



## Implementation of Pre-Primary Education in Public School in Tanzania: Challenges and Possible Solutions

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**Abstract:** The study was conducted to investigate the challenges hindering the effective implementation of the pre-primary curriculum in public schools in Tanzania and to explore strategies that could improve its implementation. The study used the leadership obstacle course (LOC) model as the theoretical framework that helped to identify the key barriers for effective implementation of pre-primary education. A mixed-methods approach with a convergent design was employed, involving 31 respondents (10 head teachers, 20 pre-primary teachers, and one district education officer) selected through random and purposive sampling techniques. Data was gathered using questionnaires, interview guides and observation tools and analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The study found out that key challenges included insufficient teaching resources, lack of teacher training, large class sizes and inadequate cooperation between teachers and parents. Teachers reported a lack of essential skills and resources as major obstacles. Additionally, large class sizes and parental neglect in supporting the curriculum were identified as significant challenges. To improve the situation, the study recommended providing additional training for teachers, increasing resource availability and enhancing parental involvement in the education process.

**Keyword :** Challenge; Implementation; Pre-Primary; Education; Solutions;

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### Introduction

Early childhood education has expanded significantly across developing countries due to increased recognition of its role in promoting foundational learning (Wolf et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2021). Many governments across the world have introduced policies that aim at universal access to early education to enhance cognitive and social development from an early age (Roseline & Matthew, 2020; Malik, 2019). In sub-Saharan Africa, pre-primary education has become a priority in national education frameworks with countries integrating it into their formal schooling systems (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015; Maghasse & William, 2016). For the case of Tanzania, the government has aligned itself with these global efforts through the Education and Training Policy of 2014 which mandates that children aged three to five years must receive at least one year of pre-primary education (URT, 2014). This policy has led to the establishment of pre-primary units within public primary schools to ensure

children are exposed to structured learning before joining primary school (Mghasse & William, 2016).

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive, social and emotional development by laying the foundation for lifelong learning (Kitta & Kapinga, 2015; Pholphirul, 2017). Exposure to structured learning environments at an early age enhances the ability of children to acquire essential skills such as literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and communication (Malik, 2019; Kinzer et al., 2016). Research suggests that children who receive quality pre-primary education are more likely to succeed in primary school and beyond as they develop stronger academic and social competencies (Roseline & Matthew, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). However, studies indicate that many children transition to primary school without acquiring the expected foundational skills, raising concerns about the effectiveness of pre-primary education in preparing pupils for further learning (Mghasse & William, 2016). These concerns call for research to be conducted on the underlying challenges for effective implementation of pre-primary education in the country and thus suggest possible measures for improvement.

Effective implementation of early childhood education requires a combination of well-trained teachers, appropriate learning materials and conducive learning environment to support children's holistic development (Taylor & Boyer, 2020; Dennis & Stockall, 2015). Teachers need specialized training in early childhood pedagogy to effectively facilitate learning through structured play and hands-on activities that enhance cognitive and social development (Mweru et al., 2020; Martínez-Bello et al., 2021). In addition, instructional materials such as books and toys play a significant role in making learning engaging and interactive for young children (Kinzer et al., 2016; Jay & Knaus, 2018). A well-prepared learning environment including adequate classroom space and outdoor play areas also contributes to the overall effectiveness of early childhood education (Burton et al., 2020; Guillén, 2018). This calls for attention to be paid on what challenges face the teaching and learning in terms of facilities and teachers and suggest possible ways for improvement.

### **Problem Statement**

There has been a growing emphasis on the importance of pre-primary education as a foundation for lifelong learning and holistic child development (Malik, 2019; Pholphirul, 2017). In response, the government of Tanzania has implemented various initiatives to enhance the quality and accessibility of pre-primary education, including mandatory enrollment in all public primary schools and the establishment of training programs for pre-primary teachers (URT, 2014; Mghasse & William, 2016). Additionally, policies have been developed to ensure the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources to support the effective implementation of the curriculum (Mabagala & Shukia, 2019). However, despite these efforts, concerns

remain regarding whether these initiatives have been effectively translated into practice. The limited enrollment of teachers in specialized training programs raises questions about whether primary school teachers assigned to pre-primary classes have the necessary pedagogical skills and content knowledge to implement the curriculum effectively (Jeon et al., 2018). Furthermore, studies highlight a strong relationship between resource availability and successful curriculum implementation, yet little is known about whether pre-primary classrooms in Tanzania are adequately equipped. Given these uncertainties, this study sought to investigate the challenges affecting the implementation of pre-primary education and to propose solutions that can enhance its effectiveness in public primary schools in Tanzania.

### **Research Objectives**

The study was conducted to address the following objectives;

1. To examine the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of the pre-primary curriculum in public primary schools in Tanzania.
2. To explore strategies that can be adopted to improve the implementation of the pre-primary curriculum in public primary schools in Tanzania.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Leadership Obstacle Course (LOC) model, developed by Gross (1971) was used to guide this study on the challenges facing the implementation of pre-primary education. The model identifies key obstacles that may hinder curriculum implementation. These obstacles include; resistance from staff, lack of necessary skills and insufficient materials. It highlights the importance of teachers having a clear understanding of the curriculum and positive attitudes toward its implementation as well as the need for proper training and sufficient resources. The advantage of the model is that it points out the specific barriers that may negatively affect the implementation of pre-primary curriculum. Therefore, the model provides guidelines for assessing how those barriers impede the implementation of pre-primary curriculum in public schools in Tanzania. By using the model, the study was able to identify further challenges and suggest possible solutions to improve the teaching and learning process in the schools.

However, the model also has weaknesses, particularly the interdependence of the obstacles. For example, lack of teacher skills may directly affect the use of resources or lack of materials may limit a teacher's ability to implement the curriculum effectively. This interconnection makes it difficult to isolate the primary factors hindering curriculum implementation. Despite this limitation, the model was applied in the current study to evaluate how factors such as teacher attitudes, skills, and the availability of materials influence the implementation of pre-primary education in Tanzanian public schools. The study used the model to identify the challenges and

suggest improvements. By addressing the challenges, there will be a smooth implementation of pre-primary education and hence improve the children's understanding in the early stages of learning.

### Literature Review

The implementation of pre-primary education is a critical issue globally and it is affected by a range of challenges that differ from country to country. For example, in Pakistan, Rehman et al. (2022) found that the lack of parental involvement is one of the biggest challenges faced by early childhood teachers. Despite the majority of teachers being trained and knowledgeable about the psychological needs of children, they struggle to engage parents in the learning process. Similarly, in Bangladesh, Rab and Obaydullah (2023) reported infrastructural issues and a shortage of human resources as key factors contributing to the low enrollment rate in pre-primary education. Furthermore, Fentahun (2022) noted that, in Ethiopia, government-run pre-primary centers face significant limitations in terms of resources compared to non-government institutions. These studies show that pre-primary education in the developing countries has is still encountering challenges for its effective implementation.

The importance of addressing these challenges is further emphasized in regions such as the Zambezi Region of Namibia, where Mubiana and Nkengbeza (2023) observed that factors such as a lack of educational materials, poor classroom environments and low parental involvement severely affect the quality of early childhood education. In Tanzania, Kabete (2023) found that pre-primary teachers in Shinyanga District face difficulties due to large class sizes, limited instructional materials and the use of mother tongue, which complicates teaching efforts. The need for a more holistic approach was also noted in the findings by Taniguchi (2022) who concluded that pre-primary education plays a critical role in mitigating social inequalities especially for disadvantaged children and that effective policies should address these systemic challenges. These studies show the need for investigating more effective strategies that can be adopted to improve the teaching and learning in pre-primary classrooms.

Efforts to improve early childhood education must also consider the socio-economic and institutional barriers that hinder progress. Abdussammed (2024) pointed to economic and social backwardness as major contributors to the low enrollment rates in many countries, affecting children's access to quality pre-primary education. In Zanzibar, Ali et al. (2022) found that overcrowded classrooms and the lack of proper teacher training were key issues that needed to be addressed to improve the implementation of the pre-primary education curriculum. Kojo et al. (2024) also emphasized the importance of parental engagement, noting that empowering parents to actively support their children's learning can significantly enhance the overall

success of pre-primary education. Due to context differences, there remains a gap for a study to be conducted in the Tanzanian context to investigate the challenges and propose possible solutions.

## Methodology

The study utilized a mixed methods approach with a convergent design combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection to explore the challenges facing the implementation of pre-primary education in Tanzania. Moshi municipality was selected as the study area to present all the districts in the country. The target population included head teachers, pre-primary teachers and the district primary education officer from 35 public schools. A sample of 31 respondents was selected, comprising 10 head teachers, 20 teachers and 1 district education officer. The selection of schools was based on simple random sampling, while head teachers and the district education officer were selected through criterion purposive sampling procedure. The teachers were selected using convenient sampling process to ensure that only the ones allocated for teaching pre-primary pupils were included in the study.

Data was collected through questionnaires, interview guides and an observation guide. The questionnaires for teachers contained both closed and open-ended questions, while interview guides for head teachers and the district education officer included open-ended questions to gather qualitative information. The observation guide allowed the researcher to assess the availability of teaching and learning resources. The instruments were pilot-tested for validity and reliability, with the reliability of the questionnaires measured using the split-half method. Validity was ensured through expert reviews for the questionnaires and communicative validation for interview guides.

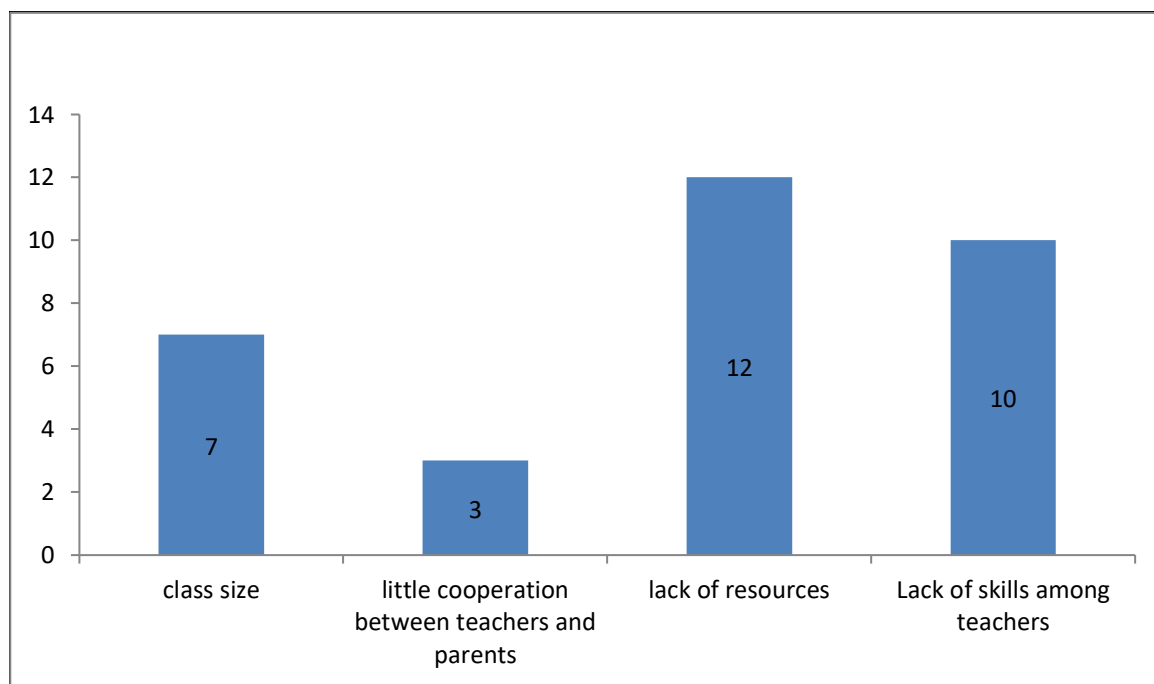
The data collection process began with acquiring permission from the district education officer, who introduced the researcher to the head teachers. The researcher then distributed questionnaires to teachers, conducted interviews with head teachers and the district education officer and observed the learning environment. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality and the voluntary participation of respondents. Finally, all the sources of information cited in the study were fully listed in the reference page following the recommended guidelines.

## Findings and Discussion

### Challenges for Effective Implementation of Pre-Primary Curriculum

The first objective of this study aimed at finding out the challenges for effective implementation of pre-primary curriculum in public primary schools in Tanzania. The researcher collected information from teachers, head teachers and observation. For the

case of teachers, they were requested to state the challenges facing them to effectively implement the pre-primary curriculum in their respective schools. This was a multiple responses question whereby teachers gave more than one response and similarly, the same response was also expected to be provided by more than one teacher. Figure 1 summarizes the responses from teachers from teachers on the challenges.



**Figure 1.**  
**Teachers' Response on the Challenges**

Figure 1 shows that 12 out of 20 teachers indicated lack of resources to be a challenge they encounter during the implementation of pre-primary curriculum. This implies that resources for effective implementation of pre-primary curriculum in public primary schools are not sufficient. Lack of teaching and learning resources affect the implementation of the curriculum as it limits the engagement of pupils in different tasks. The lack of adequate teaching and learning resources seems to be a common problem in Tanzanian public primary schools as it was also found out by Lugalla & Ngwaru (2019). Lack of resources also limits pupils mastering of essential skills which are counting, reading and writing. This is also supported by Reno et al. (2020) who concluded that effective teaching highly depends on the availability of teaching and learning resources. Schools which do not have adequate resources such as blocks, pupils Mastering of mathematical operation skills may not be smooth (Kinzer et al., 2016). Moreover, lack of resources limits pupils achievement social outcomes since effective achievement of such skills depends on pupils interaction with resources (Jay & Knaus, 2018).

Inadequate teaching and learning resources was also identified by head teachers during the interview. One of them said;

*“The major challenge is inadequacy of different resources needed to effectively implement the pre-primary curriculum at this school; the resources are not enough to all the pupils. This limits the participation of pupils in different teaching and learning activities” (Personal interview).*

A similar concern was raised by another head teacher who acknowledged the presence of some resources but they are not fit for the pre-primary pupils. The head teacher said the following:

*“The school has some resources, but the main problem is that they are not appropriate for the age of pre-primary pupils. Most of the materials we get are designed for older classes, so teachers struggle to adapt them to suit the young learners” (Personal interview).*

Responses from head teachers, together with what was indicated by teachers, suggest that the public primary schools in Tanzania face shortages of essential resources required for effective implementation of the pre-primary curriculum. Evidence from classroom observations further demonstrated that in some classrooms pupils lacked adequate seating facilities. Similarly, outdoor spaces and play equipment were insufficient to accommodate the needs of all enrolled pupils. Such limitations in play resources are likely to reduce pupils’ engagement and consequently constrain the acquisition of the developmental skills and knowledge intended at the pre-primary level.

Data in Figure 1 also show that 10 (50%) of the teachers reported lack of skills and knowledge as a major challenge to the effective implementation of the pre-primary curriculum in their schools. This suggests that a considerable number of teachers perceive themselves as inadequately prepared to deliver the required content for pre-primary education. These findings are consistent with Ng’asike (2020), who reported that pre-primary teachers in many African contexts often lack sufficient training and opportunities for continuous professional development, a situation that constrains their ability to apply age-appropriate teaching methods. According to Mgaya and Machumu (2022), the quality of pre-primary education is largely dependent on the professional competence of teachers. Therefore, the presence of teachers who feel inadequately prepared presents a limitation to the successful implementation of the pre-primary curriculum in Tanzania.

Moreover, during an interview with the district education officer, the issue of teacher incompetence was raised up as the officer said;

*“Some teachers do not have the skills which are indicated in the pre-primary education curriculum, they use their own experiences to teach the pupils. However, we encourage them to attend seminars and workshops. The government however has not organized and conducted such seminars for a quite long time” (Personal interview).*

Lack of essential skills among pre-primary teachers was also observed by the researcher during the classroom observation whereby the observed teachers were found to be weak in some aspects including setting learning objectives, making use of teaching aids, responding to pupils questions and time management. Having teachers without adequate skills and knowledge on pre-primary education negatively affects the implementation of the curriculum since these teachers may fail to create positive environment for pupils to teach effectively (Dennis & Stockall, 2015). The presence of many pre-primary teachers without adequate skills and knowledge on pre-primary education is an indication that the government made the pre-primary education mandatory in all primary schools without ensuring the availability of qualified teachers to teach the pupils.

Another challenges identified by teachers as shown in figure 4.4 include large number of pupils per class and lack of cooperation between teachers and parents. The issue of having many students in the class was also raised by head teachers during the interviews as one of them said;

*“Pupils are overpopulated in the classrooms, it becomes problematic for teachers to deal with each pupil, and this is why some pupils receive no special attention from their teachers. As a result, there is a possibility for some children to finish pre-primary without mastering the intended skills”.*

Another head of school added;

*“At this school there are over seventy pre-primary pupils, but only one teacher has been assigned to teach them. The teacher has been complaining of having too much to do but we are not able to solve the problem as no other teacher wants to join the pre-primary classes”.*

The response from this head teacher apart from showing the presence of large class also shows that teachers are not willing to teach in pre-primary classrooms. Negative attitudes might be one of the reasons for such rejection. Having large number of students per class may also limit the application of some learner centered teaching techniques and therefore affects the implementation of the pre-primary curriculum.

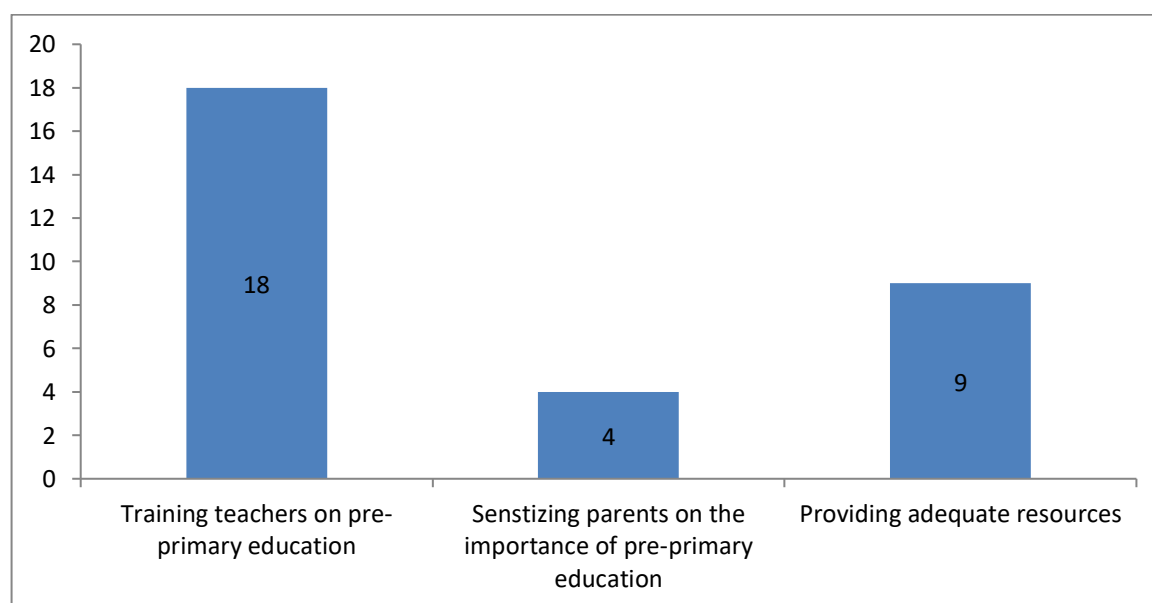
Lack of cooperation between teachers and parents was also raised during the interview with head teachers. The head teachers were complaining that parents do not take their responsibilities on ensuring the implementation of the curriculum. For instance one head of schools said;

*“Some parents do not see the importance of pre-primary education, that is why we are experiencing truancy among pupils and still parents do not show any reaction”.*

Failure of the parents to effectively cooperate with teachers may negatively affect the implementation of the curriculum. For example, if pupils are missing schools and parents do not communicate with teachers, it may not be possible for teachers to follow the pupils at home. Therefore, the missing pupils may not acquire the knowledge and skills planned to be acquired by pre-primary pupils.

### Strategies to Improve the Implementation of Pre-Primary Curriculum

The second research question aimed at finding out strategies that can be adopted so as to improve the implementation of pre-primary curriculum in public primary schools in Moshi municipality. Teachers and head teachers provided their suggestions. Teachers did while responding to an open ended item in their questionnaire while head teachers responded during interviews. Figure 2 presents responses from teachers.



Source: Field data (2025)

**Figure 2.**  
**Teachers' Responses on Possible Solutions**

Data in Figure 2 show that 18 (90%) of the teachers suggested the provision of training on pre-primary education as the best solution for improving the implementation of the pre-primary curriculum in public primary schools. This finding implies that the majority of pre-primary teachers still recognize gaps in their competence and the need for professional development to improve their effectiveness. These findings therefore signify the importance of continuous training programs for

pre-primary teachers. The findings are in agreement with the study by UNESCO (2021) which reported that sustained professional development is central to improving teacher effectiveness and ensuring quality learning in early childhood settings. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) observed that teachers who participate in regular training programs are more likely to adopt effective pedagogical practices and contribute positively to children's learning outcomes.

During interviews with head teachers, the issue of professional development was also raised as a critical need. This was made evident as one of the head teachers reported:

*"It is crucial for the government, in collaboration with education stakeholders, to organize seminars and workshops on the implementation of the curriculum. These seminars will equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to become effective implementers of the pre-primary curriculum" (personal interview).*

Another head teacher reinforced the same concern by noting:

*"Most teachers in Tanzania still need training to effectively implement the pre-primary curriculum. Seminars are a vital solution. The government, together with other stakeholders, should provide these opportunities to ensure teachers are well-equipped to deliver the curriculum successfully".*

The responses from these head teachers imply that professional development remains a critical factor for improving the implementation of the pre-primary curriculum. These findings are in agreement with the report by UNESCO (2021), which emphasized that continuous training and capacity-building initiatives are essential for enhancing teacher effectiveness in early childhood education. Similarly, Mgaya and Machumu (2022) reported that teachers who lack adequate professional preparation often struggle to apply age-appropriate teaching methods, which negatively affects learning outcomes. Thus, providing seminars and workshops in collaboration with education stakeholders can equip pre-primary teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge, enabling them to deliver the curriculum more effectively and improve the quality of early childhood education in Tanzanian schools.

Apart from teacher training, the issue of resources was raised by head teachers as another key area for improvement. One head teacher explained:

*"The government has to provide adequate teaching and learning resources in the schools. We need to have enough playing facilities including toys and other facilities of the like. These facilities are essential for enhancing the participation of children in different learning activities".*

Similar observation was made by another head teacher who had the following to say:

*“Many public pre-primary schools in Tanzania lack sufficient instructional materials and safe play areas. Providing these resources is crucial to ensure children can actively engage in classroom activities and benefit from practical learning experiences”.*

These quotations imply that even when teachers are professionally competent, the lack of sufficient and appropriate resources limits pupils’ engagement and learning outcomes. Adequate teaching materials and play facilities are essential for promoting practical, child-centered learning and ensuring that pre-primary pupils can acquire foundational skills effectively. These findings are supported by Malekela and Kalisa (2021), who observed that resource shortages in Tanzanian pre-primary schools constrain teachers’ ability to implement the curriculum fully and affect pupils’ holistic development. Similarly, Msuya (2020) reported that inadequate provision of instructional materials and play facilities reduces opportunities for experiential learning and active participation, which are critical components of early childhood education. Thus, the presence of sufficient teaching and learning resources is fundamental for improving both the quality and effectiveness of pre-primary education in Tanzania.

Parental engagement also emerged as a recurring issue during the interviews. One head teacher highlighted this by stating:

*“The parents should be sensitized on the importance of pre-primary education to their children. This will enhance their participation in education-related activities at the schools. Their involvement is essential as the schools can use the parents to make contributions and fund-raising activities to get financial resources for buying different materials”.*

This was further supported by the district education officer who said:

*“Parents need to be made aware of the value of pre-primary education. When they are informed, they are more likely to support school activities, monitor their children’s learning at home, and contribute resources to improve the classroom environment”.*

Responses from these key informants imply that parental engagement is a critical factor in the effective implementation of pre-primary education. The quotations suggest that sensitizing parents about the value of early childhood education can enhance their participation in school activities, support children’s learning at home, and contribute to resource mobilization for the schools. This aligns with findings by Chireshe and Chireshe (2010), who observed that active parental involvement

positively influences children's school readiness and learning outcomes in early education. Similarly, Olaleye and Omoniyi (2018) reported that parental awareness and engagement improve both attendance and the quality of learning experiences in pre-primary classrooms. Thus, promoting parental participation through sensitization programs and collaborative initiatives is essential for strengthening the learning environment and ensuring the successful delivery of the pre-primary curriculum in Tanzanian schools.

## Conclusion

Based on the study findings, it is concluded that the implementation of pre-primary education in the public schools in Tanzania is highly challenges. These challenges include insufficient teaching and learning resources, lack of teacher skills and knowledge, large class sizes, and limited cooperation between teachers and parents. Teachers reported that inadequate materials and play facilities restrict pupil engagement and hinder the development of essential cognitive, social, and physical skills. Many teachers also perceive themselves as underprepared to deliver the curriculum effectively, while some rely on personal experience rather than formal training. Overcrowded classrooms further limit the ability to provide individualized attention and apply learner-centered teaching methods. Additionally, low parental engagement reduces support for learning at home and limits contributions toward school resources. Strategies to improve curriculum implementation include providing targeted professional development such as seminars and workshops to strengthen teacher competence, ensuring the availability of age-appropriate teaching and play resources to facilitate active learning, and sensitizing parents to increase their participation in school activities and support children's learning.

## Recommendations

The government should organize workshops to equip pre-primary teachers with essential teaching skills, including lesson planning, classroom management and assessment techniques. Teachers should be encouraged to value pre-primary education, emphasizing its role in developing social skills. The community should support and motivate teachers to feel valued. Parents should be informed about the importance of pre-primary education to foster their active participation in their children's education.

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