

# Culturally Relevant Play-Based Pedagogy as a Panacea for Implementing Early Childhood Development Curriculum: A Synopsis of Zvishavane District.

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## Abstract

*Educational practices in Early Childhood Development (ECD) environments continue to evolve globally, in pursuit for sustainable education. Modern trends in education had seen play-based pedagogy tremendously gaining recognition in ECD settings. This study delineates the richness of culturally relevant play-based pedagogy as a panacea for implementing the ECD Curriculum in Zvishavane District of the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. A mixed paradigm coursing a mixed approach and a descriptive survey design formed this study's methodology. Fifty ECD teachers and ten Teachers-in-Charge were purposively selected from ten ECD environments in the District, to form the study's sample. Questionnaires, interviews and observations were data collection instruments used. The study found out that the utilisation of the culturally relevant play-based pedagogy was marred by a number of barricades, where some ECD educators were having limited knowledge on how to contextually utilise play for curriculum implementation, thereby becoming less confident in their educational practices. Community skepticism, cultural erosion, lack of cultural competences and training, higher academic expectations by parents, lack of access to digital resources and tools and limited digital skills, rigid curriculum and unsupportive educational policies were impeding on the endeavours to revitalise culturally relevant play-based pedagogies in the implementation of the ECD curriculum. The study therefore recommends the utilisation of culturally relevant resources in embracing culturally relevant play-based pedagogy for implementing the ECD curriculum. Multi-stakeholder collaboration, teacher empowerment to develop cultural competence, formulation of culturally supportive policies, availing digital devices and empowering ECD educators to use these resources and tools were seen as a necessity to support culturally relevant play-based pedagogies for the effective implementation of the ECD curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Culturally Relevant Play-Based Pedagogy; Culture; Panacea; Early Childhood Development (ECD); ECD Curriculum.

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## 1. Introduction

Culturally relevant play-based pedagogy is pivotal in instilling the sense of cultural identity and pride among Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners. As a delicate phase in human life, education at ECD level should lay a fundamental base for future learning, socialisation, moral, emotional and physical development which are culturally relevant to the life a people. For this reason, the effective implementation of the ECD curricula is considered as a critical component in