyarambi & Ntuli, 2020). This demonstrates pedagogical leadership qualities. To ensure every child gets a solid start in school, the Zimbabwean government increased quality and accessibility by launching the early learning policy (Chingwere, 2024). As such, each school in Zimbabwe runs a department that catered for young children. Despite these initiatives, Zimbabwe's ECD system continued to face challenges,



comprising limited resources and inadequate training opportunities for pedagogical leaders (Ngwenya, 2020; Muzembe et al., 2021). However, teachers in Zimbabwe were resilient despite the challenges; they remained dedicated to providing quality education to the young children. This influenced Majokoto' (2018) finding that teachers in Zimbabwe played pedagogical leadership roles, despite limited resources and training opportunities.

In spite of these challenges, the MoPSE Minister, Hon. Torerayi Moyo, emphasised in a report by Muchetu (2024) the importance of reaching Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this instance, SDG Number 4 centered on ensuring every learner receives high-quality education (Adipati & Chotikapanich, 2022). The Minister, in his capacity, was pushing for stakeholders to make investments in ECD. Therefore, teachers' voices were analysed, as in most cases, there is a gap between what the minister said and the practices, coupled with systematic challenges that compromise quality education in Zimbabwe. Therefore, this study aims to hear the perceptions of teachers in pedagogical leadership.

### **III. Literature Review**

The literature review section examined the perspectives focusing on of early childhood pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwe's ECD settings. Thus, young children would be fully catered for, and their families as part of the programme. This literature review section would cover teachers' perspectives, experiences, challenges, and contributions in fulfilling their roles as pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwe's ECD department. The writers of this article contend that their investigation was crucial to teachers' insights, challenges, and advocacy responsibilities as pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwe's ECD agency. Because they shape young brains, provide a supportive learning environment, and act as teachers, Nyarambi and Ntuli (2020) emphasised the crucial role that teachers play in the education process. The literature review section has the following sub-topics: the concept of pedagogical leadership, the core principles of pedagogical leadership, the importance of pedagogical leadership in early childhood development (ECD), the roles of ECD pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwe, challenges faced in pedagogical leadership, and intervention strategies.

### **IV. The Concept of Pedagogical Leadership**

Pedagogical leadership is important in educating young children. It is hoped that pedagogical leadership necessitates the teacher's understanding of the philosophy of education, leadership, and support needed during teaching. Meyer and Bendikson (2021) understood pedagogical leaders in education are teachers who concentrate on classroom activities. In addition, Modise's (2019) understanding placed emphasis on shifting from exercising managerial and administrative tasks to also incorporating teaching and learning. This shows that pedagogical leadership involves effective teaching and learning methods, and designing an age-appropriate curriculum. The pedagogical leaders, therefore, should impact children's learning experiences.

Pedagogical leadership has been more focused on administration, whereby practices were changing to embrace teaching and learning (Artikson & Lexie, 2018). This



attention was to improve curricula and pedagogy from management and administration. This amendment was propounded by the ideas of great educators like Dewey, who advocated for incorporating collaborative learning and encouraging professional development of teachers (Williams, 2017). The concept was found to be interrelated to a model in leadership called transformative leadership. This model is examined in the succeeding sections. This historical perspective highlights pedagogical leadership as a response to the call for leaders to provide quality services in the schools.

To further understand the concept of pedagogical leadership, Nutbrown's (2021) findings indicated that ECD-qualified teachers were knowledgeable and had expertise gained through education and training. Using EDUFI's (2018) views, Heikka et al. (2020) indicated that pedagogical attributes included organising and evaluating teaching for young learners. This means teachers should have expertise in selecting appropriate content, implementing the curriculum, and evaluating child outcomes. Thus far, Nevelongsky et al. (2019) found inconsistencies pertaining to insufficient resources in Zimbabwe. Insufficiency might exert pressure on the teacher to improvise resources for learners to acquire knowledge and skills. Maffea (2020) reiterated that teachers were under pressure to improvise resources to provide quality services. This resembles inadequate support as teachers implement pedagogy in Zimbabwe.

## **V. Historical Perspective of Pedagogical Leadership**

Pedagogical leadership is fundamental in the global world. It concerns teachers ensuring effective teaching and learning, developing appropriate curricula, and advocating for support toward professional development (Fonsen et al, 2022). In Zimbabwe, school empowers teachers with pedagogical skills, help them improve quality teaching through supervising learners' curriculum, and manage the shortage of resources (Mupa, 2023). Aligning these perspectives would help better understand the extent to which pedagogical leadership could facilitate addressing challenges in Zimbabwe.

## **VI. Principles of Pedagogical Leadership**

Pedagogical leadership has several principles that are significant to pedagogy. Therefore, insights, challenges, and advocacy were found essential. Webb (2022) suggested six pedagogical concepts, and only three are deemed key and are summarised below.

## **VII. Developing Ties of Supporting Pedagogical Leadership**

It was hoped that pedagogical leaders would establish relationships with other stakeholders in pedagogy. Coughlin and Baird (2022) mentioned that building relationships between teachers, learners, and families was a guiding principle. Cuduz's (2023) research showed that teachers collaborate closely with other teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders. Cuduz emphasised that the stakeholders should work together and create supportive learning environments for ECD children. This study reviewed whether teachers possess skills to create environments that are favourable for young children's learning (Muvirimi, 2019). Ties with parents are



essential for teachers because they would talk to parents about their children's progress. This became worrisome when authors found Muzenda's (2023) indication that parents expressed concerns about the weird behaviours of school personnel, considering parents as strangers in the school. This creates problems, as both stakeholders might lack trust and support for each other.

### **VIII. Establishing Conditions that Support Teachers' Professional Growth**

Pedagogical leaders were responsible for establishing conducive environments for both teachers and children. Szelei et al. (2019) proposed that creating environments conducive to learning was essential for teachers. The teachers would acquire skills and become effective leaders in ECD. Kilag and Sasan's (2023) study indicated that even the school heads need opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge to create environments that support learning. This demonstrates that staff development initiatives for young children's learning are critical. Although staff development initiatives were taken into account at different levels, Chinhara and Sotuku (2020) found that facilitators were not adequately qualified. The study deduced that supporting teachers for ongoing training would keep them abreast with best practices. Failure to support, teachers would not provide and facilitate appropriately for the young learners.

### **IX. Leading Teaching and Learning**

The review identified that expert pedagogical leaders were skilled in designing developmentally appropriate curricula and selecting effective teaching methods. The teacher who is knowledgeable would consider young children's unique needs, for example, nurturing environments (Coughlin & Baird, 2022). This is consistent with Modise's (2019) observation, which highlighted teachers' critical role in creating conducive learning environments. Thus, such environments would cater to all domains. However, this research found limited knowledge on methods that teachers could use to support young children's learning. Nyarambi and Ntuli (2020) found that most teachers in Zimbabwe lacked knowledge and skills in implementing the ECD curriculum. This indicates no smooth running of activities for pedagogical leaders.

Ensuring teachers seek opportunities for professional development in their profession is necessary (S I 106 of 2005). Teaching might improve if teachers get support through resource provision, advice, and encouragement (Hallissey, 2021). Given that teachers were working in under-resourced schools, inefficiency could have prevailed in Zimbabwean schools. Additionally, Gupta (2023) reiterated that pedagogical leaders in South Africa adhered to the curriculum framework. Thus, quality was observed externally. However, Chimbunde and Kgari-Masondo (2021) mentioned that teachers' voices were not heard through chief policy implementers, yet the formulation of policy was top-down. When policy is formulated at the top, teachers need adequate training to implement.



## **X. Importance of Pedagogical Leadership in ECD**

Pedagogical leadership in ECD is important. Modise (2019) argued that once teachers engage in training, they acquire pedagogical skills and knowledge to work effectively in the ECD centres. In addition, Fonsen et al. (2022) indicated that pedagogical leadership impacts greatly on early learning. They emphasised fostering quality teaching, creating nurturing settings, and encouraging ongoing professional training. All the fundamentals are embedded in the policy framework for adherence. Christenson and Makokoro (2023) also claimed that it results in higher teacher retention and improved professional satisfaction. This study therefore realised that pedagogical leadership was important for policy reforms and aligning them with national standards. MoPSE (2023) has curriculum standards that focus on appropriate curriculum implementation, accommodation, and so on. Hence, ECD pedagogical teachers have important roles that should be recognised and guided by the standards.

## **XI. Roles of ECD Pedagogical Leaders in Zimbabwe**

Suitable pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwean ECD settings are the teachers as they implement the curriculum. Moyo (2017) reported that children's practical competence in reading and numeracy skills is prioritised in the updated curriculum. One important responsibility of an ECD teacher is staff development, which was briefly discussed in the section on pedagogical concepts in this study. Therefore, staff development programmes must be understood. Christenson and Makokoro (2023) highlighted that staff development would be contented with their work. On the other side, Nyarambi and Ntuli (2020) emphasised pedagogical leadership exchange programmes at various levels to motivate one another and work together to accomplish common goals. To maintain pedagogical leadership an aspect of high-quality teaching, below are key roles for teachers.

## **XII. Advocating for Quality Pedagogy**

High-quality services and pedagogical leadership go hand in hand. Consistent with advocacy, Fonsen et al. (2022) suggested that pedagogical leadership is a remarkable aspect of instruction. They also found that teachers can advocate for professional improvement to stay updated with changing trends and best practices in curriculum implementation. To achieve this, Fonsen and Ukkonen-Mikkola (2019) emphasised the need for teachers to engage in professional development. Furthermore, the College of Early Childhood Educators (2020) reported that professional development is crucial because it provides teachers with current ideas and competencies.

Although the importance of staff development is attributed to professional development, the current researchers discovered that scholars were not specific about the precise topics that needed to be addressed. Interestingly, Christenson and Makokoro's (2023) finding was clear that ongoing professional development sessions improved their innovativeness in teaching approaches. Still, pedagogical leadership needed attention from ministry officials who could make decisions for professional development to keep them abreast with best practices in pedagogical operations.



In addition, teachers played the facilitation and providers of play-based learning that aligned with child-centredness (Nicholas et al., 2021), which is fundamental to drive the ECD curriculum globally and locally. When teachers plan children's activities, Kaizar and Olordiah (2023) placed emphasis on utilising play. In this instance, Parker et al. (2022) found play-based learning to be an age-appropriate approach for young children. More so, Madondo and Tsikira (2021) in Zimbabwe discovered that traditional games facilitated the teaching and learning of indigenous knowledge systems to young children. This signifies that one should be knowledgeable about incorporating play in daily lessons, setting, and providing resources.

However, incorporating play might not be successful if play materials are insufficient. To enhance the use of play-based learning, teachers need support from the relevant stakeholders. Advocating for the provision of resources, professional development might be useful to improve pedagogical leadership, but there are recurrent challenges in pedagogical leadership. Because of the recurrent challenges and unresponsiveness to the advocacy in Zimbabwe, Matowo and Tenha (2023) recommended the Ministry's intervention.

### **XIII. Developing Teacher-Parent Partnerships**

As reviewed in the pedagogical principles section, one important role of teachers as pedagogical leaders is developing partnerships with stakeholders. In their capacity as teachers, they seemed to go above and beyond the classroom to build relationships with parents, who are crucial to the successful application of pedagogy in classrooms. Pirchio et al (2023) highlighted the need to educate parents on the importance of play. This would help to create caring surroundings for teaching and learning. However, in the Zimbabwean context, Mugweni (2017) found that ECD centres lacked play materials. Thus, children might be snatching for the few play materials offered, which is hoped to create challenges for classroom control.

To advocate for resources, collaboration with parents and the community is necessary (Durisic & Bunjevac, 2017). Partnerships with parents in educating their children are essential. However, not all parents were responsive, considering hunger and economic meltdown in Zimbabwe. Mhlanga (2017) indicated that poverty, culture, and attitude contributed to the non-involvement of parents. This shows partnerships are challenging, though. To address this, parents participate in workshops on the importance of parents taking part in their children's education.

### **XIV. Assessor and Evaluator of Children's Curriculum**

Teachers are mandated to assess and evaluate their performance, children's outcomes, and classroom environment utilising assessment records, namely anecdotal, checklists, and progress. Assessment entails an important curriculum implementation task where the teacher observes learners and documents (Hawthorne, 2022). On the same note, Peterson and Elam (2021) indicated that evaluation is important in the teaching and learning process. Teachers were encouraged to carry out observations, recording the observed behaviours and evaluating the activities that the children were engaged in. However, research has shown that teachers lacked adequate assessment abilities, as



evidenced in a study by Manzunzu and Manzunzu (2021, p. 188). One participant in this study made this clear and said: “As ECD teachers, we lack assessment skills since at college our curriculum concentrated on our grasping pedagogies.” This indicates the existence of a huge gap in assessment in Zimbabwe.

Although ECD teachers were expected to assess children’s curriculum using digital tools to meet quality services for ECD in Zimbabwe, the authors hoped it was far from reach. They found evidence from Chinhara and Kuyayama (2024), who indicated challenges with large classes and a lack of flawless monitoring and supervision of children’s curriculum. An alternative might be engaging teachers in staff development. For example, integration of ICT and use of tools across the school system, which could be done through staff development workshops, though not all teachers could possibly participate. If inadequately trained teachers assess and evaluate children’s curriculum, they might not be well informed of the best practices that comprise quality. Then, it does not augur well if teachers fail to assess and evaluate the children’s curriculum, which creates challenges in pedagogical leadership.

## **XV. Challenges Faced in Pedagogical Leadership**

Literature reviewed indicated several challenges that might hinder pedagogical leadership. Hazegh (2022) found challenges in supervising high-quality ECD initiatives due to a lack of resources and assistance. In this instance, stakeholders were found to give teachers minimal support (Olaoye & Potter, 2024). Tekyi-Arhin's (2023) research revealed that teachers encountered insufficiency pertaining to the role of play and resources that were available for children to play with. Internally, Chinhara & Sotuku (2020) discovered that ECD teachers lacked professional experience in managing inclusive classrooms in Zimbabwe. Their study brought attention to the shortcomings that might be evident in the teacher preparation programmes to meet the needs of young children.

Furthermore, Chinhara & Kuyayama (2024) indicated scarce resources for inclusive classes. On the same note, Manzunzu and Manzunzu (2021) mentioned disaster in assessment, evidenced by records that could not show meaningful entries. Yet assessment is one critical issue for measuring efficiency and quality in ECD curriculum implementation. Therefore, government-funded initiatives for in-service training programmes were necessary to close the gap and address play-based challenges, in particular, which the pedagogical leader could facilitate. This, however, reveals a policy gap in the pedagogical system between inadequacies in resources and advocating for play-based learning to meet quality provisions. Such a gap hinders successful implementation of ECD curriculum. This effect influenced Chinhara and Kuyayama (2024) to recommend for stakeholder capacitation to remain informed and exercise best practices. Effective teaching in Zimbabwe requires stakeholders, including teachers, school administrators, and parents, to have access to opportunities for ongoing staff development. This is necessary because teachers would be prepared to operate effectively in their line of work. For effective and efficient pedagogical leadership to be noticed where challenges emanate, finding solutions to address the challenges is critical.



## **XVI. Intervention Strategies**

With support from the government and other pertinent parties, Zimbabwean schools should take the initiative to resolve issues that pedagogical leaders face. Policy and practice should prioritise funding for the professional development of teachers as early childhood pedagogical leaders. If teachers are provided with the necessary resources and facilities, school authorities should support the outcomes that benefit children, families, teachers, and communities. Curriculum training is one strategy mentioned in Fonsen et al.'s (2022, p. 12) study where one participant said: “We have professional development days throughout the year, and these are specific training towards the curriculum we are using ....” However, the authors of this paper found this to be interesting since they believed it demonstrated the teachers' initial training might not have given them the necessary information and abilities.

In the context of Zimbabwe, this constitutes a significant gap pertaining to continuous workshops at the expense of in-service training. There is no sustainability of knowledge and skills learnt through workshops, as compared to in-service training, which negatively affect quality of services. Toward closing this gap, higher education institutions in the nation responsible for teacher preparation could collaborate with sister schools, especially during training, to address relevant issues pertaining to the education, care, and development of young children. In line with this, Ziwire (2020) reported that institutions of higher learning could merge with schools and render support services pertaining to the knowledge and skills gap among teachers. Thus, mentorship initiatives would be established for university lecturers to assist in ongoing professional development for teachers from the schools. In such spaces, hands-on experiences could be exposed while monitoring and assessment are also carried out. Cooperative learning is one important feature that allows teachers to improve themselves. Still, cooperative learning could be effective when teachers are already trained. From the cooperative sessions, teachers would exchange knowledge based on what they learnt during training and gained through workshops. In relation to this, an excerpt from one of the study's participants in Nyarambi and Ntuli's (2020, p. 58) Zimbabwean study suggested:

I have not gone to college, but to workshops. I ask other ECD teachers what they are teaching, and that is what I do with my children. Yes, I follow curriculum books, but sometimes we do not have the materials listed in the books. They come to supervise what we do with children no one has ever said anything. I think we are doing well.

Instead of going to college to get an official certificate, it is evident from the excerpt that the participant learned through seminars and interactions with other ECD teachers. The authors of this article realised that it would not be enough to equip teachers with pedagogical skills through workshops. The field of ECD in Zimbabwe, therefore, has a gap between policy stipulation that ECD should be manned by trained personnel (S I 106 of 2005) and not through workshops and implementation of policy. It becomes a concern, imagining that supervision was done, but without feedback, and the classroom practitioner is not sufficiently equipped to address pedagogical concerns in ECD. There is evidence, then, that pedagogical leadership was not a successful story to be told in Zimbabwe. Addressing such a disparity ought to be a requirement that all classroom



practitioners should possess the necessary qualifications, and that supervisors should provide prompt feedback.

## **XVII. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical basis for this study is provided by Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory. Burns believed transformational leadership focuses on a dynamic relationship characterised by conflict and consensus that exists between the leader and followers. This theory is critical to address recurring challenges faced in Zimbabwean ECD settings. The transformational theory is concerned with innovative transformation, empowerment, and the sense of purpose (Sharma & Adeoye, 2024). Thus, the leader would inspire and motivate the Zimbabwean teachers regardless of working in classrooms that lack resources. The teachers might work extra hard to improvise and make use of readily available resources.

Furthermore, Acton (2020) found that the school head might also create opportunities for professional growth and take on leadership roles and serve as change agents. This framework acknowledges the significance of adjusting to the conditions and requirements of ECD, care, and education influenced by the challenges teachers face. This transformative belief empowers teachers to work comfortably in their day-to-day operations. In the instance of collaboration of stakeholders, Ligon (2020) found that the transformational leader would encourage community support and creation of partnerships to minimise challenges that the ECD teacher faced in implementing pedagogical leadership.

## **XVIII. Research Questions**

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- (i) What specific roles do teachers play as early childhood pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwe?
- (ii) What barriers prevent teachers from effectively carrying out their pedagogical duties?
- (iii) What strategies can be implemented to support and enhance pedagogical leadership in early childhood development?

## **XIX. Design and Methodology**

Content analysis was used in this qualitative desk review to look at materials, including books, reports, and articles. This qualitative content analysis was defined in Shava et al.'s (2021) study as the technique of condensing raw data into themes and categories based on reliable interpretations. Through rigorous inspection and ongoing comparison by the researchers, themes and categories were extracted from the data through the application of inductive reasoning. Peer-reviewed research, published within the last ten years, and studies focusing on leadership, pedagogy, and other relevant aspects that were emerging during the review, both internationally and in Zimbabwe. The selection of documents was based on publication date, trustworthiness, and relevancy.



Finding themes, patterns, and insights about the responsibilities, difficulties, and accomplishments of teachers as pedagogical leaders was one of the tasks of content analysis. The desk review approach was appropriate for this research purpose because it allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the body of research already conducted on the research topic (Aela, 2022). As seen in Chigbu et al.'s (2023) study, a desk review helped identify key subjects, trends, challenges, and best practices by synthesising and evaluating a range of scholarly articles and research works. This method also helped researchers in the current article identify research gaps, potential areas for future investigation, and the current state of knowledge in the field.

The desk review methodology has many advantages, such as being time and money-efficient and providing quick access to pre-existing data (Taherdoost, 2022). The use of this method indicated it was less costly and time-consuming than collection methods like focus groups and interviews, among others. One of the methodology's advantages is its capacity to carry out an exhaustive evaluation that entails the investigation of previously released studies, papers, and publications (Chukwuere, 2023). This desk review enabled a deepened understanding of the concept of pedagogical leadership. Analysing pre-existing information sources allowed the authors of this article to gather enormous amounts of data.

## **XX. Analysis of Literature Reviewed**

This section presents the results of the desk review of the 60 scholarly publications that were seen as reliable in relation to pedagogical issues, together with data that support the field of research. The present authors arranged the research findings according to the research issues this study would address.

**Research Question 1: What Specific Roles do Teachers Play as Early Childhood Pedagogical Leaders in Zimbabwe?**

The results revealed that early childhood teachers had a role in creating supportive and nurturing environments that promote children's overall development. This helped teachers to employ child-centred methods through play-based activities during teaching. This is consistent with a recommendation from Kaizar and Olordiah (2023), which indicated that teachers included play in all activities they designed. This means that pedagogical leaders were expected to prepare warm, conducive indoor and outdoor play areas with adequate age-appropriate materials, resources, equipment, and furniture.

Another role is collaborating with stakeholders in pedagogy. This is evident in Culduz's (2023) study, emphasising collaboration of stakeholders to establish conducive environments that promote total development of the young children. In relation to this, the Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Actors (2019) and (S I) 106 of 2005 have guidelines for teachers to provide age-appropriate play materials that are in both indoor and outdoor areas. This indicates that the roles pedagogical leaders take are guided by policy. However, from observations made by Nyarambi and Ntuli (2020, p. 60), '... the majority of ECD classrooms and outdoor learning spaces lacked suitable accommodations for children with learning disabilities and sufficient materials for



teaching and learning.’ This demonstrated a shortage of resource materials to carry out pedagogical leadership tasks in Zimbabwe. As such, the leadership is perceived as inefficient and ineffective in the field of early childhood.

One other role is to advocate for quality pedagogy in ECD settings. This was mentioned in a study by Fonsen et al. (2022) in South Africa that teachers were kept updated on current trends and best practices through ongoing professional development. Therefore, quality pedagogical leadership was evidenced through the use of child-centred approaches (Nicholas et al., 2021) while Kaizar and Olordiah (2023) emphasised the incorporation of play, provision of materials, and effective teaching and learning. In Zimbabwe, even if advocacy is taken up, quality might not be achieved because of the consistent challenges that are evident. In a study on quality provisions for inclusive education in Zimbabwe, Chinhara and Kuyayama (2024) found scarce resources utilisation, repressed equity, and quality services in the classroom. These challenges entailed that the nation of Zimbabwe was still far from providing quality. Such a conclusion is deduced from the consistencies in shortages of resources that are key for equity and quality in ECD provisions.

This study found another important role of assessment and evaluation of children’s curriculum. Manzuznu and Manzunzu (2021) found that teachers maintain records just to meet the requirement, yet the information documented was not meaningful. This was a resemblance of limited skills to assess children’s curriculum. On the same note, Chinhara and Kuyayama (2024) also found flawed monitoring and supervision of children’s experiences. This was viewed to compromise quality, especially when there are flawed assessment and evaluation outcomes. This role, therefore, was not adequately performed in the Zimbabwean ECD settings. As a result, this study recommends that all pedagogical leaders in early childhood be supported in taking up different roles with perfection. The support needed should include the provision of adequate resources, teacher training and/or staff development, and advocating for high-quality services for ECD children.

#### Research Question 2: What Barriers Prevent Teachers from Effectively Carrying Out Their Pedagogical Duties?

Results from the desk review indicated challenges faced by teachers as early childhood pedagogical leaders. This study revealed that teachers lacked resources for teaching and learning of young children (Hazegh, 2022); limited support from stakeholders, including the government, families, and schools (Olaoye & Potter, 2024). On the same note, Chinhara and Sotuku (2020) found that teachers lacked professional experience to manage inclusive classes. Furthermore, they had an inadequate understanding of the role of play in teaching young children (Tekyi-Arhin, 2023). All the discrepancies indicated that pedagogical leadership was not going well in Zimbabwe.

Additionally, opportunities for ongoing staff development were limited (Fonsen et al., 2022; Modise, 2019), which was anticipated to have driven them to employ outdated methods at the expense of the learners. On the same note, teachers in Zimbabwe lacked skills to assess children’s curriculum (Manzunzu & Manzunzu, 2021). This study was vital to open avenues for initiating professional development workshops to upskill the



teachers in pedagogical leadership. Overall, the challenges that teachers experienced as they implemented the pedagogical leadership might have barred effectiveness in taking up their roles. To address the gaps identified, the authors recommend that, for proper management of resource allocation and distribution, create opportunities for professional development programmes so that teachers keep aligned to current issues and best practices for ECD.

### Research Question 3: How Can Strategies to Support Pedagogical Leadership in ECD Be Improved?

Several strategies could be utilised to mitigate challenges faced by teachers in implementing pedagogical leadership. This study found opportunities for staff development initiatives as one strategy to improve pedagogical leadership in ECD. These findings complement the findings of Modise (2019) and Fonsen and Ukkonen-Mikkola (2019), who indicated that teachers needed professional development support to enhance their knowledge and abilities in pedagogy. More interestingly, Chinhara and Kuyayama (2024) claimed that the professional development should take a holistic approach in which teachers and other stakeholders in the education fraternity are capacitated. Their focus was basically to ensure advocacy issues toward quality provisions bear fruit.

This study, therefore, suggests that stakeholders could be provided with sufficient opportunities to participate in ongoing workshops, seminars, and mentoring programmes. It would be necessary to assist them in developing their pedagogical abilities. Therefore, increasing opportunities for capacitation programmes available to ECD teachers and other stakeholders was found essential, which could be face-to-face or using online materials on e-learning platforms.

Teachers' work would be improved toward quality provisions through the utilisation of child-centred methods (Nicholas et al., 2021), for example, play-based experiences, organised learning sessions, and provision of adequate resources. In addition, improved child outcomes could be evident if the ministry focuses on quality compared to quantity (Mugweni, 2017). In such instances, better results for the children would be yielded. One more strategy is to engage teachers in staff development on assessment and evaluation. Chinhara and Kuyayama (2024) emphasised that professional development for teachers on assessment and evaluation of learners' outcomes was crucial. If teachers are knowledgeable about this, they regularly conduct timely evaluations to ensure teaching methods and learner outcomes continue to improve. The authors of this paper recommend for a multi-faceted approach whereby professional development initiatives should be at the teachers' disposal.

## **XXI. Conclusions**

The study concludes that ECD teachers, as pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwe, understood their role in pedagogical leadership. Teachers could help young children develop holistically by creating conducive classroom environments for learning. This ensures children meet their full potential. Positive child outcomes require teachers who are well-versed in current trends and best practices in ECD. They can acquire such skills



and knowledge through professional development initiatives. This study also concludes that play-based learning, strong partnerships with families, and monitoring teacher and child performance through continuous assessment and evaluation all describe an effective pedagogical leader. Thus, high-quality services would be evident in Zimbabwe.

Findings of this study have implications for policy and practice deduced from the voices of teachers as early childhood pedagogical leaders, including:

- Funding and provision of resources for effective pedagogical practices should be guided by policy.
- Policies should be regularly evaluated, for example, quarterly or yearly, and stakeholders at all levels should be involved in the policy reforms.
- Policy should provide opportunities for professional development initiatives for all stakeholders in the implementation of best practices in their roles as pedagogical leaders.

## **XXII. Recommendations**

This study recommends actions that can strengthen pedagogical leadership in the ECD programme:

- Professional Development that is continuous through regular training and refresher courses for ECD teachers to enhance leadership skills, also, integrating leadership development into teacher education programmes.
- Increase funding toward the procurement of resources to ensure adequacy and availability of age-appropriate teaching and learning materials to reduce resource gaps.
- Involvement of teachers in policy reviews to ensure their voices are heard and can shape reforms.
- Establish partnerships between the school and communities to ensure strong networks that support culturally relevant pedagogy and shared responsibility for children's learning are built.

This study suggests a model that can be implemented to strengthen teachers' pedagogical leadership. Figure 1 below describes the model:

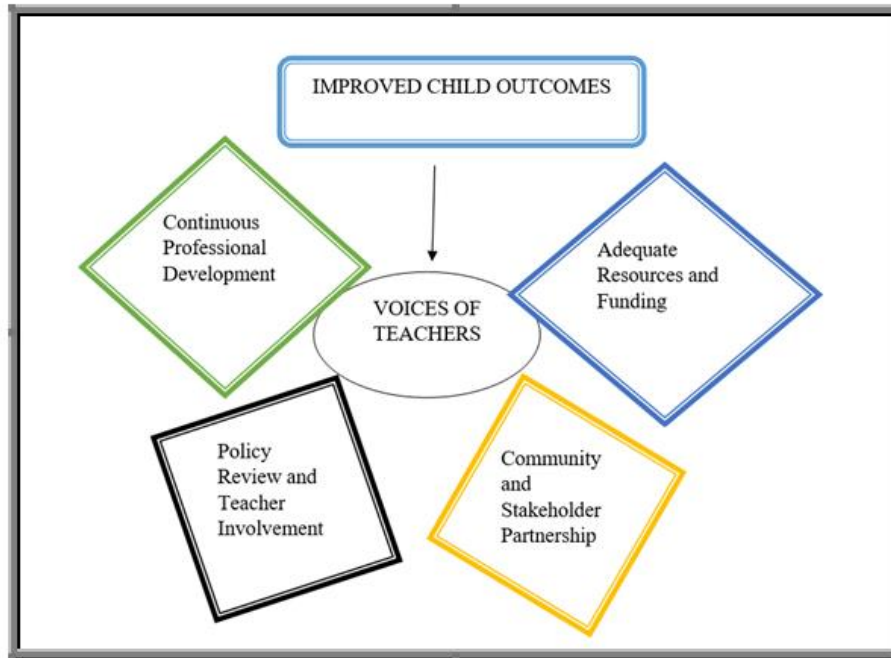


Figure 1: Enhancing ECD Teachers' Pedagogical Leadership

The figure above shows a blue rectangle indicating an improved learner outcome that can be met when teachers' voices, represented by the spherical shape of pedagogical leadership in Zimbabwe's ECD, are heard. Surrounding the teachers' voices are four factors: continuous professional development in green square, adequate resources in blue square, supportive policies in black, and community partnerships in yellow square. These facets, if well managed, can mitigate existing challenges of limited funding and training as well as scarce materials. Through the consolidation of these facets, teachers are empowered to deliver high-quality, culturally responsive education. By so doing, improving learner outcomes and contributes to global conversations on early childhood pedagogy.

### XXIII. Future Research Areas

For researchers who might want to conduct research about pedagogical issues related to ECD, below are suggested areas for future research:

- Investigation on school administrators' perspectives as pedagogical leaders in Zimbabwe. This seems important because school administrators also have an influence on pedagogy.
- Research might explore inconsistencies between practice and policy, which promotes evaluation and alignment with best practices.



- Researchers could examine parents' roles in supporting pedagogy in the classroom.

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