

**An Exploration of How The Beliefs and Self-Perceptions of Early
Childhood Teachers Influence Their Classroom Practice**

by

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Abstract

Early childhood education in Jamaica has been given more importance due to the impact of changes in the global context. One such change is the adaptation of revised developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) into the Jamaica's early childhood curriculum and classroom pedagogy. How DAP is adapted and implemented depends not only on the teachers' knowledge and skills, but also on Jamaican traditional culture. This collision of post-colonial global knowledge of child development and pedagogy and the cultural and historical development of early childhood education in Jamaica, has created some tension in how early childhood education is delivered locally. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the beliefs and self-perceptions of five early childhood teachers in Jamaica and how their beliefs were reflected in their classroom practices. Through classroom observations, interviews, and focus groups, this research gave the five teachers the opportunity to voice their beliefs about DAP's child-centered pedagogy. The teachers strongly believed in the importance of child-centered learning, no matter the type of institution in which they teach. However, their teaching styles showed varying differences based on DAP's principles. Classroom practices demonstrated both developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices, but there were practices which were not readily identified as either developmentally appropriate or inappropriate.

Several personal, professional and cultural factors influenced the extent to which the teachers' were able to implement DAP. These factors include the teachers' personal and professional experiences and culture-based practices appropriate to the various school settings and present in the Jamaican culture. Results from the data also confirm existing research on the influences of teacher's belief systems on their classroom practices, and problematise the legacy of post-colonial influences. The study concludes with recommendations for reform plans for Jamaican early childhood institutions, and for professional development, in order to improve the quality of early childhood education and care.

Dedication

While preparing this dissertation, my son Adrian was diagnosed with kidney cancer. The news shattered the entire family, but Adrian's strength and determination to survive served as an inspiration to complete this journey. To you Adrian, I dedicate this dissertation. This dissertation is also dedicated to my mother Beryl Cowie for your unselfish love to me. To my husband Patrick, for your endless love, care, and unwavering support; I could not have done this without you. To my other beautiful children, Jordan, Jodi-Ann and Sean – I am so honoured to be your Mommy!

Finally, to my sister Janet, my brothers Val, Ronald and Richard, and my dear friends Craig, Georgia, Rosie and Kerri-Ann for cheering me along to the finish line.

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The Journey

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice --
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do --
determined to save
the only life you could save.

~ Mary Oliver ~

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Abbreviation

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCPA	Child Care and Protection Act
CDA	Child Development Agency
CPOA	Caribbean Plan of Action
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practices
DAPA	Developmentally Appropriate Practices/Activities
DIP	Developmentally Inappropriate Practices
DIPA	Developmentally Inappropriate Practices/Activities
EC	Early Childhood
ECC	Early Childhood Commission
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECECD	Early Childhood Education, Care and Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECI	Early Childhood Institution
EFA	Education for All
HEART	Human Employment and Resource Training
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NCTVET	National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training
PIOJ	Planning Institute of Jamaica
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Glossary

Jones, Brown and Brown (2011) provided the following definitions of the types of early childhood institutions that exist in Jamaica as well as the personnel who serve children in the sector.

Types of Early Childhood Institutions (ECIs)

- a) **Preschool** - includes all ECIs for children from three to six years. The school is privately owned, by either an individual, corporation or faith-based institution and operate with private fees and fund-raising.
- b) **Kindergarten of Preparatory School** - Preparatory schools are private institutions for children ages three to twelve. Kindergartens serve children three through to six years.
- c) **Basic School** - A community-owned school operated by an individual, Trust, or faith-based institution. Considered “recognised” if the institution meets a set of basic requirements of the Ministry of Education are for the purpose of receiving subsidies to staff salaries and sometimes for nutrition supplies and learning materials.
- d) **Day Care Centre** - usually refers to full-day programmes for young children up through the age of three.
- e) **Infant Department** - sections of public primary or All Age schools which operate like a basic school for children ages four and five, prior to entrance to Grade One.
- f) **Infant School** - Government owned schools which operate under similar Ministry supervision as the basic schools.
- g) **Early Childhood Institution** - the term used in the 2005 Early Childhood Act to describe a setting that provides developmentally appropriate care, stimulation, education and socialisation, for children under the age of six years, including day care centres and basic schools.

Early Childhood Personnel

- a) **Caregiver** – term used for persons who care for infants and young children in day care settings.
- b) **Trained /Qualified Teacher** - ECI staff who have obtained some level of formal training in early childhood education and who work in preschool/basic school settings.

- c) **Early childhood practitioner** – a generic term more recently adopted to apply to all of the above categories of worker, without reference to level of training. (Jones, Brown and Brown, 2011, p. 16)

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

“to understand teaching from teachers’ perspectives, we have to understand the beliefs with which they define their work” (Nespor, 1987, p. 323)

Background

As a reflective practitioner, I have often wondered about and reflected upon the role beliefs play in the teaching and learning process. I have also often wondered about the impact beliefs, whether positive or negative may have on the relationships teachers have with students, parents, and their own colleagues. During my career as a teacher, many relationships, systems, and contexts have influenced and impacted on my own classroom practices.

According to Thorsen (2008), “Beliefs will always be part of our lives whether it is everyday activities, theories, philosophies, or the art of teaching.” (p 2). This point is further reinforced by Myers (2004) who alluded to the fact that practice may also affect beliefs. At a time when the early childhood education sector in Jamaica is implementing several curricula reforms influenced by the ideals of Western goals of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP), it is important to examine the beliefs and perceptions held by teachers in the sector. This is especially relevant in light of the fact that some of these goals may be unconnected to Jamaica’s cultural values, beliefs and educational priorities. Our practices have been influenced by our colonised past and Cannella and Viruru (2004) claimed that justification for the “the continued use of outdated practices and attitudes need to be challenged.” (p. vii). This study sought to do just that.

The aim of this study was to explore the lives of five Jamaica early childhood teachers and their beliefs about developmentally appropriate classroom practices. The study also explored the self-perceptions of these five teachers in terms of their professional identity as early childhood practitioners and how their beliefs and self-perceptions influence their pedagogical practices. Research has recognised that beliefs and self-perceptions play a significant role the professional lives of teachers (Chan, 2011; McMullen, 1999; Pajares, 1992; Prawat, 1992; Vartuli, 2005). With the slew of reforms, early childhood teachers in Jamaica are expected to adhere to new regulations stipulated by the Early Childhood Act of 2005, new early childhood curricula based on developmentally appropriate classroom practices, and establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships with parents, colleagues and the wider community. To achieve this however is highly influenced by the

choices the teachers make. These decisions are usually guided by their beliefs, values, and personal, as well as formal knowledge of early childhood development and education.

I will use this chapter to first outline how global events have impacted on the transformation of the early childhood sector in Jamaica. Next, I will review the socio-cultural-historical influences on early childhood education in Jamaica with the aim of contextualizing how it has evolved since Emancipation. This serves as an introduction to the macro context of this study. I will then explore the reforms that have taken place in the sector as part of the overall national strategy for achieving world-class early childhood education in Jamaica by the year 2030. I will then briefly explain the relevance of my research, especially at this time when early childhood education has taken centre-stage in Jamaica. I will also provide my research aims, objective and questions and close this chapter with a summary.

The Impact of Global Events on Early Childhood Education

Jamaica has been impacted by global events which have resulted in significant reform in the education system at all levels, but especially at the early childhood level. In 1989 the United Nations passed Conventions on the Rights of the Child. This was followed by the Jometien World Conference on Education For All (EFA) in 1990 where Jamaica was a signatory to the global commitment to education. The Education for All (EFA) movement was a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children. In 1990, the government presented the Jamaica Five-Year Development Plan (1990-1995), with a major focus on the issue of quality. During this period the government, along with international donor agencies, implemented the Programme for Advancement of Early Childhood (PACE). In 2000, the World Education Forum adapted the Dakar Framework for Action in which Jamaica committed to achieving the EFA six international goals. These education goals aimed to meet the learning needs of all children by the year 2015. Interestingly, the first goal seeks to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for children considered ‘at-risk’ or ‘disadvantaged’ (UNESCO, 2000).

A key educational reform proposal made in 2000, was to build a new culture for quality early childhood education through upgrading the professional competence of the teachers in the sector. As a result, the government launched its White Paper on Education document which would define and articulate the education policies and strategic framework of the Ministry of Education. The current education system is governed by seven strategic objectives and includes the critical minimum performance targets to be achieved by 2015 is in keeping with the World Bank’s Millennium Goals for universal quality education for all

children of which Jamaica is a signatory. During this time as well Jamaica agreed to the goals and strategies of the UNESCO Education For All Initiative (EFA) regarding school improvement planning and standards-based education.

These global events, as well as socio-cultural and political factors, helped to shape the development of early childhood care and development in Jamaica. Some of the most significant outcomes of global events that influenced the sector were a national standardized curriculum for the early childhood, primary and secondary levels; the establishment of the Early Childhood Commission (ECC) in 2003; the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) in 2004, as well as the Early Childhood Act of 2005. The Commission has as its mission a delivery of integrated and coordinated quality programmes and services to children zero to eight years old in a healthy, safe and nurturing environment. The Commission also established standards for service delivery in early childhood institutions which saw a significant number of early childhood institutions trying to make the standards of becoming fully registered. These events represented remarkable changes in the quality of care provided to young children in Jamaica, a far cry from where early childhood education emerged in Jamaica.

A most significant early childhood education reform is the National Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Development (2008-2013). Through wide consultation with relevant stakeholders across Jamaica, the Plan called for curricular reform and upgrading of the learning environments in order to make them more suitable for developmentally appropriate service delivery. The Plan proposed five action areas for improving services in the sector. They are mainly a) effective parenting and education support; b) effective preventive health care for children zero to six years; c) effective screening diagnosis and early intervention for children who are considered “at-risk”; d) provision of safe, learner-centred and well-maintained early childhood facilities; e) effective curriculum delivery by highly trained early childhood teachers.

The focus of the new curricula is to provide learning activities that will enable each child to achieve the stated developmental goals at different age cohorts, namely zero to three year olds, four to five year olds and six to eight year olds. The implementation of curricular reform which came up for review in 2013 has, however, not been without its fair share of challenges. The successful implementation of these national reforms require changes in how early childhood teachers conduct their practice. However, according to Kennedy (2005) the changes may be hindered by the fact that teachers have dispositions that interfere with their

ability to implement the required reforms and more importantly, the specific circumstances of teaching may prevent teachers from changing their practices (p. 12).

In order to fully appreciate the problem, I will provide a brief background to the cultural-historical and socio-political origins of early childhood education in Jamaica and how its development has impacted the sector.

History and Development of Early Childhood Education in Jamaica

The historical development of early childhood education in the Caribbean can be traced from as far back as the late 18th century. During the post-emancipation period of the 1830s, provisions were made for higher education, but not for early childhood. As there was no organized programme for the young children of people who were formerly slaves, many wandered idly as their parents sought employment. Through the activities of missionaries, St. Kitts and Nevis established its first infant school for children three to eight years old. Trinidad and Tobago was to follow almost a century later in 1934 with the establishment of its first private nursery and its first community basic school in 1938 (Davies, 1997). Unfortunately, only a few women teachers had the opportunity to teach a few children who were in early childhood settings. In Jamaica, the early childhood profession primarily comprised of poorly qualified females from the lower socio-economic strata of Jamaica (Miller, 1999).

The post-war period of the twentieth century heralded renewed industrialization within the Caribbean, and with it, employment opportunities for its people. After this period, other factors such as urbanisation, political and economic changes led to the need of working parents to find somewhere for children to be while they were away from home. To capitalize on this opportunity, early childhood ‘schools’ were set up on verandas, backyards and other available spaces including church halls to provide custodial care to young children (Davies, 2008). This intensified the need for custodial child care facilities for parents of young children.

In Jamaica, the first community pre-school catering to children under six years old was opened in 1938 by a United Church minister named Rev. Henry Ward. In 1941, Rev. Ward submitted a report to the Jamaican Board of Education recommending that “play centres” be established for young children. These centres would provide academic as well as organized play activities. Parents were opposed to the term “play centre” and this was replaced by term “basic school” (Jones, Brown and Brown, 2011). In 1942, the Government of Jamaica, in response to the report, stated its support of early childhood education, care and

development through the provision of additional subventions and grants. From across the region, there began an increase in the number of local private early childhood facilities with names that were indigenous of the region such as crèches, day-care centres, basic school, preschools, and dame schools (Davies, 1997). These names are still used today when referring to early childhood institutions. It is to be noted that infant schools at the time were the earliest providers of early childhood education for children under six years old and were fashioned on the state-run British Infant Schools model (Jones, Brown and Brown, 2011).

Prior to the 1990s, the Ministry of Health had the responsibility for providing services for children under three years old, which consisted primarily of medical services. In 1975 the then Government established a National Day Care Programme and built twenty-three Day Care Centres, subsidized by the state primarily supported by fees paid by working parents. A Day Care Unit was also established in the same year and was responsible for registering, inspecting and monitoring the performance of all day care facilities and services.

By the 1970s early childhood programmes started to take on even greater significance. The Ministry of Education created the Early Childhood Unit, which was responsible for the registration of basic schools and the training of early childhood teachers. A classroom curriculum was also adopted and in 1975, the Government started to provide salary subsidies for basic school teachers. In 1976, they also established Infant Departments in some of the Primary and All Age schools and introduced a Code of Regulations to govern management of basic schools through a mechanism that was called a "Sponsoring Body". This Body was responsible for seeking donations and sponsorship to improve the facilities of the institution. Formal recognition of the early childhood movement came by way of the Education Act of 1980 which provided a formal definition of an early childhood institution and the state's role in monitoring and improving the quality of services offered in the sector.

International funding also played a significant role in the burgeoning early childhood movement. It was during the mid twentieth century that international funding organizations such as UNICEF and the Van Leer Foundation started to provide sustained assistance to Caribbean countries to support early childhood care, especially to under-privileged children. In 1967 UNICEF hosted its regional conference that placed its searchlight on the impact of social and economic conditions on early childhood development and this led to increased advocacy and training within the early childhood sector (Samms-Vaughan and Davies, 2008). In 1992, the Rural Family Support Organization, a non-government organization in Jamaica, with the support of UNICEF, pioneered the Roving Caregiver Programme (RCP) that targets children 0-3 years from poor families by providing them with home visits, early stimulation

and enrichment, parental training and skill acquisition. An informal early childhood programme, the focus of the RCP is on appropriate child-rearing practices and the access of early childhood care to children from poverty-stricken homes.

Concerns however still existed as to the quality of early childhood services being delivered to children in Jamaica. Despite funding for the sector in the form of in-service training for teachers and the development of a developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum, early childhood teachers were still not being adequately trained to demonstrate the skills needed for effective teaching at the early childhood stage. An evaluation of the day care and the pre-school system was facilitated by a UNICEF-funded initiative in 1993. The results of the evaluation pointed to systemic weaknesses in the sector including the absence of curricula for the teachers to use; lack of developmentally appropriate activities for children as the emphasis was on custodial care; lack of learning and play materials to stimulate children's cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning; and the almost non-existence of child-centred approaches to teaching. More importantly, the study found that more than half of the teachers had no formal training in early childhood education and received very low salaries, comparable to those received by household helpers (Jones, Brown and Brown, 2011). The study also highlighted the use of corporal punishment as a standard form of punishment used by the teachers, which is considered highly inappropriate for children at the early childhood level.

In 1997 UNICEF hosted its World Summit Second Caribbean Conference on Early Childhood Education in Barbados that highlighted the impact of social and economic conditions on early childhood development and this led to increased advocacy and training within the early childhood sector (Samms-Vaughan and Davies, 2008). The conference was a response to the recognition that Caribbean countries would face the challenges of global competitiveness if they did not add significant value to their human capital. They also recognized through research, that early childhood education and development were crucial to the success of human resource development initiatives being undertaken by member states. However, successive Governments within the region have neglected this sector, whether intentionally or unintentionally through paltry financial allocation, inadequate policy direction and legislative support.

The Summit also recognized the need for a conceptual shift from early childhood education to a more comprehensive and holistic early childhood development paradigm. Since then, individual member states have committed themselves to a Caribbean Plan of Action (CPOA) for Early Childhood Care, Education and Development five year initiative

for the period 1997-2002. This commitment involved the advancement of early childhood care as well as the development and implementation of early childhood programmes through individual country action plans. To achieve this, the following strategies and mechanisms would have to be implemented: an appropriate legislative framework for coordinated provision of services and monitoring standards in this sector; integrated social planning and implementation of initiatives; adequate financing; equitable access to quality provisions to minimize the plight of the large percentage of children in high risk situations; education and training for all providers of ECED; appropriate Curriculum Development and materials development; increased parent, community and media awareness and involvement; coordinated action at both national and regional levels; and increased research to inform development of the sector.

As a signatory to the CPOA, the Jamaican government at the time with its policy initiatives and actions toward integration developed the National Plan of Action for Early Childhood Care and Development (1997-2000). Although it was never approved by the then Cabinet, the Plan was to be a blueprint of a service delivery model similar to that of the Caribbean Plan of Action, which focused on early childhood development anchored on holistic child development, while providing a range of family and community support.

The goals of this plan sought to attain a more integrated early childhood care and development policy for children 0-5 years by incorporating all the other relevant ministries such as the Ministries of Education, Health, Housing, Labour and Local Government. These government agencies working collaboratively would provide actions plans for the financing of initiatives aimed at poverty eradication; the development of a system for multi-sectoral data collection, monitoring and evaluation of early childhood that is linked to the Government's policy and planning systems. There would also be the development of an early childhood competency-based certification system and an accreditation system for institutions offering early childhood education training. Training opportunities would also be provided for entry-level practitioners. Another important goal was the emphasis on strengthening the parents' and community's awareness and support for early childhood and the involvement of the media (UNESCO, 2000).

To achieve these goals, in 2000, a strategic review of the early childhood sector was commissioned by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and conducted by KPMG Peat Marwick. The review reported that even though the sector saw burgeoning growth in the sector, there was poor co-ordination of the programmes. The report which was submitted to Parliament and Cabinet, recommended the establishment of a national co-ordinating body, in

the form of the Early Childhood Commission. This body would act as the chief co-ordinating agency that would streamline all early childhood activities and promote quality education for young children.

Standards for Early Childhood Education

In the current early childhood system, children enter early childhood institutions at age 3 or 4 years old. Infants and toddlers 0-3 yrs. access services at non-residential day-care centres. Early childhood programmes are offered to children 3-5 years old through Government run infant schools and infant departments in primary and all-age schools, as well as community operated basic schools, nurseries, and kindergarten schools. The ECA of 2005 requires that early childhood institutions provide developmentally-appropriate education, care and socialization of all children under 6 years old. The Act established the legal framework and standards by which early childhood institutions are governed in order to ensure that young children have access to quality education in a safe and nurturing environment.

As mentioned previously, the World Education Forum in Dakar, (UNESCO, 2000) identified six Education for All (EFA) goals to be achieved by the year 2015. The very first goal seeks to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for children who are disadvantaged. Not achieving this goal will pose a substantial challenge to the competitiveness, development and progress of Jamaica. This has implications for the country and its hopes for accomplishing Developed State status by the year 2030 and providing quality education for the nation's young children.

A comprehensive longitudinal study of child health, development and behaviour in Jamaica, conducted by Dr. Samms-Vaughan (2008), revealed that children who attended basic schools performed way below their peers in private pre-schools regardless of their social status. According to Samms-Vaughan, "This suggested discrimination in the quality of pre-school education provided..." (p. 642). If we also put within the context of the challenge we now face, identifying suitable physical space in which students can pursue education at the early childhood level and the issue of a large percentage of early childhood teachers who are still un-trained, Jamaica still has a lot of work to do in its quest to provide quality education to the nation's children.

Education policymakers in Jamaica are recognizing more and more that access to quality early childhood education and development programmes is of utmost importance, especially when it comes to the development of our country. Logan and Sumsion (2010) stated that, "It is well established that high-quality early childhood education and care

(ECEC) enhance children's wellbeing and development and have social and economic benefits." (p 42). Therefore in seeking to provide adequate early childhood education, programmes and strategies must be designed with long-term human and social development in mind (Ho, 2008). Vision 20/30 Jamaica in its National Development Plan (P.I.O.J., 2009) document, agrees that it is important that "the strategy recognizes the importance of ensuring that the foundation for the development of the child is sound and sufficient to prepare the child for a wholesome and well-rounded development process that includes a solid education." (p. 70).

Early Childhood Practices and Challenges in Jamaica

In a post-modern world, the concept of childhood has made a significant shift in meaning as adults and children share very much the same world (Mook, 2007; Janzen, 2008). In this technologically rich, information saturated and sometimes chaotic world, 21st century young children are expected to display competence in technology, creativity and innovation. They also are expected to adapt to early formal schooling, while coping with changes in family structure and dynamics and the attendant social issues that become a part of their lived experiences (Elkind, 1998). However by virtue of being children, they continue to have social, emotional and intellectual needs that must be met by the adults around them. It has been well documented that children's early exposure to quality learning environments that are developmentally appropriate will contribute to their cognitive, academic and socio-emotional outcomes (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998). It is within this context that investing in early childhood education has become particularly significant, especially as post-independent Jamaica seeks to bring about desired changes in the delivery of early childhood education services.

The early childhood period is divided into two stages: from birth to three years, and from three to six years. Like many countries around the world, the early childhood care and education system in Jamaica was divided into two components, namely day-care or nursery (which accommodates infants 0-3 yrs.) and basic/infant schools (pre-schools which accommodate children 4-6). Day-care centres are full-time programmes provided to working parents who need custodial care for their children. Basic schools are community-based sponsored institutions and exist mainly as 'recognised' and 'unrecognised' institutions. Recognised basic schools receive financial assistance from the Government in the form of subsidies to offset teachers' salary, meals for the students, furniture and appliance and building grants. Unrecognised basic schools (often operated by the Church or private

individuals) on the other hand receive no financial assistance at all from the Government and have to rely on fees charged to parents to offset teacher salary and other expenses. Infant schools are operated by the Ministry of Education and some are attached to Primary and Primary/All Age, schools and are referred to as Infant Departments. Kindergartens are often found in privately-owned preparatory schools. All these settings provide children with readiness skills for formal schooling in Grade One. Presently there are approximately 2,661 early childhood institutions in Jamaica with 140 being Government operated, and 135 Kindergarten. Basic schools account for the remaining figure (M.O.E., 2013). Nearly half of the total number of EC institutions are classified as 'recognised', while approximately 7% are considered 'unrecognised' (Jones, Brown and Brown, 2011).

The primary cause for concern however remained the delivery of early childhood education and development programmes for young children. According to The United Nations World Data on Education for Jamaica (2010/2011), this is due to several factors. These factors include the disparity between the quality of teachers in preparatory and government infant schools and infant departments versus those who in community basic schools. Teachers in basic schools are usually minimally trained or not formally trained unlike their counterparts in government-run institutions. Presently, the Ministry of Education is placing one trained teacher in recognized basic schools with a minimum enrolment of one hundred children. This is woefully inadequate and compromises the quality of curriculum delivery and care provided to the children (Ho, 2008).

As discussed earlier, ECE in the Caribbean evolved as a response to a need to provide custodial services to working mothers and as such, operated outside of government action for many years (Charles and Williams, 2006; Williams and Charles, 2008). Many of the facilities, especially in Jamaica were unsupervised and were primarily owned by non-government organizations. The informality of the early childhood sector led to the low levels of training among the caregivers. Teachers in these facilities had little theoretical understanding of child development and displayed a lack of awareness of appropriate early childhood pedagogical strategies (Davies, 1997; Charles and Williams, 2006). Many of these teachers had no experience and were mainly Sunday school teachers or other paraprofessionals with poor basic education and who had little or no teacher training (Charles and Williams, 2006). Much of my early childhood years were spent sitting in front of many of these teachers. This practice continued for quite a while and became a common feature within the Caribbean.

The field expanded during the 1980s with greater focus being placed on teacher training to equip teachers with the acquisition of skills needed to teach at this level as prior this, most of the teachers were being trained primarily through participation in-service training (Davies, 1997). Additionally, the University of the West (U.W.I.) and some Teachers' Colleges in Jamaica and Trinidad selectively offered undergraduate degree programmes. During the 1990s, the sector expanded by way of increased subventions from the Government as well as the establishment of pre-school units in primary schools. Despite this, the level of training within the region has remained low (Charles and Williams, 2006).

Historically, training for basic school teachers in Jamaica took the format of workshop-based training that did not lead to certification. With the exception of Barbados where a significant number of teachers possess undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in early childhood education, employment in most day-care centres in the Caribbean do not require post-secondary qualifications to become part of the support staff. The method of delivering educational content was primarily by rote learning, delivered by mostly untrained teachers. These teachers (many who came out of 'Sunday School') were inexperienced and lacked in-depth knowledge of essential child development and education principles and practices (Davies, 2008).

Presently, in order to achieve registration, basic schools are only required to have one teacher who is college trained. Amid concerns about the state of early childhood programmes in Jamaica and the number of untrained teachers who are still in the system, many teachers received their training through fortnightly workshops conducted by the Ministry of Education to better qualify them for their teaching roles. The University of the West Indies and Teachers' Colleges such as Mico, Shortwood and St. Joseph's have also contributed to the improvement in the quality of pedagogical skills offered in early childhood education. This has come with the recognition that the early childhood system needs to be transformed if it is to be effective in preparing young children for a rapidly changing globalized world.

Over the last few years, Jamaica has initiated a competency-based certification system aimed at upgrading the skills of teachers within the early childhood sector. Current trends in early childhood education in Jamaica included increasing the professionalism of the sector through training with HEART/NCTVET certification of practitioners or "Early Childhood Workers". The certification is categorized into three levels, namely:

Level I: basic entry level where the practitioner is expected to be supervised at all times;

Level II: the practitioner is deemed to have sufficient training and experience to

work as a care-giver or para-professional teacher with little or no supervision in the classroom;

Level III: the practitioner possesses supervisory/administrative training that is beyond Level II qualification (Jones, Brown and Brown, 2011).

Presently, more than 94% of early childhood teachers in the 140 Government public schools (Infant and Infant Departments) have tertiary level training, whilst those in Basic Schools hold HEART/NTA certification training. This variation in training across the sector has led to a variation in pedagogical content knowledge and practices with some teachers having theoretical knowledge of child development and some do not.

A Movement Towards Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP)

In addition to increased monitoring and supervision of early childhood institutions by the Early Childhood Commission, one of the major reform outcomes in the early childhood sector was the design and implementation of a new structured curriculum. The curriculum goals focus on the use of developmentally appropriate practices, with the outcome being a movement towards providing a seamless transition from early childhood centres to primary school. There is also a focus on greater collaboration with other agencies such as the Ministry of Health to promote early stimulation and early intervention.

Early childhood education in Jamaica has been heavily influenced by Euro-American ideologies of child development and the curriculum guided by the theories of Dewey, Froebel, Montessori, Piaget and Vygotsky among others. Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP), borne out of Piagetian theory, emphasized activity-based learning through children's natural play and exploration (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997). Developmentally appropriate practices (from now on to be referred to as DAP), are reflected through a knowledge of child development and methods which are age-appropriate and appropriate to the cultural experiences of the children (Copple and Bredekamp, 2009). Despite criticisms (Cohen, 2008), DAP has brought changes to early childhood education and care around the world and continues to influence teacher education in Jamaica and curricula practices in early childhood classrooms.

From a socio-cultural perspective, early childhood development is viewed as "contexts and processes" shaped by "human action, profoundly social in character and at all times mediated by cultural views on young children's needs." (Woodhead, 2006, p. 20). This study is situated within this socio-cultural perspective and in addition to child development theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, Dockett and Sumsion (2004) and Gupta (2006), suggest that

focus on the socio-cultural issues and approaches in early childhood education have increased over the years. These approaches have influenced the development and design of the Jamaican early childhood curriculum which emphasizes children's engagement in classroom activities, building collaborative relationships at home and school, and more importantly, the acquisition of culturally specific competencies and identities.

Description of the Problem

According to Miller (1999), "Caribbean education has been part of Western education for over 350 years and readily adopts and adapts major developments in leading Western school systems." (p. 10). Miller, further opined that, "Educational reform and developments within and among schools in the Caribbean can be generally located and associated with contemporary developments within Western education." (p. 10). It comes as no surprise therefore that global events and public concern about the quality of early childhood education offered to young children have brought about much needed attention and improvement in the field. It is further no surprise that this 'quality' is set against the backdrop of Western progressive ideology of early childhood best practices (Wood and Attifield, 2005; Zhu and Zhang, 2008) and influenced by emerging knowledge about brain development and early learning, and developmentally appropriate practices that promote children's learning and development (Bishop, 2006; Gallagher, 2005; Nelson, 2007; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2002; Posner and Rothbart, 2007; White and Isenberg, 2003).

The teacher's pedagogical practices have a big influence on children's learning as well. However these practices are influenced by several factors including the teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning, knowledge of child development as well as the institutional context and realities within which they work (Lim and Torr, 2007; Muijs and Reynolds, 2002). The latter is particularly true for early childhood teachers in Jamaica as the education system is currently in a state of transformation. As such, there may be unavoidable political, social and cultural conflicts or tensions between the Western ideologies of DAP and the social and cultural imperatives that guide Jamaican early childhood classroom practices.

The new Early Childhood regulations require that early childhood teachers possess at least NCTVET/Level II certification. This level requires them to acquire a deeper knowledge of child development and its application reflected in classroom resourcefulness. While much is being done to upgrade early childhood facilities and training of the teachers, there is a scarcity of relevant research on the beliefs and self-perceptions of early childhood teachers in Jamaica. Since the teacher is responsible for deciding what happens in the classroom, this

research becomes important within the context of how the implementation of various reform policies by the Early Childhood Commission emphasizing the use of DAP, can create tension between the teachers' beliefs and stakeholders' expectations.

Little is known about the belief systems held by Jamaican teachers about what constitutes 'developmentally appropriate early childhood classroom practices', as well as the perceptions they have of themselves as professionals and how these beliefs and perceptions influence their classroom practices. Davies (2008) argued that teachers in the sector are still regarded as having low social and professional status. This is evidenced by the fact that professionally, less than five percent of early childhood teachers have a bachelor's degree or a diploma in early childhood education. Additionally, more than seventy percent (70%) have HEART/NTA Levels I and II vocational training only (Davies, 2008). This is significant as early childhood institutions cater to more than 83% of total enrolment of children in the three to five year old cohort and thus play a critical role in early childhood education in Jamaica (Jones, Brown and Brown, 2011).

Another area that came under great scrutiny was the methodology being used by teachers in the early childhood institutions. It was out of this concern that the early childhood curriculum was developed based on a philosophy of how children learn and develop. This curriculum was also designed in keeping with what is considered international best practices in early childhood education. There is a strong focus on DAP which has influenced changes in the delivery of early childhood care and education (NAEYC, 2009). The Jamaican Early Childhood Commission (ECE) in 2007 instituted twelve (12) categories of standards for the early childhood sector. These Standards are strategically aligned to NAEYC's (2009) Early Childhood Programme Standards (see Appendix D).

Standard #2 from the ECC is of particularly important to this research as it speaks to EC programmes that are comprehensively designed to meet the language, physical, cognitive, creative, socio-emotional and school readiness needs of children. The programme should ensure that the needs and abilities of each child is considered, while respecting the linguistic diversity of the Jamaican child. This is almost identical to Standard # 3 of NAEYC which states that EC programmes use developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child's learning and development in the context of the programme's curriculum goals (NAEYC, 2009).

However, there appears to be some disconnect between what is practiced and what is envisioned in the conceptual framework of the Jamaican Early Childhood Commission. The Early Childhood Curriculum for Children Birth to Five Years Old (2008) states in part that

early childhood practitioners “must understand and agree with the underlying philosophy of the curriculum and have adequate knowledge of child development and how children learn.” (p. 4). Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, many of the early childhood teachers (especially those in the basic schools) had little understanding of child development or the philosophy and pedagogy related to early learning (Samms-Vaughan, 2004) and this impacted the successful implementation of the new curriculum across schools.

This has implications for the role of the teacher. Miller (1999) posited that, “It is as important to understand who the teachers are in societal terms as it is to define their roles and responsibilities as agents of change and development.” (p. 31). National reforms have redefined the role of the early childhood teacher in Jamaica. Besides being care-giver and nurturer, the early childhood teacher is expected to be curriculum planner, organizer of instruction, motivator, decision-maker and advocate. The failings of the system however have been blamed on the lack of pedagogical skills of the teacher. Many of the teachers (both pre- and in-service) with whom I had conducted professional training workshops over the years, have admitted to me that their pedagogical skills were based on the knowledge they gleaned in in-service workshops and their own insights, not to mention the institutional realities that they faced on a daily basis. Some of these realities include over-crowded classrooms, scarce resources and lack of adequate play areas for the children. This they claimed impacted on their level of effectiveness to be agents of change and development. Many of them also thought that they were not regarded with the same ‘esteem’ as their colleagues in the primary and secondary school sectors and this affected how they viewed their roles and teachers. As a result of these perceptions, I was able to identify a distinct divide between theory and practice, which was explored in this study.

Statement of the Problem

As mentioned earlier, national reforms in the early childhood sector have been strongly influenced by the ideals of DAP. The concept of DAP is based on Western ideology (Gupta, 2006), and therefore, within the Jamaican context, the adoption of the standards of DAP reflects a ‘Western’ orientation towards constructs of good and effective practice. Juxtapose this with the fact that while much has been gained, the historical and cultural legacy of traditional teaching approaches, based on Euro-American notions of child development, is still evident in many of the EC classrooms. In a post-independent Jamaica, where the education system is trying to reform itself to address the needs of the population, it is worth exploring early childhood teachers’ beliefs about DAP as well as their self-

perceptions as early childhood practitioners. Additionally, with the reform of the early childhood sector, the pedagogical competence of the early childhood practitioner has come under greater scrutiny (Williams and Charles, 2008).

Although reform has been endorsed by teachers in the sector, successful implementation rests on the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and practices of these teachers. Given too that teaching is such a complex activity, it is therefore worth exploring how the teacher's beliefs and self-perception influence curricular choices and instructional strategies, especially within this new paradigm.

Mindful of the scarcity of relevant research on the beliefs and practices of early childhood teachers in Jamaica, and the historical and socio-cultural contexts from which early childhood education emerged, this research study could not have come at a better time. I speak of timing because historically many early childhood teachers in Jamaica were considered (and are still considered) by society as "baby-sitters" and not educators. It has been accepted that in the early childhood years that children gain the educational experiences needed to set the foundation for academic skills in the later years (Saracho and Spodek, 2008; Tobin, 2005). The quality of the early childhood teacher at this level therefore becomes of utmost importance in setting this foundation.

Now that the Ministry of Education and the Early Childhood Commission have been insisting on the teachers' involvement in the planning and implementation of early childhood programmes and classroom accountability as a policy directive, the crucial role of the early childhood teacher in providing quality education to young children has at last become formally recognised. The curricular choices that these teachers make however are largely based on their own educational and philosophical beliefs which will invariably impact on their classroom practices (Kagan, 1992). As such, these beliefs and practices warrant investigation.

Significance of the study

This study intends to offer fresh insight into the belief systems and self-perceptions of early childhood teachers and how these influence their classroom practices. Presently there is no known similar study in Jamaica and thus this research study will add to the body of scholarly literature on the subject. My study will also serve as a reference for educators who would like to know more about teacher beliefs and self-perceptions or how reflective teaching can be used to improve classroom practices in early childhood settings (Cole, 1997). Hopefully my study will also affect how we look at early childhood teachers, challenge our

own beliefs and perceptions of early childhood teachers and the policy directions of the sector.

Research Rationale/Aim

The aim of this research was to gain critical insights into the beliefs and practices of five early childhood educators in five separate Jamaican early childhood education settings. The study sought to understand the factors that led five early childhood teachers to choosing a career in teaching; how their interpretation of educational theories influence the way in which they work in the classroom and to discover and make sense of the complex reality within which these educators work. It was Goodson (1991) who emphasized that educational research should “assure that the teacher’s voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately” (p. 36). It is my hope that my study will do just that. By giving these early childhood teachers a voice, I too as a teacher educator was able to understand my own role and responsibility in disseminating meaningful theoretical and practical knowledge to future teachers in the field.

Research Objectives

As mentioned before, this research is concerned with understanding the beliefs and self-perceptions of five early childhood teachers working in public and private early childhood institutions in Jamaica. As such the objectives of the study are as follows: a) to explore these teachers’ beliefs about the nature of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP); b) to examine how these teachers perceive themselves as professional practitioners and what factors shape these beliefs and perceptions ; c) to examine how these teachers’ beliefs and self-perceptions influence their classroom practice;

Research Questions

This research study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are five early childhood teachers’ beliefs about the nature of developmentally appropriate classroom practices?
2. What factors are responsible for shaping five early childhood teachers’ beliefs and self-perception?
3. To what extent do five early childhood teachers’ engage in classroom practices that are consistent with their beliefs?

In search of answers to these questions, this study followed a qualitative, case study methodology and employed a social constructivist theoretical framework with a subjective

interpretive epistemology. The section on Methodology will further elaborate my research design.

Summary

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the background of my research study, its purpose and significance to the field of early childhood education. I have also outlined the research questions and the objectives I hoped to achieve. Finally, I addressed the issues of ethical considerations and presented my approach to conducting the research.

Thesis Structure

In Chapter 2, the literature review, I will present related and relevant literature about teacher beliefs, self-perceptions and developmentally appropriate classroom practices (DAP). I will also discuss how these have impacted classroom practices locally as well as across the world.

In Chapter 3, I will present my theoretical framework for the study and in Chapter 4, I will present the methodology used to carry out my research study. I will outline my axiological, ontological and epistemological beliefs which had a significant influence on my selecting the qualitative interpretive paradigm of this study. As qualitative case studies, I will also justify the rationale for the adoption of my research paradigm and methods used in the study.

Chapter 5 will see the presentation of findings and their analyses in the form of narratives. These will be drawn from personal interview data from each of the five participants, exploring and interpreting relevant themes gleaned from the data. The narratives are used to answer the research questions. Data will also come from analyses of the self-reported Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey, classroom observation, face-to face interviews and follow-up interviews.

In Chapter 6, I will engage in a discussion, supported by literature, about the findings of the research. Chapter 7 will be my concluding chapter where I will provide my concluding reflections, provide a review of my research findings and recommendations to the relevant stakeholders.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Jamaica in recent years has seen growing attention being paid to its early childhood sector, especially early childhood teachers and the quality education they provide to their constituents. A major trend is the call for increased accountability as it relates to quality teaching that is developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant. As such, the landscape of early childhood teachers' pedagogy has undergone significant changes, with changes to the national early childhood curriculum and practices, and attendant changes to the realities of the early childhood teachers' roles and work. Since this study arose out of my experiences as a teacher educator, I sought to explore five early childhood teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions, especially as they relate to the changes in their realities.

This chapter focuses on several bodies of research regarding teacher beliefs and perceptions, especially as they relate to developmentally appropriate classroom practices. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section One explores the nature of beliefs and self-perceptions. In Section Two I will discuss factors which influence and help shape teachers' beliefs and perceptions. In Section Three I will discuss several Euro-American theories of child development that have not only influenced the Jamaican the early childhood's teacher understanding of child development, but have also influenced the early childhood curriculum as well. I will also discuss the concept of Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) which emerged from these theories and build my argument around what constitutes 'appropriateness', and teachers' belief about teaching and learning using DAP. I will then in Section Four, using cross-cultural research, explore to what extent early childhood teachers, particularly outside of the United States, engage in classroom practices that are consistent or inconsistent with their beliefs about DAP. The chapter concludes with a summary of the major points which emerged from the review.

Defining the Concept of Belief

I find it important and pertinent to start my discussion in this section on the nature of beliefs and perceptions and their influences on teachers' knowledge and decision-making in the classroom. In order to fully understand what is meant by 'beliefs' in the context of this research study, it is necessary to discuss its nature based on the various definitions that have been posited. I will expound on this construct in this section.

The role of the teacher is as complex as it is dynamic. Teaching requires a complex set of skills that transcend just applying theory into practice (Black and Halliwell, 2000; Muijs and Reynolds, 2002). Additionally, complex decisions about what goes on in the teaching and learning process are made by the teacher on a daily basis in ensuring educational effectiveness. It has been accepted that beliefs are an important underpinning for early childhood educators (Garvis, Fluckiger and Twigg, 2011), especially as they have a strong bearing on the decisions teachers make in the classroom (Bandura, 2006).

Research interests into teacher beliefs have evolved over the years. Acknowledged as a difficult construct to define Pajares (1992) refers to beliefs as a “*messy construct*” which “...travels in disguise and often under an alias of attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature.” (p. 309).

Human beings by nature have thoughts and feelings about what exist around them. Humans also tend to react based on their thoughts and feelings about people, things and situations around them. There are different ways to look at beliefs (Mansour, 2009), and several attempts have been made to elucidate this concept (Cassidy and Lawrence, 2000; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Beliefs and actions therefore seem to have a causal relationship. Richardson (2005) also described beliefs as “a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person’s actions” (p. 102). Zheng (2009) expounded on this definition by positing that ‘belief’ is a sub-set of a group of constructs that ascribes a name, definition and provides structure and directs the individual’s action.’ (p. 74). Zheng further went on to point out that “beliefs are often defined as psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions felt to be true.” (p. 74). Beliefs are therefore intimately related to one’s thought processes and contribute to the establishment of what is considered ‘truth’ to the individual. This system of beliefs however, according to Pehkonen, (2001) can be viewed as ‘subjective knowledge’ that one considers to be true even though this truth may not be proven by convincing evidence.

The subjective yet alluring nature of beliefs has been explored throughout the years. Heney et al. (2003) posited beliefs as being “one’s conviction, philosophy, tenets, or opinions about teaching and learning.” (p. 367). Decades earlier Rokeach, (1968) in his classic work on beliefs, theorised beliefs as a psychological construct that are descriptive, evaluative and prescriptive in nature and are predispositions to action (p. 113). According to Rokeach, “a

belief is any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does...’ (p. 113). Rokeach based his theory on three assumptions, namely that: a) beliefs vary along a central-peripheral dimension and as such, not all beliefs are equally important; b) belief will resist change based on how central it is; and c) the more central the belief changes, it will have widespread repercussions on the other belief systems.

Rokeach also believed in the *connectedness* of beliefs, especially how beliefs are connected to self-identity. This connectedness, according to Rokeach, is one of the most central, as it has a significant influence on other beliefs. Based on Rokeach’s theory, when others share the same set of central beliefs, there is a connectedness within the group that helps to identify the reference group. Core central beliefs are seen as very important versus those that are not shared. Rokeach also believed that these central beliefs are learned directly through interaction with objects and symbols of beliefs while other beliefs, which may be less important or functional, may be learned indirectly from the individual’s reference group.

Pajares (1992) underscored this point by stating that core central beliefs help the individual to “identify with one another and form groups and social system” (pp. 317-318). He believed that on a personal and socio-cultural level, belief systems are so powerful, that they “reduce dissonance and confusion, even when dissonance is logically justified by the inconsistent beliefs one holds.” (p. 317). He argued that even though individuals may have “differing beliefs of differing intensity and complex connections that determine their importance” (p. 318), they may resist change because:

People grow comfortable with their beliefs, and these beliefs become their "self," so that individuals come to be identified and understood by the very nature of the beliefs, the habits, they own. (p. 318)

Pajares also offered several generalizations that can be considered when conducting a research study on teacher beliefs. I will highlight those which were particularly relevant to my own research and guided my study:

1. Beliefs are formed early, self-perpetuate, and persevere even against contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience; the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter;
2. An individual’s beliefs system is acquired through the process of cultural transmission and strongly influence perception and affect their behaviour;
3. An individual’s belief system has an adaptive function that serves to help the individual define and understand the world and him/herself;

4. Beliefs and knowledge are inextricably intertwined and are instrumental in defining behaviour and organizing knowledge and information;
5. Beliefs are prioritized according to their connections or relationship to other beliefs and substructures, such as educational beliefs, must be understood in terms of their connections to more central beliefs in the system. (Pajares, p. 326)

Based on these generalizations, it can be seen that beliefs operate within a system.

Using a system approach, in this research, I chose to adapt Awenowicz's (2009) definition of beliefs, stating that:

beliefs are conceptual systems that help an individual make meaning of aspects of his or her environment; are constructed from personal or shared experiences, can be extended from socio-culturally shared knowledge with affiliated groups or communities; are compelling and emotionally charged; are very often not articulated but used to guide behavior and thinking, and most importantly, are firmly and deeply entrenched. (p. 14).

I chose this definition because it embraces the theoretical framework that informs my study. This will be further expounded in the following Chapter Three. In the next section, I will discuss beliefs and self-perceptions as they pertain to the early childhood teacher.

Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs and Self-Perceptions

More recent research has pointed to the fact that a teacher's belief system will determine the quality of education in the classroom (Garvis, 2011; Garvis, Twigg and Pendergast, 2011). According to Fang (1996) the teachers' beliefs or philosophy affect teaching and learning. Research also suggests that there is a strong relationship between the teacher's thoughts and actions in understanding teacher effectiveness (Brophy and Good, 1974; Edwards, 2003; Leung, 2012).

Kagan (1992) viewed teachers' beliefs as their "assumptions about their students, classrooms, and academic materials to be taught." (p. 65). Teachers' beliefs are therefore what teachers say and do in the classroom based on their thinking about educational practices. This point is supported by Richards and Lockhart (1998) who posited that a teacher's action is reflective of what they know and believe and this knowledge and belief becomes the philosophical framework which guides their teaching methodology.

Beliefs also emerge from one's past and present experiences and socialisation or cultural models that were presented (Raths, 2001). The development of these beliefs is based

on previous experiences in the teachers' life and has a bearing on how they relate to the children in their classroom (Inozu, 2011; Borg, 2001; Farrell, 2006; Richards and Lockhart, 1998). This point is especially critical in light of the cultural-historical legacy of early childhood education in Jamaica and the teacher pedagogy that are still evident today.

This brings me to the point of self-perception, especially as it relates to the professional self. How one views self has an impact on one's behaviour. According to Bem's (1972) Self-Perception theory,

Individuals come to '*know*' their own attitudes, emotions, and other internal states partially by inferring them from observations of their own overt behaviour and/or circumstances in which this behaviour occurs. (p. 2, original italics).

In other words, an individual's self-perception is formed implicitly by meanings derived from events and interactions in the environment. Teachers are no different as their perceptions and beliefs influence their actions (Kagan, 1992; Borg, 2001). They concluded that whether teachers were confident or unsure of their abilities, this perception is reflected in their classroom practices. In fact, Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt, (2000), concluded from their study of Netherland secondary school teachers' perception of their professional identity, that self-perception is the schema from which teachers derive their professional identity as experts in subject matter, pedagogy and didactic teaching.

This has similar implications for EC classroom practice. The early childhood teacher's personal and professional experiences are intertwined and are linked to their personal and professional identity (Court, Merav and Ornan, 2009; Rodgers and Scott, 2008). Court, et al. (2009), described the professional self as "a product of the interaction between the teachers' personal experiences and the social, cultural and institutional environment within which they work on a daily basis." (p. 208). In their study of ten Israeli teachers' reasons for choosing the teaching profession and their perceptions of their roles as teachers, the researchers drew a relationship between the teachers' expressed beliefs about early childhood education and their roles as teachers. According to Court et al., these teachers perceived themselves to be 'nurturers', and "perceived their work as allowing for an intensive relationship with children, contributing to their moral, social and cognitive development..." (pp. 213-214).

However Garvis, Fluckiger and Twigg, (2012), from their study on pre-service teachers' beliefs and perceptions, alluded to the fact that this may be an "idealized or romanticised view of early childhood education..." (p. 101). While the participants in their

study also perceived teaching in a positive, almost idyllic fashion, Garvis, Fluckiger and Twigg commented that the teachers “lacked understanding of the complexity of the profession” (p. 101). They called this a ‘deficit’ and warned that this perception of the early childhood teacher faces a challenge, as dissonance may arise when the pre-service teacher experiences a ‘reality shock’ in the real classroom versus what was experienced during field work. This disequilibrium may re-position the teacher’s belief system and at its extreme, may lead to the teacher lowering his/her own expectations “to risk a self-assessment of failure” (p. 101). It would suggest therefore that socio-cultural contextual factors must be taken into consideration when looking at beliefs and self-perceptions.

In the same manner, teachers’ beliefs and self-perceptions may also determine the nature of the interactions that occur between them and the children they teach (Lim and Torr, 2007). According to Miller and Smith (2004), teachers’ beliefs have an influence on their nature of interaction with, and the resources and structure that they provide to children. Additionally, their beliefs also unconsciously affect the attitudes they convey to children (Miller and Smith, 2004). The teacher’s attitude and behaviour will have an impact on the young child’s emotional well-being and positive sense of self, and so the quality of teacher’s interaction and relationship with the child are very important (Davies, 2008). Thus the teacher’s beliefs shape his/her approach to teaching and influence instructional strategies and performance in the classroom as these beliefs help to define their professional identity (Cheng et al., 2009; Tsai and Chuang, 2005).

Early childhood education in Jamaica is at a critical juncture and as such its services are evolving and changing to meet global standards. The teacher is crucial in this evolution of providing high-quality services as these services are based on a secure relationship between the children and the teacher (Sims, 2010). This secure relationship will also impact on effective pedagogy because, according to Bowman, Donovan and Burn (2001), young children depend on the adults with whom they interact and in many instances, it is their classroom teacher. Brophy and Good (1974) described teachers as socialising agents who have a significant influence on students’ behaviour as they transmit powerful interpretations of values and expectations. However as Court, Meray and Ornan (2009:214) found in their study, early childhood teachers’ self-perception as professionals are subjected to constant testing and shaping by the environment within which they work and as such, acknowledgement and recognition by significant others, including parents will have a direct positive effect on the teachers’ self-esteem..

Summary

In summary, early childhood teacher beliefs and self-perceptions play an important role in the teaching and learning process and are interconnected. They play a vital role in the decisions that teachers make in the classroom and the teachers' own professional identity. But an important part of the discourse on beliefs and self-perceptions is: where do these beliefs come from, and what factors influence these beliefs and perceptions? In the following section, I will explore some of the factors especially as they pertain to this study.

Factors which Influence Beliefs and Self-Perception

In this section, I will use relevant research to discuss the major factors that influence early childhood teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions as situated in my research study. My discussion is taken from the context that socio-cultural factors have a strong influence on one's beliefs and self-perceptions. As such, the discourse is taken from the perspective that teacher beliefs derive from and are influenced by: a) the teacher's upbringing and personal life experiences, b) memories of their former teachers; and c) the teacher's situated pedagogical knowledge and beliefs and d) perception of professional role.

Teacher's Personal Experiences

There is no denying that our beliefs form a part of who we are. Beliefs are formed and developed early in life, though interaction with one's family and one's culture (Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1976). Supporting this position, Aldemir and Sezer (2009) in their study with pre-service teachers, put forward the argument that teacher beliefs are influenced by the teacher's upbringing, culture, as well as their life experiences. Thorsen (2008) added that one's life experiences, encounters, challenges, relationships, successes and failures all contribute to the development of identity and beliefs about us and the world. (p. 37).

Since beliefs are formed early, self-perpetuate, and persevere even against contradictions (Pajares, 1992), it is safe to assume that by the time a teacher enters the classroom, he/she already would have had a core set of established beliefs. Therefore the older we get, the less likely we will want to change our core beliefs – beliefs that were formed from childhood and reinforced by parents, schooling and peer relationships. However personal beliefs can be challenged as the teacher navigates life experiences inside and outside the classroom. As such, pre-conceived beliefs from past experiences can flow over into the teacher's professional life and may realign how the teacher perceives his/her role in the classroom and in turn, influence the decisions made by the teacher.

The teacher's present experiences are also a source of the development of a personal belief system (Bauml, 2009). Socialization can be seen as a highly interactive process and as the teacher interacts with peers and the school culture, these variables will also influence and help to shape the teacher's belief system. After all, Hamilton's (1993) study on the influence of culture on beliefs concluded that the teacher's personal cultural history and the school's culture affect that teacher while interacting with the school and the students (p. 96). This can create tension if there is a difference or dissonance in beliefs and may give rise to inconsistencies in beliefs and action. However Kagan (1992) as cited by Faour (2003), pointed out that "teaching remains forever rooted in personality and experience and that learning to teach requires a journey into the deepest recesses of one's self-awareness, where failures, fears, and hopes are hidden." (p. 50). Therefore personal beliefs about teaching will persevere because the teacher's life experience is a main source of beliefs (Richardson, 1996; Raths, 2001) and serve as validation for classroom decisions and practices.

Memories of Past Teachers

Research over the years have shown how teacher's beliefs about teaching are influenced by the experiences they have had while attending school. These experiences also influence their choice of profession. Lortie in 1975 conducted a study on why people chose to become teachers and what kinds of experiences affected their beliefs about teaching. Lortie posited that there was a direct relationship between teacher beliefs about teaching and their own experiences when they were students. He called it 'apprenticeship of observation', and included memories of experiences with past teachers. According to Lortie, if the experiences were pleasant, teachers tend to have a more positive disposition to the career of teaching, but the reverse may happen if the experiences were bad. In any case, Lortie asserted that teachers' personal experiences do influence their values and beliefs. Becker and Riel (1999) also argued that teachers' practices and beliefs are shaped by their values, opinions and expectations of significant others around them, and are transmitted through social interactions. According to Garvis, Fluckiger, and Twigg (2012), "Observation of personal teachers develops folk theories about what it takes to be a teacher." (p. 95) and therefore influences teacher practice. Thus apprenticeship of observation of our former teachers becomes our frame of reference where we develop ideas about what it takes to be an effective teacher and how students ought to behave.

Pedagogical Knowledge and Culturally Relevant Knowledge

The influence of professional knowledge and learning on beliefs has been the source of discourse in literature for some time now (Wood and Bennett, 2000). Khader (2012)

defines pedagogy as “The activity of teaching or instructing and the methods used to instruct.” (p. 75). According to him, pedagogy is “the art or science of being a teacher.” (p. 75). In defining knowledge within the context of this study, I have adopted four main views of knowledge. The first is Calderhead (1996) who referred to knowledge as “factual propositions and understandings” (p. 715). Thus with the acquisition of knowledge, one can choose to believe it or not. Mansour (2009) viewed knowledge as frequently changing, can be evaluated or judged (p. 27). According to Mansour, while beliefs can control the acquisition of knowledge, these key features of knowledge set it apart from beliefs but have an influence on beliefs. I also refer to Savasci-Acikalın (2009) who also agreed that knowledge is ephemeral and can be evaluated and judged, but must satisfy “truth condition” (p. 4). Beliefs however do not require this condition.

It can be argued then that what a teacher comes to believe is true is influenced to a large degree on the knowledge that teacher gained and the extent to which the teacher evaluates and judges this body of knowledge. As such, there may be times when the teacher treats his/her beliefs as knowledge (Thompson, 1992). One of these beliefs is that teaching is about transmitting knowledge. As such I present my final view of knowledge as presented by Shulman (1987). He presented the argument regarding the content, character and sources for a knowledge base of teaching. He categorized this knowledge base as follows:

- a) *Content knowledge*;
- b) *General pedagogical knowledge* - special reference to those broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter;
- c) *Curriculum knowledge*, with particular grasp of the materials and programs that serve as “tools of the trade” for teachers;
- d) *Pedagogical content knowledge* - that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding;
- e) *Knowledge of learners and their characteristics*;
- f) *Knowledge of educational contexts* -ranging from the workings of the group or classroom, the governance and financing of school districts, to the character of communities and cultures;
- g) *Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds.* (p. 8)

Shulman identified pedagogical content knowledge as particularly important as it represents the “blending of content and pedagogy” (p. 8) and serves as a guide to help

teachers to understand content but more importantly, adapt the content to meet the ‘diverse interests and abilities of learners’ (p.8). Therefore Shulman believed that knowledge base was more about knowledge about teaching and was less about content knowledge.

Knowledge of teaching is rather complex however and sometimes the lines get blurred when we think that the more content the teachers knows, the better they will be at teaching that content. Zembylas (2005) posited a similar argument that teacher knowledge is crucial when trying to understand teachers’ teaching. Zembylas argued that “Teacher knowledge is a messy kind of knowledge that involves content knowledge, learning research and teaching techniques as well as knowledge that can only be attained in social practice or by personal exploration through how a teacher feels.” (p. 468). Johnson (1999) posited that teacher knowledge is a combination of past experiences and values which are all embedded in teacher beliefs.

It is therefore clear that teacher beliefs are important components of teacher knowledge. This may explain why there may be the perception that college-trained teachers are ‘better’ teachers because of the content knowledge they may possess (Garbett, and Yourn, 2002). Nagamine (2007) went further to opine that from a social constructivist perspective, “teacher knowledge is a socially-constructed experiential entity...” (p. 2). This kind of situated knowledge is key to my research.

I would like to juxtapose Shulman’s knowledge base argument within the Jamaican early childhood education system especially within the context that the majority of its EC teachers are not college trained. Through regular professional development training and other certification courses, teachers are exposed to Western dominated pedagogical content knowledge about how children develop and are to be taught. Teachers are taught content that is sometimes devoid of cultural context and realities that these teachers confront daily in their classrooms. The legacy of a traditional, linear view of child development is still commonplace in the Jamaican EC classrooms, and in a curriculum from which the teachers are expected to make professional judgment (Fleer, 2005).

Kagan (1992) believed that as a teacher's experience in classrooms grows, knowledge grows as well and develops into a personalized pedagogy that informs the teacher’s self-perception and judgment and is situated in three ways: a) context – as it relates to the students b) content – as it relates to what to be taught; and c) person – the teacher’s beliefs system (p. 74). Indeed, Kagan (1992) went further to state that “most teachers’ professional knowledge can be regarded more accurately as a belief.” (p. 73).

Woodhead, Faulkner and Littleton (1998), viewed child development culturally and criticized perspectives of Western child development as a body of theoretical knowledge and research descriptions. According to Woodhead, et al., “Child Development reflects a minority of world childhoods, based mainly on North American and European children and studied from the perspective of Euro-American researchers.” (p. 1). They went further to add that studying child development from a socio-cultural perspective “cuts through the conventional demarcation between cognitive, social, and emotional development.” (p. 1).

This makes culturally relevant knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1995) an important paradigm to consider. Since, as Kagan opined that professional knowledge may be regarded as a belief, promoting a culturally relevant knowledge base will impact the Jamaican EC beliefs about how children in their classroom develop and learn. Context therefore becomes an important part of pedagogical content knowledge as it recognizes that culture cannot be separated from the teaching and learning process.

But what does culturally relevant knowledge mean in the Jamaican context? Culturally relevant pedagogical content knowledge helps the teacher to recognize the role culture plays in the delivery of curriculum to children in the early childhood setting. With children coming from varying socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds, it makes teaching even more complex. Armed with a curriculum that heavily relies on Euro-American theories of child development (which I will discuss later) may limit the knowledge base described earlier by Shulman. A culturally relevant knowledge base will allow teachers to select, adapt and teach culturally relevant content from a curriculum that meets children’s diverse interests and learning needs (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Eventually, as Shulman and Kagan believed, this will become a part of the teacher’s pedagogical beliefs. The challenge however according to McLachlan, Fleer and Edwards (2013), is finding a way to merge the conceptual knowledge that teachers have of what children need to be successful learners, with the cultural knowledge and skills that children bring to the learning process (p. 196).

Pedagogical Beliefs

Geoghegan, Geoghegan, O’Neil and White (2004) viewed pedagogical beliefs as underpinning a personal pedagogical paradigm along a continuum that spans across the professional life of the teacher. Lim and Chai (2008) believed that the teachers’ pedagogical beliefs are “well established during their apprenticeship of observation that occurs over their years as students, where they develop ideas about what it takes to be an effective teacher and how students ought to behave.” (p. 810). Pedagogical beliefs are also shaped while being part of a learning community and can be affected by experiences of the teacher while in that

community. These experiences can create new realities and newly acquired beliefs, thus modifying or transforming once held beliefs (Gordon and Debus, 2002; Thorsen, 2008).

Perception of Professional Role

Alongside pedagogical beliefs are teachers' beliefs about their professional role. The early childhood system in Jamaica is presently undergoing a myriad of changes in terms on reforms and policy, new curriculum demands, over-crowded and under-resourced classrooms, demands from parents and administrations. This can result in the early childhood teacher feeling stressed and overwhelmed and even have feelings of inadequacy to meet the various curricular and parent demands. Added to this backdrop is the fact that Jamaica early childhood teachers do not share the same professional status as primary and secondary-trained teachers as mentioned in Chapter One.

However Thorsen (2008) opined that it is helpful for a teacher to believe in his or her capacity to have the knowledge and skills to help children meet their full potential and that this is confirmed through the teaching experience and gives the teacher a good feeling of being successful and effective. (p. 39). This applies to both pre-service and in-service teachers. Therefore as the early childhood teacher's classroom skills are honed through training and professional development as well as being a part of a vibrant learning community, beliefs about teaching and learning become more entrenched and may lead to greater feelings of self-efficacy.

Summary

Several factors affect the beliefs that early childhood teachers hold. Personal experiences including past experiences as students and observing other teachers influence teachers' beliefs about what it takes to be a teacher. Pedagogical knowledge, including content knowledge, knowledge about the students and knowledge about the self contribute to a core set of pedagogical beliefs. Pedagogical beliefs can affect how a teacher perceives his/her competence or self-efficacy. Pedagogical beliefs can serve as a mediator between knowledge and skills and help the teacher to develop a personal philosophy about teaching and how children learn and develop and what decisions to make in teaching/learning processes.

Theoretical Perspectives on Early Childhood Development and Education

Before discussing Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) in the early childhood classroom, I find it important to first highlight the major theoretical perspectives on early childhood development, namely the maturational and socio-cultural perspectives

which have influenced Jamaican teachers' theories and views of early childhood education and provide the foundation for teaching young children. These perspectives have also served to inform policies, practices and training in the Jamaican early childhood education context. They also play a role in how teachers view how children develop and learn.

According to Bredekamp (2011), "Developmentally appropriate practice begins with early childhood educators' knowledge of how children learn and develop." (p. 71). She believed that that these practices are ways of teaching that seek to promote and engage children's interests, experiences, and abilities in order to help them to successfully rise to challenges and achieve learning goals. This theoretical knowledge of how young children develop and learn can contribute to the teacher's teaching philosophy and beliefs. According to Fang (1996) teachers' philosophy and beliefs affect teaching and learning. Munby (1982) also alluded to the fact that teachers' use their beliefs and theories about what children need to learn to perceive process and make decisions in the classroom.

Bredekamp (2011) also opined that "The foundations of developmentally appropriate practice, as it is defined today, lie in the history of early childhood education." (p. 70). Grounded in Anglo-American and European traditions, in this section, I will provide an overview of historical theories and practices of child development which have heavily influenced the development of the early childhood education and the curriculum in Jamaica. The following are the major theoretical perspectives on early childhood development, namely the developmental and socio-cultural perspectives that have contributed to teachers' understanding of how children learn and I will discuss the work of philosophers Plato and Aristotle and the principal guiding theories of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Montessori and Erikson that have influenced the development of the Jamaican early childhood curriculum with specific attention given to areas such as: the maturationist theory of child development, theories on how children learn and curriculum development and instruction used in the learning process.

Maturational Perspectives of Child Development

The discourse on child development over the years has helped teachers to understand children's learning and inform how they are taught (Bowman and Scott, 1994; Kilderry, 2012). We have come to accept that a child's formative or early years are considered to be critical to further development. Educational psychology has been emphasizing over the years the importance of early year's growth and development on learning. This school of thought came out of the maturationist theory made popular by Arnold Gessell (1844-1924). From a biological perspective, growth is considered to be an orderly process based on maturation and

occurs in a systematic way called developmental milestones. These milestones of development proceed from simple to complex and are specific to certain parts of the body. While there may be varying individual differences existing in growth rate, there are ‘critical’ periods for growth and development to be universally achieved by young children. Research has indicated that the ‘critical period’ or sensitive years are between birth and five years (Krogh and Slentz, 2001; Otto, 2010). Krogh and Selntz (2001) defined this period as a “window of time during which a child is believed to learn a skills or gain an understanding with the least amount of effort and the greatest amount of receptivity.” (p. 93). It is believed that is during these formative years that children learn language, perform self-care tasks such as potty-training, simple dressing, and hand-washing; socialization inside as well as outside the home; playing with other children and following simple instructions. It is also during this time that children develop a sense of who they are. In fact, it is the mastery of many of these activities that qualify or consider children ‘ready’ for entry into pre-school and later transition to primary school.

Euro-American Perspectives on Early Childhood Development and Education

Europe has been the primary contributor to the field of child development and has provided us with common terms, assumptions and beliefs about how children learn and develop (Gee, 2011). Early childhood education however can be traced back as far as in Greece through the work of Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle (Faour, 2003). Plato believed that the State should be responsible for early childhood education and that formal education should not begin before age 6 (Faour, 2003; Krogh and Slentz, 2001). Aristotle however believed that early childhood education should be the parent’s responsibility and children should be taught at home until they attain the age of seven. Both philosophers agreed though that children had varying skills and talents and should be taught informally.

The church after the Dark Ages played a role in early childhood education as well. During the 1600s a Czech bishop named Comenius (1592-1670) was the first to propose a complete system of education using the Plato model, pulling Europe’s education system out of the Dark ages (Krogh and Slentz, 2001). Comenius believed that human mind was a storehouse of infinite capacity of knowledge, and that children learn through nature and real-life experiences (Platz and Arellano, 2011). During that same period John Lock (1632-1704), a Puritan, popularized the term ‘*tabula rasa*’ or blank slate, leaving the image of a child being ‘empty vessels’ and ready and waiting to be filled with knowledge. However, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), a French philosopher disagreed with this view of children. Instead of

a blank slate, Rousseau likened children to a flower, waiting to blossom and learning through interactions with the physical environment (Faour, 2003).

During the turn of the nineteenth century, a German educator, Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), established the first kindergarten for three to five year olds. He was also the first to establish teaching training and made contributions in the areas of curriculum and methodology, emphasizing the use of songs, games, and finger-play (Krogh and Slentz, 2001). In the Jamaican early childhood classroom these have been adapted in the form of circle time, creative activities and the singing of nursery rhymes.

The mid twentieth century was a watershed period for social and historical changes in the field of education both in Europe and the United States. John Dewey (1859-1952), an American philosopher and educator, found Froebel's kindergarten concept wanting and posited that there is a connection between education and democracy and viewed the classroom as the ideal conduit for developing and shaping democratic citizens (Dewey, 1956). Teachers, according to Dewey, serve as models of acceptable behaviour in society. Dewey also believed that learning was a life-long process, and that it is the whole society's responsibility along with parents and teachers to help in a child's development (Platz and Arellano, 2011). He believed that the curriculum should facilitate children learning by doing, using their natural curiosity and that learning activities should be relevant to the children. Dewey also advocated that schools should be student-centred and progressive if they were to transform society (Faour, 2003).

During this period as well, Italy's first female physician and later educator, Maria Montessori (1879-1952) developed the principles of teaching young children by using their senses and creative potential. She introduced self-correcting teaching materials that are still used today, but emphasized that classroom activities should be child-directed in a 'prepared environment' (Faour, 2003; Krogh and Slentz, 2001). She likened a child to a sponge, soaking up knowledge facilitated by the environment. Montessori is credited for introducing child-size furniture and mixed-ability grouping (Faour, 2003) which is common in almost all early childhood institutions in Jamaica.

This era saw the birth of the Child Study movement in Europe and the America with the field dominated by Freud's (1856-1939) psychoanalytic theory of child development, emphasizing the formation of the personality is based on how parents manage the child's sexual and aggressive drives (Spodek, 1991). Other theories that dominated the field included American psychologist Erik Erickson's (1902-1994) psycho-social theory which emphasized the role of culture and society in a child's development. According to Erikson, early

experiences, family relationships, culture and society influence child development and these influences formed the basis for emotional and social development. This development occurs in eight stages, each with its own developmental tasks. The child may experience an ‘identity crisis’ if these tasks are not successfully negotiated and so in early childhood, trust, autonomy and initiative are crucial to the child’s development (Mooney, 2000).

The Swiss biologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) changed the theoretical landscape on how children develop. Whilst other theorists posited their arguments on what children knew Piaget was curious about the nature of how children learn. His cognitive development theory, or constructivism, based on an age-stage biological and maturation level of readiness, served as a guide for early childhood pedagogy. From a constructivist viewpoint, according to Piaget, children are active constructors of knowledge and develop intellect by active interaction with the environment and efforts to make sense of the world around him/her (Piaget, 1953). Positing four stages of cognitive or intellectual development, namely *sensori motor* (18-24 mths.), *preoperational*, (2-6 yrs.) *concrete operational* (7-12 yrs.) and *formal operational* (13- adulthood), Piaget believed that children’s cognitive development must follow this sequence and intellectual capacity grew as a result of a more complex understanding of the world (Piaget, 1952; 1953; 1959).

Piaget’s theory provided a new set of language and practices that have significantly impacted on the Jamaican early childhood classroom, where terms such as “readiness”, “assimilation”, “accommodation” and “sensorimotor” and “preoperational” are common linguistic symbols used to associate early childhood learning and practices. In fact, Piaget’s constructivist theory transformed curricula design, with emphasis on discovery learning and children using concrete manipulatives to actively construct their environment (Spodek and Saracho, 2002).

Lev Vygotsky (1899-1934), a Russian psychologist, viewed cognitive development from a socio-cultural perspective. Vygotsky proposed that children learn through social interaction with a more competent and knowledgeable person and that this form of interaction is necessary for the acquisition of thinking and models of behaviour (Krogh and Slentz, 2001). He developed the concept of a *zone of proximal development* or ZPD which is “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Thus through guidance and modeling from a more competent adult or peer, a child can reach his/her ZPD. Unlike Piaget who viewed speech as an egocentric attempt to communicate,

Vygotsky also believed that children use private speech as self-regulatory mechanism while attaining his/her ZPD (Krogh and Slentz, 2001; Spodek and Saracho, 2002).

In 1968, an American medical doctor founded the School Development Program (SDP). While working out of the Yale Child Study Centre, he became involved in two of Connecticut's lowest performing schools. During his research, Comer concluded that if children were to achieve their best, emphasis must not only be placed on mastering cognitive skills, but attention must be given to the six critical pathways to development (Brown and Corbin, 2004). Positing that educators and parents must focus attention on every child in a holistic way, these pathways include: a) physical pathway which focuses on physical health, nutrition and sexually responsible behaviour; b) cognitive pathway which includes promoting development by helping children to become independent thinkers and problem-solvers; c) psychological pathway which emphasizes helping children to learn to accept themselves and becoming self-confident, especially during the identity formation stage as posited by Erikson's theory of psycho-social development; d) language pathway which focuses on increasing children's capacity for receptive and expressive language skills in varying contexts; e) social pathway which emphasizes helping children to increase their capacity to build healthy relationships and demonstrate empathy towards others; and f) ethical pathway which places emphasis on children's development along a path that increases their capacity to behave in a manner that is just and fair toward themselves and others and understanding the role of integrity (Brown and Corbin, 2004, p. 32-34). These pathways, according to Brown and Corbin, form the foundation of the School development Program (p. 32). In all of these pathways, young children benefit from having adults model the appropriate behaviours (Brown and Corbin, 2004).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 2001) systems theory also serves as a frame of reference for child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 2001). Bronfenbrenner's theory posited that social phenomenon should be analyzed within an ecological or cultural context. According to Bronfenbrenner, child development occurs within systems, each influencing and impacting on the other. These systems include the biosystem (the child) at the centre; the microsystem (the child's immediate setting e.g., home school); the mesosystem (factors which influence the microsystem e.g., relationship with family or peers); the macrosystem (overarching influences of cultural values and expectations); and the chronosystem (events occurring within the passing of time)

Brown, Emmons and Comer (2010), further expressed that social and emotional development are invariably connected to other critical pathways and through planned

mediated activities such as circle time in the mornings, students are given the opportunity to enhance their learning and development. They also put forward the idea that schools which permeate a culture of developmental understanding, have a greater chance of student success (p. 19).

It is worth noting that although the significant theories on early childhood education presented in this section originated primarily in Europe, and later in the United States, these theories still have a strong influence on the philosophies, curriculum and instructional practices found in the Jamaican classrooms today. Of course there have been some modifications and adaptations to theory and practice, based on our national conditions and cultural values (Spodek and Saracho, 2002). However, our curriculum offerings have retained much of the essence of the contributors mentioned earlier as they serve as the primary foundation for pedagogical practices and early childhood reform.

These perspectives have also formed the foundation of early childhood education (Bredekamp, 2011) and led to another theoretical perspective and reform movement coming out of the United States, that proposes the consideration of appropriate practices based on the child's development. The following section provides a discussion on developmentally Appropriate Practices or DAP and its relationship to early childhood development and education.

Summary

Euro-American perspectives on child development have influenced how teachers understand how children develop and learn. These perspectives have also influenced the language and symbols used in the discourse on child development. In the next section I will discuss the emergence of DAP, whose philosophical framework was based on some of the theories on child development described earlier.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) in Early Childhood Education

In this section I discuss the guiding principles of (DAP) and its impact on early childhood education and reform. Because DAP operates as a foundation for teaching among the five early childhood teachers who took part in the study, I will also discuss the contentious issue of what constitutes "Appropriate" and conclude with highlighting research on early childhood teachers' beliefs about DAP.

As mentioned in the previous section, research has led to different ways of looking at children's development in a holistic way. This gave way to the adaptation of

Developmentally Appropriate Practices presented at the NAEYC Conference in 1987. DAP is defined as “the outcome of a process of teacher decision making that draws on at least three, critical interrelated bodies of knowledge: (a) what teachers know about how children develop and learn; (b) what teachers know about the individual children in their group; and (c) knowledge of the social and cultural context in which those children live and learn”. (Bredekamp and Copple, eds., 1997, p. vii). DAP also serves two major purposes namely, a) to enhance the quality of early childhood experiences of young children by using developmentally appropriate activities, materials and having developmentally appropriate expectations in early childhood programmes and b) to balance academic instruction in early childhood programmes with other socio-emotional and physical development aspects (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp and Copple, 1997).

Additionally, teachers need to meet the children where they are. This involves observing children’s engagement with materials, activities, and planning curriculum and adapting teaching strategies based on observation; assessing what children already know and their interests, and keeping teaching goals in mind. (Bredekamp, 2011). So in essence, developmentally appropriate practice is teaching that is in keeping with a child’s age, experiences, abilities and interests, that seeks to help the child reach challenging yet achievable goals (Copple and Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2009). Built on a constructivist platform, and informed by the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky (Schunk, 2000), this approach also emphasizes the role of play as a crucial vehicle for children to learn language and develop social, physical and problem-solving skills. Topcu (2011) supports this point by claiming that “Teachers whose epistemological beliefs are consistent with a constructivist approach pay more attention to student discussion, interaction, and problem-solving...” (p. 100), as opposed to teachers who use traditional approaches. Therefore the use of physical punishment, prolonged seatwork, and rote-learning without hands-on experiences, would be considered developmentally inappropriate practices and not to be encouraged in the classroom. DAP soon therefore became the ‘best practices’ model and guiding principle for early childhood education (Copple and Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2009).

In 2009 NAEYC revised its policy statement based on new research and concerns from experienced practitioners regarding the changing contexts in which early childhood education occurs (Bredekamp, 2011; NAEYC, 2009). These contextual concerns included issues such as learning expectations, curriculum, classroom practices and decision-making, the role of culture and language, and including children with special needs. The statement was revised to reflect these ongoing concerns and acted as a guideline for teaching children

from birth to 8 years. NAEYC also recommended practices based on age groups, namely, infants and toddlers, pre-schoolers, kindergarten and early primary grades (Bredekamp, 2011; Copple and Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2009).

File (2012) still challenged some of these notions of the recent revised edition of DAP. She argued that the philosophical underpinnings of DAP still had strong ties to traditional child development theories with child development “framed as universal and singular.” (p. 34). She added that the DAP statements “provided little room for philosophy and values” (p. 34) and may not sufficiently contribute to curriculum decisions. She also bemoans the fact that the voices of children’s families have been largely silent in the professional discourse and suggests that “Children’s families and communities provide an understanding of desirable traits and skills” (p. 39) and so should shape what should be part of the curriculum. Blaise and Ryan (2012) support this view and concluded that the early childhood curriculum shares a complex yet inter-relationship with not only content and methodology that it contains, but a socio-cultural relationship with the people it serves.

Developmentally Appropriate Play

NAEYC’s (2012) DAP guidelines also emphasized the importance of play. Their policy statement on play states that, “Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as promoting language, cognition, and social competence...” (p. 2). Smidt (2011), views play as:

a way of being able to use hands-on or real or life-like situations to answer questions that arise in children’s heads as they constantly seek to make sense of their lives, experiences and feelings. (p. 3).

She went further to opine about the appropriateness of play by stating that play is not just for pleasure, but can be “cognitively challenging, requiring the child to use memory, signs and symbols, cultural tools including language, social skills like negotiation and planning and sharing, prediction.... (p. 69). Of such import is play that it continues to be taken seriously by academic researchers and policy-makers (Wood and Attifield, 2005).

In defining play, Flear (2012) posits two theories of play namely, developmental/maturational, where play is internally driven, and a cultural-historical perspective which suggest that “rules of everyday life and the child’s experiences of everyday practice shape how play is enacted.” (p. 26). Wood and Attifield (2005) however believed that play cannot be defined or categorized as it is context-dependent and the contexts vary (p. 5). As the contexts vary, so do the types of play. There are different types of play such as

role-play, imaginative play, socio-dramatic play, heuristic play, constructive play, fantasy play, free-flow play, structured play, and rough-and-tumble play, all resulting in a variety of learning and developmental outcomes (Wood and Attfield, 2005, p. 5).

There are many benefits of play to academic learning (Bennett, Wood and Rogers, 1997; Fler, 2010; Sherwood, 2010). However, the role of the teacher is important in providing meaningful learning experiences for children. It is therefore important for teachers to observe and assess children while they are engaged in play activities. Drake (2009) claimed that observing children is vital to understanding children's interests and learning needs and is a significant feature of the 'teaching' role (p. 186).

This has implications for DAP. One of the challenges faced by Jamaican EC teachers is how to make learning relevant to the children and connect subject matter knowledge with students' everyday lives and existing knowledge (Fler, 2010; Smidt, 2011). Both researchers endorse the fact that children benefit most when play and learning are relevant.

Another implication or challenge is the importance of teachers interacting and participating with the children during play. The teacher, although the observer should not just be a spectator, but a participant taking care to give the children ownership of what they are doing. If play is a natural response to the environment (Moyle, 2001), then the teacher may miss a great teaching moment by not participating in play activities. Unfortunately, traditionally, many Jamaican EC teachers view their roles as 'supervisor' of children's play activities.

What Constitutes 'Appropriate' and 'Inappropriate' Practices

According to Bredekamp (2011), the NAEYC policy statement "is widely used as a summary of the field's best thinking, a defence of its valued practices, and an advocacy tool for improving programs for young children." (p. 71). DAP also seeks to reflect educational values such as respect for children, building children's self-esteem and supporting active learning.

But what constitutes appropriate practices? Bredekamp (2011) pointed out that the term *appropriate* is a culturally laden term (p. 90) and continues to provoke controversy. She furthers her argument that to be developmentally appropriate, teaching practices must be effective, in that they must contribute to the child's ongoing development and learning (p. 73). In other words, if the child is not learning and progressing towards important learning outcomes, then the practices and experiences are developmentally inappropriate. Being responsive to children's individual development and varying culture is deemed appropriate.

As such, according to Bredekamp, early childhood teachers need to be intentional in everything they do (p. 73). Intentional teaching and making purposeful decisions are important facets of DAP and go hand in hand with developmentally appropriate practice. Bredekamp (2011) posits that in DAP, “teachers’ intentionality undergirds the entire program and all of the experiences provided.” (p. 73). This requires the early childhood teacher to carefully organize the physical environment, select and arrange materials to promote active engagement and supporting children’s learning and developmental progress. These decisions are made as a result of careful advance consideration and planning, based on learning experiences, curriculum planning and considering the social and cultural contexts in which the children live (Bredekamp, 2011). Bredekamp further added that intentional teachers acknowledge that play is developmentally appropriate and therefore promote play so that it benefits the children’s development as far as possible.

In keeping with DAP guidelines, developmentally inappropriate practices (DIP) included the use of didactic lessons, mostly formal and teacher-driven, delivered through consistent whole-group instruction. Students engage in seat work, using pen-and-pencil, workbooks, worksheets and rote learning with drill and practice, with the teacher spending most of her time correcting the children and using extrinsic rewards to encourage student engagement and manage behaviour (Bredekamp, 2011; Chi-Hung Leung, 2012; Stipek and Byler, 2004). This practice is also strongly discouraged in the Jamaican early childhood classroom, despite our history where these very practices have been acculturated in earlier forms of practice, but is still evident today.

As such, DAP guidelines have become one of the leading theoretical perspectives that have helped to shape the guiding principles of the new Jamaican early childhood curriculum (Davies, 2008) and was the basis behind its conceptual framework. Appendix E provides a breakdown of the nine fundamental principles of the Jamaican curriculum in keeping with NAEYC’s *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* (2009) policy statement along with the principal theorists discussed earlier in this chapter.

As mentioned earlier, much of the curriculum surrounds to a large extent a Euro-American perspective of early childhood development. The adoption of the DAP philosophies expressed through NAEYC policy statement have also impacted how the curriculum shapes what is taught to the children. This brings me to the next discussion on early childhood teachers’ beliefs about DAP and the continued debate on culturally and developmentally appropriate practices.

Early Childhood Teacher Beliefs about DAP and Classroom Practices

According to Bredekamp (2011), DAP has a history of well-grounded research about children's learning and development and provides scientifically-based guidance for early childhood teachers (p. 89). These research studies also form the basis for NAEYC's work on DAP (Bredekamp, 2011). Since the late 1980s there has been a growing body of research especially out of the United States, that supports the effectiveness of DAP in children's learning, (Bredekamp, 1987; Burts et.al., 1990, 1993; Bryant, Clifford and Peisner, 1991; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts and Hernandez, 1991; Charlesworth, Burts and Hart, 1994; Buchanan, Burts and Pellar, 1998; Huffman and Speer, 2000; Hart, Yang, Charlesworth and Burts, 2003). The study by Hart, et al., (2003) was significant as it revealed there was a negative correlation between developmentally inappropriate practices and student outcome. The study concluded that regardless of children's socio-economic status, race or gender, they were more likely to experience more stress and attendant behaviour problems. They were also more like to lag behind in mathematics and reading achieved compared to their peers from DAP classrooms. This study was corroborated by a study conducted nearly a decade early by Marcon (1992). In that study Marcon concluded that children who experienced child-initiated DAP, had better language, mathematics and science skills compared to children who experienced more teacher-directed instruction. The study also concluded that children in DAP classrooms had better social skills and work habits and possessed a stronger self-esteem, compared to children coming from developmentally inappropriate classrooms (Marcon, 1992). Research from Head Start, a poster child for DAP, and the use of the High Scope (2007) DAP approach, also supported positive correlations between DAP and children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Bierman, Domitrovich, Nix, Gest, Welsh, Greenberg, Blair, Nelson and Gill, 2008). The Head Start programme utilizes 'hands-on' lessons and activities and specific teaching activities that promote the development of children's socio-emotional, language and emergent literacy skills (Bredekamp, 2011).

However the successful implementation of DAP relies heavily on the early childhood teachers' beliefs and perceptions about teaching and learning (Vartuli, 2005; Parker and Neuharth-Pritchett, 2006; Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb and Gheith, 2010). According to Chi-hung Leung (2012) "Teachers are an important component of high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood programs." (p. 39) and as such, they have an impact on student outcomes.

There is much debate regarding the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices. Parker and Neuharth-Pritchett (2006) pointed to the gap that exists between teacher beliefs and practices by arguing that “there is often a discrepancy between what the research indicates and the philosophies of early childhood educators, which tend to be developmentally appropriate in nature, and their actual teaching practices, which tend to be developmentally inappropriate for young children.” (p. 65). Like Kim (2011), I too will posit my arguments regarding this relationship within two categories, namely: a) the relationship that exists between teachers’ stated beliefs about DAP and observed practice and b) the relationship between teachers’ stated beliefs and reported practice (p. 12). While DAP assumes a universal view of teaching practice (Kilderry, 2012), we must not begin to think that the relationship that exists between beliefs and practice can be measured objectively in trying to determine whether a teacher is using appropriate or inappropriate practices (Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb and Gheith, 2010; Kilderry, 2012). I must point out however that my debate is framed within the context of the role of culture and what is considered developmentally appropriate practices as this has significance to my study. As such, I will be drawing on research from countries outside the United States which, although embracing the overarching principles of DAP, the findings showed varying beliefs when it came to implementation.

Developmentally Inappropriate Practices or Culture-Based Beliefs and Practices?

Canella and Viruru (2004) posited that ECE has been organized and justified around the principles of DAP and has failed to recognize the diversity of children and their families in a global context (p. vii). Several studies about early childhood teacher beliefs and practices pertaining to DAP have been conducted in different parts of the world (Doliopoulou, 1996; Chen, 1997; Edwards, 2003; Kim, Kim and Maslak, 2005; McMullen, Elicker, Goetze, Huang, Lee, Mathers, Wen and Yang, 2006; Hedge and Cassidy, 2009; Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb and Gheith, 2010; Lee, 2010; Walsh, McGuinness, Sproule and Trew, 2010; Kim, 2011; Leung, 2012). These studies pointed to the fact that although early childhood teachers believed in the principles of DAP there are contextual barriers to implementing developmentally appropriate practices.

I will now discuss teachers’ beliefs about DAP and how it has influenced curriculum and teacher practice in different parts of the world. Figure 1 is an outline of the research across various regions outside of the United States which will be the focus of this section.

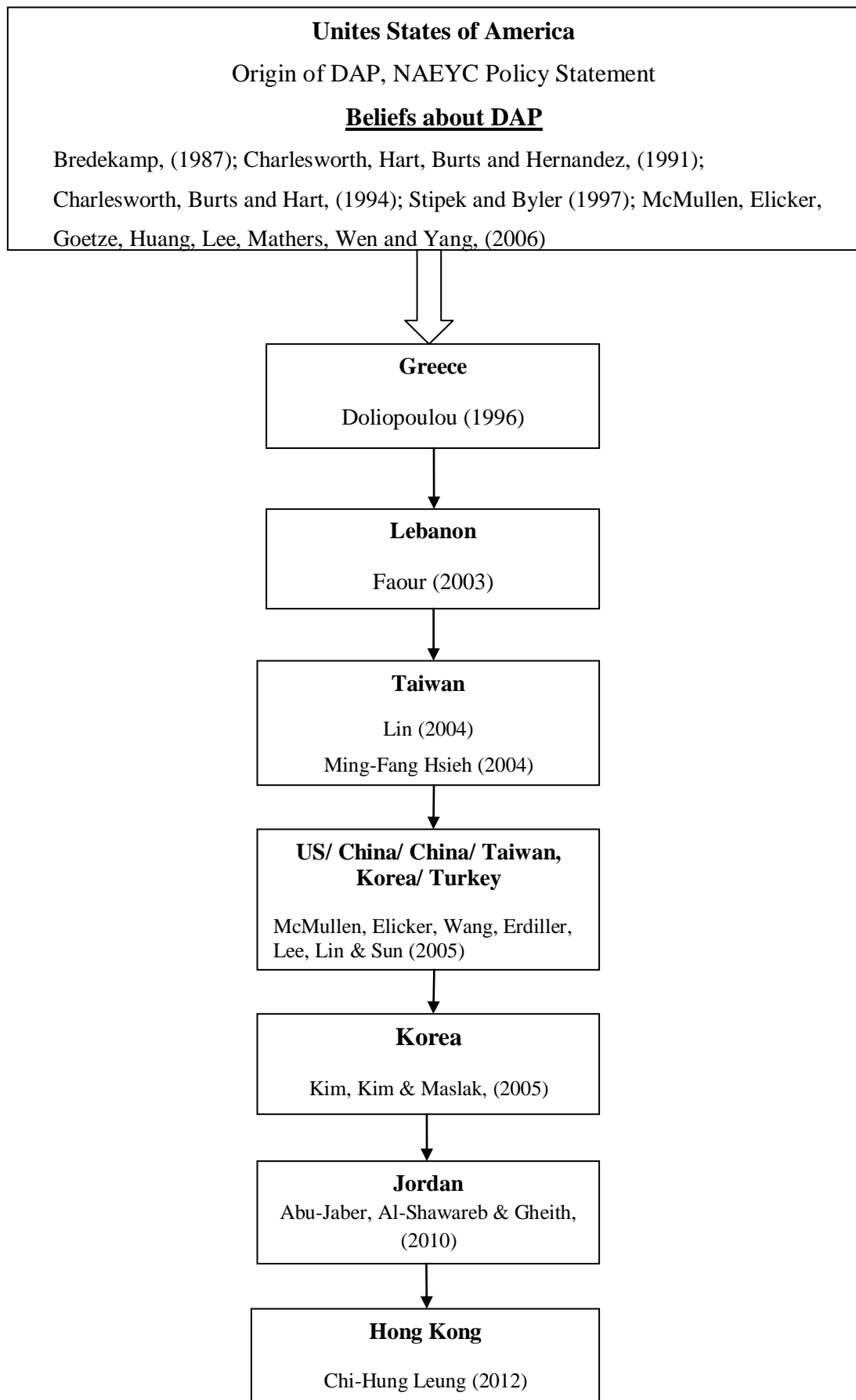


Figure 1: International Research outside the USA on Teacher Beliefs about DAP

Doliopoulou (1996) conducted a study of 67 Greek kindergarten teachers' beliefs about DAP. Using the Teacher Questionnaire and the Checklist for Rating Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Kindergarten Classroom developed by Charlesworth et al. (1993), Doliopoulou examined the consistency between the teachers' self-reported beliefs about DAP and their actual classroom practices. Results from the study showed that while there was universality of developmentally appropriate practices, teachers who utilized more inappropriate practices had more years of experience, larger class sizes and reported the influence of state regulations.

Faour (2003) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between beliefs and practices of 135 early childhood teachers in Lebanon, and whether they differ in terms of the socio-economic status of the school, class size, grade level, the teachers' pedagogical background, experience and other situational factors. Results from the study revealed that the teachers' beliefs and practices differed depending on the very variables listed above, in addition to other factors such as the teachers' level of training, age, salary and institutional support.

Lin (2004) conducted a study of Taiwanese early childhood teachers beliefs about DAP and the curriculum. The study had a sample size of 459 participants consisting of teachers, administrators and caregivers all taken from urban and rural early childhood institutions and included survey instruments such as the Teachers Beliefs Scale developed by Charlesworth et al. (1993). Classroom practices were recorded using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R) developed by Harms, Clifford, and Cryer (1998).

Results from the study indicated that there were stronger beliefs towards appropriate versus inappropriate practices. However, there were inconsistencies between self-reported beliefs and actual practices on items such as using workbooks and worksheets to evaluate performance, allowing children to plan their own activities, using reprimands to encourage appropriate behaviours and making children form letters correctly on printed lines, which were observed but considered inappropriate practices based on DAP philosophy. This was especially so in the rural schools and for teachers who did not have tertiary level qualifications in early childhood education. The study also showed that teachers from urban schools, and who were qualified and trained in early childhood, had stronger beliefs about DAP and made more DAP related decisions. The study also brought out the point the teachers had a strong belief in socio-cultural factors such as ethics being taught in the curriculum.

Ming-Fang Hsieh (2004) shared similar sentiments from a study with four early childhood teachers from varying backgrounds in Taiwan. According to Hsieh, “A culture’s traditions and values always have an impact on the objectives and designs of a school curriculum.” (p. 313) and that “the nature of knowledge and the virtues of the culture can also influence teaching practices....” (p, 313). Results from the study showed that some of the teacher’s classroom practices contained both developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices based on DAP’s guidelines. Those practices however that may be deemed inappropriate were not easy to identify as based on Taiwanese cultural practices and recommended the need to explore the essences of culture-based appropriate practices for Taiwanese children.

McMullen, Elicker, Wang, Erdiller, Lee, Lin, and Sun conducted a landmark study in 2005. In this study, the researchers compared the self-reported beliefs and practices of early childhood teachers and caregivers in the United States and China, Taiwan, Korea and Turkey. The purpose of the study was to examine whether the NAEYC policy statement for DAP which was widely endorsed by teachers in the United States was the same in the other three countries mentioned above in terms of curricula beliefs and practices. Beliefs were measured by the Teacher Beliefs Scale and the practices were measured by the Instructional Activities Scale.

The results from the study showed that there were commonalities in beliefs and practices associated with an integrated curriculum, promoting social/emotional development, providing concrete/hands-on materials, and allowing play/choice in the curriculum (p. 461). The study also revealed that Taiwan and Korea, although embracing Western child-centred philosophies and teaching methodologies, these were often in conflict with the parents and even the society’s beliefs about how young children should be educated. McMullen et al questioned DAP’s ability to apply its philosophy “to meet the needs of all children and families within a given context, let alone across multiple cultures and contexts” (p.462). They saw as a challenge, countries outside the United States being able to adopt the beliefs and philosophies of DAP while maintaining their uniqueness in terms of curricular beliefs and practices that make sense to them and holding on to their cultural values. This is the same challenge facing Jamaica at this time and this is what makes my study so significant.

In Korea, Kim, Kim and Maslak (2005) investigated 211 kindergarten and 208 child care teachers to find out their understanding and use of DAP. Like the findings from the study conducted by McMullen et al (2005), this study reported that the kindergarten teachers held stronger beliefs about DAP and used DAP activities more often than the child care

teachers. Kim, et al., (2005) also reported that inappropriate beliefs and practices were main contributors to the considerable differences in responses among the kindergarten and child care teachers.

Abu-Jaber, Al-Shawareb and Gheith, (2010) in their study, examined early childhood teachers' beliefs about DAP in Jordan. The results from the study revealed that there was general acceptance of DAP beliefs among the teachers, except establishing reciprocal relationships with families. The study as showed that there was no significant differences in beliefs based on the teachers' level of education, years of experience, or age. However, it was noted that there was not a general movement toward DAP in kindergarten schools in Jordan. Abu-Jabar et al claimed that this may be partly due to factors such as parents' expectations about the role of the kindergarten teacher and kindergartens as a whole. Culturally, the parents expect the teachers to be more didactic, something very common to Jamaica, It is also interesting to note that the results of the study also showed that as the teachers grew older, their beliefs about DAP become stronger, versus younger teacher.

In Hong-Kong, Chi-hung Leung (2012) conducted a study on teacher beliefs and practices in that country. The study consisted of 157 full-time pre-service students enrolled in a four-year B.Ed. Early Childhood Education programme and 126 part-time in-service students enrolled in a three-year B.Ed. Early Childhood Education programme. The study used the Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey (three- to five-year-olds) designed by Burts et al, (2000) as the research instrument. The results from the study revealed that items on the Survey that listed inappropriate practices such as planned curriculum and activities, pre-designed writing and reading activities, and collective classroom teacher behaviour (e.g. talk to the whole class) were not considered so by the teachers (p. 43). Issues of cultural diversity, parents' involvement in evaluation, and teachers' professional training were also highlighted by the researcher as items on the survey that had to be deleted from the model as according to the researcher, this could be due to the fact that, "Hong Kong is a unilateral culture as nearly 98 per cent of the population is Chinese. Teachers may not be aware of the phenomenon of cultural diversity in Hong Kong." (p. 43). Leung also reported that the teachers were reluctant to solicit and incorporate parental involvement as this would "affect their teaching schedules, courses planning, and the school's education philosophy." (p. 43). Leung concluded however that teachers practiced more appropriate than inappropriate beliefs and encouraged children's learning and social skills. However, according to Leung opined that these activities were teacher-driven and suggested that more child-initiated activities be encouraged.

Conclusion

The above literature review highlights the complex nature of belief and its impact on the teaching and learning process. I wish now to summarize the essential points which emerged from this review:

- To understand the process of teaching and learning in the early years, it is important to understand what goes on in the minds of early childhood teachers;
- Early childhood teachers have their own, implicit belief systems that became established through direct and indirect experiences with culture, early life experiences, school experiences and professional experiences;
- Teacher's belief systems require attitudes that honour the personal and intellectual growth of self and others in the learning community;
- Although NAEYC's DAP has emerged as a paradigm for standards in early childhood education, findings from cross-cultural studies show that teachers' established beliefs and self-perceptions have a direct and indirect influence on the teachers' decision-making and classroom practices when it come to implementing DAP.

Having laid such a foundation in the literature review, I will now proceed to the theoretical constructs that frame this study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Guba (1990) asserts that selecting a paradigm is the starting point in theoretical and methodological approaches. Guba and Lincoln (1994) described a paradigm as the “*basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigation, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways*” (p. 105). As such, the social constructivist paradigm underpinned this study and was appropriate as it viewed participants as the source of their own knowledge and as such they construct or create their social realities (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this study I relied upon the participants’ views of the situation being studied.” (Creswell, 2003 p. 8). I believe an important part of anyone’s reality (including mine) is the individual’s self-identity. Since this study sought to understand the world in which the participants live and work, a constructive paradigm is most applicable.

It is important for me to point out that I believe that a researcher’s epistemological and ontological positioning will have an effect on various aspects of the research process. It is also important for me to identify and justify the underlying assumptions about the concepts of reality and human knowledge and how these relate to the choice of my methodology. According to Crotty (1998), one’s theoretical perspective and epistemology lay the foundation for one’s research. I am now more convinced that it is therefore imperative that the researcher makes every effort to not only recognize, but make steps to address the implications of the interference of values while conducting research (Weber, 2004).

In light of the fact that one’s theoretical framework underlies one’s philosophical assumptions about the world and human interaction, I feel it is important for me to first articulate my philosophical assumptions as they help to clarify my stance as a researcher. A qualitative research design allowed me to study the complex phenomena of beliefs and self-perceptions while being mindful of the “philosophical, paradigmatic and interpretive frameworks that investigators bring to their practice” (Creswell, 2003, p.30). Greenback (2002), further added that, “When researchers are deciding what research methods to adopt they will inevitably be influenced by their underlying ontological and epistemological position. This in turn will be influenced by their values, particularly instrumental values relating to competency.” (p. 792). Explicit in this assertion is the notion that whichever epistemological position is taken, there is no escaping the influence of the researcher’s value on the research design. These values can take on moral, social or personal characteristics (Greenbank, 2003) but have significant bearing on all aspects of the research process

including data collection. In this section, I will outline the theoretical and conceptual framework which guided this study.

Theoretical and Philosophical Perspective

Social Constructivist Paradigm

The theoretical framework purposely selected for this study is the social constructivist paradigm. Social constructivism has its roots in the work of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). In contrast to Piaget's constructivist assumption that knowledge is constructed through assimilation and adaptation in successive stages, central to Vygotsky's theory is the fact that all cognitive functions originate in, and are products of social interactions.

One of the major tenets of social constructivism is the role of socialization, especially its relationship to how knowledge is constructed (Lambert and Clyde, 2000). The premise that underlies social constructivism is the fact that teacher knowledge is considered a socially-constructed experiential construct. In other words, knowledge is grounded within the cultural context in which the individual operates. Knowledge therefore cannot be separated from the social context. From this perspective, this study recognizes the role socialization and culture plays in the early childhood teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning in the early years and developmentally appropriate practices. This socially-constructed knowledge may come about as a result of interactions with colleagues who share common historical development in terms of language and logic (often referred to as symbols), leading to a common understanding of these symbols. This point is reiterated by Crotty (1998) who opined that "all knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction with human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context." (p. 42).

Working collaboratively, language, according to Vygotsky, knowledge is co-constructed where meaning is derived. This is facilitated through a more knowledgeable other (MKO) within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), with language being a powerful conduit for intellectual adaptation (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, this zone is the distance between one's actual level of development and the potential level of development (Vygotsky, 1978). Through social interaction, the socio-cultural environment helps to shape the individual's beliefs, values and perceptions of self to arrive at the potential level of development.

As mentioned earlier, the theory of social constructivism also acknowledges the role socialization plays in the construction of knowledge (Lambert and Clyde, 2000). As such, this

study acknowledges that the early childhood teachers' socialization and collegial relationships by way of workshops and other acts of collaboration, may have contributed to their understanding of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and subsequently how they use them in their individual classrooms. Additionally, having been exposed to varying experiences, both personally and professionally, many factors would have impacted on these early childhood teachers, which in turn helped to shape their beliefs and self-perceptions.

The philosophical framework that shaped this research study is represented diagrammatically in Table 1.

Table 1: Philosophical Framework

Epistemology	Axiology	Ontology	Logic for Reasoning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social constructivism; knowledge is constructed subjectively by the early childhood teacher through cultural and historical constructs; - important to take into account the historical background and culture of the teachers as this background helps to shape knowledge and truth that the teachers; <p>Context of 'natural setting'</p>	<p>Research is value- laden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - values are inherent in the context of this study -Researcher and participant interpretations need to be considered -Researcher's and participants' values affect the study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - symbolic interactionism; -Early childhood teachers construct their own reality through human activity; -as such, there might be realities based on how their interactions with each other and objects in their environment <p>no ultimate truth exists</p>	<p>Idiographic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus on interplay of factor specific to the teachers -Use of inductive logic of reasoning -Examines the teacher as a unique case and presented on the form of case studies

Epistemology

Epistemology in research can be considered to be the philosophical basis that underpins one's research (Crotty, 1998; Nagamine, 2007). Therefore the philosophical, paradigmatic, and interpretive frameworks that influenced my research design are based on the facts that early childhood teachers have beliefs about themselves and their classroom practices that are influenced by their experiences. These lived experiences impact on their perceptions of reality and the construction of new knowledge and reality (Crotty, 1998). In

this study I chose to adopt the social constructivist paradigm as its theoretical framework based on the following assumptions as outlined by Crotty (1998):

- a) The early childhood teachers possess a rich source of knowledge about themselves and teaching, but their knowledge and beliefs vary according to their individual circumstances and experiences;
- b) The early childhood teachers are instruments of their own practice and on a daily basis, make decisions and judgement within a complex teaching and learning environment;
- c) The five early childhood teachers' work is embedded in Jamaica's socio-cultural, political and economic perspectives based on the fact that these teachers are from differing familial, socio-cultural, educational and professional training backgrounds prior to entering the teaching profession. Factors such as years of experience in the classroom, work environment, relationships with students, parents, colleagues and administrators, and school culture, all contribute to these teachers' understanding of their work and their realities of teaching;
- d) As the researcher, I interpret what is observed and heard/ understood in the research setting, based on my own background, experiences and understanding of the context. The same is done by the early childhood teachers as well.

Axiology

According to Lichtman (2013), axiology is related to values and judgement. Lichtman suggested that it is neither possible nor desirable for researchers to keep their values from influencing aspects of the research (p.25). She warned against value-judgement but to be constantly aware of its influence. In this study, I am aware that interpretivist, qualitative research is value- laden and that values are inherent in the context of this study. As such, both the researcher's and the participant's interpretations need to be considered. Additionally, I am aware that the researcher's and participants' values affect the study

Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality. From a social constructivist perspective, Creswell (1998) conceptualizes reality as meaning-making, carried out by humans as they engage in their world and is based on their historical and social contexts. Thus, in this study, the assumption is that five childhood teachers construct their own reality through human activity and as such, based on how their interactions with each other and objects in their environment may create multiple realities. In other words, no ultimate truth

exists and therefore this study aimed to understand the teachers' interpretations of their beliefs and practices.

Logic of Reasoning

Logic of reasoning concerns how the researcher arrives at a conclusion. Utilizing an idiographic method, the research study examined each early childhood teacher as a unique case and presented the events in the form of five individual case studies. The spotlight was on the interplay of factors specific to each of the teachers. This research also employed the use of inductive logic of reasoning, in keeping with the epistemological basis of this study.

This study utilized a social constructivist epistemology and as such, the theoretical perspective that underlies it, aligns to symbolic interactionism. It is important that when using a constructivist epistemology, the theoretical perspective should transcend understanding experiences to engaging the participants of the study (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000). Using an interpretive approach, I recognise the influence that culture and the participants' historical experiences have on shaping their social reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This interpretive ontology has its roots in social psychology which views the study of society in the context of human interactions (Crotty, 1998; Denzin, 1989). Humans are therefore seen as social beings interacting within various cultural facets of the society. Therefore if one wants to understand the interaction between early childhood teachers and the environment within which they operate, one must attempt to unveil their lived experiences and the 'symbols' they use to represent people, objects and behaviours and even themselves (Howard and Hollander, 1997).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism has its genesis in social psychology. Conceptualized by George Herbert Mead (1934), and espoused by Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism emphasizes an idiographic approach to concept development and looks at the socio-cultural world and how humans interact in this world. Blumer viewed human interaction as a mediation among symbols, interpretations, or the meaning humans derive from each another's actions. From this perspective, symbolic interactionism is based on three simple premises:

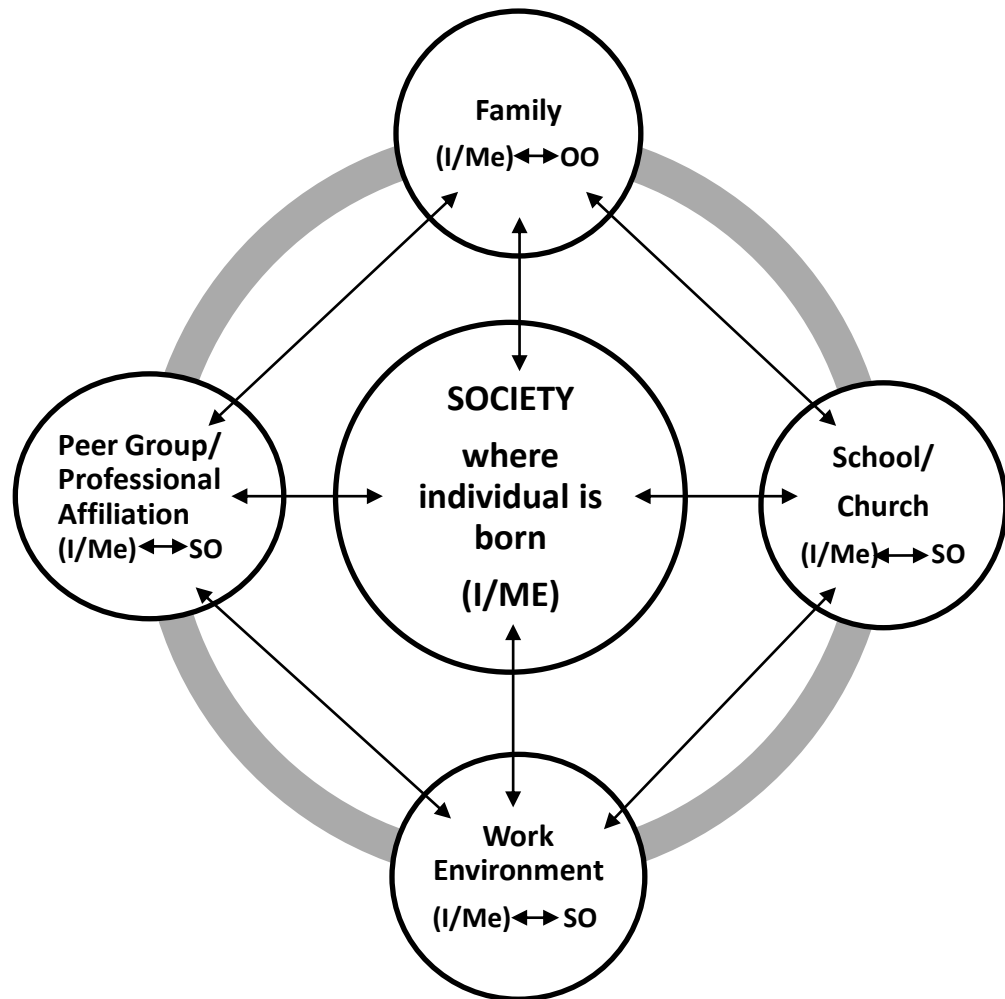
1. Human beings react to things based on the meaning that they assign to them. This meaning takes place in the context of relationships with significant others and includes such things as physical objects, human beings, institutions and guiding ethics.

2. Human beings are not born knowing the meaning of things around them; meaning arises out of social interaction with other people and language (a shared symbol system) is the conduit through which this is facilitated.
3. When human beings form meaning through social interaction, these meanings are altered or modified through an interpretive process or self-reflection. These interpretations will then guide and determine action. (p.2)

Mead also introduced the concept of the ‘Self’ as not existing before birth, but developed through interaction with others. He and Blumer (1969), believed that the possession of a self “provides the human being with a mechanism of self-interaction with which to meet the world- a mechanism that is used in forming and guiding his conduct” (p. 535).

The emergence of the Self is an ongoing process combining the “I”, the image of self conceived by the individual, and ‘Me’, conceptualized by how others view the individual. According to Mead, both the I and Me are formed during childhood and are based on how the individual was treated and responded to during social interactions (Charon, 2001). Individuals derive meaning from these treatments and responses, which in turn help the individuals to determine their societal roles (Blumer, 1969).

Based on symbolic interactionism, the individual is born into a society with established historical meaning based on symbols and conventions. The individual interacts with sub-units of the society, each with its own cultural conventions influenced by historical cultural experiences. In the sub-units, the individual forms extended historical relationships with *orientation others* (Denzin, 1966; Kuhn, 1972) and this relationship forms the basis for self-concept or I (see Figure 2). It is also through this interaction with objects, events and situations that the individual learns how the world operates. The *orientation others* consist of the individual’s parents or other close relatives in the family. The individual also interacts with individuals which Denzin (1966) describes as the *significant others*. These are people with whom individual interacts with over a short period of time, but they play a specific and well-defined role in the individual’s life. Denzin argued though that significant other can become orientation other based on the cultural context and role that individual plays, such as a teacher taking the role of ‘surrogate parent’ to a student long after that student has moved on to another grade. This is quite common in the Jamaican context, especially for students who are from economically and socially challenging backgrounds.



Key: *OO* – Orientation Other

SO – Significant Other

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for Symbolic Interactionism

In Figure 2, the family is the first sub-culture unit that the individual encounters and becomes the main source of socialization. The family unit also contributes to the individual's meaning of societal roles, behaviours and actions (Blumer, 1969). After the family, other sub-cultural institutions such as the church and school, which, with its own set of symbols and conventions, also regulate how the individual interacts within these units. Other members within these units bring into the interaction, their own cultural historical backgrounds with endemic symbols and conventions. The same thing applies to the environment within which the individual works and the peer group and affiliation to which the individual belongs. It must be noted too that there is a dynamic interaction (shown by the arrows), between and among sub-sets, influenced by society which creates (and adapts) its own set of norms, values, rules and symbols as it interacts with the individual. During the interaction, the individual receives feedback from other members in the unit who may have clearly identified

historical development and which influences the symbols and conventions used in that sub-unit. The type of feedback the individual receives from the sub-unit invariably has a direct impact on the perception of Self. An example of this is in Chapter One where I traced the cultural impact of Emancipation on the history of early childhood education in Jamaica and how this historical development influenced the status of the early childhood teacher, which is still evident today. I also posited that early child education in Jamaica has been heavily influenced by Euro-American theory of child development.

The other important aspect of symbolic interactionism is the use of language. Language is a shared system of symbols and codes and exists as an effective way for humans to communicate in a symbolic manner. It is therefore a critical skill that humans use to interact with their environment. Based on Mead's theory, humans use language to acquire knowledge about people and other objects in their environment in order to learn the communication system of their culture (Blumer, 1969). According to Blumer, social structures 'as represented by such terms as social position, status, role, authority, and prestige, refers to relationships derived from how people act toward each other.' (p. 6-7). Meaning therefore is derived from speech or gestures through interaction with others. In the Jamaican context, a lot of the language is embedded in gestures and our body language or gesture denotes how the individual is treated and accepted in a social unit, based on the feedback that is given.

Another important aspect of symbolic interactionism is the perception of an object or event. As the individual encounters objects and events, perceptions are influenced by the individual's ability to understand all the elements of the object and event in addition to perspectives held by that individual. These perspectives may contain biases, value judgement, beliefs and assumptions based on the individual's historical development, but have a significant influence on the individual's actions within the socio-cultural world that exists (Charon, 2001). We can use the analogy of Creole and Standard English where the individual is given feedback from the various social units based on the individual's use of the language. Another example could be in the family setting, where the individual, through interaction with orientation others, associates the symbols of 'mother' and 'father' and the roles these symbols play within a family unit. The individual also assigns value to these symbols and this value serves a model for the societal roles of mother and father.

Social Interactionism and the Teacher as a Professional

The analogy used above can be applied to the value or status placed on the symbol of the teacher, who is viewed with esteem and may represent a particular role based on historical cultural standards. As a group, teachers serve as symbols to be admired and respected and may be a pulling factor that an individual may want to be identified with. This negotiation occurring during the social interaction process, helps the individual to define his/her role and identity as a professional within the group. According Benjamin (2011),

in order for a prospective teacher to develop their professional identity he/she must first learn the meanings of the role of teacher and expectations of teachers as a group as well as in relation to students, teachers and members of the broader society. (p. 57).

It would mean therefore that the teacher would need to have a clear philosophy on teaching, a vision of his/her own competencies, and an insight of how experiences, feelings and motives contribute to professional performance and standards (Benjamin, 2011; Vloet, 2009).

Belonging to a professional learning community assists the teacher in creating a professional identity with a shared understanding of the roles and meanings attributed to the roles (Benjamin, 2011; Malm, 2004). A community or institution is formed by individuals engaging in varying actions at various times, creating networks or affiliations and their interactions may affirm or reject the *actions* of the individuals within the community. According to Blumer (1969), it is this kind of interaction that makes the affiliation functional as it helps to define the circumstances under which individuals act.

From a social interaction standpoint, this affiliation with a professional peer group provides a socially shared definition of professional roles and contexts for the individual and the help to shape the individual's belief system (Blumer, 1969). These beliefs may change as the individual goes through various experiences that may shape or alter the individual's life experiences and how they view themselves and their relationships with others around them. Beliefs will also serve as a barometer assisting the teacher to determine whether he/she is performing up to the standard of the group (or displays the 'characteristics of a good teacher') and whether change may be necessary as a result of the meaning the teacher derives from the experience.

Denzin (2001) utilized the term ‘epiphanies’ or turning points to provide a description of the personal experiences individuals go through based on the meaning it has for the individual and may have a transformational impact on the individual’s life, both positive or negative. Denzin described the four types of epiphanies experienced by individuals:

1. *Major epiphanies*: life-changing experiences that may shatter or change an individual’s life forever e.g., death of a parent or spouse; having a baby
2. *Cumulative epiphanies*: resulting from a series of life-changing events e.g., getting pregnant as a teenager, the parents telling the pregnant teen to leave the home; the pregnant teen having to rely on the charity of others in order to survive; overcomes the odds.
3. *Relived epiphanies*: experiences in which the individual repeatedly relives the major events (turning points) in his/her mind.

During this research study, I had to be mindful of these epiphanies as I explored more comprehensive meanings of the teachers’ experiences at major points in their lives, by capturing their voices, emotions and actions of their everyday experiences (Denzin, 2001).

Finally, through a dynamic process, the individual constructs and reconstructs interpretations of cultural symbols, situations and events in order to have an understanding of how the world operates and develop a world view or a set of beliefs. This is facilitated by interaction with generalized others in the varying sub-cultural units within the society who also influence the individual’s perception of self and respective roles within the units. This may come about as well as a result of the individuals experiencing the epiphanies. As individuals interact with the various reference groups or social units, and within themselves, perceptions are further interpreted into situations, where the individual takes an ethical or moral stance and these in turn may influence the individual’s relationship with others, whether orientation or significant (Charon, 2001).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the theoretical perspectives that guided my research study. The study set out to explore the beliefs and self-perceptions of five early childhood teachers and how these influenced their classroom practices. The contextual framework from which this study explored these issues was focused on interaction within the Jamaican socio-cultural environment of the early childhood system and the perceived roles of the teachers within this system. This conceptual framework is entrenched in the socio-cultural world and the social realities of five early childhood teachers. This study is therefore carefully aligned to social constructivist epistemology and the theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism. The

importance of social context fits very well with the context of this study as it seeks to contextualize the influences of beliefs and self-perceptions on pedagogical practices.

The design of my study will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Methodology

“Research methods are of little use until they are seen in the light of theoretical perspectives. Substantive speciality is of little use or interest until it is firmly embedded within a theoretical framework and grounded upon sound research strategies.” (Denzin, 1978, Pp. 3-4)

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the methodology and methods used to conduct this research. The topics discussed include the rationale for choosing an interpretive, qualitative approach, a description of the methodology, the conceptual framework that guided my study, and the types of research instruments used. In this chapter I will also describe the setting, the selection process, the participants, data collection and analysis procedures, and the reliability and validity measures utilized in the study. A discussion on ethical consideration, as well as my role as an interpretive researcher concludes this chapter.

Rationale for Research

It has come to be acknowledged that teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning tend to shape their instructional practices (Kuzborska, 2011). This research study addresses the need to explore the beliefs as well as the self-perceptions of early childhood teachers in Jamaica regarding curricula reforms, especially within the context of the move towards more developmentally appropriate practices (DAP). Additionally, no research study to date has focused on the beliefs and practices of Jamaican early childhood teachers.

To achieve the objectives of this study I adopted an interpretivist orientation using qualitative methods. This orientation allowed me considerable opportunity to interact with my participants and to gain a deeper perspective of the phenomenon I am studying (Gupta, 2006). The interpretivist orientation also placed me in a unique position based on my current work as Teacher Educator and my past professional experience.

Having worked as a school Guidance Counsellor for many years, I had the privilege of listening to dozens of children and adults share their inner-most thoughts and feelings with me. I listened keenly as these individuals, in their own unique ways, tried to navigate the complexities of their lives, trying to make sense of the world around them. Looking back now, I can see that my training in counselling was preparing me for this research that I have undertaken. I say this because two of the keys attributes of being an effective Counsellor are trust and the ability to listen. This trust is fostered through unconditional positive regard for

my clients and confidentiality. But as my clients shared stories of their lives and as I listened, as the Counsellor I found that I could not divorce myself from the world they invited me into. While objectivity was a desired and required attribute (as I was trained within a positivist paradigm), I realized that in many instances, this was not achievable, because many of my counselling strategies were context-dependent.

In addition to mastering some essential counselling skills, there are two important lessons that I learned while being a counsellor. Firstly, the importance of listening – and listen with ‘unconditional positive regard’, a term coined by Stanley Standal in 1954 and popularized by Carl Rogers in 1961. This simply means that the Counsellor suspends judgement while listening to the client, with the aim of facilitating the best possible conditions for the client’s growth. By accepting people for who they are and what they can become, I have been able to learn about the indomitable human spirit. This stance is reflected throughout my research and the relationship I have with the participants of the study.

The second lesson I learned was the importance of constantly being aware of my own beliefs and biases. Not that having both is bad things, but having the honesty to acknowledge them and being guided by the ethics of one’s profession in knowing when they are influencing one’s decisions. Now as a teacher trainer and educator, I have developed my own beliefs about teaching, especially early years teaching. As such, ethically, I think it is important that I acknowledge these beliefs and lay bare the assumptions and biases that I held entering this research:

- I believe that early childhood education is the most important period in a child’s learning experience and the teacher has a critical role to play in providing the most enriching experiences for young children. As such, teachers’ voices needed to be heard and attention given to them.
- I believed that I had to re-examine my own practice which I learned mainly from a Euro-American developmental perspective. I have embraced this Western perspective in my role as teacher trainer, but questioned its veracity based on the disconnect I have experienced between theory and practice within the Jamaican classroom.
- I believed that no two or even three teachers are alike. I believed that teaching is a calling and teachers make curricula and classroom management choices and decisions based on their own values, goals, intentions, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions. I am also mindful of the fact that there may also be shared professional values as well as codes of conduct which guide professionalism. I believed it was

important to explore the contexts and realities that inform these elements within the framework of grounded theory.

- Finally, I believed that real change can only come about through teacher self-awareness and reflection. This may help to bridge the gap between training and the realities that exist in the classroom.

I share these assumptions because they became the basis for my research. On the surface it may appear to be a very simplistic view-point, but it was my thirst to find answers that are grounded in theory that led me on this journey. I considered myself as a catalyst.

Another reason for my interest in this research was my exposure to the multidisciplinary philosophy of qualitative research through my doctoral studies with the University of Sheffield. During my summer school tutorials I was given the opportunity to challenge and review my previous assumptions about conducting research. Having been ‘groomed’ in and accepted without question, the positivist paradigm, my exposure to interpretivist, qualitative research opened up a new way of thinking and showed me the importance of reflexivity. Essentially, this research was meant to help me to critically assess my previous core assumptions about early childhood education by unearthing other points of view.

It is within this context that I hope my research will have significance in how we view early childhood teachers based on their beliefs about and self-perceptions of their discipline. This is especially so within the historical and socio-cultural contexts in which they work as these serve as influences on the teachers’ belief system and how they interpret educational theory (Malm, 2004).

For this research, the methodology that most suited my purpose was a qualitative methodology situated within a constructivist paradigm and which utilized multiple case studies. I will explain these in more detail in the next section.

Interpretive Perspective

Cognizant that qualitative research is highly contextual, the subjective interpretive epistemological approach was taken during the study. While constructivism is the conceptual framework that guides this study, the interpretive perspective was utilized for the collection and analysis of data. The interpretive perspective suggests that what is ‘known’ can be subjective as it is connected a personal construct-what we feel, believe, or think about something. This ‘known’ therefore represents only one possible explanation or interpretation of the individual’s reality.

While positivists concentrated on the institutions in society, Interpretivists, on the other hand concentrated on the individual in the society. According to Weber (2004), interpretivists recognize that the knowledge they build reflects their particular goals, culture, experience, history, and so on. Weber added that they

intentionally constitute knowledge... they try to
make sense of the world, recognizing their sense-making
activities occur within the framework of their life-worlds
and the particular goals they have for their work. Knowledge
is built through social construction of the world. (p. vi).

As the research study sought to explore the realities of five early childhood teachers an interpretivist perspective proved most apt in helping me to interpret and understand the meaning of these phenomena. This approach also proved to be most suitable to the collection and analysis of data as they related to early childhood teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions.

Based on the interpretive nature of the study, where the research is expected to interpret and make sense of the early childhood teachers' experiences, a hermeneutic circle was used where I collected the data, interpret them and repeat the process in order to construct and reconstruct knowledge gleaned from the interviews and conversations (Laverty, 2003) with the aim of providing a detailed insight into the factors that influence the early childhood teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions. The following is a diagram of the hermeneutic cycle used in the study.

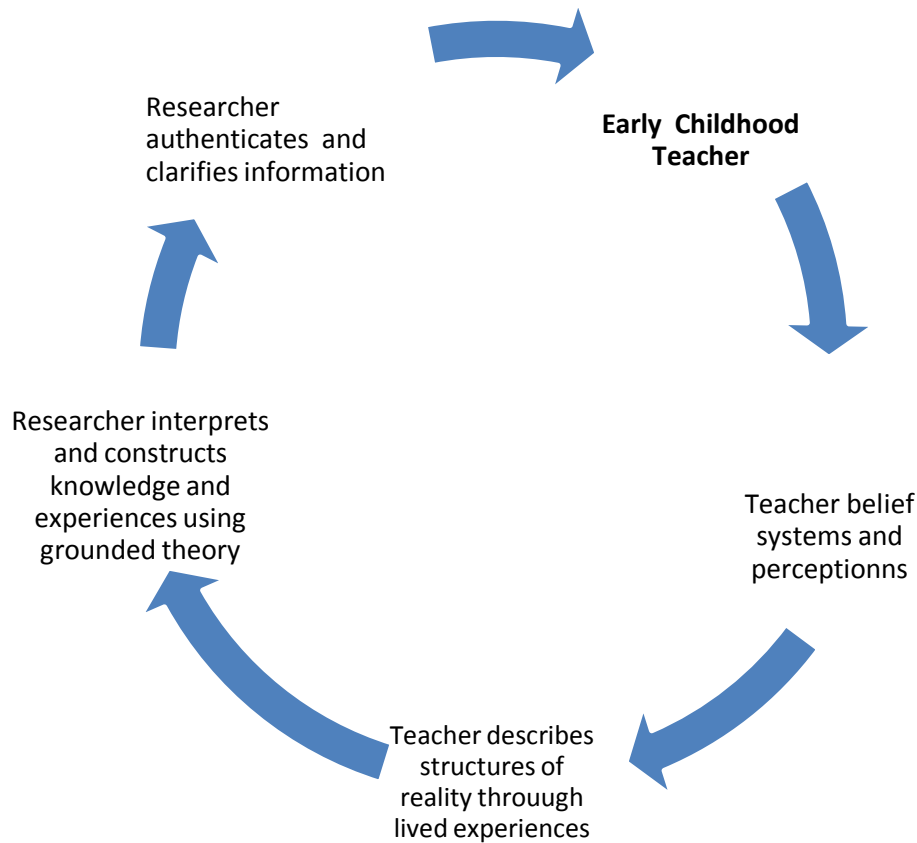


Figure 3: Hermeneutic Cycle

Of course I am encouraged to continuously identify and reflect on my own biases, values and pre-conceived assumptions and make them a part of my research (Creswell, 2008). I also see myself as the conduit through which meaning is transmitted using inductive strategies (Lichtman, 2013).

Research Design

The methodology used in the research design, was in tandem with the traditions of qualitative research. In this section, I will explain the methodological framework which allowed me to study early childhood teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions in the context of educational reforms in the sector towards developmentally appropriate classroom practices.

Qualitative Methodology

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is, "a form of social and human science research that does not have firm guidelines or specific procedures and is evolving and constantly changing. (p. 41). The qualitative research approach originated from social and cultural anthropology (Eriksen, 2001). This design is particularly conducive to my research as the focus of the study is to understand the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and values early

childhood teachers have about themselves, their teaching, and how these influence how they operate within that context. The study is conducted in the participants' natural setting, and the emphasis was on building the research relationship through trust.

On the other hand quantitative research had its origins in the scientific realm. Auguste Comte introduced the term "positivism" a paradigm associated with quantitative approach to research. His philosophy rose to prominence during the mid nineteenth century (Lindenfeld, 1980). He believed that things which are "positive" and "factual" can be studied and measured objectively. The goal of science is to uncover the truth, and through scientific exploration, 'true' knowledge can be uncovered. The axiom of positivism therefore is that only scientific knowledge can be considered.

The epistemology of quantitative research embodies scientific evidence where data is empirical, quantitative and reliable (Hogan, Dolan and Donnelly, 2009). In this method of investigation, a hypothesis is derived, tested and proven. The preferred methods include experiments (usually laboratory or field), and surveys. With this approach, when analyzing data, positivist research believes there is little room for value interference on the part of the researcher. I do not believe this is not necessarily true as the possibility of value interference exists depending on which statistical tests are used (Hogan et al., 2009).

Positivism has influenced how we conduct research today and during my years as a student researcher, it was considered the preferred model for conducting a research using 'scientific' methods. In other words, when conducting any form of research, I must have an 'experimental' group and a 'control' group. The assumption is that using a positivist approach would ensure some amount of objectivity in my data gathering process and make it less value-laden. Johnson (2009) in attempting to differentiate quantitative and qualitative research stated that, "Qualitative research tends to view facts and values as rightfully entangled and quantitative research prefers to emphasize separation of facts and values in the name of objectivity". (p. 499-500). But according to post-positivism, all observations are theory-laden and are therefore inherently biased by the cultural experiences, world views, and values of the researcher (Anderson, 2004). In other words, we each construct our view of the world based on our perceptions of it, and the vehicle that drives this perspective is our own value system.

This study utilized a qualitative case study research approach. I selected qualitative inquiry as it will best suit my objective of trying to develop a better understanding of the participants' beliefs, perceptions and experiences utilizing their natural settings in cultural contexts (Patton, 2002). Three characteristics, according to Creswell (2008), define this kind

of research namely, listening to the views of the participants, asking open-ended questions and gathering data in the participants' setting while recognizing that research "has a role in advocating for change and bettering the lives of individuals" (p. 51). Qualitative inquiry therefore allowed me the opportunity to immerse myself in the natural setting of the participants in the study whose thoughts and beliefs I sought to explore. I was mindful at the same time that according to Hatch (2002), inherent in qualitative research are "multiple realities...that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage point." (p. 15)

This research sought to unveil these multiple realities as qualitative research allows the researcher "to investigate human behaviour and beliefs and how people operate in their everyday settings." (Kilgallon, 2006:58). This study acknowledges that each of the early childhood teachers is unique and therefore brings to the process differing multiple realities, beliefs and self-perceptions which were the central focus. This research was also guided by the fact these teachers' knowledge and beliefs are not static and vacillate based on their individual experiences and the meanings they derive from these experiences. These experiences are unique to each of the teachers in the study even though they all share the same profession, and as such, seeking generalizations was not an objective. The primary aim was to explore the uniqueness of these experiences by providing rich and deep descriptions of their social and working worlds (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

In order to achieve this, qualitative research utilizes the use of a range of data collection instruments. Using a dialectical approach, this study engaged in dialogue with the early childhood teachers through case study interviews and conversations in order to explore their beliefs about and perception of developmentally appropriate classroom practices. Bruner (1991) posited that as humans we organize information about the world around us mainly through narratives and lived stories. Conversations allowed me to gain a greater insight into the major factors that influenced these beliefs and perceptions.

Selection of Participants

Patton (1990) in Wright and Flemons (2002) said that, "There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources". (p. 259). As a case study in a qualitative research, I chose to use purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007). The participants were selected based on criterion sampling (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002), and were as follows:

- Early childhood trained with at least HEART Level II certification, in addition to diverse training exposure. In order to adequately address the research question exploring the teachers' theoretical understanding of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP).
- Teachers teaching 3-6 year old children – the age range where there is high classroom interaction between the students and the teacher.
- Have a minimum of three (3) years experience as an early childhood teacher

Five early childhood teachers participated in this study. One teacher was selected from the five different early childhood settings that operate in Jamaica, namely, a) Government-funded Infant School; b) a Government-funded Infant Department within a primary school; c) a Government-built Community Basic School; d) a privately-owned Basic School and e) a Kindergarten Department within a preparatory school. This was in order to get the perspective of teachers in different early childhood settings in addition to gaining a deeper insight into some of the themes that are crucial to the contextual framework of this research study.

Working as a teacher educator, I am familiar with the local basic schools, government Infant schools and child-care institutions. Visits were made to these institutions asking for volunteers to be a part of the study. I made contact with the Principals who all indicated a high level of interest in the study. I was given the opportunity to speak to the teachers during their staff meeting, where I made a presentation outlining the description of the study, its rationale, and objectives and how the findings can assist the early childhood sector.

Within a week I had one representative from each of the institutions. They all met the criteria stated above. Initial contact was made by telephone and arrangement was made to meet at a mutually convenient time. A mutually convenient time proved difficult for two of the participants as my class schedule conflicted with their available time. A compromise was eventually reached that was satisfactory all parties.

We met the following week at their respective schools where each teacher received an Information Sheet inviting them to be a part of the study and a Consent Form. I spent about half an hour with each participant thanking them for accepting my invitation to be a part of the study. I started my data collection soon thereafter.

Participants

The five participants in this study were:

1. Rebecca– Government-funded Infant School
2. Veronica – Government-funded Infant Department within a primary school
3. Michelle – Kindergarten Department within a preparatory school
4. Janet – Private-owned Basic School
5. Susan – Community Basic School

Each participant completed a demographic data questionnaire (see Appendix D), and a detailed descriptions of each teacher will be presented in Chapter 4.

Case Studies

The utilisation of a qualitative methodology requires specific types of research designs within an interpretive framework. Case studies provide rich, detailed descriptions, perhaps of one person, a group of people sharing commonalities or experiences, an event, a set of documents, or an institution (Berg, 2007; Stake, 2005). In defining a case study, Yin (2003), posited that it is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.13). This method uses various information-gathering techniques (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2006) to increase trustworthiness, such as interviews and focus groups. Researchers view the process and examine the data holistically, and information is gathered that otherwise would not have been discovered through other less intensive strategies. According to (Creswell, 2012), a case may be an individual, a group of people, a programme, event, or setting and can be *intrinsic* (studies an intrinsic, unusual case), or *instrumental* (studies a case/cases that provide insight into an issue or theme). Creswell (2012) further added that the issue may be *etic* (the researcher’s interpretation of participant’s perspective), *emic* (supplied by the participants during data collection), or *negotiation* (information participants and researcher agree to use in a study). In this instrumental study, the five early childhood teachers were the cases chosen as sources of information in order to address the etic issues as outlined in the research questions.

Data Collection

The aim of this research study was to explore the beliefs and self-perceptions of five early childhood teachers using a qualitative research design. The approach therefore to data

gathering was to utilize the teachers' natural setting, multiple data sources and inductive data analysis. As such, data was gathered using participant observation, in-depth interviews, survey, focus group interviews and journals. The objective is to glean a better understanding of the social and cultural contexts within which the participants work. The research objectives were constantly kept in the forefront of my mind during the data collection process as well as the data analysis phase. Table 2 provides a break-down of data sources and analysis.

Table 2: Data Sources for Data Analysis

Data	Teacher Beliefs and Self-Perceptions	Classroom Practices
In-depth/Semi-structured teacher interviews	√	
Focus Group	√	
Teacher Belief Inventory	√	
Non-Participant Observations		√
Document data (lesson plan, worksheets)		√
Research Journal	√	√

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were a primary data collection source for this study. The use of interviews allowed me to get a vivid picture of the participant's perspectives by helping them to talk and reflect about their life events, early experiences, family, and their beliefs about teaching and learning. According to Beale, Cole, Hillege, McMaster and Nagy (2004:141), in-depth interviewing is an egalitarian approach which seeks to develop research relationships and rapport with participants by focusing on their experiences from their own perspective. This is exactly what I had hoped to achieve in my study. In essence, during the interaction of the interviewer and the interviewee, co-construction of narrative is taking place, and so must be interpreted in context (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face and were semi-structured in format. Unlike structured interviews that followed a prescribed format, I selected semi-structured interviews that involved using open-ended questions with the interviewees. I chose this format because it allowed my participants to solicit their own responses and thus facilitated a deeper understanding of what I was researching (Adams and Cox, 2008; Fontana and Frey, 2000). It also allowed for any clarification of comments made by the participants and

provided the opportunity for me to present a clearer picture of what the teachers perceive as being true. More importantly, I was able to verify what was reported through the process of triangulation (Tuckman and Harper, 2012)

Based on the fact that I am exploring early childhood teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were a selected choice based on its ability to provide credible in-depth information about these teachers.

Before field work was conducted, a pilot of my interview questions was initiated using a teacher from the Early Years Department at the University where I work. The aim of the pilot was to determine the appropriateness of the interview questions and to ascertain whether the questions were achieving the research objectives. This pilot proved very beneficial, as with the help of my Research Supervisor, I was able to refine my interview questions to ensure they were aligned to the overall aim of my research.

Interviews were conducted in two phases over a period of three months. In the first phase, interviews were conducted in order to elicit detailed information about the participants' background and beliefs. The primary aim was to learn more about the participants and to establish rapport (Glesne, 2006). I find this very important as Glesne (2006) opined that "rapport...is something to be continually negotiated." (p. 115). My experience and skill as a Guidance Counsellor served me well as I established rapport quite easily. I used the opportunity to allay any fears the teachers may have had regarding their participation in the research. I was also able to discuss the issue of confidentiality, outline the aims and objectives of the study, my role as the researcher well as their roles as participants in the study. The sessions were also used to schedule dates for successive interviews, location, and convenient meeting times. The interview was conducted using the four stages of interviewing suggested by Adams and Cox (2008, p. 22-23):

1. **Background** – primarily obtaining biographical data, teaching experience, establishing trust.
2. **Letting off steam** – asking general questions which allow participants to express their 'pet peeves' and unburden themselves. According to Adams and Cox, "If you do not allow them to unburden themselves of these issues at the beginning, you will find all your questions resulting in these points repeatedly resurfacing." (p. 22).
3. **Addressing issues** – a very important stage, where the interviewer introduces any issues that were not explored in Stage 2. Adams and Cox caution however that the researcher needs to be mindful "*not to bias the respondent towards specific issues or*

responses.” (p. 23). In other words, the researcher needs to keep an open-mind and be guided by the ethics of the research, especially if potentially sensitive issues arise.

4. **Tying up/Debriefing** – At this point all the issues are summed up and reaffirmation and clarification of information presented. Participants are reminded of the confidentiality of the information they provided and the researcher can use the opportunity to provide a short debriefing of aims and use of the research.

The second phase was in the form of reflective discussions. For each of the five early childhood teachers, four semi-structured interviews (see Interview Schedule in Appendix B), were conducted over a period of ten weeks, each lasting for about one and a half hours. In these sessions the teachers provided accounts of their early experiences growing up in Jamaica, teaching careers, beliefs about early childhood teaching and learning, and their feelings about current educational reforms in Jamaica. As a trained Guidance Counsellor, I was mindful of the importance of maintaining eye contact with the interviewee and keeping the conversation natural.

The interviews were hand recorded and conducted at the teachers’ convenience. The recording format was not what I had intended at the beginning of the study, but three of the five teachers expressed reservation at having their interviews audio recorded. I respected their wishes and decided that on the grounds of parity, to write down as accurately as possible, what they said. My counselling training again proved very valuable in assisting me to write comprehensive field notes and the participants were understanding when I asked them for clarification of responses. I would occasionally read back to the participant what was said in order to verify the accuracy of the information. Although writing verbatim what was said was a bit more time-consuming, it did help in increasing the sense of trust between me and the teachers and made it easier for them to talk with comfort about their beliefs and self-perceptions.

In addition to the face-face interviews, regular informal conversations took place, usually before and after classroom observations. These conversations provided the opportunity for me to have informal discussions with the teachers about their everyday teaching activities as well as presenting a chance for me to get to know the teachers on a more personal level. After a while the teachers started to share their professional lives with me without any prompting as well as the challenges they faced in their work setting.

In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, each teacher was given a pseudonym. As a matter of fact, this was done collaboratively with each teacher who approved of the pseudonym that was assigned. Data saturation was achieved at the point

where the five teachers were not able to provide any new information relating to the research questions and thus this signaled the end of the interview sessions (Merriam, 2002).

Focus Group Interviews

In conjunction with face-face interviews, a focus group interview was also conducted as a final interview at the end of the study. I consider a focus group to be particularly useful as it allowed the participants to openly discuss their beliefs while at the same time validating the experiences of other participants (Creswell, 2012, 2008; McLachlan, 2005). Focus group methods also served as an exit interview which provided additional information gleaned from the face-to face interviews with the five teachers. It facilitated triangulation of the data.

According to Onwuegbuzie, Dickins, Leech and Zoran (2009), focus groups can be formed by using pre-existing groups (p. 4). In this study I used the five early childhood teachers to form the focus group, the aim of identifying and discerning cultural themes and shared cultural patterns (Creswell, 2012). Interview protocols were observed using “ice-breakers” to put the group at ease and to create an environment that was conducive to open discussion. Next, group rules were established and information about the purpose of the session was explained. Individuals introduced themselves and shared common interests about their profession lives. The interview was semi-structured and the use of open-ended questions and probing techniques helped me to gain useful insights into the complex issue of, in my case, the influence of beliefs and perceptions on classroom practice. Although the content of what was said in the group session was very important data, the effective use of listening skills also allowed me to discern the nuances of varying emotions, contradictions, ironies and sometimes tensions that emanated from the teachers. A full analysis of the data from the focus group is provided in Chapter 5.

Unlike individual interviews where I am able to record verbatim manually what each teacher said, this was not possible in the focus group session. Permission was sought from the five teachers before the session was tape-recorded. Based on the fact that there were shared and differing perspectives from the five teachers, the selection of the tape-recorder also helped to provide evidence to the accuracy and authenticity of the data provided by the teachers. Multiple types of data collection are recommended (Creswell, 2012; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson and Leech, 2009) and as such, additional notes were taken. I also provided summary statements at the end of the session.

Teacher Beliefs Survey

A Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey: 3-5 Year-Olds was used to explore the nature of the early childhood teachers’ personal beliefs about developmentally appropriate

classroom practices and their beliefs about instructional activities and curricular focus (Burts, Buchanan, Charlesworth and Jambunathan, 2000). The selection of the Teacher Belief Survey served to achieve two objectives: 1) attempting to identify the beliefs five early childhood teachers had regarding DAP and 2) obtaining information about the teachers' self-reported instructional practice in relation to DAP. The use of surveys is supported by Pajares (1992) who opined that along with interviews, surveys and inventories can help to identify inconsistencies and areas that may need further attention.

The survey is divided in two subscales: 1) The Beliefs Scale (TBS) and 2) the Instructional Activities Scale (IAS). The TBS represents early childhood teachers' views about the goals of early childhood education, school climate and their level of support for developmentally appropriate practices. The IAS represents the teachers' reported teaching practice as it relates to developmentally appropriate practices. The survey concluded with teachers reporting their levels of satisfaction with certain aspects of their school and their teaching. The Beliefs Scale survey utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure degree of importance (1 = not at all important, 2 = not very important, 3 = fairly important, 4 = very important, and 5 = extremely important) and the Instructional Activities Scale utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure the frequency of the use of instructional activities in the classroom (1 = almost never (less than monthly), 2 = rarely (monthly), 3 = sometimes (weekly), 4 = regularly (2-4 times a week), and 5 = very often (daily)). The items of the survey were closely aligned to NAEYC descriptions of developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices and beliefs (NAEYC, 1997). Dimensions that are measured included: creating a caring community of learners; teaching to enhance development and learning; constructing appropriate curriculum; assessment; reciprocal relationships with parents and programme policy (Kim, 2003). The dimensions that measure levels of satisfaction included salary level and fringe benefits, availability of resources including technology, and the school's building and facilities. The survey also asked teachers to rate their degree of agreement regarding their enjoyment of teaching and the difference they are making in the lives of the children they teach. Appendix C provides a sample of the TBS used in this study.

Used as a supplementary method, this survey served as a 'consistency check' to corroborate (or dispute) the findings of the interview and observations. This survey was also selected based on its high reliability and content validity (Kim, 2003). The survey was administered individually, confidentially and completed at the participant's convenience.

Non-Participant Observation

Observation is an important data collection method used in qualitative research that can give permanent and systemic records of interactions and setting and can enrich and supplement data gathered by other techniques Moyles (2002). It allows the researcher to gather first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2002). In this study, the people were five early childhood teachers and the site was their classroom. Observation roles can be *participant or non-participant*. The participant observer takes part in activities in the setting they observe while the non-participant observer visits the research site and records notes without becoming involved in the activities of the participants (Creswell, 2012; Eriksen, 2001). Observation can also be structured (when the observer uses a pre-prepared list of themes to guide the event) or unstructured (when the observer takes notes within the context of the observation and then conducts an analysis for relevant themes).

Observation was one of the key methods of data collection. Here, my role as researcher was to observe situations of interest in that capacity and observe things as undisturbed by my presence as much as possible. Even though I acted primarily as a passive bystander, remaining on the periphery of the classroom, I was constantly aware of my presence. I was aware that my acting as passive bystander did not ensure objectivity, as being a Teacher Trainer, this would have an impact on what I observed or chose to ignore. I was also concerned initially that my presence might have distracted the students from the lesson. This however did not happen and the students soon forgot about me and I was able to take my notes.

Before the observations were conducted, the teachers had given me permission to observe the lesson and the students. They were quite receptive to being observed and provided me with adequate seating for me to conduct the observations.

Classroom observations were conducted once per week over a period of twelve (12) weeks. Therefore each participant's class was observed at least once during the study. I adopted the observation protocol outlined by Creswell (2012). I recorded my field notes to include information about the time, place, setting, and my observational role. The observation protocol included recorded descriptive notes about the classroom activities I observed. I also recorded my reflective notes about the themes, quotes, and my personal experiences while I was at the research sites. Creswell (2012), also recommended including a sketch of the site as part of the observation protocol, which turned out to be very useful as

drawing a sketch of the classroom made it easier for me to visualize events that took place long after the observation had ended.

Document Data

Document data can be described as any form of data that are not gathered by way of observations or interviews (Merriam (2002)). Document data also adds to the credibility of the findings and interpretations of the research. In this study, various types of document data were collected to glean additional information regarding the classroom practices of the teachers. These included the early childhood curriculum, the unit and lesson plans prepared by the teachers, and copies of worksheets and assessment given to the children.

Research Journal

During the life of the research study, from the time I made contact with my participants, to the point of completing my data analysis, I kept a record of all the decisions and activities related to the study. I kept a journal of ideas that came to me during my site visits, conversations I had with the teachers and the administrators; my own beliefs and perceptions about the teachers and their classrooms. I noted the nuances during classroom observations; kept a list of questions I wanted to ask the teachers during the post interviews and observations; comments and feedback from the teachers; my own evaluation of how things went during the focus group session and my anxiety when I thought things were progressing too slowly (Glesne, 2006).

I also used my research journal to record themes that emerged during the data as well as preliminary interpretations that arose from the analysis.

Data Analysis

According to Glesne (2006) and Merriam (2002), qualitative research data collection and interpretation occur together. In this study, field notes, interview transcripts and documents were analyzed simultaneously throughout the data collection process. In this way, previous findings served to inform subsequent interviews and observations (Glesne, 2006).

Thematic coding and categorization were the central measures used to analyze and reconcile the data from the in-depth interviews, focus group interview and the Teacher Beliefs Scale (TBS) questionnaire. According to Gibbs (2011) coding is how “you define what the data you are analyzing are about” (p. 38) and codes “form a focus for thinking about the text and its interpretation.” (p. 40). My approach to coding situated in grounded theory,

where my main focus was on “inductively generating novel theoretical ideas” (Gibbs, 2011, p. 49).

I started the process by recording the self-reported responses the five teachers gave on the sub-scales TBS and the IAS questionnaire. A Microsoft Excel folder was created where the responses for each teacher was checked against the statements on the questionnaire. Open coding was used to identify relevant categories and common themes based on the research questions posed. Categories from the TBS were refined and themes related to beliefs about teaching and learning and managing children’s behaviour began to emerge.

In regards to the face-to-face interviews, open coding, using line-by-line coding were also utilized to analyze the content of the interviews. One of the advantages of line-by-line coding according to Gibbs (2011), is that

“it forces you to pay close attention to what the respondent is actually saying and to construct codes that reflect their experience of the world, not yours or that of any theoretical presupposition you might have.” (p. 52).

In other words, I had to ensure that my coding was grounded in the data extracted from the transcript and thus reflect the five teachers’ view of the world. In this study, I adapted the content analysis procedures utilized by Quesenberry, Hemmeter and Ostrosky (2011). After going through the transcripts and assigning codes, I analysed and compared the codes of all the participants as they pertained to a particular interview question (e.g., What DAP Means to Me). Once all the data were coded and categorised, they were organised and refined into higher levels or hierarchy of themes based on constant comparison and contrasts. It must be noted that some of the codes figured in multiple categories and at times there were much more data than could be addressed within the limitations of the study, and so I decided to select the themes that were most pertinent to the research questions of the study, and from which I could extrapolate substantial data based on the main issues addressed in the questionnaire and interviews. Also happening simultaneously, was document review to gather relevant information. These documents included the teachers’ lesson and unit plans.

As mentioned previously, I adapted the content analysis model utilized by Quesenberry, Hemmeter and Ostrosky (2011). The following diagram represents the content analysis procedures used in this study to analyze the transcripts from both the face-to-face and focus group interviews. It also illustrates how the categories were defined and categorized.

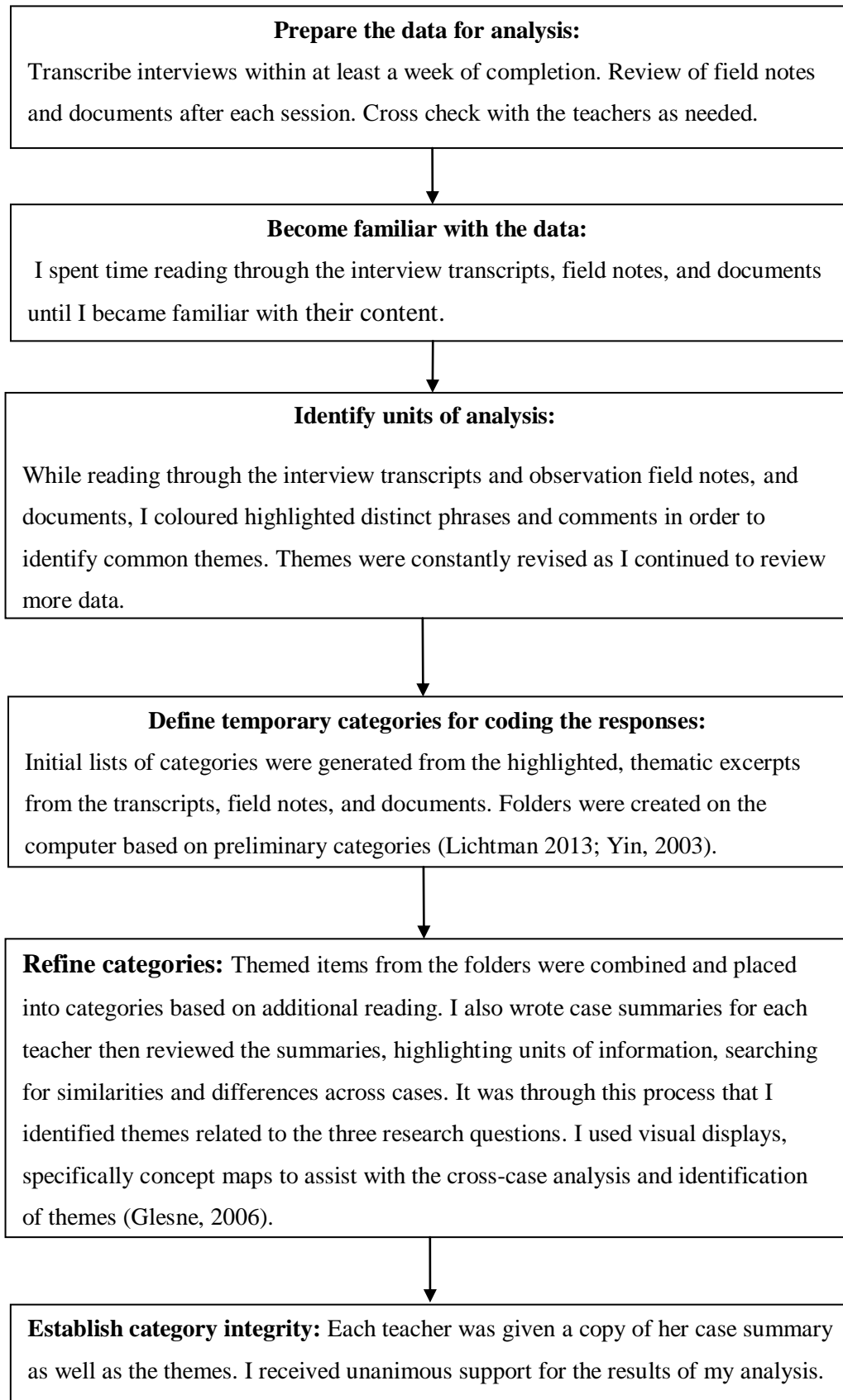


Figure 4: Content Analysis Procedures

In summary, coding served as a fundamental analytic process for this study. The codes that emerged suggested a novel theoretical and analytical way of explaining the beliefs and self-perceptions of five early childhood teachers within the Jamaican context.

Validity and Reliability

Issues of validity and reliability are important when considering case study research. Although these terms are used more often in quantitative research and rooted in positivist epistemology, (Winter, 2000), they are becoming increasingly important in qualitative research. As Bullough (1998) reminds us “Standards of validity and reliability remind us that we cannot write just anything we wish, that interpretations, however tentative, must be disciplined by data...” (p. 29). According to Anderson (2010), the validity of research findings refers to “the extent to which the findings are an accurate representation of the phenomenon they are intended to represent.” (p. 2). Validity is simply the trustworthiness of the results of the study.

Yin (2003) alluded to the fact that reliability ensures that errors and biases in a study are kept to a minimum. Results from a study should be dependable and consistent. Therefore as a researcher, I had to make every effort to safeguard the reliability of my data. However this need to ensure that the results from my study were valid and reliable is reflective of the positivist past that has lingered with me. As a novice qualitative researcher, I was mindful that I brought my past experiences to the research situation.

Issues of validity and reliability have been challenged by qualitative researchers (Golafshani, 2003; Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002) advocated for the terms reliability and validity to remain pertinent and should be maintained in qualitative inquiry (p. 16). Indeed, it seems almost a paradox as according to Thomas and Magilvy, “qualitative research is a journey of explanation and discovery that does not lend to stiff boundaries.” (p. 151). Ironically, Morse et al. (2012) conceded that “It is the researcher’s creativity, sensitivity, flexibility and skill in using the verification strategies that determines the reliability and validity of the evolving study.” (p. 17). Thus, if these are important skills that the qualitative researcher should possess and qualitative research does not lend itself to “stiff boundaries”, then positivist notions of validity and reliability would be deemed inappropriate in a qualitative study such as mine. This stance is supported by Rolfe (2006) who opined that “The quality of the research cannot be assured by the rigorous

application of a set of previously agreed strategies and procedures.” (p. 309) but must be appraised on its own merits (p. 310).

One of the most unique (and probably most significant) attributes of qualitative research that replaces the positivist’s terminologies of validity and reliability is qualitative rigor. First addressed by Lincoln and Guba in the mid 1980s, qualitative rigor are “ways to establish *trust* or *confidence* in the findings or results of a research study” and “is useful for establishing *consistency*...and provides an *accurate representation* of the population studied.” (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011, p. 151, my italics for emphasis).

I too agree with Thomas and Magilvy (2011) that trustworthiness “from the moment of conceptualization of the research is essential.” (p. 154). In an effort to maintain trust and confidence in my findings, I adopted the guidelines posited by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that had four components, namely, (a) credibility; (b) transferability; (c) dependability; and (d) confirmability.

Krefting (1991) opined that “A qualitative study is considered credible when it presents an accurate description or interpretation of human experience that people who also share the same experience would immediately recognize.” (p. 218). One strategy I used to achieve this was member checking. In doing this, I allowed each teacher to read through the data analysis and give their feedback on my interpretation of their responses. This provided me with a method of checking for any inconsistencies in the data, challenges to my assumptions and gives the teachers an opportunity to scrutinize their data and make corrections where needed (Yin, 2003). Additionally, I utilized an independent person (inter-rater reliability) to assist with the verification and confirmation of the themes of the transcripts.

Transferability is simply the ability of the research findings and/or methodology to be applied in other contexts or groups. One way I sought to achieve this in my study was to provide rich descriptions of the biographics and demographics of the five early childhood teachers in the study. Dependability “occurs when another researcher can follow the decision trail used by the researcher.” (Thomas and Magilvy. 2011, p. 153). This chapter provides a means of establishing dependability by providing a detailed description of the research process, as well as including my research supervisor and peers experienced in qualitative inquiry, in the analysis process.

Confirmability occurs with the establishment of credibility, transferability, and dependability. As a qualitative researcher, I had to ensure that the results gained from this study truly reflect what the participants say, especially as a result of the subjective nature of

qualitative inquiry. I therefore had to be mindful of my own biases by being reflexive and keeping an open mind. I too had to engage in critical reflection (Johnson, 1997; Patton, 2002; Hammersly, 2006; Watt, 2007) and be constantly aware of my role as the researcher.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations cannot be made without a searchlight being placed on the researcher's own ethical values. Mutch (2005) opined that the issue of power influences ethics in research and as such researchers should use their conscience when reflecting on their research actions (p. 34). This research was no different as I considered the principles of ethics that I had to adhere to.

Although the focus of my research did not directly involve early childhood students, my research will be conducted in early childhood settings. As such, my ethical research framework was be guided by Cullen, Hedges and Bones (2005). They considered the preparation, gathering and disseminating of data from three perspectives: (a) considering the rights of young children in the research process; (b) viewing research within a team environment where researchers are encouraged to consider team roles and synergies. This will be crucial in my focus group meetings as each participant will be taken from a different early childhood settings, with their own orientation and perspective. A third perspective posited by Cullen et.al, (2005) was that researchers need to consider the impact their research will have on parents and the larger community. Researchers are encouraged to make parents aware of the implications of the research or how it may impact the school's normal teaching programme. Also parents' should be kept abreast of any changes in the research as it progresses. During my research these three ethical considerations will guide my research process. The research was also scutinised by the Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A).

Access to Research Sites

Five early childhood centres were chosen as sites for this research study, with one teacher from each site. These centres included a) a Government-funded Infant School, b) a Government-funded Infant Department with a primary school, c) a Government-built Basic School, d) a privately-owned Basic School and e) a Kindergarten department with a preparatory school. To avoid any possible ethical dilemmas in terms of power and authority, my research sites did not include schools where I have had pre-existing relationships with the teachers through professional development workshops or teacher supervision (Hammersly,

2006). However I did not anticipate any difficulties with access to the selected research sites because of the good relationship the university to which I am employed has with administrators within the early childhood sector. Even so, I sought permission from the school administrators to conduct this research. This was done by making introductory visits to the centres and meeting with the principals and staff to formally share with them my research proposal and to ask for their school to be a part of the research.

Informed Consent

The participants of the study were informed about the nature of the research and the research objectives through a formal letter sent to the schools. Consent forms were given to the participants, and they were encouraged to ask any pertinent questions about the study. Participation will be strictly voluntary and the role of the participants during the research process will be clearly articulated, especially the issue of confidentiality of information. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time they desired.

Power Relations

As a Teacher Trainer in one of Jamaica's leading teacher training institution, I am known within the field of education. It is for this very reason that I have selected schools that I have not had any previous contact with through workshops and supervision. The participants were therefore not previously known to me. I was cognizant of the fact however that I would be introduced to the participants as not only a researcher, but a Teacher Trainer as well. I was therefore mindful of the perceptions they may have had of me as an influential individual and so I tried to avoid making any evaluative comments and giving any personal opinions (Hammersley, 2006; McLachlan, 2005). So in this context the issue of trust becomes important. In this study and as Barbour and Schostak (2005) noted, "Trust is a delicate gift easily broken" (p. 42). In my role as researcher, I am an interviewer as well as a facilitator and as such, I will have to concentrate on being the listener and through my actions, and not allow my perspective to interfere with the research process (McLachlan, 2005). The position of power is therefore a delicate one that I must consider if I were to provide opportunities for the participants to share their perspectives.

Non-Deception

In order to sustain an ethic of trust and care, every effort was made not to deliberately misrepresent the data collected. The data collected were not used against the interest of any of the participants nor the institutions within which they work. This assurance was given in writing to the participants and reiterated during the data collection process. They were also informed that they had free access to the data collected and that all information collected

would be returned to them at the end of the study. Analyses of the data were also sent to them so they could check (and re-check) the interpretations of my findings.

Summary

Conducting any form of research can be a painstaking and meticulous exercise. This research study utilized the interpretive research paradigm with its own rigour. A large amount of data was gathered using a Teacher Beliefs survey, interviews, observations and data were presented using a case study design. Care was taken to preserve the ethical standards of research and as such, issues such as informed consent, power relations and non-deception were addressed. Pseudonyms were also used to protect the anonymity of each of the five teachers. Content analysis procedures were used in analyzing the data as I tried to interpret and ‘make sense’ of the large amount of data that were gathered.

In the following chapter, I will present the results of the data in three parts. Firstly, I will set the context and background information about the five Jamaican early childhood teachers. Secondly, I will present a brief profile of each of the five teachers and thirdly, I will present the themes that emerged after analyzing the data.

Chapter 5: Results

*“We live in stories, not Statistics”
Anon in (Gilbert 2002:223)*

Introduction

In this chapter, I present findings from the analysis of the interviews, observation, and document data in addition to the Teacher Beliefs Survey. The results are organized around case summaries of five early childhood teachers. The case summaries consists of descriptive analyses of the stories and views which the teachers shared with me, and some of the contextual variables impacting them. In the remaining part of this chapter, I present the themes that emerged from the cross-case data analysis, which are presented through the three research questions. I was able to generate three significant themes, namely, a) Beliefs about DAP; b) Factors That Shape Beliefs and Self-Perception and c) Relationship between beliefs and practices.

The first theme is associated with the teachers’ belief systems about teaching and learning exposing the connections between their beliefs and practices. The second theme is related to the teachers’ beliefs about and perceptions of an effective early childhood teacher and the integration of the teacher’s choice of career and personal life experiences which influence the work she does. The third theme is related to the teachers’ place of work highlighting the relationship between their reported beliefs about teaching and learning and their classroom practices based on DAP principles. Each theme is followed by detailed discussion using the case summaries. At the end, conclusions and overall findings are addressed. As mentioned in Chapter 4, in order to preserve the participants’ anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to each teacher and any identifying locations removed.

The Participants

There were five early childhood teachers who were interviewed and observed for this study. Although they all worked in different types of early childhood institutions, what was common among them was that all the teachers were women and had children of their own. They also had many years of experience teaching young children. The participants in this study were Rebecca, from a Government-funded Infant School; Veronica from a Government-funded Infant Department within a primary school; Michelle, from a Kindergarten Department within a preparatory school; Janet, from a Private-owned Basic School and Susan, from a community Basic School. The participants are presented as individual case studies which provide a snapshot of their lived experiences. In presenting the

data, I tried my best to retain the essence of what they said, felt, believed and meant in order to share their stories as accurately as possible.

I conducted a total of four interviews with each participant in their respective classrooms at the schools where they are currently teaching. The interviews were conducted at the end of the school day which allowed us a degree of privacy. During each interview session I sat across each participant's desk, with notepad in hand. All the participants reported that they were uncomfortable with having their voices taped and I respected their wishes. Each interview lasted between 35 and 45 minutes.

Presentation of Case Studies

Case Study One: Rebecca

Demographics and Background Information

Rebecca is a teacher in her early-forties with 23 years of teaching experience in early childhood education. After completing high school, Rebecca enrolled in a Teacher's College to pursue a three-year Diploma in Early Childhood Education. After leaving college, Rebecca went to work at a Government Infant School in her community. Years later, she upgraded her qualifications to a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education. After twelve years at her community school, Rebecca then moved on to teach at another Government Infant School in Kingston, where she has been teaching for the past eleven years.

Rebecca's school is located in an inner-city community and is classified as a Government Infant School. It therefore falls under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The school boasts a population of over three hundred students. She also considers mentorship an important part of the learning community and is always looking out for new staff, keeping them 'under her wings'. She reported that she enjoys her present teaching job and feels that she is making a difference in the lives of her students and plans to remain in teaching for a very long time. Rebecca is married and has two children and believes that her role as a mother has helped to hone her skills.

Case Study Two: Veronica

Demographics and Background Information

Veronica is a very confident and passionate early childhood teacher. She has been teaching for twenty-five years, with nineteen years being in the early childhood sector. Veronica completed the NCTVET/Level 1 in Early Childhood Education and then went on to pursue the Diploma in Education, specializing in Primary Education. She was later employed

as an early childhood teacher within her home community. She later completed the Bachelor in Education, specializing in Special Education. Veronica stated that she deliberately selected this programme of study because she found herself having to instruct children with special learning needs more frequently and wanted to receive formal training in the area. Veronica now teaches at a Government-funded Infant Department within a primary school, with a population of over eight hundred children combined. She reported that she enjoys her job immensely and is very certain that she will be in early childhood education for many years to come. Veronica is divorced and has four children and during the last interview, boasted with pride that she would soon become a grandmother.

Case Study Three: Michelle

Demographics and Background Information

Michelle, who is in her mid-forties, is a pleasant and cheerful teacher from the Kindergarten Department within a preparatory school. She has completed the HEART/NCTVET Levels I and II certification in Early Childhood Education and is currently enrolled in the B.Ed. in Early Childhood Education at a Teacher's College. She has been teaching for the past twenty-five years, with nine years at her current school. She currently teaches five year olds in the Kindergarten Department of a Preparatory School located in St. Catherine. At the time of the study she had a total of thirty students in her class. She reported that she enjoys her present teaching job and feels that she is making a difference in the students' lives. She also stated that if she had to start over, she would choose teaching again as her career. Michelle is married and has three children and claimed that her greatest strength is her ability to empathize with others.

Case Study Four: Janet

Demographics and Background Information

Janet, from a Private-owned Basic School is a warm and soft-spoken teacher in her mid-forties. With a quiet disposition, Janet holds HEART /NCTVET Levels I and II certification in Early Childhood Education and is presently contemplating enrolling in the B.Ed. in Early Childhood Education at the Mico Teacher University College. She has been teaching for the past nine years and has always taught at the school. Her school is located in an urban community in St. Catherine, which is plagued by on-going community gang violence. Janet lamented that this has led to the fall in enrolment at the school as parents fear sending their children to the school. She currently has thirteen students in her class of five-

year olds, a decline from twenty-five students the previous school term. Despite all of this, Janet stated that she enjoys every minute of teaching and has made a commitment to remain at the school for a while for the sake of the children. Janet is single and has one child. She is also a grandmother.

Case Study Five: Susan

Demographics and Background Information

Susan is a determined, cheerful woman in her mid-thirties. She has been teaching at a small community-based Basic school for the past six years, the least of all the other four participants in the study. She holds HEART/NCTVET Levels I and II qualifications and is presently pursuing Level III. She has also participated in professional short courses in Reading. She has been teaching at her current school for the past three and a half years, primarily four and five-year olds. At the time of the study, Susan had a total of nine students in her class. Her school is located in a residential community in St. Catherine and has a population of about forty students. The school registers children from two to five years old. Susan is single-parent with one child.

Data Analysis

The five cases presented above were purposefully selected for this study. They were selected from five different types of early childhood institutions in order to provide a rich analysis on their beliefs and self-perceptions within their specific institutional contexts. In this section, I present a cross-case analysis of the findings based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are five early childhood teachers' beliefs about the nature of developmentally appropriate classroom practices?

In response to this question, a cross-case analysis of five early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices related to teaching and learning was done. In exploring the teachers' beliefs about DAP, two major categories were identified, namely beliefs about teaching and beliefs about learning. Within the category of Beliefs about DAP, two major themes emerged from qualitative data analysis. These were (1) Beliefs about Teaching, and (2) Beliefs about Learning. Four sub-themes emerged from the theme beliefs about Teaching. These were (1) characteristics of the EC teacher; (2) Approaches to planning, (3) Approaches to teaching, (4) pedagogical/content knowledge. In the Beliefs about Learning theme, four sub-themes also

emerged from qualitative data analysis. These were (1) learner attributes, (2) how children learn, (3) what children need to know/learn and (4) managing children's behaviour

Research Question 2: *What factors are responsible for shaping five early childhood teachers' beliefs and self-perception?*

In response to this question, the category of Factors that Shape Beliefs and Self-Perception was created. Three major themes emerged namely, (1) Influence of key events in life, (2) Influence of Key People and (3) College training/ in-service training/ professional development. Based on careful analysis, four sub-themes also emerged. These were, (1) personal life experiences; (2) parents; (3) memories of their EC Teachers; (4) teaching experiences.

Research Question 3: *To what extent do five early childhood teachers' engage in classroom practices that are consistent with their beliefs?*

The data from this question were derived primarily from the Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey and classroom observation and interview transcripts. The data revealed the major category of Relationship between beliefs and practices. From this category, four sub-themes emerged: (1) DAP Activities; (2) DIP Activities; (3) -DIP classroom practices and (4) Culture-based practices. Table 5.1 outlines graphically the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the three research questions.

Table 3: Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes

Research Question	Category	Major Themes	Sub-Themes
<i>1: What are five early childhood teachers' beliefs about the nature of developmentally appropriate classroom practices?</i>	Beliefs About DAP	1. Beliefs about Teaching:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What DAP means to Me -qualities of the effective EC teacher - Pedagogical knowledge/skills -Approaches to planning - Approaches to teaching <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> - Learner attributes

		2. Beliefs about Learning:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How children learn – the role of play - What children need to know/learn - managing children’s behaviour
<i>2. What factors are responsible for shaping five early childhood teachers’ beliefs and self-perception?</i>	Factors That Shape Beliefs and Self-Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influence of key life events and People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher Preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Life experiences and teaching -Parent (Mother); -Memories of their EC Teachers; Mentors; <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- Teaching experiences <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- Teacher status
<i>3. To what extent do five early childhood teachers’ engage in classroom practices that are consistent with their beliefs?</i>	Relationship between beliefs and practices	Manifestations of DAP and DIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developmentally Appropriate Practices Activities (DAPA) versus Developmentally Inappropriate Practices Activities (DIPA) -Challenges to DAP

In this section, I will provide a cross-case analysis of the findings according to the research questions and themes that emerged from the data. In this section I will also present the sub-themes that exemplified the major themes.

Research Question 1: What are five early childhood teachers’ beliefs about the nature of developmentally appropriate classroom practices?

Beliefs About Teaching

What DAP Means to Me

During the face-to-face interviews I asked each of the teachers to share with me in one sentence, what DAP meant to them. I think it is important that before I present the findings for this section, to elucidate the teachers’ personal meaning of DAP and the level of

importance they placed on the seven goals of the early childhood programme highlighted in the National Curriculum. These were their responses to their meaning of DAP:

Rebecca: *“DAP is meeting each individual child where [they] are at...their background..where they coming from and ensuring that you catered to their individual needs....”*

Veronica: *“DAP is selecting activities that are appropriate to the child’s stage of development, style of leaning and their learning needs...”*

Michelle: *“I would define DAP as the holistic development of a child.”*

Janet: *“DAP is understanding that children develop at different rates...so we have to teach based on where they [the children] are at...what they are interest in.”*

Susan: *“DAP is understanding how children learn and using appropriate strategies to teach them at their level.”*

All of the teachers provided their own definition of DAP. Based on the responses, Rebecca was the only teacher who mentioned the three major components of DAP, namely age level, the child as an individual, and the child’s cultural context. This suggests that Rebecca had a very good understanding of the concepts of DAP. Veronica, Janet and Susan also had sufficient and fairly correct knowledge of DAP in terms of age and ability levels, but Michelle did not include any of the components in her definition.

These responses led to a discussion on what they considered to be the key qualities of the early childhood teacher. A cross case analysis was conducted from which the sub-theme emerged. The following section outlines the findings, and the common themes that emerged.

Qualities of the Effective Early Childhood Teacher

This sub-theme included the teachers’ beliefs about the characteristics of an effective EC teacher. Rebecca believed that the teacher must first love children. She also believed that the teacher must be understanding, patient, pleasant and not *“a grumpy troll”* and provide stability to children, *“children need stability. They need to know that they will have their teacher for a while...”*. Rebecca also stated that the effective early childhood teacher must be solution-focused and not dwell on problems. According to Rebecca, *“As teachers, we dwell too much on problems that we face, rather than finding solutions.”*. She added that the effective early childhood teacher must be able to multi-task and manage her time effectively, *“good multi-tasking equals time not wasted!”*. When asked about her greatest strengths, Rebecca stated that she is very creative and a problem-solver.

Veronica believed that the effective EC teacher must be teachable. According to Veronica, EC teachers *“must possess the ability to listen, share, respect others, laugh, cry,*

move on, teach and transfer information". She also believed that making mistakes was part of the process of being an EC teacher "*when you make a mistake, know that you are not perfect and [that] you do make mistakes.*" Veronica, like Rebecca, also believed that patience was an essential quality that the EC teacher must possess. Veronica explained that "*you must have patience beyond measure...*" but also "*possess empathy, disagree without being disagreeable and understand they cannot fix everything and everyone...*". She believed most importantly that the EC teacher "*needs to think outside the box.*" Finally, Veronica felt that her greatest strengths were creativity and her ability to laugh at herself.

Michelle believed that to be an effective EC teacher, the person must be patient and empathetic. According to Michelle, "*patience is important and goes hand in hand with empathy...*" She also believed that the EC teacher must be like a mother who nurtures her children. Michelle explained that:

*Having mother-like qualities help you to understand the children better.
It helps you to be gentle with the children when they misbehave but stern at the same time.*

Other qualities Michelle emphasized were caring, supportive and the love of children. These were qualities were also shared by Rebecca and Veronica. Michelle stated that her greatest strength was her ability to empathize and relate to the parents.

Janet also believed that patience and the love of children are very important qualities the EC teacher must possess. She explained that:

*Patience is important because it takes a lot to be in this profession.
Teaching young children can take a toll on you and you have to be patient with the children and yourself. If you love the children, it will make your job much easier.*

She added though that the most important quality was creativity. She stated that teaching young children requires a lot of creativity on the part of the teacher, especially as it pertains to keeping the children interested in the lesson. Janet believed that her greatest strength is her creativity.

Susan, like the other four teachers believed that the most important qualities the EC teacher should possess were patience and a caring attitude. She also believed that the teacher should have a love for children and maintain a good relationship with the children and their parents. She added that to be effective, the early childhood teacher needs be resilient in the face of pressure from parents who may not understand the curriculum. According to Susan:

Sometimes parents come to you complaining that their child

is not writing or doing what they call 'school stuff' They do not understand the curriculum and think that I am giving their children 'baby stuff' to do. They criticize you and if you not strong, you may just want to give up...you have to be resilient....

Susan believes that enthusiasm for the job helps to keep her resilient. She also believes that the teacher must have a sense of humour and be very observant in the classroom. She explained:

Being observant is so important. You have to be alert to the needs of your students...that's how I was able to identify that one of my students had a learning difficulty....

Susan, like the other four teachers, stated that patience was one of the key qualities that make the effective early childhood teacher. Susan reported that her greatest strength is resilience. Figure 5.1 summarizes the four key qualities of the effective early childhood teacher that were common among all five participants in the study.

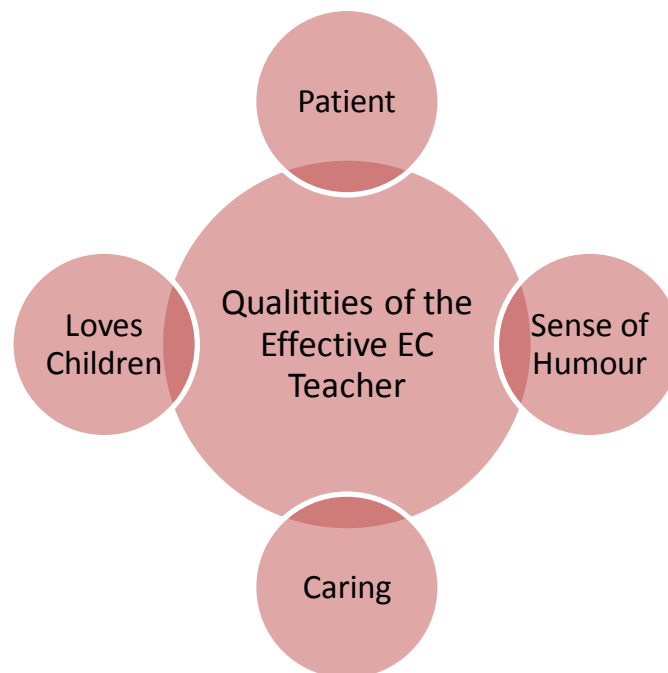


Figure 5: Summary of Qualities of An Early Childhood Teacher

In summary, this section presented the findings which illuminated the common themes that emerged regarding five early childhood teachers' beliefs about what makes an effective early childhood teacher and their perception of the strengths they bring to their job. I

will now provide findings based on the participants' beliefs about the pedagogical knowledge and skills the early childhood teacher should possess.

Pedagogical knowledge/skills

During the interviews, the teachers were asked to share what are the critical pedagogical knowledge and skills they believed an early childhood need to possess. This section presents the findings within each teacher's individual context.

Rebecca stated that the EC teacher must have a knowledge of child development, especially developmental theories. According to Rebecca:

*The teacher needs to know how children develop and
Apply this knowledge when teaching...it was one of the
first things I learned in college...*

Rebecca added that the teacher needs to know her content. Rebecca explained that content knowledge at this level was crucial as early childhood education is “*the foundation of the learning process*” and “*sets the stage for development.*” It is for this reason that Rebecca believed that the early childhood teacher must be college-trained as “teaching is more about practice.”

Rebecca shared that the key pedagogical skills that an EC teacher must possess are observation and communication skills. She believed that these skills are needed so the teacher is aware when the children are not progressing and achieving as they should. She also believed that the teacher needs to be a good communicator to parents, teachers and the community. Rebecca claimed that it is her communicative competence that has helped to negotiate the difficult issues she faces in her inner-city school as she believed that knowing how to establish strong partnerships with the parents makes her teaching much more rewarding.

Veronica also shared that the EC teacher must have knowledge of child development and learning. She stated that the teacher needs to know how to plan and support children's learning. Veronica explained:

*If the teacher has a good knowledge of how children
develop and learn, then she can plan for them and
support their learning...she (the teacher)needs to know
what they can and cannot do, and know what is most
important to teach...*

Veronica also believed that the teacher must know the behaviour patterns displayed by students. This knowledge she claimed will help the teacher to deal with behavioural problems when they arise in the classroom.

Michelle also believed that a knowledge of child development is a crucial knowledge base for the EC teacher. She said the teacher must consider the developmental domains when teaching and ensure that critical skills are taught. She also stated that the teacher must be able to interact with the children and communicate at their level. She explained that “*chalk and talk cannot work...the teacher must be able to hold the children’s attention.*”

Janet believed that an EC teacher must know how children develop and how they learn. Developmental theories inform the teacher as to what to teach and when to teach according to Janet. She provided an example:

Take for instance Mathematics... I would not teach fraction to the 2 year olds, but I can teach it to the five year olds based on Piaget’s theory of how children learn. The 2 year-old would just not understand...

Janet emphasized the importance of the teacher knowing her subject matter. She explained that the teacher needs to know content areas such as literacy, numeracy, social studies and social skills. Janet believes that she is lacking in the area of content knowledge. Staring into the distance, she explained that,

“I don’t feel confident...I don’t have enough knowledge about teaching children...[I] feel bad that I am not college-trained. That’s why I am applying to Teacher’s College... so I can learn more about the subjects I teach”.

She also felt that being college-trained would assist her with her delivery skills, a component she considered critical to being an effective teacher.

Susan’s beliefs about what the EC teacher must know in order to an effective teacher was the same as the other teachers. She stated that the teacher must have knowledge of child development and how children learn. She explained that “*there is a lot of diversity in the classroom.*” She believed this knowledge will inform the teacher about which students are developing atypically, and how best to reach and teach these children. As such, the teacher has to be familiar with the curriculum strands and content. This knowledge according to Susan will assist the teaching with planning and knowing how to create the different learning centres.

Communication skills were also important skills that Susan believed the EC teacher should possess. She stated that the teacher must be able to communicate at all levels, especially with parents. She explained that the teacher must act as a model in the classroom and so she encourages the children to ‘speak properly’.

The following figure depicts the key pedagogical knowledge and skills that the five teachers believed the effective early childhood teacher should possess.

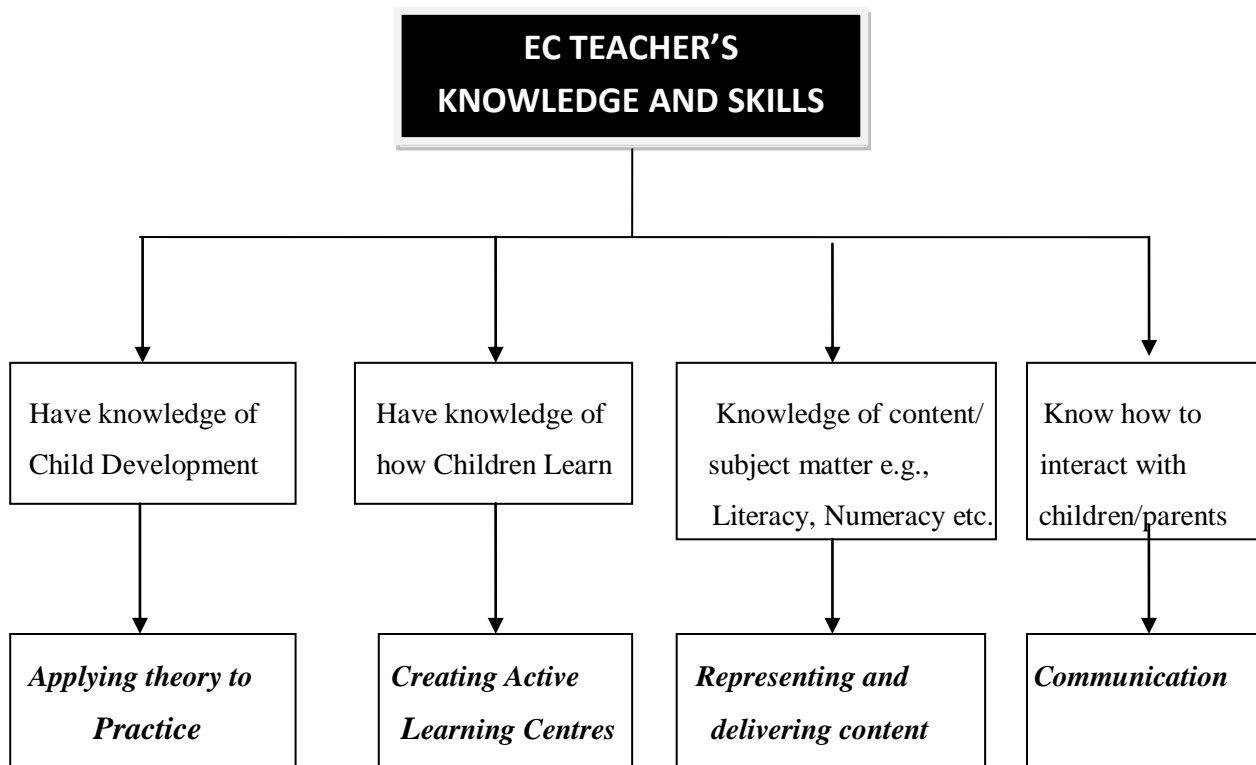


Figure 6: Early Childhood Teachers' Key Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills

The next section presents the findings from another sub-theme relating to the teachers' self-reported beliefs about how they approach planning.

Approaches to Planning

Approaches to planning and teaching were key themes that emerged from the data. In this study, planning was associated with curriculum as all the teachers in the study used the Jamaican Early Childhood Curriculum Standards as the basis for planning. The Curriculum Standards require teachers to plan and support children's learning through the creation of active learning centres. All the teachers had a copy of the curriculum and there was evidence of planning of lessons and methodologies used. The Ministry of Education encourages integration of the curriculum to reflect children's developmental domains. The units are

thematic and should connect concepts to the children's life experiences. Table 4 provides a summary of the teachers' curriculum beliefs based on the results from the Teacher Beliefs Scale. Questionnaire items 31, 32, 36, and 37 are considered appropriate curriculum beliefs.

Table 4: Summary of E.C. Teacher's Curriculum Beliefs

Category	Belief Statement	Rebecca	Veronica	Michelle	Janet	Susan
Beliefs about Curriculum	5 for each curriculum area to be taught as separate subjects at separate times.	Not important at all	Not very important	Very important	Not very important	Very important
	31. to teach health and safety with a variety of projects throughout the school year.	Extremely important	Fairly important	Fairly important	Extremely important	Fairly important
	32. for children to experience multicultural and non-sexist activities and materials.	Very important	Fairly important	Extremely important	Extremely important	Very important
	33. that outdoor activities are planned daily.	Extremely important	Extremely important	Extremely Important	Extremely important	Extremely important
	36 to use parent input in curriculum.	Very important	Extremely important	Extremely Important	Extremely important	Extremely important
	37 that children do activities that integrate multiple subject areas (reading, math, science, social studies, etc.).	Extremely important	Extremely important	Extremely important	Extremely important	Extremely important

During the interview sessions, the teachers were asked to share their perspective on the ways they have been using the curriculum. Rebecca explained the following about her planning with the Curriculum Standards:

I am still struggling with the Developmental Objectives from the Curriculum... if you are not careful, it will take you into the primary

Curriculum before the children are ready and so lose sight of essential skills. The themes for the age group I teach are redundant and so when I plan the topic, I explore [it] deeper to make it exciting for [the] children so they don't become bored... you have to plan with the children in mind...modify lessons to meet their interests...

Rebecca's school utilizes Common Planning Time where Friday afternoons are reserved for teacher planning lessons for the following week. Integration of concepts from other subject areas is encouraged but each teacher has the freedom to design her lessons based on the needs of the children. Planned outdoor activities are also a requirement of the school and are heavily practiced by Rebecca.

Veronica also plans her lesson based on the Developmental objectives taken from the curriculum but is mindful of the children who sit in front of her. According to Veronica, "When planning my lesson, I take into consideration the learning needs of my students." Veronica uses the curriculum as a guide and explained that:

I believe that some of the requirements in the curriculum are too much for the age... the curriculum leaves off so much...

She also added that:

The curriculum covers some areas. It is said to be a guide... if you are not careful then you will move away from the reading writing and arithmetic and just focus on giving information...

For this reason, Veronica prepares lessons that are skilled-based as she feels that her students need to be competent at reading, mathematics and social skills. However, she stated that she tries as much as possible to organize the curriculum content to reflect DAP.

Michelle uses themes to organize content and planning her lesson. In her school, each teacher is responsible for the planning of her lesson. According to Michelle:

Our school uses the A Beka curriculum. I use the EC curriculum as well but sometimes the Developmental Objectives are not practical. Our school focuses on mastery of basic skills and as a private school, parents expect results. Each teacher is held accountable for the children's learning outcome...this can be a challenge....

Michelle shared that to deal with this issue teachers would come together and share resources. Like Rebecca's school, Michelle's school practices a whole school approach to planning. This was evident during my visits to the school where Michelle was seen sharing with the teachers, the activities she planned to teach. Based on the fact that curricula content

was organized thematically, collaborative planning of activities proved very useful and practical. When asked why she believed that it was very important for each curriculum area to be taught as separate subjects at separate times, Michelle reiterated that Phonics and Math skills are crucial skills for children to learn and so these skills have to be given emphasis on the time-table. She did however indicate that it is extremely important that children do activities that integrate multiple subject areas, along with phonics and mathematics.

Janet believed that a lot of creativity should go into planning. She stated that even though there is a national curriculum, she is the sole decision-maker when it comes to planning for her students. The Developmental Objectives were considered when planning her lessons and, like the other participants in the study, content was organized based on themes. However Janet lamented about the challenges she faced with finding teaching resources. According to Janet:

Our school is very small and the parents are very poor. It is hard to get resources as the parents can't afford to give their children paint, crayons, drawing paper...so when planning my lesson, I have to think about finding suitable materials for the activities...I have to use all the creativity in me... (sigh)

Susan agreed that creativity is a very important part of planning. In her school, the teacher is the sole decision-maker for what happens in her class. Susan stated that she does not mind this approach, as it provided her with the flexibility that she desires. She does use the National Curriculum but explained that she adapted the Developmental Objectives to meet the realities of her students. She stated that:

The objectives sometimes are not practical to my students. I know what my children need...that is how I plan... at the end of the day, it is my responsibility to ensure that the children learn the essential knowledge skills they need to move on to Primary school...

During the face-to-interviews and focus group session, all of the teachers agreed that planning was an important part of a teacher's work. They also believed that parent input was very important. They also agreed that effective planning of lessons and instructional activities is a critical factor that supports students' learning and is strongly encouraged by their school's administration.

Approaches to Teaching

In this section I will present the themes that emerged from analysis of data from the five teacher's approaches to teaching young children. I will start by presenting the self-reported beliefs of the teachers regarding the types of activities and classroom interactions they give to children in their classrooms. The following are the results of each teacher's teaching strategies beliefs. Questionnaire items 6,8,10, 15, 26 and 34 are considered developmentally appropriate and items 19 and 30 'inappropriate'.

Table 5.1 Summary of Teaching Strategies Beliefs

Item No.	Questionnaire Statement: How important is it...
6	for children to select their own activities.
8	to provide a variety of concrete learning materials in centres (writing centre, science centre, math centre, etc.).
10	for children to learn by actively exploring relevant and interesting materials.
12	for children to work on worksheets and ditto sheets individually and silently.
15	for teachers to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions, asking questions, facilitating children's involvement with materials and activities.
19	for children to colour within the lines.
21	for teachers to prepare children for change before a change of activities.
26	for children to participate in art, music, dance, drama (ex. dramatizing favourite stories).
30	for children to observe teacher demonstrated experiments to learn science concepts.
34	for children to work in small groups on projects that they plan and conduct themselves.

Rebecca's Approach to Teaching

"Teaching is about empowering children." Rebecca believed in children working in small groups, selecting their own activities, providing a variety of concrete learning experiences along with relevant and interesting materials, having the children participate in art, music, dance and drama the teacher moving around the classroom, interacting with the children (items 6, 8, 10, 15, 26 and 34) were *extremely important* to her. Rebecca described her approach to teaching as combining children's prior knowledge and experiences with new

experiences. She firmly believed in student-centredness and using children's experiences as a platform for learning. She explained that:

Teachers are facilitators. Children come to school from different backgrounds, with different skills and experiences. They have a lot to contribute. My teaching does not rely on the curriculum... my job is to create the environment for learning and be a facilitator for learning... teaching is about the children, not me...

Rebecca's classroom consisted of a large open space that was separated into centres of interest. I observed that the room was brightly coloured with storage for the children's personal belongings, neatly labelled. There was a large carpet at the front of the class where children sat during Circle Time. Several activities were provided throughout the day, with the morning activities being primarily free-choice. According to Rebecca:

the children must be given some autonomy... they discover things on their own. I am there as their guide... I walk around the class to see what the children are doing and ask questions.

Rebecca believed that children should be given choices, even though the curriculum at times does not allow that to happen all the time. These choices, she claimed help the children to problem-solve and take ownership for their learning, something she claimed is lacking in the Jamaican classroom. Interestingly, Rebecca reported that DIP item #19 was **very important** to her but the children observing teacher-led experiments to learn science concepts (item 30) was **not very important** to her as this is not done very often in her class. She added that she believed that fine motor skills development and eye-hand coordination were key skills that teachers must promote in their classroom through structured activities such as colouring within the line.

Veronica's Approach to Teaching

"I like to use the multi-sensory approach." Veronica reported that was **extremely important** for her to provide a variety of concrete learning materials; for children to participate in art, music, dance and drama and for the teacher to move around in the class (items 8, 15, and 26). Veronica believed in the active involvement of children in the teaching and learning process. She reported that it was **very important** for students to learn by actively interacting with relevant and interesting materials (item 10) and that it was **fairly important** for children to work in small groups (item 34). She believed however that it was **not very important** for children to select their own activities (item 6). Instead, she felt that knowing

your student's learning needs is the first step in deciding which approach to use when teaching. She explained that her training in Special Education has helped her to be flexible in her approach to teaching. She explained

I can tell if a child has problems with letter knowledge. That is, they mix up b/d/q/p, m/n/w. I am able to deal with a child who may not be able to sit still or who throw tantrums. The child who is said to busybody or ill-mannered because he is outspoken doesn't affect me as much as it may another teacher... I take the time to know my students and select activities that fit their needs...

Veronica's classroom is small, but well-ventilated. It was quite welcoming. The walls were clean and heavily decorated with charts. Mobiles were strung along the walls and ceiling. On one of my observation visits, I arrived at the class in time to see Veronica making manipulatives from cardboard boxes for her mathematics class. Seeing the interest on my face (and probably guessing what I was about to ask), Veronica explained:

I make my lessons interactive...I have discussions... (I have) charts for those who learn visually, and manipulatives for those who need to touch.

I did observe Veronica utilizing the multi-sensory approach in her classroom teaching. She said she spent time at the beginning of the term conducting assessments to ascertain the learning profiles of each student and she tries to match each style with the preparation of the learning activities. Like Rebecca, Veronica believed that it was very important for children to colour within the line (item 19).

Michelle's Approach to Teaching

"My focus is on building children's skills." Michelle reported that was ***extremely important*** for children to select their own activities. Like Rebecca, Michelle reported the same response to strategies such as providing a variety of concrete learning experiences along with relevant and interesting materials, having the children participate in art, music, dance and drama, and the teacher moving around the classroom, interacting with the children (items 6, 8, 10, 15, and 26). She believed it was ***fairly important*** for children to work in small groups on projects. Michelle explained that the Kindergarten Department operates a more formal approach to teaching. The time-table has separate blocks for numeracy and literacy. Parents are told to purchase literacy and numeracy workbooks for their children as well. According to Michelle:

The workbooks are used to practice literacy and numeracy skills. I also provide them with specifically selected worksheet activities that help build on these skills.

Michelle further explained that at the end of their time in the Kindergarten years, students will have to sit a national examination (the Grade One Individual Learning Profile) when they enter Grade One of Primary School. She claimed that her students will have to master basic literacy and numeracy skills in order to successfully pass this exam to be considered at the ‘Mastery’ level. She reiterated that these are ‘skills for life’ that every child should master before moving on to Primary or Prep school. This is why she believed, like Rebecca and Veronica, that it is **extremely important** for the children to be able to colour within the lines as activities like these, help them to develop their fine motor skills and prepare them for writing. Observing the teacher demonstrate science experiments was **fairly important** as a lot of hands-on science demonstration were not conducted in the classroom. Michelle explained that:

I would love to do science experiments... but time time is a problem... it takes time to set up the experiments and with so many other things to do... it is easier to show them a video...they love videos!

Michelle’s classroom was very inviting with lots of charts and models and a wide range of manipulatives. There were also storage boxes filled with readers and worksheets. Students were seated in groups, their names neatly printed at the top of their desks and below a colourful number-line strip, numbering from one to ten. Her desk was strategically placed near the entrance of the classroom.

Janet’s Approach to Teaching

“I give demonstrations first.” Janet reported that it was **extremely important** for children to select their own activities and for providing a variety of concrete learning experienced along with relevant and interesting materials to children. She also believed that it was **extremely important** for children to participate in art, music, dance and drama, for children to work in small groups on projects and the teacher must move around the classroom, interacting with the children (items 6, 8, 10, 15, 26 and 34). Like the other participants, Janet believed that it is **very important** for children to colour within the lines (item 19). Janet during the interviews emphasized the point that many of the children who are in her class lack many of the basic academic, motor and social skills needed for school. She

felt it was therefore *extremely important* that she teaches these skills explicitly. This includes children observing the teacher demonstrate experiments to learn science concepts (item 30). She stressed that structure is necessary and she has to be the model for providing the kind of structure the children needed. She commented:

*I demonstrate first for the children, so they can practice...
When I bring across my lesson, children get to feel, touch, see.
I would write something on the board and they are expected
to follow how I do it. I do the same thing for teaching letter
sounds, writing numerals and so on...*

Janet's classroom was very small and separated by a chalkboard. Children were placed in groups of four all facing the chalkboard. There were storage shelves stacked with workbooks and worksheets. There was small corner labelled 'Reading' and on a small table was a small fish tank. The Reading corner had several story-books and a few Big Books. The walls were decorated with aged charts and mobiles that looked weather-beaten. Janet appeared embarrassed when I visited her classroom for the first time and explained that when it rained, the roof would leak and dampen the mobiles. She explained that she had replaced the mobiles and charts on several occasions, but the school was facing financial problems and resources were scarce.

Susan's Approach to Teaching

"You have to adapt the concepts." Susan believed that it was *extremely important* for teachers to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions, asking questions, facilitating children's involvement with materials and activities (item 15). She also believed that it was *very important* to provide a variety of concrete learning centre materials and for children to participate in art, music, dance and drama (items 8 and 26) but believed it was *fairly important* for children to learn by actively exploring relevant and interesting materials. When asked about this item, Susan explained:

*I find I have to adapt the concepts that I teach...
I have children with disabilities in my class and I am
not able to find the right materials all the time...
sometimes I am teaching and then realize that some
(of the) students are not understanding the concept...I
have to switch to an activity that can best bring out
the concept...I have to be very creative...*

Like the other participants in the study, Susan believed that it was *very important* for children to colour within the lines (item 19). She too believed that this activity helps to develop fine motor skills. She also believed that it was *fairly important* for children to observe the teacher demonstrating science experiments, even though this is not done in her class.

Susan's classroom was small but attractively decorated with charts and samples of the children's work. The room was well-ventilated with clearly defined learning centres. There was also a 'Dress-up' corner. There were storage shelves stacked with children's workbooks and storybooks donated by the church. The students were seated in groups of four, with their names clearly labeled on their desks. A time-table was also seen pasted to the wall in addition to a Classroom Rules chart.

In summary, this section provided data on the participants' approaches to teaching. From the data, all the teachers had strong beliefs about developmentally appropriate teaching strategies. They also had strong beliefs about the importance of children performing activities considered to be 'inappropriate' by NAEYC (2009). This will be discussed further in Chapter Six. I will now present the themes that emerged from the second theme related to the first research question.

Beliefs about Learning

The second theme that emerged from the first research question was Beliefs about Learning. Four categories were identified from the data analysis. These were (1) learner attributes, (2) how children learn – the role of play, (3) what children need to know/learn and (4) managing children's behaviour. This section presents the findings from these categories.

Learner Attributes

This category included beliefs about the attributes of young children in terms of learning. All the teachers had positive views of the young children. For instance Rebecca viewed them as "*clean, not empty slates*" who, to her are "*ready to be filled with knowledge.*" She added however those children "*can't be seen as vessels you pour into...but be guided along the way.*" Rebecca also stated that children bring a lot of enthusiasm to the learning process. Janet shared the view that, "*children come to us as blank slates*" but they learn "*at their own pace*". She added that children "*learn through their senses*" and love to "*explore their environment.*" Veronica shared Janet's belief that children learn using their senses. Veronica explained that she recognizes that children receive information through different modalities and in her class, she supports various styles of learning. Michelle believed that

young children are naturally curious and are interested in many things. She also believed that children come to school ready to learn but may lose interest if they are not engaged in realistic and meaningful learning activities. Susan believed that children come to the learning situation with prior knowledge. She explained that *“the home is the first classroom. Children come to us knowing a lot things... the good and the bad....”* Susan added that these prior experiences impact on a child’s readiness and ability to learn.

How Children learn

Results from data highlighted the teachers’ stated beliefs about the importance of using hands-on, concrete materials, real-life experiences (both formal and informal), incorporating the various styles of learning. All of these are done through play and active learning centres. Rebecca stated that *‘recall is inevitable’* while Veronica believed that children learn in different ways. She explained that *“some children look at things; some by listening to information and some have to touch.”* Michelle believed that *“children learn through repetition... develop schemas from past to present....”* She also believed that children *“grasp what has been taught to them by seeing me and imitating me... and the feedback from parents.”* All the teachers also believed that children learn best in group situations and these are a crucial part of classroom teaching.

Symbolic terms such as *‘hands-on’* and *‘concrete’*, *‘play’* were frequently used by the five teachers. All the teachers placed a high value on the role of play. Although incorporated in all their programmes, each teacher ascribed a different meaning to play based on the context of their classrooms. Rebecca believed that play was *“VITAL in capital letters! Children learn best through play.”* She utilized large blocks of time for free play in her programme, both inside and outside the classroom. According to Rebecca, *“I intertwine play in my lesson presentation...play comes out in the lesson concept e.g. Hop-Scotch in Mathematics.”* She added that she used play as a natural way of learning and free activities allow children more autonomy.

Veronica also believed that play was an important part of children’s learning. Veronica commented that, *“through play they [the children] learn to socialize with each other; they learn to solve problems...they learn to create.”* She stated that in her class the children use play to discover new things, and share with their peer’s new learning.

Michelle also incorporated play in her classroom programme. She viewed play however as *‘work’* that the children must *‘do’* in order to develop their skills. She commented that all of her play activities were structured with specific skills development in mind. She shared an example of one of her developmental activities:

“Take for instance the Reading Corner... the children select a book of their choice, but they have specific tasks that they have to complete. They work in the Centre, either as a group or individually...”

She expressed reservation about the use of ‘free-play’ as she felt it *“can become disorganized as the children become disruptive and lose the meaning of the activity...play has to be structured”*

Janet also considered play as very important. She considered play however as more of an activity that is done outside the classroom. She said she took the children outside every day. She stated gleefully that

children love to come to my class because they get the chance to go outside to play...exercise is a part of health... it builds the child’s gross motor skills and stimulates their brain...it helps to release their energy...play is very important.

Janet however lamented that play inside the classroom was not practical as the classrooms were separated by a chalkboard. She explained that *“I wish I could really play with the children in class, but this would be chaotic and disturb the class beside me...”*

Susan also placed great value on the importance of play. She stated that every child should be given a chance to play. She believed that play involved singing songs, playing ring games and allowing children to choose their own activities. Janet reported that she gets very involved when the children are playing. She commented that:

I play with the children...I just don’t stand by and watch them. We are on the floor together, laughing, singing...

Susan believes that during play children should be engaged in activities that are meaningful and relevant. Susan said she incorporated play in all of her classroom activities as she felt that play helped to develop children’s social skills.

What children need to know/learn

For the sub-theme *What children need to know/learn* in the early years, the areas identified as crucial skills that children need to know and learn were academic skills such as alphabet knowledge, numeracy skills, writing skills such as letter formation, pencil grip; school readiness, self-help skills and social skills. All the teachers agreed unanimously that a mastery of academic skills is important if children were to succeed in the primary years. Emphasis on learning to form and write letters, number skills and being able to dress oneself were keys that were valued by the teachers.

The issue of school readiness provoked much discussion, especially during the focus group session. Rebecca felt that readiness was a term that was very subjective. She believed that children should acquire basic numeracy and literacy skills, but social skills should be a priority. According to Rebecca:

*Who or what determines when a child is ready?
 ,,some Grade One exam that they sit to determine if they are
 'ready' for Grade One?... we need to stop this foolishness
 and equip the children with critical life skills... how to live
 harmoniously within the environment...to learn that there is
 another way to have your [their]needs met without
 being aggressive...this is what I have to deal with every single day!*

The others nodded in agreement. Maxine commented that there must be a balance. She said the reality is that the children have to sit a readiness examination and so teachers have to prepare their students in order for them to be competent to sit the exam. The focus she stated has to be on the academic skills and fine and gross motor skills development. Susan and Janet agreed that these skills were high priority in their readiness programme.

They all agreed that social skills competence was very important. Veronica added the dimensions of age and maturity as they relate to school readiness. She explained that theory showed that girls mature faster than boys and therefore would be considered more ready for entry into primary school. She said this must be considered when teaching basic skills such as writing, penmanship making the sounds of the letters of the alphabet. She added that:

*some children come to school with these skills already there
 so you have to take into consideration the different ability levels
 of the children... all the children will not be ready at the same time...*

Managing Children's Behaviour

Findings for this sub-theme *Managing Children's Behaviour* highlighted that the teachers also had strong beliefs about how children's behaviour should be managed. NAEYC (2009) DAP principles recommends that teacher use intrinsic rewards in order to help children assess and take ownership of their own behaviour. This involves children sharing in the decision-making process in the classroom. Data for this sub-theme was derived from the Teacher Beliefs Scale (TBS), Instructional Activities Scale (IAS), observations, interviews and the focus group session. The following Table 5.3 lists the statements considered DAP and

DIP beliefs. On the TBS Questionnaire items 18, 27 and 35 reflect DAP beliefs while questionnaire item 16 reflects an ‘inappropriate’ belief.

Table 5.2: TBS Questionnaire Items – Managing Children’s Behaviour

Item No.	Questionnaire Statement: How important is it...
16	for teachers to use stickers, treats, and/or stars to encourage appropriate behaviour.
18	for children to establish rules for their classroom.
27	for children to talk informally with adults in class.
35	for strategies like setting limits, problem solving, redirection to be used to help guide children’s behaviour

Rebecca believed that it was **very important** for teachers to use stickers, treats, and/or stars to encourage appropriate behaviour. She explained that based on her students’ social background, giving the students extrinsic rewards increases the likelihood of the children displaying appropriate behaviours. Veronica agreed as she reported that it was **extremely important** for teachers to use this strategy. Janet also believed that this strategy was **extremely important** as well as Susan. Michelle was the only teacher to report that this strategy was **fairly important** as she stated she did not have many behavioural problems in her class. All the teachers believed that it was **extremely important** for children to establish rules for their classroom (item 18). According to Veronica, “*they make them [the rules] so if they break them, they know the consequences.*”

For item #27 Janet believed that it was **extremely important** for children to talk informally with adults in the class while Rebecca believed that it was **very important**. Veronica shared the same belief as Rebecca. Susan felt it was not very important while Michelle did not rate this item, but instead wrote beside the statement, “this does not happen in my class..”. When asked to explain, she stated that she considers it ‘*quite rude*’ for children to speak informally to any adult in the class. “*Children must have manners!*” she responded.

On the IAS the teachers were asked to rate the frequency of the stated activities using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (**Almost never: less than monthly**) 2 (**Rarely: two or three times a month**) 3 (**Sometimes: once or twice a week**) 4 (**Regularly: three or four times a week**) 5 (**Daily**). Table 5.4 lists Questionnaire items 23, 24, and 26 reflect practices

considered ‘inappropriate’ in terms of managing children’s behaviour. I will now present the findings from the data based on the reported responses from the five teachers.

Table 5.3: IAS Questionnaire Items– Managing Children’s Behaviour

Item No.	Questionnaire Statement: How often do children in your class...
23	receive tangible rewards for good behaviour /performance.
24	lose special privileges (trips, recess, free time) for misbehaviour.
26	get placed in time-out chair.

In response to item #23, all the teachers stated that they do this *daily* although Michelle had reported on the TBS that it was *fairly important* for teachers to use stickers, treats, and/or stars to encourage appropriate behaviour. Item #24 solicited mixed responses. Rebecca reported that children lose special privileges, especially free time for misbehaviour and this happens *daily* in her class ; Veronica reported that children lose special privileges *regularly* in her class; Michelle reported that this happens *almost never* in her class as the “*children know the rules*”; Janet and Susan use this strategy *sometimes* in their class. All the teachers reported that children placed on ‘time-out’ *regularly* whenever they misbehave.

Summary

In summary, this section presented findings that shed light on the sub-themes that emerged about the early childhood teachers’ beliefs about children’s learning. The data showed the complexity of beliefs regarding beliefs about learning as each teacher viewed learning differently. There were however similarities in their beliefs and practices, especially regarding how children learn, the critical knowledge and skills that children need to learn, and managing children’s behaviour. In the next section I will present the findings for the second research question.

Research Question 2: *What factors are responsible for shaping five early childhood teachers’ beliefs and self-perception?*

In this section I will present the five cases as they share their stories about their personal and professional experiences as early childhood teachers. The aim of this section is to illuminate the factors which influenced their beliefs and self-perceptions. From the findings, two major themes emerged, namely the Influence of key Live Events and People

and Preparing for Teaching. The sub-themes that emerged for the first theme were (1) Personal life experiences; (2) Influence of Parent/Mentors and (3) Memories of Their EC Teacher. Two sub-themes emerged from the second theme namely, (1) Teacher education and (2) professional experiences. Cross-case analysis is used to present the data.

Influence of Key Life Events and People

Life Experiences and Teaching

While analyzing the data, I began to unravel an interesting relationship between the teachers' life experiences and their teaching beliefs. All five teachers had different personal life experiences related to them becoming early childhood teachers. During the interviews they shared stories that effortlessly moved from stories about their life experiences to stories from their professional experiences. They all shared the belief that teaching was a divine destiny. Each had a defining moment or epiphany that helped to solidify the impact of the choices on their personal life.

Rebecca spoke about her parents' separation:

During my early teens, my parents were having problems in their marriage, but being devoted Catholics, they refused to get a divorce. They decided to separate...my father moved out of our home....

Rebecca shared that becoming a teacher was her sole desire while growing up. With her mother now a single parent and the family adjusting to new lifestyle changes, Rebecca said this only served to strengthen her resolve to become a professional teacher. Rebecca stated that while growing up, her mother stressed the importance of education. She said she still remembers her mother's mantra: "*Education makes you powerful.*"

Veronica shared her personal experience:

While attending school I encountered children who I believed could do better if only they had a little more help. I was always told I have teacher qualities.... I always felt I needed to know more in order to address the problems I found they had. Some of the children I helped in the community did not go to any basic school hence they lacked that foundation needed to go on to the higher grades. There were so many things missing...

This was a life-changing moment for Veronica:

As I grew older, I promised myself that I will always try to make

a solid foundation for the children that I teach regardless of their age.

Even if they were teenagers, I believed in bringing them back to basics.

Michelle did not initially think she would become a teacher. She said she had a difficult childhood and experienced learning difficulties while in primary and high school. After leaving high school she was employed in several low-skilled jobs. She reported that she always had a love for baking and it became one of her sources of income. Soon after, she became pregnant. Two years later, she became pregnant again. Although Michelle really enjoyed being a mother, she felt she needed more. She explained:

*I was young, unemployed...I just wanted something to do...
after having my second child, I was living with their
Grand- aunt who had a basic school on her veranda.
I used to assist her, and that's when I realized I had a
passion for teaching. I started working with her full time
in September 1989.*

Janet also shared her story of her personal background:

*My mother had fourteen of us. My father left our home
when I was eight years old. I got pregnant when I was
sixteen years old to a much older man who promised he would
make life better for me... (sigh) I did not get the
chance to graduate from High School...got married at
nineteen years old but separated soon after that...*

Janet continued:

*I worked for several years as a helper (maid) and in the evenings,
I would help my son with his school-work. I was determined [that]he was
going to have a better future than me...That same year he received an
award for "Most Improved Boy". I was so overjoyed!
It was then I realized that I could teach!*

Susan also shared the hardship she experienced on her path to becoming a teacher. She explained:

*My parents had eleven of us and I am the last child. We lived in
the country and things were very hard for my parents and going to school
barefooted was a norm. When I was twelve years old I ran away from
home to live with my eldest sister. I registered myself in High
school but did not complete school as I got pregnant. After years of*

being in an abusive relationship and having another child, I decided to start my own business. People used to comment that they admired how hardworking I was.

Susan describes the defining moment for her deciding to become a teacher:

One day a man came into the shop and said, "You know you are a teacher? You should be in the classroom!" It was like God sent him to me... it was my destiny...I just knew it was time...

Influence of Key People

All the teachers mentioned the significance of key individuals who influenced their decision to become early childhood teachers. Rebecca believed that she was destined to be a teacher based on the influence of her mother:

My mother had the biggest influence on me choosing this career. She was an early childhood teacher...it was my mother who helped me with practicum...she always came to my class to show me what to do... most of what I learned came from my own experience and my mother's guidance...

Rebecca feels that she shares many of the qualities her mother possessed. She considers herself a good manager with an uncanny ability to multi-task. Considering herself a 'constructivist' at heart, Rebecca strongly believes that development of the whole child is essential, a belief also shared by her mother she said.

Veronica also credits her mother as a major influence in her beliefs about early childhood teaching. She explained:

My mother was an early childhood teacher and she would ask me to assist with making charts and writing her lessons. I attended the school where she taught and learned a lot from her...

Michelle believed her Grand aunt has had the greatest influence on her beliefs about teaching. She explained that during her time working with Grand aunt, she learned a lot about teaching young children.

She would come around me and the children and give me pointers...when I was doing [teaching] something wrong, she would show me what to do... how to write on the chalkboard and so on...

Janet said she received positive teaching influence from her Pastor who encouraged her to teach in Sunday School and her local church. According to Janet, her Pastor told her “*You can teach.*” Susan said her greatest influence was her classroom teacher in primary school.

I loved Maths and Miss would always make me go to the [chalk]board and work out the sums, while the other children looked on... it felt good... I could see that my classmates were learning...I would mimic the way she talked...it was fun...

Memories of Their Early Childhood Teachers

Rebecca reported that her EC teacher had a positive influence on her beliefs and self-perception as a teacher. She said:

I can recall one specific kindergarten teacher.. she was very kind, patient, always smiling...I loved when she read stories to us and made the sounds of the character... (laughter) she made learning ‘fun’

Veronica and Janet also shared that they had a positive experience while in basic school. Veronica stated that she had a deep admiration for her kindergarten teacher. She said her earliest memories of her teacher were her “*warm and giving nature.*” Veronica added that even though she punished the class, “*we knew we were loved.*” Janet explained that her basic school teacher was

“an old lady, but the sweetest soul you could find. She was soft-spoken and very kind...she was friend, counsellor, everything an early childhood teacher should be.”

On the other hand, Michelle and Susan had negative memories of their early childhood teachers. Michelle remembered her teacher as very “*loud and aggressive*”.

Michelle added:

I used to be scared of her... when I did something wrong like not knowing the alphabet, she would get into a temper and beat and shout at me...I hated school for a long time...

Susan believed that her teacher did not like her because she was poor. She explained that:

She would always pick on me and ridicule me in front Of the class...I always tried to be on my best behaviour for her...she was a very creative teacher though, and she knew how to teach...looking back, I admired that about her.

Both Michelle and Susan shared their belief that their negative memories of the early childhood experiences only served to reinforce how not to teach young children. According to Michelle, *“Whenever I start to feel upset with the children, I just remember what I went through at their age....”*

Preparing for Teaching

I will now present the findings for the second theme that emerged from the data. The sub-themes are 1) Teacher education and (2) professional experiences. Data was derived primarily from interviews and the focus group session.

Teacher Education

The five teachers in this study exemplified the the diversity in their training. Each participant will share how they prepared for early childhood education and their professional experiences.

Rebecca’s Preparation

Immediately after graduating from high school, Rebecca entered Teacher’s College. She felt it was a natural progression towards her career goal. Rebecca however believed that her college preparation for teaching was not influential. She explained:

*College does not form an impact on me as a teacher.
I believe who I am as a teacher is not influenced by college
training...preparing for teaching starts when you enter
that classroom for the first time on your own...*

She stated that her mother was the greatest influence during her college training. She said that it was her mother who *“helped to connect the dots between theory and practice.”*. She continued:

*In my time many persons failed methods (course) because it was
more theory than practice...it was my mother who helped me
with practice...some things I never learned in college such as
marking a register...may seem a simple thing, but I needed
someone to show me how...*

Veronica’s Preparation

Veronica grew up in a poor rural community with her other siblings and after leaving High School, she was indecisive about what the future course of her life would be. Her mother at the time was teacher at a community-based Basic School. According to Veronica, this was how she prepared for her career in early childhood education:

After I left High School I was at home doing nothing and not knowing what I was going to do with my life. I was approached by my former Basic School Teacher telling me to write an application for the position of teacher at the Basic School. I jumped at the opportunity. If I was accepted it would mean I wouldn't have to go job hunting. I was accepted and so started my career as an early childhood teacher.

When asked about who or what influenced her beliefs during training, Veronica stated:

I did not get any formal training then. I was told what to do by the Principal and we were required to go to workshops at the end of each month. I watched the other teachers in the school and I asked my mother who was an early childhood teacher (retired now) how I could go about doing certain things.

After teaching for several years, Veronica decided to pursue her Diploma in Primary Education. She commented that at the time she felt she would have earned a better salary at the primary level. At this time she was divorced with three children. With the help of her mother, Veronica decided to complete her Bachelor's degree in Special Education. She commented:

It was a great experience! I learned so much about how Children learn and how to cater to their individual needs...

When asked about her practicum experience, she stated that it influenced her beliefs about teaching as she had a chance to observe her cooperating teacher's pedagogical skills and reflect on her attitude to teaching young children with special needs.

Janet's Preparation

Janet said that she did not have any formal training or certification when she initially started teaching. Having started her teaching career as a Sunday School Teacher, she claimed this experience helped her in her decision to become an early childhood teacher. She said an Education Officer (EO) from the Ministry of Education at the time was the main influence on her beliefs during that time. She explained:

The E.O. told me that if I wanted to teach, I had to find thirty-two children. At the time the school did not have even five children. I walked the community and found

*thirty-three children and twenty were placed in my class...
I created history for the church community.... After a few
Years the EO told me to go back to school and I completed
the HEART Level I and II... the teachers there taught me lot...
I also went to workshops...I am determined to finish my degree...*

Michelle's Preparation

Michelle, like Janet did not have formal training when she started teaching and waited for a few years before pursuing formal training. She explained that after starting teaching with her Grand aunt in 1989, it was not until 2003, she pursued the HEART/NTA Level I and II Early Childhood Education certification. She was however quick to add that she attended workshops and other types of training during the period 1989 and 2003.

Susan's Preparation

Susan, like Janet started her teaching career as a Sunday School teacher. She said after the Pastor saw the work she was doing, the President of the church decided to send her for training. Susan said while on training, she would practice the strategies with her son. She commented:

*Before I taught a lesson, I would try it out with my son...
If he enjoyed it [the lesson], I would teach it the same way...
Sometimes he would give me ideas of what I could change
and so forth...(laughter)*

Susan also completed the HEART/NTA Level I and II Early Childhood certification and in 2011 and 2014 completed two short courses at the Mico University College.

Teacher Status

Another sub-theme that emerged from exploring the teachers' experiences was teacher status – how the teachers viewed themselves as early childhood practitioners. Rebecca, having formal training to the undergraduate level, felt 'used' by the 'system'. She explained:

*Trained Infant School teachers are used as resource teachers
in cluster meetings and workshops... that's why I've no
motivation to attend these meeting anymore...we are always
called upon to do demonstrations...because of this the basic school
teachers think the infant school teachers are superior and to be
honest, the infant school teachers treat the basic school teachers
as inferiors...*

Veronica, who is also college trained to the undergraduate level, feels the same as Rebecca. She stated that she has also had similar experiences of being used as a resource person at cluster workshops. According to Veronica:

*...it reached at point where I had stop going to workshops
It was the same thing over and over...I had to show the
Basic school teachers how to make charts...how to write
Lesson plans...it was as if I was doing the work of the
Development Officer...after a while it got to me...*

Michelle, Janet and Susan, who are HEART/NTA early childhood trained, shared a different kind of sentiment. Michelle believed that the Development Officers “refer to college-trained teachers with more respect.” According to Michelle, “they feel the college-trained teachers are more knowledgeable.”

This point was also raised by Janet during my interview with her. She believes that this is a false assumption as:

*Sometimes the Basic School teachers know more and
are more experienced...sometimes we do a better job
because we have the experience and know the children...
we don't get the level of respect as the college-trained
teachers...they look down on us...*

Susan in our interview said she does not feel she receives the same kind of respect that is given to college-trained teacher from the community and the parents. She commented:

*The community looks up to the school if the teachers
are college-trained...parents want college-trained
teachers to teach their children...they feel that because
we are HEART-trained, we are not as competent as
the college-trained teachers...*

In summary, all the teachers interviewed stated that their beliefs about DAP were influenced by different aspects of their teacher preparation and experience in the field. While Veronica stated that her practicum experience and attendance to workshops influenced her beliefs, Rebecca said that these had little influence on her beliefs. Michelle, Janet and Susan, although not trained teacher graduates also stated that their HEART/NTA certification training and professional development workshops influenced their beliefs about early childhood teaching, especially DAP. There was also a dissonance among the two college-

trained teachers and the three HEART-trained teachers in terms of their status as professionals. I will now present the findings in response to the third research question.

Research Question 3: *To what extent do five early childhood teachers' engage in classroom practices that are consistent with their beliefs?*

The following section presents an analysis of the findings in order to consider Research Question 3. The results of the five early childhood teachers' description of their teaching practices were categorized as developmentally appropriate practices activities (DAPA) or developmentally inappropriate practices activities (DIPA) based on 2009 NAEYC DAP guidelines (Bredekamp, 2009). DAPA and DIPA data were derived from the teachers' self-reported responses on the Instructional Activities Scale (AIS) of the Teacher Beliefs Scale (TBS) instrument.

This presentation of data represents the end of a long process of listening, observing, note-taking, reviewing documents, transcribing and interpreting the data derived from multiple sources. Following the data analysis model used by Hsieh (2004), the teaching practices that did not meet the criteria of DAPA or DIPA, were classified as *culture-based practices* based on the context of the five early childhood institutions' culture. Two observation sessions were conducted in each of the five teachers' classroom. A vignette of one of the two observations is provided for each teacher, followed by a table summarising developmentally appropriate and inappropriate classroom practices and the teachers' related beliefs. A typology of activities based on DAP, was used to organize the data that were salient to this study: self-directed activities, circle time activities, large and small group activities and play.

Relationships between Beliefs and Practice

Rebecca's DAPA and DIPA and Related Beliefs

A Day in Rebecca's Class 1 (4-5 yr. old)

Class began at 8:00 am and Rebecca greeted the children cheerfully. I was then introduced to the children as if on cue, all the children rose and greeted me. The day started with self-directed play for about thirty minutes, and children were allowed to choose activities from different areas in the room. There was a Home Centre, and a Reading corner. Rebecca viewed play as an important part of how children learn and provided many opportunities for the children to play by intertwining play with the lesson, but stressed the

importance of the children playing quietly so not to disrupt the class next door. Rebecca commented:

Although I encourage the children to use play while learning, the layout of the classroom does not allow this to happen without disturbing the classroom next-door. I require the children to work quietly but they must engage in all learning activities...

After the self-directed activities, Rebecca conducted Devotions and then students were instructed to form a circle for Circle Time. This activity began with the Rebecca and the children singing a song and then having a discussion with the children about what they did at home with their parents. She also spoke about the calendar and had the children rote count to 20. She then read them a story that was related to the lesson unit on “Getting Along with Each Other”. She sat in a chair at eye level with the children. Rebecca then asked the children questions about the story. She paused a several times to redirect a few students who were not paying attention (e.g., “Alex, look this way”).

After the reading of the story, followed by a discussion, the children had snack time. They also had the chance to play outside. They had to clean up before they could go outside. There was only one slide and a swing so Rebecca had to keep a watchful eye to ensure that the children did not push each other to get to the slide or swing. At the end of Break, it was time for the Literacy lesson. Children were presented with the letter of the day and instruction was explicit and teacher-led. Children activities included children creating a drawing to tell the story, finger-painting and writing the letters on dotted lines. The children then went for lunch and play.

When the children returned from lunch, it was Nap Time for about fifteen minutes. When the children woke up, they sang songs and then it was time for enrichment activities or guided learning. The children were placed in groups with Rebecca sitting with the ‘slower’ students, while the ‘faster’ students worked independently. There were primarily table-top activities with the children making post-cards for Christmas, pasting, colouring, stringing beads etc. The day ended at 1:00 pm with evening prayers and the children dashing out of room. Appendix F1 provides a summary of the activities I observed when I visited Rebecca’s class.

In consideration of Research Question 3, Rebecca engaged in classroom activities that were somewhat consistent with personal beliefs about developmentally appropriate classroom practices. There appears to be a consistent belief about children learning as she engaged the children in activities that were more developmentally appropriate than inappropriate to a

large extent. Although Rebecca believed that children “*need to be engaged in meaningful learning activities*” there are many times she said she had to lead the activities in order for children ‘*to benefit completely from the experience.*’ However she added that “*Ideally, activities should meet the needs of each child but the size of the class is too large.*”

When asked about whether she had changed anything during the last year, Rebecca stated that she had not really thought about it. She however believed that “*teaching and learning are not static*” so “*I have to modify the lessons to meet the needs and interests of my students.*” This was evident in her lesson plans and consistent with her planning and preparation of learning experiences. Rebecca believed that twenty-three years of classroom experience teaching four and five year olds enhanced her ability to respond to the needs of her students and gave her greater flexibility. The analysis of the data also showed a consistency with her beliefs about behaviour management as she thought it is important for children to be rewarded for their “*good behaviour*”. An example was a child who had kept talking out of turn and after several warnings, was told to stand at the back of the class and face the wall. He stayed there for about five minutes, and then rejoined the group. Veronica also stated that children were discouraged from using aggression to solve conflicts. She added that this was practiced throughout the school.

Veronica’s DAPA and DIPA and Related Beliefs

A Day in Veronica’s Class 2 (5 yr. old)

Veronica’s class was welcoming to the children and parents. Class started at 8:00 am with Devotion. Veronica selected the songs to which she and the children acted out. Then it was time for Circle Time where the children sang, recited the days of the week and the alphabet. Veronica then conducted a read-aloud about animals on a farm. A discussion about the book then followed and children made sounds of the various animals. She used the story to deliver a short math lesson where the children used counters to count the number of animals on the farm. They also placed the animals in groups. The children then had a short break. After break the children returned for Literacy. Veronica started the lesson by taking the children outside for a Nature Walk. A discussion then took place after which she placed the children in small groups where they drew pictures of animals, some coloured animals, some did reading activities.

It was now time for Lunch and Veronica told the children to clean-up before they went for lunch. It was during lunch that the children went to the playground. After lunch, the children had a short nap and then it was time for Guided Learning and continuation of the Animal theme. Again the children were placed in small groups and given worksheet

activities. Veronica sat with the ‘struggling’ students while the other students worked independently. Class was dismissed at 1:30 pm. Appendix F2 summarizes the observed practices and related beliefs during my visit.

Data revealed that Veronica had strong beliefs about DAP. Her beliefs about teaching and learning were related to her practices. There was evidence of multisensory teaching. However based on DAP guidelines, some of her practices would not be considered DAP activities. These included literacy activities that were primarily teacher-led and reliance on worksheets. Veronica justified her practice by commenting:

Some children come to school with no workbooks. I have to copy from another child's book in order to get the work done or sometimes I have to give different work to those child/children. This sometimes cut down on the amount of time available to be spent on a lesson. Sometimes the children get the workbooks to take home and it is left at home. I have to find alternate work for those children.

In terms of managing children’s behaviour Veronica rewarded the children with stickers for correct responses. A few children were verbally reprimanded, but rewarded when they displayed the desired behaviour. When asked if she had changed anything about the way she taught, she stated “yes”. She commented that she had to change her style of teaching as she had to conduct in-depth research on the lesson topics and had to find creative ways to help the children understand the concepts.

Michelle’s DAPA and DIPA and Related Beliefs

A Day in Michelle’s K- 2 (5-6 yr. olds)

Michelle’s class was warm, inviting and well organized with classroom routines and procedures clearly posted on the wall beside the whiteboard. On my arrival, the children were involved in self-directed activities, playing with puzzles, toys and building blocks. At 7:45 the children assembled for class devotion. After singing songs selected by Michelle, and a short prayer, the children then formed a semi-circle for Circle Time. They all sat on a mat with Michelle in the centre and were reminded about how to behave. A few parents stopped at the door to greet Michelle. She waved back at them. At this point the Teacher Aide, (Aunty X) arrived. The children politely welcomed her in unison, with well-spoken, animated voices. She then asked the children to share what they learned from their self-directed activities.

For Circle-Time the children recited the calendar (months and weeks), the alphabet and rote counted to 50. It was then time for Literacy Studies where Michelle read a story to the children. She asked questions about the story and gave the children opportunities to express themselves with the help of Aunty X. The theme for the lesson was “The Foods We Eat” Michelle conducted a Phonics lesson on the Letter of the Day (hard C). The children were then given A Beka workbooks to complete activities, with Aunty X sitting with a group of four children. The children then had a break and class resumed with a Math lesson. The students worked in small groups using manipulatives to problem-solve. Again children were taught explicitly.

After the math lesson, the children then went for lunch, but before they ate, each child received a ‘pump’ from a hand sanitizer strategically positioned on Michelle’s desk. Children ate lunch inside the class and had to clean-up before they could go outside to play. After lunch, the children continued workbook activities, participated in art, finger-painting, colouring and lacing. Class ended at 1:00 pm. The following table summarizes the observed practices and related beliefs. Appendix F3 provides a summary of Michelle’s practices and related beliefs.

Data revealed that Michelle beliefs about teaching and learning were inconsistent with her classroom practice. Based on DAP guidelines some of her practices were inconsistent with DAP principles. For example, Michelle’s reliance on work-books and worksheet activities are considered DIPA. Michelle also adhered to a rigid, teacher-directed lesson plan. Although she linked the concepts she taught, each concept was taught in separate periods on the time-table. It was evident that the focus of her lesson was on mastery of basic skills.

In terms of managing the children’s behaviour, Michelle had very good classroom control. It was evident that the children were aware of the consequences of misbehaviour and therefore worked eagerly to be rewarded with stickers, rather than losing privileges. When asked whether she had changed anything about the way she taught over the last year, she replied to the negative. She rationalized that over the years she has been getting the desired results from her students as all of them had mastered the Grade One Assessment for primary school. She commented:

The children are doing quite well...all of them...

The teachers in Grade One expect the children to have mastery of basic reading and writing and math...it is my job to get them ready.

Michelle did say she has learned a lot about teaching over the years, and going to workshops has helped to hone her skills. She also emphasized that the parents are also satisfied with the job she has done so far.

Janet's DAPA and DIPA and Related Beliefs

A Day in Janet's Class 1 (3-4 yr. olds)

Janet's school consisted on a large opened space separated into three classrooms by two blackboards. Janet's classroom was the first on entering the room. The rooms were very small and Janet's room was quite cluttered with books on shelves and old charts. A behaviour chart was hung on the wall above the chalkboard. Beside Janet's table was a corner labelled Reading Corner. A few Big Books were neatly placed on a mat. During my visit, this corner was a popular place for the children. The children's desks were clustered in groups of four to accommodate approximately twenty-four children. On the day of my visit, thirteen children were present. Janet explained that there was a flare-up of violence the evening before and as such, many parents did not send their children to school.

The class began at 8:15 am with Devotion with all the children in the school. Devotion was led by the school Principal, who is also the owner of the school. At the end of the proceedings, all the children went to their respective classes. Janet started her lesson with Circle Time where Janet engaged the children in singing 'action songs' which she demonstrated and the children imitated. The children seemed to have enjoyed the activity as they asked her to sing the song several times. She acceded to their request to squeals of laughter. The children then participated in rote counting, reciting the days of the week, the months of the year and the letters of the alphabet. Janet then conducted a read-aloud and reminded the children to be quiet and to listen carefully. The reading was then followed by a discussion with the children about safety. This provided an opportunity for the children to talk about their experiences the evening before. It was evident that the children needed this catharsis.

The discussion led into Break and the children went outside to play. There was no grassy area, no slides or swing. The children played tag and Janet joined them until the bell rang and they all went inside. Janet settled the children using another 'action song' and then proceeded with the literacy lesson. Activities consisted of showing children sight-words on flashcards, tracing letters, with Janet giving them verbal directions. Soon the bell rang for lunch and children were instructed to say prayers before having their meal.

I had to leave at that time but I did return a week later for another observation after their lunch session. At this observation, I noticed that that the activities were similar to the

table-top activities the children did in the morning session I observed the week before. Activities consisted of tracing, colouring and workbook activities. Appendix F4 provides a summary of Janet's observed practices and related beliefs.

Data showed that Janet's beliefs were inconsistent with her practices. She held strong beliefs about creativity in planning but this was not evident in her classroom practices. While Janet held more appropriate than inappropriate beliefs, her classroom practices demonstrated more inappropriate practices, such as the focus on table-top activities and the almost non-existence of self-directed activities. Janet was a bit unsure when I asked her about self-directed activities, but she explained that the lack of classroom space did allow for children to go to centres of interests.

In terms of managing children's behaviour, Janet did use stickers to reward the students for appropriate behaviour and correct responses. Two students were not allowed to go outside to play as they were horse-playing during a table-top activity. Despite several verbal warnings from Janet (who was standing over them), they continued playing. Janet spoke to them in a quiet but stern tone. Asked if there was anything she changed in her teaching over the last year, Janet stated:

Yes, I have... I have modified my classroom rules...

My lesson plan is more child-centred..

When asked what influenced these changes, Janet explained:

[I] am going back to college...workshops...

exposure to new classroom methodologies that show me

how to identify and reach out to children with special needs...

Susan's DAPA and DIPA and Related Beliefs

A Day in Susan's Class 2 (5 yr. olds)

Susan's Classroom environment was warm, inviting and well organized with storage containers clearly labelled. The walls were colourfully painted and decorated with charts. A rule chart was posted on the wall at eye level and there was also a Daily Roster for chores on a Bulletin Board. There were also small pictures of the faces of the nine children in the class. A large whiteboard with its edges carefully decorated, occupied a wall at the front of the room. Learning centres were also clearly labelled.

When I arrived at the school, the children were engaged in table-top activities such building blocks and Lego, playing with toy trucks and three girls were busy 'having tea' with miniature tea-sets in the "Dress-Up" corner. At 8:00 am Susan gathered the children for Devotion. They reluctantly pulled themselves away from their play activities to join Susan in

singing lively choruses and a short prayer. The children recited the Lord's Prayer. Susan reminded the children of the classroom rules and that she expected them to demonstrate proper manners. Susan then announced Circle Time and the children sat in a circle with Susan standing at the board. She pointed to the days of the week, which the children recited, then the months of the year. She then pointed to an Alphabet Chart where the children recited the alphabet in unison. One of the children started yawning and Susan told him to pay attention.

Susan then read a story from a Big Book with the curriculum theme "Caring Things in Our Home and Community". She then engaged the children in discussion but she asked primarily closed questions, e.g., when teaching about taking care of our bodies, Susan said, "*It is important to keep the house clean, right?*" to which the children chorused "*Yes, Miss!*" Susan then introduced the letter 'm' to the children. She produced the sound of the letter and the children imitated. She then wrote the letter on the board. Other literacy activities included the children writing the letter 'm', colouring and completing worksheet activities pertaining to the lesson concept.

The children then had break where some of them went outside to play while the others stayed inside and had their snacks. Twenty minutes later the children gathered for curriculum activities that were a continuation to what they did before Break. Susan told them to look around the room for objects and words that began with the letter 'm'. They then participated in a writing activity until it was time for Lunch.

Lunch was served in class but the children had to finish their lunch before going out to play. The playground housed a swing/slide combo, see-saw, and brightly coloured oversized rubber tyres. There were peals of laughter from the girls, especially when Susan joined them in a game of Hop-Scotch. It was soon time for the children to return to class.

After settling the children through singing and nursery rhymes, the children were placed in small groups for focus group activities. They were engaged in activities such as tracing around pictures and cut-out shapes. The final part of the activity was to create a collage. The day ended at 1:30 pm with the children placing their collage on the bulletin board. Appendix F5 provides a summary of Susan's observed practices and related beliefs during my visit to her classroom.

Data showed that Janet's beliefs were generally consistent with her practices. However, based on DAP guidelines, although Susan held strong DAP beliefs, some of her practices may be considered as inconsistent to these beliefs. For instance, the children

participated in rote activities, and her teaching style was didactic. While the children engaged in self-directed activities, most of the learning activities were teacher selected.

In terms of managing children's behaviour, during the period of observation, Susan spent a lot her time paying more attention to children who were misbehaving, trying to get them focused on the activity at hand. As a result, the longest block of uninterrupted time for meaningful instruction was less than fifteen minutes.

Data from the study also revealed that teacher authority is valued by the teachers. All the students are expected to listen to and obey teacher authority. According to Rebecca during the focus group session:

Majority of my students come from inner-city communities and you cannot allow them to get out of hand. You have to assert authority or your class will descend into chaos!

The other teachers nodded in agreement with Michelle adding that '*children must know that you love them, but they must also know who is in charge. Children need to learn this from an early age.*' Michelle received a round of applause for this comment. All the teachers agreed however that that despite its challenges, managing the children's behaviour was an important part of their instructional practice.

Challenges to DAP

An interview question was asked regarding a major challenge they faced since the start of the new school year and what have they been doing to overcome it. Data from the observations and interviews with the teachers highlighted some of the challenges they faced in trying to create developmentally appropriate practices and provide meaningful experiences to the children. Rebecca stated the lack of strong parenting support. According to Rebecca:

We have a small group of parents who help [us] out every now and again...they are the same parents who come to PTA meetings and any little functions we have...if we had more parents participating in the school, we could do more for the children...

When asked what she has been doing to overcome some of these challenges, Rebecca said the school has recently started a parent mentoring programme. She has also started sending text messages home to her parents about their children's progress and has been receiving very good feedback.

Veronica shared similar sentiments and explained her challenge:

The new curriculum asks for parental interaction but

the parents most times do not help...for field trips, some the parents complain that they can't afford it or they just don't send the children. When going on field trips I have to ask the parent to send the children whether or not they contribute, as I think them [the children] not going will take away from the children's experience

She also shared her challenge with trying to provide meaningful experiences for the children in her class. She commented:

When you try for real [concrete] objects they can't be found and the pictures sometimes do not give the children a real feel of what you are talking about.

Asked how she has overcome these challenges, Veronica shared:

I have to just try as best as possible to explain to the children and hope they grasp what I am talking about... I also try to make the things from paper or other materials to look like the real thing as much as possible...

Michelle explained that her major challenge is the lack of institutional support from the Government. She explained:

Persons within the institution are not being supported by the Government... it seems [as if] because we are a private Institution, we are ignored...they focus only on basic schools... sometimes we feel abandoned...on our own...we do our own thing...

Michelle said she has been lobbying her concern at every cluster workshop held by the Early Childhood Commission and hopes one day, her concern will be addressed.

Janet said her major challenge was being able to manage the behaviours of some of the children in her class. She commented that:

Many of the children come from violent communities... They bring the behaviours into the classroom and it is a real challenge for the teachers...just last week I reprimanded one of the boys in the class and he told me he was going to cut my throat! Can you believe that? (sigh)...

When asked how she has been dealing with the challenges, Janet confesses that at times she felt helpless. She explained:

When you have to deal with children not bringing their textbooks to school... poor attendance...and no parent support...it makes you feel like giving up...but I feel I am making an impact in the children's lives...

Susan said her greatest challenge has been trying to understand how to manage learning difficulties in her classroom. She mentioned that since the beginning of the school year, two students with autism have been placed in her class. She explained that not being exposed to special education made her feel hesitant about accepting them her class. She commented on how she tried to overcome the challenge:

At first I was sure what I would do with these two students but as I got to know them and their disabilities, I felt a bit better...I read a lot and did a short course in special education... it was quite helpful...

All the teachers were quick to add that despite the challenges that are presented to them on a daily basis, their children have been making sufficient progress.

Conclusion

This section explored the stated beliefs and practices of five teachers and highlighted a variety of complex, contextual and personal factors that impacted on the consistent and inconsistent relationships between their beliefs and practices based on DAP guidelines. In this chapter, four major areas were presented. First, each of the five cases was introduced and their school context highlighted. Second, a cross-case content analysis was presented outlining the teachers' beliefs and practices about early childhood teaching and learning. Third, factors that influenced beliefs and self-perceptions were presented. Fourth, the relationship between beliefs and practices was examined. The specific focus of this chapter was to answer the primary questions of the study: (1) What are five early childhood teachers' beliefs about the nature of developmentally appropriate classroom practices? (2) What factors are responsible for shaping five early childhood teachers' beliefs and self-perception? (3) To what extent do five early childhood teachers' engage in classroom practices that are consistent with their beliefs?

Response to these questions revealed that the teachers' practice does match their personal beliefs. The teachers generally hold DAP beliefs but based on DAP guidelines, these beliefs are inconsistent with DAP activities. It was conjectured that the context of the

teachers affected these inconsistencies. The socio-cultural influences were hard to delineate and will be the focus of discussion in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The world is not to be put in order, the world is order.

It is for us to put ourselves in unison with this order.

(Henry Miller, 1891- 1980)

Introduction

This study set out to explore the beliefs and self-perceptions of five early children teachers within the context of developmentally appropriate practices. Utilising qualitative methodology, data were collected from a variety of sources mainly a Teacher Beliefs Survey (TBS), in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The study involved five case studies of early childhood teachers whose teaching experiences span more than twenty years. The findings arising from careful analysis of the data are discussed in this chapter, with reference to relevant literature and research.

The following is a summary of the findings in response to the three research question posed:

- Teachers share individual yet collective beliefs about the nature of DAP;
- While early childhood teachers had generally positive beliefs about the nature of developmentally appropriate practices, these beliefs are influenced by complex, yet inter-related socio-cultural factors;
- The teachers believed that their personal history and family background influence their choice of teaching profession, preparation and perception of role;
- The teachers held strong beliefs about their status in the early childhood sector and its influence on their self-perceptions as professionals;
- Early childhood teacher practices had their origins in belief systems that are shaped through interactions with people and events and the various cultural-based practices within their individual learning communities;

The findings of the study were grounded in the theoretical framework of social constructivism. I adopted the social constructivist paradigm based on the assumptions that:

- a) It is used to understand the multiple realities of five early childhood teachers and in turn construct new knowledge that would elicit greater awareness of these realities. This paradigm also considers the importance of historical development and symbol systems that are inherited by these teachers and how their historical background

influenced their beliefs and self-perceptions. This background also influences how they shape the knowledge and truth that the teachers create, including what they have learned about about DAP within a social context. In light of the on-going transformation of the early childhood sector, early childhood teachers in Jamaica have under-gone a myriad of experiences, both personal and professional and each impacting on their construction of reality;

- b) internal teacher attributes such as teacher disposition and character (Croswell and Elliot, 2004; Peterson and Seligman, 2004), beliefs and attitudes (Nieto, 2003) perceptions of self-efficacy and self-identity (Howard and Johnson, 2004; Bandura, 1997) and some external forces such as school climate (Lokan, 2003), and the quality of collegial relationships may influence the interpretation of new experiences and how early childhood teachers make sense of their reality;
- c) finally, as early childhood teachers recount critical aspects of their teaching career, this will lead to a deeper understanding of how these teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions impact on their classroom practices. By sharing these experiences, this has enhanced the study as it sought to explore how the beliefs and self-perceptions of early childhood influence developmentally appropriate classroom practices. Reflection is also a critical aspect of this research, and was used to further define factors that influence self-identity and professional practice.

These assumptions were pivotal to the findings of the study. It is within this background that I present my discussion on the findings and implications for the findings.

Teachers' Beliefs about the Nature of DAP

NAEYC's 2009 policy statement on DAP defined developmentally appropriate practices as those that "*promote young children's optimal learning and development...*" (p. 16). DAP is also rooted in constructivists' theories of child development and that teachers are crucial to the implementation of high quality early childhood education programmes. How teachers understand DAP is therefore important to its effective implementation.

All the teachers in the study provided their own definition and understanding of DAP. Each teacher ascribed their own meaning to DAP. Rebecca had a very good understanding of the elements of DAP based on the policy guidelines, but Veronica was also able to articulate some of the basic tenets of DAP. This supports the conclusion by Kim (2011) that college-trained students had stronger beliefs about DAP. However Janet, although not yet college trained, was also able to articulate some of the basic tenets of DAP, based on her years of

experience and exposure to professional development workshops over the years. There was a difference of understanding about DAP between Michelle and Susan and this had implications for the pedagogical decisions they made in their classrooms. Collectively, all the teachers believed that DAP meant considering the individual learning characteristics of the child, but most of them were not able to meet the children's individual needs. This supports the findings of Hsieh (2004) whose study also revealed similar tensions between DAP philosophies and the Jamaican traditional cultural values.

Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

Recent discourse in the literature suggest a change and even a challenge in the way early childhood teachers understand children's learning and their own roles as teachers (Ailwood, 2008; Alvestad and Duncan, 2006; Ryan and Grieshaber, 2005). The literature suggest a shift from a dependence on developmental theories as the dogma for understanding child development to a post-modern perspective that values the complex influence of children's social, cultural and religious backgrounds on their development. In this section, I will discuss how five teachers' reliance on child development theories, in particular constructivist theory, becomes the core of their beliefs about teaching and learning and provides a framework from which they make sense of their roles as educators and their experiences with children.

The Maternalising Qualities of the Effective Early Childhood Teacher

In this study, the five teachers described qualities of an effective early childhood teacher in a maternalistic way. Symbolically, they used attributes that showed a relationship between a mother and a child. Ailwood (2008) described this mother role symbol as 'maternalism' which she defined as "the cultural understandings attributed to this role by society" (p. 158). She went further to add that "women in ECE have worked within, through and sometimes against the discourses of maternalism embedded in the institutionalised and public definitions of their work." (p. 158). This statement aptly applies to the five teachers in this study.

Despite the differences in age distribution, professional qualification, years of experience and EC settings, responses revealed distinct similarities in the views and beliefs to the questions regarding the effective EC teacher. This gendered nature (all the teachers prefaced their statement with 'She') of the early childhood teacher supports the views of Garvis, Fluckiger and Twigg (2012) who agreed that EC teachers were "simplistic and overly optimistic about the profession" (p. 101). This simplistic or 'romantic' and stereotypical view

of the EC teacher as articulated by the teachers in this study is not only perpetuated by mass media such as television and books, but teacher training programmes (pre- and in-service) that may identify the teacher in a unitary way and not within a contextual and historical framework (Ryan and Grieshaber, 2005). Additionally, women have dominated teaching, especially at the early childhood level and the ‘feminization’ of the profession has led it to being marginalized as ‘women work’ (Anliak and Beyazkurk, 2008 as cited by Sengupta 2011).

This integration of the mother role with the teacher role has implications for ECE in Jamaica. The interpretation of responses from the five teachers in my study reflected a desire on the teachers’ part to identify with this mother role. Interestingly, the five teachers in the study were mothers themselves. My interpretation supports findings from Gupta (2006) who concluded that teachers viewed teaching as an extension of their maternal role, and as such treated their students as their own children. At a deeper level, their orientation to mothering as being caring and patient etc. is transferred to their teacher role and as Gupta (2006) opined that if the ‘mother’ is removed from the teaching, there may be a “corresponding reduction in the teacher’s sense of responsibility and accountability...” especially when it comes to the children’s overall personal development “in accordance with acceptable social norms” (p. 103). While I believe that this caring orientation is an important part of the delivery of early childhood care and education, equally important is the need to create a space for teachers to be empowered towards striking a balance between this maternilised orientation and the role demands of a the professional EC teacher.

Approaches to planning and teaching

The demands of the professional EC teacher is a good place to start the discourse on the participants’ approach to teaching and learning. Teachers’ beliefs and theories about teaching is grounded in their own teaching experiences (Raths, 2001) and their approaches to planning operationalize these theories and beliefs. Teachers’ core beliefs and theories can polarize teaching approaches into either a child-centred approach and the traditional or didactic approach (Stipek and Byler, 2004). DAP philosophy has favoured the child-centred approach as the ‘best’ practice for teaching (Bredenkamp, 2009). This approach has been challenged however as recent research is pointing to the fact that classrooms contain complex social and cultural realities where the student-centred approach may not adequately cater to the needs of the children (Millikan, 2003) This was evident in my study as the teachers practiced both child-centred and teacher-centred approaches to teaching. However the five

cases provided evidence of the complex social and cultural realities that impacted on their approaches to planning and teaching.

In terms of young children's learning attributes, the teachers' knowledge was situated within a Western view of child development and child-centred education. DAP's philosophy is based on individualism, that is, the individual needs and interests of children must be a priority. By doing so the EC teacher takes into consideration the individual differences among children (Kwon, 2002; NAEYC 2009). According to Gupta (2006), "Child development is a very Euro-Western concept and emphasizes the individualistic nature of optimal development." (p. 5) and added that "Early childhood discourse has been widely defined by developmental theory..." (p. 5). Attendant with these theories are a set of developmental skills that seek to define the appropriateness of teachers' classroom practices (Gupta, 2006). The teachers in this study had exposure to early childhood theories through college courses and in-service training. It was therefore not very surprising that the teachers described learner attributes that were grounded in Euro-Western child development theory which seemed to influence their beliefs about how children learn and develop.

I also use the curriculum as a frame of reference for my discourse. The Jamaican curriculum is based on the Euro-Western theory of child-centred learning which is congruent with the principles of DAP. Based on DAP guidelines, "Learning experiences are more effective when the curriculum is responsive to children's interests and ideas as they emerge (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997, p. 129). This has become a major criterion for distinguishing DAP and DIP. Using this criterion (even though the teachers were using a child-centered curriculum), the five teachers were all identified as using DIP activities. Additionally, based on the teachers' responses, the child-centred philosophies of DAP have also influenced their pedagogical content knowledge. This can create tensions between Euro-Western child development theory and the Jamaican cultural and values contexts. This was evident in the difficulties the teachers experienced trying to operationalize the 'Developmental Objectives' within the curriculum. Tensions are also created among parents and the wider society regarding their ideas about children's readiness for primary and preparatory schools.

Identifying children's interests is not as easy as it seems, especially when viewed from an individualistic perspective. Although the teachers in the study endorsed the importance of teaching children based on their individual learning profiles, they were not able to meet the individual needs of their children as much as they wanted to. My findings were supported by Hsieh (2004); Gupta (2006) and Kim (2011) whose findings were similar. Hsieh (2004) opined that even though having a curriculum based on childrens' interest is important

in EC education, the issue is whether the curriculum can help teachers to accurately identify children's interests.

Adding to this complexity is the tension teachers experience between applying a child-centred approach on one hand, and a curriculum-centred approach on the other hand, while trying to fulfil parents' and the school's expectations. This tension arises as a result of an assessment system where children have to demonstrate mastery of key developmental skills in the state-mandated Grade One examination. It implies therefore that identifying and meeting children's individual interests may become secondary to a curriculum-based approach as was seen in the teaching practices of the teachers in this study. As teachers navigate this dissonance in terms of what children need to learn and know, it is important that they recognise the relationship between the dichotomy of group oriented and academically oriented approaches in early childhood education and plan a curriculum that is practical and based on the teachers' everyday reality.

The Role of Play

A discussion on play is also important based on the findings from the study and issues discussed in the Literature Review. This based on the fact that play is considered an integral part of early childhood education (Fung and Cheng, 2012; Pramling-Samuelsson and Carlsson, 2008; Vong, 2012). In fact, Wood and Attifield, (2008) claimed that play has enjoyed an "idealized status" (p. 9). Ailwood (2003) posited play from three perspectives, namely, 1) romantic/nostalgic; 2) play characteristic and 3) developmental. I found these three discourses pertinent to my research findings and form the basis for my own discourse on play in early childhood. According to Ailwood, the romantic/nostalgic vision of play reflects "the dominant Western view that children need play..." (p. 289). This vision is further broken down into developmental types such motor/physical, social, constructivist, fantasy, reflecting the dominance of developmental psychology primarily based on the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky (p. 289). Findings from my research supports this position taken by Ailwood as all the teachers discussed play within this romantic/nostalgic perspective, even lamenting the fact that children lacked sufficient opportunities to play.

Ailwood (2003) also wrote about play as a characteristic discourse. While the five teachers had various constructions of play, they all agreed that play was a natural way for children to learn. Play was also placed in the context of 'free activities' but regulated by a time-table. Play was characterised by indoor and outdoor play, with specific behaviours. For instance, indoor play consisted of working with building blocks, puzzles, making collages or

participating in learning activity centres, while outdoor play is characterised by using swings, slides, see-saw, Jungle Gym or playing Tag or ‘Dandy Shandy’.

The developmental discourse on play pertains to psychological theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, Erickson, and Kholberg. Ailwood (2003) claimed that this type of discourse is the most dominant and is strongly endorsed by DAP. But Ailwood claims that this view of play “occurs in a social and contextual vacuum” (p. 290) and within this vacuum, “the rational child unfolds individually on the developmental journey to a finite adulthood.” (p. 290). This type of play discourse also unfolded during the interviews with the teachers, who also conceptualized play within a developmental framework. However this conceptualisation was part of the dissonance between learning through play and learning through teacher-directed activities.

It was interesting to note that all the teachers to a large extent acted more as supervisors during play activities. They practiced what they called ‘guided learning’ where their role consisted primarily of offering monitoring and assistance. They made the decision of what play activities the children were involved in and so at times play became a form of reward for good behaviour, instead of a source of meaningful interaction between the teacher and the student.

Factors That Shaped Beliefs and Self-Perception

Research supports the findings from my study which highlighted that beliefs are intrinsic, but are shaped by one’s life experiences (Aldemir and Sezer, 2009; Richardson, 1996; Thorsen, 2008; Vartuli, 1999). In Chapter Three I drew upon the classic theories of Social and Symbolic Interactionism as my main theoretical framework for my study. There was evidence of these theories from the findings of the study. While the teachers shared aspects of their life experiences, it became evident that their upbringing had a significant impact on their lives and their choices to become teachers. Each teacher had a defining moment or what Denzin (2001) called an epiphany. By navigating the teachers’ scripts, I was able to identify the ‘*major epiphanies*’, finding experiences that changed each teacher’s lives forever; the ‘*cumulative epiphanies*’- e.g., Janet getting pregnant as a teenager, Susan running away from home at an early age and overcoming the odds; and ‘*relived epiphanies*’ that each teacher had to repeatedly relive in her mind, e.g., Michelle regretting that she did not accept an offer to be formally trained in her younger years.

The symbol of mother was not only prominent in how the teachers described the effective EC teacher but their own mothers figured prominently as the person who had the

most influence on their beliefs about teaching and the teaching profession. This was evidenced by how they spoke about their mother or other significant care-givers in their lives. Social interaction theory places a lot of emphasis on the role of the family as the first subculture unit that the individual encounters and so the major transmitter of beliefs (Blumer, 1969). It is interesting that the only two teachers in the study, who happened to be college-trained, had mothers who were teachers themselves. As for the other three teachers, other members of the family unit such as an Aunt, contributed in some way to the teachers' beliefs.

Another factor that influenced the teachers' beliefs was the memories these teacher held of their former early childhood teachers. Their perception of the image of the early childhood teacher was framed by the experiences they had with their own teachers and may have inspired their existing practice. These early memories may also serve to validate why they teach the way they do and their beliefs about teaching (Fischer and Kiefer, 2001; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). Evidence from my research also supports this view. Fischer and Kiefer (2001) went further to explain that in addition to memories of past teachers and interaction with children in the classroom, society also imposes general views about the 'ideal' teacher image. From my study, the teachers spoke of their teachers in idealist terms. This idealism was so profound that Susan, despite having some negative memories of her EC teacher, validated her teacher's behaviour by stating her admiration for her former teacher's pedagogical skills. Michelle, on the other hand, used the negative memories of her EC teacher to inspire her present classroom practices. Fischer and Kiefer (2001) also explained that this idealistic image of the teacher may lead to teachers developing unrealistic expectations of their students and may even overlook diversities of learning needs in the classroom. Evidence from my observations in the five teachers' classrooms also supports this view.

The issue of low teacher status featured prominently in the data analysis. Similar to the findings from the study by Shatz-Oppenheimer and Dvir (2008), to be professionally identified was very important to the teachers in my study. Seeking further education was also important. This supports the findings by Gable and Halliburton (2003) whose study also showed that teachers saw the need to pursue further education and training. However, in Jamaica, EC teacher qualification and experiences are not commensurate with pay and conditions of work and are not given the same status as primary education. While there has been a global movement toward the 'professionalization' of early childhood education which has led to increased qualification, training and skills, in contrast, low wages and poor working conditions have not undergone major changes in Jamaica.

Research has shown that early childhood teachers continue to be among the lowest paid professionals, regardless of certification and educational level (Boyd, 2013). Research also indicates a positive relationship between early childhood teachers' qualifications and high quality programmes and child outcomes (Boyd, 2013; Kontos and Wilcox-Hertzog, 2001; McMullen, 1997; McMullen and Alat, 2002; Pianta et al., 2005). The research also highlighted the fact that the teachers' educational background influenced their classroom practices.

Historically, Jamaica has not been able to attract qualified EC teachers as the present system only accommodates one trained teacher in an institution, so when an EC teacher attains a degree, there are limited chances for upward mobility. This further highlights the disparity among early childhood institution in Jamaica as EC teachers in Government-owned institutions are required to be college-trained versus private-owned institutions which may not be able to adequately remunerate college-trained teachers. In a system where there are variations in training and experience across the sector, ranging from high school graduate (called 'un-trained') to college trained graduate, this dichotomy has created tensions within the early childhood system. In a learning community, these tensions affect how teachers perceive themselves and polarize beliefs about themselves and their practices based on the status ascribed to them within that community. What this study asserts is that professional recognition should be given to the teacher especially in regards to their professional roles and qualifications. Boyd (2013) also supports this point.

Relationship Between Beliefs and DAP

DIPA or Culture-Based Practices?

The five teachers in this study engaged in classroom practices that were consistent with their stated beliefs and who they were as teachers within multiple contexts. However, there were instances where the teachers engaged in practices that may be considered inconsistent with NAEYC's DAP standards. What could have accounted for the inconsistencies observed? Mansour (2009) argued that teacher beliefs should be studied contextually, recognizing the influence of culture on teachers' classroom practices. Mansour also claimed that studies should be situated within a physical setting such as the individual classroom, which considers the constraints, opportunities and external influences acting on the data sources. This study revealed some of these contextual factors within the cultural setting of Jamaica, and has added to the international research on the cultural nature of early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices

The schools' culture-based practices featured prominently in the data analysis from this study. I observed that the teachers' classroom practices and pattern of interactions with the children were strongly influenced by culture-based practices inherent within the institutions. It has been argued that if a teacher's beliefs are strongly tied to her sense of self, the more these beliefs will resist change. This was consistent among all five early childhood institutions. Their practice reflected beliefs they felt best served them, their content, and their students' needs.

Contextually, culture-based practices are important considerations as 'appropriate practices' because the social expectations of Jamaican children are different from those in the North America and Europe in many aspects. Although the Jamaican early childhood education curriculum is designed to embrace the principles of meeting the individual needs of children, the schools in this study practiced more collectivism. The children were seen as belonging to a group or community and so there are cultural expectations that may take precedence over other influences such as DAP.

The individualistic nature of DAP has created apparent tensions with the collective-based pedagogies practiced by the teachers in this study. I wish reference my discussion on collective-based pedagogy around that was espoused in Reggio Emilia settings in Italy and to some degree interpreted and articulated by the Jamaican teachers in the study.

The philosophy that underpins Reggio Emilia is that learning is taking place within a community. In this community, the focus is on children's self-awareness and well-being. This is acquired through and is a direct result of the relationships which the children develop with their teacher and each other. This self-awareness is derived because of others, and not as a result of an awareness of others (Edwards, Gandini and Foreman, 1998). In a didactic instructional setting, the focus is on working collectively and the child is rewarded for his/her contribution to the group effort and work. Children are expected to contribute to group activities. The feedback the child receives from the group may have an impact of how the child relates to others and the relationship the child has with the teacher. This was evidenced among the five teachers during my observations as the teachers placed close attention to the children who were not participating in the group activities.

In a collective-based pedagogy, as practiced in Jamaica, the child is viewed as part of group or class, just like being a part of a family. The child is therefore embedded in the community and there is a shared responsibility for the child within the community. They are expected to follow group planned activities, such as devotion, singing, playing and eating. The child who does not conform may be considered a 'bad pickney (child)'. Whereas DAP

emphasizes and values children's individual abilities and developmental levels, especially when it comes to learning and play, the Jamaican culture values academic achievement as a benchmark for personal achievement and so there is a tendency to ensure that children are 'ready' for primary school.

According to Hsieh (2004), "A culture's traditions and values always have an impact on the objectives and designs of a school curriculum." (p. 131). However, with the influence of Western views of child development and how to educate young children, this has created much tension among the teachers in the sector, as evidenced in my research findings. This tension is compounded by the value of individualism claimed within DAP and espoused in the Jamaican early childhood curriculum.

There are some expectations and cultural values that I must highlight in order to put a context to this section of my discussion. These were noted in all the EC institutions I have visited. In terms of the children, they are expected to:

- Wear uniforms to school every day;
- Demonstrate proper manners such as respecting authority, greeting each other, saying "I'm sorry" when they have done something wrong to another child;
- Share with other children – this include food, toys, books etc.
- Participate in all group activities;
- Eat snack and lunch together;
- Form lines to enter and leave their classrooms;
- Be rumbuntious and noisy on the playground, but sit still and listen during instruction

Devotion is an activity that is of significant cultural value in Jamaican schools and rooted in the teachers' practices. This is one of the post-emancipation heritages adopted from the European Christian missionaries, who first started early childhood education in Jamaica. Daily devotion also forms part of the teachers' own religious and cultural beliefs and may influence not only their interaction with children but the type of learning experiences they provide for children (Holloway, 1999). All the schools in the study had Devotion as a time-tabled activity and was conducted every morning. All the children were expected to participate in morning devotion, lunch-time and 'evening' prayers.

Kindness is another Jamaican value and is encouraged in all children. Jamaica prides itself with being a country where its inhabitants display acts of kindness to each other daily and children are expected to do the same. In other words, collectivism is a characteristic of

the Jamaican EC setting where children are viewed as part of a group versus the individualistic stance of DAP.

Fleer (2003) contended that now is an opportune time to “critically examine our own profession and question what we have inherited from our forebearers...” (p. 65). It must be noted however that majority (if not all) of the culture-based practices I outlined previously can easily be traced to the legacies of our colonial past. In Chapter One I had traced the history of early childhood education and development in Jamaica and the significant contribution of the clergy from England. As stated earlier, many of the standards and practices found in the Jamaican early childhood classrooms today (e.g., devotion), has its genesis with British colonialism and its influences on norms and approaches to pedagogy.

While the culture-based practices I alluded to may have its heritage in British colonialism, I find it important to posit the notion of what equates indigenous practices. The Jamaican society has emerged as a diverse society consisting of people from African, Chinese, Indian and European descent. This diversity is displayed in our music, art, and culinary offerings. However, one thing that has remained endemic to Jamaica is the “*interconnectedness*” of its people, and how this connectedness affects what we value and believe in as a nation. This connectedness is deep-rooted in our predominantly African ancestry. Although the original inhabitants of Jamaica are thought to be Arawak Indians, it was the Africans, who came to the island during the Slave Trade whose culture has persevered. This African heritage has been passed on through a rich oral tradition (with the elders gathering the children around to share stories), which have been passed on for centuries. This language system has its own symbols and uniqueness that has penetrated even the formal school system, despite the lingering British legacy.

When it comes to knowledge and learning, Jamaican teachers also have their own theories and philosophies of learning and pedagogy and are found in the stories and ceremonies as a way of knowing. An example of ‘indigenous’ Jamaican practices besides story-telling, is children learning by doing and observing the elder. Knowledge is embedded in social (normative) values, which are reflected in the stories and traditions the children are exposed to.

Another example of this is that, even though there is a standard early childhood curriculum, all the teachers in the study felt it was important to teach the academic areas - reading, writing and mathematics (or the 3Rs) if the children were to achieve mastery in later grades. The classrooms in this study still reflect the 3Rs as the teachers’ beliefs about how children learn and what they need to learn influences the decisions teachers make. ‘Drill and

practice' may therefore become a part of the childrens' learning experiences, as evidenced in this study This teaching style was a key feature of post-colonial Jamaican early childhood institutions over two centuries ago and is still practiced today. This practice is considered DIP, even though the teachers at times attempted to provide varying learning experiences other than didactic teaching. This accounted for the teachers vacillating between DAP and DIP activities. Hsieh (2004) and Kim (2011) reported similar findings.

With the colonization of Western views of child development and pedagogy through through the influence od DAP, we have therefore according to Fleer (2003:76):

“channelled our efforts and discourse into an individualistic framework at the expense of interdependence, thus disenfranchising some children and positioning them as failures when they do not succeed on their own.”

Indigenous pedagogical practices to me therefore is about preserving, affirming and honouring the unique cultural and personal strengths of the Jamaican children. This uniqueness is embedded in the various cultural constructs within the schools that help to shape teaching practices alongside other demographic/socio-economic factors. It is my belief that we do not need another 'psychology' of Caribbean children. What we need, based on the data from my study, is to reduce the reliance on Euro-American theories of child development and how children should be taught and instead develop a common understanding of the outcomes we seek in Jamaican children.

In my study, there were strong self-reported beliefs about DAP and the observed practices showed that DAP activities were used in the classrooms on a regular basis. Even though the teachers endorsed DAP, they still valued DIP activities such as the use of workbooks and worksheets, children sitting around their desks, teacher directing some of the children's activities, and the teacher using verbal reprimands to encourage appropriate behaviour. Although the teachers practiced guided learning activities, they also believed that teacher-planned and teacher-directed activities were good for children's learning. The teachers practiced what they believed. My findings were similar to those conducted by Li (2003), Lin (2004) in Taiwan, and Liu (2007) in Taiwan and the United States.

Of particular interest were Li's (2003) findings that the teachers' perceptions of children's learning focused primarily on the children's academic achievement. The teachers in my study had similar perceptions. Berthelsen, Brownlee and Karuppiyah (2011) shared similar findings from their study and reported that even though the teachers in that study held child-centred beliefs their practices were more academic oriented. Berthelson et al. opined

that these practices were aimed at meeting the expectations of parents. As a former classroom teacher myself, I have experienced the meritocratic system that operates within the Jamaican education sector. Early childhood education is no different – it has become very competitive. Teachers and parents place high emphasis on academic achievement starting at an early age. This has led to a more functionalist approach to EC education (Berthelsen et al. 2011) as parents (and the state) place substantial pressure on the teacher. The outcomes may be practices that may not be considered DAP.

Challenges to DAP

Janet and Veronica complained that the lack of resources, especially texts, makes it difficult to effectively implement DAP. Powers, Zippay and Butler (2006), states it succinctly in their study that:

A lack of resources (such as texts) may mean that students are poorly grouped. A classroom only equipped with desks may make it difficult for a constructivist-minded teacher to capitalize on the social aspect of the learner. (p. 125)

The lack of resources is a real challenge in the Jamaican early childhood classroom and has posed a challenge to the teachers' implementing new practices. This point resonated among all the teachers in this study. The data showed that more inappropriate practices occurred in the schools that were under-resourced, such as the schools in which Janet and Veronica worked. Another challenge that surfaced among the teachers in the study was the class size. Bredekamp (2011) had reported that smaller class sizes better facilitated DAP activities. Jamaica still struggles with large class sizes.

Limitation of the Study

Despite the significance and purposes of this study, there are some limitations. This study was exploratory and produced descriptive, yet preliminary findings. The use of qualitative methodology allowed for a rich, detailed analysis of the teachers and their setting. This study was limited to the purposefully selected sample of five teachers who volunteered their participation. The sample size was small and as such, is not a representative of the total population of early childhood teachers in Jamaica. The results therefore cannot be applied too broadly. The intent was not to generate findings that could be generalized to other early childhood teachers and institutions, but to seek to gain deeper insights into the topic of early

childhood teachers; beliefs and perceptions and how these influence their classroom practices.

Another limitation is this study was limited to investigation using a hermeneutic circle where data are collected and interpreted. This model for the study is based on the highly interpretive nature of the data being analyzed. The items on the self-reported Teachers Beliefs Scale (TBS) items were primarily drawn from DAP guidelines. Although the TBS had strong validity and reliability (Bredenkamp and Copple (1997), some of the items are somewhat devoid of cultural context. This created some confusion and as such, the extent and range of the DAP construct was limited in terms of how teachers responded to the questions. To address this, in-depth interviews were conducted.

The difficulty of finding relevant literature from Jamaica was also a limitation for the study. In preparing for this study, I had to rely on extensive use of literature published outside of Jamaica. Since the socio-cultural context was an important aspect of this study, Jamaican literature would have certainly enhanced my thinking.

This study was delimited to participants who were in-service early childhood teachers and therefore these teachers: (1) had at least one year's field experience as a full-time teacher in an early childhood setting; (2) taught all subjects to their students in the classroom; (3) had achieved the standards for Early Childhood Teacher Certification, that is, a HEART/TVET Level II or Teachers' College Certification.

Implications of the Study

Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development

The findings of this study suggest that DAP beliefs are strongly endorsed by the five early childhood teachers. All the teachers expressed strong theoretical understanding of child-centred philosophy. However the teachers' beliefs about children's learning are rooted in Euro-American perspective of child development and pedagogy. This affected their beliefs about their teaching and their role as teachers. This has implications for teacher education as there is a need to expose early childhood teachers to diverse models of teaching so they can create their teaching paths (Aldemire and Sezer, 2009). These models must also be presented with a socio-cultural context.

The findings also accentuated the importance of higher education and teaching preparation in early childhood education. According to Chew (2012):

A gradual move towards new entrants with tertiary education should be encouraged as higher levels of general education appears to be more influential than higher levels of professional

specialised training. (p. 156).

Bowman (2011) also reiterated that teachers who hold a Bachelor's degree possess better language skills and understanding of content and pedagogical knowledge. As cited by Chen (2011) in Singapore, the low academic qualifications of early childhood teachers, has impacted on the quality of care given to children. A similar situation is presently happening in Jamaica. As such, there is an urgent need to formalize the minimum academic entry requirements of early childhood educators.

The value of having highly organized in-service training also needs to be highlighted. Boyd (2013) stated that holding a Bachelors Degree in early education and participating in further professional development trainings "has been central to the movement within early childhood education to obtain professional status." (p. 16). Professional development training be comprehensive but reflect classroom realities and be tailor-made based on the social needs on the schools. Using real-life demonstrations of appropriate Jamaican activities and experiences could expand teachers' beliefs about how to use DAP in the classroom. A generalized, whole-sale approach may not prove most effective as each school has its own idiosyncrasies. There should also be continued effort to provide basic content knowledge with information on how to implement appropriate activities.

The findings of the study also revealed a gap between theory and practice. As such, there is a need to engage teachers in critical reflection in action. This can be strengthened and facilitated through professional development training and used to enhance the teacher's lesson delivery and provide an avenue for them to initiate discussions on what works or doesn't work for them in reality. Critical reflection also helps the teacher to open their knowledge and beliefs to a conscious level of scrutiny in order to contribute to constructing and documenting a more culturally appropriate curriculum and pedagogy. Pianta (2011) emphasises continuous reflection that guides the teacher's classroom decisions and provide a more effective way to interaction with their students. Pianta suggested that mentoring and coaching are effective ways to facilitate this. Reflective thinking and writing, however, is a skill that is not innate and so must be taught as a process, in a caring and non-judgemental way, helping teachers to listen to themselves and share their experiences with others in the learning community. Helping teachers to become reflective practitioners should definitely be taken a step further through professional development programmes.

The teachers also cited key people and events as factors which influenced their beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning. They cited personal factors such as parents, memories of childhood teachers, experiences with motherhood and described feedback from

accumulated life experience as their strongest influence. These findings underscore the importance of collegial feedback and support that can positively impact the teacher's beliefs and related classroom practices.

This brings me back to the point about post-colonial influences on the Jamaican EC teacher. In Chapter 2, I established that DAP originated in the USA and has as its philosophical framework theories drawn from the work European theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky. Viruru (2005) commented that discourses on early childhood have been dominated by Western perspectives on child development and are embodied in NAEYC' DAP policy guidelines. These guidelines or standards have been adopted by many countries around the world, including Jamaica, and have remained pre-dominantly Euro-American in its foundation. I dare say DAP has colonized early childhood education in Jamaica as child development is still viewed in this linear, universal world view, as evidenced in our EC curriculum which is framed around Euro-American developmental theories. This 'colonization' has been so internalized by the EC teachers that these Western theories scaffold their pedagogy and "philosophy" of teaching. Tensions may arise when teachers encounter experiences that do not fit Western-based developmentally appropriate practices that may be devoid of socio-cultural contexts, and be viewed as 'inappropriate'.

This can have an impact not only on the teacher's self-perception, but the classroom decisions they make and the kinds of interactions they have with the children in their classroom. These were evident from the findings of the study. Given the cultural histories, beliefs and practices in the Jamaican context, this study will therefore add to the debate regarding the 'decolonization' of early childhood education. This does not mean abandoning Western theories and perspective, but viewing early years teaching within a socio-cultural context that considers not only the child's development, but the child's perspective as well.

In terms of policy, the present early childhood education reform in Jamaica calls for more child-centred approaches, but change is not likely to happen without support to assist teachers to translate policy reforms into actual practice. It becomes important therefore for policy-makers and educators to understand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in order to help them develop programmes that are relevant and sensitive to their beliefs and the needs of the children who they teach (Lubeck, 1998). Additionally, teachers should be guided towards becoming aware of the inconsistencies between their own beliefs and practices.

Finally, my study also brought to the fore issues regarding what we expect of our children and the kinds of learning experiences we offer them. Do we all have the same image of the educated Jamaican child? And what do we want for our children? Do we want good

problem-solvers and decision-makers? Do we want strong-willed, independent thinkers? Or do we want individuals with strong values and attitudes? What characteristics and what forms of knowledge, do we value most and why? These issues need to be discussed and resolved as teachers tend to act on what they value and believe (Pajares, 1992). I think it is time for Jamaica as a nation to define our own expectations based on our realities and promote our own philosophies, not based on Euro-American standards, but on what we want for our children and the education system which has such profound and formative effects on their lives.

Implications for Future Research

As mentioned earlier, this study was exploratory and the findings are not generalisable to other teachers. My study has served as a starting point in the process of gathering information about early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in Jamaica. I therefore consider the results as contributing toward directing future research projects in Jamaica as well as globally. Based on my challenge of finding relevant local literature for my review, we need substantial research in the field of early childhood education in Jamaica. I think it is important for teachers to get involved in documenting classroom practices, school cultures and action research. At the same time, teachers should be validated as researchers in their own right.

Pajares (1992) cited that beliefs are not static and develop and change through the teacher's experiences and learning. Pajares also stated that beliefs are formed early but as teachers grow in the profession they may encounter conflicting beliefs, challenges to their own beliefs, or difficulties implementing certain practices. Although teachers in this study held strong beliefs about DAP, there were conflicts between their implementation of the DAP activities and the pressure of academic achievement. Further research needs to be done to find out: How do early childhood teachers beliefs change over time? What is the nature of these changes? How do these changes occur? The findings should prove very interesting.

Summary

This chapter provided a discussion on the findings from an exploration of five early childhood teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions and their relationships to the teachers' classroom practices. The discussion revolved about the theory of social constructivism and related to relevant literature and underscored the influence of the teachers' socio-cultural contexts on their classroom practice.

Based on the findings on the study, I have agreed with Awenowicz's (2009) that beliefs, are conceptual systems conclude that (a) one's belief systems cannot be separated from one's culture - it is culturally transmitted through interaction with family and personal experiences; (b) self-perceptions are based on feedback from the external environment and the value the individual places on that feedback; (c) significant events in our lives can serve to validate or alter our beliefs and (d) beliefs are what we use to make sense of what we do - teachers teach what they feel is important based on a core set of beliefs. Therefore teachers' beliefs operate within a complex, yet inter-related socio-cultural framework, individually and collectively.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

The NAEYC's DAP guidelines have brought about changes in early childhood education. Even though research literature has illuminated the value of DAP in early years learning, it has not been met with universal acceptance. As such, there is a need to think of the culturally-based beliefs and practices that can influence the implementation of globalised approaches such as DAP. Culturally-based beliefs and practices can serve as sources for decisions about what are considered appropriate educational experiences for young children. This study has served to unearth the complexities that surround the decisions teachers make regarding how much choices, freedom and control children are given during the teaching and learning process.

Early childhood education in Jamaica has had its roots in European early childhood education philosophies. European Christian missionaries inculcated the philosophies and theories of early childhood education as well as curriculum offerings. Over the centuries, these programmes affected the learning experiences and values that children were provided with. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Western philosophies and theories became the foundation for EC pedagogy in Jamaica and dominate the framing of the curriculum. The study has served to illuminate the point that these philosophies and theories from the past may no longer be appropriate or even desirable.

I consider this study unique as I utilized social constructionism, symbolic interactionism and a post-colonial view to explore, describe and offer an interpretation of the ways in which Jamaican ECE teachers may espouse Western notions around Developmentally Appropriate Practice whilst finding it difficult to enact such practice in classrooms and schools. As such, there is tension and lack of fit due to fundamental differences in cultural beliefs and values which, combined with limited resources and (often) minimal teacher education, can mean that teachers do not do what they say they do. Therefore, in a post-colonial context, exploring the beliefs and roles that EC teachers play

can provide a better understanding as to how teachers teach and what beliefs influence their practices.

This study was concerned with exploring the beliefs and self-perceptions of five early childhood teachers working in public and private early childhood institutions in Jamaica. The objectives of the study were (a) to explore these teachers' beliefs about the nature of DAP; (b) to examine how these teachers perceive themselves as professional practitioners and what factors shaped these beliefs and perceptions ; and (c) to examine how these teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions influence their classroom practice. Through a series of interviews, observations and careful data analysis, I believe all of these objectives have been met. I also believe this study, based on its uniqueness to the Jamaican early childhood context, will make a significant contribution to knowledge on teacher beliefs and practices.

The results of the study reinforced the point that teaching practices in Jamaica should not be categorized as DIP due to the major influences of culturally-based practices. This is as a result of the fact that some elements of the teachers' practices, which are not described in the DAP Guidelines but was commonly seen in Jamaican early childhood classrooms, were not readily identified as either DAP or DIP. Some examples included wearing uniform to school, conducting daily devotions, regulating children's manners, respecting teachers' authority, and using verbal reprimands to promote desirable behaviour. These were identified as culture-based practices within the Jamaican context.

Recommendations

It is within this framework that I posit the following recommendations:

Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

- Change the low status image that early childhood teachers hold by making them an essential part of the Jamaica Teachers Association. This will help them to develop a sense of professional identity. This will also help to lessen the stigma associated with the traditional nurturing role of the EC teacher as an educator.
- Introduce a policy that only allows holders of a university degree in early childhood education to teach young children, and offer better salaries in order to recruit highly educated teachers.
- Look at how DAP is implemented in the early childhood institutions. Socio-cultural variations and the teachers' situated knowledge of child development need to inform what versions of DAP and developmental theory (or theories) are adopted. Otherwise the legacy of colonialism will continue to exert its power through those devices.

- Provide teachers with comprehensive training and awareness about the use of DAP within a culturally-relevant context.
- Ensure the developmental goals and objectives in the curriculum reflect local values and inform approaches to classroom practices. The curriculum should also reflect the customary practices, traditions and rituals that touch the lives of children in various cultural contexts and encourage the participation of children in the everyday life of their community.

Recommendations for Teacher Education

- My study has shown that teachers' beliefs are important when seeking to understand classroom practices. Teacher educators should address the beliefs of teachers in training by helping them to articulate their beliefs through biography writing and using metaphors. Teachers in training should be encouraged to challenge their existing beliefs by providing them with diverse, postmodern models of child development and learning in the early years. Time should be given to class discussions and reflections in order for teachers in training to examine their own beliefs about teaching and learning, who they are as teachers, and their own beliefs about and perceptions of the purposes of early childhood education (Hao, 2000; Schön, 1991). All of this is done within the context of informing the teachers of cultural and social class differences that exist in early childhood education.
- As teacher educators engage teachers in training in reflection about their deeply held beliefs, it is important to help teachers become aware that at some point, their beliefs may be different from those of the school that they work in or of the parents of the children they will teach.
- In collaboration with the Early Childhood Commission, provide hands-on practice to in-service teachers so that they can translate child development principles to classroom practice. The model could include offering short courses with a multilevel approach which leads to a systematic professional development.
- Finally, help both pre- and in-service teachers to make the link between theory and practice so that they can translate theory into practical everyday teaching practices.

School Recommendations

- Principals must ensure that the teachers who they hire to teach young children have a degree in early childhood education.

- Principals must ensure that teachers are provided with continuous training on how children develop and equip them with the best ways of observing and listening to children. This can be done by affording them release time to attend workshops, or observe other teachers and classrooms.
- Principals must implement a peer coaching and mentoring programmes in the school.
- Establish an electronic inter-school database network in all of Jamaica in which all early childhood teachers can exchange ideas, lesson plans and activities, discuss similar areas of concern, and post videos documenting classroom best practices.

Reflections and Closing Comments

I extend gratitude to the five teachers who participated in this study. Working with young children can be a very rewarding experience, but it can also be very challenging. I encourage EC teachers to think and reflect about their daily classroom practices and how their beliefs influence their decision-making.

In concluding this thesis, I wish to make three comments related to the purpose of this research. First, this study provided an opportunity to highlight EC teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Secondly, the study identified the factors which shaped and influenced the beliefs and self-perceptions of these teachers. The teachers' participation in the study gave them an opportunity to reflect on their past and how it impacts on them today.

Finally, the teachers were able to articulate the challenges they encountered trying to implement DAP. What was evident was the unwavering belief the teachers held that every child is unique and deserves high quality education and care. I conclude this research feeling very hopeful. I leave this process with a quote by Dewey that continues to inspire me:

*The path of least resistance and least trouble
is a mental rut already made. It requires
troublesome work to undertake the
alteration of old beliefs.*(John Dewey, 1859-1952)

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Appendix A: Consent and Study Information

A1: Ethical Procedures Documents

University of Sheffield School of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

Complete this form if you are planning to carry out research in the School of Education which will not involve the NHS but which will involve people participating in research either directly (e.g. interviews, questionnaires) and/or indirectly (e.g. people permitting access to data).

Documents to enclose with this form, where appropriate:

This form should be accompanied, where appropriate, by an Information Sheet/Covering Letter/Written Script which informs the prospective participants about the a proposed research, and/or by a Consent Form.

Guidance on how to complete this form is at:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/11/43/27/Application%20Guide.pdf>

Once you have completed this research ethics application form in full, and other documents where appropriate email it to the:

Either

Ethics Administrator if you are a member of staff.

Or

Secretary for your programme/course if you are a student.

NOTE

- Staff and Post Graduate Research (EdDII/PhD) requires 3 reviewers
- Undergraduate and Taught Post Graduate requires 1 reviewer – **low risk**
- Undergraduate and Taught Post Graduate requires 2 reviewers – **high risk**

I am a member of staff and consider this research to be (according to University definitions)
: **low risk** **high risk**

I am a student and consider this research to be (according to University definitions):
 low risk **high risk**

*Note: For the purposes of Ethical Review the University Research Ethics Committee considers all research with 'vulnerable people' to be 'high risk' (eg children under 18 years of age).

University of Sheffield School of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

COVER SHEET

<p>I confirm that in my judgment, due to the project's nature, the use of a method to inform prospective participants about the project</p> <p>(eg 'Information Sheet'/'Covering Letter'/'Pre-Written Script'?):</p>	
Is relevant	Is <u>not</u> relevant
<p>√</p> <p>(if relevant then this should be enclosed)</p>	

<p>I confirm that in my judgment, due to the project's nature, the use of a</p> <p>'Consent Form':</p>	
Is relevant	Is <u>not</u> relevant
<p>√</p> <p>(if relevant then this should be enclosed)</p>	

<p>Is this a 'generic "en bloc" application</p> <p>(ie does it cover more than one project that is sufficiently similar)</p>	
Yes	No
	<p>√</p>

I am a member of staff

I am a PhD/EdD student

I am a Master's student

I am an Undergraduate student

I am a PGCE student

The submission of this ethics application has been agreed
by my supervisor

Supervisor's signature/name and date of agreement

.....

I have enclosed a signed copy of Part B

University of Sheffield School of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

PART A

A1. Title of Research Project An Exploration of How The Beliefs and Self-Perceptions of Early Childhood Teachers Influence Their Classroom Practice

A2. Applicant (normally the Principal Investigator, in the case of staff-led research projects, or the student in the case of supervised research projects):

Title: Mrs. First Name/Initials: Margaret C. Last Name: CHIN

Post: Department:

Email: edp009mcc@sheffield.ac.uk Telephone: 876-827-4175

A.2.1. Is this a student project? YES

Elizabeth Wood

A.2.2. Other key investigators/co-applicants (within/outside University), where applicable:

Please list all (add more rows if necessary)

Title	Full Name	Post	Responsibility in project	Organisation	Department

A3. Proposed Project Duration:

Start date: January 2013

End date: January 2014

A4. Mark 'X' in one or more of the following boxes if your research:

	Involves children or young people aged under 18 years
	Involves only identifiable personal data with no direct contact with participants
	Involves only anonymised or aggregated data
	Involves prisoners or others in custodial care (eg young offenders)
	Involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness
√	Has the primary aim of being educational (eg student research, a project necessary for a postgraduate degree or diploma, MA, PhD or EdD)

University of Sheffield School of Education**RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM****A5. Briefly summarise the project's aims, objectives and methodology?**

The aim of this research is to gain critical insights into the practice of five early childhood educators in five separate Jamaican education setting. The study seeks to understand the factors that leading five early childhood teachers choosing a career in teaching; how their interpretation of educational theories influence the way in which they work in the classroom and to explore and make sense of the complex reality within which these educators work.

This study will utilize a qualitative case study research design. The issue that will be explored is the early childhood teacher's professional identity and beliefs about developmentally appropriate classroom practices. Five early childhood teachers, each a singular case, will assist in this exploration. The Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey: (3-5 Year-Olds) designed by Burts, Buchanan, Benedict, Broussard, Dunaway, Richardson & Sciaraffa (2000) and based on the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC 1997, 2009) will be used to collect data. This instrument was selected based on its high psychometric properties (Kim, 2005) and its ability to critically analyze early childhood teachers; beliefs about developmentally appropriate practices (DAP).

The project will involve observation and in-depth interviews which will allow me to get a vivid picture of the participant's perspectives by helping them to talk and reflect about their life events, early experiences, family, and their beliefs about teaching and learning. Focus group interviews will also be conducted. Finally, during the study, prospective participants will be encouraged to keep reflective journals in which they will record their reflections on their classroom practices.

A6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

Participants will be interviewed and asked to share personal aspects of their lives. This may make them feel vulnerable as difficult or challenging issues may arise. The potential participants may also have give up some of their time to accommodate me for interviews and as such, I have to take this into consideration as well. It is therefore crucial that I fully explain to the potential participants the nature of the research, my expectations, and give them an opportunity to think carefully about their potential participation in the study. This will be achieved by proving them with an Information Sheet, detailing the study and asking for their informed consent.

A7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project and, if yes, explain how these issues will be managed?

While the Research will conduct the interviews primarily during the potential participants' normal school hours, there may be instances where these interviews may be conducted outside of the research sites and outside their working hours as the need arises. This however will not raise any issues of potential risk to personal safety or safety to the potential participants as any meeting for interviews will be mutually arranged and agreed upon by both the Researcher and the potential participant.

A8. How will the potential participants in the project be (i) identified, (ii) approached and (iii) recruited?

The main criterion for the selection of participants in this study is that the potential participant must be teaching in an Early Childhood Institution. One teacher will be selected from the five different early childhood settings that operate in Jamaica, namely, a Government-funded Infant School, a Government-funded Infant Department within a primary school, a Government-built Basic School, a privately-owned Basic School and a Kindergarten department with a preparatory school will be invited to participate in the project. A meeting will be scheduled with the institution's Principals to discuss the study. Through permission of the Principal of each research site, a meeting will be held with the teachers at these sites to explain the details of the study and solicit their participation. They will be also be asked to sign a Consent Form for the study should they decide to participate. Participation will be strictly voluntary.

A9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

Yes

No

If informed consent is not to be obtained please explain why. Further guidance is at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/researchethics/policy-notes/consent>

Only under exceptional circumstances are studies without informed consent permitted. Students should consult their tutors.

A.9.1 How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):

During the meeting with the teachers, the Researcher will describe the overall research study, the experience the participants will encounter and the benefits that they may expect to encounter (such as helping other early childhood teachers in the future). Each teacher will be given an Information Sheet outlining the details of the study, how data will be gathered, and how private information about themselves will be kept confidential (pseudonyms will be used to protect their privacy). A Consent Form will also be given stating voluntary participation and the participant's right to withdraw at any time without penalty or malice. Participant will be given time (at least three weeks) in which to think about whether or not they want to participate in the study. I will give the participants information on how to contact me should they decide to participate in the study or not.

A.10 How will you ensure appropriate protection and well-being of participants?

All information about the participants will be kept strictly confidential. Only the Researcher will have access to the participants' personal information. The issue of anonymity and confidentiality will be fully explained to the participants. All meetings will take place at the research sites as far possible, but if the need arises, meetings outside of the research sites will be mutually agreed upon by the Researcher and the participants.

A.11 What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

All potential participants will have to give the Researcher verbal consent before each interview and observation session. They will again be informed about confidentiality of the information they disclose. All information will be kept in the custody of the Researcher. A file will be kept for each participant and pseudonyms will be used to protect their privacy. Only the Researcher will have access to the data during the analysis of data. Transcripts will be handwritten but permission will have to be sought from the participants for the use audio recordings (if needed) during the interview sessions. No disclosure of data will be made to anyone at the participants' place of work or in their professional sphere.

A.12 Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?

Yes

No

A.13 Will the research involve the production of recorded or photographic media such as audio and/or video recordings or photographs?

Yes

No

A.13.1 This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded or visual media:

How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media or photographs may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?

University of Sheffield School of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

PART B - THE SIGNED DECLARATION

I confirm my responsibility to deliver the research project in accordance with the University of Sheffield's policies and procedures, which include the University's '*Financial Regulations*', '*Good research Practice Standards*' and the '*Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue*' (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the research funder.

In signing this research ethics application I am confirming that:

1. The above-named project will abide by the University's Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue': <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/researchethics/index.html>
2. The above-named project will abide by the University's 'Good Research Practice Standards': <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/researchethics/general-principles/homepage.html>
3. The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
4. There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.
5. Subject to the research being approved, I undertake to adhere to the project protocol without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter from the University ethics reviewers notifying me of this.
6. I undertake to inform the ethics reviewers of significant changes to the protocol (by contacting my supervisor or the Ethics Administrator as appropriate
7. I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CICS).

8. I understand that the project, including research records and data, may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.
9. I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this form will be held by those involved in the ethics review procedure (eg the Ethics Administrator and/or ethics reviewers/supervisors) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
10. If this is an application for a 'generic'/'en block' project all the individual projects that fit under the generic project are compatible with this application.
11. I will inform the Chair of Ethics Review Panel if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.

Signature of student (student application):

Signature of staff (staff application):

Date:

Email the completed application form to the course/programme secretary

For staff projects contact the Ethics Secretary, Colleen Woodward

Email: c.woodward@sheffield.ac.uk for details of how to submit

A2: Participant Cover Letter

Dear Teacher,

Let me first take this opportunity thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please find enclosed an Information Sheet detailing the aims and objectives of my study.

Seeing that you are an integral part of this study, I would like to sit with you to explain all the relevant procedures involved as well as to address any concerns and answer any questions you might have about the study. I will make myself available at your earliest convenience.

The date for commencement of this project is January 2013. Please free to contact me at 827-4175 or by email at margarechin64@gmail.com or edp09mcc@sheffield.ac.uk.

I look forward to working with you on this project and anticipate our next meeting.

Very best regards

Margaret C. Chin

A3: Participant Information Sheet

1. Research Project Title:

An Exploration of How The Beliefs and Self-Perceptions of Early Childhood Teachers Influence Their Classroom Practices.

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the project's purpose?

It has been well researched that early childhood teachers play a critical role in the development of learning in the formative years. The Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Commission have also acknowledged this belief as well and as such have been making policy decisions to improve the level of early childhood education in Jamaica. But how do early childhood teachers feel about their professional roles amidst these policy changes? The aim of this study is to construct an understanding of the teacher's beliefs and self-perceptions of what they do on a daily basis to see how these influence their classroom practices. Hopefully the information will allow for an increased understanding of the early childhood see themselves as professionals and conduits of developmentally appropriate practices.

4. Why have I been chosen?

This project will involves five (5) early childhood teachers (with varying years of teaching experience) and one class of students taught by each participant. You have been chosen partly because you are an early childhood teacher who has expressed a willingness to participate in this project.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this Information Sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. You may withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

To complete this project I anticipate that we will need to meet for discussions at least four times. Each interview should last for about 1 hour. All interviews may take place at a place and time convenient to you, depending on your level of comfort. I can make myself available at my expense, should you need transporting to a specific location.

At the first interview I would like to develop an understanding of who you are as a person. I would like to understand your likes, dislikes values and personal goals. I may need to conduct a second interview for this. At this interview I will request that you fill out a questionnaire to help learn a little bit more about you. At this interview I will also need you to help me to schedule a date and time when I can observe you teach a group of your students. After this observation it is my hope that you will be available so we can have an interview immediately following the observation. If not, we can schedule a meeting at your earliest convenience. Subsequent interviews will be scheduled where any gaps in the data will be filled.

I will also need your help to select the group of students for observation and to give the letters and consent forms and then collect them after they have been signed by their parents.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Because of the fact that no names or places will be used in this project and no disclosure of the results will be made to anyone at your place of work or in your professional sphere there is minimal chance in any discomforts, disadvantages or risks involved in your participation. If you think of any foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages and risks please feel free to state these so that I can work to eliminate them. If any issues arise late in this project please also bring them immediately to my attention.

8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will help to enrich your classroom learning environment and hopefully enhance the teaching of early childhood in Jamaica. The opportunity to confirm your personal value and uniqueness as a person within the early childhood sector is also a potential benefit.

9. What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

If for any reason the project has to be terminated you will be notified and the reasons explained to you.

10. What if something goes wrong?

If any problems arise please feel free to discuss them with me and/or to report same to:

Dr. Elizabeth Wood

University of Sheffield

Department of Educational Studies

388 Glossop Road

Sheffield S102JA.

If you are dissatisfied after consulting with me or my supervisor you may contact the Universities' Registrar or Secretary.

11. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

12. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The research paper will be archived by the University of Sheffield. Should you require a copy of the project a copy will be made available to you.

15. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield Department of Educational Studies ethics review procedure.

16. Contact for further information

For further information you may contact me at

Mrs. Margaret Chin

The Mico University College

1A Marescaux Road

Kingston 5

Jamaica W.I.

Email: margarechin64@gmail.com

Tel: 1-876-827-4175

You may retain this copy of the information sheet for your records. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this project and I truly appreciate your involvement very much.

A3: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Please indicate your willingness to participate in this research by completing this form.

Research Title: *An Exploration of How The Beliefs and Self-Perceptions of Early Childhood Teachers Influence Their Classroom Practice*

Principal Researcher: Mrs. Margaret Chin

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

4. I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded

5. I agree to the use of anonymised names in publications

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix B: Interview Guide Questions

Thank you _____ for agreeing to talk with me. As you are aware I want to talk with you to explore how your life course has influenced your journey as an early childhood teacher and your beliefs about the purposes of early childhood education. I wish to ask you a few questions. Some of these questions will be of a more personal nature while others will look at some of your perspectives on teaching and the students you teach. There are no restrictions on your responses to the questions asked so feel free to expound and seek clarification if you need to. You do not have to answer any question(s) that you may be uncomfortable with. You can also end the interview at any time. If you have any questions during the interview, please feel free to ask me.

1. Can you please tell me a little about yourself?
2. How did you prepare for becoming an early childhood teacher?
 - *At what point did you know that you wanted to become a teacher?*
 - *Were there people in your life who influenced that decision?*
 - *Were there events in your life that influenced that decision?*
 - *Describe the path you took to become a teacher*
3. What or who were some of the main influences on your beliefs during your training?
4. To what extent do you feel that your training has provided you with sufficient knowledge and skills to carry out your role as a professional early childhood teacher?
5. What, to you, are the most important characteristics of an EC teacher?
 - *What kinds of knowledge and skills do you think an EC teacher must possess?*
 - *What does she have to know – to be able to do a good job of teaching young children? What is most important?*
 - *What would you say are your greatest strengths as an early childhood teacher?*
6. Can you give me your personal beliefs about the purposes of early childhood education?
 - *Your beliefs on how children learn?*
 - *Your beliefs about play?*
 - *How would you describe your approach to teaching?*
 - *How have your beliefs influenced the way you teach young children?*
7. What do you enjoy most about teaching young children?

8. The Ministry of Education along with Early Childhood Commission since 2008 implemented new curricula for the early childhood sector. What is your perspective on the new curricula?
 - *Have you been using the new curriculum in your classroom?*
 - *In what ways have you been using it to plan your lessons?*
 - *Can you explain to me your approach to planning?*
9. As you may be aware, one of the most significant policy changes made by the Early Childhood Commission in regards to the new curricula, is the use of “Developmentally Appropriate Practices” or DAP for short in delivering early childhood programmes.
 - a) What do you know about DAP?
 - b) Do you think DAP is relevant to ALL children in the early childhood setting?
 - *Are the goals and philosophies of DAP culturally relevant in your setting? Are they relevant to children across the ability range?*
 - *How do you structure your daily time-table to reflect DAP in your classroom?*
 - *How do you organize the curriculum content to reflect DAP in your classroom?*
 - *How do organize play and other child-directed activities to reflect DAP?*
10. Over the last year, have you changed anything about the way you teach? What factors helped or hindered change?
11. What has been your major challenge since the start of the new school year? What have you been doing to overcome it?

Thank you for participating in this interview!

Appendix C: Research Questionnaire

C1: Consent to Use Teacher Belief Survey

Margaret C Chin <edp09mcc@sheffield.ac.uk>

19/09/
2012

to dburt1, tbuchan

Dear Drs. Burts and Buchanan,

I am presently reading for my Doctorate in Education at the University of Sheffield in the UK. In my study I will be exploring the beliefs and practices of early childhood teachers in Jamaica. I found your survey on the internet and thought it was most appropriate for the nature of my study. As such, I would love to use your survey in my study. I am therefore seeking your permission to include your survey as part of my data gathering process.

Thank you in advance and I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Margaret Chin



Teresa Buchanan <tbuchan@lsu.edu>

19/09/
2012

to Diane, me

Hi Margaret,

Thank you for getting in touch. Yes, you may use the survey, but we ask that you would send us any results you get from it, after the study is complete.

Good luck with your project. :)

Terry Buchanan

C2: TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES SURVEY: 3-5 YEAR-OLDS

Dear Teacher,

I am interested in finding out how you teach your students. I am conducting a survey of early childhood teachers so I can learn more about your beliefs and practices. I specifically would like to find out about your own personal beliefs about teaching and the specific things you and your students do in your classroom.

This survey should take about 30 minutes to complete. Please note that your responses will be confidential so feel free to write any other comments that you feel may be necessary. For example, while doing this survey it may cause you to reflect on the things you do in your class (especially those you do well) and may wish to write additional comments.

To ensure confidentiality, this page will be removed from your survey and kept with your consent form in a separate file. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence.

Thank you so very much for your participation! Please contact me if you have any concerns about the study.

Margaret Chin

margarechin64@gmail.com

"I have been fully informed of the above-mentioned procedure, its possible benefits and risks. As such, I give my permission to be a part of the study."

Your Signature _____

Date _____, 2013.

This Survey was created from S. Bredekamp and C. Copple (Eds.) (1997), *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs: Revised Edition*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. This version of the survey was created by Diane C. Burts, Teresa K. Buchanan, Joan H. Benedict, Sheri Broussard, David Dunaway, Stephanie Richardson, & Mary Sciaraffa at Louisiana State University. The questionnaire was originally conceptualized and developed by Rosalind Charlesworth, Craig Hart, Diane C. Burts, Sue Hernandez, & Lisa Kirk at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1990.

In this study, I will be careful to keep your responses to this survey confidential. Reports of findings will not use names of respondents nor schools.

PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF:

1. Educational Status

(Check all that apply)

- _____ High School Diploma
- _____ NCTVET/ Level 1
- _____ NCTVET/ Level 2
- _____ NCTVET/ Level 3
- _____ Diploma
- _____ Bachelor's Degree
- _____ Master's Degree

If you have graduated from college, please complete questions #2 - #4. If not, please skip to #5.

- 2. Major/Area(s) of Specialization ECE ECD Sp Ed. Other_____

(Circle all that apply)
- 3. Minor/Area of Specialization ECE ECD Sp Ed. Other_____

(Circle one if appropriate)
- 4. Certification ECE ECD Sp Ed. Other_____

(Circle all that apply)

PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT YOUR TEACHING CAREER:

- 5. How many total years have you taught? _____ years.
- 6. How many years have you taught in your current school? (including this year) _____ years.
- 7. How many years have you taught in an early childhood (PK-K) classroom? (including this year) _____ years.
- 8. Have you ever taught children with disabilities? (circle one) **Yes** **No**
- 9. If “Yes” how many years have you taught children with disabilities? _____ years.
- 10. What other grades have you taught and for how long?
 - _____ grade _____ years
 - _____ grade _____ years

PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT YOUR CURRENT TEACHING POSITION:

- 11. What is the predominant age in the group of children that you teach? (check one)
 - _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 (kindergarten)
- 12. How many children are in the morning/all day class?
 - _____ boys _____ girls _____ total

How many children are in your afternoon class? (if applicable)

_____ boys _____ girls _____ total

13. Please check the longest block of uninterrupted time you have in your class for meaningful instruction or activities. (check one)

_____ 15 minutes _____ 1 hour and 15 minutes

_____ 30 minutes _____ 1 hour and 30 minutes

_____ 45 minutes _____ 1 hour and 45 minutes

_____ 1 hour _____ 2 hours

14. If special education support services are provided to children in your classroom, where do the children receive that support? (check one)

_____ pull-out programmes (e.g., Early Stimulation Project, Child Guidance Clinic)

_____ in the classroom

_____ both in and out of my classroom

15. What percentage of the children in your class is qualified or benefitting for/from the PATH Programme or any other subsidized programme? _____%

16. Which one of the following best describes your current teaching environment?

_____ For-profit child care

_____ Community basic school

_____ Private/Prep school

_____ Government basic school

_____ Government Infant Department

_____ Faith-based child care

Part II of this questionnaire asks about your views about early childhood education and your beliefs. PLEASE THINK ABOUT CLASSROOM FOR 3-4 AND 5 YEAR OLDS IN GENERAL AND YOUR CLASS IN PARTICULAR Kindly read each item and answer to the best of you knowledge.

17. Teacher's Views about Early Childhood Education

Rate the relative importance of these seven goals of early childhood education programme. Circle one number for each item.

1= Least Important

2= Somewhat Not Important

3= Important

4= Somewhat Important

5= Most Important

	Least Important	Somewhat Least Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Most Important
a. Self -Esteem	1	2	3	4	5
b. Independence	1	2	3	4	5
c. Creativity	1	2	3	4	5
d. Basic Skills	1	2	3	4	5
e. Cooperation	1	2	3	4	5
f. Social Skills	1	2	3	4	5
g. Knowledge and Facts	1	2	3	4	5

18. Teacher's Views on School Climate

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements about your school's climate. Circle one number for each item.

1 = Strongly disagree

2 =Disagree

3= Agree

4 =Strongly agree

Item	SD	D	A	SA
1. Staff members in this school generally have school spirit	1	2	3	4
2. The level of child misbehaviour (for example, noise, horseplay, or fighting in the corridor) in this school interferes with my teaching.	1	2	3	4
3. Many of the children I teach are not capable of learning the material I am supposed to teach them.	1	2	3	4
4. I feel accepted and respected as a colleague by most staff members.	1	2	3	4
5. Teachers in this school are continually learning and seeking new ideas.	1	2	3	4
6. Routine administrative duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching.	1	2	3	4
7. Parents are supportive of school staff.	1	2	3	4

19. Kindly indicate your own personal **beliefs** on **how important** the following statements are to you. **Circle one number that most nearly represents your beliefs about each item.**

- 1 = Not important at all**
2 = Not very important
3 = Fairly important
4 = Very important
5 = Extremely important

It is _____	Not important at all	Not very important	Fairly important	Very important	Extremely important
1. for tests to be used to evaluate children	1	2	3	4	5
2. to use worksheets and workbooks in evaluating children	1	2	3	4	5
3. for activities to be responsive to children's individual differences in interest	1	2	3	4	5
4. for activities to be responsive to individual differences in children's development	1	2	3	4	5
5. for each curriculum area to be taught as separate subjects at separate times	1	2	3	4	5
6. for children to select their own activities	1	2	3	4	5
7. for children to receive instruction in letter and word recognition.	1	2	3	4	5
8. to provide a variety of concrete learning materials in centres (writing centre, science centre, math centre, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
9. for children to create their own learning activities (e.g. cut their own shapes, plan their own art, or writing experiences).	1	2	3	4	5
10. for children to learn by actively exploring relevant and interesting materials.	1	2	3	4	5
11. for children to learn by interacting and working cooperatively with other children.	1	2	3	4	5
12. for children to work on worksheets and ditto sheets individually and silently.	1	2	3	4	5
13. for teachers to use flashcards to teach reading.	1	2	3	4	5
14. for children to read from basal books daily in teacher-directed groups	1	2	3	4	5
It is _____	Not important at all	Not very important	Fairly important	Very important	Extremely important
15. for teachers to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions,	1	2	3	4	5

asking questions, facilitating children's involvement with materials and activities.					
16. for teachers to use stickers, treats, and/or stars to encourage appropriate behaviour.	1	2	3	4	5
17. for children to know their letters and letter-sounds before they learn to read.	1	2	3	4	5
18. for children to establish rules for their classroom	1	2	3	4	5
19. for children to colour within the lines	1	2	3	4	5
20. for children to write letters on the line.	1	2	3	4	5
21. for teachers to prepare children for change before a change of activities.	1	2	3	4	5
22. for children to write, or scribble	1	2	3	4	5
23. for children to have stories read to them daily, individually and/or in groups	1	2	3	4	5
24. for children to be good readers	1	2	3	4	5
25. for children to dictate their own stories to the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
26. for children to participate in art, music, dance, drama (ex. Dramatizing favourite stories)	1	2	3	4	5
27. for children to talk informally with adults in class	1	2	3	4	5
28. for children to experiment with writing by inventing their own spelling.	1	2	3	4	5
29. to provide many daily opportunities for developing social skills with peers in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
30. for children to observe teacher demonstrated experiments to learn science concepts	1	2	3	4	5
31. to teach health and safety with a variety of projects throughout the school year	1	2	3	4	5
32. for children to experience multicultural and non-sexist activities and materials.	1	2	3	4	5
It is _____	Not important at all	Not very important	Fairly important	Very important	Extremely important
33. that outdoor activities are planned Daily	1	2	3	4	5
34. for children to work in small groups on projects that they plan and conduct themselves,	1	2	3	4	5
35. for strategies like setting limits,	1	2	3	4	5

problem solving, redirection to be used to help guide children's behaviour					
36. to use parent input in curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
37. that children do activities that integrate multiple subject areas (reading, math, science, social studies, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

20- Instructional Activities and Curricular Focus

For the following question, please think about **how often** do children in your class do each of the following activities. **Circle one number on each line.**

1 =Almost Never (less than monthly)

2= Two or Three times a month/Rarely

3= Once or twice a week /Sometimes

4 =Three or four times a week/ Regularly

5= Very Often/ Daily

Item	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly	Daily
1. build constructions with purchased and /or recycled materials	1	2	3	4	5
2. select centre (reading, math, science, writing, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
3. participate in dramatic play activities	1	2	3	4	5
4. listen to recordings of stories	1	2	3	4	5
5. do creative writing (combining symbols/invented spelling and drawing, and conventional spelling)	1	2	3	4	5
6. play with games and puzzles	1	2	3	4	5
7. explore life science materials such as animals and plants, and/or physical science materials such as wheels and gears.	1	2	3	4	5
8. sing and/or listen to music	1	2	3	4	5
9. move creatively as a planned activity	1	2	3	4	5
10. colour and cut freely- self –drawn shapes	1	2	3	4	5
11. use manipulatives (like pegboards, puzzles, Legos, tangrams, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
12. do phonics activities	1	2	3	4	5
13. read in ability level groups	1	2	3	4	5
Item	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly	Daily
14. circle, underline, and/or mark items on worksheets	1	2	3	4	5
15. use flash cards with sight words and/or math facts	1	2	3	4	5
16. participate in rote-counting	1	2	3	4	5
17. practice handwriting on lines	1	2	3	4	5
18. participate in hands-on projects	1	2	3	4	5
19. colour and/or cut pre-drawn shapes	1	2	3	4	5
20. copy from chalkboard	1	2	3	4	5
21. participate in whole-class teacher-directed instruction	1	2	3	4	5

22. coordinate their own activities in centres	1	2	3	4	5
23. receive tangible rewards for good behaviour /performance.	1	2	3	4	5
24. lose special privileges (trips, recess, free time) for misbehaviour.	1	2	3	4	5
25. take tests	1	2	3	4	5
26. get placed in time-out chair	1	2	3	4	5
27. participate in specifically planned outdoor activities	1	2	3	4	5
28. participate in multicultural and non-sexist activities	1	2	3	4	5
29. play competitive math activities to learn math facts	1	2	3	4	5
30. do health and safety activities	1	2	3	4	5
31. draw, paint, work with clay, and use other art media	1	2	3	4	5
32. solve math problems that are incorporated into other subject areas	1	2	3	4	5

21- Who do you think has the greatest influence on your teaching? **Circle only one number.**

1= No Influence

2= Slight influence

3= Some influence

4= Moderate influence

5= A great deal of influence

	No Influence	Slight influence	Some influence	Moderate influence	A great deal of influence
a. Government	1	2	3	4	5
b. School Principal	1	2	3	4	5
c. Development Officer	1	2	3	4	5
d. Parents	1	2	3	4	5
e. Teacher (yourself)	1	2	3	4	5

22 - Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements on teaching. **Circle one number for each item.**

1 = Strongly disagree

2 =Disagree

3= Agree

4 =Strongly Agree

Item	SD	D	A	SA
a. I really enjoy my present teaching job	1	2	3	4
b. I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of the children I teach	1	2	3	4
c. If I could start over, I would choose teaching again as my career	1	2	3	4

Your Comments:

DATE QUESTIONNAIRE COMPLETED: ____ / ____ / ____



Thank you for completing this survey! I really appreciate your help!



Appendix D: Comparison of the Jamaican Early Childhood Commission Standards and NAEYC (2009)EC Programmes Standards

Early Childhood Commission Standards	NAEYC (2009)EC Programmes Standards
<p>Standard 1: Staff</p> <p>The staff at early childhood institutions has the training, knowledge, skills, and attitude to help children achieve their full potential.</p> <p>Standard 2: Programmes</p> <p>Early childhood institutions have comprehensive programmes designed to meet the language, physical, cognitive, creative, socio-emotional and school readiness needs of children.</p> <p>Standard 3: Behaviour Management</p> <p>Early childhood staff has the training, knowledge, skills and attitude to promote positive behaviours in children.</p> <p>Standard 4: Physical Environment</p> <p>Early childhood institutions have physical environments that meet building, health and safety requirements and allow adequate space for children.</p> <p>Standard 5 : Equipment & Furnishing</p> <p>Early childhood institutions have indoor and outdoor equipment and furnishings that are safe, child-friendly and promote optimal development of children.</p> <p>Standard 6: Health</p> <p>Early childhood institutions have physical facilities, policies, programmes and procedures that promote healthy lifestyles and protect children and staff from illness.</p> <p>Standard 7: Nutrition</p> <p>Early childhood institutions provide children in their care with nutritious meals and model good nutritional practices for children and families.</p>	<p>Standard 1. Relationships</p> <p>The programme promotes positive relationships among all children and adults to encourage each child's sense of individual worth and belonging as part of a community and to foster each child's ability to contribute as a responsible community member.</p> <p>Standard 2. Curriculum</p> <p>The programme implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive.</p> <p>3. Teaching</p> <p>The programme uses developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child's learning and development in the context of the programme's curriculum goals.</p> <p>Standard 4: Assessment of Child Progress</p> <p>The programme is informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to provide information on children's learning and development.</p> <p>Standard 5: Health</p> <p>The programme promotes the nutrition and health of children and protects children and staff from illness and injury.</p> <p>Standard 6: Teachers</p> <p>The programme employs and supports a teaching staff that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and interests.</p> <p>Standard 7: Families</p> <p>The programme establishes and maintains</p>

<p>Standard 8: SAFETY</p> <p>Early childhood institutions provide safe indoor and outdoor environments for children, staff, stakeholders and visitors to the institution.</p> <p>Standard 9: CHILD RIGHTS, CHILD PROTECTION AND EQUALITY</p> <p>Early childhood institutions uphold the rights of children, protect them from harm and ensure that all children have equal access to services.</p> <p>Standard 10: PARENT AND STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION</p> <p>The Management and staff of early childhood institutions have good relationships with parents, caregivers, family members and the community.</p> <p>Standard 11: Administration</p> <p>Early childhood institutions have a management structure that ensures good administration. There are policies, procedures and programmes that ensure child, family and staff well-being.</p> <p>Standard 12: FINANCE</p> <p>Early childhood institutions have sound financial practices and adhere to standard accounting principles</p>	<p>collaborative relationships with each child's family to foster children's development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.</p> <p>Standard 8: Community Relationships</p> <p>The programme establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children's communities to support the achievement of programme goals.</p> <p>Standard 9: Physical Environment</p> <p>The programme has a safe and healthful environment that provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments. The environment includes facilities, equipment, and materials to facilitate child and staff learning and development.</p> <p>Standard 10: Leadership and Management</p> <p>The programme effectively implements policies, procedures, and systems that support stable staff and strong personnel, fiscal, and program management so all children, families, and staff have high quality experiences.</p>
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Appendix E: Jamaican E.C. Curriculum & Guiding Principles/Theorists

Curriculum Principle	NAEYC Position Statement #	Principal Guiding Theorists
1. Learning Through Play: Children learn best through their play and interaction with the environment	10. Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition, and social competence (9. 14)	Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey, Montessori
2. Sequenced Learning: Children develop and learn in an orderly sequence, moving from simple to more complex knowledge and skills and they do so at their own individual pace and timing.	2. Many aspects of children’s learning and development follow well documented sequences, with later abilities, skills, and knowledge building on those already acquired (p. 11)	Piaget, Montessori; DAP Framework
3. Individual Learning: The individual child’s needs, interests, style and pace of learning must be respected and not sacrificed to group demands.	3. Development and learning proceed at varying rates from child to child, as well as at uneven rates across different areas of a child’s individual functioning. (p. 11)	Erikson, Dewey, Vygotsky DAP Framework
4. The Teacher’s Multiple Role: Children thrive and learn best in environments with warm, nurturing and caring adults who perform a variety of roles to ensure that children grow and develop healthily and feel safe, respected, loved and happy.	7. Children develop best when they have secure, consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers. (p. 13)	Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson; DAP Framework
5. Inclusion of All Children: The curriculum ensures that the rights of all children, including those with special needs, are fully respected and appropriate adaptations made	8. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts. (p. 13)	Piaget, Vygotsky, Montessori, DAP Framework

where necessary to ensure inclusion of all children in all activities.		
<p>6. Integrated Curriculum: Children learn best when the curriculum integrates content from various disciplines and skills from the developmental domains in a way that is consistent with their holistic view and experience of the world.</p>	<p>1. All the domains of development and learning—physical, social and emotional, and cognitive—are important, and they are closely interrelated. Children’s development and learning in one domain influence and are influenced by what takes place in other domains. (p. 11)</p>	Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, DAP Framework
<p>7. The Learning Environment: Effective early childhood learning environments are planned and organized to provide good balance in the children’s learning activities and to encourage children to pursue their individual interests as they interact with developmentally appropriate materials in a non-threatening environment.</p>	<p>9. Always mentally active in seeking to understand the world around them, children learn in a variety of ways; a wide range of teaching strategies and interactions are effective in supporting all these kinds of learning. (p. 14)</p>	Montessori, Dewey, Vygotsky, Piaget DAP Framework
<p>8. Assessment in Early Childhood: Assessment of children should be carried out for the primary purpose of providing adults with the information they need to plan more appropriately for children’s ongoing development and should</p>	<p>11. Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery, and also when they have many opportunities to practice newly acquired skills. (p. 15)</p>	Montessori, Vygotsky, Piaget, DAP Framework

involve strategies that support rather than threaten children's feelings of self-esteem.		
9. Involving Parents and Community: Children benefit most from early childhood programmes in which practitioners value and build supportive relationships with parents, families and the community.	5. Early experiences have profound effects, both cumulative and delayed, on a child's development and learning; and optimal periods exist for certain types of development and learning to occur. (p. 12)	Piaget, Vygotsky, DAP Framework.

Source: *The Jamaica Early Childhood Curriculum for Children Birth to Five Years: A Conceptual Framework (2008)*

Appendix F: Data Analysis

Table F1: Summary of Rebecca’s observed practice and related beliefs about DAP

Rebecca (Govt. Infant School)		
Observed DAPA	Observed DIPA	Related beliefs about DAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom environment warm, inviting and well organised; routines were established. • planned lessons based on themes • Circle-time activities involved engaged discussion, singing, reading; children were allowed to choose what they wanted to. • Learning centres clearly labelled along with other items in the room; children worked individually or in small; child chosen groups most of the time. Different children were doing different things. • Rebecca walked around each centre conversing with the children. • Most charts hung at children’s eye level • Planned time for play; children played games, participated in dramatic play activities; used puzzles, toys, play- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children use workbooks, ABC flashcards, and sight word materials. • Teacher-led reading during circle time; children expected to sit quietly and listen. • Reading and writing instruction emphasizes direct teaching of letter recognition, reciting the alphabet, colouring within the circle, and being instructed in the correct formation of letters. • Children participated in rote counting. • Children had to play quietly so as not to disturb the class next door. • Children not allowed to play outside until they have cleaned up their work area. • Children were 	<p><i>Beliefs about Teaching</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher is a facilitator. • Utilized the EC Curriculum Standards but as a reference. • Approaches to planning include common planning time with colleagues; use of themes; integration with other subject areas. • Planned indoor and outdoor activities supported by the environment. • Play seen as vital; used as a teaching strategy. <p><i>Beliefs about Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are intrinsically motivated. • Children must be engaged in meaningful experiences and given autonomy. • Children learn through play and ‘hands-on’ experience. <p><i>Managing Children’s Behaviour</i></p>

<p>dough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside play supervised • Large amounts of building blocks and math manipulatives available for all students; activities closely related to children's daily life experiences. • Children drew, used finger-paint and had work displayed at eye-level • Children were not allowed to speak unkindly to each other or hurt each other. • Children encouraged children to 'talk it out' as a problem-solving strategy. 	<p>extrinsically rewarded for participation e.g., <i>if you behave yourself, you will get a sticker.</i>"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child placed at back of the class for misbehaviour. • Children not spoken to at eye level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children receive tangible rewards to encourage appropriate behaviour. • Children lose privileges for misbehaviour e.g., hitting another child. • Focus on teaching social skills
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Table F2: Summary of Veronica's observed practice and related beliefs

Veronica (Infant Dept in a Primary School)		
Observed DAPA	Observed DIPA	Related beliefs about DAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom environment warm, inviting and fairly well organised. • planned lessons based on themes • Circle-time activities involved engaged discussion, singing, reading; • The learning activities covered all the developmental domains. • There were different styles of learning activities, including group activities and small group activities; some activities were child-selected and others teacher-selected • While teaching Mathematics, children used math manipulatives • Planned time for indoor play; children played games, participated in dramatic play activities; used puzzles, toys; activities closely related to children's daily life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and writing instruction emphasized direct instruction, reciting the alphabet, colouring within the shape, and being instructed in the correct formation of letters. • Children used workbooks, and worksheets • Teacher-led reading during circle time; children expected to sit quietly and listen. • Learning centres seen but not actively used by the children. • Children were extrinsically rewarded (given stickers) for participation and 	<p><i>Beliefs about Teaching</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multisensory approach to teaching. • Utilized the EC Curriculum Standards • Planning based on learning needs of students • Lessons are skilled-based but use of themes; integration with other subject areas. • Planned indoor and outdoor activities • Focus on play; used as a teaching strategy. <p><i>Beliefs about Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children learn through play and 'hands-on' experiences. • Children come to the learning situation with prior knowledge • Must consider children's learning styles and readiness levels. <p><i>Managing Children's Behaviour</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children receive tangible rewards to encourage appropriate behaviour. • Children lose privileges

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building blocks and math manipulatives available for all students; • Children drew, used finger-paint • Children were not allowed to speak unkindly to each other or hurt each other. 	<p>completion of work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children not spoken to at eye level • Child placed on 'Time-out' for misbehaviour such as hitting another child. • Children verbally reprimanded when they spoke out of turn 	<p>for misbehaviour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social and adaptive skills very important
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Table F3: Summary of Michelle's observed practice and related beliefs

Michelle (Kindergarten/ Prep)		
Observed DAPA	Observed DIPA	Related beliefs about DAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom environment warm, inviting and well organised; established routines and procedures • Circle-time activities involved engaged discussion, singing, reading; children asked to select songs. • Discussion time was provided. Michelle wrote down the children's ideas on the board. • planned lessons based on themes. • children played games, participated in dramatic play activities; • Children drew, used finger-paint • Children had many opportunities to express themselves • Play is structured and time-tabled • Well-organized and well-labeled storage of play materials • Display of children art and other class-work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigid, thematic teacher-developed and teacher-directed lesson plans. • Separate periods were set aside to learn content material in math and phonics. • Children used commercial workbooks, worksheets, ABC flashcards, and sight word materials; activities include colouring pre-drawn forms, tracing, or correct use of scissors. • Group activities such as circle-time was teacher-led e.g., children expected to sit quietly and listen and responded to questions asked by Michelle • Reading and writing instruction emphasizes direct teaching of letter recognition, reciting the alphabet, colouring within the circle, and being 	<p><i>Beliefs about Teaching</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilized the A Beka System -EC Curriculum Standards used as a reference. • Explicit teaching. • Focus on mastery of basic skills. • Teaching resources shared with colleagues; • Whole school approach to planning; use of themes; general integration but Phonics and Mathematics are time-tabled subject areas. • Planned indoor and outdoor activities. <p><i>Beliefs about Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play is seen as 'work' and must be structured with specific skills development in mind. • Children are naturally curious and interested in many things. • Children learn through repetition • Children come to school ready to learn • Activities must be based

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual portfolios for the children 	<p>instructed in the correct formation of letters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children participated in rote counting • More time spent on teacher-directed, whole group instruction • Children were extrinsically rewarded for participation • Children not spoken to at eye level 	<p>on children's interest and abilities</p> <p><i>Managing Children's Behaviour</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children receive tangible rewards to encourage appropriate behaviour. • Children lose privileges for misbehaviour. • Focus on teaching social skills along with academic skills
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Table F4: Summary of Janet’s observed practice and related beliefs

Janet (Community Basic School)		
Observed DAPA	Observed DIPA	Related beliefs about DAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circle-time activities involved engaged discussion, singing, reading; • Janet modelled how to ask for assistance and encouraged to do the same. • Most charts hung at children’s eye level • Outside play supervised; Janet played actively with children on the playground after Break • Children encouraged to talk and interact with each other during small group sessions. • Children were not allowed to speak unkindly to each other or hurt each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom environment was cluttered, with a few items labelled in the classroom. • There were not many art materials such as crayons, play dough, and variety of paints, accessible to the children • Toys, books, or related learning materials in the classroom provided little choice and variety for children. • Children use workbooks, ABC flashcards, and sight word materials. • Teacher-led reading during circle time; children expected to sit quietly and listen. • Janet told the children exactly what they will do and when and they were expected to follow her instructions. • No planned time for indoor play. • Reading and writing instruction emphasizes 	<p><i>Beliefs about Teaching</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilized the EC Curriculum Standards. • Emphasise creativity in planning; • Content organized by themes; integration with other subject areas. • Sole decision-maker when it comes to planning • Play seen as important but conducted primarily outside the classroom. • Focus on explicit instruction; demonstration important. <p><i>Beliefs about Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children learn at their own pace • Children learn through their senses and love to explore their environment. • Children learn through play and ‘hands-on’ experience. • Focus on fine and gross motor skills development

	<p>direct teaching of letter recognition, reciting the alphabet, colouring within the circle, and being instructed in the correct formation of letters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children rote count; stones and beads used as manipulatives. • A child who misbehaved was separated from the group and sat in the back of the class. • Children were expected to be quiet most of the times in classroom (to avoid disrupting adjoining class). • Children were extrinsically rewarded for participation for successful completion of classwork • Children not spoken to at eye level 	<p><i>Managing Children's Behaviour</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children receive tangible rewards to encourage appropriate behaviour. • Children lose privileges for misbehaviour. • Focus on social skills competence.
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Table F5: Summary of Susan’s observed practice and related beliefs

Susan (Faith-based Basic School)		
Observed DAPA	Observed DIPA	Related beliefs about DAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom environment warm, inviting and well organised. • Routines well established; environment predictable. • Circle-time activities involved engaged discussion, singing and lap reading. • Learning centres clearly labelled along with other items in the room; Most charts hung at children’s eye level • Planned time for play; children played games, participated in dramatic play activities; used puzzles, toys, play-dough. Susan played with the children. • Susan played actively with children on the playground • Large amounts of building blocks and math manipulatives available for all students; • Children drew, used finger-paint • Children were not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children use workbooks, ABC flashcards, and sight word materials in the mornings • Teacher-led reading during circle time; children expected to sit quietly and listen. • Reading and writing instruction emphasizes direct teaching of letter recognition, reciting the alphabet, colouring within the circle, and being instructed in the correct formation of letters. • Susan questions were not designed to stimulate higher order thinking; • Children rote count and learned the alphabet by rote • During the small group activity, Susan spent too much time overseeing behaviors instead of interacting with the children. • Children were extrinsically rewarded for participation e.g., if you behave yourself, 	<p><i>Beliefs about Teaching</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilized the EC Curriculum Standards but made adaptations. • use of themes selected by Susan; integration with other subject areas. • Planned indoor and outdoor activities. • Play seen as vital; used as a teaching strategy. • Adaptations needed to meet the individual needs of the children <p><i>Beliefs about Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation must be used to monitor children’s development • Children must be engaged in meaningful experiences and given autonomy. • Children learn through play and ‘hands-on’ experience. <p><i>Managing Children’s Behaviour</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children receive tangible rewards to encourage

<p>allowed to speak unkindly to each other or hurt each other.</p>	<p>you will get a sticker.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children not spoken to at eye level	<p>appropriate behaviour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children lose privileges for misbehaviour.• Focus on teaching social skills
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