



A Child-Centred Discourse in Zambian Kindergartens?

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Abstract

This article aims to identify and discuss the existence and strengthening of a child-centred teaching discourse in Zambian kindergartens. The article is based on the understanding that the teacher-directed approach to teaching is a historically based hegemonic discourse within Zambian kindergartens. This means that the teacher-directed teaching discourse dominates thinking in many ways and is translated into institutional arrangements (Hajer, 1995, in Svarstad, 2005, p. 243). Several studies have pointed to the challenges posed by the teacher-directed teaching discourse in kindergartens in Sub-Saharan Africa as a hindrance of pedagogical quality in such institutions, pointing to a child-centred teaching discourse as an important path towards development (EFA, 2015, p. 208, Temba, 2014, p. 110; Mwaura et al., 2008; 2011). This article includes a positive discourse analysis of the Zambian Education Curriculum Framework² and a small-scale qualitative study, based on observations from four classrooms in four kindergartens in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. The article focuses on conducting a positive discourse analysis of the elements of child-centred teaching discourse observed in one of the four classrooms. The findings point to the existence of a child-centred teaching discourse in the Zambian Education Curriculum Framework. However, only one of the four Zambian kindergarten teachers seemed to implement teaching practices that could be identified as a child-centred teaching discourse. The elements of a child-centred teaching discourse identified through the positive discourse analysis were: the kindergarten teachers' professional decisions, good interaction with children, use of a variety of materials, and children's participation. The findings are discussed in light of the Zambian Education Curriculum Framework as well as theoretical perspectives on child-centred teaching discourse, argumentation theory and children's right to participation. Finally, the article includes a critical discussion of how the findings may strengthen a child-centred teaching discourse in Zambian kindergartens.

Keywords: Child-centred teaching, discourse, kindergarten, ECCDE, Zambia

Introduction

According to the Ministry of General Education in Zambia, the country's Copperbelt province has a 39 per cent estimated enrolment rate in kindergartens (MoGE, 2018). Current practices in Zambian kindergartens are commonly viewed as predominantly teacher-directed (Iruka et al., 2012, p. 139; Temba, 2014). The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (EFA) described

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² Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (2013). Zambia Education Curriculum Framework. Curriculum Development Centre.

the quality of early childhood education in Sub-Saharan Africa as an area of particular concern. Teaching is described as often age-inappropriate, where kindergartens are downward extensions of schooling, relying mainly on teacher-directed pedagogy and emphasising academic skill training from the age of three (EFA, 2015, p. 67). EFA described the need for schools to develop from teacher-dominated instructional practices to learner-centred approaches, as a vital part of developing the quality of the pedagogical processes in kindergartens (EFA, 2015, p. 208). While the terms learner-centred and child-centred have much in common, the latter may be more fitting when addressing the youngest children, as it also emphasises the important role of play and warm relations in addition to children having an active role in kindergarten settings (Chung & Walsh, 2000, p. 217; Stipek & Byler, 2004; Mwaura et al., 2008; 2011; Lerkkanen et al., 2012; Goble, 2014, p. 2). The term 'child-centred' has been prominent since the late 1800s, and remains central to the contemporary discourse of early childhood education (Chung & Walsh, 2000, p. 215). The term encompasses various meanings which may be divided into three main categories; the Fröbelian origins emphasising the value of play, the progression notion that children should guide their activities and the developmentalist notion, emphasising more instrumental approaches to children, learning, curriculum and assessment (Chung & Walsh, 2000; Wood 2007). Furthermore, critical voices are highlighting the unclear role of the kindergarten-teacher encompassed in the child-centred discourse, as well as ethical aspects concerning the western origins of child-centredness (Langford, 2010; Fallace, 2015). Yet, other studies underline the valuable contributions of child-centredness in Eastern Africa, when contextualized appropriately (Mwaura et al., 2008; 2011, Akello et al., 2016). Drawing from literature about learner-centredness, it may seem that the importance of fostering critical reflection is lacking in the literature on child-centredness (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1972; Schweisfurth, 2013). In the following study the term *kindergarten* is used as a common term for the institutions that provide early childhood care, development and education (ECCDE) for children age 0–6 in Zambia (Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, 2013).

The lack of information and standards regarding Zambian kindergartens reflects the need for documentation, research and development of the quality in Zambian kindergartens (EFA, 2016 and 2015; Iruka et al., 2012). Several studies have highlighted the importance of quality in early childhood care and development education (ECCDE) experiences, especially for poor and vulnerable children (Iruka et al., 2012, p. 128; McCoy et al., 2017, p. 485). A recent study from Zambia found significant associations between children's enrolment in ECCDE and school readiness, especially the development of fine motor skills, and a moderate effect on letter naming, nonverbal reasoning, and executive functions (McCoy et al., 2017, p. 499). While even relatively poor provision brings some benefits, the better the quality, the greater the gain. (McCoy et al., 2017, p. 500; EFA, 2015, p. 68). Much of the attention on monitoring quality in ECCDE has focused on quantitative measures – such as child/teacher ratios, class sizes, teacher qualifications, access to water and good hygiene or availability of materials. However, studies have shown modest correlations between improvement of quantitative measures and kindergarten performance at the classroom or programme level (EFA, 2016, p. 211). One of the sustainability goals of The United Nations Development Programme is quality education. Among the target goals are that all children have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education, by 2030 (EFA, 2016, p. 7). This article focuses on the quality of pedagogical processes in

kindergartens by seeking to identify and discuss the existence and strengthening of a child-centred teaching discourse (CCTD) in Zambian kindergartens. A previous project and study on pedagogical approaches in Zambian schools resonate with the emphasis on pedagogical process quality in this study (Stephens & Harber, 2009). The CCTD may also be related to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), with special reference to Article 12, which underlines children's right to express their views freely in all matters affecting the child. A CCTD values and emphasises children's participation and contributions in kindergarten (CRC/C/GC/7/rev1 2006, p. 7). Zambia ratified the UNCRC in 1991 and is vigorously seeking to ensure basic rights for all children (Morgan, 2013).

Based on the data collection and studies, the following research questions are raised:

- (1) Are there elements of a child-centred teaching discourse in the *ZCEF for ECCDE*?
- (2) Are there elements of a child-centred teaching discourse in the selected Zambian kindergarten classroom?
- (3) How can the findings help strengthen a CCTD in Zambian kindergartens?

Child-centred and teacher-directed teaching discourses

The term 'teaching discourses' is used in a wide sense and includes both teaching practices and the formal curriculum. A common way of categorising teaching is by differentiating between child-centred versus teacher-directed teaching. (Lerkkanen et al., 2012; Stipek & Byler, 2004; Goble, 2014). In their purest form, the two teaching discourses have quite different views of the main roles, aims and focus of the communication and relationship between the kindergarten teacher and child. A teacher-directed teaching discourse (TDTD) commonly means that the teacher dominates the instructional conversation and children's participation is limited. Tasks are designed to help children learn facts or procedures. A TDTD also implies that the teacher rigidly holds children accountable for attaining a universal standard, which is assessed with the use of various standardised tests. The teacher engages children in rote activities and imposes discipline without explanation or discussion, and with inconsistent consequences (Lerkkanen et al., 2012; Stipek & Byler, 2004). In the kindergarten context of Zambia, teaching and learning are mainly emphasised in formal sessions within a traditional classroom (Iruka et al., 2012, p. 139).

In this article, the notion of CCTD is primarily based on the works of Fröbel 1887, Dewey 1916, Bruner 1966 and Vygotsky, 1978, all of whom subscribed to the recognition of small children as active knowledge-constructors through everyday situations. A CCTD is characterised by a combination of teacher and children making choices. The teacher provides opportunities for cooperative, small-group activities that promote peer interaction (Lerkkanen et al., 2012, p. 268). Within a CCTD, the teacher's role varies between facilitating guided and unguided play, interaction with children where they explore and reflect about meaningful topics based on children's interests, making learning a shared responsibility of teacher and children (Lerkkanen et al., 2012; Goble, 2014, p. 10;). A CCTD also highlights the importance of care and warm relations, children's participation, smooth conflict resolution, and consequences that are appropriate and applied equally (Stipek & Byler, 2004, p. 391; Mwaura et al., 2008; 2011; Lerkkanen et al., 2012, p. 268; Bae, 2012, p. 61; Bae, 2018). Also, several studies indicate that

the best ways for children in kindergarten age to develop, both in terms of short-term and long-term effects, is through various forms of child-centred approaches (Mwaura et al., 2008; 2011; Sommer et al., 2013, p. 472; Sommer, 2015, p. 74).

The historical legacy of the teacher-directed teaching discourse in Zambian kindergartens

The first assumption that underpins most discourse analytical approaches is that we are fundamentally historical and cultural beings, and our knowledge about the world is a product of historically situated interchanges among people (Gergen, 1985, in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). Historically, kindergarten education and care in Sub-Saharan Africa have been highly influenced by the Infant School System, a British imperialistic model that was transported to the colonies in the 19th century. The infant school curriculum included moral and religious lessons taught mechanically to large numbers of mixed-age classes (Prochner & Kabiru, 2008). Common features such as large classes, with children behind desks who mainly repeat after the teacher, still resemble the teacher-directed teaching discourse in Zambian kindergartens (Iruka et al., 2012). This imperialistic model is understood as an influential model in the development of a taken-for-granted TDTD in kindergartens in Zambia (Burr, 1995, p. 3; Gergen, 1985, pp. 266–267, in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5).

Methods

The selected kindergartens, classes and kindergarten teachers

The kindergartens used for this study were the same as those to which Oslo Metropolitan University sent bachelor's degree students in their last year of early childhood education (ECE) training, for three months of alternative practice placement in Zambia. The selection of these kindergartens was conducted by a local contact person working with the training of kindergarten teachers in Zambia. The kindergartens were selected based on representing a diversity of the existing kindergartens in the area, with regard to factors such as economy, size and ownership.

The four Zambian kindergartens and classes included in this study are situated in an urban area of the Copperbelt province. All of the kindergartens are private. Two of the classes were for 1–2-year-old children, including 20–32 children. The third class was a combination of baby class and nursery, for 18 months–3-year-olds, with 28 children. The final class was a combination of nursery and reception classes with 32 3–6-year-old children. Each class had one kindergarten teacher. All of the kindergarten teachers had at least two-to-three years of education as primary school teachers. Two of the teachers also had formal education as kindergarten teachers, either in addition or as part of the three years of teacher education. The kindergartens varied in terms of the socio-economic status of the parents, as well as the material resources in the kindergartens. The physical environment in three of the four classes had a strong resemblance to traditional classrooms, where desks and chairs/benches took up most of the floor space, and in the front, there was a teacher's desk and a blackboard.

Observations

A combination of unstructured participant and non-participant observations were used by four students from Oslo Metropolitan University, in four kindergarten classes for 10 weeks in 2015 (Wadel, 1991). All of the students had previous training in observation methods, as well as experience with observations in Norwegian kindergartens. Each of the students wrote four stories from practice about events from the classrooms. Birkeland defined stories from practice as “selfmade stories by adults and children about the kindergarten. Stories from practice are about limited situations where the interaction between the participants is presented in detail and personally, the way in which the storyteller experienced the situation” (Birkeland, 1998, p. 15 – my translation). Stories from practice are selected and written on the basis that they are perceived by the participant or non-participant observer to be special events that stand out in a positive, negative or surprising way. The intention of writing the story from practice is to be able to evaluate and reflect critically on the event that took place and develop practices and reflections in the kindergarten (Birkeland, 1998; 2003).

The personal aspect of stories from practice could be criticised for being an overly subjective form of observations to be used in research. On the other hand, the subjective approach may also be seen as a transparent approach and accepting that an observer will never be able to be objective. It is thereby relevant to be aware that the Norwegian students’ and my selection, writing, interpretation as well as discussion of stories from practice will be coloured by our Norwegian background, where a CCTD commonly is emphasised in the kindergarten sector (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2018, p. 15). This could also mean that the students and I are especially able to identify a CCTD in kindergarten settings.

The students sent their stories from practice and reflections to me, in my capacity as both their teacher and co-researcher. In addition to the stories from practice, the students also wrote a daily personal log about their daily observations and reflections in the kindergartens. The students used their logs as a recourse in connection with conversations and email correspondence with me during this study. Before the students went on practice placement, they received an orientation about this research project, as well as two courses emphasising cultural, societal and educational aspects of the Sub-Saharan African context. Thereafter, the students signed a form if they consented to their written observations being used for research purposes. The inclusion of students in research is highly encouraged at universities and colleges in Norway and internationally (Melkers, 2009; Jokstad et al., 2013). An ethical issue is whether students feel pressured to sign the consent because of the power relation between student and lecturer. We stressed that consent was voluntary and would not have an effect on the assessment of the students. Generally, Norwegian culture is associated with small power distance, meaning that there is relatively little distance between people in a position of power and those affected by power (Hofstede, 2001 in Samovar et al., 2007, p. 146). The kindergartens were informed about the students’ assignments, and the Zambian kindergarten teachers signed an information letter where they agreed that the students’ observations could be used for research purposes.

While the students were in practice placement, I visited the four kindergartens for half a day each and interviewed the local kindergarten teachers. Data from the interviews are not included in this article mainly because I was not allowed to interview the kindergarten teacher who facilitated the classes upon which this article is based. The senior leader decided that I should interview the head of the kindergarten department. The kindergarten was co-located with a

primary school. After I visited the kindergartens, I discussed my impressions and the interviews with the Norwegian students to get a more holistic understanding. The kindergarten teachers gave their consent to my discussing the content from the interviews with the students.

The researcher role of the students and I in this study may be defined as “outsiders”, since we were in Zambia for a limited time, which may have led to limitations in our ability to grasp aspects and nuances of the Zambian culture and context (Swadener & Mutua, 2008). This may pose some limitations on the accounts of what was observed and the interpretations of the two texts analysed in this study. Preferably, the article would have been written together with a Zambian “insider”, as this would have strengthened the study as a form of decolonizing research (Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

Choice of story from practice

The topic and theme tool analysis of the 16 stories from practice indicated that the following topics surfaced as the most common (Gee, 2014, p. 201):

- (1) The dominant role of teacher-directed teaching and its challenges
- (2) The local kindergarten teachers’ use of threats or ridiculing children who did not follow instructions.
- (3) Challenges related to the transition into kindergartens for children in baby classes

This article focuses on Topic 1 and, based on five years of experience as a teacher in the programme that sends students on practice placement, my impression is that a TDTD had all along been a dominant teaching pattern in the selected Zambian kindergartens. However, in this article I have made an information-oriented selection of an unusual case, based on the expectation that there is potential to learn about CCTD for Zambian kindergartens through the case (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230). The story from practice was chosen on the basis that it may challenge the hegemonic discourse of TDTD in Zambian kindergartens. In the analysis and discussions of the story from practice, I also draw on supplementary student observations from the four selected kindergartens, to enrich the contextual descriptions. Since the students wrote their stories from practice in Norwegian, I have translated the selected stories into English.

Discourse analysis

The analysis relates to the more general philosophical assumptions that underpin most discourse analytical approaches, drawing from accounts of social constructionism (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). Discourses are defined as ways of understanding the world or some part of it, viewed as a socially constructed meaning system (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Svarstad, 2005). The article is inspired by positive discourse analysis (PDA). Macgilchrist (2007) described PDA as analysing the discourses we like, rather than those we wish to criticise. Martin (2004) related PDA to an alternative approach, seeking to bring about positive change by analysing processes that may serve as models in future development within society. The approach to PDA in this article may be related to what Macgilchrist (2007) termed ‘inversion’, which means challenging the mainstream view by identifying and arguing that an alternative view exists. PDA is regarded as a complementary form of critical discourse analysis (Macgilchrist, 2007). This article includes a brief PDA of the elements of CCTD found in the Zambian Education

Curriculum Framework (ZCEF)³ and an elaborate PDA of an observation from one kindergarten classroom in Zambia, based on a small-scale qualitative study. This article uses a selection of tools for applied discourse analysis, with special emphasis on the predicates and subjects in the ZCEF and the selected classroom observation (Gee, 2014). According to Gee, “The predicate is the verb and anything following it that the verb links to the subject...The predicate gives information about the subject” (Gee, 2014, p. 24). By analysing the subjects and the predicates in the curriculum and the classroom observation, we believe we can see an emphasis on what is defined as a CCTD. The analysis also includes the use of argumentation theory, based on Aristotle’s understanding of rhetoric (Sandvik, 2013). The choice of PDA implies the acknowledgment of pedagogical qualities in the Zambian kindergarten system and thereby seeking to counteract a common pitfall within eurocentrism, often having a one-sided and negative emphasis when Europeans describe and discuss the pedagogical processes in kindergartens in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nsamenang & Lo-Oh, 2010; EFA, 2015; 2016).

Results

Elements of a child-centred teaching discourse in the Zambian Education Curriculum Framework

In 2013 the Zambian government launched a revised national Education Framework (ZECF), which included the education of children from zero until secondary school, as well as the curriculum for Teacher Education for these schools. The national curriculum was partly issued as a tool to help deal with challenges related to quality issues in the decentralised model of Early Childhood Education after the 1960s (Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, 2013, p. 5). A short section in the ZECF is about ECCDE, which concerns children from 0–6 years of age. (Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, 2013, p. 26). The section emphasises the holistic development of children’s physical, social, emotional, aesthetical, cognitive, spiritual, and moral development. Below is an analysis of the descriptions of the kindergarten concepts found in the ECCDE section of the ZECF, focusing on the predicates and subjects (Gee, 2014, p. 24).

Table 1. The ZECF section about ECCDE, divided into subjects and predicates

No.	Subjects	Predicates
1	The day-care centres for the 0–2-year-olds	provide care, affection and love (to the children)
2	Nursery classes, for children aged 3–4 years,	focus on promoting social interaction of young children from different social backgrounds by providing playmates and play resources.
3	The reception level, for children aged 5–6 years, is a preparatory stage for entry into Grade 1.	The teaching and learning at this level is largely informal, through guided and unguided play, with formal teaching taking up only 40 per cent of the programme

The emphasis given in Predicates 1–3 about how to provide care and development for the 0-6-year-old children in the ZECF has several parallels with a CCTD. The focus on a holistic development in a variety of learning areas, promoting social interaction, where various forms of play are valued, is strikingly similar to the above-described dimensions in a CCTD. Thus, through the curriculum, the educational authorities seem to contribute to the production of a counter-discourse to the hegemonic TDTD. The ZCEF may be interpreted as an indication that development towards a complementary CCTD is embraced by the Zambian educational authorities at the national level. After Zambia achieved independence in 1964, there are grounds for believing that foreign experts played a significant role in framing the national education policy documents (Ministry of Education, Education Sector, 2010, p. X; Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, 2013, p. 2; Serpell, 2018). This points to the importance of problematizing and contextualizing purportedly universal theories in the formulation of ECCDE advocated by international organisations such as UNICEF and WHO (Schweisfurth, 2013; Morelli et al., 2018).

Elements of a CCTD in the selected Zambian kindergarten classroom

A main focus of this study was to conduct a PDA of a story from practice from a classroom of 28 children, aged from 18 months to three years of age. The local kindergarten teacher and the Norwegian student were both present and working together during the chosen story from practice. The local kindergarten teacher only had training as a primary school teacher but had several years of experience from working with kindergarten children. The classroom was a small room filled with tables and chairs. The Norwegian student described a teaching pattern, which lasted at least a week, in the following story from practice:

This week the Zambian kindergarten teacher had decided that they should only have one session of teaching and one session with expressive arts each day. The children enjoyed making flowers, trees, the sky and grass. We used various materials for the different parts of the picture. The sky and grass were made with yarn, which the children glued on. The flowers were made of cardboard, which the children painted. We also took handprints of the children's hands. The kindergarten teacher listened a lot to the children during these activities, and children were allowed to choose what colours they wanted to use. The teacher sat down at the children's level during the activity. The teacher had conversations with the children and was no longer the one shouting at the children and scolding them.

The children really enjoyed these expressive arts activities and they were very eager to help getting everything done. A three-year-old boy came over and said: "If it's like this in kindergarten every day, then I really want to come.

Table 2 below is included to illuminate the actions taking place in the story from practice, called predicates. The table also clarifies who is involved in the various actions in the story from practice (Gee, 2014, p. 24).

Table 2. The story from practice, divided into subjects and predicates

No.	Subjects	Predicates
1-4	The Zambian kindergarten teacher's actions	
1	Zambian kindergarten teacher	decided that they should only have one session of teaching, and one session with expressive arts each day
2	The kindergarten teacher	listened a lot to the children during these activities
3	The teacher	sat down at the children's level during the activity.
4	The teacher	had conversations with the children and was no longer the one shouting at the children and scolding them
5-6	The Norwegian student, Zambian kindergarten teacher and children's actions	
5	We	used various materials for the different parts of the picture. The sky and grass was made with yarn, which the children glued on. The flowers were made of cardboard, which the children painted.
6	We	also took handprints of the children's hands.
7-9	The Children's actions	
7	The children	enjoyed making flowers, trees, the sky and grass
8	children	were allowed to choose what colours they wanted to use.
9	The children	really enjoyed these expressive arts activities, and they were very eager to help getting everything done

The analysis of the story from practice will refer to the numbering of the various predicates in the table above and argue that they are indications of a CCTD.

The kindergarten teacher makes a professional decision

According to Predicate 1, the kindergarten teacher makes a professional decision of including a session of expressive arts every day. Professionalism means that the kindergarten teacher relies on relevant knowledge, the formal mandate and values in the ZCEF (Østrem & Hennem, 2016). When the student asked the kindergarten teacher why she chose to have expressive arts instead of ordinary subjects, she answered: "If we focus too much on those subjects, it wouldn't be fun to come to kindergarten. And it would be sad if the children should feel that way at an age of 2–3 years". According to Gee, the reference to "those subjects" is a form of deixis tool that makes assumptions about what the listener already knows or can figure out (Gee, 2014, p. 17). The reference to "ordinary subjects" and "those subjects" in the story from practice is interpreted as the learning areas, which the ZCEF terms as "pre-mathematics and "pre-literacy and language". According to the student's observations, these are the learning areas that are most commonly emphasised in the four kindergartens. According to the ZCEF, kindergartens in Zambia should spend 3.5 hours on each of the three learning areas: expressive arts, pre-literacy and language, as well as pre-mathematics. Spending half of the day on expressive arts and half of the day on another learning area is in line with the ZCEF. The kindergarten teacher's

argumentation about the importance of kindergarten being “fun” can be seen as a form of *pathos*, emphasising reasoning that includes children’s views and feelings when making professional decisions, thereby acknowledging children’s right to participation (Sandvik, 2013, Committee on the Rights of The Child (CRC/C/GC/7), 2006, p. 7). Prior to the Zambian teacher’s decision, the Norwegian student had described some of her impressions from her first days in the classroom in the following story from practice:

The first days that I was in the kindergarten, the children were to learn the letter A. First they sang an alphabet song. Then the teacher pointed at the letter A on the wall. The children were to repeat. Afterwards, the children received paper, in order to write A and colour. All children needed help in order to do the assignment the way the local teacher wanted them to. Therefore, the children had to sit and wait for help. When children didn’t manage to sit still, the local teacher told them to behave. After the class about letters, they had lunch. Thereafter they had a class about the number 1. So, there was not much time for other things. The children received a piece of paper with the number 1, where they were to write the number on. After this, each child was to come up to the blackboard to write the number. Some children managed, and the whole class clapped; others did not, and the response to the child was: “You managed, almost”.

This story provides background to the local teacher’s decision to include an expressive arts session each day. The story from practice also provides a relevant example of what may be categorised as a quite typical form of TDTD in the selected Zambian kindergarten classrooms.

Good interactions with children

According to Predicates 2, 3 and 4, the kindergarten teacher also shows an emphasis on good interactions with the children, which is a central aspect of a CCTD. The Norwegian student seems to point out in Predicate 4 that the kindergarten teachers’ way of interacting with the children during the expressive arts sessions is more positive than during classes with an ordinary subject. It seems that the expressive arts class offered particularly good opportunities to cultivate warm relations with the children, which is important within a CCTD (Mwaura et al., 2008; 2011; Lerkkanen et al., 2012, p. 268, Stipek & Byler, 2004, p. 391). The descriptions of the kindergarten teachers’ attentive and sensitive approach have a strong resemblance to what the Committee on the Rights of the Child described as a child-centred attitude, which they link to facilitating children’s right to participation:

To achieve the [children’s] right of participation requires adults to adopt a child-centred attitude, listening to young children and respecting their dignity and their individual points of view. It also requires adults to show patience and creativity by adapting their expectations to a young child’s interests, levels of understanding and preferred ways of communicating (CRC/C/GC/7/, 2006, p. 7).

According to Bae, such interactional patterns give opportunities to validate the child’s thoughts and feelings, and for the child to draw positive conclusions about their own value in a learning context (Bae, 1995, p. 455; 2001; 2018, p. 148).

Children and adults using a variety of materials

According to Predicates 5 and 6, the expressive arts class involved the use of a variety of materials such as yarn, cardboard, glue and various painting techniques. Compared with the other three kindergartens, this kindergarten was viewed as averagely rich. The Norwegian

student commented in her reflection over this story from practice that she was impressed with the ability of the kindergarten to make use of recycled materials for teaching purposes. In line with a CCTD, this way of using the materials seems to have given opportunities for children's participation and cooperation through guided and unguided exploration and play (Fröbel, 1887; Bruner, 1966; Vygotsky, 1978). In the other three Zambian kindergartens, the teachers provided a limited variety of materials for the children to explore, play and learn. The main materials used in these classes were paper, pencils, the blackboard and the occasional use of English songs. Lack of teaching materials and furniture are some of the major challenges regarding implementing child-centred approaches in schools in Sub-Saharan Africa (EFA, 2015, p. 208).

The children's non-verbal and verbal appreciation

According to Predicates 7, 8 and 9, the expressive arts classes are interpreted as a positive experience for the children, using descriptions such as "enjoyed", "really enjoyed" and "very eager". This is in line with the kindergarten teachers' indirectly described intention of making it "fun to be in kindergarten". Furthermore, the student describes that the children "were allowed to choose what colours they wanted to use". Within a CCTD there is commonly a mixture of teacher and children making choices. The expressive arts sessions seem to have given the children opportunities to express their views freely, in line with the UNCRC.

A CCTD emphasises opportunities for cooperative and small-group activities that promote peer interaction. The expressive arts classes seem to have involved positive cooperative group processes, and the Norwegian student commented that the children were "very eager to help getting everything done". The story from practice mainly describes what the student perceived to be the children's views. However, at the end of the story from practice, the student included a quotation, which enabled us to get more first-hand information about the view of a three-year-old boy: "If it's like this in kindergarten every day, then I really want to come." This comment from the child seems to reveal that the professional decision of including the daily expressive arts classes, based on principles of CCTD, had a very positive appeal on the child's experience of well-being in the kindergarten, much in line with previously mentioned results from Bae's research (Bae, 1995; 2001; 2018).

The PDA of the chosen story from practice in a Zambian kindergarten has identified that the expressive arts classes seem to fulfil the previously described markers of a CCTD. The kindergarten teachers' expressive arts class and professional reasoning have been discussed in light of the ZCEF, theoretical perspectives on the CCTD, children's right to participation, as well as argumentation theory.

Discussion of how the results could help strengthen a CCTD in Zambian kindergartens

The results are discussed critically in light of three aspects that may be related to strengthening CCTD Zambian kindergartens: Strengthening professional reasoning, processual quality, and structural conditions.

Strengthening professional reasoning

The story from practice indicates that the Zambian kindergarten teacher had the necessary professionalism and confidence to plan and implement a CCTD in a Zambian kindergarten context. However, the teacher did not refer explicitly to the ZECF in her explanation of why she chose to have Expressive Arts. The teacher's professional reasoning could have been strengthened if it had also included explicit inferences from both the ZECF, research about young children, as well as an ethical argumentation for her reflections on actions. This type of reasoning is referred to as *logos* and *ethos* within argumentation theory and would have supplemented the kindergarten teachers previously mentioned *pathos* aspects of professional reasoning (Sandvik, 2013).

One could also question whether the kindergarten teacher was working fully in line with the ZECF when the first half of the day was spent on formal teaching for 2–4-year-old children. According to the ZECF, formal teaching is prescribed only for the 5–6-year-old children, and should only take up 40 per cent of their programme.⁴ However, in sub-Saharan African countries, the basic tenets of CCTD may conflict with local understanding of authority structures, obedience and teacher–child relationships (EFA, 2015, p. 209). In light of this, the Zambian kindergarten teacher modelled remarkable confidence and autonomy in her professional decisions to implement CCTD, despite possible cultural or structural obstacles. The historical legacy and studies indicating the dominating role of TDTD in Zambian kindergartens seem to indicate a need for research and monitoring of how the ZECF is interpreted by stakeholders and implemented by kindergarten teachers in Zambia.

Strengthening pedagogical process quality

Is it possible to implement the principles of CCTD from the expressive arts classes in other learning areas? According to several studies, a CCTD is a recommended way for children to develop a meaningful understanding of mathematics, natural science, language as well as social skills (Sommer, 2015, p. 71; Mwaura et al., 2008; 2011). According to a longitudinal effect study of a child-centred intervention programme in East African kindergartens, the essential aspect were the use and choice of locally available and affordable materials for children to explore and experiment with, under the guidance of warm and stimulating personnel (Mwaura et al., 2008; 2011). Drawing from such relevant studies and the chosen story from practice in this article, one could assume that a CCTD is a relevant approach in all subject areas in the ZECF. In that regard, the ZECF also encourages valuing indigenous heritage and thoughts that could fit in the local and national situations. Several researchers of kindergartens in Africa have emphasised the importance of indigenous heritage and language in educational settings (Nsamenang & Lo-Oh, 2010, p. 390; Temba, 2014; Mwaura et al., 2008; 2011). According to the ZECF, the language of instruction in kindergartens should be a familiar Zambian language.⁵ However, only one of the four kindergartens in this study used a familiar local language as the language of instruction. Apart from this, none of the kindergartens seemed to actively value indigenous heritage in their interaction with children. With regard to playing resources and

⁴ Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education 2013. Zambia Curriculum Education Framework in Lusaka. Curriculum Development Centre.

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⁵ Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, 2013, p. iv and 19.

language, there also seems to be a need for exploration and research into how indigenous heritage and local culture may contribute to the strengthening of pedagogical process quality when implementing CCTD in all learning areas described in the ZCEF.

Strengthening structural conditions

A final question is whether the Zambian kindergarten teacher would have decided to implement a CCTD if she had been the only adult in the classroom, with around 28 children aged 2 and 3? Based on observations from the selected kindergartens, the common situation would be one local teacher per classroom, with 20–32 children. As previously mentioned, quantitative measures such as large classes, a lack of supportive environment and teacher training are viewed as some of the challenges related to implementing a CCTD in schools in Sub-Saharan countries (EFA, 2015, p. 208). A final area for further research would be the possibilities and hindrances related to current structural conditions, or the lack thereof, with regards to planning and implementation of the ZCEF and CCTD in Zambian kindergartens.

Summary and conclusion

The PDA in this article has identified the existence of a CCTD in the policy document, ZCEF. This may indicate that the TDTD no longer has a hegemonic position, and could instead be seen as a leading discourse since it alone does not dominate perceptions of the teaching discourse in Zambia (Svarstad 2005, p. 243). However, the observations indicated the existence of a CCTD in only one out of the four selected kindergartens. The elements of a CCTD identified were: the kindergarten teachers' professional decision, good interaction, use of a variety of materials, and children's participation. These findings were discussed in light of how they may contribute to strengthening the CCTD in Zambian kindergartens in three aspects: professional reasoning, pedagogical process quality and structural conditions. The future aim should be to strengthen the CCTD towards becoming a leading discourse in Zambian kindergartens, in line with the ZCEF and children's right to participation in the UNCRC. This would represent an important contribution towards reaching the UN's sustainability target 4.2 of ensuring the provision of quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education by 2030 in Zambia (EFA, 2016, p. 7). The possible co-existence of TDTD and CCTD as leading discourses in Zambian kindergartens may be resolved through continuous and critical reflections of their validity and implications, with reference to professional reasoning in light of the dimensions of argumentation theory; logos, ethos and pathos.

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