

Running head: Implementing National ECCE Curriculum

**IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION
CURRICULUM: CONCERNS OF TEACHERS AT AN ECCE CENTRE IN THE ST.
GEORGE EAST EDUCATIONAL DISTRICT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

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Abstract

This study investigated the concerns of teachers, as they implement the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Curriculum. The National ECCE Curriculum was designed to improve the quality of education experienced by preschool children. This is significant toward the achievement of the goals connected with “Education for All,” and for the holistic development of children. A qualitative approach was used to gain an insight into concerns of three teachers at a particular ECCE Centre. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The Concerns Based Adoption Model was used to identify teachers’ stages of concern. The findings indicated that teachers had concerns at four of the seven stages of concern- personal, management, consequence and collaboration. They also had concerns about administration. The teachers were concerned about their competence, the Curriculum Guide, time, resources, collegial and collaborative support, the curriculum’s impact on children’s learning, and administrative support. The findings highlight the importance of appropriate interventions to support teachers through curriculum change, to facilitate successful implementation of the innovation.

Keywords: curriculum, implementation, concerns, early childhood care and education

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Chapter One

Introduction

The National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Curriculum is a programme, which addresses the cognitive, emotional, social, physical, moral and spiritual dimensions of three to five year old children in an integrated, holistic manner. This curriculum is designed to foster all areas of children's learning, primarily through the in-depth exploration of themes that integrate subject matter, while making connections across developmental domains. This curriculum was developed in the year 2006, to be implemented in all ECCE centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago by September of 2007. It was designed as a major step towards improving the quality of early childhood programmes offered in Early Childhood (EC) centres. Prior to its development and implementation, a variety of curricula existed, many of which were highly academically oriented, above the children's developmental level and limited in the use of concrete materials and opportunities to socialize (Logie, 1997). Individual ECCE administrators based on their vision of what children should learn developed such curricula. Issues therefore arose with regard to the opportunities offered for development in the social, emotional, physical, creative, moral and spiritual dimensions of the child. In addition, such a situation provided the impetus towards attaining the goals connected with "Education for All" as outlined in the Dakar Framework for Action. One of the goals is "Expanding and Improving Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children" (UNESCO, 1990). Steps towards improvements in the quality of ECCE, was evident in a number of initiatives including the development of a national curriculum.

Background

The National ECCE curriculum is based on the philosophy that issues affecting children are of national importance. It is designed to nurture children into ideal citizens, who are well-adjusted, effective communicators, emotionally secure and intellectually empowered (Ministry of Education, 2007). It provides “for the first time in the nation’s history, a common philosophy, standards for classroom practice, and holistic goals for children’s learning in all developmental domains” (Eggers-Pierola, Skiffington & Helms, 2008 p.6).

This curriculum represents a significant undertaking, as Trinidad and Tobago moves toward the fulfilment of its mandate for human development, bearing in mind the influence of the early childhood years on later life (Ministry of Education, 2006). UNICEF (2008) emphasises that:

Early learning experiences contribute to the sound educational development of children. Students, who are provided with early opportunities to develop literacy, numeric competency and social skills, achieve development norms sooner than their peers who have not had similar opportunities (p. 11).

As a mechanism for change, the curriculum’s focus is the development of appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions, needed for productive, disciplined, tolerant citizenship and lifelong learners (Wright cited in Ministry of Education, 2006). In addition, the curriculum is so designed, that the standards pertaining to the “Ideal Caribbean Person” should be realized.

The teaching and learning processes proposed in the curriculum, embody active and interactive learning strategies, which employ a variety of materials in investigations and inquiry.

Principles such as Holistic learning and development, Active Learning, Interactive Learning, Integrated Learning, Learning through Play, Partnership/Relationship for Learning and Authentic Assessment permeate the curriculum, and reflects developmentally appropriate practices as outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2009). This is fundamental in the development of a harmonized curriculum, aimed at fostering continuity across levels of education in a Seamless Education System.

The first five years of a child's life is marked by rapid cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional and motor development. These developments when nurtured by close relationships between the child and the caregiver result in an emotional bond, which develops self-confidence, high self-esteem, positive social skills, and promote the child's ability to learn (UNICEF, 2010). A child's physical and health development is of equal importance given the escalating incidences of child obesity and life style diseases that have impacted negatively on physical and emotional health. It is therefore, imperative that appropriate behaviours and attitudes, regarding physical health be imbued in order to minimise the risk associated with health problems. With this in mind, the ECCE curriculum seeks to create an environment, which will foster the development of emotional well-being and physical health through its content, which focusses on health, hygiene and physical activity, delivered through interactive and active learning strategies.

Communication plays a pivotal role in every aspect of life. It facilitates opportunities for understanding social situations, learning about the world and the sharing of information. When children's communication skills are not developed, they experience challenges understanding others or expressing themselves, which can negatively affect their academic, social and emotional development. According to the Ministry of Education (2006), a print rich environment with appropriate language experiences such as role-playing, singing and reading

promotes the development of communication skills. The ECCE curriculum caters for such development as it provides opportunities for students to use spoken language, develop their skills as emergent readers, express themselves in creative ways and develop receptive language skills.

Given the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society in which we live, it is essential that children develop appropriate knowledge, skills and dispositions to interact peacefully and justly in the society. Therefore, children should be immersed in an environment, which embodies respect for self and others, an appreciation of diversity and a commitment to national pride. The ECCE curriculum promotes the creation of such an environment, which supports cultural identity while celebrating diversity. It fosters the development of appropriate knowledge, dispositions and skills, as reflected in appropriate social behaviour, the development of self-control and the understanding of various cultures, ultimately preparing children for citizenship.

The preschool level plays an important role in laying the foundation for future learning at the primary school and beyond. Studies have found that “preschool education produces persistent gains on achievement test scores, along with fewer occurrences of grade retention and placement in special education programs” (Barnett and Camilli, 2002 cited in Barnett & Hustedt, 2003, p. 55). Given the significance of preschool in the academic achievement of children, emphasis at this level must also be placed on cognitive development. In addition, our society is characterized by rapid changes in the work environment, technology and communication, necessitating the development of an individual, with the capacity to acquire constantly, new knowledge and skills to respond to such changes as lifelong learners. The development of problem solving, critical thinking and technological competencies for gathering and processing information becomes critical. The ECCE curriculum caters for the intellectual development of

children, facilitating early mathematical understandings, and exploration of the natural and physical world including computers and other technologies.

It has been theorised that children possess a natural aptitude for creativity. Therefore, the creation of opportunities for spontaneous, intuitive self-expression in activities unregulated by rules becomes necessary (Jutakyte, n.d.). In addition, the importance of teaching children artistic skills have been emphasised by Gaižutis (1988) cited in Jutakyte (n.d.) who stated that cultural traditions and forms of art must be introduced and taught to young children, thus facilitating the development of their creative abilities rather than trusting solely on free self-expression. Further, Gardner's (2006) multiple intelligence theory attests to the importance of the aesthetics in education since it provides avenues for creative expression. The ECCE curriculum caters for the creative development of children, as it provides opportunities for children to explore their creative talents via a number of possibilities for expression, while enhancing intellectual, social and emotional development (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The thrust towards improving the quality of education offered to young children via changes in the early childhood curriculum have not been exclusive to Trinidad and Tobago. Internationally, a number of curriculum initiatives have been noted, which were designed to raise standards towards this venture. In Sweden, improving quality through curriculum was viewed as an issue of priority. Of the five policy areas targeted to improve quality, Taguma, Litjens and Makoweicki (2013) state that, Sweden "considers a well-designed balanced curriculum as key to providing high-quality ECEC with the most favourable holistic outcomes for children" (p. 7). Accordingly, a new preschool curriculum was developed in 2010, which integrates all aspects of children's learning and development, while emphasising the importance of play.

In England, reports citing appropriate learning curriculum as one of the pre-requisites for a high quality education, have propelled the development of a number of initiatives. The Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education (SCAA, 1996) recently revised as Early Learning Goals (QCA, 2000) are two such initiatives, which were designed to raise curriculum standards while offering a balanced programme (as cited in Kwon, 2002). Such initiatives represents a move away from the traditionally, academic curriculum towards a child- centred approach aimed at fostering children's holistic development.

The integrated, holistic, child centred approach to the ECCE curriculum is also emphasised in several programmes. Similar to our National ECCE curriculum, the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum (Te Wha-riki), which was introduced in 1996, sought to ensure a high quality consistent programme designed to foster development in all domains. This curriculum intended to develop children into confident competent communicators. Additionally, it was designed to develop children who are healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging, and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society (Ministry of Education 1996, cited in Blaiklock, 2010).

Thailand's National Education Law of 1999 provided a national policy framework for educational reform, which emphasized a holistic approach to early childhood care and development for more effective ECCE programmes (Los Angeles-Bantista, 2004). This framework places emphasis on child-centred processes emphasising play and social interaction in active learning as well as content that is culturally and socially relevant. Curricula thus designed, promote learning experiences, which support the physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development of children (Los Angeles-Bantista, 2004).

Large scale early childhood educational reforms designed to address educational inadequacies, while aiming to produce globally competitive citizens have also been noted in China. Curriculum changes steered by the National Education Commission and Guidance for Kindergarten Education in 2001- three to six year olds - have promoted child-centered, progressive holistic methods, while discouraging a traditionally teacher-directed curriculum (Hui Li, Wang & Ming Sin Wong, 2011).

A number of global initiatives aimed at promoting the holistic development of the child in quality early childhood settings have been emphasised in some widely accepted international recommendations. The goals associated with the recommendations by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) such as Education for All (EFA) and the Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation: Harnessing the Wealth of Nations along with the Convention of the Rights of the Child are highly significant. These recommendations highlight the need to improve and reinforce curricula and methodologies in Early Childhood Care and Education adopting a holistic, child-centred approach that focusses on the development of the child in all areas. For example, the impetus for quality ECCE programmes was apparent at the first world conference on ECCE in September 2010, when a global action agenda was adopted with requirements:

to reinforce effective programme delivery by improving curricula and methodologies in tune with childhood, valuing play, affection, cooperation, talent and creativity, joy, fostering of self-confidence and autonomy as well as active learning pedagogies that take into account the child's point of view (UNESCO, 2010).

Initiatives towards quality ECCE through curricula improvements have also been noted within our Caribbean region. Given a history characterised by the informality in which the

provision of ECCE has developed within the Caribbean, varying standards of care and quality existed because of a lack of strong theoretical understanding of child development as well as lack of resources to provide appropriate learning environments. It became imperative to develop and implement, among other measures, appropriate curricula, learning materials and learning environments. In 1997 a Caribbean Plan of Action for Early Childhood Care and Development was adopted by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government, which focussed on strategies to achieve among other goals, appropriate curriculum development towards improving the quality of Early Childhood Education Care and Development provision (Charles & Williams, 2006).

Jamaica for example, recognising the importance of quality ECCE to children's learning, responded by changing the ECCE curriculum moving away from the traditional subject centered approach as evident in the PECE Manual, to curricula that adopted an integrated approach as seen in the Readiness Programme for Four Year Olds, and Readiness Programme for Five Year Olds.

In 2002, an Early Childhood Working Group was established with the responsibility to identify and coordinate regional activities to support and facilitate action at the national level. The Regional Framework guides the working group for Action, which identified as one of its goals "Comprehensive, sustainable and effective early childhood development programmes in all member states". To date all member states are implementing plans to improve the quality of early childhood services including "developing and harmonising curriculum offerings that are consistent with the current scientific underpinnings" (Charles, 2012 p. 20).

In its effort to improve the quality of early childhood services offered, Trinidad and Tobago, prior to the development of the National ECCE curriculum launched the ‘Standards for Regulating Early Childhood Services’ in 2005, after a series of consultations with stakeholders. Various other initiatives were launched including the construction and modernization of Early Childhood Centres, as well as increased teacher training (Burgess, 2009). Subsequently, the National ECCE curriculum guide having been launched in 2006 was distributed to ECCE centres to be implemented and institutionalized. The Guide, which is to be used as the basis for curriculum planning, is not designed to prescribe specific activities and resources, but to assist teachers in the creation and adaptation of curricula that will reflect its principles. Accordingly, the Guide avoids using prescriptive language and specific directives related to pedagogy. In this regard, teachers are required to translate the curriculum’s principles and strands into teaching and learning at their centre (Eggers-Pierola, Skiffington and Helms, 2008).

In a study conducted by the Education Development Centre Inc., on ECCE in Trinidad and Tobago in 2007 for the Seamless Education System Project, the researchers reported that most (91.7%) of the government and government assisted centres reported that they received a copy of the guide. They also indicated that up to that point in time they received no guidance on how to use it for curriculum planning (Eggers-Pierola, Skiffington and Helms, 2008). A search for documentation regarding any subsequent training efforts was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, some teachers and administrators have indicated that a ‘train the trainer’ approach was conducted, where the administrators were trained and were then required to train the teachers. Notwithstanding, many teachers have indicated that they received no training in the use of the guide.

The ECCE Division was revitalized and restructured, recently employing a curriculum coordinator and curriculum facilitators to monitor and support curriculum development in ECCE centres. These facilitators are required to visit centres to guide administrators and teachers in the implementation of the curriculum. Thus, they provide guidance with respect to teaching strategies and the preparation of activity plans and materials. They also plan and conduct workshops to address curriculum issues deemed most urgent.

Professional development seminars have been conducted for administrators and teachers in educational districts, dealing with curriculum related matters. Some teachers who have attended these workshops have complained about the lecture type manner in which they are conducted, adding that it was of little benefit to them. A curriculum facilitator has observed that challenges exist with the manner in which teachers are adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of the students. This facilitator expressed, that after eight years since the launch of the ECCE curriculum, teachers still do not know how to translate the learning outcomes of the guide into specific activities for the children- a concern she acknowledged, is shared by many of her colleagues. In addition, teachers have been informally expressing their concerns regarding their implementation of the curriculum. Despite these concerns, administrators and teachers are expected to use the curriculum guide to shape their planning and practices. Cheung, Ng and Hattie cited in Leung (2008) expressed that identifying the concerns of teachers is crucial for successful curriculum implementation. It allows one to identify when an innovation has been accepted or adopted. Accordingly, this study focusses on the concerns of ECCE teachers implementing the National ECCE curriculum.

The School's Context

The school under study is the Precious Gardens Early Childhood Care and Education Centre (PGECCE) (pseudonym), a co-educational government centre, located in a sub-urban area of the St. George East educational district. This school was established in the year 2012. The school's present enrolment consists of thirty-seven (37) children; nineteen (19) boys and eighteen (18) girls; and a teaching staff of four teachers and an administrator, who manages three other Early Childhood Centres, working at the PGECCE Centre once per week. The administrator, who is also certified in ECCE, has recently completed a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree. Three of the teachers, currently hold the position of teacher assistant, while one teacher occupies the position of teacher. This teacher assumes the duties of the administrator in the administrator's absence. The teachers are all trained at the certificate level of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. Three of them have completed the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree, while one is presently on the last year of pursuing the B.Ed. (ECCE) degree. They are all responsible for implementing the curriculum.

The school is located within a community comprising of families in the middle and lower income brackets. However, the children who attend the school are primarily from families of the lower socio-economic bracket, who work mainly in low-income jobs, such as factory workers, store clerks, cashiers or with the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and the Community – Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP).

Although the community surrounding the school is characterised by a mixture of family structures such as nuclear, single parent, and extended families, most of the children come from

single parent and stepparent homes. Together, these families form part of a residential community with a population of approximately five thousand persons of various religious persuasions including Christians, Hindus and Muslims (Joseph, 2011).

As a researcher positioned as an ‘outsider’ in this study, I held extensive discussions with the administrator and the teacher who perform administrative duties in the administrator’s absence. This revealed several pertinent details. From its inception, the centre received a copy of the curriculum guide. The teachers however did not receive individual copies. They were expected to download it from the Ministry of Education’s website. The administrator noted that although the teachers adopt a child-centred approach to teaching and learning, she is of the belief that they have not been using the curriculum guide to plan and implement activities. Therefore the activities planned and implemented, have not been meaningfully engaging. Inadequate resources compound the situation, forcing teachers to provide resources at their own expense. Even requests made of parents for resources are met with a negative response. As a result, the Centre lacks some of the resources.

According to the administrator, most parents have been expressing concerns about the curriculum in relation to their children’s readiness to enter primary school. They believed that their children were engaging in too much play and therefore, would not be ready to enter the primary school. Some parents have even opted to remove their children from the school.

Prior to teaching at the PGECCCE centre, the teachers taught at privately owned centres. They did not receive any training in the use of the curriculum guide. However, they have attended one workshop, which dealt with activity planning using the Guide, and centre based

learning. They received limited guidance from a curriculum facilitator who visited the school on about three occasions.

The teachers meet as a group at the beginning of each term to plan the theme, which is to be used to guide subsequent plans and activities for the entire school. The teacher - with the administrative duties - then uses the curriculum guide to match the learning objectives of the theme, with the learning outcomes as outlined in each strand of the guide. Each teacher is then required to develop and execute individual curriculum activity plans outlining specific learning outcomes and activities appropriate to her group of children, based on the theme, aligning her objectives with the learning outcomes in the curriculum guide. Despite this requirement, the teachers seem to plan activities without reference to the curriculum guide.

Statement of the Problem

A number of international recommendations, regional and local initiatives have been undertaken to improve the quality of ECCE education worldwide. However, at PGECCE Centre there appears to be a gap between what is advocated in the curriculum and how the curriculum is delivered, as evidenced by some challenges at the Centre.

According to the Centre's administrator, teachers have been expressing their apprehension and frustration regarding the adaptation of the curriculum specific to the needs of the children. These teachers have been observed to be executing their written activity plans based on goals and learning outcomes, contrary to that which is recommended in the guide. The children have therefore not been exposed to the curriculum as designed to foster learning and development in all areas appropriate to them.

If this situation continues, then the children's learning and development in all areas may not be realized. Since curriculum is fundamental to improvements in quality education, an investigation into this situation is therefore warranted, hence this study on the teachers' concerns.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the concerns of teachers at the PGECCE centre, as they implement the National ECCE curriculum. It will also examine teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning at the Early Childhood level. The findings could offer insights that will assist the administrator in providing support to teachers during curriculum implementation.

Research Questions

Overarching question

What concerns do teachers at the PGECCE Centre, have about implementing the National ECCE Curriculum?

Sub Questions

1. What are teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning at the Early Childhood level?
2. What are teachers' concerns regarding the National ECCE Curriculum Guide?
3. What concerns do teachers have regarding their delivery of the National ECCE curriculum?

Sub-questions two and three have been selected for operationalization in this study.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to gain a deeper insight into the concerns of teachers regarding implementing the National ECCE curriculum at the PGECCE centre. This is significant since

the level and type of teachers' concerns exert a powerful influence on the implementation of an educational change, as these concerns impact on actions thereby determining the success of an initiative (Puteh, Salam & Jusoff, 2011).

Based on the findings of this study, appropriate measures, designed to address concerns and support teachers as they implement the curriculum, can be instituted at the Centre. In addition, this study will also add to the research literature on ECCE curriculum locally.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This review of the literature seeks to illuminate the topic, 'Teachers concerns implementing the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Curriculum. Relevant issues were classified into three broad areas: teachers' beliefs about quality teaching and learning at the ECCE level, issues in the implementation of a new curriculum and strategies for supporting teachers' implementation of a curriculum. These issues were examined using books, scholarly journals, dissertations and other research studies and were discussed accordingly.

Teachers' Beliefs about Quality Teaching and Learning at the ECCE level

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines a high quality programme, as meeting the needs of and promoting the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children and adults- parents, staff and administrators- involved in the programme (Gordon & Browne, 2000). Such programme is fostered by a well-implemented Early Childhood curriculum that provides developmentally appropriate cognitive tasks and support, resulting in positive immediate outcomes for a child's learning and overall wellbeing, as well as lasting and enduring results for the child's future (Frede, 1998 cited in Taguma, Litgens & Makowiecki, 2012; Mahony & Hayes, 2006).

These outcomes include adequate preparation for elementary school, cognitive stimulation, nutritional and health benefits and long term social benefits (Currie & Thomas, 1999). Evidence for such benefits was found in a study conducted, to evaluate the impact of Head Start Early Childhood programme. It was observed that children who participated in the

programme, obtained higher scores on assessments of their cognitive and language development and were less aggressive than the non-participants (Barnett & Hustedt, 2003). Similar findings were obtained from the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, which also indicated positive outcomes in areas of economic performance, crime prevention, family relationships and health for children who received the quality preschool programme (Schweinhart et.al, 2005).

Teachers Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs about quality teaching and learning are significant to the implementation of a curriculum. This is because the interpretation and implementation of a curriculum, is dependent on their beliefs and the context in which they operate (Borg, 2003; Christou, Eliophotou-Menon & Philippou, 2004). In addition, teachers' beliefs play an important role in the type of classroom experience of children and, ultimately in classroom quality (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes & Karoly, 2009).

Teachers' beliefs affect their actions, which in turn affect student learning (Pajares, 1992 cited in Drang, 2011). Researchers have also indicated that teachers' beliefs and practices are mutually informing. They found, that contextual factors are critical in determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement curriculum that is in harmony with their beliefs (Fang, 1996; Tabachnick & Zeichner 1986 cited in Borg, 2003).

Research also reveals a disparity between teacher beliefs and practices. They indicate that teachers' beliefs are usually more developmentally appropriate than their practices (Stipek & Byler, 1997). A study conducted to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices as it relates to an innovation, found that there was a difference between the two (Li, Wang & Wong, 2011). That study of 10 kindergarten classes revealed that while the teachers indicated that they preferred a

child-initiated approach, their practice demonstrated teacher directed approach. The findings also indicated that while teachers adopted ideas such as respecting children, active learning, and play-based teaching and learning, these were not practiced in their teaching. The researcher concluded that curriculum planners should consider contextual factors such as culture, language, parents, teachers and resources in their planning for the implementation of an innovation.

Drang (2011) offered a number of reasons for inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices. These include the various mandates teachers receive that might hamper their ability to deliver the type of instruction as they desire, culture of conformity to discipline, and self-control, and parents' focus on early learning and academic achievement. In addition, Drang expressed, those classroom constraints such as large class sizes, limited resources, predetermined classroom layouts and a lack of expertise in delivering the new curriculum hindered teachers from practicing what they believed. Despite the inconsistencies between belief and practice, research show that generally, early childhood teachers have beliefs and carry out practices that is more developmentally appropriate than that of teachers in kindergarten through third grade (Buchanan, Burts, Bidner, White, & Charlesworth, 1998; Stipek & Byler, 1997; Vartuli, 1999).

The findings of a research study identified teachers' beliefs about the teaching and learning activities that are important for children at the ECCE level (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes and Karoly, 2009). Seventy-five teachers from public, private and family Centres participated in several focus groups. The results indicated three categories of learning experiences, which teachers believed are important for children at the ECCE level.

These are types of teacher-child interaction, children's learning environment and types of learning opportunities. Teachers believed that being supportive, establishing trust, encouraging individualization, being a role model, and demonstrating mutual respect are important aspects of

teacher-child interaction. With regard to the learning environment, teachers believed that safety, age appropriateness, teacher resourcefulness, clear rules and consequences, and predictability are significant in teaching and learning. Teachers also believed that play, hands-on activities, peer interaction, one-on-one activities, guided exploration, and child-guided activities are important types of learning opportunities for children.

Issues in the implementation of a new curriculum

Implementing a new curriculum is an attempt to change teaching and learning practices (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991). This warrants the consideration of a number of issues in order to manage effectively this change process. This section examines some of the issues related to three areas namely: the school environment, administration and the teacher.

School Environment

“The key organizational unit for making change successful is the school” (Hall & Hord, 2001 p.14). Fullan and Promfret (1977) explain that the culture of school required to adopt change, plays a critical role in whether implementation occurs and how it occurs. This includes teachers, principals and district personnel, who must take into account the progress of and facilitate the change. In addition to the structures, formal requirements and professional development sessions, Fullan (2001) advised that strategies for implementing change should also focus on the existing cultures, values and practices that may be required to implement successfully such change.

An important aspect of the culture is a shared learning-oriented culture (Hall & Hord, 2001) otherwise known as a professional learning community (Fullan, 2001). This is characterised by a community of professional learners, who value and seek change in order to

enhance their efficiency as teachers. Accordingly, teachers interact with each other giving and receiving assistance, while they converse about the meaning of the change. Fullan declared that that such collaboration relates strongly to the degree to which change occurs. He warns that teachers working in isolation learn little from each other, and are therefore not in a position to experiment and improve. Moreover, it contributes significantly to the adoption and ultimate success of a new initiative.

The physical features of the school's environment, such as resources, policies, structures and schedules that determine how the staff works, affect the implementation of a new curriculum (Hall & Hord, 2001). Hall and Hord contend that these must be given due consideration since the "planning and provision of resources represent an important means by which implementors are enabled to initiate implementation and sustain the change process (p. 110). Therefore, they advised that there should be the regular updating of supplies as these deplete over time.

Administration

Principals are the primary catalyst and facilitator of change. Thus they are required to be instructionally focussed, providing support and direction as curriculum leaders. Accordingly, principals organise training and development sessions over a period, checking continuously with teachers to identify needs, solve problems and clarify questions. Such training and development during implementation should be focussed on the change innovation, so that teachers can learn the necessary skills for use in the classroom (Hall & Hord, 2001). However, Hall and Hord observed that professional development training is oftentimes vague and off-target and of little use.

Teacher Characteristics

The successful implementation of an innovation requires teachers to change practices with which they have become familiar. However, their willingness to change is affected by personal characteristics such as attitudes, beliefs, values, relationships and norms that govern their behaviour.

In a longitudinal study conducted with 33 teachers, to determine the characteristics, which influence the implementation of a new preschool curriculum, it was found that the teachers who were characterised as motivated, responsible, organized and open to new learning opportunities were strong implementers of the new curriculum. They demonstrated eagerness to learn new strategies and were open to additional training opportunities. Conversely, those teachers who had little motivation, or for whom the curriculum's approach was directly opposed to the way in which they were trained and to their own personal philosophies of child-development, demonstrated a low level of implementation and a level of resistance to the change (Leiber et al. , 2009). The researchers therefore suggested that adding a component to the training and coaching called Communities of Practice rather than relying on Professional Development might be useful.

The findings of another study conducted by Burgess, Robertson and Patterson (2010) illuminated the attitudes of teachers as they implement three curriculum initiatives: a literacy initiative, a pedagogy initiative and a health initiative. Twenty-five university trained early childhood teachers responded to a questionnaire, which sought to identify how they respond at a number of decision-making points. The results showed that teachers had positive attitudes towards those initiatives, which they considered to be in their interest and viewed as a resource.

In addition, those teachers who had previously adopted what they perceived as current early childhood pedagogy felt validated by the strategies and methods outlined in the initiative.

Negative attitudes to the curriculum initiatives, were expressed by 39 percent of the respondents who offered work priority concerns and the content of the curriculum as reasons for their negative responses. These teachers expressed that the curriculum documents were daunting and that they felt confused or disappointed.

The researchers concluded that teachers who engage positively with an initiative are likely to continue their engagement throughout the implementation. Conversely, teachers who do not engage at initiation, who display negative attitudes are unlikely to engage with the initiative during implementation. This suggests that the decisions teachers make during the initiation processes acts as a signal for decisions for continuous engagement or irreversible rejection of a new curriculum.

Teachers Concerns

Roselyne (2013) views teachers as indispensable to any educational change, since they are directly responsible for the organization of learning, to enable the maximum benefit of all the children who must experience the curriculum. This requires them to make changes in the use of materials, teaching approaches, beliefs, values and the roles of teachers and administrators (Fullan, 2001). Such changes will inevitably give rise to some concerns.

Hall and Hord (2006) define concerns as the composite representation of the feelings, preoccupation, thought and consideration given to a particular issue or task. Fuller (1969) developed the concerns theory, later modified by Hall, Wallace and Dossett (1973) which posits that teachers encountering a new situation progress through a natural developmental sequence of concerns. Initially teachers' concerns are more self-oriented. Their focus is more on 'self' and

the effect of the innovation on them, rather than the practice of teaching or the needs of the children. Once these concerns are resolved, teachers become concerned with the task. At this stage, concerns focus on the processes of using the innovation and their ability to manage the tasks required. When the task issues are resolved, teachers move to the impact stage, where they are concerned with the effect of the innovation on students and what they can do to make it better. Individuals who do not have any direct contact with the innovation and whose concerns do not focus on teaching and teaching-related issues have unrelated concerns (Hall & Hord, 2001).

Concerns exert a powerful influence on curriculum implementation and determine the kind of assistance that teachers might need in the implementation process (Christou, Eliophotou-Menon & Philippou, 2004). When the change process is facilitated assiduously, teachers move from self-concerns to task concerns during the first two years finally to impact concerns after three to five years. If support is not offered, the progress of concerns is inhibited, management concerns are more intense and many teachers revert to self-concerns (Hall & Hord, 2001).

The four broad areas of concern-unrelated, self, task and impact is reflective of seven specific categories of concerns namely awareness, informational, personal, management, consequence, collaboration, and refocusing. While these stages are distinctive, they are not mutually exclusive. A teacher can exhibit some degree of concern at all stages. However, the intensity of concern characterised by particular stage, will vary as the implementation proceeds (Hord, Rutherford, Hurling-Austin, & Hall, 1987).

The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is a framework, which provides tools and techniques for understanding concerns, in order to facilitate an educational change. Specifically, the Stages of Concern (SoC) dimension of the model provides a tool for understanding the

concerns of teachers at different points during implementation. To interpret and explain the findings related to the expressed concerns of teachers implementing the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum, this researcher used the principles outlined in this dimension.

The SoC is characterised by seven stages or categories of concerns about an innovation. The first category 0 (Awareness) indicates that the individual has little concern or involvement with the innovation. At stage 1 (Informational) the individual has a general awareness about the innovation and is interested in learning more about it. At stage 2 (Personal), concerns are reflective of the individual's uncertainty about the demands of the innovation, his or her adequacy to meet those demands and the individual's role with the innovation. The informational and personal stages are synonymous with the self, stage of concern.

Stage 3 (Management) concerns focus on the processes and tasks of using the innovation and the best use of information and resources. The individual also has issues with efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling and time demands. Task is at the management stage of concern. Stage 4 (Consequences) is characterised by concerns about the impact of the innovation on clients, an evaluation of outcomes and changes needed to improve outcomes. At stage 5 (Collaboration) the individual is concerned about the coordination and cooperation with others in the use of the innovation. At stage 6 (Refocusing), concerns are about the exploration of more universal benefits, including the possibility of major changes or alternatives to the innovation. Stages 4, 5 and 6 are considered the Impact stage of the Concerns.

The SoC dimension of the CBAM model has been used to measure concerns in a variety of educational contexts. For example, a study conducted to evaluate teachers' concerns in Science Literacy for Human Capital Development, an aspect of a new preschool curriculum,

found that teachers had concerns at the personal informational and consequences stages (Puteh, Salam & Jusoff, 2011). The results of this mixed methods study, in which 369 teachers participated in the quantitative phase, indicated that the teachers were aware of the curriculum and the changes, which they were required to make. Although they raised issues about the personal benefits of this adoption, they were more concerned about the curriculum's impact on the pupils and their subsequent performance in other classes. In addition, teachers were concerned about ways to accomplish objectives and acquire materials. Overall, teachers were largely focussed on the self and task stages. The researchers also found that there were no differences in concerns based on qualification or teaching locality.

Strategies for Supporting Teachers' Implementation of a Curriculum

Support strategies are meaningful and pertinent for successful implementation. These strategies however, must take into consideration the concerns of teachers (Hall & Hord, 2001; Hall & Locks, 1978). Brown (2010) declares that supporting teachers will enable them to be powerful, positive forces for change, carrying out implementation effectively.

The approach used for supporting and assisting teachers in understanding the content of the curriculum and begin implementation has been the traditional train the trainer approach. However, it has been noted that this approach is ineffective as it situates teachers as passive stakeholders who must receive knowledge delivered by experts (Burgess, Robertson & Patterson, 2010).

Researchers have since identified important elements in training, necessary for supporting teachers. These consist of an appropriate program of professional development designed to promote teachers' understanding of the elements of the curriculum innovation,

successful experiences in implementing new approaches (Peers, Diezmann, & Watters, 2003 cited in Brown, 2010), and sufficient time and follow-up support for teachers to master new content and strategies and to integrate them into their practice (Corcoran, 1995).

Individualized coaching and mentoring has been advocated as a promising approach to professional development (Brown, 2010, Joyce & Showers cited in Guskey, 1986). Mentoring is a strategy that is based on the building and sustaining of relationships and the handling of challenges. It involves a mentor who has experience in the curriculum. The mentor provides advice, shares knowledge and experience and co-teaches using a low pressure, self-discovery approach. Coaching is directed towards job performance, the ability to adapt to the change. It focusses on the learning of professional skills, and the use of open-ended questions to assist teachers to see objectively their own patterns of behaviour and to prompt reflection, planning, goal setting and action to increase the implementation of the curriculum (Brown, 2010). Administrators, fellow teachers and curriculum supervisors can provide coaching (Joyce and Showers cited in Guskey, 1986).

Mentoring and coaching are beneficial for facilitating changes in specific instructional practices of teachers, as they grant teachers the opportunity to implement new approaches and receive immediate feedback on such practices. Neuman and Cunningham (2009) cited in Korkeamäki and Dreher, (2012) stated that despite the effectiveness of professional development in developing teachers' knowledge, it must be accompanied by coaching in order to improve practice. Similarly, Korkeamäki and Dreher (2012) found that extensive modelling and coaching allows teachers to shift from a theoretical understanding to an understanding of how principles are applied in the classroom.

Brown (2010) conducted a study to explore the factors, which led to the professional growth of three pre-kindergarten teachers of as they were supported and guided in the implementation of a pre-kindergarten Mathematics curriculum. The findings of this case study indicated that interactions and consultations with the mentor and peer coach resulted in increased confidence and enhanced competence in curriculum and materials management and a willingness to seek out and utilize appropriate professional development opportunities. In addition, teachers incorporated new strategies and became increasingly adaptive with curriculum activities. Furthermore, there was a developmental progression of teacher growth as teachers began to assimilate innovative approaches leading eventually to a reorganisation of their perceptions that were obtained through dialogue with the mentor, peer coach and colleagues.

Moreover, the findings indicated that mentoring and coaching activities supported teachers' implementation of the curriculum. The strategies of the mentors and coaches were embedded within professional development sessions, comprised of different kinds of learning opportunities. Such strategies included small group interaction, providing time, materials and support when learning new activities, in-class support and supplemental materials all of which were integrated on-site.

Domotrovich, Gest, Gill, Bierman, Welsh and Jones, (2009), conducted a randomized controlled trial to identify strategies for improving teaching quality. Eighty-four teachers from 44 classrooms participated in the study. They received training in language and literacy skills enrichment and social emotional skills enrichment strategies that were to be integrated into the existing curricula. They attended three-day training workshops prior to the start of school and a one-day booster workshop midway through the year. Teachers also received weekly mentoring support from trainers who were experienced master teachers working as consultants. These

mentors spent three hours per week in each classroom observing, modelling intervention techniques and team teaching lessons. In addition, they conducted 1-hour weekly meetings with the teachers.

The findings revealed that teachers who had the intervention, talked with children more frequently and in more cognitively complex ways, used more questions and talk that was more sensitive and responsive to the children. The researchers concluded that effective professional development support enables teachers to implement explicit instructional activities as they seek to improve their teaching practices towards improvements in student learning.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The aim of this research is to explore the concerns of teachers regarding their implementation of the National ECCE Curriculum. Specifically it sought to derive answers to research sub-questions:

What are teachers' concerns regarding the National ECCE Curriculum Guide?

What concerns do teachers have regarding their delivery of the National ECCE curriculum?

This is of value, since research in education, which particularly focusses on insight and understanding from those being studied, makes a significant contribution to the knowledge and practice of education (Merriam, 1998). Care was therefore taken, to explore the concerns in such a manner, that the credibility of its findings can be assured. This chapter explains the type of study and design chosen, the process of selecting the participants, the methods of data collection and data analysis, the researcher's experience in conducting the study, and the delimitations and limitations of the study. All places, schools and persons in this study were given fictitious names in order to maintain their anonymity.

Research Design

The research design according to Merriam (1998) is a plan, which serves to guide the researcher in the process of answering the research questions. It connects theoretical paradigms to strategies and methods of collecting data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This study sought to understand the concerns of teachers, at the Precious Gardens ECCE Centre, regarding their

implementation of the National ECCE curriculum. Accordingly, the study used the qualitative research approach as its guiding framework.

The qualitative approach was best suited to this study since this research was primarily concerned with the interpretations and meanings, which the teachers have constructed, based upon their experiences in implementing the curriculum. This approach, allowed the researcher to investigate and describe the concerns of teachers while implementing the curriculum, examine the context in which they operate, and capture their ideas and feelings regarding the situation.

In addition, this approach is reflective of this researcher's ontological position that reality is seen through many views. Thus, it facilitated obtaining an understanding of the concerns of the teachers from multiple perspectives. Merriam (1998) states the qualitative design is interpretative in nature with multiple realities and interpretations.

Merriam (1998) and Rossman and Rallis (2013) suggest that qualitative research is inherently interactive with the researcher becoming the main instrument for data collection and analysis. Accordingly, face-to-face contact with the participants was necessary. The researcher entered the setting of the participants, and engaged in meaningful interactions with them. Creswell (2013) affirms that "qualitative research is a situated activity, which locates the observer in the world" (p. 43). Within this context, the researcher was afforded the opportunity to clarify uncertainties, summarize information and reflect on the data as the study evolved. Such interaction is indicative of this researcher's epistemological position, that knowledge is socially constructed. The researcher also believes that the participants' concerns are the result of their interactions with their working environment, and that their views are necessary in order to gain an in-depth understanding.

In order to appropriately capture and convey the nature of the concerns experienced by the teachers, a research strategy that allowed for rich, thick descriptions in the form of words, rather than numbers was needed. Accordingly, qualitative research was fitting, as it allowed the researcher to present the participants' actual words as data, to support the findings. Merriam (1998) confirms, "the product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive" (p. 8). Creswell, (2013) adds that qualitative research will enable the researcher to obtain and convey a "complex detailed understanding" (p.48), of the teachers' concerns through a rich description that cannot be obtained using quantitative methods.

The design used for this qualitative inquiry is the case study research design. Merriam (1998) defines a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit" (p. 193). Creswell (2013) adds that the case study is a qualitative approach, which enables the researcher to explore the bounded system through detailed in-depth data collection.

Accordingly, the bounded unit, which constituted the unit of analysis in this research, is the concerns of teachers implementing the National ECCE Curriculum at a single ECCE Centre- the Precious Gardens ECCE Centre -over a period. This researcher intended to portray what it is like to be implementing the National ECCE curriculum at this ECCE Centre by giving a narrative account of the teachers' concerns.

Qualitative case studies are noted for their special features, which Merriam (2009) has characterized as being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. A case study is described as being particularistic, when it focuses on a particular situation, event, programme or phenomenon. It is descriptive when the product is a rich, complete description of the phenomenon under study and is heuristic because it enlightens the readers' understanding of this phenomenon. This study

concentrated on a particular situation- the concerns of teachers at the Precious Gardens ECCE Centre. It sought to provide insights that will illuminate the readers understanding of those concerns, through the weaving of a rich, thick narrative. It is therefore particularistic, descriptive and heuristic in nature.

To add to the credibility of this study, this researcher seeks to illuminate the reader's understanding of personal biases, assumptions and motivations for conducting the study. Maxwell (2005) cited in Merriam (2009) explains, that this is important for understanding the influence of a researcher's values and expectations on the conduct and conclusions of the study. In this regard, the researcher's site is described.

Researcher's Site

As a teacher, holding a Certificate in ECCE (Cert.Ed.), and a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) specializing in Early Childhood Care and Education, I have been exposed to a significant degree of training in the field of Early Childhood. It was during the course of pursuing the B.Ed., that I was introduced to National ECCE Curriculum, which was then launched in Trinidad and Tobago. On perusing the Curriculum Guide, I realised that the learning outcomes that the teachers were specifically required to use are stated in very broad terms. I believed that this would pose a challenge for the teachers, who have to implement this curriculum.

This belief was confirmed as I spoke with several ECCE teachers, listening to their complaints about the Curriculum Guide, along with the many other challenges, which they have been experiencing as they sought to implement the curriculum. I am of the view that the teachers were not sufficiently equipped with the necessary skills to tailor the curriculum to suit the needs

of the children and that the curriculum should have been written in more specific terms given the competencies of the teachers.

Having taught at the Infant level in the primary school for over eighteen years, I have experienced first-hand the challenges of working with children who were unprepared academically and socially to engage with the curriculum at the Infant level. Such challenges were accompanied by a degree of disappointment, since it was expected that the children would have been adequately prepared with a certain degree of knowledge and skill necessary, to work at the primary school. These experiences, gave rise to some concerns about the students' curriculum experiences at the ECCE (preschool) level, and were my motivation to conduct this study. I am acknowledging that I have some biases, but will make every effort to disallow these biases from influencing the research process.

Sampling Procedure

Selection of Research Site

Convenience sampling was used to select the site to conduct this study. This researcher was acquainted with the administrator for a number of years on a professional and collegial level. In addition, the ECCE Centre of which she is in charge is located in an area, which is in close proximity to the researcher's location. These conditions made this site readily available and easily accessible for this researcher. Merriam (2009) states that convenience sampling is used to select a sample that is convenient to the researcher. It can be based on availability of a site or respondents. Merriam cautioned though, that this strategy alone is likely to produce "information poor" cases (p. 79). Therefore, a further sampling strategy was subsequently used to select the participants.

Selection of Participants

The participants for this study were selected using the purposeful sampling strategy. This strategy was used because it, “allows the researcher to select those participants who will provide the richest information” for the study (Best & Khan, 2006, p. 19). Merriam (1998) affirms that purposeful sampling is used when the researcher wants to discover, understand and gain insight and must therefore select a sample from which to glean the most information. This researcher selected three teachers of a staff of four based on certain criteria. These teachers were selected because they have a range of experience implementing the curriculum, and have all implemented the new curriculum for at least one year. They were therefore equipped with sufficient knowledge about the curriculum and experience in implementing it, which places them in a position to offer the richest, most salient information.

Maximum variation strategy was also employed in their selection. This strategy allowed the researcher to select participants with the widest possible range of characteristics of interest to the study, in order to increase the likelihood of gaining different perspectives regarding the teachers’ concerns (Merriam, 2009). Accordingly, participants were selected based on variations in: the number of years teaching at the ECCE level, their experience teaching the new curriculum, the age group that they currently teach and their qualifications.

The three selected teachers have taught at the ECCE level for 22 years, 10 years and 1 year respectively. One teacher who teach the four plus group have been implementing the curriculum for four years, while the teacher who teach the mixed group have been implementing the new curriculum for two years. The other participant who teaches the three plus group has

only been implementing the curriculum for one year. The teachers also vary in their levels of qualification. Further details of each participant are given in the following section.

The Participants

Mary is an experienced early childhood teacher, with a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Care and Education. She has 10 years of teaching experience at the ECCE level. Seven of those years were spent teaching at two other ECCE Centres. In one of those Centres, she implemented a different curriculum using a more traditional approach. Over those years, she has taught the three plus and four plus age groups. However, most of her years were spent teaching children of the four plus age group. At present, she teaches the four plus age group of children. She is the only staff member who holds the position of 'Teacher' at the Centre. She also holds the most senior position among the staff. As such, she is responsible for the management of the Centre in the Administrator's absence. Mary has been implementing the new ECCE curriculum for approximately four years.

Nadine is a veteran teacher with 24 years of experience. She has recently graduated with a Bachelor of Education Degree specializing in ECCE. She taught at a private ECCE Centre for 22 years, and is now teaching at the Centre of study for the past two years. She has been implementing the new Curriculum since that time. She teaches a mixed group of three plus and four plus children. She considers herself to have a high degree of creativity, which she thinks is valuable in the Early Childhood setting. Her decision to move from a Centre using the traditional approach, to one, which used the new child-centered approach, was motivated by a need to use her creative skills to contribute to what she describes as 'a better way of teaching.' Nadine is employed in the position of 'Teacher Assistant.'

Gail is the youngest member of staff. Her first teaching appointment was at the Centre of study, where she has been teaching for a little over one year. Prior to this her only other teaching experience was during her training where she spent approximately one month at one Centre and a few weeks at another. She possesses a Certificate in ECCE and is presently completing her third year of the Bachelor of Education programme, with a concentration on ECCE. She teaches a three plus group of eleven children. She is presently employed in the position of ‘Teacher Assistant.’

These three teachers provided relevant data for this study. The procedure for the collection of such data is explained in the following section.

Data Collection

Data collection is the process whereby specific data is selected using the appropriate procedures and techniques for collecting such data (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). As such, data were collected using face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Interviews were considered to be the most appropriate method for gaining an insight into the concerns of teachers as they implement the National ECCE Curriculum. During the interviews, the researcher was afforded the opportunity to converse with teachers, in order to discover their concerns, and thereby generate data, which may not have been available in any other form. Interviews were therefore apt as it had the capacity to elicit the individuals’ “feelings, intentions, meanings and thoughts on the situation at hand” (Litchman, 2006, p.117). Litchman (2006), also states that the goal in interviewing is to find out what the interviewees’ feelings and thoughts are about certain things.

Silverman (2004) confirms that the interview is an interactive, flexible and generative instrument for discovering meaning.

The interviews were semi-structured to facilitate a loosely defined framework, which allowed for flexibility in the range and order of the questions (Wellington, 2000). They were conducted using an interview guide (refer to Appendix A). The exact wording and order, in which the questions were asked, were not pre-determined (Wellington, 2000; Merriam, 1998). This format facilitated the building of a positive communication climate, which allowed a rapport to be established in a conversational type interview where, as Merriam (1998) states, the researcher can “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world view of the respondent, and to new ideas of the topic” (p. 74). The semi-structured interview was this researcher’s preferred method, in contrast to the structured interview, which may not have yielded the depth of perspectives. Merriam (1998) cautioned, “The problem with using a highly structured interview in qualitative research is that rigidly adhering to predetermined questions may not allow you to access participants’ perception and understanding of the world” (p. 74).

This researcher developed questions for the interview guide. These questions were constructed to elicit answers to the research sub-questions: What are teachers concerns regarding the National ECCE Curriculum Guide. What concerns do teachers have regarding their delivery of the National ECCE curriculum? The questions were constructed based on related literature including the Stages of Concern Questionnaire. The interview guide consisted of a general question to glean personal information from the participants and some open-ended questions (refer to Appendix A). They were pilot tested by a colleague who has experience, implementing the new ECCE curriculum at another ECCE Centre. Thereafter, some adjustments were made in the wording and order of some of the questions.

Interviews were conducted on two days in the month of April. They were conducted at the participants' convenience, in the privacy of Administrator's office at the ECCE Centre, after the school's dismissal. The interviews were done individually and lasted for approximately thirty-five minutes each. Before each interview, I reassured the participants of their confidentiality and anonymity, and reminded them that the interview will be audio taped. The ethical procedures employed in the study will be described in detail in a later section. I encouraged them to be open and honest since there are no wrong answers. In order to establish a positive communication climate I was mindful to assume and maintain a pleasant, respectful, non-judgemental, non-threatening persona, and to refrain from letting my views be known (Merriam, 2009). Such measures were taken in order to increase the credibility of the findings.

All interviews were therefore conducted in a pleasant conversational like manner. The first two respondents, shared information, gave detailed explanations and examples. However, the last interviewee provided very specific answers, with insufficient details, which required the researcher to pose a number of probing questions for further details. At the end of the interview, each participant expressed hope that the information they shared would be useful in provoking appropriate responses to support their implementation of the curriculum.

During data analysis, issues arose which required clarification. A second interview was therefore scheduled with two of the participants to clarify such issues. These interviews lasted for approximately seven minutes each. This additional data was subsequently transcribed and inserted into the original transcript.

Ethical Considerations

Collecting data from the participants warranted that I adhered to pertinent ethical considerations. Prior to conducting the interviews, permission was sought from the Centre's Administrator and the ECCE Division; (refer to Appendix B) to gain access and to obtain the participants' agreement to take part in the study and audio tape the interviews. To obtain full participation, I met with the principal and teachers of the Centre to apprise them of the subject and nature of the research. I presented to them both orally and in writing, a description of the study, the procedure to be adopted, what their participation entailed, and how this research could be of benefit to them (refer to Appendix C). They were also given assurances that no risks would occur because of their participation.

In order to ensure the anonymity of the participants, the administrator was assured that a pseudonym would be used instead of the school's name in the transcripts or the written report. The teachers were also assured that their names would be replaced by pseudonyms in any written record. The participants' confidentiality was also assured. All transcripts were stored in separate files on this researcher's personal computer, not in internet storage devices. Participants were made aware that their participation in this research was voluntary. Therefore, they were also informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

The Researcher's Experience

I conducted informal discussions with the Administrator in order to gain background information. From the onset, I carefully constructed and asked probing questions to get pertinent information. I revisited on several occasions, to clarify information previously obtained and

gathered more information. These interviews with the administrator caused me to reflect on myself as an interviewer, as I was required to, listen carefully, exercise patience, probe for further details and ponder immediately on the information received. This made me realise that my skills as an interviewer were crucial in gaining pertinent data.

Prior to the start of the interviews, I sought to verify the information about the participants. I then realised from my meeting with them, that two of them were implementing the curriculum for under three years. On reflection, I decided to change the criteria to include teachers who had been implementing the curriculum for at least one year. I felt that one year of implementation was sufficient for any teacher to have genuine concerns about their implementation of the curriculum. In addition, Hall and Hord (2001) acknowledges that teachers usually demonstrate concerns (self and task) at the beginning of their teaching.

I made several visits to the Centre to gather background information from the administrator and teacher with administrative duties and to interview the participants. A second interview, which lasted for about four minutes, was conducted with two of the participants to clarify issues arising during data analysis and member checking. On each occasion, the participants were cordial as they openly responded to questions asked.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making meaning from data by consolidating, reducing and interpreting it (Merriam, 1998). This is done in order to answer the research questions. Data analysis for this study followed the guidelines of Merriam (2009). The audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim. On completion, the transcripts were read while listening to recording to ensure that the participants' words were accurately captured. Having verified the accuracy of

the transcriptions, the transcripts were read and reread, while looking for meaningful segments of data with the potential to answer the research questions. Once these segments were identified, they were highlighted in colour using a word processing programme. A note, comment, observation or query was written in the margin next to these highlighted evidence, a process which Merriam (2009) refers to as coding (refer to Appendix D). A second interview was scheduled with two of the participants to clarify queries emerging during data analysis. This new data was transcribed and coded.

The coded transcripts were returned to each participant for the verification of the accuracy of their expressions and the meanings that the researcher derived. This strategy, referred to as member checking, was done to ensure the credibility of the emerging findings. Merriam (2009) views it as the “most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and the perspective they have” (p. 217). In addition, a colleague who recently graduated from the Masters in Education Programme reviewed the transcripts to assess the plausibility of the codes and themes generated. We subsequently met to compare and discuss the codes and the themes generated.

Transcripts were further reviewed focussing on the codes, reflecting on their meanings and grouping those that go together. These groupings were again compared and revised while looking for similar patterns and regularities, to form the categories or themes. Such categories were reflective of patterns that were common to all data sets. These themes were then categorised according to Stages of Concern.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

Best and Khan (2006) defines delimitations as the “boundaries of the study” (p.39). This study is delimited to the exploration of the concerns of three teachers implementing the National ECCE Curriculum at the Precious Gardens ECCE centre. This researcher will therefore not seek to generalize to the wider population of the ECCE Centres.

Limitations

Limitations are defined as those conditions out of the researcher’s control, which may place restrictions on the conclusion of the study (Best & Khan, 2006). There were two limitations associated with this study. The effort made not to disrupt the school’s activities and yet keep within the timeframe for this research resulted in limited time to conduct the study.

Given that the researcher is the main instrument for data collection and analysis, personal biases can influence the interpretation of the data. Merriam (1998) suggests that as a human instrument, biases can interfere with the process and opportunities can be missed. Efforts were therefore made to minimize the influence of any biases.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this case study was to understand the concerns of teachers at the Precious Gardens ECCE Centre, as they implement the National ECCE curriculum. Specifically, it sought to derive answers to two research sub-questions:

2. What are teachers concerns regarding the National ECCE Curriculum Guide?
3. What concerns do teachers have regarding their delivery of the National ECCE curriculum?

Data were obtained through interviews conducted with three teachers –Gail, Nadine and Mary (pseudonyms) - who were in the process of implementing the curriculum at the Centre. The data were coded (refer to Appendix D). Similar codes were then grouped to obtain categories, which were reflective of the teachers’ concerns (refer to Appendix E). These concerns were subsequently categorized according to the Stages of Concern dimension of the CBAM model (refer to Appendix F).

The findings revealed:

- Self Concerns related to Curriculum Guide and to teachers’ competence.
- Task Concerns related to time demands and resources.
- Impact Concerns related to collaborative and collegial support and the curriculum’s impact on children is learning.

Additionally, teachers had concerns about administrative support and guidance.

Self Concerns

Research Question 2:

What are teachers concerns regarding the National ECCE Curriculum Guide?

Concerns about the National ECCE Curriculum Guide.

Concerns about the National Curriculum Guide were categorised as ‘Self Concerns.’ These were concerns which teachers had in relation to their awareness of the innovation, their uncertainty and inadequacy to meet those demands and their roles in regard to the innovation.

The three teachers expressed concerns with the language used in the Guide. They felt that the use of broad terms and vague wording in the Guide made it difficult to understand what they were required to teach. Gail lamented:

When I look online at curriculum from Switzerland and others, I could understand everything, and I am from another country. It is more specific....But here they will put something broad and you have to try and figure out what they mean.

Gail also expressed her feelings about the Guide exclaiming, “The Guide does not make any sense.” In response to the challenges, which she experienced, trying to translate the learning outcomes into activities designed for learning in specific areas she explained, “Well sometimes you put what they have and you have to tweak it. If you are doing a theme on birds, you try to put birds somewhere at the end or in the middle.”

Mary concurred with Gail and expressed that the situation left them with limited solutions. She explained:

...because it is very general and sometimes vague and then you, you want to kind of narrow it down to a particular activity that you are doing, basically you have to end up changing up the words. Unfortunately, you are always backed up against the wall.

She further expressed that there should be a change in teachers' thinking in order to understand and interpret this curriculum. She stated that:

You have to really change your mind-set. In terms of this vague language in the Guide and... moving it from a vague language to something concrete that you could work with, it was a little difficult.

Like Gail and Mary, Nadine expressed similar challenges using the Guide. She indicated that she was unclear with certain aspects of it, which she believed, might not have been an issue if she received the necessary guidance. She articulated:

Opening this Guide poses a little bit of an issue, because there is no one there to guide you through anything...you are supposed to indicate the attitudes skills, dispositions. We are supposed to use it from the Guide as the guideline in order to write the plan. Those areas I am not clear with....There are certain aspects of it that I am still not sure about....the process of all the activity plans.... and the process in which we have to write it, I think that is a little bit stressful and a little too much.

However, unlike Gail and Mary, she expressed positive sentiments about the usefulness of the Guide to the children and the teachers. She believed that this Guide could assist teachers in their practice.

I believe there are a lot of good things in it, which we can use to guide us, and to help not just the child develop, but the teacher develop their way of questioning within their objectives for the lesson ...

On the contrary, Mary and Gail were concerned that the Guide did not assist teachers in their practices. Mary was concerned with the lack of suggestions and examples of teaching and learning strategies, which she considered to be “limiting the teacher” to their previous knowledge and skills. She thought that teachers with some degree of teaching experience were better equipped than beginning teachers are, to use the Guide. She voiced:

It’s limiting the teacher in the sense that it doesn’t provide any ideas, especially for beginning teachers and so on. The more experienced teachers will be able to work along based on their own experiences, but the Guide as compared to how the Primary school is, Primary school is more in depth and it outlines the strategies or the steps that you should take to reach to a certain point, whereas our own, does not. So it is limited in that regard. It doesn’t go with the word ‘guide’.

In addition, Gail believed that the Guide restricted her ability to develop her own objectives. She feels that this placed an additional burden on her, because she was required to use the Guide to plan instead of writing her own objectives in a manner pleasing to her. She stated:

You have to read through what they have and you have to use what they put in the book. You can’t put what you want. I find going through that is more work. I could just write down what I want to get from them.

Unlike the other teachers, Mary was also concerned with the lack of standards to assist teachers in their assessment of the children. She felt that the Guide should contain standards for each age

group to attain. This she thought would be helpful in focusing teachers' attention on what the children should be able to achieve at the end of each year. She said:

You don't have the kind of focused attention that you need to help them prepare.... what I understand from my research and so on, curriculum guides usually have... they have different levels, different levels of attainment to reach this goal. There is none there. So in terms of a teacher who is in the beginning group they don't have a set goals to say well they could measure their children by and say well they would have achieved this for this period of time and they are ready for the next stage- four plus or whatever- there is nothing like that... There is no measurement in the Guide to help me.

Research Question 3:

What concerns do teachers have regarding their delivery of the National ECCE curriculum?

Concern About Competence.

Concerns about competence were also categorised as 'Self Concerns.' Self-concerns were concerns that teachers had in relation to their awareness of the innovation, their uncertainty and inadequacy to meet those demands and their roles concerning the innovation.

All four teachers seemed to have some knowledge about the curriculum. They spoke about their understanding of the child-centered, hands-on approach and acknowledged that this new approach replaced one that was traditionally teacher-directed. However, they all shared concerns regarding their ability to implement it efficiently and successfully. Gail, who began implementation of this new curriculum for a little over a year expressed her feeling of

incompetence, “I don’t think I could implement it, or I probably don’t know if I doing it the right way.” Mary also indicated her uncertainty with the manner in which she implemented the curriculum. Even after implementing this curriculum for about four years, Mary expressed that she was still trying to familiarize herself with the curriculum. She said, “I’m still getting familiar with it in some...trying to mesh it with what I think should be done...” Nadine’s twenty-four years of experience teaching at the ECCE level, coupled with the fact that she embraced the new curriculum, seemed to have had an impact on her feeling of competence to implement the curriculum. She expressed a degree of confidence in her practice, despite implementing the new curriculum for only two years now. However, her major concern was the possibility of receiving negative feedback from the administrator and curriculum officers. She expressed:

So right now although believe that I am ok with it and I am writing my activity plans and so on, any point in time they can come and tell me that I did something wrong.

All three teachers expressed concerns about their competence in implementing this curriculum. They felt that inadequate training seriously compromised their efforts. Consequently, they were unfamiliar with some aspects of the curriculum, and lacked an understanding of what they were required to do. Mary indicated that she received no training to use the Guide. She said that it was like “throwing me into the water without a paddle” She further elaborated:

I cannot say I really got any training to use the Guide because when you think of training you think that somebody will go through it, get you familiar with what is expected and what the language is in the Guide and the whole mind-set behind the Guide. Basically, I would have had to do that on my own.

Mary also indicated that the training she received to deliver the curriculum was insufficient. She therefore sought information and engaged in trial and error in an attempt to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. She said:

[There was] not sufficient training in this curriculum. The assistance I think should have been given prior to starting in the Centre or even from the administrators, or even during that first term, for any new staff that come in, there should be some kind of familiarization with the curriculum and how it should be implemented, and how you should structure the activity plans and so on... basically I had to fumble through. I had to read a lot; I had to ask a lot of questions... So I think if that was done, that kind of support, initial support that I needed, I would have been a little more confident....

With respect to training Nadine indicated, that she received “none at all.” She further indicated that not even the ECCE certification programme in which she was enrolled adequately prepared her to use the Guide. She said:

No..., the training at the University did not, although they would touch on it briefly. When you are doing an assignment and you have to use the activity Guide they would give you a little insight about how to do it. What I do now is whatever little I picked up from ... [Institution named]. Familiarity helps you getting it a little clearer and clearer, but I am still challenged in some areas.

Gail shared a similar experience stating that, “The training wasn’t enough for you to get anything. I don’t even know what they really want. It’s just that they give you the Guide and you have to figure out what to do with it.”

The lack of a shared understanding of the curriculum's principles and approaches seemed also to have affected the teachers' understanding of what was expected of them. Mary's response suggests that the implementation of the curriculum at the Precious Garden's ECCE Centre was subject conflicting interpretations due to inconsistencies between administrators and curriculum officers about what was required. Mary stated:

I am still making changes because, the changes come when there is a change of [the] people who supervise you and their understanding of what is expected is different to what you were told previously, so is always have a little conflict where that is concerned.

There also appeared to be differences in understanding of specific approaches among teachers and the Administrator, Curriculum Officers and Supervisors, which resulted in sporadic changes that affected curriculum implementation. Mary explained her dilemma:

So is still a lot of adjusting to certain things because the literature and how I understand it says something and then what the authorities, so to speak say, is different. So that's one of my concerns and that's where I have to do adjustments. You have an understanding of something and they just throw you off. They themselves don't understand it. That's my concept of it.....but in trying to share it with the Administrator there was some conflict with her understanding of it and then also the understanding of her Administrators. So we weren't able to effectively even try a project in the way how it ought to be tried or how it ought to be done, it ended up being done as a theme..., and not a project. So we still had the limitations from the Administrator because she herself didn't understand the project.

Gail added that the preparation she received from her course of study for certification in ECCE, though inadequate, taught her some principles, which she was eager to implement. However, she indicated that there was a disparity between her knowledge and what the curriculum officers and supervisors required, which hampered her ability to implement the curriculum. She noted:

It makes you feel like you lost. You don't know what they really want. Because when you are doing the Bachelors and they [are] teaching you all these lovely things about developmentally appropriate practices and developmentally appropriate curriculum, you are eager to get a classroom to implement. And when you are here you ask yourself 'implement what'? They not allowing you to implement what you learn, so you always at a disconnect. It is not flowing.

Task Concerns

Task Concerns were related to the processes of using the ECCE curriculum and ability to manage the tasks required. The teachers revealed task concerns that were related to time, and the availability of resources.

Concern About Time.

The teachers all expressed varying concerns in regard to time. Mary said that she experienced challenges, managing the time allotted for small group activities. She felt constrained by the scheduled time for small group activities. Due to the nature of the project approach, she thought that more time was required, to conduct activities related to the project. She stated:

One of the challenges is time frame... the small group time is limited as opposed to the centre-based time. And there are certain things because of the nature of the project you could get so much information and the questions and so on... you have to end up cutting off the children and their own interests, you cannot continue it as freely as you should... for it to spill over into the centre-based time or otherwise. So the time is an issue for me.

Gail however, was concerned that the time allocated for planning is not suitable because of other issues or demands. She said:

The time to plan... The children do not leave here at two o'clock. So you still have to supervise them, and you may want to put work on display and organise the Centre. It's so much little things that you have to do and you don't have time to even do the plan, and then your mind might not be ready in the afternoon to do it, because you might be tired and you need to keep sane.

She also had concerns with the amount of time spent in planning. She said, "I will sit down with it for an hour [expression of alarm] to put it into activity plans."

Nadine was concerned about the amount of time, which she spent in planning and researching for teaching strategies. She explained:

That is what is a little stressful for me now because of the time I have to spend preparing ... I am out of UWI and my husband is saying, "Every time I reach home you always in front of the laptop. You realize that you are out of UWI now?" I am still doing research, spreading things on the floor and cutting things at home, because I want certain things to come out.

Like Gail, she was also concerned about the possible impact of the time demands on her health.

She also added:

Considering the fact that we have to be here throughout the holidays... We have to apply... and you cannot apply at any particular time, because they have workshops during the holidays... But at the end of the day you have to think about your health, your sanity.

Concern About Resources.

All three teachers expressed concerns about the resources at the Centre. They felt that the resources were inadequate to implement the curriculum, given the number of children enrolled at the Centre. Mary voiced:

Having the right and sufficient resources to actually implement the curriculum is another issue, because yes the school would have been given a certain amount of materials and apparatus inside the centre before it open, so, but it is limited compared to the amount of children we have at the centre presently.

Nadine further explained that the resources, which were supplied to the Centre, were not directly related to teaching and learning. She felt that the children's potential were not being maximised as a result.

We have no real form of resources here.... We were here one year and one term before they brought supplies as they call it- hand towel, toilet paper, printing paper, things like that... As I tell people this curriculum could go very far in terms of the children's

learning, in terms of their development but it cannot go anywhere without the necessary resources.

Gail supported Nadine's view, and added that the perceptions of parents also contributed to the Centre having insufficient resources. She said:

But we only get paper and Bristol board and we have to get everything else. We don't have enough books. So we need materials. And the parents feel that the school has everything and they don't want to contribute anything...

However, all three teachers seemed to have greater concerns with the policy restrictions placed on them by the Ministry of Education regarding the acquisition of resources. They expressed that the Ministry debarred them from making requests of parents or conducting of fundraisers in order to secure resources. Gail stated that "there is an issue with us asking parents for things. So you are very cautious with asking them for things." Mary stated, "What we can request of parents to bring in to the Centre now, that was barred, so we no longer could ask for certain resources." Nadine expressed her frustration, and reflected on her past experience at the private Centre, to emphasize the value of parents in assisting with resources.

Like everywhere you turn, there is a block because you are not allowed to raise funds; that's another thing that the private Centres do. The cardboard we are using for boards, I got it from a parent from my old Centre. I didn't ask any of the parents from here because we cannot do that. We are not allowed to ask them for anything. So I had to ask a favour of my 'old' parents from where I worked, who had three children whom I taught. He brought ...it here free of charge. I also got the white paper from a parent from my old school.

Gail and Nadine were also concerned about Ministry's policy, which in their view restricts access to external resources. Nadine said, "we are not allowed to go outside and appreciate anything that there is around here without written letters. And it takes time to go through that." Gail expressed, "They might have things within our environment, yet we can't even leave the school compound to go anywhere... But it's really the Ministry... the policies that they have that restricts you."

Impact Concerns

Impact-concerns focussed on teachers working along with their colleagues to improve the implementation of the curriculum. It relates to the manner in which the ECCE curriculum implementation was affecting the children, and teachers exploring the possibilities of more effective alternatives.

The data indicated that the teachers expressed concerns about the impact of the curriculum on the children and about collaborating with their colleagues in using the curriculum.

Concern About Collaboration and Collegial Support.

The teachers were all concerned with the lack of collaboration and collegiality among their colleagues. They revealed that they worked in isolation. This they believed hindered the possibility of benefitting from the needed support. Gail, who had limited teaching experience, expressed that she did not know whether she was implementing the curriculum in the manner in which it ought to be done. She openly spoke about her desire and faith in collaboration:

Teaching is not just, you get a degree and you go and teach. It is experience and you learn from other people, and a little critique from other people will help me. But if

nobody says nothing, then you are left on your own... Teaching long time was an isolated thing: blackboards and everybody in their corner, everybody teaching their class. But I find teaching is more than that because you need your colleagues input, peer review...

Nadine spoke about her dissatisfaction with the situation.

Well I try my best to not let anything bother me. There are certain times that I get a little disappointed in certain ventures that we will be working on and you find that not everybody is quite there. Although we tend to talk about teamwork, when it comes to certain things, we don't consider it. It will remain just at the surface and that is a big thing for me.

Mary, who held the senior position at the Centre, spoke about the challenges of collaborative support, given her roles in that position:

It is difficult to get sufficient colleague support especially if you are the more experienced person. They themselves, they now 'wading through the water,' they now getting acquainted with the curriculum, so the things that you might see because of your experience that should be done and so on they are not seeing, and sometimes even if you try and share that concern with them, still it may not follow through. So in terms of their own experience, you wouldn't get that kind of support.

Concern About the Impact on Children's Learning.

The teachers also indicated their concerns with the effect of their teaching, on the children's learning and development. Gail expressed her desire for the development of the

children's thinking skills and their use of language. She believed that the curriculum should be able to develop her teaching skills, and ensure the children's learning. She said:

I am concerned with how do I know if the children are learning. Because sometimes you might come with a nice lesson... and the children might not respond how you want them to respond. They might not talk much, or one person says something and everybody repeating what that one person says. I don't want that. I want the children to think and to use language...I want the curriculum to be able to help me with my teaching to ensure that they are learning, especially what they are supposed to be learning.

Nadine revealed that she engaged in reflective practice, made adjustments, considered the children's interest and their individual differences:

You have to question yourself as to what are my children getting out of this lesson... I have to look at the children that I am dealing with and implement strategies that can work for them, and because they are different. I have to adjust things a lot.... I will usually be thinking about, how I will get this one to do this and what will interest them....

Mary expressed that she adjusted the way she delivered the curriculum in order to make it more effective. She said, "I had to tailor it to my group to make it effective because of the previous concerns that I had.... I have seen some things that the objectives and the goals states that the children are attaining."

Administrative Concerns

Concern About Administrative Support.

Teachers expressed concerns about the support received from the administrator and curriculum officers. They shared the opinion that the support and guidance given to them during the implementation process was inadequate. They felt that the poor support and guidance approach from the curriculum officers and the working arrangements of the administrator further exacerbated the situation. Gail stated:

There is a cluster administrator who has to see about different schools. We are like the 'outside child'. So she doesn't really have time even to talk to us individually, but a little clinical supervision will help.

Mary expressed that the Administrator lacked the initiative to address the delivery of the curriculum, and that the structure of the workshops which they attended were ineffective in meeting the needs of teachers and addressing their concerns. In addition, she indicated that the time scheduling of workshops were unsuitable, resulting in teachers' absence. She said:

I am still relying on my own experiences mainly... the concerns that I have, I will share it with my administrator and then I will get feedback. But in terms of a proactive approach in terms of having meetings that will focus on some issue in our delivery of the curriculum, there is none... It [the workshops] wasn't really workshop, it was more lectures in terms of you need to ask questions and share your experiences and get some feedback regarding those experiences what should have been done differently whatever,

we never had that opportunity. It [the workshops] would have been done in a time when some persons were either in their Centres trying to organize for a new term and some were on vacations

Nadine indicated inadequate support resulted from the Ministry's demands on the administrator and insufficient visits from the curriculum officer. She lamented:

I get some level of support in terms of my administrator but it isn't much because she is hardly here, and when she is here, there is always some memo that comes from the Ministry that she has to discuss with us and focus on something or the other...

Therefore, they can come at any time and say that 'this is not being done or that is not being done. We saw our curriculum facilitator at the beginning of the term and now we are still yet to see her.

She also complained about the poor support and guidance approach of the curriculum officers:

I found it very much distasteful that I had to wait until the curriculum was over and all the children were excited and they never came back to see what was added. They came and visited the Centre but they didn't come to see what was added. They waited until I was in a workshop for the summer...She complained about the different meals. At that time, I was ready to leave because I found it very distasteful. If you are there to help us and you see something like that you couldn't call me in the Centre and tell me.

Gail shared a similar view, adding her need for feedback.

I don't think I get support at all. The curriculum officer, she came the last time and one time before that. She never really spoke... you know... bring you and ask you anything. She just looked around and made her general comments to the head teacher or the

administrator, but I thought that she would speak to the teachers and if we have any concerns, we could pour it out one time but that was not done. There was once when she was leaving and I asked her what was going on, and she just mumbled something and.... I like communication because how would I know if I am doing ok or if I am not on the right track.

Summary of Findings

This study investigated the concerns of teachers regarding their implementation of the ECCE curriculum. The findings were derived from the analysis of data obtained to answer the research questions: what are teachers concerns about the National ECCE Curriculum Guide and what concerns do teachers have about their delivery of the curriculum? The findings revealed that the teachers had concerns about the National ECCE Curriculum Guide. They expressed that the Guide was broadly and vaguely worded, consequently challenging their ability to translate the stated learning outcomes into activity plans. In addition, they were also concerned about the lack of suggestions and examples of teaching and learning strategies and the lack of standards of attainment that would assist them in their practice. Further, teachers felt that the Guide was restrictive because it did not offer them the freedom to develop their own objectives. Moreover, the teachers felt that their more experienced colleagues were better equipped to use the Guide.

The findings also indicated that the teachers were concerned about their competencies in the use of the Guide and their delivery of the curriculum. They were of the view that of inadequate training and the lack of a shared understanding among teachers, the administrator and curriculum officers, about the principles and approaches of the curriculum, has compromised their ability to implement the curriculum effectively. Given their responsibility to implement the

curriculum, teacher resorted to trial and error. Others drew on the knowledge they gained in their university programme, and the experienced teachers drew on their prior experience. They employed these strategies in their efforts to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the curriculum.

Teachers expressed concerns that the time allotted for small group activities, and for planning was inadequate and unsuitable. They were also concerned about the amount of time spent in planning and researching for strategies. While the lack of sufficient resources is also of concern, teachers were more concerned with the policy restrictions, imposed by the Ministry of Education, which debarred them from requesting resources from the parents. They felt that parents were an invaluable source for supplying the needed resources.

The lack of collaboration and collegial support was another concern shared by the teachers. They were also concerned about the effect of the curriculum on the children's learning and development and inadequate support and guidance from the administrator, curriculum officers and supervisors. They believed that the administrator lacked the wherewithal to address the delivery of the curriculum and working arrangements exacerbated the problem. They also felt that the structure of and approaches presented in workshops did not adequately meet their needs or addressed their concerns, and curriculum officers provided minimal support and guidance.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

This study sought to gain an insight into teachers' concerns as they implement the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) curriculum. This researcher used a qualitative case study approach to answer the research questions:

2. What are teachers concerns regarding the National ECCE Curriculum Guide?
3. What concerns do teachers have regarding their delivery of the National ECCE curriculum?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from three teachers who were implementing the curriculum at the Precious Gardens ECCE Centre. Data from the interviews were analysed and themes generated. This chapter summarizes and discusses the results obtained from the data. These findings are discussed in accord with the literature regarding educational change, issues in the implementation of a curriculum and strategies for supporting teachers. Recommendations for future practice are given.

Recap of Findings

The findings revealed that the teachers have self-concerns. They had a number of concerns about the Curriculum Guide and with their competence to implement the curriculum. They also expressed task concerns, associated with time allocation and time demands and the lack of adequate resources. The lack of collaboration and collegial support and concerns about the effects of the curriculum on the children's learning and development, were two impact

related concerns shared by the teachers. They were also concerned about inadequate support and guidance from the Administrator, Curriculum Officers and Supervisors.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed several concerns of teachers about the Curriculum Guide. They were concerned that the language used was broad and vague, which challenged their ability to use it to develop activity plans. In addition, the teachers were concerned with the lack of suggestions and examples of teaching strategies and the lack of standards of attainment to assist them in the teaching and assessment of the children. They also felt that the Guide was restrictive since they were of the belief that it did not offer them the freedom to develop their own objectives. Moreover, the teachers felt that their more experienced colleagues were better equipped to use the Guide.

These findings suggests a lack of understanding in the use of the Guide for the planning of learning activities. Eggers-Pierola, Skiffington and Helms (2008), researchers who conducted a study on ECCE in Trinidad and Tobago, states that the Guide is designed to facilitate the teachers' development of a curriculum that is best suited to the needs of the children and the specific context of the Centre. Thus, teachers are required to translate the curriculum's principles and strands into specific teaching and learning activities, appropriate for the children. Accordingly, the language used is deliberately non-prescriptive, with learning outcomes stated in broad terms. The Guide also avoids prescribing specific pedagogical directives, hence the omission of specific activities, strategies and resources. Essentially the Guide is designed to assist teachers in creating their own activities that would reflect its principles.

The perceived lack of teachers understanding of the manner, in which the Guide is to be used, might have contributed to challenges in its use to plan learning activities. This deficiency in understanding could be attributed to their lack of training to use the Guide. The teachers indicated that they did not receive any training in the use of the Guide. As a result, the teachers felt that the Guide is ‘limiting and restricting’, a view diametrically opposed to its design. The concerns about the lack of training to use the Guide, their lack of understanding and their challenges in translating the learning outcomes into activity plans are therefore interrelated. Hall and Hord (1987) cautioned that personal concerns ‘feed’ on each other further intensifying them. Mary’s view that a change in the teachers’ thinking is required, in order to understand and interpret this curriculum, along with Nadine’s belief, that the necessary guidance would assist and possibly eliminate their challenges, is worth consideration.

The findings revealed a number of concerns regarding teachers’ delivery of the National ECCE curriculum. The teachers were concerned about their competence to deliver this curriculum. They felt uncertain about the manner in which they implemented the curriculum. They believed that inadequate training and the lack of a shared understanding among teachers, the administrator and curriculum officers, about the principles and approaches inherent in the curriculum, seriously compromised their ability to implement the programme effectively. Gail for example, stated that she did not think that she could implement the curriculum. Given their mandate to implement this curriculum, the teachers were obliged to develop strategies that facilitated their delivery of the curriculum. Therefore, some resorted to trial and error, others drew on the knowledge they gained in their university programme; and the experienced teachers drew on their prior experience.

Teachers' concerns about their competence have the potential to affect their attitudes towards the curriculum. These attitudes influence their decisions, whether they continue with the curriculum or reject it, possibly reverting to the traditional teacher-centered approach with which they were familiar, while giving the appearance that a change occurred. Everard et al. cited in Brundrett and Duncan (2011) revealed that too many initiatives produce only a facade of change, while teachers gradually revert to the old ways of working. There is a possibility of such situation occurring with the experienced teachers like Nadine with 24 years and Gail with 10 years of teaching experience, who might rely on their prior experience for strategies, since they lacked training, support and guidance. It is likely that these teachers might be drawing on the traditional approach, since the majority of their experience would have been with this approach.

The effects of teachers' attitudes on their decisions regarding an innovation were realized in Burgess, Robertson and Patterson's (2010) study, where they found that positive attitudes of teachers who engaged initially in an innovation are likely to continue throughout the implementation. Conversely, negative attitudes occurring, due to lack of engagement in an initiative, cause teachers to discontinue their work with the curriculum. They further noted that positive attitudes might decline due to inadequate training and support.

Two of the teachers stated that they relied on knowledge gained from their university programme to implement the curriculum. These teachers are qualified with a Bachelor's degree in ECCE, while the third teacher, who holds a Certificate in ECCE, is completing her Bachelor's Degree. However, they all expressed their feeling of incompetence with the implementation of the curriculum. This suggests that while such knowledge is valuable, it might be inadequate to assist teachers to implement the curriculum competently. The teachers stated that the programme of study, did not adequately prepare them to implement the curriculum.

It has been acknowledged that there is a relationship between teacher expertise-knowledge of the subject matter, experience- and student learning (Fullan, 2001). However, Wasik et al. (2006) cited in Domotrovich, Gest, Gill, Bierman, Welsh and Jones, (2009) noted that there was no relationship between level of teacher education, and quality of curriculum implementation. This seems to suggest that the level of teacher education is not necessarily an indicator of teacher expertise. Fullan (2001) explains that there are huge gaps between most teacher education programmes and the school. These gaps exist, for example, in areas such as constructivist pedagogies and learning to be collaborative. Consequently, teachers fail to demonstrate the level of expertise expected of a certain level of education.

Researchers acknowledged that training is essential in the preparation of teachers for their work, as it equips them with necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to perform their duties competently (Roselyne, 2013; Brundrett & Duncan, 2011). The National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), (2009) views training as an investment to equip teachers with teaching strategies for different purposes. NAEYC adds that this training should encompass excellent pre service preparation, on-going professional development and on the ground support and mentoring. The need for in-service training that would equip teachers for the new demands of the curriculum is paramount. The teachers did not receive this training. Such training should be designed to promote teachers' understanding of the elements of the curriculum innovation, provide successful experiences in implementing new approaches (Peers, Diezmann, & Watters, 2003 cited in Brown, 2010), and allow sufficient time and follow-up support for teachers to master new content and strategies to integrate them into their practice (Corcoran, 1995). This will eliminate the need for teachers to use trial and error that might not be guided by

sound theoretical and pedagogical principles. Roselyne (2013) indicated that such in-service training would provide the impetus towards curriculum change.

The teachers also expressed task or management related concerns. Although they were concerned about time, these concerns differed as some were based on time allocation and others on time demands. Mary was concerned that the time allotted for small group activities in the daily schedule was insufficient for certain activities, including the project. Mary's concern seems to suggest that there is no flexibility within the daily schedule. This conflicts with the provision of the curriculum, which allows for flexibility in time scheduling of activities under unanticipated circumstances (Ministry of Education, 2006). In this regard, Mary seems to lack an awareness of the conditions as outlined in the Curriculum Guide, for implementing the curriculum. This adds to the need to bring awareness about the nature of the curriculum through training.

Gail's concern is what she considered the unsuitable and inadequate time allocated for planning. Such time was allocated after the dismissal of the children. She believed that such time is unsuitable for three reasons. Firstly, not all of the children leave promptly after dismissal and must be supervised until they leave. Secondly, such time is used to reorganise the learning space, and thirdly, she might not be in the frame of mind to engage in the planning of activities. Gail seems to have an issue, related to Administration and with the management of time, since it might be possible to seek alternative times within the daily schedule in which she could accomplish some of her activities. This could possibly be facilitated and supported through administrative arrangements.

For Nadine and Gail, the amount of time spent on planning and researching for strategies, was of concern. They seemed to be alluding to their struggles, trying to develop specific

objectives and activities based on the Guide as well as their difficulties researching for strategies to achieve their objectives effectively. Such concerns could be attributed to the lack of sufficient knowledge and expertise in the curriculum, due to a lack of training.

Teachers also expressed that inadequate resources is of concern to them. They further explained that the resources supplied, were not related to teaching and learning. However, they were more concerned about the policy directive from the Ministry of Education, prohibiting the acquisition of resources through fundraisers or requesting of parents. Of equal concern was the restriction against accessing external resources via field trips. Such inadequacy in resources made it difficult for the teachers to implement effectively the curriculum, which hinged on play and hands-on active learning. Hall and Hord (2001) contend that the “planning and provision of resources represent an important means by which implementers are enabled to initiate implementation and sustain the change process” (p.110). NAEYC, (2009) emphasizes play as an important vehicle for developing self-regulation and for promoting language, cognition, and social competence. In addition, the Ministry of Education (2005) instructs that teachers must provide daily opportunities for children to experience child- initiated or teacher-directed play. There is therefore a need to provide adequate resources to facilitate the hands-on approach to learning via play.

The finding in regard to the policy which according to the teachers, debarred them from accessing external resources via field trips, suggested that teachers did not have an understanding and appreciation for the policy. The policy required teachers to seek and receive permission before proceeding on such ventures. While to the teachers the policy seems restrictive, in actuality the policy does not debar teacher and students from engaging in field trips. Rather, it was designed to safeguard both teachers and students while they were out of the school’s

compound. Such thinking about the policy represents a lack of appreciation of its purpose. The education of the teachers in this regard is therefore of importance.

The teachers also expressed concerns about the lack of collaboration and collegial relationships. The findings revealed that they were working in isolation, which they believed prevented them from having the benefit of learning from their colleagues. In addition, Mary believed that her position as the senior teacher among colleagues who are new to the curriculum prevented her from receiving the support of her colleagues. She felt that her colleagues might have an expectation that she would be more competent than they are and would therefore be reluctant to share ideas or offer criticisms relating to her work.

These findings support the position of Fullan (2001) that teachers working in isolation learn little from each other, and are therefore not in a position to experiment and improve. Fullan also explained that the degree, to which teachers improve in their teaching, strongly relates to the extent to which they interact with each other. They become better teachers, having greater confidence in handling instructional issues. There is a lack of collaboration among teachers in this study. This could be another reason for the lack of confidence and competence the teachers feel about their implementation of the curriculum, since they might be learning very little from one another.

Teachers also had concerns about the effect of the curriculum on the children's learning and development. The teachers revealed that they were concerned about the development of children's language and thinking skills and measures to ensure that they achieve their objectives. One teacher indicated that she adjusts strategies, considering the children's interests and individual differences. These findings are similar to those in a study conducted by Puteh, Salam

and Jusoff (2011) on teachers concerns about a Preschool curriculum. In this study, the results showed that the teachers were concerned about the impact of the curriculum on the pupils and their subsequent performance in other classes. In addition, teachers were concerned about the ways to accomplish objectives and acquire materials.

Inadequate support and guidance from the Administrator, Curriculum Officers and Supervisors was another concern of the teachers. They stated that the support and guidance from the Administrator was inadequate due to the lack of initiatives to address the delivery of the curriculum and her regular absence from the Centre because of her working arrangements. In addition, they felt that the structure and scheduling of the workshops were unsuitable for addressing their concerns and assisting in their development of the skills needed to implement the curriculum. Moreover, the poor support and guidance approach of curriculum officers and supervisors were of no benefit to them in their desire for improvement in their teaching.

Fullan (2001) states that the Principal -referred to the Administrator in ECCE Centres-is central to promoting or inhibiting change. In order to be a critical agent of such change, principals perform several roles. They establish goals and expectations to ensure quality teaching. They assist in leading teachers' learning and development (AREA Educational Change Special Interest Group, 2012). The findings suggest that the administrator might not be performing these roles. Therefore, the administrator might be inhibiting change rather than promoting it. This is reinforced by the policy regarding work conditions of a cluster administrator, which requires such individual to work at the Centre once per week.

Fullan also advised that personnel policies such as hiring criteria and role descriptions should support the efforts in the direction of the change. Instead, the hiring criteria of the

Administrator, seems to be working against her role in supporting teachers towards a change, since she might not have sufficient time for personal contact, to observe, guide and direct teachers in their teaching practices.

The teachers were concerned that the workshops, held for ECCE teachers, did not address their concerns and equip them with teaching skills. The findings indicate that the general format of the workshops were that of lectures, which did not address the specific concerns of teachers or offer ideas for use in the classroom. Guskey (1986) stated that teachers hope to gain specific, concrete and practical ideas, directly relating to classroom activities from the workshops they attend. In addition, the scheduled times for these workshops were unsuitable for all teachers to attend resulting in a number of teachers being absent. This suggests that there is a need to examine the nature, structure and scheduling of the workshops to make it accessible and beneficial for all teachers.

Overall, teachers reported concerns at four of the seven stages of concern according to the Concerns Based Adoption Model. These are personal, management, consequence and collaboration. Their concerns about the Curriculum Guide and their own competencies indicated that their concerns were more intense at the personal stage. Less intense concerns were expressed at the management, consequence and collaboration stages. Given that the teachers were implementing the curriculum, they had clearly passed the awareness stage. However, there was no indication that they had progressed to the refocussing stage. Hall and Hord (2001) state that teachers could have concerns at more than one stage and have no concerns at some stages in the Stages of Concern. They added that the concerns could vary in their degree of intensity.

While the teachers expressed the lack of training necessary to equip them to use the Curriculum Guide and to implement the curriculum, the absence of concerns at the informational stage could be attributed to the level of teacher training. Both Mary and Nadine are qualified with Bachelor of Education Degree in ECCE, while Gail is nearing the completion of her Bachelor of Education Degree specializing in ECCE. Such programme of study would have given teachers an awareness of and satisfied the need for information about the curriculum.

Hall and Hord (1987) posit that highly personal concerns that are reflected in the teachers' inability to work with the curriculum and the uncertainty arising from the use of the innovation, is typical of 'nonusers'. Teachers of the Precious Gardens ECCE Centre have expressed their inability to use the Curriculum Guide and their feeling of incompetence to implement the curriculum. Therefore, it seems that they were unable to work with the curriculum as intended. In addition, they expressed their uncertainty about their attempts to implement the curriculum given the lack of training, inadequate support and inadequate resources, and may be categorised as 'nonusers'. Hall and Hord added that nonusers are apt to have concerns about how the authorities perceive their use of the innovation, as evident in Nadine's response, "any point in time they can come and tell me that I did something wrong." This is in contrast to implementers of an innovation who tend to have intense management concerns. Given the possibility of such categorization, there is a need to examine the extent to which teachers have been implementing the new curriculum, as they reported.

The intensity of their personal concerns seems also to be indicative of the lack of support with their implementation of this curriculum. Hall and Hord (2001) stated, when Administrators actively facilitate the implementation of an innovation, teachers move from personal concerns to

management concerns during the first years of use, then to impact concerns after three to five years.

Hall and Hord (2001) further advised that when concerns are more intense at the personal stage, the change facilitator should have more face-to-face contact and be more encouraging. They cautioned that an early resolution of concerns at this stage is critical if teachers are to progress to higher stages of concern and diminish the time for effective implementation.

Recommendations

The findings of this study revealed that teachers were generally concerned about the following: the National ECCE Curriculum Guide, their competence, time, collaboration and collegial support, the curriculum's impact on children's learning, and administrative support. The insights gained could be beneficial in developing appropriate interventions to facilitate the successful implementation of the new ECCE curriculum and in planning and supporting future change efforts. In this regard, the following recommendations are given:

- To promote and sustain teachers' use of the Guide for the planning and implementation of a curriculum as designed by the Ministry, two measures are suggested.
 - The ECCE Division, through its Administrators, Curriculum Officers and Supervisors, should conduct training sessions to develop teachers' capacity to use the Guide. These sessions should be designed to develop an understanding of the purpose, rationale, principles and approaches and include practical, relevant activities, which demonstrate the use of the Guide to plan specific teaching /learning activities. Based on the outcome of this measure I propose the following long-term measure.

- The Ministry of Education should seek to redesign the curriculum to include specific learning outcomes; details of teaching strategies with examples and suggestions for assessment that are more specific for each age group. This will allow the flexibility to tailor the curriculum to the needs of the children while providing sufficient details to guide the teaching, especially of beginning teachers.
- Intervention strategies to develop teachers' competence, are as follows:
 - Regular on-going professional development sessions should be designed and implemented involving teachers, administrators, curriculum officers and supervisors. These sessions should include information about the curriculum's principles and approaches and provide opportunities for practice and demonstrations and feedback.
 - Follow-up support should be given through mentoring and coaching. These strategies will provide readily available personnel for addressing concerns in the planning and implementation of the curriculum. They will be beneficial for providing regular day-to-day or weekly support and guidance, with opportunities for skill development, feedback and discussions.
 - Training and support sessions should also involve visits to other ECCE Centres, that are successfully implementing the curriculum. This will give teachers a first-hand example of what effective implementation looks like.

The above recommendations should also be effective in alleviating teachers concerns about the length of time spent in researching for strategies, planning and the use of scheduled time.

- To address teachers' concerns about resources and to support the implementation of the curriculum, the Centre should always be equipped with an adequate supply of resources. To achieve this, the Ministry should revisit its policies and structures regarding the procurement and distribution of resources to ensure alignment with the Centre's demands.
- A revisit of the policy regarding making request of parents for resources is necessary. While the Ministry does not mandate parents to supply resources, they should be encouraged and allowed to make such contributions. This will assist in building partnerships between the Centre and parents as encouraged in the Curriculum.
- To address concerns about collaboration and collegial support, the administrator should introduce organizational structures to foster the development of a collaborative learning culture. For example, teachers should be encouraged to engage in team teaching as is necessary.
- To address teachers concerns about the impact of the curriculum on learning and development, teachers' training should include the use appropriate formative and summative assessment strategies and techniques, and the use of appropriate recording and reporting devices, to track progress over a period.
- To ensure that the administrator, curriculum officers and supervisors perform their roles as change facilitators, they should engage in on-going professional development training programmes. This should equip them with appropriate skills to attend successfully to teachers' concerns and to manage effectively the change process.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

General Questions

1. Could you tell me about yourself as it relates to your work as a teacher?

Tentative Sub Questions

2. How long have you been teaching in Early Childhood Care and Education?
3. How long have you been teaching since the launch of the new ECCE curriculum?

The National ECCE Curriculum was launched in the year 2006 in an effort to change the teaching and learning practices at the Early Childhood level from a traditionally academic curriculum to one that is more child-centered.....

4. What do you know about this curriculum and how should be implemented?

[Q.2] What are teachers concerns regarding the National ECCE Curriculum Guide?

The implementation of this new curriculum is to be directed by the National ECCE Curriculum Guide....

5. What are your thoughts and feelings about the Guide?
6. What type of training did you receive to use the Guide?

[Q.3] What concerns do teachers have regarding their delivery of the National ECCE curriculum?

7. What changes have you made in order to implement the ECCE curriculum?
8. How have the requirements of the curriculum impacted on you as a teacher in the profession?
9. Based on your experiences, what are your challenges, if any, with the implementation of this curriculum?
10. How has the training you received prepared you to implement this curriculum?

11. How do you feel about the type and level of support received in your delivery of this curriculum?
12. What are your feelings about preparation and planning in order to effectively deliver the curriculum?
13. During your experience teaching this curriculum, what were your concerns about the effect of the curriculum on children's learning and development?
14. What were your thoughts or ideas if any, about modifying or enhancing or replacing the curriculum?
15. What other concerns, if any, about implementing the curriculum, do you have at this time?

APPENDIX B

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

6th November, 2013

The Director – Early Childhood Care and Education
The Ministry of Education
Early Childhood Care and Education Division
MTS Plaza Aranguéz

u.f.s The Administrator, [REDACTED]

Dear Madam,

I am presently reading for the Masters in Education (M.Ed) with a concentration in Curriculum at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. As a part of the fulfilment of this degree, I am required to conduct a study in an area that is of interest to me and to submit a written report.

I am interested in investigating teachers’ concerns regarding implementing the Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum, at the [REDACTED]. In this regard, I am kindly requesting your permission. Your support will be greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

.....

Arlene Winchester-Morris

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

[Redacted]

March 11, 2014

[Redacted]

Dear Teachers,

I am Arlene Winchester-Morris, a student of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. I am required to conduct a small research project in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Master of Education Degree in Curriculum. I am therefore, requesting your participation in the project.

The topic of the project is “Implementing the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Curriculum: Concerns of teachers at an ECCE Centre in the St. George East Educational District of Trinidad and Tobago.”

As a participant, you will be required to share your concerns regarding the implementation of the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum. This will be done via interviews lasting for approximately thirty minutes, at the school, at a time convenient to you. The interviews will be audio-taped.

I will ensure that your identity is protected by the use of pseudonyms in this research. I also assure you of your confidentiality. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without prejudice.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate. Please feel free to ask any questions or to contact me if you so desire at [Redacted] or [Redacted].

Yours respectfully,

.....

Arlene Winchester-Morris

.....

I have read the above and agree / do not agree to participate. (Circle appropriately)

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____








APPENDIX D

CODED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

R= Researcher

G= Gail

Concerns Colour Coding Key:

The Curriculum Guide	
Competence	
Curriculum Impact on Children’s Learning	
Collegiality	
Time	
Resources	
Administrative Support	

R	<i>What do you know about this curriculum and how should be implemented?</i>	
G	What I know is that the new curriculum.. The curriculum is more like an approach which they can use in the school. It’s not very... I don’t think I could implement it, or I probably don’t know if I doing it the right way. I am doing the best as I could. I use the book, to get the strands and pick out the affective, cognitive and physical domains and that’s about it.	Feeling of incompetence Sense of uncertainty Lack of confidence
R	<i>So you are referring to the curriculum Guide.</i>	
G	Yes. That is all I really know.	Limited knowledge
R	<i>What are your thoughts and feelings about the Guide?</i>	
G	It is not very friendly.	
R	<i>Please explain</i>	
G	Well if I have an activity, and I know what I really want to get from the children, I have to use the Guide in order to get the outcomes or the objectives. I find going through that is more work. I could just write down what I want to get from them.	Challenges understanding Guide result in a feeling of additional work.
R	<i>So what do you mean by more work?</i>	

G	You have to read through what they have and you have to use what they put in the book. You can't put what you want.	Restricts her freedom to develop her own objectives.
R	<i>So how do you translate that into activity plans?</i>	
G	Well sometimes you put what they have and you have to tweak it. If you doing a theme on birds you try to put birds somewhere at the end or in the middle. To me the Guide does not make any sense.	Inability to use the Guide to translate the learning outcomes into activity plans.
R	<i>If they were to change it, what would you recommend?</i>	
G	Well they could use words and things that more relevant to Trinidad and Tobago, how we do things in our culture. They might have things with our environment yet we can't even leave the school compound to go anywhere...	Should be more culturally relevant
R	<i>What could they do to make the curriculum more relevant?</i>	
G	Whatever theme you are doing or whatever interest the children to bring it together if you can leave the school to visit a farm or somewhere that relates to what they are doing.	
R	<i>Is there anything in the curriculum that prohibits the school from doing that?</i>	Policy restricting access to external resources.
G	I don't think is the curriculum. But it's really the Ministry. The policies that they have that restricts you.	
R	<i>What do you mean by you cannot leave?</i>	
G	Well you have to get permission and we were planning a field trip last term, but we didn't get to go to culminate the whole theme. A lot of these children don't go anywhere. When you talking to them you can't get much, so they need to go out. But you can't just go in the park, without permission. So it is limited in those aspects. And in terms of how they wrote the objectives, sometimes it is not even grammatically correct because you will see children will be given opportunities to.. and then you will see something like materials and I do not know what they mean. They did not really say. When I look online at curriculum from Switzerland and others, I could understand everything and I am from another country. Its more specific. But here they will put something broad and you have to try and figure out what they mean. For example 'multimode text' what is that? I am not flowing with it. I will sit down with it for an hour (<i>expression of alarm</i>) to put it into activity plans.	Inability to understand the Guide Language used is broadly worded Time consuming Guide
R	<i>Do you think your training prepared you to use the Guide and to implement this curriculum?</i>	
G	I think that they did not get into the Guide much when I was at School of Continuing studies. It was the first time you really getting involved with the in depth curriculum. Before you teaching and they would say that you have to teach the Social Studies, English, Math, but now you have something to follow. It was just as if you had something to complete, like a curriculum for us to complete. We were given things to read for homework,	Lack of sufficient training Limited knowledge of how to use the Guide

	<p>but it was not discussed in class. It was not in depth. But its only now when I went to UWI, we had to do a course in which we used the Curriculum Guide. That is when I got to go into it. But having to use it to write your activities you now realise what some of the things mean. The training wasn't enough for you to get anything. I don't even know what they really want. Its just that they give you the Guide and you have to figure out what to do with it.</p>	
R	<i>How does that make you feel as a teacher?</i>	
G	<p>It makes you feel like you lost. You don't know what they really want. Because when you doing the Bachelors and they teaching you all these lovely things about developmentally appropriate practices and developmentally appropriate curriculum, you are eager to get a classroom to implement. And when you are there you ask yourself 'implement what'? They not allowing you to implement what you learn, so you always at a disconnect. It is not flowing.</p>	<p>Feeling of incompetence</p> <p>Sense of disconnect between training and practice</p>
R	<i>In terms of your actual delivery of the curriculum have you had to make any changes in order to implement the curriculum?</i>	
G	<p>The thing is whichever school you go to, there is a different way of doing things. The school I was at before, the children were outdoors a lot so you have to do things for their body to be moving. But here to go out and do a little exercise they don't want to go outdoors, some hide and some don't want to do it.</p>	
R	<i>What are your general concerns about implementing this curriculum?</i>	
G	<p>I am concerned with how do I know if the children are learning. Because sometimes you might come with a nice lesson, and you might think it nice and the children might not respond how you want them to respond. They might not talk much, or one person say something and everybody repeating what that one person say. I don't want that. I want the children to think and to use language. Yes I try with the words and letters and write what they say, but I need to know more of how to achieve stimulating environment and all the nice things they say. But we only get paper and Bristol board and we have to get everything else. We don't have enough books. So we need materials. And the parents feel that the school has everything and they don't want to contribute anything. But I really want to know that the children are learning something. I want the curriculum to be able to help me with my teaching to ensure that they are learning, especially what they are supposed to be learning. I know that social skills are part of it, but the parents will want to see that they learning their numbers and their letters.</p>	<p>Concern about children's learning.</p> <p>Concern about actual teaching proficiency</p> <p>Limited resources</p> <p>Lack of parental support to acquire resources.</p> <p>Desire to become more proficient</p> <p>Concern for parental expectations</p>
R	<i>You mentioned that there is a lack of resources. What about asking for parents support where that is concerned?</i>	
G	<p>Well we leave that up to the Administrator, because there is an issue with us asking parents for things. So you are very cautious with asking them for things. Some parents find that it is a Government school and the</p>	<p>Lack of parental support in acquiring resources</p>

	Government is supposed to provide. And we cannot raise funds to get things. But we can ask parents for recycled things like egg crates and things like that.	Restrictions from the Ministry to acquire resources
R	<i>You mentioned challenges with the Curriculum Guide, but what other challenges do you have with planning?</i>	
G	The time to plan. The children do not leave here are two o'clock. So you still have to supervise them, and you may want to put work on display and organise the Centre. Its so much little things that you have to do and you don't have time to even do the plan, and then your mind might not be ready in the afternoon to do it. Because you might be tired and you need to keep sane. (laughter) So I might have to carry the work home now to complete it. I might not complete that here.	Inappropriate time for planning Health concerns
R	<i>How do you feel about the type and level of support received in your delivery of this curriculum?</i>	
G	I don't think I get support at all. The curriculum officer, she came the last time and one time before that. She never really spoke... you know... bring you and ask you anything. She just looked around and made her general comments to the head teacher or the administrator, but I thought that she would speak to the teachers and if we have any concerns, we could pour it out one time but that was not done. There was once when she was leaving and I asked her what was going on, and she just mumbled something and... I like communication because how would I know if I am doing ok or if I am not on the right track. Teaching is not just, you get a degree and you go and teach. It is experience and you learn from other people, and a little critique from other people will help me. But if nobody says nothing. Then you are left on your own and you feel like.. Teaching long time was an isolated thing: blackboards and everybody in their corner, everybody teaching their class. But I find teaching is more than that because you need your colleagues input, peer review...	Lack of support from curriculum officer Poor coaching techniques from curriculum officers Desire for feedback about her teaching Lack of feedback from colleagues
R	<i>Do you have peer review here?</i>	
G	No. And then there is a cluster administrator who has to see about different schools. We are like the 'outside child'. So she doesn't really have time even to talk to us individually. And then you always busy with the children. But if I am assisted in my teaching or in my needs or where I need assistance, or where I can improve, that will help the children and the school. That assistance is lacking because everybody in their class or you might share information with colleague, but a little clinical supervision will help.	Lack of support from administrator Lack of collaboration with colleagues
R	<i>Earlier you mentioned accountability to the parents, what are your concerns in this regard?</i>	
G	Some parents may not tell you anything, but in the end they want their child to go to some school and the child didn't get into any school and they in your skin because the child can't read or write. What we have is parent/teacher conference, so we had it the term before last term and only a few parents did not come. I would tell them that the curriculum is not just	Unmet parental expectations

	reading and writing, that will come. When you are going to the bank carry the child with you. Let them see what money is, let them observe the signs and that would assist them in literacy and reading. It is not just about reading from the Republic Reader. So I am trying to tell them how I teach so they could use the same way to teach the children at home. I told them not only to focus on reading and writing but on social skills also. Social regulation is very important, when the children don't want to finish an activity because they find it too hard. So persistence all these things you teach them. I told them to carry the children outdoors play with them to develop their large muscles/	
R	Having explained all of that have you had any parents complaining	
G	No. Not with my group. My school initiative is about learning through play. But even that you can't get the parents to come out. Some parents are showing a keen interest, saying that they are learning so much. We have to help them to know and just teach them to know. They don't know.	Lack of parental support
R	What were your thoughts or ideas if any, about modifying or enhancing or replacing the curriculum?	
G	I don't find that we should throw away the old things that we used to do traditionally. You take what good and you could build on it. Because we grow up with that curriculum and most of us ok. The new curriculum needs to be improved. I don't think we doing centre-based how it ought to be done. The small group need to be improved. We need to get to the point of how High/Scope and Reggio is done. It should become a part of what we are doing.	Desire for improvement in the way the curriculum is taught
R	With reference to the modifying or enhancing the curriculum, you said that we should not throw away the traditional things, you should take what is good and build on it. What are some of the old ways of doing things that should not be thrown away?	
G	Well some of the teaching could still be teacher directed but not the whole activity. You give the children some time to be active and then the teacher intervenes, but not just the children, the children, the children, because you may want something out of it. But if you have ten children with ten different ideas, you will be all over the place. Yes you say child-centered, yes, what interest them, but at the end of the day your objectives have to be met.	
R	Doesn't that happen now?	
G	Well yes because we have the Centre- based learning where they get to do activities and play and the teacher is there just to supervise what they are doing and how they are playing and to encourage them to go further and to build on what they are doing. But the small group activity, we have to do an activity and here is where you get the teacher directed and the child centered learning. But the center based is a different time. But we try to	

	incorporate the two.	
	<i>So are you saying that the present curriculum focusses only on child-centered learning and not teacher directed?</i>	
	That's what I got, that you are not allowed to do teacher directed. The thing is more the child's interest, child- centered learning. That is what I understand but sometimes you need teacher-direction.	Lack of understanding of principles of the curriculum Believes that there is not teacher Directed activities
R	<i>You mentioned getting to the point of High Scope and Reggio. How do you think we will get to that point?</i>	
G	Well collaboration. Teachers need to support each other and stand up for what they know, because a lot of teachers know what to do.	No collaboration among colleagues
R	<i>What other concerns, if any, about implementing the curriculum, do you have at this time?</i>	
G	I think all the schools should have a standard measurement of the curriculum to follow for T&T. Because you find some schools doing one thing and others doing another thing. And the parents getting confused and the primary school labelling the schools. They don't want children from that school. And who is suffering? They need to stop stigmatizing the children. Nothing is wrong with the children. They just need to give them the environment to function. Another thing is that I find in this school the curriculum is too rigid.	Lack of cohesive curriculum implementation among schools Stigmatization of ECCE Centres Too rigid a curriculum
R	<i>Meaning What?</i>	
G	Well probably the daily schedule, I should say. Because the children don't really... yes they have Centre time but still remember four centres and ok they go here Monday. You want to spread them out to make sure they go to each centre and they might want to go to the math centre three times for the week and you will tell them no. And you not supposed to tell them no. And then is too many children to a Centre, sometimes 12 or 13 children in that little space so it don't make sense. So something needs to be done. They need to get proper staff because they have people. There are people in my class unemployed. Three years and they not working nowhere and they did Bachelors. So we need to tweak the Centre based. Even the themes, how we doing it because sometimes you all over the place and you really not getting it. You know what the children really interested in, what you really want to get out of this theme. Sometimes I find myself doing research like if I am doing UWI work	Lack of focus Not achieving leaning objectives

R	<i>You said they need proper staff. What do you mean by proper staff?</i>	
G	We only have four teachers here, no assistant teacher, although you sign that. So we only get to open four Centres, and the other Centres are closed. The children would ask to go to those centers that are closed and we would tell them no. One girl actually started to cry. Are we really giving them choice. And then we have five days in the week. So if they choose a Centre twice, you have to make sure they choose from the others. Is that really choice? They probably only get choice on Monday and that is not free choice. So we need additional staff to really make it work. I think we implementing these things and it not really working because we not putting proper things in place.	Inadequate staffing is debarring children their freedom of choice.
R	<i>What about projects?</i>	
G	Our administrator suggested we do projects this term because it's a short term. But again, we did not talk about it because... I don't know what going on. I told her I would try to do it in my class. But apparently nobody knows how to do it.. The project approach	Lack of understanding of project approach
R	<i>What do you think about the workshops that were conducted?</i>	
G	The first one when I came here was just two days. I find it was short. Well it was just probably an introduction into the system. They dealt with the daily schedule, activity plans, things like that but it wasn't in depth into the curriculum. It wasn't consistent. Up to now they never talk to me about the curriculum. Now I heard they want to introduce numeracy and literacy, but all that is in the curriculum. So now I confused. So something wrong somewhere. Where is the connection? Are we going to teach that separately like a subject. I don't know	Workshops not addressing curriculum delivery Workshop not consistent Lack of clarity about new initiatives

APPENDIX E

THEMES GENERATED FROM CODES

<p>Challenges translating goals /strands in the guide into activity plans Very general and vague/vaguely worded Not allowing flexibility/ Limits the teacher No set standards of attainment No standard goals/tools to measure children’s learning Lacking in examples and suggestions Lacking in strategies to achieve goals Lacking in specific categories of development Restrictive/Senseless Guide is stressful Unfamiliarity with parts of Guide Guide is beneficial to children’s learning and development Guide assists teachers with questioning skills</p>	<p>Concerns about the Curriculum Guide</p>
<p>Feeling of incompetence/frustration Lack of self confidence Feeling lost, confused Sense of disconnect between training and practice Desire to become a better teacher Desire for improvement in the way the curriculum is taught Lack of training/ Insufficient training Concern for meeting curriculum officers expectations Laborious teaching/ sense of uncertainty Too rigid curriculum Planning and teaching physical and mental strain on health parental expectations /accountability adding pressure Challenges understanding of the principles and requirements of curriculum Uncertainty about certain aspects of the curriculum. Conflicting understanding and expectations among administrators, teachers and</p>	<p>Concerns about Competence</p>

<p>curriculum officer</p>	
<p>No standard tools for measurement of children’s learning Intended outcomes are not being achieved Negative stigmatization of children from primary schools Concern finding strategies that can achieve learning objectives Concern about meeting children’s needs and interest Having to constantly make adjustments to improve children’s learning Inadequate staff limiting students freedom of choice</p>	<p>Concern about the Impact on Children’s learning</p>
<p>Lack of collaboration among colleagues</p>	<p>Concerns about and collegiality</p>
<p>Factors impinging time for planning Limited time for activities Too rigid time scheduling Too much time spent researching for solutions/strategies to teaching challenges</p>	<p>Concern about time</p>
<p>Limited resources Lack of parental support in acquiring resources Restrictions from the Ministry to acquire resources from parents or through fund raisers Policy restricting access to external resources</p>	<p>Concern about Resources</p>
<p>Lack of support from curriculum officers Lack of administrator support and guidance due to Ministry’s demands and work conditions Lack of the initiatives from the administrator to address curriculum delivery Insufficient visits from curriculum officers</p>	<p>Concern for Administrative Support</p>

<p>Poor coaching techniques from Curriculum Officers</p> <p>Workshops ineffective for addressing concerns, not meeting needs</p> <p>Unsuitable time scheduling of workshops resulting in teachers absence</p>	
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APPENDIX F

THEMES CATEGORISED ACCORDING TO THE STAGES OF CONCERN

Self Concerns	Personal	}	Concern about using the Curriculum Guide
			Concern about Competence
Task Concerns	Management	}	Concern about Time
			Concern about Resources
Impact Concerns	Consequence		Concerns about the impact on children’s learning
	Collaboration		Concerns about collegial support

Other Concerns

School Administration

- Concerns about administrative support