

## Using Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Teaching Early Literacy: A Case Study of Zambian Public Preschools

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**Abstract :** The education system in Zambia still bears scars of colonialism in the area of policy, curriculum and implementation. This historical context resulted in the failure by the Government of the Republic of Zambia to achieve literacy goals expected among school going children. Specifically, research shows that the use of English for initial literacy and Western based teaching methods to engage learners in literacy activities at lower levels of education including preschool has exacerbated this situation. In 2014, the Government of the Republic of Zambia implemented a new curriculum that, among others things, required preschool teachers to use local and cultural materials and familiar languages for early literacy teaching from preschool to grade 4. This paper presents findings from a study that sought to establish ways in which preschool teachers use Zambian Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous teaching strategies to support literacy development among preschool children. The study used Indigenous research methodology for data collection and iterative feature of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) in the data collection process and analysis. This study established that, as agents of education, preschool teachers represented community adult educators because of some roles which they played beyond their academic mandate. The study further found that classrooms as venues of learning were equipped with learning corners reflecting Indigenous literacy materials and Indigenous ways of learning. Additionally, the study found that learners were more responsive to literacy lessons because of the use of familiar languages and local contextualized environments that supported their own cultural ways of learning. The study recommended that if the education system in Zambia is to be fully inclusive of Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural ways of learning, the education policy and curriculum should include conscious steps on how this should be implemented at the classroom level. The study further recommended that more diverse local literacy materials and teaching aids should be produced for use in the classroom.

**Keywords :** agents of learning, early literacy, indigenous knowledge systems, venues of education

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