INVESTIGATION INTO THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

CENTRE BASED -ACTIVE LEARNING CURRICULUM APPROACH:

TEACHERS' CONCERNS AT FOUR ECCE CENTRES IN THE

ST. GEORGE EAST EDUCATIONAL DISTRICT.

EDRS 6900: Project Report

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of

Master of Education in Curriculum

Of

The University of the West Indies

Maria Paul-Wiseman

2013

Mrs. Desiree Augustin

School of Education

Faculty of Humanities and Education

St. Augustine Campus

ABSTRACT

An investigation into the Early Childhood Care and Education Centre Based -Active Learning curriculum approach: Teachers' concerns at four government ECCE Centres in the St. George East Educational District.

This study investigated teachers' concerns about the early childhood care and education Centre Based-Active Learning curriculum approach at four government early childhood centres in the St. George East Educational District in Trinidad and Tobago. Centre Based-Active Learning curriculum approach was introduced as a significant part of the educational reform to improve the quality of educational programmes offered to three and four year old children. A qualitative case study was employed to gain insights into the concerns of four early childhood teachers. The theoretical framework of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) was used to analyze teachers' concerns with the implementation. The findings revealed that teachers had intense concerns related to informational, personal, management and collaboration stages, but minimal concerns were reported at the awareness, consequence and refocusing stages. Emerging concerns were related to ineffective training and understanding, time demands, availability of resources, inadequate staff, and lack of support from the cluster administrator.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENT

Page

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter 4

Data analysis and Findings

Chapter 5

Chapter 1

Introduction

'The best investment we can make is in early childhood as what happens to us in the first six years basically sets our coping skills and competence for life' (J. Fraser Mustard, 1997).

Background for Curriculum Reform

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) has become a central focus for governmental agencies and educators all around the world both in industrialized and developing countries. Equitable access to quality early childhood education is increasingly viewed by policy makers as a means of strengthening the foundation of lifelong learning for all children (Urban 2010).

With the growing concerns for early childhood education, a collective commitment among international countries was made at the United Nations Education Scientific Children's Organization (UNESCO) World Education Forum in 1990. From this conference, the World Declaration on Education for All agreed on six international goals to meet the learning needs of children by 2012. The first goal in the World Declaration on Education for All is aimed at expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.To achieve the goal for early childhood, the World Declaration on Education for All stated that active learning approaches are particularly valuable to assure learning acquisition and allow learners to reach their full potential.

An evaluation of the achievements and challenges of the first goal conducted through the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) revealed substantial increase in early childhood enrolment, decreased child mortality rates and progress in the quality of early childhood care and education

curriculum; this was observed throughout the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas, Arab States, Europe, North America, Asia and the Pacific. Additionally, some of the Caribbean islands have shown satisfactory progress in achieving the first goal, yet significant gaps exist with the aspect of appropriate curricula practices. While there is a trend towards the increasing access to early education services, there is also a continued international development to make the curricula less academically oriented and more child-centred (Sacks and Ruzzi 2005).

Reasons for Introducing Active Learning Curriculum Approach

Driven by the demands for positive learning outcomes and the sense of urgency surrounding curriculum reform, a child-centered active learning approach to early childhood curriculum is encouraged by educators and researchers. UNESCO (2008) Global Monitoring Report highlights a trend to revise curricula, make classroom interactions more responsive and centred on the child. Therefore, it is proposed that the emphasis on children's learning should be changed from a traditional, passive approach to a more active approach. Ginsburg's (2009) report on the progress of early childhood education indicated that active learning curriculum approaches have provided an expanded range of experiences for young children; enabling them to make use of learning opportunities both within and beyond formal education. The consistent implementation of active learning curriculum approaches has the potential to raise the standards of care and education experienced by young children (Goffin 2001).

With active learning approach, young children utilize their innate desire to explore, ask questions about people, materials, events and ideas that arouse their curiosity; they are able to solve problems and generate new strategies. Hohmann & Weikart (2006) stated that an active learning

approach provides children key experiences to promote mental, emotional, social and physical growth. Active learning consists of four main components: a positive adult- child interaction and support; an organised play space into specific interest areas or learning centres with developmentally appropriate materials; a consistent daily routine allowing children to anticipate what happens next in the environment and a team-based daily assessment which includes observing, interacting and planning with children. As a best practice, Marshall (2003) suggests that there must be a shift in the relationship of the teacher and the learner where the old paradigm view the teacher as responsible for children's learning, to a more active learning approach allowing children to engage in exploration of materials and ideas.

Active learning approaches are the most common form of government supported programme towards curriculum reform in early childhood education. UNESCO (2007) Global Monitoring Report suggests that active learning approach accommodates children from age three years to primary school entry age. This approach offers a range of activities and learning opportunities to help young children develop language, social and enthusiasm vital for the present and future well-being. Arnold (2006) research on Centre Based- Active Learning identified positive impact on children's language, social and cognitive development and emphasized the importance of adult-child interaction, class size, staff-child ratio and staff training.

An analysis on early childhood education was conducted through the Organisation for Early Childhood Development (2004). This analysis revealed that Reggio Emilia and Montessori approaches of Italy, Te Wharriki approach of New Zealand, High/Scope of the United States of America, the Experiential Educational approaches of Netherlands and United Kingdom are the predominantly used curriculum approaches with common principles of active learning, play,

child-centered and holistic development. Morrison (2009) indicates that these curriculum approaches have been extensively researched, tested and demonstrated positive learning outcomes.

International Developments of Active Learning Implementation

In the 1980's, China commenced curriculum reform in which the National Action Plan for implementing the early childhood curriculum shifted emphasis from teaching knowledge and skills to an active learning approach for children. A study conducted by Liu and Feng's (2005) on the early childhood curriculum implementation in China showed that Reggio Emilia, High/Scope and Montessori curriculum approaches were adopted. These approaches promoted respect for children's active learning by allowing children to take the initiative as they engaged in centre based teaching and learning experiences.

Jordan was amongst the first countries in the region of North Africa to focus on early childhood curriculum reform to ensure that children are provided with quality learning opportunities. Roggermann & Shukri (2010) indicated that the country has forged a largely comprehensive educational system geared at developing the human resources of its citizens. In 2006, the National Educational Strategy was drafted and it emphasized that the changing role for teachers required new knowledge, skills, attitudes, teacher preparation as well as training. The key principles of active learning assisted teachers to view themselves as learning facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge. However, Roggermann & Shukri (2010) case study on curriculum reform found that the High/Scope active learning approach and the principles of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) curriculum have been extremely difficult for both teachers and families to accept due to the traditional modes of learning. The UNESCO (2007)

also reported that other challenges Jordan faced had to do with the huge amounts of materials and financial resources. The training of teachers on the High/Scope approach could not eliminate the traditional mentality to teaching, since High/Scope considers the backbone of the education process to be the child, not the teacher.

In the United States of America, children's participation in active learning programs has increased steadily in the past two decades. Sacks and Ruzzi (2005) declared that the popular curriculum approaches in the United States of America provide children with high quality opportunities to reach their potential and achieve readiness for learning. Marcon (2002) research study on the High/Scope active learning curriculum approach showed that children who were exposed to this learning experience do significantly better academically in later schooling than children whose preschool experiences are more academic and teacher-directed

Regional Developments of Active Learning Implementation

Within the Caribbean region, Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada and Saint Kitts and Nevis have adopted the High/Scope educational approach of active learning to suit the culture of the islands. The implementation of High/Scope approach has been framed within the Caribbean's early childhood learning goals and outcomes which address six (6) key areas of learning: wellness, resilience, valuing of culture, effective communication, intellectual empowerment and respect for self and the environment (Meyer 2000). A study conducted by Williams (2009) on the implementation of an active learning approach showed that Saint Kitts and Nevis have implemented the High/Scope active learning approach into the curriculum and have stood out as a country that has managed to sustain a higher level of programme quality compared to countries that have not implemented High/Scope active learning approach.

Local Developments of ECCE in Trinidad and Tobago

A historical review on ECCE was conducted by Logie (1997) which highlighted that during the period (1834-1918) Trinidad and Tobago experienced a slow rate of education for young children. Throughout most of the post-emancipation period of the nineteenth century, preschool aged children were care for by families; no formal education was done. However, the post war period of the twentieth century showed social and political reform and educational expectations for children heightened. The establishment of limited secondary education and scholarships added fierce competition for entry in secondary schools.

The demand for early childhood began to emerge in the 1950's. Privately owned schools provided children with reading, writing and arithmetic opportunities aimed at giving an academic head start to compete with the educational demand at primary and secondary school system. This demand for education was only affordable by working class and middle income families.

Governmental involvement in young children's learning began in September 1970. A pilot project on preschool was funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. During this period, the government established the Preschool Education Unit within the Ministry of Education to: register private early childhood centres, monitor the physical condition of all centres, train teachers and to re-establish a National Council for ECCE.

Additionally, a curriculum, referred to as SPICES was developed by the Voluntary Service for All (SERVOL). The aim of this curriculum was to encourage children's creativity and spontaneity rather than pressure children to read, write and count. Throughout private centres, the use of SPICES curriculum was based on personal choice of the administrator or provider.

The programs at various centres continue to reflect traditional teacher-controlled and teacher-centered with passive learners and curriculum inconsistencies.

Within most recent times, a project was undertaken in partnership with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) to construct new government ECCE centres and to upgrade existing ones. During the period 2006-2010 government ECCE centres were managed by an Administrator, one Teacher, two Teacher Assistants, and an auxiliary staff. This system was supported by Family Life Officers, Curriculum Facilitators and Quality Assurance Officers who were responsible for facilitating home/school link, supporting centre staff with curriculum implementation and monitoring the physical environment. However, in 2011 discontinuance in the ECCE management occurred when a mandate was given by the Minister of Education, honourable Dr. Tim Gopeesingh to arrange the ECCE Centres into clusters groups based on educational districts and geographical locations within the district. The restructuring of the previous management system now comprises of; one Administrator who is responsible for a cluster group of three or four ECCE Centres, one teacher, two teacher assistants per centre with the absence of the supporting officers.

Trinidad and Tobago embraces Active Learning Curriculum Approach
Locally, Trinidad and Tobago introduced the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide (NECCECG) in September 2006 which provided for the first time in the nation's history, a common philosophy, holistic goals for children's learning in all developmental domains and standards for classroom practice (Eggers-Pierola, Skiffington and Helms, 2007). The new curriculum approach is often articulated among early childhood teachers throughout Trinidad and Tobago as Centre Based-Active Learning (CBAL). This refers to the

active approach to early learning in which children interact with objects and people in a prepared learning areas or spaces in the classroom to construct knowledge.

Centre Based- Active Learning has been defined by Celestin (2008) as specifically identified areas or spaces in the early childhood settings which are also termed learning centres, work areas, activity areas as well as interest areas. The Implementation of the NECCECG presented a major change in the educational reform process to address concerns of the traditional teacher-directed approach to curriculum and the lack of quality early childhood experiences offered during children's early formative years (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Justification of Concerns for the Study

Internationally in the Middle East, Erden's (2010) research on preschool teachers' concerns regarding change of the curriculum to active learning approaches has identified that teachers have concerns such as need for a supporting environment and collaborative relationships. Erden's (2010) considered these concerns are crucial factors motivating teachers for better implementation.

The research study conducted by Eddy (2009) on teachers' attitude toward the curriculum approach in ECCE showed that teachers in Kenya had a negative attitude towards teaching in the centres as concerns were not addressed at a governmental level. Similarly in Malawi, a research on teachers' concerns was conducted by Mizrachi et al., (2008). The findings revealed that teachers focused on government supported policies as main factors discouraging the use of active-learning pedagogies.

At present, not much research has been undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago on Early Childhood Care and Education teachers' concerns as it relates to the implementation of the CBAL approach. With this implementation, early childhood teachers are expected to change from the traditional teacher- centered approach to an active child-centered method which is relatively new to them.

Teacher's concerns regarding the implementation of the CBAL approach in early childhood education should be examined as Hall and Hord (2006) specified that successful implementation depends largely on the extent to which implementers' concerns about change are taken into account. Barrow (2011, p. 43) recommends that every effort should be made to mitigate implementers' concerns or at least to minimize them, ensuring that implementers approach innovation more objectively and, by so doing, increase the likelihood of embracing the innovation that was intended. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate early childhood teachers' concerns after three years of implementing the curriculum as feelings and perceptions at this stage will affect successful implementation.

Description of the Centre's Context

The study is being conducted at four recently constructed government early childhood centres located in the St. George East Educational District. Two of the centres were established in 2012, the other two centres were among the first twenty (20) centres completed in 2009 to provide free quality education to three and four year old children, as well as to meet the goals of the 2015 Dakar Framework-Education for All.

The ecology of each ECCE centre consists of an outdoor environment adorned with large, trimmed, grassy playfields, attractive flowering plants as well as the sand and water play areas.

The indoor space for children's activities is sectioned into seven clearly defined and attractive learning centres comprising of: Math and Manipulative, Dramatic Play, Art and Craft, Language and Literacy, Science and Discovery, Blocks, and Computer and Listening.

The staffing at each of the four centres consist of a cluster Administrator; responsible for the supervision of the four centres, thirty five children, two teacher assistants and one teacher whose responsibility is to carry out both teaching and administrative duties in the absent of the administrator. The four teachers from each of the centres have obtained a Bachelor of Education Early Childhood Care and Education degree from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine and have been implementing the curriculum over the past three years. The other eight teachers are in the process of completing their early childhood degree programme and have not been in the system for more than three years. However, all members of staff are responsible for curriculum implementation.

Statement of the Problem

The implementation of the Centre Based- Active Learning curriculum approach in Trinidad and Tobago has heralded significant changes in educational philosophies and practices in early childhood care and education. During visits to the early childhood centres and in the course of interacting with teachers, apprehensions have been informally expressed about the implementation of the Centre Based -Active Learning curriculum approach, in particular planning of activities and strategies for children to select learning centres. Even though the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide has been implemented to provide developmentally appropriate experiences for young children, there are no clear guidelines on how to carry out the approach and as such it is open to teachers' interpretation and

justification for their practices. This openness to interpretation can lead to feelings of frustration on the part of teachers who are at the forefront of implementing the curriculum approach. It therefore becomes necessary to understand and address their concerns at this stage since future implementation can be hindered.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to identify the concerns of early childhood teachers in the St. George East Educational District regarding the implementing of the CBAL curriculum approach and to formally document these concerns so that strategies could be developed to assist teachers with future implementation.

Significance of the study

This study seeks to gather information from teachers about their concerns regarding CBAL approach to the curriculum. The findings could be useful to the centre's administrator in the planning of professional development workshops to address and employ strategies to overcome teachers' concerns with the curriculum approach. Additionally, the study could provide information to guide curriculum developers at the Ministry of Education Early Childhood Care and Education Division to make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum. Finally, it could be beneficial in contributing to the local literature on Centre Based- Active Learning Approach in early childhood education.

Research Questions

<u>Overarching question</u>

What concerns do teachers have about the implementation of the Centre Based -

Active Learning curriculum approach at the four Government ECCE Centres in the St.

George East Educational District in Trinidad and Tobago?

<u>Sub-Questions</u>

1. What are teachers' understandings of the approach to the ECCE Curriculum?

2. What concerns do teachers have about the implementation of a Centre Based - Active

   Learning approach at their institutions?

3. What concerns do teachers perceive may impact on the implementation of the CBAL

   approach?

For this project, only Sub-Question Two (2) has been operationalized.

Definition of Key Terms:

➢ **Early Childhood Education:** Educational programmes that are meant to be

developmentally appropriate created specifically for all young children between the ages

three to five years old to prepare them for entry into and success at formal primary

education.

➢ **Curriculum Implementation:** The process of enacting or putting into practice an idea,

programme or set of activities for learners (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

➢ **Centre Based:** Specifically identified areas or spaces in the early childhood environment in which adults organized play spaces to support and provide children with opportunities to make choices and carry out their ideas of play; they are often referred to as learning centres, work areas, activity areas or interest areas (Hohmann & Weikart, 2006).

➢ **Active Learning:** Learning in which the child, by acting on objects and interacting with people, ideas and events, constructs new understanding (Hohmann & Weikart, 2006).

➢ **Concerns:** The composite representation of the feelings, preoccupations, thoughts and consideration given to a particular issue or task (Hall, George and Rutherford, 1979, cited in Hall and Hord, 2006, p.139).

Organisation of the Study

Chapter one introduced the study by providing a background description of: the research topic, the problems giving rise to the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions that the study seeks to answer, the significance of the study and definitions of key terms. Chapter two contains a review of the literature regarding the active learning curriculum approaches in early childhood education, implementation of change and the Concerns Based Adoption Model as it relates to the change process. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework used in this study, the research method employed and the procedures followed during the course of the study. It also highlights ethical considerations, researcher's position, limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter four includes the analysis of the data and presentation of the findings in relation to the research questions. Chapter five discusses each finding in light of the literature and provides recommendations based on the findings of the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The focus of this study was based on investigating teachers' concerns as they implement CBAL in the early childhood environment. To pursue this focus, it was necessary to understand the literature that describes the active learning environment in the context of early childhood care and education, implementing change and the Concerns Based Adoption Model.

Active learning in the early childhood environment

With the recognition of children's role in the learning process and the rise in attention from a psychological, sociological or child's rights awareness perspective, a shift in focus from the traditional to an approach where children are active participants is essential (Hayes 2003). Active learning originates from the theoretical perspectives of John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky who viewed learning as constructive. The theorists' main beliefs are that learning is active and involves doing, learning is interactive, children learn through play with their peers and more experienced others which promote development.

Children's learning has also been considered by Gordon & Browne (2006) as an active process based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by the learners rather than occurring as a result of transfer from teacher to child. To facilitate active learning teachers must incorporate the main elements into children's activities. These elements consist of using open-ended materials, direct experiences to manipulate and make choices from a variety of materials, opportunities to develop language through speaking, listening, reading and writing and the support of adults in the

environment to extend children's knowledge, skills disposition and attitudes (Ministry of Education 2006).

According to Haack (2008), the use of active learning has been encouraged in early childhood education to enhance the quality of learning through the creation of meaning rather than rote memorization of facts; as merely taking part in activities may not be enough to achieve deep learning. White & Mitchell (1994) state that an active learning environment provides opportunities for children to co-operate, to develop skills in critical and creative thinking, as well as to explore new phenomena through which meaningful learning can occur.

Roopnarine & Johnson's (2002) study on well-known curriculum approaches in early childhood presents views of children as active participants in the integral and ongoing process of learning. These approaches consider the dimensions contributing to the positive development and later success in school. The longitudinal studies of Schweinhart, Barnes & Weikart (1993) compared the High/Scope active curriculum approach, teacher -directed approach and child-centered theme-based approach. The results showed that there was a slight advantage for teacher-directed instruction initially, but long term data collected in adolescence showed that the children who were exposed to the High/Scope active curriculum approach have adopted better to societal demands and found themselves a better life with higher education and employment than children who were engaged in a traditional teacher-directed approach.

Additionally, Morrison's (2009) overview on active learning approach found that the adults create the setting in which children learn. The teachers provided the experience for children to construct their own knowledge through direct manipulation with physical objects and events rather than direct teaching. The context is created by implementing and supporting five essential

elements: active learning, classroom arrangement, the daily schedule, assessment, and the curriculum. According to Hohmann & Weikart (2009) the central element of the High/Scope daily routine is the plan-do-review sequence in which children state their intentions through planning with adults, carry out the plans during work time, and review with the teachers and peers on what they have discovered. Cahir (2008) summarizes that children who are immersed in High/Scope curriculum approach participate as active learners in a supportive classroom with intentional teachers. The learners share control, develop initiatives and pro-social dispositions which positively affect their subsequent learning and life decisions.

Montessori is another approach possessing distinct features that confer learning through action. Each classroom is designed to be developmentally appropriate and allow children to play and work cooperatively. The belief is that children develop patience and obedience, respect for peers and adults in this environment. The teachers scaffold children's learning, constantly observe and document the progress of individual children. The information gathered from observation is used to decide when to introduce new materials in a demonstrative lesson. Lillard (2012) conducted research on the implementation fidelity of Montessori Approach. The findings revealed that children who participated in the programme where no alteration to the programme was made developed greater skills in reading, mathematics, vocabulary and social problem-solving skills than compared to other programmes that supplemented conventional teacher-directed activities.

In another study, Rathunde (2003) compared the outcomes of children who attended the Montessori school with children from traditional school. The report indicated that Montessori children experienced a significantly better quality in their academic work than their traditional

counterparts. According to the research, the Montessori's children perceived their school as more positive community for learning, with opportunities for active learning.

Research studies on Reggio Emilia's project approach to learning have also provided documented benefits on children's development. Baldacchino's (2011) research study revealed that less behavioural problems in the classrooms were encountered and children demonstrated longer attention span when they were exposed to self-initiating learning experiences. Additionally, Katz and Chard (2000) study on the project approach found that the children mastered skills not only in basic reading, language and mathematics skills but in social development, decision making and critical thinking skills. Within the Reggio Emilia's approach teaching and learning involve the active engagement of children working collaboratively on projects. Katz (2006) emphasizes that the use of projects provide opportunities for intellectual curiosity and all aspects of development. Similarly, Rinaldini (2000) also pointed out that the projects permit children to construct their own meaning, raise questions, builds theories and meaning about the surrounding world.

The research findings from these studies highlighted that the implementation of active learning approaches provide children with positive long term academic and social benefits. This idea of active learning educational approaches have emphasized what the century-old theorists have postulated as appropriate for young children. The studies have also justifies the importance of adopting the approach to enact the National ECCE Curriculum Guide in Trinidad and Tobago ECCE Centres; since the desired outcomes are for children to grow up as confident, effective communicators and lifelong learners. Therefore, a consistent implementation of the Centre

Based-Active Learning approach has the potential to raise the standard of early childhood care and education experienced by young children.

Implementation of Change

Implementing Centre based –Active Learning approach is a positive change to curriculum reform in Trinidad and Tobago and the early childhood teachers are at the forefront in the implementation of the new paradigm. Hall & Hord (2006) define change as a process through which people and organisations move as they gradually come to understand, becoming skilled and competent in the use of new ways. Fullan (2004) also explains that the challenges teachers experience with implementation of a new innovation may be due to a lack of knowledge of the change process. Therefore, Golbeck (2002) advised that one way to follow the changes of a new innovation is to ask teachers how they conceptualized their practices throughout implementation. This suggests that teachers will undergo changes when implementing the CBAL approach and it is important to help teachers understand these changes.

With the implementation of any new program three components are at stake: (1) the possible use of new or revised materials, (2) the possible use of new teaching approaches and (3) the possible alterations of beliefs. Change has to occur in practice along these dimensions for it to have a chance of affecting the outcome (Fullan 2001). The teachers implementing change to Centre Based- Active learning could either alter the teaching approach, or use the materials and alter some teaching behaviours without grasping the beliefs underlying the change. Therefore, the success of change starts and ends with individuals involved, but some will grasp the change immediately while most will need additional time or few teachers will avoid making the change for a very long time (Hall & Hord 2006).

Fullan's Educational Change model, Rogers' Diffusion model and the Concerns Based Adoption Model of Hall and Hord are all grounded in empirical studies of change. These models provide critical understanding when implementing any changes to new innovations; in this case understanding the changes taking place with the implementation of CBAL.

Change in education is associated with reform and improvement. Fullan's educational change model addresses factors such as the characteristics of change, local factors and external factors all affecting the process of change. With characteristics of change, a general feeling of a need must be directly perceived by the implementers. Hence, careful examination of the curriculum determines whether or not the change addresses priority needs (Fullan 2001). The complexity, quality, contextual suitability and practicality of the innovation also affect change. Most innovation addresses urgent and ambitious needs; it happens that decisions are frequently made without the follow-up or preparation time necessary to generate adequate materials (Fullan 2001).

Local characteristics of the implementation affect change. Prawat (1996) argues that a learning community approach often builds social and intellectual connections, commitment and professionalism without manipulating control. However, Fullan states that without support of regional administrators, change may happen with individual teachers or single schools, but it will most likely remain isolated in some innovative pockets without affecting the broader system. Government and other external agencies can promote curriculum implementation through resource support, standardization, and closer monitoring. Fullan (2001) highlighted that the change process is less effective when there is either a lack of role clarity, ambiguity about expectations, absence of regular interpersonal communication, and ambivalence between

authority or support roles of external agencies. Fullan's model also indicated that change affects the individuals involved. Therefore, individuals' perceptions and concerns should be considered during the implementation of change.

Rogers' model of change focuses on diffusion of an innovation and the rate of adoption which is made most effective through communication. Rogers (2001) refers to diffusion as the spread of a new idea from its source of invention to the ultimate adopters. The rate of adoption is the mental process through which individuals pass upon first hearing about an innovation to find adoption. The model proposed that the innovation decision process occurs at five stages: 1. from first knowledge of innovation, 2. to forming an attitude toward the innovation, 3. to a decision to adopt or reject,4. to implementation of the new idea, 5. to confirmation of the decision. Rogers also noted that prior conditions such as previous practice, felt needs or problems, innovativeness, and norms of the social systems affect the change process.

From these studies on implementing change, valuable information on the various stages that teachers would undergo during the implementation of CBAL. Teachers must firstly recognize the need of the curriculum approach and with the support from administrators the rate of adoption and use will be effective.

Development and the change process

Concerns are the personal side of change and have been defined as the composite representation of the feelings, preoccupation, thought and consideration given to a particular issue or task (Hall and Hord, 2006). The theory on concerns development emerged in 1969 by the researcher Francis Fuller who documented and analysed the findings on prospective teachers' and

beginning teachers' concerns towards teaching. Fuller proposed four main levels of concerns that teachers experience during the change process: unrelated, self, task and impact.

According to Fuller (1996), unrelated concerns occur most frequently among student teachers who had no direct experiences with children in a school setting. The teachers have concerns, but they are not centered on teaching or teaching related issues. Self-concerns are most often seen in student teachers where the focus of concerns is about self-adequacy rather than on children's need or on teaching. These concerns are described as egocentric in that teachers are focused on what the teaching experience will be like and questions revolve around the ability to succeed as a teacher. Task concerns are identified in student teachers when the real work of teaching becomes central. The final phase of impact concerns focuses on student outcomes, their progress and what can be done to be a more effective teacher.

Hall and Hord (2006) research found that over two-thirds of the concerns of pre-service teachers were in the self and task areas when the implementers have very little experience using the innovation. Two – thirds of the concerns of experienced teachers were in the task and impact areas where teachers focused on how students benefit from the innovation. Additionally, teachers may have concerns at several levels at any given time, but their concerns are concentrated in one particular level. However, Hall and Hord (2006) also stated that concerns would appear when teachers are confronted with new experiences and when these concerns are resolved more mature concerns would appear.

A study on change was conducted by Van den Berg (1999), it was found that the same types of concerns were expressed when people are engaged with any change. Additionally, the interventions to facilitate change should be linked directly with the concerns of those who are

engaged with the change. Therefore, Hall and Hord (2006) recommend that teachers with concerns need support from a facilitator who is highly experienced with details of using the innovation and can offer specific tips on how to carry out the implementation.

Principles of Change & the Concerns Based Adoption Model

The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) was first introduced in 1973 and focused on in-service teachers' concerns when confronted with an innovation and incorporated Fuller's (1969) three phases of concerns. CBAM is comprised of three dimensions: (1) The Stage of Concerns dimensions which deals with the teachers' perception and feelings about an innovation. (2) The Levels of Use dimension indicating how teachers implement the innovation and (3) The Innovation Configuration which demonstrates the different ways innovation is implemented. The Stages of Concerns will be used as this study focuses on affective side of change as it relates to teachers' concerns with implementation of the new Centre based- Active learning approach.

The Stages of Concern (SoC) component of CBAM is a diagnostic concept identifying the concerns of teachers during the change process. Hall and Hord (2006) stated that SoC gives insights into teachers' feelings and perceptions about the changes during the implementation of an innovation. The SoC also enable change facilitators to make decisions as to what kind of intervention should be developed to assist teachers. Although each of the stages is distinguished from the other, they are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, teachers may show concerns at all the stages, but the intensity of particular stages varies with any individual as the implementation of an innovation progresses.

With the Stages of Concerns, Hall and Hord (2006) identified and confirmed seven specific stages of an innovation. These SoC are placed into four developmental dimensions: unrelated,

self (awareness, informational and personal); task (management) and impact (consequences, collaboration and refocusing).

At the awareness stage (0) teachers have little knowledge or involvement with the innovation and are not likely to be concerned about it. At the informational stage (1) teachers exhibit awareness of the innovation and are interested in learning more details about the general characteristics, effects and requirements for use of the innovation.

Teachers who are at the personal stages (2) of the innovation exhibit little concerns of how best to manage changes in the classroom environment or how changes will affect learning. The teachers experience uncertainty about the demands of an innovation, inadequacy to meet those demands and their role in relation to the innovation. This includes an analysis of their role with regards to the reward structure of the organisation, decision-making and consideration of potential conflicts with existing structures or personal commitment.

 At the management stage (3) of concerns, the teachers are focused on the processes and task of using the innovation and resources. Issues related to efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling and time demands are most important. At the consequence stage (4), teachers express concerns about the impact of the innovation on students in their immediate sphere of influence. The focus is on relevance of the innovation for students; evaluation of student outcomes, including performance and competencies; and changes needed to increase student outcomes.

 During the collaboration stage (5) teachers focus on co-ordination and cooperation with others regarding use of the innovation. They begin to seek out relationships that will assist them in implementing the innovation. At the refocusing stage (6) the teachers focus on exploration of

more universal benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of major changes or replacement with a more powerful alternative.

According to CBAM, administrators should search out possible solutions to move teachers from self-concerns to task concerns, especially at the first year, and then to the impact concerns after three to five years of implementation. Therefore, with the implementation of Centre Based-Active Learning approach at the early childhood level, it is necessary for teachers to share concerns or challenges they encounter throughout the implementation process so that profound intervention strategies can be made to support change.

Use of CBAM by educational researchers

Researchers indicated that the systematic approach of CBAM is effective in overcoming barriers to the adoption of an innovation and also empowers users to a successful implementation (Sashkin & Egermeier 1992). According to Loucks-Hasley (1998), the CBAM framework has implications for professional development in making changes and provides support for the individual involve in the change. Wu (2002) revealed that CBAM model was developed to describe concerns that individuals have about an innovation. Hall and Hord (2006) suggest that the hypothesis underlying CBAM model is that the change facilitator can make decisions about how to use resources and provide interventions for teachers to facilitate change.

Stages of Concerns and CBAM have been used as a research tool with various educational innovations such as teachers' concerns regarding the implementation of new curriculum. (e.g., Van den Berg 2000), measuring the teachers' concerns when participating in professional workshop. A study was conducted by (Harry 2004) using the CBAM model on teachers' concerns with the implementation of CAPE communication studies found that teachers had

primarily intense self-oriented concerns at the awareness, informal and personal stage. Teachers also showed concerns at the impact stage –collaboration. Another study by (Dowrich 2008) on teachers' perception with the implementation of National Continuous Assessment Programme in school revealed that all seven teachers had varying degrees of concerns with the implementation but most experience the same type of self, task and impact concerns. Few studies have begun investigating the personal side of early childhood teachers' concerns on the Centre based- Active learning approach.

Summary

The research on the literature revealed that active learning approach offers numerous benefits to young children's learning experiences. Therefore, the introduction of Centre Based –Active Learning for young children in Trinidad and Tobago is aimed at providing opportunities for children to become active participants in the learning process. The teachers' role in the early childhood environment encompasses facilitating learning, incorporating developmentally appropriate resources and providing support. Additionally, the literature emphasized that the implementation of a new innovations is often wrought with challenges and concerns occurring at varying levels. The literature confirmed that teachers are responsible for making change and that change is a process in which teachers develop over time.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The focus of this study was to provide an understanding of early childhood teachers' concerns as they experienced the new Centre Based- Active Learning curriculum approach in one educational district in Trinidad and Tobago. This chapter provides a description of the research design used in the study, as well as coordination of sampling procedure, data collection and analysis to answer the research question: What concerns do teachers at the St. George East Educational District have regarding the ECCE CBAL curriculum approach?

Research Design

This qualitative case study sought to gain insight into the concerns teachers have about the CBAL implementation. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) state that an effective research design outlines the purpose into which there is coherence between the research question and the proposed approach to generate data that is credible and verifiable.

Justification for Using Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an inquiry process which provides opportunities for the researcher to get a clear insight into a social or human problem. The researcher is able to conduct the study in natural settings, builds complex, holistic pictures, analyse words and reports detailed views on informants (Creswell 2007). One of the key philosophical assumptions of a qualitative research as suggested by Merriam (1998) is that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds.

More importantly, Creswell (2007) indicates that the qualitative research has an interpretive characteristic so data derived from the participants' perspectives are attempted to be understood from the participants' form of reference and the meaning people have constructed of their experiences. This unique characteristic of the qualitative research allows the researcher to understand the meaning people have created about the implementation of the CBAL curriculum approach and how teachers are able to share their concerns.

Additionally, Wellington (2000) posits that employing a qualitative inquiry allows the study to evolve, as the researcher is the key instrument for data collection and analysis through observation, participation and interviews. Therefore, while engaging in the study it is likely for the researcher to re-enter the field, review initial questions and seek elaborations from participants to clarify uncertainties of the topic. Moreover, Merriam (1998) made clearly that the goal of a qualitative inquiry is to offer deep exploration of issues aimed at describing, understanding and interpreting concerns with the CBAL curriculum implementation.

Justification for Qualitative Case Study Approach

The method used in this research is a case study. The use of case study provides in-depth detailed explanation of single examples (an event process, organization, individual or group) of similar phenomenology (Rossman & Kallis 2003). A case study research is an empirical inquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenology within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Case study is useful when studying educational innovations and seeks to describe, understand and explain feelings or concerns Yin (2003). Therefore, case studies produce an understanding of real life events while retaining holistic and meaningful characteristics.

The operationalized research question of the study is what concerns do teachers have about the implementation of CBAL curriculum approach? According to Yin (2003), 'what' type questions are connected to exploratory case studies providing opportunities for the researcher to explore teachers' concerns during the implementation of the CBAL curriculum approach in the early childhood setting.

Sampling and Selection of Participants

The purposive sampling strategy was employed during this research. Creswell (2006) states that this strategy allows the researcher to seek individual who can bring rich information central to understanding the research issue. Purposive sampling also provides opportunity for the researcher to select convenient samples that are most suitable to generate relevant and in-depth data to answer the research question (Miles & Huberman 1994).

In this study, four teachers from four separate government ECCE Centres were selected to participate in the study. The teachers belong to the same cluster group which is managed by one Administrator. One of the participants holds a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Care and Education and has over fifteen years of experience with early childhood children. The other three participants hold an ECCE Teacher's Certificate and a Bachelor of Education ECCE Degree with a span of over ten years working in the field; firstly as ECCE Teacher Assistants and have recently been upgraded to the position of ECCE Teacher. The participants are all responsible for ensuring efficient operation of their respective centres as well as implementation of the curriculum in the administrator's absence. Each of the four participants was selected because they were recognized as qualified early childhood teachers with years of experience. The

participating teachers have all been considered by staff and parents as passionate and committed to working with young children ages three and four years.

Data Collection Method

The data for this study were collected through a semi-structured focus group interview with four participants. Kitzinger (1995) recommends that the number of people per focus group is usually six to ten or can be as few as four if the purpose of the study is to understand an issue or behaviour. A focus group refers to individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on personal experience, the subject of the research topic (Powell, Single & Lloyd 1996). The object of focus group interview is to get high quality data in a social context where people can consider their own view in the context of the views of others. Krueger (1994) indicated that focus groups has a sense of community in that the participants are relatively homogenous by having common attributes, such as gender, ethnic background, occupation or specific interest. In this case, all the participants were female early childhood teachers with over ten years working experience in the field and are responsible for implementing the curriculum approach.

Interviews are advantageous in qualitative research by allowing interaction among the interviewees to yield the best information. When one- on-one individual interviewee may be hesitant to provide information, focus group creates the tone for open communication (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). The semi- structured framework provided flexibility to conduct the interview, to probe or ask appropriate questions for clarification. Therefore, an interview guide (Appendix A) with open-ended questions was designed to elicit specific information from the respondents to answer the research question. Through this flexible and interactive nature of

interviews, Merriam (1998) declared that in- depth language and meaning would be discovered as teachers' share their concerns, feelings and beliefs.

In preparation for the focus group interview, the participants were given letters indicating the date, time, and venue, as well as their willingness to participate. An after-school session was planned at a familiar and comfortable early childhood centre with visible learning centres with walls lined with display of children's work. To capture the audio and video of the session, a video camera was used as the major recording equipment. At the start of the interview, the researcher outlined the purpose of the study and plans for the results. Participants were reassured that there were no wrong or right answers and were encouraged to be frank in the discussions.

The focus group interview was conducted in the month of April 2013. The interview session lasted for approximately fifty minutes. Patton (1990) suggests capturing the actual words of the persons being interviewed is important; video recording provide opportunities to replay and review collected data rather than simultaneously attempting to take notes during the interview session. Therefore, transcribing of the actual data was done at a later date.

Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) defines data analysis as a complex process involving moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and construct concept, between induction and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. Similarly, Mc Millam & Schumacher (2001) defined data analysis as an ongoing cyclical process integrated into the phases of a research. With qualitative case study research the grounded theory methodology is utilized. This involves initial or open coding, forming categories, interconnecting the categories, building a story that connect the categories and ending with a theoretical proposition (Strass & Corbin 1990).

In order to reduce the data, the recorded interview session was manually transcribed. The data were further interrogated by scrutinizing the transcribed data line by line for leads, ideas and issues. From the development of the codes, key terms and phrases from the data were obtained. These were then grouped at a higher level to form categories or themes. The formations of themes were developed by comparing commonalities and differences as well as obtaining similar patterns from codes.

The data were all compared until the categories were saturated and no additional answers relating to the research question was provided. The generated themes were then classified according to the conceptual framework of Concerns Based Adoption Model Stages of Concerns (Appendix B). Written descriptive narratives from the participants were then developed (Appendix C).

Ethical Considerations

To gain access to individuals and the field of study involves several steps (Creswell 2006). The process in this research involved submitting a letter to the Ministry of Education ECCE Division for approval to conduct the study (Appendix D); verbally informing each participants of the study, the procedures that will be undertaken and what will be done with the findings. A letter was given to each participant to indicate their approval (Appendix E).

The following ethical considerations were observed throughout the study: anonymity and confidentiality of their responses, the use of pseudonyms to protect participant's identity, respecting relationships, permission to video tape the interview and the participants rights to withdraw at any time.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness of this qualitative research Guba (1981) recommends four criteria to be employed: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility: To promote confidence that the phenomena have been accurately recorded, both triangulation and member checking were strategies used. Triangulation involves corroborating evidence from different sources to bring light to the research Lincoln & Guba (1985). Therefore, the focus group and individual's interviews were conducted. Additionally, member checking were used with the participants' to determine the accuracy of the words shared.

Transferability: The findings of a qualitative research project are specific to a small number of particular environment and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations (Merriam 1998). Within this study, thick description of contextual information has been provided on the particular centres, data collection strategies and the participants involved in the study.

Dependability: Lincoln & Guba (1985) indicated that the process within the study should be repeated in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results. In this study are detailed sections of the research design, data gathering information and the processes which were followed.

Confirmability: To ensure that a full revelation of the data upon which interpretation is based, the exact words of the participants were incorporated into the discussions and availability of the transcript for review has been appended.

Researcher Bias

Creswell (2007) recommends that the researcher should make explicit of their position during a qualitative research. My position is ECCE Administrator/ Teacher assigned to the four government early childhood centres and I have been directly involved with implementing the CBAL at the classroom level.

Delimitations

In a qualitative research design, delimitation addresses how the study is narrow in scope (Creswell 2006). This study confines itself to interviewing a minimum of four early childhood teachers from one cluster group within an educational district in Trinidad and Tobago. Due to the limited number of participants, the findings from the study may not be generalized to early childhood teachers of different cluster groups or educational district. However, the number of participants selected had rich information to increase the understanding of the phenomena.

Limitations

As the researcher is the key instrument for data collection, Merriam (1998) reminds that human instrument is fallible by mistakes and personal biases. Limitations associated with the study are the researcher's familiarity with the early childhood centres and the respondents. This may lead to the possibility of the participants responding in a way that is perceived to be of interest to the researcher and valuable information may be withheld. The constraint of time to meet with the interviewees in one location for the focus group interview was considered another limiting factor.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter reports the analysis and findings of the data which originated from participants during a semi-structured focus group interview. Four teachers Mandy, Darcelle, Grace and Chrissie (pseudonyms) from an ECCE cluster group provided responses to the research question about their concerns on the implementation of the CBAL curriculum approach.

An interview guide was used to obtain personal information from the participants (See Appendix A). The data were analysed manually by segmenting direct words, sentences and paragraphs from the participants and assigning codes. Recurring patterns among the codes were generated and significant themes were assigned (See Appendix C). The themes were discussed in relation to the CBAM Stages of Concerns framework using descriptive narratives along with direct quotations from the participants. The Stages of Concerns are four developmental dimensions (See Appendix B): Unrelated (awareness), Self-concerns (informational and personal), Task concerns (management) and Impact Concerns (consequences, collaboration and refocusing).

Research Question: What concerns do teachers have about the implementation of Centre Based - Active learning curriculum approach at four Government ECCE Centres in the St. George East Educational District in Trinidad and Tobago?

From the findings, the following themes were generated and discussed according to the CBAM Stages of Concerns framework. Self-concerns themes were associated with teachers' understanding, training and demands of the implementation. The task concerns themes were associated with heavy workload, unavailability of resources and inadequate staff and Impact concerns themes were lack of support from cluster administrator.

Self- Concerns

Self- concerns are concerns that the early childhood teachers have understanding the innovation, the training received and demands of the implementation.

Teachers' Understanding

The findings revealed that all teachers had to make changes when CBAL was initially introduced. Even though teachers had prior experience teaching in the field of early childhood education they had no previous knowledge of the innovation. This implied that they were all at the awareness stage with little concerns about implementing the innovation. After spending three years implementing CBAL, all four teachers shared common informational and personal concerns. The teachers were cognizant of the changes required and expressed a desire to learn more of the nature of the innovation. One of the teachers, Chrissie shared her views of the need to acquire more information to enhance the implementation:

> I still need to get acquainted as to the correct way to do the centre selection; rotation and the types of activities that should be done in the learning centres. There are always some clarifications and explanations needed whenever we meet at workshops there are different views of how to implement this approach. The more information I get from experts will help with me to implement the curriculum effectively.

Mandy also shared similar concerns of gaining an understanding:

> There are some clarifications needed on how to correctly implement this. After trying for some times it can be confusing when you just think this is correct and others who may have been in the field longer would indicate that I have been doing things incorrect. I definitely need more information to assist me.

Training

Whilst the teachers expressed their struggles with the concerns to understand the innovation, it was established that they received little or no formal training to implement CBAL. The teachers who were exposed to training considered the workshops ineffective in providing information for proper implementation.

Darcelle and Grace who have been in the system for over three years both shared this concern:

> I had not received any training. However, there were other teachers who were sent and they brought back some information of the training they received. As I implement the curriculum there would always be trials and errors, so I experiment with the information I get from the trained staff… I have not received any training in centre based active learning. I learnt from discussions at the table on afternoons (Grace).

Mandy, a teacher who attended workshops lamented in her discussion:

> I think that most of my training I gain from the degree programme and the certificate early childhood teacher's course. This is what helps me to understand the theoretical perspectives. The training at workshop can be helpful at times, but sometimes confuses me rather than do good. Training must be done within small groups so you can be able to ask questions or actually be conducted at the centres where you can get a more hands-on- approach in the teaching environment.

Demands of CBAL

As the teachers became familiar with the CBAL implementation they expressed that the approach has contributed to development of children's independent skills and have allowed them

to take their own initiative in the learning process. However, personal concerns were raised as to how the changes differ from their previous practices as well as the demands CBAL now imposed on them. The teachers voiced that excessive observations, documentations and additional workload in assisting the administrator were frustrating. Chrissie, who had spent over ten years working with young children before the new curriculum approach was introduced, expressed personal concerns with the changes she had to make as she moved away from a teacher- directed to a child-centered approach:

> This was a whole new mind set, I had to change some of my beliefs of what I perceived was worthy of children's learning and what I should teach. Now, I have to research on what and how children learn best in this type of environment. I have to do more observation and activity planning to incorporate specific learning outcomes at first this was a challenge. But as I now understand, I had to change my teacher-directed approach sometimes I feel that you ah… you know you may lose control of the children.

Mandy commented on the demands she experienced when having to implement CBAL:

> I see this approach as having advantages and disadvantages. One of the main advantages is that children minds expand more and they are open to wider thinking. They are able to problem solve, think critically and use their initiative to do things on their own or with the help from their peers…. I believe that the consistent observations and documentations of children's can be very hectic. I find that having to prepare my work, function as administrator in her absence and to assist teachers with planning is very demanding.

Grace, who has been implementing the new curriculum for over three years, expressed that:

> I think this is very helpful, hands-on approach that allows children to learn and
> develop. The lesson planning as it relates to the format in the National Curriculum
> Guide. When you have to search out goals from the various strands can be quite
> demanding especially if you were not properly trained.

Task Concerns

Task concerns are related to the actual use of the CBAL curriculum approach or the management of the innovation at each early childhood Centre.

After three years of implementation, the findings indicated that the teachers concerns were associated with time, training, availability of resources and inadequate staff. However, it was found that the most prominent, intense task management concerns from all four teachers were related to time/heavy workload, availability of resources and inadequate staff.

Heavy workload

Most of the teachers shared that the demand on time was a major concern with implementing the approach. Even though it was indicated by the teachers that they use the daily schedule as a guide concerns were raised by two teachers as it relates to scheduling time for children to engage in meaningful play at the learning centres. Nevertheless, time scheduling was not a major concern with all the four teachers. The foremost and emerging complaint was in the management of time for teachers to implement the curriculum effectively. The teachers complained that additional heavy responsibilities in the administrator's absence infringed on the implementation.

Darcelle voiced that:

This is very difficult to accomplish throughout the day. Even though you may sit and plan as a group of teachers, you still have to find that time to prepare activities to meet the individual need of each child. Sometimes when you are conducting an activity you have to stop in the middle to take phone calls, talk with parents or other individuals who may visit the centre and even write daily logs. This takes away a lot of time from implementation itself.

Grace expressed her concerns with the demand of time:

…we have to spent time doing other unrelated matters which Darcelle shared, this really affect the curriculum. It takes a lot of time for me to prepare activities for children, sometime I am up at night going through the internet and researching suitable activities for the children. At school you cannot have the time to do all of this; it is like working double time to implement this curriculum.

Resources

The study revealed that the teachers from two of the early childhood Centres experienced severe concerns with limited resources. Teachers explained that the curriculum requires a variety of materials to successfully implement themes or projects, as well as planning activities for each learning centre. Mandy, a teacher from one of the most recently constructed early childhood centres commented that:

There are insufficient resources at the centre to implement the curriculum. Whenever you plan an activity there must be some form of concrete materials that children can manipulate and make association with real life, but sometimes you have to improvise

with other items. Yes, we will try to make from recyclable materials but those are not

durable. Even, teachers need suitable reference books which can assist with planning.

Darcelle and Chrissie expressed similar sentiments as they experienced similar frustrations with respect to lack of materials and spoke at length on this concern. They found that even though the early childhood centres may have some suitable resources, they encountered problems when changing the theme for each new term. Darcelle claimed that:

Once the materials are readily available some aspect of planning can be easily

resolved. In term of the resources being adequate, I would say the resources that

presently exist are developmentally appropriate and caters for different learners. Yet

children need to be exposed to new materials at every stage in their development to

scaffold their learning. One cannot continue to use the same material every time;

different themes require materials to be changed.

Chrissie declared:

In this type of setting you must have the material to work with; this will provide

maximum benefit to the learners and the teachers. The centre needs more resources

which should be changed as often as possible to encourage experimentation and

develop children's curiosity.

Inadequate Staff

While the teachers commented on the need for teaching and learning resources, another succinct

issue emerging from the findings was task concerns associated with human resources. All four

teachers articulated that insufficient staffing at the centre acts as a hindrance to the

implementation of CBAL. Mandy expressed that:

Inadequate staff presently employed, all learning centres are unable to be open and

Centre based- Active learning cannot be implemented the way it was intended to

allow children to choose a centre without restriction in their choices.

Chrissie also shared her views on inadequate staffing at her centre:

Well, we do not have sufficient staff to implement this appropriately. Observation

and Documentation is another challenge on its own. The expectations for centre

based learning will take a while to materialize because the number of children at a

learning centre is too many and we need additional staffing.

Both Grace and Darcelle shared their concerns with inadequate staffing. It was noted by the

teachers that in the past the visit of family life officers, curriculum personnel and quality

assurance officers to the centres were instrumental in the curriculum delivery.

I that see insufficient staff to manage learning centres on a daily basis, as some

centres have to remain close, this itself is a barrier to implementation… Another

concern is the lack of human resources to manage the learning centres and to

properly document or supervise children. I also think that the assistance we once

received from the Family Life, Curriculum and Quality Assurance officers are solely

lacking.

Impact Concerns

Impact concerns are classified as consequences, collaboration and refocusing. Consequences

focus on the impact of CBAL on children and parents. Collaboration deals with cooperation with

others - staff or colleagues - regarding the use of CBAL. Refocusing is exploration of the

universal benefits of the innovation and finding another alternative to the innovation.

The findings revealed that not many teachers had consequence or refocusing concerns at this stage of implementation. The teachers expressed no grave concerns with the benefits that children gain from using CBAL. In fact, only one teacher shared opinions on parents' understanding of the benefits of curriculum and the anticipated outcomes for children. Darcelle mentioned that:

> My only concerns are that of parents who need to understand how children benefit from this type of programme. It is different to the traditional type of teaching but they need to buy into the programme**.** I want to make sure that what we are implementing will yield positive benefit to the children later on as research have stated.

Support from Cluster Administrator

One of major themes originating from the data was that of the cluster administrators' concerns. The data found that teachers express their willingness to implement the curriculum approach by working together; the collaboration among the staff was not a major concern. However, the lack of administrators' daily presence to support implementation at the ECCE Centres was found to be a severe concern. The teachers were vociferous on this matter as they recognised this deficiency to be a major hindrance to the curriculum implementation. Mandy contended that:

> I need the assistance in explaining the curriculum to fellow staff members. Not all the time teachers may know what to do and the administrator is not here every day to lend her support, so you have to use activities which you may consider appropriate.

Grace's dissatisfaction was that:

Administrators try their best to work with staff, especially with the planning of

themes and assisting with the curriculum web. I am concern and quite dissatisfy with

the fact that they are not present every day. We need their support even though we

are considered experts in our own rights. It is a new approach and you need

immediate guidance.

Darcelle and Chrissie had similar sentiments on the issue:

The administrator is very supportive, but is not around every day to assist with

implementation. My concern is that administrators have a number of centres to give

their support and each centre has its own issues with the implementation. I see this as

being very challenging for the administrator to manage and leave teachers to rely on

what they think is appropriate.

Summary of Findings

The analysis of the data from the interviews revealed that a common trend of concerns existed

among the teachers as they attempt to implement the CBAL curriculum approach at the four

government ECCE centres. As the teachers pursued the implementation, they expressed concerns

for a greater understanding of the approach. Teachers are fraught with issue of time scheduling to

appropriately conduct centre based- active learning. The findings indicated that teachers

considered the training they received to be ineffective as they pursue implementation. Critical

concerns of inadequate staffing, the demands of the system and limited resources were

emphasized by the teachers as hindrances to the implementation of the CBAL approach for

young children. Moreover, to increase the prospect and sustain implementation of CBAL

teachers were concerned about the need of having the presence of one administrator to a centre.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

Recapping the findings

The purpose of this research study was to investigate teacher's concerns about Centre based-Active Learning curriculum approach. The use of a qualitative case study provided opportunities to purposefully select the participants with rich information. The study was informed from the views of four teachers; with over ten years experience in the field of early childhood education and share the responsibility of curriculum implementation in the administrator's absence. During a semi-structured interview the data were collected from teachers' response in attempt to answer the research question. What concerns do teachers have about the implementation of Centre Based - Active Learning curriculum approach at four Government ECCE Centres in the St. George East Educational District in Trinidad and Tobago?

The findings from the data revealed that teachers experienced varying degree of awareness, self, task and impact concerns about the CBAL implementation. Teachers disclosed the following concerns; a desire to acquire more information and understanding of the curriculum approach, scheduling of time to appropriately conduct centre based- active learning. The findings indicated that teachers had concerns with the ineffective training they received to implement CBAL. Additionally, teachers emphasized critical concerns of inadequate staffing and limited resources as limitations to the implementation of the CBAL approach for young children. The findings also showed that teachers were concerned about the need for one administrator attached to an ECCE centre to increase viability of the implementation.

Discussions

The findings of the study were derived from the analysis of teachers' response using the CBAM

Stages of Concerns dimension (as shown in Appendix B) and the reviewed literature on change

implementation. Findings revealed that teachers had intense concerns at the informational,

personal, management and collaboration stages. Minimal concerns were reported at the stages of

awareness, consequence and refocusing which is consistent with Hall & Hord (2006) assumption

that teachers can experience several Stages of Concerns about an educational innovation

concurrently, but with different degrees of intensity.

With over ten years of experience in the field of early childhood education, teachers were

introduced to the new CBAL approach. The need for new approach was initiated by the 2000

Dakar Framework for Action and handed down by the Ministry of Education mandating that

teachers commence the implementation. Teachers were conscious of the perceived need and

willingly embrace the change from their previous teacher- directed to a child-centered approach.

The progress through this stage of awareness was smooth with little or no concerns of the

innovation. Fullan (2001) indicated that with change a general feeling of a priority need must

directly be observed by the implementers.

The highly informational and personal concerns suggest that teachers showed interest to acquire

more knowledge and how to effectively make use of the approach. The teachers were also

concerned about demands and effects of the change. Fullan (2001) indicated that change involves

passing through zones of uncertainty, where teachers experience situations of being lost and

begin to reflect on implementation demands. After three years of implementation the teachers'

concerns moved from self to intense task -management concerns. According to Hall & Hord

(2006) teachers should have moved from early self-concerns to task concerns within the first year and to impact concerns after three years. This means that during the early stages of the change process, teachers at the early childhood centres have gained insufficient knowledge or confidence to master the implementation. For CBAL to be effective at the centres, practical training aspect of implementation was necessary to build understanding and competency.

Given that teachers received little or no training as revealed in the findings, the unmet needs of the teachers continued to increase at the management stage which was supported by the researched literature which indicated that if teachers are not effectively trained, concerns fail to progress from self to task to impact.

At the impact stage of concern, no teacher expressed concerns about the consequences of CBAL approach. The study suggested that the teachers were not interested in the learning aspect of the children, as the teachers were of the opinion that once CBAL is effectively implemented children should experience maximum benefit. However, at the collaboration stage there were high concerns among the teachers with administrators rather than the collaboration with their coworkers.

The findings suggested that teachers cooperated and supported each other throughout implementation at their centres, but collaboration among colleagues did not alleviate their impact concern. Prawat (1996) indicated that a learning community often builds social and intellectual connections, commitment and professionalism, but Fullan (2001) warned that without support of facilitators or administrators change may happen with individual teachers, but the innovation may remain isolated without affecting the broader system. At this stage, the early childhood teachers at the centres were predominantly concerned by the limited support received from

administrators when changes at the governmental level introduced the cluster administration system.

As teachers are implementers of CBAL, their concerns about training, availability of resources, inadequate staff and administrator's support must be addressed so the rate of adoption and use will be augmented. Even though some teachers progressed to the impact stage, their concerns were not address at the self and task stages where concerns were most extensive. With the additional mandate brought on by the political bureaucracy to introduce a cluster administrator system, implementation progress is arrested and as such concerns may continue to intensify. Therefore, teachers can return to self- concerns if these conditions remain unchanged (Hall & Hord 2006) or the possible use of the approach may well be at stake (Fullan 2001).

Recommendations

The research findings indicated that teachers' concerns were: understanding and training, time demands, resources, inadequate staff, and lack of support from cluster administrator. The following recommendations to address these specific concerns have been provided.

Understanding and Training

As teachers are experiencing high self-concerns after three years of implementation, the following intervention strategies to alleviate concerns may be useful:

To ensure coherence and sustainability of CBAL implementation, the Ministry of Education should provide experts to conduct continuous and effective Professional Development Workshops for both administrators and teachers. Training should focus on the provision of

information related to the content matter of the CBAL curriculum and offer specific 'how-to' tips. As part of the training, Ministry of Education through the ECCE Division should create attachments with other early childhood centres locally or internationally that have mastered implementation of the approach so teachers can have study tours to build competence and observe best practices.

Time Demands

The participants expressed concerns related to time demands which hinder appropriate implementation. Training sessions provided by the Ministry of Education should include time management skills to empower teachers with strategies that can be employed at the centres. The government should increase high-quality materials by considering the installation of internet at each centre as a tool for teacher research and children's learning. This would assist where resource books or other teaching aids are unavailable.

A team of curriculum facilitators assigned by the Ministry of Education to revisit the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide to provide explicit samples of themes, projects or activities plans as guidelines for teachers. Teachers can then refer to these samples to clear previous misconceptions as they carry out plans for implementation. .

Resources/ Inadequate Staff

 Material, finances and staff deployment are critical to the efficient working of the implementation at the centre. The government should revise resource allocation principles, aligning them with the centres priorities for continuously maintaining the provision of resources and finances in a timely manner. The Ministry of Education's policy for contracted teacher position should be revisited to ensure immediate replacement or renewal of qualified staff after

contract period, rather than teachers becoming despondent with employment security which can be a grave threat to successful implementation.

Lack of administrative support

To sustain viability of early childhood education a system reform is paramount in addressing the concerns of teachers at the centre. Effective organizational structure should be in place to ensure coordinated functioning with Ministry of Education central administration and ECCE Division. The collaborative efforts between the government, Ministry of Education central administration and ECCE division should seek to develop policies to undertake regular evaluation of cluster administrator system to determine effectiveness. The Ministry of Education should aim to improve the organizational structure within the ECCE Division and deploy staff to fill the necessary vacant positions. This is essential to determine role clarity of ECCE leaders, administrators and teachers to avoid power struggles within the system which inadvertently affect curriculum implementation.

A major success would require direct support from administrator of the centre. Therefore, administrator and teachers collaborative efforts should attempt to develop and strengthen an ethos of Professional Learning Community. This would provide opportunities for teachers to share effective strategies to enact the implementation. Administrator should encourage the use of clinical supervision, peer coaching as well as a team-based system whereby regular cluster meetings are held for planning and discussing challenges or progress with implementation.

References

Arnold, C., Barlett, K., Gowani, S. &Merali, R. (2006*). Is everybody ready? Readiness,
transition and continuity: Reflection and moving forward.* Background paper for EFA
Global Monitoring Report.

Baldacchino, A. (2011). *Localizing Reggio: A study of Reggio Emilia inspired childcare centres
Prince Edward island, Canada. Saarbrücken, Germany*: Lambert Academic
Publishing.

Cahir, P. (2008). *HighScope Program Briefing Paper*. Early Childhood Australia.

Celestin, C. (2008). *Curriculum policy and reform: Early educator's perception of young
children's response to centre based-active learning.*(Unpublished master's thesis).St.
Augustine Trinidad: School of Education. UWI.

Charles, L. & Williams, S**.** (2006). *Early Childhood Care and Education in the   Caribbean.
Background Paper for EFA:* Global Monitoring Report 2007.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and Research Design: Choosing amongst Five
Approaches.* Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications.

Davies, R. (1997). *A Historical Review of the Evolution of Early Childhood Care and
Education in the Caribbean.* Conference Report. CARICOM.

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks Ca: Sage.

DeVries, R., & Kohlberg, L. (1987/1990). *Constructivist education: Overview and comparison with other programs.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

DeVries, R., Zan, B., Hildebrandt, C., Edmiaston, R., & Sales, C. (2002).*Developing constructivist early childhood curriculum: Practical principles and activities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Dowrich, M. (2008).*Teachers' perception of the implementation of the National Continuous Assessment Programme in a Primary School in St. George East Educational District in Trinidad and Tobago*. (Unpublished master's thesis). St. Augustine Trinidad: School of Education. UWI.

Eggers-Pierola, C., Skiffington, S. & Helms, B.J. (2008). *Trinidad and Tobago: Seamless education system project: Early childhood care and education study.* Newton: MA: Education Development Inc.

Fullan, M (2001). *The meaning of educational change.* Teachers College Press: New York.

Ginsburg, M. (2009). *Active learning pedagogies as a reform initiative: Synthesis of Case Studies.* Academy for Educational Development.

Goffin, S. G., & Wilson, C. (2001).*Curriculum models and early childhood education: Appraising the relationship* (2[nd]ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Golbeck, S.L. (2002*). Instructional Models for Early Childhood Education*: Clearinghouse on elementary and early childhood education. University of Illinois.

Good, T. L., &Brophy, J. (1994), *Looking in Classrooms:* HarperCollins College Publishers, New York, NY.

Guba, E.G. (1981). *Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries.* Educational Communication and Technology Journal, 29 (2), 79-91.

Haack, K. (2008). *UN studies and the curriculum as active learning tool.* International Studies Perspectives, 9, 395-410.

Hall, G.E. & Hord S.M. (2006).*Implementing change: patterns, principles and potholes*. Boston: Pearson Education Company.

Harry, S. (2007). Teachers' concerns about CAPE communication studies. In L. Quimina-Aiyejina (Ed.), *Reconceptualising the agenda for education in the Caribbean: Proceedings of the 2007 Biennial Cross-Campus Conference in Education. April 23-26 2007, School of Education, UWI. St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago* (pp. 203-215). St. Augustine Trinidad: School of Education, UWI.

Hayes, N. (2003). Play, Care and Learning: Creating an integrated curriculum for early childhood education in Ireland. In M. Karlsson- Lohmander I. & Pramling (Ed.), *Care,*

play and learning: Curricula for early childhood education Vol. 5, *Researching Early Childhood*(pp. 69 – 82): Early Childhood Research and Development Centre: Goteborg University.

HighScope Educational Research Foundation. (2010). *HighScope Perry Preschool Study*. Retrieved from.pdf

Hohmann, M., & Weikart, D. P. (2005).*Educating Young Children.* (2nd Ed.). Ypsilanti, Michigan. High/Scope Press.

Jamaica. Ministry of Education. (2008). *Jamaican early childhood curriculum for birth to five years: A conceptual framework.* Jamaica Grant Memorial Trust.

Karnes, M. B., Schwedel, A. M., & Williams, M. B. (1983).*Acomparison of five approaches for educating young children from low-income homes .*In *as the twig is bent: Lasting effects of preschool programs* (pp. 133-170). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Katz, L. G. (2000). *Another look at what young children should be learning.* Eric Digest. Champion, IL: Eric Clearing house on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

Katz, L., & Chard, S.C. (2003). *Engaging Children's Minds: The project approach*. Alex Publishing Corporation.

Kitzenger, J. (1995). *Introducing focus groups*. British Medical Journal 311: 299-302.

Krueger, R.A. (1994). *Focus Group: A practical guide for applied research.* London. Sage.

Lillard, S.A. (2012). Preschool children's development. In Classic Montessori, Supplemented

      Montessori and Conventional Progress. *Journal of School Psychology,* 50 (2012)

      379-401.

Lim, M.-Y., Sirene. (2007). *Exploring Colonization Situating Young Children's*

      Experiences within the multiple contexts of globalizing: Singapore. Columbia

      University, USA.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985).*Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills: Sage

Logie, C. (1997*). Early Childhood Care and Education in Trinidad and Tobago. An analysis of*

      centre-based provision for children under five.(Unpublished PhD Thesis).University of

      Sheffield.

Marcon, R.A. (1999). Differential impact of preschool models on development and early

      learning of inner-city children. A three cohort study: *Developmental Psychology*,

      35(2), 358-357.EJ 582 451.

Marcon, R. A. (2002). *Moving up the Grades: Relationship between Preschool Model and Later*

      School Success:

McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in education. A conceptual*

      introduction(5[th]ed). New York: Longman.

Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education (2[nd]ed).*

      San Francisco: Jossey Bass. Inc.

Miller, L. B., &Bizzell, R. P. (1983).Long-term Effects of four Preschool Programs: Sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. *Child Development, 54*(3), 727-741.

Mizrachi A, Padilla O., & S-Banda, W. (2008). *Active-Learning Pedagogies as a Reform Initiative:* The Case of Malawi. Washington, DC: American Institute for Research.

Morrison, G.S. (2009). *Early Childhood Education Today:* Pearson Ally Bacon. Prentice Hall.

Mustard, F.J. (1997). *Investing in the Early Years: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do. Crown.* State of South Australia.

Myers, R.G. (1995). *The Twelve Who Survived: Strengthening Programmes of the Early Childhood Development in the Third World.* (2nded.)Ypsilanti, Michigan. Highscope Press.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods.*(3rded.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Powell, R.A., Single, H.M., & Lloyd, K.R. (1996).*Focus group mental health research: Enhancing the validity of user and provider questionnaires.* International Journal of Social Psychology. 42(3), 193-206

Resnick, M, (2002). *Rethinking learning in the digital age. The global information technology*

        Report: Readiness for the networked world. Retrieved from

        http://llk.media.mit.edu/papers/mres-wef.pdf

Rogers, E. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations* (5[th]ed.). Free Press, New York.

Roggermann, K. & Shukri .M (2010).*Active learning pedagogies as a reform Initiation*: The

        Case of Jordon.

Sacks, L & Ruzzi, B, B. (2005).*The new commission on the skills of the American Workforce.*

        Early Childhood Education: Lessons from the states and abroad: National Center on

        Education and the Economy.

Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H.V., Weikart, D.P., (1993).*Lasting Differences*: *The HighScope*

        Perry Preschool Study through Age 27. Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope press.

Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W.S., Belfield, C.R. & Nores, M.

        (2005).*Lifetime effects: The High/Scope Perry preschool study through age 40*.

        Ypsilanti: High/Scope Press.

Silverman, D. (2004). *Qualitative research theory, methods and practice.* London: Sage

        Publications.

Stake, R.E. (1995).*The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stewart, D.W., & Shamdani, P.N. (1990).*Focus group: theory and practice.* Newbury Park:

    Sage Publications.

Strass, A. & Corbin, J. (1990).*Basics of qualitative research*: *Grounded theory procedures and*

    techniques. California: Sage Publications, Inc

Trinidad and Tobago. Ministry of Education (2007).*Early Childhood Care and Education*

    National Curriculum Guide: Port of Spain, Trinidad: Author.

UNESCO (2000).*Dakar Framework for Action: Education for all: meeting our collective*

    commitments. UNESCO editions. Paris.

UNESCO (2007).*Education for all global monitoring report*. Strong foundations. Early

    Childhood Care and Education: France.

UNESCO (2007).*Education for all: Global monitoring: Report*: Jomtein.

Urban, M. (2009**).***Early Childhood Education in Europe: Achievements, Challenges and*

    Possibilities Brussels: Education International.

Van den Berg, R., & Ross, A. (1999). *The Permanent importance of subjective reality of*

    teachers during educational innovation: A concerns-based approach. American

    Educational Research Journal.36 (4). 879-906

Van den Berg, R., Sleegers, P., & Geijsel, F. (2000). *Implementation of an innovation: Meeting*

    the concerns. Studies in Educational Evaluation. 26 (331-350).

Wellington, J. (2000*). Educational research. Contemporary issues and practical*

    approaches: London continuum.

Williams, S. (2009). *Establishing Curricula in the Caribbean: HighScope helps meet the region*

    early childhood challenges: UNICEF, Jamaica.

White, R., & Mitchell, J. (1994). *Metacognition and the quality of learning. Studies in*

    Science Education, 2321-37

Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research: Designs and Methods* (3[rd]ed). London. Sage Publications.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Research Topic: An investigation into the ECCE Centre Based- Active learning Approach: Teachers' Concerns at four ECCE Centres in the St. George East District.

General Questions:

1**.** How long have you been teaching in the field of early childhood education?

2. How long have you been teaching since the new curriculum for early childhood has been implemented?

3. What is your understanding of Centre based- Active learning curriculum approach?

4. Have the implementation of CBAL impacted on the way you now teach? What is different?

5. What are some of the changes you had to make to implement this approach to learning?

6. What are your concerns about the use of this approach in teaching children? 7. Do you think you need more information on this curriculum approach that will help you with implementation?

8. What are your concerns when having to implement CBAL?

9. What areas of CBAL do you consider as most challenging to implement?

10. What areas of CBAL do you consider to be most successful?

11. What are some facilitators that are used to ensure successful implementation of the CBAL curriculum approach?

12. What are some barriers to the implementation of the innovation?

13. To what extent would you say that the training you received for teaching CBAL was adequate? What concerns do you have with training?

14. What concerns do have with time in order to prepare activities for teaching and learning?

15. What are your concerns with the time scheduled for children to make use of CBAL?

16. What concerns do you experience with availability and adequacy of resources when implementing the curriculum?

17. Are the resources adequate and readily available to implement the curriculum approach?

18. What concerns do you have about the impact of CBAL approach on children's learning?

19. Has there been collaboration with other colleagues concerning CBAL implementation? What concerns do you have with collaboration?

20. What concerns do you have with the support you have received from Administrators in implementing the new approach?

21. What new strategies do you think can be used to improve the implementation of this approach?

22. Do you have any other concerns you would like to share about the CBAL curriculum approach at your early childhood centre?

THANK YOU!

Appendix B

Concerns Based Adoption Model Stages of concerns

Typical Expressions of Concern about an Innovation

Stage of Concern	Expression of Concern
6. Refocusing	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.
5. Collaboration	How can I relate what I am doing to what others are doing?
4. Consequence	How is my use affecting learners? How can I refine it to have more impact?
3. Management	I seem to be spending all my time getting materials ready.
2. Personal	How will using it affect me?
1. Informational	I would like to know more about it.
0. Awareness	I am not concerned about it.

Appendix C

Sample of transcript showing units of analysis Codes and Themes

<center>**Interview Guide**</center>

Research Topic: An investigation into the ECCE Centre Based- Active learning Approach:

Teachers' Concerns at four ECCE Centres in the St. George East District.

<center>**Question 1**</center>

How long have you been teaching in the field of early childhood education?

Mandy*:* I have been teaching for ten years

Darcelle: For Twelve years

Grace: Well, for ten years

Chrissie: For twelve years

<center>**Question 2**</center>

How long have you been teaching since the new curriculum for early childhood has been

implemented?

Mandy: I have been teaching five years now

Darcelle: Over three years well, let us say four years.

Grace: It's only four years now

Chrissie: for approximately four years

<center>**Question 3**</center>

What is your understanding of Centre based- Active learning curriculum approach?

Mandy: It is a new educational approach to holistic learning. It is interesting with all the

learning centers and children learning through play. Children do a lot of problem-solving and the

teachers observe and note areas to scaffold learning and do not focus only on the cognitive but

the social and emotional skills as well.

Darcelle: What I understand is that centre based-active learning provides an avenue to move away from teacher-directed approach and allow children to become engaged in activities with adults support.

Grace: It is an approach to teaching and learning that encourages children to become engaged in meaningful activities that leads to the development of needed life skills.

Chrissie: My understanding is that centre based- active learning provides opportunities for children to grasp different concepts on their own, with peers or from the support of their teacher. During this approach children make use of materials that assist with developing of various skills.

Question 4

Have the implementation of CBAL impacted on the way you now teach?

- Explain what is different?

- Explain what is the same?

Mandy: Well, the teaching is not structured, you learn from the children as they ask questions which will help you to observe more and to plan with the multiple intelligences in mind. This also helps me to structure children's learning for active engagement which in a sense takes away from the past aspect of rote learning.

Darcelle: It not much of a difference to what I am accustomed to. Children in this type of environment develop numerous skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and negotiating. As a teacher you are now a researcher finding out how children learn best, rather than giving them what you think is of interest to them.

Grace: This way of teaching changed the way I was doing things before. Rather than allowing children to sit and take in information you plan activities that are interactive and integrated.

Chrissie: Yes, it has impacted on the way I teach. Previously, I believe that I placed too much focus on reading and writing rather than developing the whole child. Now I understand that all aspects of developments are important, so when I plan activities I focus on all areas of development rather than on the cognitive alone.

Question 5

What are some of the changes you had to make to implement this approach to learning?

Mandy: Some changes? My beliefs about pedagogical practices, my teaching styles from traditionally allowing children to sit still and now to the contemporary way of active involvement. It's not what I want to teach, but rather what the children want to know. I had to make few adjustments.

Darcelle: I had to make adjustment to some of the activities that I will plan for the children to incorporate the active learning elements such as concrete objects for manipulation, allow choices by providing a variety of materials. Children are also given the opportunity to communicate what they have learnt rather than me having to do all the talking.

Grace*:* Well, now I have to do a lot of observations of the children. Before, this new approach was implemented; I did not do much planning or observation. The lessons were a set of information that was taught without allowing children to communicate their interest so you can be aware of the necessary skills to build upon.

Chrissie: This was a whole new mind set, I had to change some of my beliefs of what I perceived was worthy of children's learning and what I should teach. Now, I had to research on what and how children learn best in this type of environment. I have to do more observation and activity planning to incorporate specific learning outcomes at first this was a challenge. But as I now understand, I had to change my teacher- directed approach sometimes I feel that you ah… you know you may lose control of the children.

Question 6

How do you feel about using this approach in teaching children? What are some of the demands?

Mandy: I see this approach as having advantages and disadvantages. One of the main advantages is that children minds expand more and they are open to wider thinking. They are able to problem solve, think critically, use their initiative to do thinks on their own or with the help from their peers. The children benefit from using concrete materials in the environment and at centre time they demonstrate a range of learning experiences that you may think they have not develop in other planned or structured activities. I believe that the consistent observations and documentations of children can be very hectic. I find that having to prepare my work, function as administrator in her absence and to assist teachers with planning is very demanding.

In addition, using this approach is somewhat a challenge for parent, since they do not understand how this helps children to be prepared for primary school. The primary school's environment is mainly traditional chalk and talk and teachers tell children what to think rather than how to think.

Darcelle: I honestly believe this is the way to go with children. These children come to school with a wide range of knowledge. I believe in the fact that children learn through play and a great deal of their learning come from a prepared environment. Children are exposed to skills that are

needed in the society today, for example the ability to take turns, to corporate with each other, problem solve with adult intervention. Research too has shown positive outcomes and the long term benefits of this approach. Even though I may still not understand how to exactly implement this approach, I see this as a way forward with education.

Grace: I think this is very helpful, hands-on approach that allows children to learn and develop. The lesson planning as it relates to the format in the National Curriculum Guide. When you have to search out goals from the various strands can be quite demanding especially if you were not properly trained. We have to spent time doing other unrelated matters which Darcelle shared, this really affect the curriculum. It takes a lot of time for me to prepare activities for children, sometime I am up at night going through the internet and researching suitable activities for the children. At school you cannot have the time to do all of this; it is like working double time to implement this curriculum.

Chrissie: This is very difficult to accomplish throughout the day. Even though you may sit and plan as a group of teachers, you still have to find that time to prepare activities to meet the individual need of each child. Sometimes when you are conducting an activity you have to stop in the middle to take phone calls, talk with parents or other individuals who may visit the centre and even write daily logs. This takes away a lot of time from implementation itself. Using this approach has its positives, but once you have the material and resource as well as prepared staff it can work.

Question 7

Do you think you need more information on this curriculum approach that will help you with implementation?

Mandy: There are some clarifications needed on how to correctly implement this. After trying for some times it can be confusing when you just think this is correct and others who may have been in the field longer would indicate that I have been doing things incorrect. I definitely need more information to assist me.

Darcelle: As an individual I believe that the more information given sometimes clarification is made. I do believe that more information will be of benefit to me.

Grace: I think I understand, but to build confidence I would say that some clarification is still needed.

Chrissie: Yes, I still need to get acquainted as to the correct way to do the centre selection; rotation and what types of activities should be done in the learning centres. There are always some clarification and explanations needed. Whenever we meet at workshops there are different views of how to implement this approach. The more information I get from experts will help me to implement the curriculum effectively.

Question 8

What are your concerns when having to implement CBAL?

Mandy: My concerns are that persons without the experience in centre based learning should have ongoing training since that are some inconsistencies existing in the system. Another concern is that the supply of materials at the learning centre has to be changed with the theme and the lack of government funding makes this a challenge. Yes, we have to improvise and use recyclable materials but this can be very time consuming. As, teachers we have a lots to do, we have the work of administrator in her absence, write activity plans, observe children on a daily basis and at the end of the day you don't have sufficient time.

Darcelle: My concerns are: Resources to set up each learning centres, Teachers' unfamiliarity with implementation. This put stress on the teacher who has to manage her group of children and having to supervise at the same time. I too may be grappling with ideas to come to term with planning especially with children this age you have to pay attention to what they are doing or communicating. Prior to deployment of staff, some sort of refresher course must be done on the aspect of centre based learning. Another concern is that of 'time' depending on the number of children within your group, you can hardly ever carry out the entire plan-do-review process.

Grace: My main concerns are planning time and materials at the learning centres to keep children's interest.

Chrissie: I agree that materials to scaffold children's learning is lacking, Finances to upkeep centres as you make changes to the theme each term and adequate staffing to support and observe children

Question 9

What areas of CBAL do you consider as most challenging to implement?

Mandy: I believe that the major challenge is that centre based active learning need adequate staffing to work effectively.

Darcelle: Well, we do not have sufficient staff to implement this appropriately. Observation and Documentation is another challenge. The expectations for centre based learning will take a while to materialize because the number of children at a learning centre is too many and we need additional staffing.

Grace: I find that the strategies for selection of learning centres, documentation of children using the strands rather than simply narrative reporting as well as provision of the materials to enhance the theme or project are most challenging.

Chrissie: I don't really encounter any major challenges with the implementation. However, I find that having to prepare my work, function as administrator in her absence and to assist teachers with planning is very challenging.

Question 10

What areas of CBAL do you consider to be most successful?

Mandy: I believe that the success lie in the fact that children have opportunity to select material they want to use, communicate freely with each other and teacher are able to allow children to be actively engaged in age appropriate activities.

Darcelle: The area that is most successful is the responsibility that teachers place in up keeping the well-defined learning centres. When you enter the building you do not see chaos, but a structure in place. Another aspect is the children knowledge of how to make use of the centres; I think they have learned how to use the materials.

Grace: The opportunities for children to develop skills for example in communication, problem-solving and cooperating with their peers are very successful.

Chrissie: What I consider to be most successful about CBAL is the fact that children understand what they have to do in the environment. It is child-friendly and builds independence. I also like the fact that whatever materials we have in the learning are durable.

Question 11

What are some facilitators that are used to ensure successful implementation of the CBAL curriculum approach?

Mandy: Some facilitators that I considered successful in the implementation are the adequate space for children to work, the general aesthetics of the centre, is conducive to learning and the general cooperation of teachers to promote safety and professionalism in the workplace.

Darcelle: What I appreciate is the fact that observation sheets and centre-based plans are provided so teachers can observe particular skills in the children as they carry out their plans during centre time. The layout of the centre, the flexibility of the daily schedule and teachers willingness to work together. I see these factors assisting with the implementation

Grace*:* I like the fact of having a print rich environment whereby children can use interactive charts. The teachers working together play a big role in maintaining a pleasant ethos.

Chrissie: Some facilitators to ensure successful implementation is the fact that teachers make it quite customary to meet at the end of the day to discuss and make plan for the next day. The vision and mission of the centre also reflects the general ideas of the curriculum and it act as a facilitators for teacher to be reminded and not to lose focus.

Question 12

What are some barriers to the implementation of the innovation?

Mandy: The barriers that are seen are in: With the number of Inadequate staff presently employed, all learning centres are unable to be open and Centre based- Active learning cannot be

implemented the way it was intended to allow children to choose a centre without restriction in their choices. The next is resources, as I mentioned before, this aspect of the curriculum need a lot of work. If the theme changes the centre should reflect this and availability or resources are limited to make an effective activity. Additionally, I see that teachers lack some knowledge as to how to implement or bring a learning centre 'alive.' They rather sit and wait for the teacher or administrator to hand down information rather than taking initiative and to try for themselves.

Darcelle: I have observed some gap in the knowledge of how to implement centre based among the administrators themselves. All early childhood centres should reflect oneness of the curriculum but as far as see there appears to be many variations of what is the ideal. Another barrier is the lack of human resources to manage the learning centres and to properly document or supervise children. I still believe that the curriculum facilitators assisted a great deal. It appears that there is a disconnection of implementation. This would hinder growth and we would not be moving forward with the curriculum.

Grace: The lack of staffing and the absence of an administrator on a daily basis to assist with problem that may arise are major barriers. Another concern is the lack of human resources to manage the learning centres and to properly document or supervise children. I also think that the assistance we once received from the family life, curriculum and quality assurance officers are solely lacking.

Chrissie: Well, we do not have sufficient staff to implement this appropriately. I that see insufficient staff to manage learning centres on a daily basis, as some centres have to remain close, this is a barrier to implementation. Additionally, lack of resources for teachers to works with; this will include, sample of activity plans, themes and projects in the National Curriculum

Guide, resource books, working computers and even internet access at the centre. Observation and Documentation is another challenge on its own. The expectations for centre based learning will take a while to materialize because the number of children at a learning centre is too many and we need additional staffing.

Question 13

To what extent would you say that the training you received for teaching CBAL was adequate?

Mandy: I think that most of my training I gain from the degree programme and the certificate early childhood teacher's course. This is what helps me to understand the theoretical perspectives. The training at workshop can be helpful at times but sometimes confuses me rather than do good. Training must be done within small groups so you can be able to ask questions or actually be conducted at the centres where you can get a more hands-on- approach in the teaching environment.

Darcelle: I have not received any training. However, there were other teachers who were sent and they brought back some information of the training they received. As I implement the curriculum there would always be trials and errors, so I experiment with the information I get from the trained staff.

Grace: I have not received any training in centre based learning. I learnt from discussions at the table on afternoons.

Chrissie: No training received except what I have covered at UWI. Workshops helped to a certain extent, but not too much is covered on what is necessary to meet the need of teachers. Teachers need to know if the curriculum is working, we need some sort of evaluation of the

programme to determine its effectiveness. I believe that workshop on centre based is the same thing over and over nothing new.

Question 14

What concerns do have with time in order to prepare activities for teaching and learning?

Mandy: In terms of activities, the learning centres must depict the theme with suitable resources and activities but sometimes limited time is available for teacher planning.

Darcelle: This is very difficult to accomplish throughout the day. Even though you may sit and plan as a group of teachers, you still have to find that time to prepare activities to meet the individual need of each child.

Grace: It takes a lot of time for me to prepare activities for children, sometime I up at night going through the internet and researching suitable activities for the children. At school you cannot have the time to do all of this; children need your undivided attention.

Chrissie: I try to make the best use of the little time I have to prepare activities. The challenge for me is the time to write up the activity plans on a daily basis.

Question 15

What are your concerns with the time scheduled for children to make use of CBAL?

Mandy: Time is of major essence to do centre based- active learning. Children must plan with their teachers first and then venture out into the selected learning centres to carry out their plans. I believe this need a lot of time.

Darcelle: Time is very important in the daily schedule but when it comes to the actual centre based time you have to develop strategies so you can maximize the time appropriately. The Plan-

Do-Review aspect of the approach needs time and I am concern with the actual time that children have to carry out their plans at the learning centres.

Grace: I find that children need more time to do centre based learning. To plan and review takes a while and children have to pack up before moving to a next activity.

Chrissie: When working with children I believe that you will always find that issue of time is of concern, especially when reluctance set when they are enjoying an activity and it is time to pack away. The time scheduled for daily activity is as guide and you have to know how to use it effectively.

Question 16

What concerns do you experience with availability and adequacy of resources when implementing the curriculum?

Mandy: There are insufficient resources at the centre to implement the curriculum. Whenever you plan an activity there must be some form of concrete materials that children can manipulate and make association with real life, but sometimes you have to improvise with other items. Yes, we will try to make from recyclable materials but those are not durable. Even, teachers need suitable reference books which can assist with planning.

Darcelle: I think this concern has a major impact on the implementation itself. Once the materials are readily available some aspect of planning can be easily resolved. In term of the resources being adequate, I would say the resources that presently exist are developmentally appropriate and caters for different learners. Yet children need to be exposed to new materials at every stage in their development to scaffold their learning. One cannot continue to use the same every time and with a different theme for the term materials need to be changed.

Grace: There must be adequate materials to implement the curriculum. When children are doing an activity, I think they all like to have personal space and materials.

Chrissie: My concern is that once you have this type of setting you must have the material to work with; this will provide maximum benefit to the learners and the teachers. The centre needs more resources which should be changed as often as possible to encourage experimentation and develop children's curiosity.

Question 17

Are the resources adequate and readily available to implement the curriculum approach?

Mandy: The materials and resources that we have at the centres are readily available and are adequate. They are available for children to make use of and as the children themselves become familiar they will get bored and will need to move onto another level. The materials need to change every now again, let's say every term so that the children can truly benefit.

Darcelle: The resources are not necessarily adequate but they are readily available for children to access.

Grace: Children's resources are readily available for them to use, but in term of term of variety there need to be more since you have to change the theme and even use projects.

Chrissie: I would not say that the resources are adequate we still need a lot more to effectively implement the curriculum. However, the materials are at the children's level and within their reach.

Question 18

What concerns do you have about the impact of CBAL approach on children's learning?

Mandy: I know that centre based- active learning is a positive benefit for children's learning. Parents see it as giving children a right start. However, they are pressured by the Primary School entrance examination and the questions about children's readiness.

Darcelle: My only concerns are that of parents who need to understand how children benefit from this type of programme. It is different to what the traditional type of teaching but they need to buy into the programme. I want to make sure that what we are implementing will yield positive benefit to the children later on as research have stated.

Grace: This approach works well at this level for children; I don't have any concern with learning because I see that children gain a lot of experiences.

Chrissie: Centre based learning approach is child-centered and works to the benefit of children. I know that children will be able to cope at another level because they are developing so much important skills that will prepare them for the primary school. My concern is that teachers should take a firm grasp of the curriculum and develop confidence in what they are doing at this level.

Question 19

Has there been collaboration with other colleagues concerning CBAL implementation? What concerns do you have with collaboration?

Mandy: Yes, there has been collaboration with others, but they tend to have concerns about what is expected of them or what is considered appropriate way to implement CBAL.

Darcelle: There has been collaboration with early childhood teachers, but there seem to be an under tone of disconnection of the knowledge of implementation. Everyone needs to be on the same understanding to effectively implement the curriculum.

Grace: Yes, Teacher's collaboration is mainly focused on the structure activities and preparation of learning centres.

Chrissie: Yes, It is always on the issue on centre selection and how to make use of the learning centres with limited staff.

Question 20

What concerns do you have with the support you have received from Administrators in implementing the new approach?

Mandy: We need feedback to find out if this is approach is working effectively. By now this programme should have been evaluated to determine its effectiveness. Are we really using what is considered HighScope way of centre based -active learning? Or are we really behind in terms of the approach in helping young children? I need the assistance to explain the curriculum to another staff member. Not all the time teachers may know what to do and the administrator is not here every day to lend assistance, so you have to use activities what you consider appropriate.

Darcelle: The Administrator is very supportive, but is not around every day to assist with implementation.

Grace: Administrators try their best to work with staff, especially with the planning of themes and assisting with the curriculum web. I am concern with the fact that they are not present every day. We need their support even though we are considered experts in our own rights. It is a new approach and you need immediate guidance.

Chrissie: My concern is that administrators have a number of centres to give their support and each centre has its own issues with the implementation. I see this as being very challenging for the administrator to manage and leave teachers to rely on what they think is appropriate.

Question 21

What new strategies do you think can be used to improve the implementation of this approach?

Mandy: I do believe that in-service workshops to assist teachers can be very effective. Not the ones held during the July- August Vacation because this is such a large group that sometimes you cannot tell whether individuals have grasped a proper understanding. In terms of resources, the ECCE centres should develop a resource bank whereby, materials can be retrieved for new themes. Teachers from cluster groups could come together to share ideas on how they make activities interesting at their centres.

Darcelle: Firstly, all administrators should work as a collective body and be on board with the sameness in implementation strategies for the centre- based aspect of the curriculum. Secondly, training should be done within cluster group rather than with everyone at the July- August vacation period. This sometimes losses the essence as to what teachers needs to know. The workshops are good but, sometimes individual are timid to ask questions or share their ideas.

Grace: What I believe can be done is to have a library for teachers' resource books. Have a compilation of theme and projects done at the centre so that teacher can review for ideas and can be re- used when necessary.

Chrissie: Teachers can work with parents and community members to create resources for each theme or projects. Also, learning centres can be done on a rotation basis instead of opening all the centres.

Question 22

Do you have any other concerns you would like to share about the CBAL curriculum approach at your early childhood centre?

Mandy: Not really, but what I can add is that proper planning of centre- based active learning is important and teachers must have on-going training as they implement centre based learning.

Darcelle: I think that I shared everything.

Grace: No, I don't have any other concerns.

Chrissie: I really look forward for CBAL to be implemented in the proper way without teachers having to struggle with issues relating to this. Also the concern is that the National ECCE Curriculum Guide itself to be adjusted with samples of themes and projects for teachers to pattern after and with strategies to use learning centres.

THANK YOU!

Generated Codes and Themes

Inadequate staff ▮ (olive green)

Unavailability of Resources ▮ (yellow/orange)

Lack of administrative support ▮ (purple)

Demands of the Curriculum ▮ (blue)

Lack of Training ▮ (light green)

Teachers' understanding ▮ (red)

Codes	Emerging Themes
In term of staffing definitely this is an issue Inadequate staffing Limited staff There must be adequate staffing The challenge is with staffing.	Inadequate staff
lack of resources for teachers to works with The next is resources, need a lot of work. Provision of the materials to enhance the theme or project Lack materials at the learning centres. Resources to set up each learning centres. Supply of material The material and resource is needed	Unavailability of Resources
Absence of an administrator on a daily basis Administrator is not here every day to lend assistance They are not present every day.	Lack of administrative support

We need their support	
A station administrator is no longer here	
New cluster administrator system	
Administrator is no longer here on a daily basis	
Absence of curriculum facilitator	
Planning of lessons Lesson plans Searching out goals for the lessons activity Develop new strategies to reach to each child Prepare my work, Function as administrator in her absence Assist teachers with planning Preparing materials to enhance lessons Preparing of learning centres Daily recording and documentation Children's work to be documented and recorded Research on what and how children learn	Demands of the Curriculum
I need the assistance to explain the curriculum No training received No training Have training issues Do not have regular workshop Support is very little at this time No support or guidance Difficulty with the curriculum	Lack of Training

Work on your own Lack of Knowledge Teaching is not structured Children as they ask questions You to observe more Encourages children to become engaged Meaningful activities Development of needed life skills.	Teachers' Understanding

Appendix D

Letter to Ministry of Education requesting permission to conduct study.

Ministry of Education
Early Childhood Care & Education Division
MTS Plaza,
Aranguez Main Road,
Trinidad.

Dear Team Leader

I am presently reading for the M.Ed. (concentration in curriculum) programme at the University

of the West Indies. As part fulfilment for this degree, I am required to conduct an original

research into a matter of concern and write the report

In this regard, I would like to report on teacher concerns on the implementation of the ECCE

Centre based- Active learning Curriculum approach. This research will require a focus group

interview with teachers. I believe that feedback from this exercise could lend itself to develop

strategies to assist teachers in planning.

Therefore, I am seeking your permission to conduct an interview with four teachers from ECCE

cluster group to which I am assigned.

Yours Respectfully,

……………………..
ECCE Administrator/ Teacher

Appendix E

Letter given to participants

Government ECCE Centres.

Dear Teachers

At present, I am completing a Master's in Education programme at the University of the West Indies. As partial fulfilment, I am required to conduct original research of educational concern. I am seeking officially, your willingness to participant in the study.

The topic is "Implementing the Centre based- Active learning Curriculum Approach: Teachers'

Concerns." As a participant, you will be required to share your concerns relating to this implementing at the centre. This is to be done at a focus group interview session, which will be conducted at the centre, on Friday 26th April at 3:00 p.m.

I assure you that the findings from the study will be solely used for the research paper. I also assure you that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout the research. Please be reminded that you can feel free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Yours Faithfully,

…………………..
ECCE Administrator/ Teacher