

**INVESTIGATING THREE ECCE TEACHERS' CONCERNS
REGARDING INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN TWO EARLY
CHILDHOOD CENTRES IN THE VICTORIA EDUCATION
DISTRICT**

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate three ECCE teachers' concerns regarding inclusive practices in their mainstream classrooms within the Victoria education district, Trinidad. Research identifies environment, attitudes and organisations as social barriers to the effective implementation of inclusion. Findings indicate a need for stronger teacher collaboration and a propensity to underestimate their professional training as prerequisites for successful inclusion. This research design uses a qualitative case study, constructivist approach, tape-recorded interviews, observations and field notes to assist the manual coding, triangulation, analysis and narrative processes. An understanding of this phenomenon may help to improve mainstream inclusion at the foundational level.

Key Terms

Inclusion, Special Needs, Disabilities, Concerns, ECCE Centre, Collaboration

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“Wisdom is the prime thing. Acquire wisdom; and with all that you acquire, acquire understanding.”

Proverbs 4:7.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Chapter One: Special Needs Inclusion in Early Childhood Education.....	1
Introduction.....	1
The Research Problem	1
Background to the Study.....	2
The International Context	2
Policy Review in England for Inclusive Practices	3
Mainstreaming, Integration, or Inclusion.....	3
The Regional Context	4
The Local Context.....	5
The Researcher’s Experience and Motivation	6
Problem Statement	7
Justification for the Research.....	8
Purpose of the Study	8
Research Questions	9
Expected Outcome	9
Definition of Key Terms.....	10
Challenges to the conduct of the Study.....	10
Summary	11
Chapter Two: The Literature Review	12
Introduction.....	12
The National ECCE Curriculum Guide	12
The Theoretical Framework.....	14
Organizational Barriers in ECCE.....	16
Attitudinal Barriers in ECCE	20

Environmental Barriers in ECCE Centres	22
Summary	25
Chapter Three: Methodology Design Methods and Strategies for Inquiry	27
Introduction	27
The Research Design	27
Qualitative Method	28
The Inductive Method	28
Theoretical Perspectives	29
The Case Study	29
Triangulation	31
The Researcher's role in the Study	31
Research Sites for the Project	31
Participant Sampling	32
Participant Profiles	32
Participant 1: Centre 1	33
Participant 2: Centre 1	33
Participant 3: Centre 2	34
Data collection Procedure	34
Research interview process	34
Interviews	35
Participant observations and Researcher field notes	35
Data Analysis Process	36
Issues of Trust and Ethical Considerations	36
Informed consent	36
Confidentiality	37
Permission	37
Authenticity and trustworthiness	37
Limitations	38
Delimitations	38
Researcher's experience in the conduct of the study	38
Summary	39
Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings	40

Introduction	40
Summary of the case study framework.....	40
The physical ECCE environment.....	41
Centre programme evaluation.....	42
The Language for ECCE Inclusion-Definition	42
Communication in ECCE Inclusion.....	43
Services and Supports	43
Human Resource Personnel:	43
Professional Training:.....	44
Pedagogical Aids:	44
Social Attitudes toward ECCE Inclusion	45
Teacher Autonomy and Flexibility:	45
Administrator/Teacher Flexibility and Support:	46
Organisational Procedure and Practice for ECCE Inclusion	47
Research driven practices:	47
Team Teaching and Collaboration:.....	48
Summary	48
Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations	49
Introduction.....	49
Discussion of the Case Study Findings.....	49
Centre Programme Evaluation	50
Language and practice of Inclusion for ECCE	51
Communication, Training and Collaboration Opportunities in ECCE.....	52
Social Attitudes in ECCE inclusion	52
Overall Evaluation of Inclusion	52
Recommendations	53
Disabling environmental threats to inclusion.....	53
Overcoming weaknesses to inclusion process	54
Enabling ECCE Inclusion Procedures and Practices	55
Implications of the study.....	56
Conclusion	57
References.....	59

APPENDIX A.....	70
APPENDIX B.....	71
APPENDIX C.....	73
APPENDIX D.....	79
APPENDIX E.....	80

Chapter 1

Special Needs Inclusion in Early Childhood Education

“Study the past if you would define the future”

Confucius (551 B.C.E – 479 B.C.E)

Introduction

Inclusive Education involves the dispensation of meaningful learning opportunities to which all students should have access. Meaningful learning, in inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), suggests that spaces designated as classrooms should be outfitted with age-appropriate furniture and fittings and be well equipped with pedagogical artefacts and materials for student interaction and participation. The ideal inclusive classroom should be overseen by professionally trained teachers who are able to facilitate individualised activities for all differentiated learners at their developmental levels. Inclusive education is relatively new in Trinidad and Tobago, and as a result, early childhood teachers in some government-assisted classrooms appear to be facing a number of challenges and concerns.

The Research Problem

The qualitative research problem here deals with teachers’ concerns regarding inclusive practices that they are expected to implement for the effective delivery of the ECCE Curriculum programme in the Victoria education district, South Trinidad.

Background to the Study

The International Context

Serious recognition of inalienable rights of man came to the forefront when world leaders met at the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Convention, 1948. This was a direct response to the effects of World War II, industrialisation, child labour, and other perverse exploitation of children with and without disabilities in Europe and America (Aries, 1962). This time-line continued with a World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand, 1990. The fundamental principles of the EFA dealt with non-discrimination; equality of opportunity and treatment, universal access to education and solidarity (UNESCO, 2004). A phrase which resonated in this conference was that *education must be accessible to all in law and in fact*. This meant that the written philosophical tenets of inclusion should come into being through human intervention and the actions that follow. Thus in 1993, thirty-six countries in the Americas and individuals of all diversities met to participate in the Declaration of Managua which sought to promote the universal policy and practice of treatment of individuals with justice, equality, equity, inclusion, interdependence and diversity (Peters, 2007). Notwithstanding these new assemblies, the 1990 EFA Conference remained the foundation for all successive conferences on inclusive education. An example of particular note was the June 1994 Salamanca Special Needs Education World Conference in Spain. There, member states reaffirmed their commitment to the right to education of every individual as was specifically outlined in the appropriate Articles entrenched in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Peters, 2007).

The World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal is another example of tangible evidence of the collective commitments of the member states on EFA. At this forum, six frameworks were presented that revealed documented evidence of the progress made in the years 1999 to 2000 based on the enactment of the goals formulated at the 1990 Jomtien Conference (Peters, 2007). Inclusion was therefore seen as the fundamental philosophical thread interwoven in UNESCO's programmes and the guiding principle for the development of EFA by the year 2015.

Policy Review in England for Inclusive Practices

The Warnock Report of 1978 was one commissioned by the English government of the day in keeping with the EFA policies and guidelines. This commission was headed by Baroness Warnock and comprised of members from diverse disciplines. That report became a catalyst for change in mindsets and treatment of individuals with disabilities in England and the world at large. It influenced the way its Education Act 1981 was drafted, and contained new and acceptable terms for describing individuals with physical impairments (Garner, 2009). The Warnock Report also served to shape modern day curriculum implementation, support services, pedagogical aids; classroom-assistive technology and best practices regarding inclusion of children with special needs in *mainstream schools* (Garner, 2009).

Mainstreaming, Integration, or Inclusion

Older terms now used interchangeably to refer to inclusion are: mainstreaming, integration, normalisation, least restrictive environment, de-institutionalisation, and regular education initiative (SEDL, 2014). The child who would normally be placed in a

special needs institution is mainstreamed into the general education classroom, where it is *least restrictive* to his or her ability to learn and develop alongside his or her average peers (Rogers, 1993). Integration has many classifications. *Physical Integration* involves zoning children in schools within the community where they live (Ringer & Keer, 1988, as cited in Thompkins & Deloney, 1995). *Instructional Integration* requires collaboration between general and special educators regarding modified instruction and assessment (Downing & Eichinger, 2003). *Social Integration* is the placement of a child with a disability in a general education classroom to help socialise the child into the normative behaviours of society (Friend, 2007, as cited in Watson & Beaton, 2007, p. 13).

The Regional Context

Many Caribbean states have come to recognise the role of inclusive education in building all society human resources. As a result, several States presented country reports at a Caribbean Symposium on Inclusive Education (CSIE) organised by UNESCO in Kingston, Jamaica in 2007 (IBE-UNESCO, 2007). That symposium promoted inclusion as a process. A review of the preparatory report indicated that country dynamics help to determine the direction in which inclusion will progress.

Jamaica placed its focus on governance and management of its education system. This country has been embracing inclusion since the late '80s and early '90s but had only recently started to focus on providing inclusion education for children with disabilities in mainstream schools (IBE-UNESCO, 2007). The Guyana government reported its investment in teacher training for facilitating special needs, as well as the child who is gifted and talented (IBE-UNESCO, 2007). Health and Family Life Education was also introduced as a core subject area to address HIV/AIDS and other special concerns that

operate as barriers to social inclusion (IBE-UNESCO, 2007). The reform focus was one of culturally responsive teaching, inclusive education and developmentally appropriate practices.

The Barbados government philosophy on inclusive school education includes the use of Individualised Education Programmes (IEPs), national curriculum and general classroom activities (IBE-UNESCO, 2007). Their *pull out* programme ensures that children with identified special education needs are served in general education classrooms using pedagogy and group instructions to focus on the particular need. Their *full inclusion* model enables the child with special needs to remain in the general classroom at all times with the provision of *adaptive or modified curriculum strategies*. This government noted that natural classroom conditions can and will affect the way some children learn; that children with learning disabilities are “*chronically among the most vulnerable at risk for not learning*” (IBE-UNESCO, 2007, p. 38). A major focus, therefore, is to provide seamlessness and continuity throughout its inclusive education programme.

The Local Context

Trinidad and Tobago has been experiencing a paradigm shift in its ECCE programme and practices from the 1970s. Formerly, this sector had been dominated by private nursery centres such as the Christian-led SERVOL organisation. Today, however, new ECCE centres are being financed, constructed, and outfitted by the government through its Ministry of Education ECCE Division. This shift shows that National Education policy espouses a similar ideology as its non-governmental counterparts, and is a further demonstration that government has taken the lead of educating young children to

become agents of attitudinal and social change on a journey toward total human development (Ul Haq, 1995).

Attitudinal and social change for total human development at the national level connotes that access, participation and quality in education are the recognized rights of children, which ensures that *All Children Can Learn*, and therefore, *No Child Left Behind*. These are the basic tenets of education systems the world over, and which is now part of the National Vision 2015 plan for Early Childhood schooling (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2012). The concept of total human development further suggests that [in Trinidad and Tobago] all children with special needs have a right to inclusion in mainstream ECCE education and that there should be a continuum of services to sustain their growth and development (Reiser, 2012).

The Researcher's Experience and Motivation

The decision to conduct this research project came about as a result of university course work in special needs. Group fieldwork for the said course led to the participation in the local Down Syndrome Annual Buddy Walk and a visit to the Memisa Centre, an institution in East Trinidad that facilitates children with Down syndrome. The programme culminated in a display and verbal reporting segment on the overall experience. That firsthand view of children with special needs sensitized me to the reality of exclusion of individuals with special needs in society and the importance of inclusion best practices in mainstream education.

I became even more aware of children with special needs in my secular work. At statutory meetings, colleagues began expressing their concerns that more and more, their staff was facing the challenge of children with special needs within their mainstream

ECCE clusters. Similarly, teachers at centres for which I have direct contact began making observations of some children, and communication with the children's parents revealed that autism, speech and language delays observed by teachers were confirmed by qualified specialists.

As I began to conduct preliminary research in the area of inclusion, it was found that local research at the very foundational level in this country was rather limited. Alarming, those preliminary observations held implications for the number of children who have since left the ECCE classrooms whose needs may have been under-served. Consequently, it became my obligation to conduct a case study research on inclusion.

Problem Statement

Teachers have voiced the concern that the lack of special needs training; appropriate classroom pedagogy, understanding of the National Curriculum Guide (2006) for special needs planning, organisational and support services are presenting barriers to the effective implementation of inclusion of children with special needs in their general education settings. Teachers view the above concern as a real problem since they have never used curriculum goals and objectives in conjunction with any IEP and consider the policy guidelines for special needs as outlined in the Draft White Paper (2005) for regulating early childhood services to be ambiguous. This concern holds significant implication to inclusion research and thus demands a better understanding of the phenomenon in order to create functioning inclusive settings and alleviating teacher concerns.

Justification for the Research

This qualitative case study proposes to gather data on ECCE teachers' concerns regarding the practice of inclusion in two ECCE Centres. According to Yin (2009), case studies are both “an object of study” and a “product of inquiry” in which the researcher investigates a concern in one or more sites where a real-world phenomenon is occurring. This twin-site case study facilitates the gathering of rich, thick and in-depth data through the use of observations, interviews, and researcher field notes that may help to uncover truths about the phenomenon, and provide problem solving strategies to relieve teacher concerns and improve inclusion practices. A case study design was considered most appropriate for this research since it deals with one concern and yet affords the researcher the ability to study the phenomenon through the lenses of multiple participants, and utilizes the format known as logic of replication (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the concerns of three early childhood teachers at two early childhood centres in the Victoria education district regarding the practice of inclusion when responding to children with special needs in their classrooms. The assumption that these general education teachers are concerned about inclusion as a philosophy and as a process creates an equal concern about the impact of policy and curriculum programme enactment in the general inclusive environment designed for children ages 3 to 4 years old. Furthermore, there seems to be a dearth of local studies on inclusion at this educational level. The prime objective of this study is to garner a greater understanding of teacher concerns with a view to providing strategies for the proper implementation of inclusion in general education classrooms.

Research Questions

Overarching question:

What concerns do ECCE teachers have regarding the practice of inclusion at their centres in the Victoria Education District?

Sub Questions:

1. What concerns do ECCE teachers have regarding the practice of inclusion within their teaching environments in the Victoria Education District?
2. What concerns do ECCE teachers have regarding attitudes toward the practice of inclusion at their centres in the Victoria Education District?
3. What concerns do ECCE teachers have regarding the organisational administration for inclusion of children with special needs at their ECCE centres in the Victoria Education District? (For the purpose of this study sub question 3 will be operationalised).

Expected Outcome

It is expected that the results of this study can be used to enhance teacher awareness regarding their current inclusive practices, and to ensure that all children with and without disabilities at these centres can transition equipped with the foundational prerequisites for further learning as delineated in the National Early Childhood Care and Curriculum Guide (2006).

Definition of Key Terms

Inclusion: “The right of every young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of society”

(NAEYC, 2009, p. 2).

Special Needs: Children who have or are at risk for a developmental disability as defined by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part c (Early start 0-3 years old) or have a specific diagnosis as defined by IDEA Part b (3 years and above).

Concerns: “The composite representation of the feelings, preoccupation, thought and consideration given to a particular task” (Hall, George & Rutherford, 1997, as cited in Cheung & Ng, 2000).

ECCE Centre: Any facility “providing learning support, care and development services to children from three to children under six years of age” (Trinidad and Tobago, 2005, p. 1).

Collaboration: A style of interaction between licensed teachers voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal (Friend, 2007).

Challenges to the conduct of the Study

Several challenges emerged during the conduct of this study which included timely clearance to carry out the study within the centres chosen. The study had to be confined to two of three centres initially selected and the time line had to be extended due to unforeseen occurrences. These setbacks, however, were collectively viewed as an opportunity to review the findings in the most in-depth way possible.

Summary

In summary, an overview of inclusion was given in this chapter to showcase its relevance to the current qualitative research study. Chapter 2 will discuss the relevant framework, interview questions, supporting literature and the strategies on best practices for inclusion. Chapter 3 will discuss the design and methodology of the study whilst Chapter 4 will showcase the data analysis and presentation of findings. Chapter 5 will present a discussion of the results, implications and recommendations study.

Chapter 2 **The Literature Review**

Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' concerns regarding the practice of inclusion in their communities of learning in the Victoria education district. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework which underpins the study and addresses the research questions. The chapter will also examine some local and international reports, reviews and statements on inclusion. Additionally, it will highlight support strategies for teaching in general ECCE settings. An in-depth understanding into these areas mentioned shall also provide knowledge on the general education teacher's role in inclusion settings, the support available, and the way forward to minimising concerns regarding inclusion.

A brief analysis of the National ECCE Curriculum guide (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2006) will precede the review since it is the recognized curriculum instrument which holds the set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices for guiding high quality and excellence in government mainstream ECCE centres in Trinidad and Tobago.

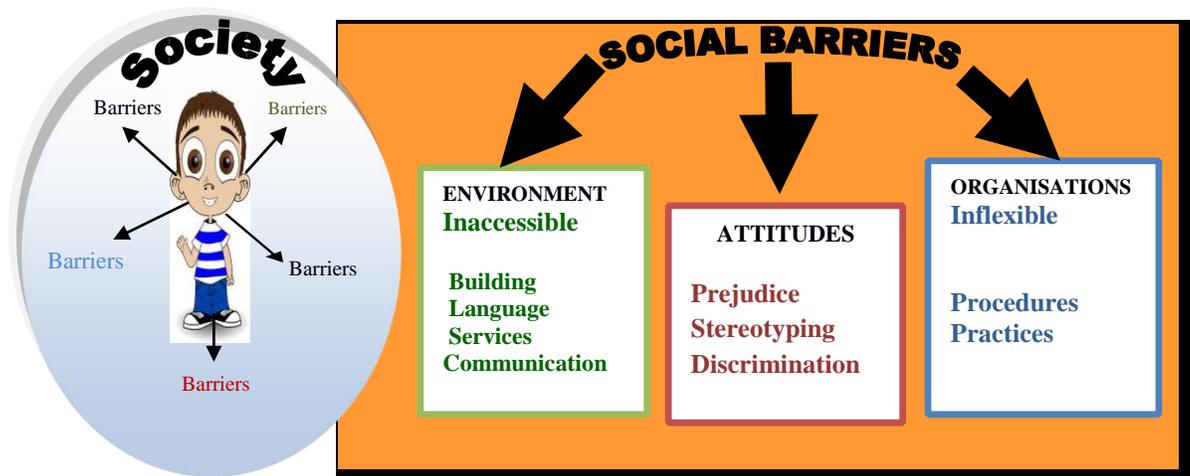
The National ECCE Curriculum Guide

At every level of the education system teachers are placed at the helm of curriculum change (Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 2010). The National Draft Curriculum Guide is both policy and institutional innovation that government

ECCE teachers in Trinidad and Tobago are expected to implement. The rationale for this guide, according to the Ministry of Education, is to “*articulate our perceptions of what is desirable quality Early Childhood Care and Development*” (2006, p. 15). Its authors also state that the Curriculum Guide was designed to ensure that the curriculum content and instructional strategies offered would assist teachers in facilitating and encouraging learning for all children, “*including children with identified disabilities, challenges, and developmental needs*” (p. 15).

The assumption, however, that the Curriculum Guide “*will provide teachers with a framework for programme planning to extend and promote all children’s development*” (p. 15), remains in a sense an organisational premise in the minds of many ECCE educators. Research shows that the piloting strategy used to sensitize preschool educators and professionals on the use of the guide was not effective, and therefore buy-in has been gradual (Eggars-Pierola et al., 2008, p. 28). In fact, many teachers have expressed concerns about using the guide in their curriculum planning; some have even stated that it is too general in its layout of goals and objectives (Franklyn, 2010, p. 24). This information suggests that some teachers do not see themselves as *curriculum developers* (a term that was coined by Hohmann and Weikart (2002)), and therefore need assistance in coming to this realisation. Thus, it is of crucial importance to re-pilot the Curriculum Guide in a manner that would sensitize teachers to its complexities, its alignment to inclusion as an educational philosophy, and about their varied roles as classroom leaders and managers (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2006, p.56).

FIGURE 1 Oliver (1990) The Social Model of Disability (Adapted Version from the Democracy Disability and Society Group (2003))



The Theoretical Framework

Although other models could have been used to underscore the relevance of this study, the Oliver (1990) Social Model of Disability was chosen by the researcher as the theoretical frame, since it encapsulates teachers’ concerns regarding inclusive practice for children with special needs in their Victoria education district classrooms. This disability model is comprised of three distinct categories that are further divided into nine subsets. These subsets clearly identify the types of barriers that demote inclusion. All three areas are interconnected and will be discussed in this chapter. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher has focused on the section dealing with organisational inflexibility in order to highlight teachers’ primary concerns.

There has been much intellectual debate on the Social Model of Disability and other models like it in general. Some critics suggest that this model is an outdated, ideological litmus test of disability politics that individuals with disabilities use to

distinguish between those organisations, policies, laws and ideas that are progressive from those that are deficient (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002). Supporters of this model, however, accept its simple claims, that its reference to disability is not one of physical human impairment, but that of societal impositions or barriers placed on individuals with disabilities, and which limit their right and ability to fully participate in contemporary society. These limitations are seen as a form of social exclusion (Youdell, 2006). A crucial oversight of the model is the insightfulness that it actually provides on the logical distance between the model's causation descriptions and public policy (Samaha, 2007).

A social constructivist approach can be used with this disability model since its framework is left to interpretation. This theory is underpinned by the assumptions of reality, knowledge and learning (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the multiple realities of the disabled and individuals with special needs are constructed from their experiences and social interactions with peoples, environments and organisations. In turn, the experiences that stem from human interaction within their social world are what determine the values that such individuals would adopt (Mertens, 2009). Therefore, the removal of organisational, attitudinal and environmental barriers in schools ultimately removes negative values, and encourages a change in mindsets and ways of thinking about special needs procedures and inclusion practices in school and in society.

According to Bricker (1978, as cited in Odom, et al, 2001) a rationale for the inclusion of young children with disabilities in general education settings is based on three logical reasons:

1. The regular education curriculum and the integration of children with special needs and disabilities among typically developing peers assists the growth of normative behaviours.
2. Public law and least restrictive environments ensure that children with disabilities can receive free care and education among children of the same age.
3. It is perceived more ethical to place a child with disabilities in a classroom situated nearest to his/her home and community as this will better facilitate the needs of the child and the parents.

Organizational Barriers in ECCE

A theoretical assumption on barriers in organisations is that “internal barriers may emerge as symptoms; their deeper causes and underlying factors have to be accounted for” (Shavinina, 2003, p. 506). It has been argued that the existence of barriers in innovation is the rule and not the exception, and that in most cases, organisational policy (curriculum guide) and procedures (inclusive processes) work against both successful development and implementation of innovation products. Research has shown, however, that complexity is involved in translating inclusion policies and their intended outcomes into everyday practices (Flem & Keller, 2000; De Bard & Kubow, 2002; Haug, 1998, as cited in March, 2008). According to Moore (2011), “flexibility as we move forward will be one of the hallmarks for ECCE as a learning organisation” (p. 6).

Organizational Inflexibility

Organisational formalisation is the degree to which rules and procedures are used for dealing with workplace challenges (such as the implementation of educational inclusion). Studies show that positive and negative links can be formed between

organisational inflexibility and formalisation. These links can develop as a result of institutional responsiveness to the needs of the employee or to the enforcement of heavy constraints that diminish productivity and motivation. Thus, there is the opinion that the organisational structure and the climate of an educational institution determine the level of productivity and autonomy that general education teachers within an ECCE organisation will display (Wren, 2005). Studies also show that some of the factors that reduce productivity and create social barriers are centralisation, ambiguous policy language and communication, perceived lack of organisational support and training (Daft, 2006).

Centralization, Ambiguous Policies, and Communication

The issue of inclusion, as bureaucratic lip-service, was discussed in an 'Education for All in the Caribbean' monograph series that was partly commissioned by UNESCO (2000). A consensus reached in that forum was that a major government task, regarding inclusion and special needs education, involved the promotion of public legislation, public funding, support systems, and policy development for educational reform. This regional series showed that where educational reform was concerned, classroom organisation was paramount. According to the UNESCO (2000) report, "if the uniqueness of every child is the central focus of the school system, then finding manageable ways to meet those specific, individual needs is the main responsibility of the regular classroom teacher" (p. 17).

If the regular classroom teacher, as a professional, has to take up the challenge of focusing on inclusion and the uniqueness of each child, there is the definite need for ongoing training and development in special needs, curriculum differentiation and communication skills for working with children, parents and agencies (Peters et al.,

2008). This also suggests that the school system focus should be on teacher empowerment rather than bureaucratic stop gaps to the process of inclusion (Forlin, 2010).

Moore (2011), in his 'Final Report on Strategy for ECCE', called for flexibility as an organisation-wide action plan in order to achieve inclusion and other long term goals. He describes flexibility in educational institutions as the change that occurs when there are internal and external interactions that produce learning. Learning, in this sense, involves the reduction of limitations placed on the general education teacher, the over reliance on procedures, and excessive approval stages that produce system wide *inaction*.

Inclusion is therefore successful when general education teachers work with their administrators and parents to build a collaborative management support team, become proactive, research-oriented, technology-driven and reflective practitioners in their situational learning contexts. While change on the whole is incremental, changing an organisational culture that is responding slowly toward inclusion can be a difficult undertaking, and one that will demand continuous effort in the direction of change (Moore, 2011).

Organizational Structure and Classroom Procedure

According to Odom et al. (2001), inclusion at the preschool level differs markedly from primary and secondary school levels. These researchers contend that the differences were in the relationship between early childhood development and relevant teaching practices, the organisational structures, site-based management and teacher preparation (Seyfarth, 2005).

Inclusive Teaching Practices

Inclusive teaching practices in ECCE comprise instructional techniques, curriculum modification, and diverse learning opportunities which include educational scaffolding strategies in order to help children overcome their challenges (UNESCO 2009). Seyfarth (2005, p.132) reports, however, that studies on professional development programme opportunities for teachers show that participants were mainly exposed to one week of conventional activities that did not necessarily involve collective participation. Where, however, there was engagement in collaborative activities, there was also improvement in instructional strategies and assessment. Consequently, Gettinger and Stoiber (1998) suggested redesigning assessment to properly assess the inclusion child, the general classroom child, and the child who is gifted and talented in order to facilitate individual and developmentally diverse needs, skills, abilities and aptitudes.

There is also the need within the teaching community for specialist practitioners beyond the general degree. According to Mitchell (2010), the addition of specialist practitioners may serve to contribute to more effective teaching and learning, may encourage greater organisational problem-solving, and promote more high-performing inclusive environments. Investing in its human resources for sustainable growth and development is therefore a major government priority, and has been the repeated recommendation of successive government-commissioned reports and other noteworthy documents (Miske Witt & Associates, 2008, pp. 34-42.; Bergsma, 2000; Williams, 2007, as cited in De Lisle, Seecharan & Ayodike, 2009).

Attitudinal Barriers in ECCE

An international literature review titled 'Teacher Education for Inclusion' (Johnson & Howell, 2009) showed that attitudes comprise of three components. The first deals with the cognitive assumption that persons and situations generate attitudinal beliefs or concerns. The second is affective in nature and deals with the set of feelings stemming from the beliefs or concerns. The third is behavioural and focuses on an inclination toward a bias that is consistent with the belief or concern. Some social relationships within the ECCE environment can result in attitudinal barriers. Three forms of attitudinal barriers that can exist in preschool settings are prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination.

Prejudice

Allport (1954) describes prejudice as antipathy based on a faulty inflexible generalisation directed toward a group or an individual group member. An example of this can be seen in a journal article titled 'Confronting Prejudice in the Early Childhood Classroom' by Araujo & Strasser (2003). The article focused on a kindergarten teacher's quick response to her charges' misconceptions that black persons were *different* and *bad*. The article opened with a suitable caption which stressed the point, "When teachers confront prejudice actively in early childhood settings, the classroom can be a place where children celebrate diversity" (p.178). In order to create and support inclusive settings, the general classroom teacher must therefore display attitudes that reflect impartiality, neutrality, and diversity, so that their young charges can mirror similar behaviours.

Stereotyping

Generalised beliefs about the characteristics of a group and the causal chains that relate the group characteristics to one another are considered stereotyping (Written,

Brink, Gist, & Hilton; 1997; Murphy & Medin, 1995, as cited in Baumeister & Finkel, 2010). While stereotyping might be a normative behaviour amongst preschoolers, Levitch & Gable (2005) suggest that the negative aspects associated with stereotyping should be discouraged in the inclusive classroom. These researchers recommend that teachers (as reflective practitioners) should consider their roles as leaders of impressionable charges, and therefore model behaviours that promote understanding, appreciation and tolerance of diversity in others in keeping with the cognitive and social learning theories of Piaget and Bandura respectively. Levitch & Gable (2005) further suggest that teachers should discourage name calling, encourage role play on good citizenship, and confront issues of race, gender, and disability. Regarding studies on the theory of exposure or contact, Zajonc (2001) shares the similar argument as Allport, who believes that contact or repeated exposure with members of a stereotyped or minority group will ultimately result in positive attitudes and visible change towards individuals of said minority group. Hence, meaningful contact and communication within the inclusive supportive environment stimulates discussions that promote correct thinking on issues, encourages the pursuit of shared goals, and helps to dispel any propensity to typecast peers or the practice of classroom discrimination (Allport, 1954), as cited in Kleeman & Wilson (2007).

Discrimination

Discrimination (the differential treatment of a person or individuals based on their affiliation to a particular group) should also be avoided in inclusive settings. Currently, ECCE teachers as professionals in Trinidad and Tobago are categorised as non-teaching staff in the teaching sector. They are also thought to be the least qualified in the teaching profession, which is a grave misrepresentation of their individual advancement. Another

social barrier that bordered discrimination in the ECCE sector was the discontinuation of the essential services of quality assurance, family support and curriculum officers. The decision to reintroduce those services was welcomed, since the success of inclusion requires that these adult supports be firmly established and available to children with and without disabilities (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2005).

Perceived discrimination in the selection of some administrator/teachers from the primary school sector rather than the pool of qualified and experienced ECCE personnel has also had an effect on national ECCE school milieu, resulting in communication barriers, teacher inaction and job turnover. Within recent years, however, teaching assistants, teacher assistants and teachers from within the ECCE sector have been interviewed and contracted as Administrator/Teachers.

Environmental Barriers in ECCE Centres

Standardisation is an important feature in inclusive ECCE settings (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2005). As previously stated, the inability of local government to fully translate its inclusion policies and their intended outcomes into everyday practices can result in a number of environmental barriers. Such environmental barriers impede accessibility to physical buildings, limit access to services, and create ambiguous language and distorted modes of communication within and throughout the teaching and learning environment (Cate, Diefendorf, McCullough, Peters, & Whaley, 2010).

ECCE Buildings

For the purpose of this study, ECCE is comprised of government and government-assisted centres. The new-age model government centres are built for the inclusion of children who are wheelchair users. These buildings are outfitted with ramps, hand rails, special needs parking areas, toilets, bathrooms, padded safe rooms, and outdoor play areas

that are accessible to all children. The aforementioned features, however, are not part of the infrastructure in temporary government-assisted ECCE facilities and older model centres. Additionally, some of these temporary buildings do not have bathroom facilities or outdoor play areas in general. The lack of physical upgrades and necessary infrastructure in such settings exist as barriers to the quality of care and education that a general classroom teacher/facilitator is expected to provide.

ECCE Services

A joint position statement of the DEC and NAEYC (2009) proposed that shared understandings about the meaning of inclusion should be the starting point for creating a system of services and supports for children with special needs and their families. The authors also expressed the notion that these systems should include professional development for parental, administrator, teacher, and specialist roles to better care for the inclusion child, and for acquiring the skills and dispositions for effective practice. Villa & Thousand (2003) posit that the typology of inclusion varies depending on the need. Consequently, inclusion may exist as simple integration into the general classroom; as the need for curriculum modification or as the revision of assessment practices to ensure that children with special needs and disabilities can receive an overall classroom and academic experience.

Organizational Language and Communication for Inclusion

Villa & Thousand (2003) suggested an organisational systems approach to successful whole school inclusion. This system involves the processes of organisational best practices, visionary leadership and administrative support, redefined roles and relationships among adults and students, collaboration, and additional adult support when

needed. Embedded in this systems approach is the rich language for effective communication and practice of inclusion.

The Administrator as Visionary Leader

Villa et al. (1996) described a study of 32 inclusive Canadian schools where it was found that administrative support and vision either facilitated or impeded general education teachers' attitudes to inclusion. It was found that the effective administrator *listens* to teachers' concerns, possesses *emotional intelligence*, engages in *interpersonal communication*, displays *solidarity* with staff, and provides timely *information, training* and *technical assistance* to staff. Said leader schedules time for teachers to meet and plan, and give *up-building performance appraisals* along with *feedback* especially in the implementation of inclusion as a new practice (Littrell, Billingsley & Cross, 1994).

Redefined Roles

In adapting to inclusion in their general ECCE settings, teachers must be ready to meet the needs of children and families. They must view inclusion as a whole school approach and thus refrain from using language that describes groups within the environment as 'my students' and 'your students' (Villa & Thousand, 2003). Furthermore, they must engage in *teamwork* and *participation* such as *co-teaching, coaching, mentoring, reflection, differentiated instruction*, as well as *group planning, or* in other words, *collaboration*, which is a contemporary approach to teaching (Villa & Thousand, 2003).

Collaborative Efforts

Throughout this study, the term 'collaboration' has been mentioned as a prime component to the successful implementation of inclusive education (Villa & Thousand, 2003). An informed understanding of collaboration as a systematic approach will help

general education teachers recognise that some of the everyday practices they perform are established collaborative measures. For instance, the daily schedule already includes time for morning and evening team planning and problem solving. Daily observation of children creates opportunities for the identification of special needs or disabilities and enables *front line research*. *Interpersonal* communication fosters working relationships among stakeholders in the learning community, and can result in strategy planning for the implementation of *differentiated teaching* of diverse learners and opportunities to showcase children's creativity and intelligences.

Teacher Support

Multi-age grouping of children and discipline approaches are two types of teacher supports that are already in effect in the general education classrooms under study. Villa (2002, as cited in Villa and Thousand, 2003) describes other ways in which the inclusion teacher and other professionals can work together to ensure that quality and excellence of care and education is disseminated in the inclusion classroom. These include:

- consultation and parallel support
- complementary teaching and co-teaching support
- trans-disciplinary teaming, and
- school wide positive behaviours

Summary

This chapter provided research that focused on the framework for the study and philosophical theories. It also discussed essential facets of the research questions on barriers in procedures and practices for inclusion, along with suggestions and strategies

for successful mainstream inclusion. Chapter 3 will highlight the methodological approaches used in the conduct of this qualitative case study.

Chapter 3

Methodology Design Methods and Strategies for Inquiry

Introduction

The previous chapters presented a world view on inclusion and inclusive practices regarding children with special needs in mainstream ECCE classrooms, as well as its universal importance. Informed research on the barriers to inclusion illuminated the fact that general education teachers are not tabular rasa since their requisite knowledge and experiences prepare them for meeting with challenges in inclusive settings. Additionally, many strategies for overcoming classroom barriers were highlighted to show how inclusive education can be improved and achieved.

This current chapter describes the methodology involved in gathering data on three teachers' concerns regarding inclusive practice for children with special needs at two ECCE centres in the Victoria education district. It discusses the philosophical beliefs, inductive and literary reporting style associated with the qualitative case study paradigm and their relevance to this research. Furthermore, it provides a background of the research sites, participants, and all other processes that comprise the design for this study, such as ethical issues of trustworthiness and confidentiality.

The Research Design

Blaikie (2009) contended that a research design is basically a technical outline that is prepared and used by the researcher to guide the research project, and links method to research outcomes. It is comprised of theory and practice, which when interwoven, forms a research story or narrative. For this research, the case study approach, philosophical framework, and constructivist framework were chosen. The study used a qualitative

design, since the purpose is to investigate and to understand the local phenomenon on teachers' concerns regarding the practice of inclusion in their general classrooms. This research paradigm focuses on gathering rich, thick data from the participants by asking 'what' and 'how' questions that target the barriers to inclusion. The research was conducted beyond six months in order to obtain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon.

Qualitative Method

Qualitative research is social research of an observed phenomenon on which text data is collected by the researcher in an attempt to gain understanding of human action (Schwandt, 2001). The basic elements of a qualitative design include the research questions, participants, data collection strategies, analysis procedures, and findings (Hatch, 2002). According to Creswell (2007), researchers who use the qualitative paradigm inadvertently embrace the inductive method.

The Inductive Method

In education research, the inductive method is used to create analytical text through the deconstruction and reconstruction of data collected via observation, interviews, and researcher's notes. This information is then transcribed into a story or report. Merriam (2009) explained that the inductive research method and the researcher's intuition are used to build concepts, hypotheses or theories that promote knowing (p 15). Stake (1995) posited that the data collected in case study research should better serve the purpose of particularisation. This study, however, requires an investigation of the different elements embedded within the data sources; the researcher thus moves beyond particularisation to analytic generalisations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Theoretical Perspectives

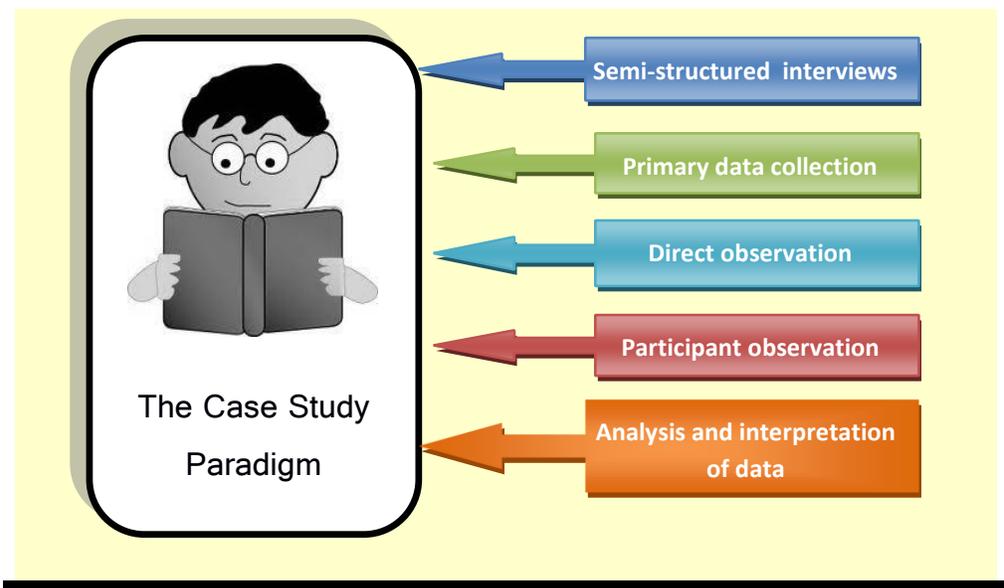
Qualitative case studies are underpinned by a set of theoretical assumptions and perspectives that are essential to the chosen design method. According to Anfara & Fertz (2006), the role of theory is both pervasive and influential, since it plays a key role in framing and conducting almost every aspect of the study, and assists the researcher in presenting the problem in clear and understandable terms. Epistemology in qualitative research deals with issues of truth as reality and the researcher's conceptualisation of the participant in data collection analysis and assessment (Angen, 2000). It also determines the communicative process at the time of data collection. Axiology focuses on the cultural values and ethics embedded in the research. This case study focuses on the values and ethical considerations of the ECCE organisation as espoused in the Curriculum Guide (2006), including those of the participants and the researcher who is also immersed in the study. Ontology in qualitative case study design is concerned with the nature of the social world and, in this case, the significance it places on inclusion (Blackburn, 1993; Bruner, 1990). As such, the ontological paradigm comprises the set of interview questions that ask how and what in order to discover the data that would inform the research.

The Case Study

There are a number of research methodologies available to the modern day qualitative researcher Creswell (2007). These paradigms have evolved over time to facilitate researchers' changing needs and correctness of fit to the specific academic research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Creswell (2007) recognized the preponderant use of the case study among five approaches. Yin (2008) identified the case study process as an empirical inquiry that investigates a present day phenomenon in an in-depth real world

context. He determined that case studies can be used to research organisational and social phenomenon and posited that a theoretical perspective should be formed when considering its design. Stake (2009) contended that a case study is not a methodology in itself; rather, it is a research option used to catch the complicity of a unique problem.

Figure 2 illustrates the qualitative case study design for the current study



Creswell (2013) reasoned, however, that it is both an object of study and a product of inquiry – an exploratory, interpretive method underpinned by the ontological assumption – that multiple realities constructed from social interaction shapes individual experiences and creates value systems (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 2009). Thus, Mills, Durepos & Viebe (2010) declared that when the design, conduct, analysis and reporting are sound, the findings [of a multi-site case sample] may be more compelling than that of a single cohort sample. Accordingly, a multi-site case study was chosen as the means of gaining a richer understanding of teachers’ concerns regarding inclusion in their general settings.

Triangulation

Triangulation, as a research process, is a strategy which incorporates multiple data sources, appropriate theory, and inductive processes for the purpose of building and supporting a qualitative case study (Stake, 1995). Triangulation also helps the researcher to address the emic concerns and experiences expressed both verbally and non-verbally by the participants in the study. Patton (2002) stated that “because the researcher is the instrument of qualitative inquiry, the quality of the result depends heavily on the qualities of that human being” (p. 513). The ability to set aside personal biases, and hold a somewhat etic perspective when analysing and interpreting data, are essential qualities that can empower the researcher to remain objective in the exploration and co-construction of knowledge. Hence, triangulation helps the researcher to ensure the integrity of the qualitative research (Flick, 2006).

The Researcher’s role in the Study

The role of the researcher in a qualitative case study is multifaceted and vital to the research process and final write up. Stake (1995) described the case study researcher as a teacher, interpreter, advocate, auditor, and biographer. While the researcher will undoubtedly hold personal views on the area under research, the overall responsibility is to report the concerns and experiences of the participants and observe all areas of protocol when selecting participants, gathering data, analysing and interpreting.

Research Sites for the Project

Both centres share the commonality of being government-assisted mainstream centres that cater to all diversities of children ages 3 to 4 years old and their families. Both

centres are situated in similar socio-cultural backgrounds where the economic reality is low-income earnings for many parents and guardians. The student capacity at both centres range between 28 and 35. The teacher-to-child ratio is maintained almost at the maximum 1:15 general classroom population as delineated by organisational policy, and as previously stated, the syllabus is obtained from the 'National Early Childhood Curriculum Guide' (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2006).

Participant Sampling

Purposive sampling, according to Creswell (2007), falls within the interpretive paradigm. Five teachers comprised the population of professional educators at the two centres under study. Silverman (2008) stated that accessibility and convenience are not part of the purposive sampling process; therefore, three teachers whom the researcher felt would give the most meaningful responses to the set of interview questions were chosen. Further, the criterion for the selection of the participants was based on their years of experience and educational background. The researcher thus acknowledges that multiple realities of teachers – their lived and shared experiences within the two communities of learning – impact their inclusive practices or lack thereof.

Participant Profiles

Profiling the participant is considered an effective means of sharing interview data (Miles & Huberman, 1984, as cited in Seidman, 2013). Two of the three teacher participants assigned to the centres under study received certificate training in ECCE. One of them is currently pursuing her undergraduate degree while two have already completed their first degrees. All three teachers were exposed to some form of special needs and

disabilities coursework during their certificate and undergraduate programmes. All teacher participants are in favour of inclusion, and were exposed to pre-service training at general ECCE classrooms before working in their current settings. All participants are using the ‘National Early Childhood Curriculum Guide’ (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2006) for planning structured activities. For the purpose of anonymity in the conduct of this study, each participant has received an appropriate pseudonym.

Participant 1: Centre 1

Ms. Monitor has over 26 years of experience in foundational teaching. This participant has had children in her group who displayed attention deficit disorder, language delays, and autism. This teacher declared that the strategies she used for children with special needs in her group were observation, keeping the child close when teaching, and encouraging the child to participate in all activities. This participant found that, “While we use the guide in our planning, when it comes to special needs, we have to make the activities more interesting and simpler than that obtained from the guide.”

Participant 2: Centre 1

Ms. Flowers has approximately 6 years of experience in ECCE. She has obtained her prior knowledge of special needs via university-based courses. This participant revealed, “Having some prior knowledge has helped to prepare me for a clearer picture of what I have to deal with in the classroom.” Ms. Flowers was, at the initiation of this current study, facilitating a preschooler diagnosed with mild autism in her group. Regarding the use of the curriculum guide, this teacher further contends, “Although the guide equips you to a point in your preparation for classroom activities, it is limited.”

Participant 3: Centre 2

Ms. Cook has over 9 years of experience in this field and was introduced to special needs at the ECCE certificate level. In her practice Ms. Cook has had to facilitate children with major language deficits. She explained:

“Some children did not get enough exposure to language [at home] so their speech was affected. For that I did a lot of picture and word reading. I engaged them in pointing out objects and word pronunciation. This also involved making the child comfortable...the child who cannot express his/herself in words, has a tendency to act out physically against his/her peers.”

Ms. Cook also use the guide and relies on its five strands and cultural approach to treat with the language deficits in her special needs group.

Data collection Procedure

Participant observation was an integral form of data collection chosen for this research project. The research objective comprised applying overt observation, informal teacher consultation, and field note write-ups on inclusion practices and procedure in the research sites. Daily observations for continuity were not possible at the two centres under study due to the researcher’s work portfolio.

Research interview process

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) described research interviews as professional discourses that interrelate and unearth diverse views between the researcher as interviewer and the respondent. The researcher is able to extract meaning from the participants’ background, demographic knowledge, sensory observation, behaviours and lived experiences via the medium of semi-structured questions (Patton, 2002). The actual

questions for the interview were formulated based on sub question 3: *'What concerns do ECCE teachers have regarding the organisational administration for inclusion of children with special needs at their ECCE Centres in the Victoria Education District?'*

The researcher utilized the information gained from readings on quality indicators of inclusion practices by Cate et al. (2010), and on organisational procedures to assist in the formulation of the set of interview questions used to guide this study.

Interviews

Described as flesh and blood verbal and non-verbal expressions between or among knowledgeable minds, face-to-face interviews provide the richest source of data in qualitative research work (Leavy, 2014). The three interviews used to inform this study were conducted individually. Each of the respondents agreed to a taped sit-down interview on scheduled days, and to member checking for accuracy and clarity of language and meaning as a follow-up procedure. All interviewees appeared to be comfortable with the questions and probes, as initial trust was established among the researcher and study cohorts.

Participant observations and Researcher field notes

The fact that participant observation includes direct artefact collection and interview data makes the researcher a participant in the study, and therefore, the researcher is able to gain a more in depth understanding of teachers' concerns and anticipations, their practice, and behaviour in inclusive social settings (Hatch, 2005). Patton (1990) posited that having a first-hand grasp of a social phenomenon, direct

personal experience and on-site observations of taken-for-granted teacher practices are compelling reasons for including participant observations in a qualitative research study.

Data Analysis Process

Dey (1993) contended that qualitative researchers learn by doing. The analysis process comprises a set of iterative steps such as reading and memo-recording, managing the data through concept mapping, coding for categories and themes, analysing the data, forming tentative assumptions, and reporting the findings in a narrative format (Creswell, 2013). Manual coding was used by the researcher for the content analysis procedure rather than computerised coding.

Issues of Trust and Ethical Considerations

Ethics and trust come into consideration especially during the interviewing process, as the researcher has to interpret the data relevant to the research. Said researcher had to avoid subjective behaviour that may result in misrepresenting the meaning in participants' answers. Hence the importance of *member checking*, taped recording and verbatim transcripts in the data analysis process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained in writing from each of the participants who agreed to the interviewing and observation process. Each participant was also made cognizant of their right to withdraw from the study at any point during the period it was conducted in keeping with research protocol (Seidman, 2013). **See Appendix (B).**

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a basic principle in qualitative research that seeks to preserve human dignity (Given, 2008). The researcher is bound by the affirmation made in the consent form to the respondents that raw data collected via interviews will not be publicly identified as that of the respondents and will be only used for the purpose for which it was collected.

Permission

Researchers and institutional review boards must primarily consider whether research is intrusive and has potential for harm, whether the venue is perceived as private or public space, how confidentiality can be protected and whether and how informed consent should be obtained (Lichtman, 2013).

In keeping with the above criteria, preliminary permission to conduct the research was sought in writing from the ECCE Division, which has the responsibility for overseeing all government operations at the centres chosen for this research project. Initial permission was given via telephone conversation on 21st February, 2014. See **Appendix (A)**.

Authenticity and trustworthiness

Validity and reliability in research is said to be an elusive entity. The researcher thus used the alternative terms ‘authenticity’ and ‘trustworthiness’ offered by Lincoln & Guba, (1985, as cited in Rodwell & Byers, 2012). Qualitative data collected in the field, in the words of Stake (2005), faces hazardous passage from writing to reading. The writer, therefore, seeks ways of safeguarding the trip. Hence, the researcher relied on

qualitative theory and the triangulation process to ensure authenticity and trustworthiness of the current study.

Limitations

This current study was limited to two ECCE centres, three individually-taped face-to-face interviews, participant observations, and researcher's field notes. The researcher had to await approval before embarking on interviews in the centres approved before interviews could be conducted. The researcher was limited to two out of three centres for the conduct of the study.

Delimitations

Both general preschool settings selected for the study are government-assisted centres located in the Victoria educational district that promote the use of the 'National Early Childhood Curriculum Guide' (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2006). The researcher confined the study to three teachers. Only sub question 3 was operationalised for the purpose of data collection for gaining insight into teachers' concerns regarding the practice of inclusion at their centres, and how these concerns might be addressed in order to promote high quality in practice and procedures.

Researcher's experience in the conduct of the study

Time scheduling was a big challenge to the conduct of this study. During the conduct of the study I began reflecting on my former classroom experience as a teacher. Back then, it was difficult getting staff members to recognise one of my classroom cohorts as being selectively mute. The consensus among the teachers was that the child was 'attention seeking'. Her behaviour lasted, however, for the entire two years in the preschool environment, and continued even after she transitioned into primary school.

Consultation with parents revealed that the child was developing normally and proof was given in the form of videos taken of the child in her home setting. This current research is further emphasis that collaboration is crucial to the inclusion process, and that teacher's personal philosophies should be aligned to the organisation policy in order to make inclusion work.

Summary

This chapter described the case study and design as well and provided a measure of justification for each approach. It also described the process used in choosing participants, methods of data collection and triangulation, the ethical considerations concerning site selection, participation of respondents, and the limitations and delimitations. Chapter 4 will address the data analysis and presentation of findings.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

I want to understand the world from your point of view... to know what you know in the way that you know it... to understand the meaning of your experience, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them.

James P. Spradely (1933-1982)

Introduction

This chapter presents the observations and interviews based on the operationalisation of sub question 3: *“What concerns do ECCE teachers have regarding the organizational administration for inclusion of children with special needs at their ECCE centres in the Victoria education district?”* Overt observations provided first-hand knowledge on how procedures and practices for inclusion were implemented in the settings under study. The set of interview questions generated answers on organisational procedures as it relates to teachers classroom practices. The responses from the participants together with participant observation and field notes provided the rich, thick data that was later coded into themes and categories. **See Appendix (C) for teacher transcript.** During this analysis process, as main instrument to the study, I also had to rely on my own intuition and the appropriate theory to create the narrative used to communicate what teachers know, feel and live regarding inclusion in their communities of learning.

Summary of the case study framework

The Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1990) comprises three main barriers that are further divided into subsets. These subsets were used to help analyse the themes and

categories that emerged out of the data collected in order to show how teacher concerns impacted on the inclusion philosophy, procedure and practice at the two centres under study. This framework also helped the researcher to analyse the data in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to inclusion in the general ECCE settings, and to pinpoint recommendations for discussion in the final chapter.

The physical ECCE environment

Though one centre is more rural to the other, both centres under study are located within the Victoria educational district. Bathroom facilities at these two centres comprise two toilets each. Observation of the physical structure at Centre 2 revealed that its toilet facilities are child-sized, and that the property has bathroom facilities to ensure the hygienic care of children who may soil themselves. Facilities for teachers are located within the major structure of the complex which houses the ECCE centre. This situation is an environmental barrier since supervision at the centre drops when one of the two teachers has to physically leave the centre to access the adult toilet facilities.

Regarding the environmental barriers at Centre 1, Ms. Monitor, comments:

We have two, toilets, one for boys and one for girls but not the type for children in general ECCE settings (child-sized) and not for children with special needs... Although we are at ground level, we still do not have a bathroom area...

In this scenario, teachers share facilities with children and in the event of a toileting accident where a bath is required for proper child care, parents or guardians have to be notified, and the child is removed from the centre. Situations like this present a barrier to teaching and learning since it interrupts the daily schedule and the child's

routine. The general layout of both centres does not cater to children who are wheelchair users. This is seen as a form of unconscious discrimination and environmental exclusion.

Centre programme evaluation

Regarding programme evaluation for children with and without special needs, it was found that space and storage of materials were problematic at both centres. Teachers' concerns were specifically geared toward lack of resources (general and special needs), the inability to display thematic or project work of children, and the draconian rules and restrictions regarding the use of the property for teaching and learning.

Space is limited...Everything is conditional. We are here, but we cannot put up children's work on the wall. Our centre vision and mission have to be fastened with tacks... Our furniture has to be stowed away every Friday (to accommodate for weekend users)...Parental commitment to this weekly task is becoming less and less. When we compare our situation to what is obtained in a new centre, it is not difficult to feel excluded as teachers.

The above concerns expressed by Ms. Monitor speak to the environmental attitudes: prejudice and discrimination, and to the lack of teacher/parent collaboration.

The Language for ECCE Inclusion-Definition

All three teachers surmised that the term '*organisational administration*' included the promotion of effective and efficient policies that delineate the day to day operations for general and inclusion practices at their settings. Teacher participants, however, voiced the opinion that there was no smooth flow in the organisational administration for inclusion; therefore, improvement was needed. It has been observed that the lack of a clear definition of inclusion has become a barrier in terms of the *taken-for-granted* inclusive language already existing in the classroom environments. This language

includes self-correcting pedagogy, collaboration and many others identified in Chapter 2 of this study.

Communication in ECCE Inclusion

An observation made during the conduct of this study was the utilisation of communication channels for reporting possible cases of special needs or disabilities in young children. The question of how to report was seemingly unknown to some teachers.

Ms. Cook, for example, stated:

The concern is I do not understand where to report to. As a teacher, I am constantly observing, and besides administrators, there are different heads in the organisation, so I am not too sure where to report...What are the stops from here to another level of assistance?

According to Odom et al. (2001), *the existence of standard definition for inclusion will help to clarify perspectives and expectations of the different stakeholders, and policy makers regarding modes of communication across agencies, and between professionals and families.*

Services and Supports

The subset 'Services' in the environmental section of the Social Model of disability was another category under which teachers' concerns regarding inclusion practices in their communities of learning was uncovered.

Human Resource Personnel:

According to the participants, it has not been their experience during their years of practice to receive teacher support. The general education teacher as a professional practitioner is considered the enabler of the curriculum, and therefore expected to fulfil several roles in the carriage of duty (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2006). Lack of

support and services creates the feeling of exclusion. The possibility of there ever being special education teachers in the general education classroom would be a welcomed addition and an organisational commitment to the process of inclusion.

Professional Training:

Teacher training and retraining for inclusion, professional enhancement, ability to use assistive technology, recognise giftedness, talent, learning disorders, and behavioural challenges in children within their immediate learning communities were shared concerns among the individual participants during the interview. During the observation and informal discourses, it became evident at both centres that children who were diagnosed with autism, separation anxiety, ADHD and severe neglect were taught alongside the general preschool population. Very little attention was being placed on curriculum adaptation to meet the individual needs of the inclusion child. Training and retraining is therefore seen as a supportive tool to inclusion to alleviate occurrences of teacher inaction. In the words of Ms. Monitor:

From the training I have done so many years ago, I am not so sure how it is within the new system...You have more and more children coming in with special needs and I think training should be made available...updated at least every two years...especially since the new administration wants us to deal with inclusion within the school environment.

Pedagogical Aids:

The consensus among the participant teachers is that the existing pedagogy at their centres is basically for general use. There is also the opinion that the said pedagogy is mainly for tactile use and that some are culturally inappropriate. It should be noted that while pedagogical provisions are limited, the materials that can be found at these two

centres include self-correcting, tactile, visual, and concrete mathematical blocks and shapes. These apparatus are suitable for all children 3-4 years old. Said pedagogy was designed for this concrete operational stage of development regardless of the existence of disability or special need.

Furthermore, manipulation of these pedagogical aids helps to strengthen fine muscles in children's hands, preparing them for grasping, holding and writing; essential pre-requisite transitioning skills. There is, however, the need for computers, cameras, microphones, radios, televisions, and outdoor equipment at both centres to appeal to children's other senses, diverse learning styles and large motor development.

Social Attitudes toward ECCE Inclusion

In-depth analysis of the interview question uncovered both conscious and unconscious barriers among the teacher participants which were aligned to the prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping subsets of the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1990) attitudinal category.

Teacher Autonomy and Flexibility:

All participants demonstrated inflexibility in terms of their concerns about labelling or misdiagnosing a child observed to have a special need. It was inferred that lack of training, and the fact that symptoms for one special need such as attention-seeking behaviours in a child predisposed to emotional ill-health, could be mistaken for ADHD or some other special need. These reasons, along with the view that support services were lacking, creates a form of teacher inaction that can be seen in Ms. Monitor's response:

We are left with making the decision as to how many years we have just to keep the children in the environment and observe them, but we do not have anything in place. We just try to integrate them with the others.

Unconscious abstinence from the commitment to properly identify, record and make information on children with special needs and disabilities available to the administrator/teacher responsible for frontline management of ECCE centres can be considered teacher neglect. Persistence in such a course of inaction can result in self-fulfilling prophecies and underachievement for transitioning students with the irony of children being left behind.

This attitudinal barrier speaks further to the need for updated professional training, revisiting teaching codes and ethics, well-articulated job performance information, and effective clinical supervision of teachers for meeting the needs of all children, especially children with special needs.

Administrator/Teacher Flexibility and Support:

Participant teachers expressed mixed attitudes toward the role of administrators and their professional ability to support teachers in activity planning for special needs. Ms. Monitor expressed the belief that administrators' portfolios do not extend to special needs activity planning, to providing pedagogical aid for teachers, and supervision or feedback regarding inclusion. This participant opined that there were limitations and discrimination factors at the organisational level regarding what administrators can do in their cluster centres to promote inclusion.

Ms. Cook held the perceived prejudicial view that: "Most teachers and administrators are at the same educational level so unless administrators are given specialised training then we have the same knowledge about special needs." These two views, though different, stereotypes the administrator as one who is deficient in his or her professional ability to

manage and lead in the area of special needs and inclusion. Conversely, Ms. Flowers' view was that administrative support was given to teachers, and used the example of teachers being encouraged to research different strategies to support student learning. Ms. Flowers' attitude towards the environmental concerns was positive and resilient. She posits,

The challenges and limitations are there, [yet] we try to maintain a certain kind of quality and care for the children of our programme. It is mainly the physical things that limit us but at times we try to go beyond our circumstances.

Organisational Procedure and Practice for ECCE Inclusion

A considerable amount of data from interview questions and observations was spread across the procedure and practice categories of the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1990) framework as follows:

Research driven practices:

The lack of computers and internet access at the centres under study is a barrier, in a sense, to research driven practices for the collection of educational information and strategies for teaching children with and without special needs. The answers to the question of proactive and responsive research to assist planning for special needs reflected diverse views such as "We have spoken to members of the family and tried to implement some of the things we learned." Or "Research should be done and should be evident in the centre." Or "Research is done individually and privately at home... whatever data we get we file it." Said question is linked to the teacher's role, knowledge and competencies as outlined in the 'National Curriculum Guide' (GORT Ministry of Education, 2006).

Team Teaching and Collaboration:

In the area of team teaching and collaboration for effective implementation of the curriculum for teaching and facilitating with special needs, it was found that centre-based planning was weak in both centres under study. Suggested reasons for this weakness were associated with the need for variety of pedagogy to match the interest of the children and to match the themes and projects being carried out at the centres. It also required teacher commitment to keep children on task in the learning centres that they chose to visit. Limited space remains a challenge; collaborative efforts of the ECCE organisation are necessary for making and sourcing pedagogy. There is also the need for parental stakeholdership in terms of contributing materials and time to the outfitting of learning centres for more effective centre-based learning outcomes and experiences.

Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth analysis of the interview questions, classroom observations, researcher's notes and reflections. Through all themes and categories the barriers associated with the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1990) framework were highlighted. From this research, valuable information was obtained to further demonstrate that inclusion should be clearly defined to improve procedure and practice within the local ECCE sector. Chapter 5 will outline strategies for overcoming weaknesses and threats to inclusion and inclusive practices at the two centres under study.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

“Promoting inclusion means stimulating discussion, encouraging positive attitude, and improving educational and social frameworks to cope with new demands in education structures and governance.”

O'Reily (2009)

Introduction

The focus of this study has been on three ECCE teachers' concerns regarding inclusive practice in two early childhood centres in the Victoria education district, South Trinidad. The two ECCE Centres chosen for the study are government-assisted. All teachers at the centre, including the study participants, are contracted Ministry of Education employees. A multi-site case study provided an in-depth understanding of how inclusion works at these two centres. This chapter will provide a discussion and recommendation of the findings for the study.

Discussion of the Case Study Findings

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats emerged out of the face-to-face recorded interviews and observations of the three teacher participants in this current research. Regarding inclusion, it is a common strength that all teachers, in some way, have embraced the ideology of inclusion and the integration of children with special needs and disabilities in the general education classroom. It is also an established fact that the National curriculum guide as an innovation policy and teachers' aid is multifaceted and replete with strategies for inclusion. The Cluster Centre arrangement of administrator/teachers as frontline supporters of staff, children, parents and community is also an area of strength in the process of inclusion.

Centre Programme Evaluation

- The lack of infrastructure for all children with and without special needs and disabilities as discussed throughout the study, is a perceived environmental and curriculum programme weakness at the two centres.
- The present space designated for school activity within and without out the two compounds is inadequate.
- This lack of space is further threatened by the creation of learning areas along the periphery of the centres to accommodate for the exploration of themes and projects of a given term.
- The overwhelming weakness at Centre 1 is the sharing of classroom space with external groups. Furniture has to be stored on Fridays to accommodate for other weekend activities by these external groups who hold the right to the use of this space and who permit its use as an ECCE centre under stipulated conditions.
- The packing away of furniture is an environmental barrier that presents the threat of physical injury to teachers, parents and caregivers who volunteer to this process. This environmental barrier has resulted in frustration and lack of parental support over time, resulting in weakened teacher-parent relationships.
- Teachers at Centre 1 have been operating in this building for over 7 years under restrictions regarding the display of children's work, lack of shower facilities for providing hygienic care and lack of technology and outdoor equipment for the promotion of large motor development.

The environmental barriers at both centres prevent consistency and continuity in learning for all children accessing these two environments. It also serves to highlight the distance between the causation descriptions and public policy enactment as discussed in the theoretical framework in Chapter 2 of this study.

Language and practice of Inclusion for ECCE

The curriculum guide has been described as a well thought out innovation to assist early development of all preschoolers. The guide, however, is not replete with real world examples to match the plethora of desired outcomes, overall goals and strands that are embedded in its contents. This is seen as a curriculum oversight and acts as a barrier to the use of the guide. Users of the guide feel that there is a need for concrete representations of activities for promoting centre-based learning, and written examples of activity plans for guiding the implementation of themes and projects.

It was always the expectation of the authors of the curriculum guide that local teachers, as networkers, problem solvers, researchers, theorist and practitioners, would use their combined knowledge and competencies to create media and technological aids to support teachers in the carriage of their general and inclusive practices and that these experiences would be edited into the guide. This inclusive language and understanding is as follows:

The National ECCE Curriculum Guide does not seek to provide a rigid structure for the delivery of content but clarifies, explains and provides guideline that inform practice and context for implementation...It will guide teachers in creating environment, selecting appropriate materials, using effective strategies;...and allowing continuing incorporation of new ideas from current research in child development and early childhood education (GORTT Ministry of Education, 2006, p.14).

It should be noted that correct usage and versatility of the curriculum guide was underscored at the beginning of Chapter 2 of this study.

Communication, Training and Collaboration Opportunities in ECCE

The benefits of speaking with one voice and working together as a unified ECCE sector regarding inclusion and inclusive practice has implications for organisational and general classroom specialised adult support. This was also discussed in the review of the literature by Moore (2011) in the current study.

Social Attitudes in ECCE inclusion

This study showed that teachers' attitude toward each other, organisational practices and procedures, as well as the level of care and education of children with special needs, could result in barriers or facilitators of inclusion. It also highlighted teacher participant views of the role of the administrator in terms of frontline teacher/student support for inclusion. Data collected from the interview and an assessment of the participants' body language during the sit-down discourse, showed that there were mixed opinions on the role of the administrator. The literature chosen for this study showed that healthy administrator/staff relationships were crucial to the effective implementation of inclusion, and that where weaknesses and threats occur in practice, collaborative effort in communities of learning would not exist.

Overall Evaluation of Inclusion

All members of staff appeared dedicated to ECCE teaching and learning. This was seen in part by their professional and personal need to continue tertiary studies in ECCE education. It was also evidenced by the researcher's observations of regular teacher planning, teacher observations, creation of pedagogy, purchasing of materials and treating

children using their private funds. Teachers also modelled positive interactions toward all children, parents and other visitors to the two centres. It was found, however, that there was gross underestimation of teacher competency and overall understanding of the inclusion language for communication across the ECCE sector and in classroom practice.

Recommendations

Several recommendations emerged out of this qualitative case study during the triangulation and inductive processes. The themes and categories generated from the analysis process were applied to the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1990) framework. These were then further analysed and aligned to the theory used to underpin this study. From the entire process, the following recommendations were made:

Disabling environmental threats to inclusion

Land allocation for the purpose of erecting a standalone, single story unit with enough floor space to accommodate a preschool population of at least 50 children, and to provide all the modern day universal indoor and outdoor features of an ECCE centre, has been problematic for these two centres. Fortunately for Centre 1, land has been accessed within the same catchment area through government negotiation. Measures are currently being undertaken for erecting the long-awaited preschool.

A new inclusive centre connotes that teachers and parents at Centre 1 will be relieved of the overwhelming weekly duty of reorganising the space. This will also mean less wear and tear on the furniture, that children's work can be prominently displayed, and that all physical infrastructure which operated as barriers to inclusion would be removed.

Overcoming weaknesses to inclusion process

Given the provision for access to special needs support services, local research reveals that educational institutions are not seen as primary sites of intervention.

Therefore, no provisions have yet been made to make student support service accessible to early childhood centres. It is recommended, therefore:

- That teacher flexibility and inclusive practice can be increased through more rigorous and specialised coursework at the undergraduate level at both the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT).
- Intensive in-service training at institutions such as the Memisa School for children with Down's syndrome and other related Syndromes in Arima, or at the Cascade school for the hearing impaired will further sensitise teachers to pedagogical artefacts and assistive technology, available support services and curriculum adaptation in conjunction with IEPs. This type of training would ensure higher quality, access and teacher-student care and participation.
- Such programmes at the undergraduate level will help to maximize true integration of specialised personnel to meet the demand for support services for inclusion. Mitchell (2010) in this study highlighted the need for specialist to assist the inclusion process, and this form of specialised coursework may help to create jobs for the transitioning On the Job Trainee (OJT) and other capable individuals who may still be determining their niche in the world of works. Franklyn (2010) and Mc Cain et al.

(2007) have discussed integration of specialised services in early childhood programmes as an investment.

Enabling ECCE Inclusion Procedures and Practices

A shared vision of inclusion at individual early childhood centres, as expressed in the literature, is the beginning of the breaking down of barriers that operate as threats and weaknesses in ECCE settings. This shared understanding also help teachers to become enablers of the inclusive curriculum programme. Shared vision and philosophies create teacher confidence, assertiveness and the empowerment to accept the role as an educational agent of change (Berry et al., 2012). The inclusion teacher who no longer feels excluded as a result of attitudinal barriers will in turn become more responsive to administrative support and organisational guidelines for teaching *everybody's children*. Cole (2008) gives further insight into how this can be accomplished.

Recommendations for enabling inclusion procedures and practices are:

1. Participatory training workshops for administrators and teachers organised by the ECCE Division that target special needs, disabilities and inclusion issues. A main focus should be research driven practices. The forum should include provisions for task-oriented book and technology research, discussions and group reports. The literature shows that situational and community learning among knowledgeable others is a built-in support system. This was also a strong recommendation of teacher participants who describe district-level workshops as a support service for generating strategies for the implementation of inclusion. Bi-annual participation at district cluster workshops that target these and other poignant concerns can become the catalyst for creating local podcasts, web nodes, documentaries, stories, rhymes, finger plays, dramas, plays, and

other cultural media to help complete the practical aspect of the curriculum guide. This recommendation includes the practical vision of the establishment of an ECCE film unit that will afford UWI Film students and UTT Music Technology students the opportunity to work and contribute to the local, regional, and international Early Childhood educational forums.

2. Written communication between the ECCE organisation and general education centres, as expressed by teachers, will help to remove ambiguity and assist in shaping the healthy formalisation process for inclusion within the sector.

3. The employment of additional staff will help to alleviate the micromanagement of administrator/teachers and teaching staff at the level of ECCE coordinators. This would also bring greater visibility to the kinds of support available to teachers in terms of family support officers, quality assurance and curriculum officers. Additional staff also helps to lighten workloads and create greater efficiency, higher quality and commitment, and decreases worker burnout.

Implications of the study

Inclusion in general early childhood centres is a new phenomenon. As such, few local studies have been carried out at the foundational level of preschool. There are, however, quite a number of regional studies on inclusion at the preschool primary level which were not included in this study. A wealth of information was found in final reports commissioned by existing and previous governments. Researcher observation and intuition suggests that little follow-through has occurred with regard to many of the recommendations suggested in the reports. Those workable recommendations answer the question that inclusion can work, but there must first be a willingness to implement and

monitor for continuity of the process itself for seamlessness in education and ultimate success.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study has served the purpose of providing a clearer understanding of the meaning, purpose and value of inclusion as an organisational philosophy, process and general education teacher practice. This study gathered research that included diverse understandings of what inclusion is and what it is not. It provided a history that chronicled the emergent need for inclusion as a form of protection and recognised constitutional rights of all individuals with special needs and disabilities and their families.

This study provided information on the different terminology used to describe the evolution of inclusion and shared international, local and regional considerations of inclusion. This study told the story of inclusion through the lenses of three teachers and used their concerns in the communities of learning to arrive at the body of research emerging out of the study. The case study approach was the preferred channel for collecting the data and for inductively replicating and analysing the evidence to present a final report that conveyed teachers concerns and to produce recommendations to improve inclusive practice. It also identified taken-for-granted practices and procedures that inadvertently hinder the process of inclusion.

This study showed that willingness on the teacher's part to embrace organisational policy, procedures and practices encapsulates, in part, the shared vision and understanding of inclusion. Recognising the value of the administrator/teacher in terms of collaborator, enabler, clinical supervisor, mentor, coach and overall in-house teacher support engenders

mutual respect, positive appraisals, and feedback to help remove barriers at the environmental, attitudinal and organizational levels within the ECCE sector and general education settings.

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APPENDIX A

Letter seeking permission from ECCE Division to conduct research project

31st January 2014

Ms Deborah Khan
ECCE Lead
Ministry of Education
ECCE Division
MTS Plaza
Aranguez

Dear Madam,

UWI MASTERS IN CURRICULUM RESEARCH PROJECT

The University of the West Indies Masters in Curriculum Programme is designed to ground students not just in a course of study, but to make a difference in the lives of others.

As a year two student in the above mentioned programme I have already begun see my role as administrator/teacher as a great opportunity to encourage educators and ancillary staff to develop and increase their passion for nurturing our nation children regardless of cultural diversity, Special Needs or Learning Disabilities.

I have therefore chosen the project topic ***“Investigating ECCE Teachers’ Concerns Regarding Inclusive Practice in Three Early Childhood Centres in the Victoria Education District”*** as I feel this is an area in need of research within my cluster centres and hereby make request for permission to conduct the research in same.

I hereby assure the Division that all ethical considerations will be observed. No Centre will be named; no teacher or child identified; and teachers’ rights will be protected. I thank you in advance for your granting permission to conduct the research and promise that at all three Centres the daily schedule will not be interrupted.

Enclosed is a comprehensive master copy of the Research Proposal.

Respectfully,

.....
JUNE E. GRANT
ADMINISTRATOR/TEACHER

APPENDIX B

Protocol letter to participants with consent form

3 February, 2014.

Dear Participants,

UWI Masters Research Project Information Sheet

As part of the requirement for the University of The West Indies (UWI) Masters in Education (Curriculum) degree programme, I am required to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with investigating ECCE Teachers Concerns Regarding Inclusive Practices for Children with Special Needs or Disabilities in their learning communities.

The study will involve classroom observations, interviews and journal entries on the said topic to be carried out over a term and during the normal working hours.

I have chosen your Centre to carry out the research based on initial observations and concerns that you have aired over a period of time and would like very much to gather qualitative data from interviews that may lead toward alleviation of these concerns and improvement of practice in this area. Still, it must be stressed here, that you are not under obligation to participate in the research if you do not wish to do so.

However if you agree to participate, you can be assured that the name of the Centre, the individual preschooler to whom you may refer (past or present) and your own identities will not be divulged, instead pseudonyms will be used in my attempts to promote anonymity and confidentiality.

The information will be kept confidential from third parties including fellow workers and personnel at the Ministry of Education ECCE Division. A censored version of the interview transcript will however be included in the appendix of the thesis which may be read by future students on the course and the thesis itself may be published as a research journal.

There is a dearth of information on Early Childhood Inclusion (ECI) in Trinidad and Tobago and therefore your earnest participation in this research may lead to in-depth research in this area that will prove beneficial to all educational districts in this part of the Caribbean region.

This study was approved at the proposal stage by both UWI and the Ministry of Education Early Childhood Division. For further information on any other aspect of this research project on inclusion you can contact me at (868- 773-3496) or at june.e.grant@gmail.com.

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

June E. Grant

Consent Form

I agree to participate in Student Number 808100010 research study. The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing. I am participating voluntarily and give permission for my interview to be tape-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up via a pseudonym that will be used to disguise my identity.

I also understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

.....

(Please tick (✓) one box)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

Signed.....

Date.....

APPENDIX C

Background information and interview questions

Background information:

1. How long have you been working in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)?

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2. What is your current level of education in this specialized field?

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3. Are you in agreement with the current initiative for inclusive environments for all diversities of children in the ECCE classroom?

Yes

No

4. What are some of the special needs programmes that you were exposed to in ECCE?

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5. During your career as an ECCE educator/facilitator what are some of the special needs you have encountered among the three to four year old population that you have served?

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6. How have you dealt with these cases?

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7. How have you utilized the national ECCE curriculum guide for finding strategies for working with children with special needs in your current practice?

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8. What if any are some concerns regarding the use of the ECCE guide in facilitating children with special needs?

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QUESTION 3 OPERATIONALIZED
INVESTIGATING THREE ECCE TEACHERS' CONCERNS REGARDING INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN TWO EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES IN THE VICTORIA EDUCATION DISTRICT

Organizational policy and procedures:

1. What is your working definition of **Organizational Administration** of ECCE Centres?
2. How would you describe the current **organizational administration** regarding the provision of teacher support for inclusion of children with Special Needs in your classroom setting?
3. What are your concerns regarding general teacher training in Special Needs for the promotion of inclusion of all children in the ECCE setting?
4. What are your concerns about **organizational flexibility** regarding activity planning to meet the needs of children with Special Needs in your inclusive setting?
5. What are your concerns about **teacher flexibility** regarding activity planning to meet the needs of children with Special Needs in your inclusive setting?
6. What are your concerns about **Administrator/Teacher flexibility** toward activity planning to meet the needs of children with Special Needs in your inclusive setting?
7. How would you describe the current ECCE Organization regarding the provision of pedagogical aids for children with Special needs in your inclusive setting?
8. How would you describe the current ECCE Administrator/Teacher support regarding the use of pedagogical aids for children with special needs or disabilities in your inclusive setting?

9. What are your concerns about teacher's ability to utilize pedagogical aids for children with Special Needs in your ECCE setting?
10. What are your concerns about the ECCE Organization policy or procedures on reporting a possible learning disability identified in a preschooler in your learning community?
11. What are your concerns regarding instructions for this reporting procedure?
12. Are these instructions readily available in a step by step format that explains the procedures for reporting suspected cases of (Learning Disabilities, Giftedness, Talent or other Special Needs such as malnutrition, obesity, emotional disorders and physical disabilities)?
13. What alternative procedures are there in place for addressing concerns about children with Special Needs in your community of learning?
14. What are your concerns regarding accessing family support services for addressing the needs of all children in your community of learning?

Organizational Practice:

1. What are your concerns regarding teacher autonomy in treating with children with Special Needs in your classroom context?
2. What are your concerns about teacher responsibility for caring for children with individual and diverse needs in your general classroom?
3. What are your concerns about the present indoor and outdoor environment for educating and caring for the needs of children with Special Needs?
4. What are your concerns regarding the current daily schedule for meeting the needs of ALL children in your community of learning?
5. What are your concerns regarding the current practice of 1-15 teacher/child ratios and how this impacts on meeting the needs of all children in your general classroom setting?

6. What are your concerns regarding the distribution of teachers to meet the demand for individualized teacher facilitation for children with Special Needs in your general ECCE classroom setting?
7. What are your concerns regarding teacher collaboration for facilitating children with Special Needs at your ECCE Centre?
8. What are your concerns regarding team teaching for facilitating children with Special Needs at your ECCE Centres?
9. What are your concerns regarding (action, proactive and responsive) research to assist the planning process for meeting the diverse needs of all children in the general ECCE setting (indoor and outdoor)?
10. What are your concerns regarding activity planning (small group, Centre Based Learning, Individual) for meeting the diverse needs of all children in the general ECCE setting?
11. What are your concerns regarding daily/weekly observation of children with Special Needs in your community of learning?
12. What are your concerns regarding child assessment practice at your ECCE Centre?
13. What are your concerns regarding Centre programme evaluation for children with and without Special Needs at your community of learning (student pedagogy, space, teachers' physical aides and pedagogical resources, physical plant/building)?
14. What are your concerns regarding Administrator/Teacher supervision with feedback for on the job professional enhancement for meeting the needs of all children and especially those with Special Needs in your general ECCE setting?

15. What are your concerns about shared-decision making (activity planning, effective strategy and other curriculum implementation, team-teaching, pedagogy and furniture installation) for facilitating children with Special Needs within your community of learning?

16. What are your concerns regarding teacher collaboration among the cluster Centres within educational district in which you operate?

17. What are your concerns regarding the support or lack of support derived from the Student Support Services for facilitating children with Special Needs at your Centre?

APPENDIX D

Main themes and categories identified and coded

Barriers to Teacher inclusion in General Education Setting: Victoria Education District Trinidad

CATEGORIES	THEMES	COLOUR CODE
ENVIRONMENT	Programme evaluation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher as qualitative auditor 	
	Language for inclusion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher awareness and shared understanding 	
ATTITUDES	Communication	
	Services and supports:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Adults specialists • Pedagogical aids 	
ATTITUDES	Autonomy and flexibility, attitude :	
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization • Administrator • Teacher 	
	Organizational Procedures	
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy awareness • Inclusion behaviour 	
	Teacher inclusion practices:	
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher awareness • Teacher as curriculum developer/ enabler • Collaboration 	

APPENDIX E

Excerpt of interview transcript

QUESTIONS AND PROBES	Ms Monitor	Ms Flowers	Ms Cook
What is your working definition of Organizational Administration of ECCE centres?	The procedures for running the early childhood programme, the way how things are done – there is no flow	The way the organization is put together to be effective and efficient.	The daily functions of the Centre, it also includes the government laws, international laws, our Division and the Ministry of education.
How would you describe the current organizational administration regarding the provision of teacher support for inclusion of children with Special Needs in you classroom setting?	Are you talking about personnel? There isn't any. Staff that is there has to do everything and have to be everything for everyone. You have to separate yourself into different categories to deal with certain problems. No one is coming into the centre to deal with such things	It is in need of improvement	So far I have never seen support given. In the past there has been no experience of having support being given in the area of special needs.

<p>What are your concerns regarding general teacher training in Special Needs for the promotion of inclusion of all children in the ECCE setting?</p>	<p>From the training that I have done so many years ago, I am not sure how it is within the new system. Then it was not adequate. I think more training should be added. You have more and more children coming in with special needs and I think is needed especially since the new administration want us to deal with inclusion within the school environment.</p>	<p>A concern I have is that teachers are not trained to recognize giftedness and also become aware of the various learning disorders, and challenging behaviours etc.</p>	<p>When we received training it was not in IEPs, just basic courses that did not give you the ability to specialize in special needs. We are therefore working blind we need to be given more expertise in this area.</p>
<p>What are your concerns about organizational flexibility regarding activity planning to meet the needs of children with Special Needs in your inclusive setting?</p>	<p>I think the flexibility has to come from the teachers themselves not necessarily what they may get in a curriculum guide or anything like that it has to come from the teacher herself</p>	<p>I think it could be better organized. The plan is rigid</p>	<p>Daily planning is done at the Centre on a weekly, monthly and term basis to ensure that we cover all aspects of our theme or project, curriculum web and cultural events.</p> <p>Planning is more a teacher related activity based on the news and interest of children.</p>
<p>What are your concerns about teacher flexibility regarding activity planning to meet the needs of children with Special Needs in your inclusive setting?</p>	<p>Right now it is general; it is supposed to be covering everybody right now but it does not have too much that says this is a plan for special needs, this is a particular plan for everybody else, it is a straight forward plan that we are dealing with right now.</p>	<p>In terms of inclusive education and activity plan writing, teachers have been taught to create activity plans that reflect general issues or developmental milestones not special needs.</p>	<p>When we are teaching parts of the body, the ambulance people involved in emergency situations, children who do not have hands with which to play, we ask the children how they think such children will be able to engage in play. We do try to sensitize children in some way so I believe that the activity plan can be used as it is to provide for the need of the child with special needs.</p>

<p>What are your concerns about Administrator flexibility toward activity planning to meet the needs of children with Special Needs in your inclusive setting?</p>	<p>I don't believe that administrators have that particular instruction to impart that to their staff so it comes down to what is happening at the top and if the curriculum coordinator did not inform the administrators on how it has to be done then the administrators will have no information to impart to the staff, so I don't see anything happening there.</p>	<p>A concern is that the Administrator/Teacher work alongside staff in ensuring that children with special needs are well catered for</p>	<p>Most teachers and administrators are at the same educational level, so unless the administrator has special education knowledge beyond the undergraduate level...</p>
<p>How would you describe the current ECCE Organization regarding the provision of pedagogical aids for children with Special needs in your inclusive setting?</p>	<p>Provisions have to be made to some extent but if you talking about special needs, No provisions have been made.</p>	<p>In terms of equipment, not every child is catered for and the equipment we have is basically for general use. I would like to see equipment that would appeal to every sense that a child possesses. Most of the stuff is tactile, so a child with as special nee that would respond through auditory faculties is limited in this environment where there are no audio visual except for the 'LED' Board and that is not an auditory device. Teachers bring their lap tops when they can to help facilitate the teaching of an activity.</p>	<p>What is provided by the government – some are needed and some are not culturally relevant.</p> <p>We have a television and a radio. We do not have a computer. It is a concern that we have overlooked because these technologies are need for helping children develop language, word formation and pronunciation.</p>

<p>How would you describe the current ECCE Administrator/Teacher support regarding the use of pedagogical aids for children with special needs or disabilities in your inclusive setting?</p>	<p>I believe if it was up to the administrator themselves, there would not be a problem but then these aides come from the MOE. Because some of these things are costly administrators can only make recommendations.</p>	<p>The administrator encourages staff to research and also to try various strategies that will support student learning.</p>	<p>There was avoidance to this question. (Researcher's Note).</p>
<p>What are your concerns about teacher's ability to utilize pedagogical aids for children with Special Needs in your ECCE setting?</p>	<p>We need a list of special needs assistive pedagogy. Once we have it then it has to be imported.</p> <p>Our centre is not new. We do not have most of the materials that new centres have, so we are disadvantaged in terms of the amount of resources that we have and how to use it.</p>		<p>We have some self-correcting pedagogy but the majority of pedagogy at the centre is for general use. If you know how to use it as a teacher you demonstrate that use to the children. Otherwise we improvise and make the ones we don't have. We need to have more sensory motor, memory skills and self-correcting materials.</p>

<p>What are your concerns about the ECCE Organization policy or procedures on reporting a possible learning disability identified in a preschooler in your learning community?</p> <p>Probe:</p> <p>So in the past you have never gone to your administrator and communicate your observations on children with special needs in your environment?</p> <p>So you are suggesting that this area is cloudy and clarity should be given regarding roles and responsibility of administrator and head teacher?</p>	<p>I have not heard of anything where you report something like that but even if you can were do not know if there is anything in place to take care of that.</p> <p>What we have learned in the past is that some children after they graduate from our environment when they go to the primary schools they have encountered some problems and I think recommendations were made there for these cases.</p>	<p>In my experience I have not really seen that except for some time ago when we received a form and it inquired where we were asked to fill in information about children with special needs at the Centre.</p> <p>That form was a cause for concern because it was the only one we received and was comprised of inadequacies. There was the ambiguous term; “Special Need/Disabilities” which you pointed out to us was inaccurate because a special need may not be a disability.</p>	<p>The concern is I do not understand where to report to. As a teacher you are constantly observing and beside administrators, there are different heads in the organization so you are not too sure where to report or what are the stops from here to another level of assistance.</p> <p>It was so while I was training and then they stopped hiring administrators for a while and the ‘Head Teachers’ (body language and facial expression changed) had to handle their own stories. The MOE also stopped family/community and quality assurance officers... so now that the administrators are back, I am not sure what the practice is in this new arrangement.</p> <p>Yes because even when that was the policy after the teacher and administrator sat with the parent and the matter was reported, to my knowledge there was no real follow-up, the matter was no longer heard of. I know there was also a student support service but I do not hear about them anymore.</p> <p>Researcher explained that</p>
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			No provision for support has been made for Student Support Services to operate as adult specialised services in the ECCE Sector.
<p>What alternative procedures are there in place for addressing concerns about children with special needs in your community of learning?</p> <p>Probe: Ms. Flowers:</p> <p>Are you saying that even though you are not a trained specialist that you can take on the responsibility of contacting agencies or referring parents to agencies?</p>	<p>When children come into the centre we have them in the environment, we observe them and try to make recommendation to the parents but we are sometime afraid to do that because we do not want it to look like we are stereotyping their children so we are left with making the decision as to how many years we have just to keep the children in the environment and observe them.</p>	<p>I guess seeking the assistance and advisement of other staff members who might have had the experience before doing individual research, as well as, engaging in communication with parents to find out if they made similar observations and have similar concerns.</p>	<p>Observe children, make apparatus, consult books, use the internet, and communicate with agencies such as social welfare and dental services.</p> <p>One of my lecturers at university provided a listing of agencies and other sources during the programme course work.</p> <p>Well it was just a list forwarded to teacher-students and the recommended course work text on special needs.</p>