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EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT TEACHERS` UNDERSTANDINGS OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND HOW THEY INCORPORATE IT IN THEIR PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES.

Abstract

The study establishes Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers` understandings of indigenous knowledge and how they incorporated indigenous knowledge (IK) into their pedagogical practices. The study was motivated by the growing call for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge into the education system in Zimbabwe. A qualitative research paradigm was adopted because this enabled me to obtain in-depth information from the teachers in their natural setting. A case study method was followed drawing on three schools which were purposively sampled to provide rich, in-depth data. The schools were drawn as one from the urban, peri-urban area and rural areas respectively. Semi- structured interviews; survey, observation and document analysis were used to collect data. The study comprised six (6) Early Childhood Development teachers and three (3) School Heads. Data were analysed in using thematic content analysis. The findings reveal that the Indigenous and western ECD programmes are running parallel to each other. Findings further reveal that tension exists between the more formal approach to ECD offered by schools and the play-based pedagogical approach which are widely advocated by those researching in the ECD space. It emerged that the ECD programme is being over formalised at the expense of a playful pedagogical approach that allows for the successful incorporation of IK. Further, findings reveal that most teachers who participated in this study could not effectively incorporate IK into their pedagogical practices. In cases where IK was incorporated, incorporation was minimal and often incidental in nature. This limited use of IK is fuelled by the

realisation that only three out of the nine participants had a reasonably good understanding of indigenous knowledge. The others showed a partial understanding. The teachers who showed a good understanding of indigenous knowledge are degree holders.

Key words: Early Childhood Development, ECD Curriculum; ECD Pedagogical Practices; ECD Policy, Indigenous Knowledge.