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Prekindergarten Practitioners' Perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for At-Risk Students

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Walden University
2020

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Abstract

Investigators have addressed elementary practitioners' perspectives concerning the concept of curriculum development and children's learning; however, much less information is available on prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum for at-risk prekindergarten students. This basic qualitative study explored prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students in a southeastern state. The theories of constructivism and self-efficacy guided the conceptual framework for this study. The research questions focused on prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competency, and motivation during implementation of the curriculum. Data were collected using in-depth semistructured interviews with prekindergarten practitioners (teachers). Data were analyzed through a priori, open, and axial coding based on the study's framework. The qualitative data analysis software system, QDA Miner Lite, was used to help organize the raw data and store the data safely. Member checking was used to provide all participants the opportunity to review the summary of the data findings and confirm the accuracy. Participants identified perspectives of self-efficacy, competency, and motivation during implementation of the curriculum. School officials need to provide timely support and comprehensive professional development for practitioners to enhance curriculum implementation. Positive social change could occur when school officials establish strategies for curriculum onboarding and implementation, thereby improving practitioners' teaching experiences and improving the learning environment for all students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my late great-grandmother, Agnes Louise Hodges ("Auntie Queen"), who was a constant source of strength and inspiration. I also dedicate this work to my late grandfather, Neville Moulton, for his support and devotion. I thank them for teaching me perseverance, to love learning, and to work hard. I am eternally grateful for their guidance, faith, and unconditional love.

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I offer a special thanks to my friends and colleagues who have given me support during this endeavor. Thank you for understanding and supporting me. I am encouraged by the new friendships that emerged on this journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In an urban school district in a southeastern state of the United States, 8.6% of children are at-risk (The Planning Council, 2016). Research has indicated that numerous children in the United States begin kindergarten with limited foundational skills (Lonigan et al., 2015). The curriculum implemented is significant because practitioners are provided guidance for learning strategies and objectives, which enables them to meet the learner's needs (Ansari & Winsler, 2014). Early learning practitioners who deliver helpful, knowledgeable, and intentional interactions are much more likely to encourage key academic and social skills in children (Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, & Jamil, 2014). Children who have access to high-quality early education in the United States have benefited, with the most substantial interventions occurring in prekindergarten programs (Morabito, Figueroa, & Vandenbroeck, 2018).

The practitioner's responsibility is to guide children's learning using resources to scaffold their learning experiences and support development. Practitioners must identify the developmental needs, level, and skills of the children when determining how to reinforce current skills and introduce new content (Ogunnaike, 2015).

The purpose of this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program used with at-risk students in a school district, in a southeastern state. In this study, I identified the perspectives of prekindergarten practitioners who implement The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in select classrooms for at-risk prekindergarten

students. This chapter includes the significance of the study and provided the reader with the background, problem statement, research questions, and conceptual framework. It also includes the nature of the study, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the potential implications for positive social change.

Background

The benefits of attending early learning programs have been recognized for years through research such as the HighScope Perry Preschool Project (Bakken, Brown, & Downing, 2017; Schweinhart, 2003; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1981) and the Carolina Abecedarian Project (Campbell & Ramey, 1994; Ramey, 2018; Ramey et al., 2000). The preschool programs offered high-quality educational opportunities to families from deprived backgrounds. Nationwide, early learning practitioners are required to deliver quality education to children, constructed around state ideals and standards (Buettner, Hur, Jeon, & Andrews, 2016). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2016) recommended developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) for young children's learning and development. The recommendations are most useful for early childhood practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders influential in the well-being of young children. Developmentally appropriate practice in the primary years (0–8) is vital for optimal learning outcomes for children (NAEYC, 2016).

State Preschool Initiative Plus (SPI+) is a form of preschool classroom in high-need and at-risk communities within school divisions across a southeastern state (Gaylor et al., 2016). SPI+ practitioners use their comprehension of curriculum beliefs, child

development, and suitable developmental approaches to implement The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. A 2015 survey of SPI+ practitioners revealed that practitioners were less likely to have a favorable opinion of the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program and were not likely to be certain about using the curriculum to teach their students (Scientific Research Institute, 2016). Studies have shown that practitioners teach more efficiently and demonstrate a higher level of fidelity to the assigned curriculum when they are proficient in the instructional methods and guidelines (Cobanoglu & Capa-Aydin, 2015; Tuul, Mikser, Neudorf, & Ugaste, 2015), and they believe in their instructional strategies.

At-risk children are born with the same abilities as children who are not at-risk (Hindman, Skibbe, & Foster, 2014). The education and development of at-risk children are influenced by differences in socioeconomic status and experiences (Deck, 2016). Research about cognitive development have shown that the primary years are key in children's learning, and further research is required to assess the perspectives of practitioners about The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program and how well at-risk students are prepared for kindergarten (Black et al., 2017; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Although current literature addresses practitioners' perspectives regarding children's learning and curriculum development (Green & Condy, 2016), it has been unsuccessful in discussing prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum in early childhood programs with at-risk students. As a result of this gap in literature, curriculum coaches and practitioners must formulate their own understanding for implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. Understanding the prekindergarten

practitioners' perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program may provide school officials with insights and contribute to the body of knowledge necessary to address prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum.

Problem Statement

Academically, at-risk students in the United States perform lower than their peers who are not at-risk, particularly in mathematics and literacy (Duncan, Magnuson, & Votruba-Drzal, 2014). Practitioners are key to curriculum implementation because curriculum is critical in the introduction of school readiness skills to preschool students (Goble et al., 2016; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). There is a problem in an urban school district in a southeastern state in the United States. Despite research about practitioners' perspectives of children's learning and curriculum (Gehris, Gooze, & Whitaker, 2015; Green & Condy, 2016; Yurdakul, 2015), current literature addressing prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of a curriculum for at-risk prekindergarten students is not as prevalent. In an annual report by Scientific Research Institute, (2016), practitioners in the SPI+ program were least likely to be self-confident in their aptitude to teach their students using The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program.

A survey conducted by SPI+ coordinators in November and December of 2015, reported varying levels of practitioner comfort in implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program (Scientific Research Institute, 2016). Coordinators reported a need for more instruction on the use of curriculum materials prior to implementation (Scientific Research Institute, 2016).

The purpose of this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students in a southeastern state. The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program is the curriculum of choice in eight out of eleven school districts across the state, and the curricula is new to 68% of the practitioners (Scientific Research Institute, 2016). One of the duties of the practitioner is recognizing the educational needs of their students (Mooney, 2013; Ruzek et al., 2016) and providing an environment with rich and stimulating learning experiences (Carlsson-Paige, McLaughlin, & Almon, 2015). Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory proposes that students must interact with their environment to learn. The ideal approach to improve care and education for young children is to instruct and coach practitioners to provide quality environments and intentional learning experiences (Tonge, Jones, & Okely, 2016; Wilcox-Herzog, McLaren, Ward, & Wong, 2013).

Children with access to high-quality early education have been exposed to advantages, with the most significant area of intervention occurring in prekindergarten (Fischer, Peterson, Bhatta, & Coulton, 2013; Karoly, 2016). Approximately four million children begin kindergarten in the United States annually, but many children enter kindergarten behind their peers in academic and social-emotional skills, because of different opportunities and minimal access to quality prekindergarten programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Early childhood programs that provide competent, considerate, and intentional interactions are expected to support academic and social

skills in young children (Hamre et al., 2014). Practitioners play a vital role in introducing the curriculum to students. As children develop new knowledge and experiences, the responsibilities of the practitioner increase. The practitioner must support learning and provide meaningful resources to students to meet the individual needs of each student.

Practitioners must distinguish the developmental level and previous experiences of the students when determining what new information to present and how to implement the curriculum (Ogunnaike, 2015). In The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, practitioners use their comprehension of curriculum ideas and child development to implement developmentally appropriate activities. The best years for the greatest learning outcomes in children are the early years between ages 0–8 (NAEYC, 2016). It is during this timeline that children develop constructive relationships and when crucial learning occurs in all developmental areas (Bustamante, White, & Greenfield, 2017; Copple, Bredekamp, Koralek, & Charner, 2013). Research shows that children who feel that they have healthier relationships with peers and practitioners feel more accepted and experience a better sense of belonging in school (Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014). Curriculum is vital and a playful, cognitive curriculum that involves scaffolding can enhance the self-regulation skills of 4-year-olds (Peverill, Garon, Brown, & Moore, 2017; Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013).

There is a gap in research with regard to practice. Research shows that a curriculum and aligned assessment system can support the education and growth of young children from diverse backgrounds and is effective when the implementation is linked to positive child outcomes (Lambert, Kim, & Burts, 2015). From the Preschool

Curriculum Evaluation Research Initiative Study (Institute of Education Sciences, 2008), a wide-ranging diverse experimental study of preschool curricula, researchers found that The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program is comprehensive across learning domains, provides well-designed learning activities, and active teaching strategies for practitioners. There is a lack of research relating to prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program and the implementation of the curriculum in classrooms with at-risk students. Information obtained from my study has the potential to add to the body of knowledge about the topic.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program used with at-risk students in a school district, in a southeastern state in the United States. The term practitioner refers to prekindergarten teachers. Curriculum is generally defined as the organized framework that outlines best practices in instruction, the content that children are to learn, and the methods to utilize to achieve the identified goals (Cross & Conn-Powers, 2014). Practitioners are the most important people in the curriculum implementation procedure because they are well-informed about the method of instruction and it is their responsibility to introduce the curriculum to the students (Alsubaie, 2016).

With limited research published on prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum for at-risk students, I attempted to understand the perspectives of

prekindergarten practitioners who implement or have implemented the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. To determine the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives, I identified the personal perspectives and insights of prekindergarten practitioners in state-funded programs. I used semistructured interviews to investigate the research questions and develop an understanding of the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students. Through the interviews, I gained an in-depth understanding of the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives. During data analysis, I used a priori codes (Implementation Practices, Knowledge, Experiences, and Feelings) based on the study's framework. I analyzed and categorized the data collected from the prekindergarten practitioners into themes through a priori and open coding. I used the qualitative data analysis software system, QDA Miner Lite to assist in organizing and storing the raw data. Creswell (2013) stated that member checking occurs when participants explore the credibility of data findings. I provided all participants the opportunity to review the summary of the data findings and confirm the accuracy of my interpretations of their individual information collected during the interviews.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of their own competence and motivation when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?

Conceptual Framework

For the purpose of the current study, I used two theories to represent the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework that grounded this current study was based on the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) and the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Constructivism highlights the significance of how knowledge is constructed by humans, through personal experiences. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his skills and the capability to use the skills to achieve a projected outcome. In this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews, I explored prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students in a southeastern state in the United States.

According to Vygotsky (1978), knowledge is constructed through interpretations of events that occur in a person's environment. In addition to the learning that takes place, constructivists view the interactions that students contribute to their classroom setting as critical aspects of their education. Constructivists view learning as primarily social with the mind vigorously pursuing fulfillment, instead of an empty vessel seeking information (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). Under constructivism, knowledge is a concept that is reinforced through an active process of interaction and immersion with the

environment and not a service that is transferred from practitioner to student (Schcolnik, Kol, & Abarbanel, 2016).

The theory of self-efficacy emerges from Bandura's social cognitive theory. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy denotes one of the greatest significant predictors of human motivation. Under the construct of self-efficacy, the ability of practitioners to impact their environment is deeply associated with their perceptions of competence to implement a curriculum, motivation and persistence, perseverance despite repeated failure, and belief in their capability to bring about change. Bong and Skaalvik (2003) posited that efficacy beliefs are not general beliefs about a person's talents and skills, but beliefs in what a person can accomplish with the skills they have.

I used the conceptual framework to develop the interview questions to explore the perspectives of the practitioners about The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. The research questions included elements such as practitioners' experiences and knowledge, perspectives of self-efficacy during implementation, as well as prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of the learning environment. I based the topic of my study on the idea that practitioners help children construct new knowledge and practitioners' beliefs about their teaching capability played a significant role.

Through a basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews, I constructed new knowledge using prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives. I used a priori codes based on the study's framework and open coding to analyze and categorize data into themes. During analysis, I reviewed the participant interview responses for repeated statements and words. I used the collected information to create codes, categories, and

themes, then constructed meaning related to the theories of constructivism and self-efficacy. I organized the information by matching the codes that answered each research question (see Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). I compiled the information into results based on the themes that emerged (see Sutton & Austin, 2015) and reported all discrepant data. A more detailed explanation of the conceptual framework of the theories of constructivism and self-efficacy was explained in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

I used a basic qualitative design to address the study's research questions. Qualitative research is largely exploratory in nature and allows an investigation of complex matters concerning human conduct and perspectives (Kelly, 2016). I used the study design to focus on individuals, situations, and procedures, and I had the chance to acquire insightful and descriptive information. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative investigators collect evidence through direct and open conversations with people. Because I was concerned with the phenomenon of curriculum and considering perspectives of practitioners, I used a basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews.

I used a basic qualitative design to investigate the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives on The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program because it is the best method to obtain information about actual experiences. A basic qualitative design, also known as interpretive or generic (Kahlke, 2014; Patton, 2015) is an inductive approach used to investigate and understand the participants' perspectives without generalizing the information (Auta, Strickland-Hodge, & Maz, 2017). This basic qualitative study

contributed to the knowledge that was necessary to address the perspectives of practitioners on The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program for at-risk prekindergarten students.

I analyzed the data through deductive and inductive forms of analysis. First, I used a priori coding based on the study's framework to identify potential themes. After obtaining data, I used open coding to create temporary labels. I did this by reading through the interviews several times to seek portions of data that gave a summary of the interviews. I then used axial coding to identify relationships among the labels created through open coding (see Twining, 2017). Being honest with the participants was a critical component of data analysis and management because the practitioners' statements determined what is presented in the final report of the study (see Sutton & Austin, 2015). I used the basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews to obtain detailed data. I utilized an external auditor to review the development of codes, themes, and findings.

The participants were prekindergarten practitioners of at-risk prekindergarten students, enrolled in SPI+ programs. The prekindergarten sites varied within an urban school district in a southeastern state. Data collection occurred through semistructured interviews. I used the interview questions to identify self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in practitioners' implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. During the development of the interview questions, two experts in the early childhood field reviewed my interview questions and provided recommendations. The experts were a professor who received her doctorate in early childhood education from a local university and the department chair for a community college who received her

doctorate in early childhood education from a university in a southern state. Through the research questions, I explored prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students in a southeastern state.

Definitions

At-Risk Students: Students vulnerable to adverse outcomes such as school failure, require interventions that are structured and constructive in nature. At-risk status includes individual skill deficits, community and family dynamics, and demographic factors. Environmental and demographic factors, such as minority ethnic groups and socioeconomic status (SES) are indicators of at-risk status (McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016).

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP): An approach to teaching that focuses on how children learn, develop and the most suitable way to instruct each student. DAP is grounded in research and consists of practitioners creating and implementing activities according to the developmental stage of the children (Alford, Rollins, Padrón, & Waxman, 2016).

Early Childhood Education (ECE): Commonly refers to the early learning for all young children, birth through age 8 (NAEYC, 2016).

High-Quality Child Care: Encompasses environment with developmentally appropriate materials, space for children to move around freely, and interest areas for children to engage in meaningful, hands-on activities. The adults in the learning

environment meet the educational qualifications and adult-to-child-ratio, by caring for only a few children at once, and the staff turnover is low (Bullard, 2016).

PALS-PreK: The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening tools for prekindergarten students (PALS-PK) in a southeastern state. Screening takes place during the fall and spring of each school year and provides a comprehensive assessment of young children's knowledge of literacy fundamentals (University of Virginia, 2017).

Perspective: The attitude or view of things in their exact relations or comparative significance (Bruce, 1980).

Practitioner: A person who has received specific training and is actively involved in the profession. Practitioners must contemplate the distinct desires, interests, and developmental stage of each student in their care, and must use this evidence to design a stimulating and pleasant experience for the students in all areas of learning and development (Campbell, 2013)

Prekindergartener: A student enrolled in a program designed for 4-year-olds or the year prior to the start of their kindergarten term. Prekindergarten (PK) programs are designed specifically to ensure that preschoolers are ready for kindergarten (Gilliam & Zigler, 2004)

Scaffolding: Teacher-provided provision to support students' learning developments within a classroom. This includes the use of supplies, resources, models, strategies, rubrics, and modeling and coaching techniques (Pentimonti & Justice, 2010). Scaffolding supports students to attain greater level performances than accomplished individually.

School Readiness: Denotes foundational skills, actions, and knowledge children exhibit as they begin school, which enables them to attain future academic success (Sabol & Pianta, 2017).

Self-Efficacy: A person's belief in his or her competency to produce desired results. Self-efficacy also includes a person's motivational practices and determination (Bandura, 1994).

Social change: The social behavior or the social relations of society. Social change has emotional impact on people with mutual tenets. Social change is the collective transformation of individuals within society (Patil, 2012).

Assumptions

In research, investigators often bring their assumptions and opinions into their work which leads to two challenges. First is acknowledging awareness and second is determining if the participant perspectives will be included in the research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). I conducted interviews with prekindergarten practitioners in SPI+ classrooms designated for at-risk prekindergarten students in a southeastern state. I evaluated both the recognized assumptions and any assumptions that were not well-known (see Armstrong & Kepler, 2018). I assumed that The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program will continue to be important in the prekindergarten classrooms. The State's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric was utilized by school districts to select the Creative Curriculum for Preschool. I assumed that the prekindergarten practitioners had a genuine interest in participating in my research.

I assumed that the participation criteria of the sample was suitable and therefore, guaranteed that the prekindergarten practitioners had all implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Programs in classrooms with at-risk students. I assumed that prekindergarten practitioners would provide direct and genuine responses for this study. I also assumed that participants would provide truthful responses about their perspectives and the data collected for this study might provide insights to stakeholders.

Scope and Delimitations

Practitioners are central in a young child's education (Ntumi, 2016) and hold a key role in the implementation of the curriculum (Ntumi, 2016). The scope of this current study was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students in a southeastern state. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that previous experiences of early childhood practitioners influenced their perspectives. The current study was chosen over other topics related to practitioners' perspectives because there was a gap in research on practice. The primary participants of my study were prekindergarten practitioners. I chose to exclude other practitioners from other grade levels because their role is less relevant.

I designed the study for a group of seven prekindergarten practitioners in classrooms located in a school district in a southeastern state. I conducted the study only in classrooms in which the at-risk prekindergarten students are or were enrolled. The classrooms had the SPI+ designation because the at-risk students meet the guidelines for enrollment, and the practitioners were the focus population for the study. I excluded other

sites from the study because they did not meet the criteria for participation and were not relevant to the purpose of the study.

The sample size was not representative of a larger and similar population. I delimited the sample for the study to practitioners at an urban school district in a southeastern state. I identified the perspectives of practitioners who identified in the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) that they were implementing or have implemented the curriculum in classrooms designated for at-risk students. I did not include practitioners who were implementing the curriculum in classrooms not designated for at-risk students. The procurement of data was delimited to the prekindergarten classrooms designated for this study. I delimited the study to specific questions during face-to-face or telephone interviews. Each interview lasted no more than 1 hour and I conducted each in a single session and one-on-one semistructured format.

In terms of transferability of the current study, the context was clearly described so that the reader would determine transferability of the results from the study to other settings. The results of the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program may increase the body of knowledge that relates to prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of preschool curriculum used with at-risk students. The results of the study may also bring about additional data to transfer to other research (see Bengtsson, 2016). When transferring results of the current study to future research, it was necessary to consider that this study was limited to practitioners of prekindergartners enrolled in SPI+ settings. Self-efficacy was a situational construct that is unique to each individual.

Limitations

Limitations exist in qualitative research. The research design, basic qualitative using semistructured interviews, was not without limitations. Interviews are one of the most significant sources of research evidence (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2014). My bias was a limitation that may affect the results of the study. As the researcher of the current study, I reflected upon my previous professional experience with The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program and my implementation to at-risk students. I searched for biases while I conducted my research and documented my assumptions and potential biases throughout the study, in a personal journal (see Creswell, 2013). I disclosed my professional status to safeguard the interview and data collection processes.

- I am currently, a program director of a preschool located in the same region in which the research was conducted.
- The Creative Curriculum for Preschool was the curriculum being implemented in the prekindergarten classroom at my school for 4 years (2014–2018).
- I am a former prekindergarten teacher with two years' experience implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool.
- I've implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool to 4-year-olds in a mixed model classroom. Students who were at-risk and those not at-risk were enrolled together.
- I hold a master's degree in teaching and learning early childhood education.
- I have presented on various early childhood topics at conferences, workshops and seminars on the local, state and national level.

- I have been in the early childhood field for 22 years

Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed that sampling is one limitation of qualitative research and participants within classrooms, institutions, and districts are theoretically responsive to general questions. Limitations of this study may affect the ability to transfer results to other prekindergarten programs. The use of only seven practitioners of at-risk students was a limitation that may have affected the results of my study, therefore I provided rich descriptions of the sample (see Santiago-Delefosse Gavin, Bruchez, Roux, & Stephen, 2016). To find a trend in prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum used with at-risk students, more research is needed.

The practitioners' knowledge of only The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program was another limitation of the study. I limited the study to practitioners teaching in classrooms with the at-risk designation within the same school district. Self-efficacy is a situational construct that is unique to each individual. Practitioners in other classrooms with different designations or guidelines, might have responded differently to the findings of the study. I explained data collection verbatim including details about each phase (see Avenier & Thomas, 2015). I added this study to research concerning prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of preschool curriculum used with at-risk students.

Significance

The study is used to focus on prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program and their perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation for implementing it in classrooms for at-risk students. The

project is unique because it addresses the SPI+ model which builds upon the successful State Preschool Initiative (SPI) program that has supported the school readiness of at-risk prekindergarten students since 1996 (see Virginia Department of Education, 2015). The data I collected from this study may have significance by providing direction and guidance for school officials on how to advise practitioners regarding the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom. Officials may gain an understanding of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students. Insights from this study may aid early care and education programs in the planning and implementation of best practices of effective curriculum.

Practitioners' perspectives of students have been found to directly influence their actions and behavior in the classroom (Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017). Practitioners' perspectives of the curriculum or their own feelings of competence regarding teaching aspects of it may influence implementation practices. Implications for positive social change include possible changes in the curriculum program chosen for implementation in classrooms with at-risk students and maybe for practitioners' professional development to further develop competence in implementation. These implications are important because research has shown that practitioners are concerned with making appropriate decisions about how and why students should learn selected curriculum materials (Young, 2014). The practitioner has a powerful influence on the implementation of early childhood curriculum (Ntumi, 2016), and is the most important person in the implementation process because of knowledge, practice, and competencies (Alsubaie, 2016). For

stakeholders who are instrumental in decision making about early childhood curriculum, the results of the current study may inspire positive social change relating to the investigation of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum for at-risk students.

Summary

In chapter 1, I explained the foundation for this study. The perspectives of practitioners of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program was significant, and this understanding was a central element of this study. I provided background information regarding the phenomenon, the research questions, the foundation for the conceptual framework, and nature of the study. The assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations provided explanations of the boundaries and challenges of the study. In the definitions section, I provided meaning to key concepts and terms with multiple meanings. I included the significance of the study and potential implications for positive social change. The purpose of this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program used with at-risk students in a school district, in a southeastern state. In chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature on prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum with descriptions of search strategy and key variables and concepts. I also include an in-depth discussion on the conceptual framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Children who are from low-income families and at risk for school failure often yield lower academic outcomes than their peers from wealthier households, particularly in the areas of literacy and mathematics (Duncan et al., 2014). At risk does not always indicate a status of wealth. School readiness skills are major precursors to academic success (Lonigan et al., 2015). Education practitioners are responsible for identifying children's academic needs and providing a supportive environment with rich and interesting learning experiences (Radford, Bosanquet, Webster, & Blatchford, 2015). Early childhood practitioners are vital sources of information about how to support learning and school readiness for prekindergarten students. Practitioners who understand instructional delivery and pedagogy are central to student success (Summers, Davis, & Hoy, 2017). The purpose of this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program used with at-risk students in a school district, in a southeastern state in the United States.

In this chapter, I discuss the literature search strategy and continued with an examination of the study's conceptual framework. The conceptual framework is based on the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) and the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). In this review, I discuss various topics within the scope of the study. These topics include quality and model of prekindergarten programs, curriculum in early childhood education, achievement gap and instructional intervention, practitioners' perspectives on

curriculum and practices, self-efficacy, at-risk students and school success, and supporting children's learning and development.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted a comprehensive search using the Walden University Library website (http://library.waldenu.edu/), Google Scholar, and the local public library to discover literature on the topic of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. The education databases that I used were: (a) Academic Search Complete, (b) Annie E. Casey Foundation, (c) Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), (d) Education Research Complete, (e) ProQuest Central, (f) PsycINFO, and (g) SAGE Journals. I conducted an initial search of these databases using the key terms *at-risk children, teacher perspectives, self-efficacy, prekindergarten practitioners, state-funded, early childhood,* and *preschool curriculum.* Established limits consisted of peer-reviewed journals, assorted documents, and publications.

I used a simultaneous search link to search ERIC, a database with millions of records conserved by the U.S. Department of Education, and Education Source, one of the largest collections of full-text education journals. The Boolean phrase *teacher perspectives AND curriculum AND attitudes* yielded numerous results. Using Google Scholar Alerts, I requested weekly email updates on current research pertaining to *teacher perspective of curriculum.* In addition to the previously mentioned databases, I used seminal work from Vygotsky and Bandura. I also consulted reference lists and textbooks to find information on the topic.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a printed or visual article that highlights specifically what the researcher will study. It clarifies the relationships, if any, between the main issues, variables, and theories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the current study, the conceptual framework is based on the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) and the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The constructivist theory emphasizes that knowledge is constructed from experiences and perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978), and the practitioner plays a key role. The constructivist theory provides part of the framework used to guide my exploration of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives and emphasizes how the previous experiences of practitioners influence their perspectives about The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. The term *self-efficacy* refers to a person's belief in the desired skills to complete a task and the confidence in the ability to succeed (Bandura, 1977). Through Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, I identified prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives about the confidence and competence needed to implement The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in their classrooms.

The study's purpose was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, used with at-risk students in a school district, in a southeastern state in the United States. I framed the purpose that each practitioner held different perspectives about The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, according to his or her previous experiences. I developed the research questions to acquire information regarding prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives about The Creative

Curriculum for Preschool Program within the constructivist and self-efficacy theories. I used the framework to provide support for the research questions concerning prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of the curriculum, as well as practitioners' experiences and knowledge, perspectives of self-efficacy during implementation of the curriculum, as well as prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of the learning environment.

In this study, through semistructured interviews, I gathered prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives and self-efficacy about implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program based on their social interactions and experiences. Vygotsky (1978) asserted that knowledge is built from experiences and perspectives. During the interview process, I captured direct responses about the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives, self-efficacy for implementing curriculum, and what experiences contributed to their knowledge about the curriculum.

Constructivism

This study of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives is grounded in the constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) which explains that people develop skills through experiences acquired in their community settings, where learning occurs in a cultural context (Wilkinson & Jones, 2017). Constructivism holds that everyone embraces a different perspective about an experience centered on his or her prior experiences. The experiences build upon themselves to generate new knowledge. Practitioners must recognize the developmental level and prior experiences of the students when deciding how to present new information and implementing curriculum (Ogunnaike, 2015).

Constructivism was used to gather perspectives. Constructivism identifies the fundamental role of interactions and experience among students and practitioners.

Under the theory of constructivism, perspectives are determined by knowledge. Constructivism plays a significant role in the construction of meaning from experience (Prince & Felder, 2006). Through their experiences with The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, practitioners developed new knowledge, constructed their own understanding, and shared their perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. The theory of constructivism offers the structure used to explore how experiences of practitioners influence their perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program.

Current teaching strategies are deeply rooted in theories of constructivism. According to Vygotsky (1978), knowledge is a needed and widespread facet of the method of creating culturally ordered and precise human intellectual meaning. Vygotsky believed that all experiences create a framework on which knowledge is built and each person's perspective is different regarding any prior experiences. Adults are a major source of cognitive and social development. The theory of constructivism suggests that practitioners must recognize knowledge as a creation of the human mind and is constructed differently by each learner (Akpan & Beard, 2016).

Vygotsky (1978) declared that interactions with others are essential features of cognitive development, and learners must interact with their surroundings to achieve new knowledge (Ogunnaike, 2015). Through interactions with practitioners, advanced peers, or parents, a student's understanding of skills or construction of new knowledge is

supported. According to Vygotsky, when children are working collaboratively with others in their environment, learning occurs and stimulates various aspects of their development. Vygotsky suggested that school is a culture in which learners develop cognitively through interactions. In the school setting, the practitioner scaffolds learning and supports the child through guided participation (Muhonen et al., 2016). It is here that the practitioner sets high expectations for students and motivates them to strive to succeed (Hallinan, 2008). Vygotsky believed that children could be taught effectively by building upon their prior knowledge and applying scaffolds.

Constructivism encompasses interrelationships between instruction, learning, and development (Eun, 2010). For example, there is a shift in performance between a child attempting to solve a problem independently and a child receiving assistance from an adult. Hence, the relationship between a child and practitioner can govern how much a child can learn (Eun, 2010). Under the theory of constructivism, individuals construct their personal knowledge of the world around them through experiences and their perspectives of those experiences. Through hands-on experiences, children are best able to construct knowledge and demonstrate an understanding of their world (Inan & Inan, 2015).

Constructivism is used to guide practitioners in developing more child-focused learning environments that place the child at the center of instruction and guided the exploration of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program is based on constructivist principles and social cognitive theory (Hatch, 2012; Michael-Luna &

Heimer, 2012). I used the theory of constructivism to provide an understanding of Prekindergarten Practitioners' Perspectives of the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program because the theory is key in understanding child development, curriculum, and the construction of knowledge.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy was applied to this current study to assist in understanding practitioners' experiences and self-efficacy beliefs about their abilities to implement the curriculum. This theory is grounded in a larger conceptual framework known as social cognitive theory. Bandura defined self-efficacy as a person's belief or decision in the ability to yield desired results. Bandura also explained that self-efficacy beliefs differ by circumstances and adjust over time. The theory of self-efficacy has been used in literature about persons' perceptions of self, competence about employment, and working with individuals with special needs (Gray & Muramatsu, 2013), and lived experiences (Creswell, 2013, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Practitioners' teaching strategies in early childhood environment have been linked to self-efficacy beliefs (Perren et al., 2017). According to Bandura (1977), an individual's self-efficacy will have a significant impact on how that person addresses a job or assignment. For example, if a practitioner is confident that she has the competence to implement a lesson, she will be more likely to succeed in her implementation practices. However, if her belief in her ability to execute the lesson is low, she will be less likely to have stable or positive feelings during implementation and may not be motivated to help students who have difficulties, nor persist if students repeatedly fail in task completion.

Self-efficacy is a key idea within motivation, and it has been found to be predictive of perseverance, achievement, and performance (Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKim, & Zumbrunn, 2013). Bandura (1977) believed that a person's self-belief or confidence in his or her competence is vital to achieving a satisfactory outcome when completing a task and a practitioner's self-efficacy for the task is fundamental for teaching success. According to Bandura, people with high self-efficacy beliefs typically persevere in negative situations, whereas those with low self-efficacy beliefs usually avoid difficult situations.

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy has been used as the framework for previous research (Bedel, 2015; Guo, Dynia, Pelatti, & Justice, 2014; Méndez, Arellano, Khiu, Keh, & Bull, 2017) about early childhood practitioners. Ventura, Salanova, and Llorens (2015) found that practitioners with high levels of efficacy view their work environment and challenges that arise as opportunities for personal and professional growth. Prekindergarten practitioners' self-efficacy beliefs may affect the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in their classrooms. One of the current study's guiding research questions focused on the prekindergarten practitioners' description of their perspectives of self-efficacy when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. Not only does self-efficacy affect the behavior of persons, but self-efficacy also affects how individuals relate with their environment (Roos, Potgieter, & Temane, 2013).

Researchers have explored self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998) and the relationship with performance (Emich, 2012; Mitchell, Hopper, Daniels,

George-Falvy, & James, 1994). Self-efficacy is related to work performance (Liao & Chuang, 2007), impacts how much of a challenge a person is willing to take on, and plays a vital role in a person's ambition and desire to achieve satisfaction (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Researchers have also addressed the significance of prior experience, knowledge, and their roles in the growth of new understanding (Bandura, 1994; Mitchell et al., 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). To build self-efficacy beliefs, people must understand expectations to implement work effectively (Bandura, 1977). In this current study, including the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) in the study's framework helped me to develop themes for analysis which I used to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

The purpose of this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program used with at-risk students in a school district, in a southeastern state in the United States. I conducted an exhaustive review of literature to explore factors related to the perspectives held by the practitioners who implement the curriculum in a southeastern state. The research in this literature review addresses the following topics: state-funded prekindergarten program quality, curriculum in early childhood education, achievement gap and instructional intervention, practitioners' perspectives on curriculum and practices, and at-risk students and school success.

State-Funded Prekindergarten Program Quality

The term *early care and education (ECE*) is applied to private and public programs that support young children's growth and development prior to kindergarten (Tarrant & Huerta, 2015). ECE is interchangeable with the term *early childhood education*. Public education in the United States is primarily a state and local responsibility (Sciarra & Hunter, 2015), and the enrollment rate is highest in the ECE population. (Mamedova & Redford, 2015). Early learning is important, in that a child's early educational experience sets the foundation for future success (NAEYC, 2016). Nationwide, state-funded preschool programs serve approximately 1.5 million children—32% of 4-year-olds and 5% of 3-year-olds (Barnett, Votruba-Drzal, Dearing, & Carolan, 2017).

Quality is a critical component of early childhood programs. According to the position statement of NAEYC, high-quality early childhood education supports the social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development of young children. These developmental milestones are essential because they set the stage for future academic success (NAEYC, 2016). Researchers have shown that high-quality preschool benefits all children, particularly those from low-income families (Barnett, & Frede, 2017; Yoshikawa et al., 2013), and access to high-quality early learning programs gives children a solid start toward formal education and beyond (Wechsler, Melnick, Maier, & Bishop, 2016).

Two studies about the quality of prekindergarten programs were conducted by Peterson (2015) and Bassok and Galdo (2016). Peterson identified quality indicators in

public and private prekindergarten classrooms through the perspectives of program directors. During a review of data, the researcher found a discrepancy in perspectives of quality based on the type of program. Program directors viewed teacher-child ratio as a crucial indicator of quality regardless of the type of program. They felt that quality was greater in private than public programs and perceived a program's quality as decreasing when the teacher-child ratio increases. In a study on the differences in access to quality early childhood programs, Bassok and Galdo found that the connection between the features of the community and convenience to learning environments plays a key role in the availability of high-quality programs. The researchers also found that children from low-income backgrounds which are typically situated in large minority communities, were enrolled in preschools that are considered low-quality.

In other studies, conducted about the quality of prekindergarten programs, researchers emphasized enrollment, academics, and benefits of investments. A 2012 report on a national sample of preschool children indicated that 60% of 3–5-year-old children were enrolled in center-based early childhood programs (Mamedova & Redford, 2015) and 29% of 4-year-olds were enrolled in state-funded preschool programs (Barnett, Carolan, Squires, & Clarke-Brown, 2014). Although the literacy and mathematics skills of low-income children lag a full year behind those of high-income children at the time of kindergarten entry (Dorman et al., 2017; Duncan & Murnane, 2014), research by Coley, Votruba-Drzal, Collins, & Cook (2016) indicated that low-income children who attended private ECE programs demonstrated high levels of language, reading, and mathematics skills at age 5. Coley et al. also revealed that children who attended public programs and

Head Start displayed increased reading and mathematics skills in comparison to children experiencing only parental care.

Ongoing studies of early childhood programs in Massachusetts, Oklahoma, and New Jersey have shown the benefits of quality early education investments, which generate roughly $8 for every dollar invested, according to economists (Elango, García, Heckman, & Hojman, 2015). The $8 return on investment is generated from the skill development of individuals who enrolled in quality early childhood programs and the individuals' contribution to the economic workforce. Another example of the positive return on investment in early education programs is crime prevention. The fewer arrests of the individuals who participated in quality early childhood education programs versus those who did not benefit from access verifies another return on investment (Elango et al., 2015).

Access to quality prekindergarten programs is another topic discussed by researchers. The effects of lack of access to high-quality programs is evident as more children from low-income families enter kindergarten behind peers from more affluent communities (Duncan et al., 2014). This discrepancy is being addressed with the opening of more universal prekindergarten programs, nationally. There have been challenges, but the overall accessibility has led to positive outcomes in terms of school readiness, especially with children from urban settings (Dorman et at., 2017). The potential benefits of preschool can only be realized if families have access to high quality programs (Wechsler, et al., 2016). The need to improve the overall quality of early childhood programs must be addressed (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Pelatti, Dynia, Logan, Justice, and

Kaderavek (2016) indicated that, although classroom quality is key, few recent studies have explored the practice and fundamental quality of publicly funded early learning programs.

The main evidence of quality in early childhood education programs are the ratings of the Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). At the federal and state level, officials are anxious to increase the quality of early childhood education programs (Sabol & Pianta, 2015). QRIS is used to address the need to improve the quality of early care and education programs. Separate from licensure requirements, officials have developed a strategy that establishes common quality principles for ECE programs that are structured into different levels (Tarrant & Huerta, 2015). Nationally, QRIS is being developed or implemented in almost every state (Tarrant & Huerta, 2015) and a recent study by Connors and Morris (2015) revealed that QRIS emphasizes process quality more strongly than does licensing.

Other researchers have contrasted program quality and its evaluation through methods such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) across diverse programs, serving low-income preschool children. In a study on Head Start programs, the researchers found that Head Start programs presented the highest quality ratings (Fuller, Kagan, Loeb, & Chang, 2004; Li-Grining & Coley, 2006). Quality measures such as the ECERS-R have been analyzed with recent research finding limited connections to students' school readiness skills and validity weaknesses in large national samples (Votruba-Drzal, Coley, Koury, & Miller, 2013). A review by researchers of the type of quality indicators used in state QRIS systems found that most indicators showed

no significant association with children's functioning (Sabol, Hong, Pianta, & Burchinal, 2013). A recent meta-analysis conducted by Hofer, Gordon, Lambouths, and Rowe (2014) determined that ECERS ratings have neither substantively nor statistically significant associations with children's outcomes.

Early Childhood Curriculum

Practitioners in high-quality prekindergarten programs implement developmentally appropriate curricula, which they use as a tool to engage students in learning experiences that are active and language-rich (National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning [NCQTL], 2015). Sabol and Pianta (2017) found that high-quality programs address multiple domains and standards to ensure children are developing in ways that support health and school readiness. Wood and Hedges (2016) found that there are three substantial themes within curriculum theory: content, coherence, and control. In their study, on research and policies that regulate approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the researchers found that curriculum in early childhood is viewed differently according to the curriculum framework applied by practitioners (Wood & Hedges, 2016). The researchers determined that inquiring about curriculum in early childhood education is a necessary effort to develop different theoretical frameworks for understanding the ways in which curriculum can be considered alongside instruction, assessment, and play (Wood & Hedges, 2016).

In public preschool programs such as state prekindergarten and Head Start, research-based curriculum is significant because it supports implementation practices, accessibility of materials, and guarantees that preschoolers are provided opportunities to

learn (Duncan et al., 2015). With a concentration on child school readiness, several researchers have focused on incorporating evidence-based curricula in early childhood programs (Griffin, 2010; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2015). The use of thoughtfully sequenced learning activities has enhanced preschool children's letter knowledge and phonological awareness (Lonigan & Phillips, 2016). Wasik, Hindman, and Snell (2016) evaluated book reading practices and vocabulary development. Through effective early interventions such as engaging children in discussions, clearly defining words, and being interactive, the authors found enhanced achievements in the oral comprehension and vocabulary skills of the children (Lonigan & Phillips, 2016). Ensar and Keskin (2014) found that at the end of the prekindergarten year, children in classrooms receiving intervention displayed a reduction in behavior problems, positive emotional adjustment, and transitioned effectively to kindergarten.

Participation in early childhood education programs with developmentally appropriate curricula aids the development of the whole child (Landry et al., 2014). Bierman, Heinrichs, Welsh, Nix, and Gest (2017) found that the use of evidence-based curricula heightened social-emotional school readiness skills of low-income children. Two of the most common early childhood curricula utilized by state-funded prekindergarten programs are The Creative Curriculum for Preschool and HighScope (Duncan et al., 2015). In a study conducted by Duncan et al., (2015) on enhancing school readiness with preschool curricula, results indicated that The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program produced much more positive classroom processes than locally developed curricula. The HighScope Curriculum failed to improve either the behavior or

academic achievement of preschool children, relative to the local curricula. The authors also determined that more evidence is necessary to determine if The Creative Curriculum for Preschool and HighScope curricula are effective in promoting young children's learning (Duncan et al., 2015).

The content in early childhood programs is instrumental in the academic development of students. Yoshikawa et al., (2013) conducted research on content in early learning programs and found that students who are engaged with content in profound ways while developing conceptual understanding are better able to develop skills in specific areas, such as mathematics or language development. Snow (2014) of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, cautions against excessive classroom time spent on content with simple words. She claimed all children will learn familiar words from their daily interactions, and time in the prekindergarten classroom should consist of teaching uncommon things (Snow, 2014). A curriculum must be well implemented, if it is to be effective. Strong preservice teacher preparation and in-class coaching for teachers increase the likelihood that curricula will be used effectively (Aikens & Akers, 2011).

There is skepticism on whether preschool curricula highlight the cognitive skills of children, more than their socio-emotional development. (Kluczniok, Anders, Sechtig, & Rossbach, 2016). According to Gialamas, Mittinty, Sawyer, Zubrick, and Lynch (2014), the development of socio-emotional skills in children are crucial to academic success at the early childhood level. The authors found that the practitioner's education, knowledge, and training are not linked with the socio-emotional and cognitive outcomes of their students (Gialamas et al., 2014). Jensen, Holm, and Bremberg (2013) found that

few studies highlighted the potential benefits of preschool in the socio-emotional development of children. The authors also found smaller outcomes in the children's cognitive development skills (Jensen et al., 2013).

Achievement Gap and Instructional Intervention

Consensus is growing about the importance of early childhood. Nationally, inequality in educational achievement by income is a long-standing concern and has been increasing (Goldrick-Rab, Kelchen, Harris, & Benson, 2016; Reardon, 2013). According to Nores and Barnett (2014), many disadvantaged children will attend preschool for less than one year. Reardon (2013) explored socioeconomic backgrounds of families and its impact on the achievement gap. Over the past three decades, educational performance of the children and the incomes of their families, poor and affluent, have separated considerably (Reardon, 2013). Due to this inequality, the author explored the ability of schools to provide children with an equal chance at academic and economic success. Results indicate that parental investments in children's learning affect reading, mathematics, and other attainments later in life (Reardon, 2013). According to Reardon, this gap between rich and poor children's overall achievement scores is much larger now than it was fifty years ago.

Other researchers have studied achievement gap in early childhood programs. Previous research by Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) revealed that the achievement gap between low-income children of color and their more affluent white counterparts starts before kindergarten entrance. In their study on executive function skills between advantaged and disadvantaged children, Fitzpatrick, McKinnon, Blair, and Willoughby

(2014) found that executive function and other cognitive skills are essential to academic performance. Children who grow up in poverty show deficits in executive functioning (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). In the past decade, numerous comprehensive assessments of state-funded public preschool programs such as the Universal Preschool Programs in Virginia and Oklahoma, have described outcomes on mathematics and reading achievement at school entry level. The assessments also explained social-emotional outcomes in early childhood education programs in the states (Gormley, Phillips, Newmark, Welti, & Adelstein, 2011; Huang, Invernizzi, & Drake, 2012).

Interventions to combat the achievement gap in early childhood have been studied by researchers. Duncan et al., (2015) conducted research that discussed approaches and interventions to improve preschool participants' instructional experiences in elementary school. The authors explored two methods that may improve the instructional skills of preschoolers, consisting of more stimulating instruction for the children and partnerships between preschool and kindergarten practitioners, that focuses on smooth transitions for the children between grade levels (Duncan et al., 2015). Previous research has also shown that children from low-income families often display a delay in school readiness at kindergarten entry, creating an achievement gap that develops over time and contributes to huge, long-term disparities in educational attainment and employment (Ryan, Fauth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006). Though preschool enrollment may lessen the gaps in school readiness for low-income children and have positive effects on a community (Soria, 2016), longitudinal research suggests that the advances low-income children make during

preschool participation often decline at school entry and fade by early elementary school (Bierman, Heinrichs, Welsh, Nix, & Gest, 2017).

Practitioners' Perspectives on Curriculum and Practice

In school districts, both nationwide and internationally, discussions continue about the impact of curriculum and assessments on teaching practices, distribution of resources, and whether they achieve the intended improvement in student achievement (Polesel, Rice, & Dulfer, 2014). Bushaw and Calderon (2014) found that 58% of Americans believed the curriculum implemented in their community's schools needs modification. Sverdlov, Aram, and Levin (2014) explored kindergarten practitioners' perspectives of a new nationwide mandated early literacy curriculum (Sverdlov, Aram, & Levin, 2014). This study is unique because it is the first to explore kindergarten practitioners' perspectives of emergent literacy and their perspectives of stakeholders' beliefs. Researchers found that practitioners believe all five literacy goals (alphabetic skills, book immersion, emergent writing-reading, communication skills, oral language) are necessary for success. Most practitioners felt their literacy practices improved and thought parents had attributed little importance to literacy goals (Sverdlov et al, 2014).

Two recent studies conducted by researchers examined practitioners' perspectives and implementation practices. Cobanoglu and Capa-Aydin (2015) explored early childhood practitioners' perspectives on the implementation of curricula in their public schools. The public-school practitioners were required to implement a specific curriculum based on the constructivist curriculum approach. In this model, the students build their knowledge through experiences. The authors found that the practitioners'

commitment and reliability to the curriculum was stronger when their beliefs were aligned with the approach (Cobanoglu & Capa-Aydin, 2015). Findings also indicated that the perspectives of the practitioners impacted their implementation practices (Cobanoglu & Capa-Aydin, 2015). Alvestad and Sheridan (2015) conducted a study on preschool teachers' preparation and documentation of students' knowledge in their preschool classrooms and explored the practices of the teachers, conflicts, and difficulties. The teachers in the study were required to document their implementation practices and learning outcomes of the national curriculum. Implementation consisted of daily classroom practices, content, and activities. The authors found that there are detailed glitches and problems connected to relationships between teachers' planning, documentation, and reflection on children's learning in preschool (Alvestad & Sheridan, 2015).

Through professional development opportunities, practitioners will learn how to modify their teaching practices to meet the needs of the students. According to Slavin, Lake, Hanley, and Thurston (2014), refining the aptitude of practitioners must be the central point of professional development. Practitioners' beliefs and attitudes toward instruction play a critical role in their classroom practice in the quality, frequency, and content of instruction, regardless of the academic area they teach (Maier, Greenfield, & Bulotsky-Shearer, 2013; Rietdijk et al., 2018; Tomas & Jackson, 2017). Mligo (2016) conducted a study on practitioners' perspectives about a preschool curriculum and application practices. The author found that due to practitioners' inexperience with the curriculum, implementation was not successful. Results also indicate that the

professionals did not meet the criteria required to teach in the setting and the learning environment was not conducive to teaching and learning (Mligo, 2016). Researchers have recommended that the design of curriculum materials should support both student and teacher learning (Arias et al., 2016; Ball & Cohen, 1996). Approximately ten years later, Davis and Krajcik (2005) expanded upon Ball and Cohen's suggestions by creating a set of "design heuristics" for the development of curriculum materials that could support teacher knowledge in the manner proposed by Ball and Cohen.

Differences in kindergarten readiness can be attributed to differences in curriculum types (Claessens, Engel, & Curran, 2014), instructional practices, and program structures (Hill, Gormley, & Adelstein, 2015). In early childhood education, the best learning environment involves hands-on activities, supportive facilitation, a balance of cognitive and social domain skills (De Haan, Elbers, & Leseman, 2014), and includes interventions for at-risk students (Lonigan & Phillips, 2016). Researchers have also confirmed that at-risk preschool students benefit from an evidence-based curriculum that deliberately integrates social-emotional and literacy skills (Nix et al., 2016). Practitioners' perspectives of the curriculum are important; thus, they constitute an integral component of my study. The perspectives that practitioners bring to the classroom environment about the curriculum, instruction, and students are formulated and motivated by their knowledge, experiences, and meaning (Gross & Gilbert, 2011).

At-Risk Children and School Success

Children who have positive early childhood experiences are more likely to experience school success. Quality early childhood education is a source for reducing

inequality (García, Heckman, Leaf, & Prados, 2016). Of the nation's 12.9 million preschool-aged children, nearly 3 million live in or near poverty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). For decades, researchers such as those who studied the Carolina Abecedarian Project (Campbell & Ramey, 1994; Ramey et al., 2000) and the HighScope Perry Preschool Project (Schweinhart, 1994; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1981) have documented the benefits of attending preschool. These notable programs provided early childhood services to families from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The academic achievement of children who participated in early childhood programs have been examined by researchers. In a study carried out by Crosnoe, Benner, and Davis-Kean (2016), it was discovered that the association between phonics instruction and children's reading achievement during the first year in kindergarten was strongest among children who had attended preschool. Conti, Heckman, and Pinto (2016) found that high quality early childhood care and education can have an impact on academic achievement, behavior, cognitive development, and health-related outcomes for children. Other researchers have found that over the elementary school years, test scores of children who participated in preschool exceeded the scores of children who did not (Bakken, Brown, & Downing, 2017; Diazgranados, Borisova, & Sarker, 2016; Yoshikawa, Weiland, & Brooks-Gunn, 2016).

The socioeconomic status of children has been known to affect a child's education. Arsenio (2013) conducted a study to find out if social and economic disparity affects a child's education and answer questions about how access to high-quality preschool affects achievement. The research focused on how at-risk children are affected

by behavior problems, the influence it has on their school success, and future employment status. The author stated cognitive skills include mental acuteness and achievements such as letter knowledge, whereas non-cognitive skills include problem solving and paying attention (Arsenio, 2013). Clinton, Edstrom, Mildon, and Davila (2015) evaluated how socioeconomic status affects the social-emotional development of preschool children. The authors found that preschool children from both wealthy and poor families made substantial advances in social-emotional knowledge through the social-emotional learning experiences that were implemented by their practitioners.

Children who exhibit readiness skills (adequate self-regulation, mathematics, reading, mathematics, and externalizing behavior skills and being in good health) at kindergarten entrance are more likely to acquire proficiency by the end of fifth grade (Aber, Grannis, Owen, & Sawhill, 2013). Huang (2017) investigated the impact of attending a state-funded prekindergarten program on letter name knowledge. Children who attended prekindergarten had higher letter name knowledge (nine letters more) compared to students who had just begun prekindergarten (Huang, 2017). The researcher also revealed that students who attended prekindergarten were found to have a lower chance of repeating kindergarten (Huang, 2017). Letter knowledge aid in the understanding that patterns of letters represent sounds of spoken language (Huang, Tortorelli, & Invernizzi, 2014).

Active participation in preschool is important. Researchers have documented the benefits of children attending preschool for one year compared to two years on their social-emotional skills and academic achievement (Domitrovich et al., 2013; Moore et

al., 2015) in kindergarten. Through a large data analysis of several federal data sets, preschool dosage in early childhood education was explored (Burchinal, Zaslow, & Tarullo, 2016). Researchers described preschool dosage as frequency (number of days attended), amount of time (hours attended each day), or length of involvement (years of exposure) of a child in public preschool. The researchers found that most prekindergarten children who enroll in public preschool usually attend for one year (low dosage), but early intervention programs such as Head Start often enrolled children for two years (high dosage) at 3 and 4-years old (Shah et al., 2017).

Participation in preschool programs has been associated with several positive outcomes. Barnett, Carolan, Squires, and Clarke-Brown (2014) provided a synopsis of preschool enrollment in state-funded early childhood programs and evaluated data from the High Scope Perry Preschool Program Study on the economic benefits of preschool on at-risk children. The researchers found that children enrolled in the High Scope Perry Preschool Program became more productive citizens. In a study on preschool participation and outcomes, Barnett et al. (2014) found numerous positive results such as long-term positive relationships, increased cognitive and social-emotional development, improved high school graduation rates, and employment history. Ansari and Winsler (2016) explored school readiness for at-risk children enrolled in state-funded early childhood programs. Preschool experiences differ because programs vary in the type, location, and services provided. Preschool children were enrolled in prekindergarten programs located in public schools, family childcare, and center-based programs. Programs were both licensed and licensed exempt by the state. The researchers focused

on programs in the state with children of diverse backgrounds to address the gaps in knowledge. They found that students enrolled in public prekindergarten programs had a higher chance of being categorized as more skilled than their peers in subsidized programs (Ansari & Winsler, 2016).

The type of preschool program in which at-risk children enroll is significant to their success and linking the achievement gap. Crosnoe, Purtell, Davis-Kean, Ansari, and Benner (2016) evaluated an accommodations model for at-risk preschool children enrolled in early childhood programs. The researchers explored the type of preschool program available for enrollment and their selection process. Head Start and non-Head Start programs along with public and private programs were reviewed. The researchers believed children from low-income families benefit from preschool but are less likely than other children to enroll. They found that inquiry on children from low-income families entering school with limited academic skills is plentiful. Masten, Fiat, Labella, and Strack (2015) explored educating children living in poverty and children who are extremely mobile. The researchers believed that achievement gaps in early childhood are preventable through early assessments and access to quality early childhood education.

Summary and Conclusions

In the United States, the instructional practices of early childhood practitioners have been impacted by required instructional standards (Chen & Zhang, 2017; Goldstein & Bauml, 2014). Practitioners have an obligation to use specific instructional materials and implement explicit content. Previous researchers have reported on the strategies teachers use to support learning experiences of all children while developing effective

strategies for teaching state standards in appropriate and responsive ways (Drake, Land, & Tyminski, 2014; Goldstein & Bauml, 2014). The researchers highlighted components of practitioners' perspectives about teaching children and curriculum (Herman & Pinard, 2015) and constructivism (Plotka, 2016).

By bringing awareness to prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool and its implementation to at-risk prekindergarten students, researchers may highlight strategies practitioners might use to support learning experiences of all children. The information may help practitioners to develop effective strategies for teaching state standards in meaningful ways. Carefully selected programs provide children the opportunity to develop, express their emotions, and interact with others (Burger, 2015). The data gathered in my study may lead to a greater understanding of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students.

There exists research on early childhood practitioners who teach at-risk students and their perspectives of the curriculum implemented in their classrooms, but little research on prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. This chapter detailed the literature review, literature search strategy, and conceptual framework of the study. Chapter 3 includes a complete description of how the gap in research on practice was explored through a basic qualitative design, to lead to a greater understanding of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in a southern state. Components of chapter 3 includes

the research method, design, and rationale for the selection of this basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews. I provide readers with information about my role as the researcher, methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program used with at-risk students in a school district, in a southeastern state in the United States. Qualitative research involves descriptive models that outline the study and addresses the significance of the problem. Chapter 3 will include a clear description of the research method for the current study with specifics on the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology used, issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?

RQ2: What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of their own competence and motivation when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?

I chose a basic qualitative research design to collect a single source of data through semistructured interviews. A basic qualitative approach was adopted to explore the perspectives held by prekindergarten practitioners in a southeastern state about The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the purpose of the basic qualitative approach is to recognize how people discover understanding from their lived experiences. Alison-Bryant, Liebeskind, and Gestin

(2017) and Creswell (2013) noted that qualitative investigators retrieve accessible data through in-depth conversations with participants. A qualitative approach was the most applicable method for this study because it allowed me to acquire detailed information and understanding of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives. The seven participants for my study were ideal to attain an in-depth understanding of the study. The number of participants for my study is a typical sum in qualitative research (see Creswell, 2013). The research goal of exploring the perspectives of practitioners who implement or have implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program to at-risk students in select prekindergarten classrooms would not have been accomplished through a quantitative approach because I was not seeking numeric descriptions of views of a population. A quantitative approach lacks the in-depth perspectives that I intended to ascertain.

I used semistructured interviews to collect in-depth viewpoints from each participant to develop a thorough representation of the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives. The research questions were designed to attain a deeper understanding of the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation concerning The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. A basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews was selected because I had the opportunity to study the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives more closely and the intended outcomes were best suited for a basic qualitative design. According to Lawrence (2018), a basic qualitative design allows for in-depth inquiry and examination to discover patterns and themes from data. My data collection method, semistructured interviews, is

aligned with data collection methods consistent with basic a qualitative design. Other qualitative designs considered were phenomenology and grounded theory.

Phenomenology focuses on the lived experiences of the participants and the main data collection method is through interviews. The phenomenological approach was not aligned with my study as strongly as a basic qualitative design using open-ended interviews. I was more interested in the practitioners' viewpoints about the curriculum and not a description of their experiences. Grounded theory was not applicable because it is not as descriptive as a basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews and the purpose is mainly to develop a theory (see Creswell, 2013). In a study with a grounded theory research design, the major data collection method is through interviews of 20 to 30 participants or until data saturation is reached (Yin, 2014). I focused on a smaller number of participants.

Role of the Researcher

I was the sole researcher of the current study and was responsible for all facets of the study. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to ascertain the perspectives and feelings of study participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). I am the program director of a laboratory school at a public university in a southeastern state and have been in the early childhood field for 22 years. Before my role as program director, I worked as a prekindergarten teacher in the region, served as a quality mentor for three local early childhood programs, and a professional development facilitator on the local and national level. My interaction with and exposure to the practitioners in the region occurred through professional development conferences and workshops on various early childhood

topics, as an attendee. Through my interactions with and exposure to early childhood practitioners, I have gained motivation into becoming a staunch advocate of early childhood education.

With the allocation of funding to increase access to high-quality preschool in districts serving at-risk students, I was interested in understanding the perspectives held by early childhood practitioners regarding the curriculum and their efficacy for implementing it with at-risk students. I conducted this study in the city of my employment, but not in schools that I supervised. I am an employee of the public university and not the school district. For this study, I sought truthful, direct answers as I explored prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students in a school district, in a southeastern state. I assumed the role of investigator and conducted interviews and analyzed data. I disclosed my professional status in the study to safeguard the interview and data collection processes. I work at a public university located in the school district in a southeastern state where the study will take place.

Bias in research is universal, and my goal was to lessen bias. To help limit bias, I disclosed conflicts of interests. Conflicts of interest occur when the professional judgment about the validity of research, the primary interest, may be influenced by a secondary interest such as professional relationships (Bero, 2017). The best strategy to address conflicts of interest about my position and relationship with the practitioners was to disclose the conflict within the research. I addressed the issue of personal bias by

documenting my thoughts and feelings as they arose, in a reflective journal. I used the reflective journal to document my personal biases as they were recognized.

I did not offer incentives to the prekindergarten practitioners to attain their participation in my study. I established a relationship with district administrators and practitioners for the sole purpose of the current study. Revealing conflicts of interest helped to control my personal biases and assumptions about the current study (see Mecca et al., 2015). My professional relationship with the practitioners and my position as a program director at a school that implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program did not alter the results because protocols were followed. I am familiar with The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. For 3 years, it was the curriculum implemented in the prekindergarten classroom at my school. I am biased about the content, supplemental materials, and assessment tools.

It was important when analyzing data, in this study, that I focused only on the perspectives and reflections of the practitioners who participated in the study. I restricted my study to adult participants who gave consent to participate in the study. None of the participants are individuals who might be considered vulnerable. It was imperative that I isolated my personal philosophies and views about the curriculum and document them in my personal journal as I self-reflect throughout the study. I revealed any violations of the rules, avoided biased reporting of the data analysis, and used an external auditor to substantiate my research. The auditing structure exists to verify and enhance the quality of research (Wicherts, 2016). During the data analysis phase, I utilized an external auditor

to review the development of codes, themes and findings. The auditor assessed my study to determine if my results were accurate and supported by data.

Methodology

Participant Selection

I conducted this basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews with prekindergarten practitioners of at-risk students in a school district in a southeastern state in the United States. In a basic qualitative study, participants formulate and recognize the meaning of a phenomenon while they experience the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). An average sample size for a basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews research is between five and 25 participants (Creswell, 2013). The practitioner population consisted of seven prekindergarten practitioners from public school settings in the district. Yin (2014) posited that due to the basis of the basic qualitative design, the distinctive standards about sample size are inconsequential. I chose seven participants because my focus was to obtain detailed information about each practitioner's perspective of the curriculum, which is typical in qualitative research approaches (see Creswell, 2013).

I assigned an identification code (P-1 through P-8) to each participant and a corresponding number to each site. I used the alphabetical and numerical identifiers in the reporting of the findings of the study to ensure confidentiality. I have successfully completed the required training course "Protecting Human Research Participants" through The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research along with CITI Human Protection Training through Walden University. I first secured

approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the data collection for my study. I then obtained consent from the school district's research department to conduct my study. This was done by sending a written request by e-mail to the Research Authorization Committee. I followed-up on my request with telephone calls to confirm and obtain written approval.

Upon approval from the school district, I contacted the site administrators of the schools electronically for permission to conduct the research at their schools. I obtained the e-mail addresses of practitioners through referral by other practitioners (snowball sampling) and distributed the invitation to participate letter and consent form electronically to all potential participants. I obtained the name/contact information of the first participant(s) that started the snowball sampling process through email addresses I already had in my possession. I obtained the email addresses through professional development communications and participation in various early childhood workshops and conferences. I do not work with the teachers, nor do I communicate with them daily. I extended the invitation and asked the teachers to share my research information but let them know that they did not need to do so. The invitation to participate letter explained the details of my study. In the letter, I sought agreement from the participants to be interviewed at least once for a period of 1 hour after school hours at a location of their convenience. The letter contained my email address and telephone number for interested participants to contact me and return the signed consent form.

Upon receipt of the consent form, I sent the demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) to the participants electronically. Each practitioner who was interested in

participating in my study had a timeline of seven days from distribution to return the completed demographic questionnaire to me electronically. The demographic questionnaire was used to assist in selecting only those practitioners who implement or have implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program to at-risk prekindergarten students in their classrooms. The questionnaire contained class demographic questions and questions focused on the use of the curriculum. My contact information (email address and telephone number) was listed to return the survey to me. The first seven practitioners who responded and implemented the curriculum to at-risk prekindergarten students in SPI+ classrooms were selected.

The criteria for practitioners included selecting participants who implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program to at-risk prekindergarten students located in public elementary and early childhood schools. For the current study, I gathered data from seven practitioners to establish validity and saturation. A small number of participants yielded a deeper understanding of the study than a large sum of participants (see Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010). The prekindergarten practitioners at the sites who implement or have implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program to at-risk prekindergarten students were information-rich and ideal participants for this study. Those practitioners who did not or have never implemented the curriculum to students enrolled in SPI+ classrooms were not chosen for participation. The non-SPI+ practitioners were omitted because they could not purposefully inform the research problem or an understanding of the significant purpose of the study.

Instrumentation

Data collection took place once approval was obtained from the school district's research department, and the site administrator of each elementary school and early childhood site. Basic qualitative studies often utilize document analysis, interviews, and observations to gather data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Percy, et al., 2015). I collected data through a single method. Semistructured interviews were used to investigate the research questions and develop an understanding of the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. I audio-recorded the interviews so that I was actively listening to each participant. The data collection instrument for interviews with practitioners consisted of interview questions (see Appendix C). I developed from the conceptual framework on theories of constructivism and self-efficacy. The interview questions were designed to encourage in-depth and thorough responses and keep the conversation flowing (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). My 22 years of expertise as an early childhood educator and program director was instrumental in designing the questions for completing the analysis for The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program.

Semistructured Interviews. Interviews are customized and permit unrestricted responses, and flexibility that is not acquired through other techniques (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). Semistructured interviews are a frequently used data collection method in qualitative research and the significance of the interview guide profoundly impacts the results of the study (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Prior to each interview, I reviewed the interview protocol (see Appendix B). The interview protocol

served as a guide for the conversation with each participant. I conducted semistructured, in-person or telephone interviews with practitioners who work directly with at-risk prekindergarten students and implement The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in their classrooms. I audio-recorded each interview on an EVISTR hand-held digital voice recorder. Cridland, Jones, Caputi, and Magee (2015) noted that in semistructured interviews, the focus is on the content that is important for the participant, allowing various perspectives to be communicated. A sample of seven prekindergarten practitioners from public schools participated in semistructured interviews. The practitioners were given a chance to ask me questions following their interviews.

The interview questions were formed with questions associated with the research questions, to keep the dialogue flowing, and inspire thorough responses (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). During the development of the interview questions, two interrater experts in the early childhood field reviewed my interview questions. The experts provided feedback to ensure that the interview questions were precise and aligned with the research questions. The experts were a professor who received her doctorate in early childhood education from a local university and the department chair for a community college who received her doctorate in early childhood education from a university in a southern state.

The interview questions focused on various aspects of the curriculum, implementation practices, practitioners' knowledge, experiences, and feelings. Literature sources about practitioners' perspectives, early childhood curriculum, and at-risk students were the basis for my instrument development. My instrumentation for semistructured

interviews with practitioners consisted of my own questions. The purpose of these questions was to gather information regarding the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. I audio-recorded the interviews on a hand-held digital voice recorder, then transcribed and analyzed the data. Member checking or participant validation is the process of providing all participants the opportunity to review the summary of the data findings and confirm accuracy of interpretations. I sent each participant a summary of the data findings for them to review for accuracy (see Creswell, 2013).

Content Validity

The use of interviews as a data collection method allowed for insightful and detailed explanations of the study (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2014). Having a positive connection and developing creditability with the participants was essential in gathering detailed and quality data. Credibility and trustworthiness are important and strengthens qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Validity in qualitative research has been commonly discussed in the methodological literature and can be defined as the degree to which the variables of a research theory are proven accurate (Lub, 2015). Content validity was established using rich, thick details of the data to describe the findings (Creswell, 2013). I used member checking and provided all participants the opportunity to review the summary of the data findings and confirm the accuracy of my interpretations of their individual information collected during the interviews.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I began the recruitment of participants for my study after permission is received from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (approval number 09-25-19-0501637), the school district's research department, and the site administrator at each elementary and early childhood school site. I also sought email addresses of prekindergarten practitioners through snowball sampling. I obtained the contact information through referrals from practitioners (snowball sampling) in the district. I obtained the name/contact information of the first participant(s) that started the snowball sampling process through email addresses I already had in my possession. I obtained the email addresses through professional development communications and participation in various early childhood workshops and conferences. I distributed the invitation to participate in the study letter and consent form electronically to potential participants.

Participants willing to participate were asked to return the signed consent form to me via email. Upon receipt of the consent form, I sent the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) to participants. Practitioners were asked to return the demographic questionnaires to me electronically within seven days of receipt. Participants could have contacted me via telephone or email to learn more about the study. Upon contact with each participant, I reviewed the information they received in the invitation to participate and addressed any questions and concerns they had. During the telephone call, I reviewed the interview protocol and scheduled interviews with each participant. I reminded potential participants that they could have exited the study at any time, for any reason, with no repercussions.

Participation. Upon approval from the school district and the site administrators, I used purposeful sampling to determine the prekindergarten practitioners who would participate in the study. In purposeful sampling, locations and participants are selected because participants have knowledge about the study's purpose and can advise the study in meaningful ways (Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I chose the data collection sites, public school prekindergarten classrooms, by following the criteria outlined below:

- The data collection sites are prekindergarten classrooms located in public elementary and early childhood schools in the district.
- A classroom designated as SPI+ with 4-year-old students enrolled.
- A classroom whose practitioner implements The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program daily.

Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research for the identification and collection of in-depth information from participants connected to the study of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants could have left the study at any time with no repercussions and all the data collected thus far for a particular participant would have been destroyed by shredding. I disclosed to participants their Right of Refusal and/or Withdrawal from the study in the invitation to participate, during interview scheduling, and on the informed consent form.

Collecting Interview Data. I scheduled a mutually agreeable time, date, and location away from the classrooms to conduct each interview. A signed letter of informed consent was required from each participant. Participants signed the informed consent

before interviews began. The goal of the informed consent was to offer necessary and understandable information to a prospective participant for voluntary agreement regarding participation in the research study (see Nijhawan et. al., 2013).

Each interview lasted no more than 1 hour and was conducted in a single session and one-on-one semistructured format. Before the interviews, I reviewed the purpose of this study with the participants and reiterated confidentiality, their choice not to answer any of the questions presented, and option to withdraw from the study at any point in time, with no repercussions or negative consequences.

The interview questions (see Appendix C) focused on various aspects of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, practitioners' self-efficacy, motivation, and perspectives of competence to implement the curriculum with at-risk students. I audio-recorded each interview and started a new recording at the beginning of each. I transcribed the interview transcripts verbatim. Member checking is the process of providing all participants the opportunity to review the summary of the data findings and confirm accuracy of interpretations. All participants were given the opportunity to review a summary of the data findings for correctness of my interpretations of their own data (see Creswell, 2013). To exit the study, I conducted a short debrief with each practitioner. I reviewed the purpose of the study, shared a summary of my findings, answered any questions they had, and thanked participants for their participation.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis is an ongoing process that involves repeated reflection on the data, documentation throughout the study, and establishes themes (Creswell, 2013). In this

basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews, I analyzed data to reveal the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of the curriculum and self-efficacy for implementation with at-risk students. During data analysis, I used a priori codes (Implementation Practices, Knowledge, Experiences, and Feelings) based on the study's framework. I open coded the data collected from the practitioners by reading the information several times to generate preliminary labels for sections of the data. I reviewed the notes and audio recordings collected from the semistructured interviews to organize common themes about the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of the curriculum and self-efficacy for implementation in the designated prekindergarten classrooms. All steps of the coding process for the current study were documented and recorded to ensure validity.

In the first step of the data analysis for the current study, I transcribed the audio recordings from the interviews. I transcribed each recording verbatim. Each transcription had the complete recorded summary of all questions and answers from participants during the interview. I used the electronic transcription service, Otranscribe.com, to help transcribe participant interviews. Upon completion of the transcriptions from otranscribe.com, I printed copies of each transcript. I read and analyzed the transcripts to check for mistakes and grammatical errors.

After preliminary review, I read and reviewed the written transcripts several times while listening to the audio recording. I used this method to check for accuracy and any missing responses. I then analyzed the data with a priori coding. The a priori codes are based on constructs from the conceptual framework. The a priori code are:

‘Implementation Practices’, ‘Knowledge’, ‘Experiences, and ‘Feelings’. I searched the transcripts line-by-line for significant statements, phrases, and words and wrote them in the margins of each transcript. All significant statements were organized and grouped into codes (see Creswell, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). After obtaining data, I used open coding to create temporary labels. I did this by reading through the interviews several times to seek portions of data that gave a summary of the interviews. According to Creswell (2013), the method of coding is comprised of breaking down the data into smaller groups, collecting proof, and finally defining the code.

Next, I used axial coding to identify relationships among the labels created through open coding (see Twining, 2017). I organized the codes with similarities and documented them in the composition notebook. I counted the frequency of words or phrases identified as codes in the interview transcripts. I arranged the codes into various categories to discover connections between the data and research questions (see Galman, 2013). To determine ways in which the participants answered the research questions, I analyzed the transcripts and used labels to organize the data and generate meaning of the interviews. I reviewed the codes and combined them with similar new codes that emerged. I clustered the codes into themes then compiled the themes into results of the study, according to each research question (see Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Finally, I utilized an external auditor to review the development of codes, themes and findings. The auditor is a professor at a university in a southern state. She holds a doctorate in in special education from a university in a northern area of the US. Upon feedback from the auditor, I organized the data interpretation of the interviews into

informational summaries. I compiled and shared a summary of the results in chapter 4. In the summary, I described the participants' profiles and sites and used the alphabetical and numerical identifier in the descriptions. Participants were not be identified, and confidentiality was guaranteed. A written report concluded the analysis.

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)

In addition to using Microsoft Word Software System 2016 to document demographic information about participants and answers obtained during the interviews, I utilized the computer-assisted data analysis software system, QDA Miner Lite. QDA Miner Lite is a qualitative data analysis software that aids in the sorting, annotating, coding, and analysis of data. Provalis Research, a prominent designer of text analysis software, created the software in 2012. QDA Miner Lite has several key features that was valuable for data analysis. I was able to use the software to store and organize the raw data. According to Paulus and Bennett (2017), computer-assisted data analysis software provides more ways of coding and analyzing qualitative data. The software is also useful for safely storing data. I reported all discrepant data.

Trustworthiness

The process to certify trustworthiness of research analysis begins with the selection of the most ideal data collection technique to address the inquiries (Elo et al., 2014). I used various methods to establish trustworthiness in this qualitative study. Semistructured interviews was the data collection method implemented. To increase credibility (internal validity) in this study, I discussed all assumptions and biases that were part of the study. This is known as researcher reflexivity. Prolonged contact in the

fieldwork for this study was minimal. I gained an understanding of the practitioners' perspective through interviews. I aimed to develop trust with the participants through respect, professionalism, and by maintaining their confidentiality. Member checking is another strategy that established credibility and accuracy (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants were allowed to review a draft of the findings of the study. Member checking confirmed that participants approved that the information is accurate.

By saturating the research with descriptive data about the methodology, participants, and setting, transferability (external validity) was increased. The reader determined transferability of the results of the study through thick description of the data and may increase the body of knowledge that relates to prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of preschool curriculum used with at-risk students. Keeping records of how the study was being conducted increased both the dependability and confirmability of the study. The audit trail consisted of the reflective journal used along the way. I utilized an external auditor to review the development of codes, themes, and findings. The external auditor for this basic qualitative design is a professor at a university in a southeastern state who has a doctorate in Special Education from a university in the northern area of the US. An external audit was beneficial in assessing the trustworthiness of the current study (see Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

Ethical Procedures

Research ethics is a significant issue in planning and conducting research (Flick, 2016), and a primary responsibility of the researcher is to protect participants and their data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Before any data collection, IRB approval was obtained.

Upon approval from the IRB, I conducted the study according to Walden University's standards. According to Northway (2000), ethical implications can be found in aspects of the research process, this includes topic choice, sample identification, and sharing the findings. I have completed the required training course "Protecting Human Research Participants" through The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research. I then sought approval from the school district's research department, followed by the site administrator of each site in the district.

Once site approval was received and I obtained the contact information of potential participants, I disbursed the invitation to participate letter and consent form. Upon receipt of the consent form each participant, I sent the demographic questionnaire to prekindergarten practitioners electronically. Once practitioners had been selected, I contacted each to schedule individual interviews. Before starting each interview, I adequately informed the participants about the nature of the study and reviewed their signed consent form. The informed consent form included the purpose of the research study, a description of the participants' role, any risks and benefits, procedure for keeping the participant's data confidential, and the amount of time required for participation for each activity in the study. The form also informed participants of their right to discontinue the study at any time, contact information of the researcher, and IRB.

In developing the interview questions (see Appendix C), I was reflective about the kind of questions that I would ask the participants and how the questions would affect the participants in their role as practitioners. I protected the participants' information. Alphabetical and numerical identifiers were used to identify the participants and locations

to maintain privacy (see Creswell, 2013). Data collected for the study was secured in a locked cabinet in my home. I protected all electronic data with a password on a personal computer. At the end of the study, I returned all data including email correspondence, signed consent forms, audio recordings of interviews, notes, and drafts of final report to the locked cabinet and will maintain for five years. The data will then be destroyed according to IRB policy. I will employ secure destruction by using a shredder to destroy physical data. Digital data and audio recordings will be erased.

Summary

This section detailed the methodology of the study. Components included the research design and rationale for the selection of this basic qualitative design using open-ended interviews. In the role of the researcher, the readers found evidence of the researcher's experience in the field, relationship with participants, and how to generate information from study participants. Participant selection, instrumentation, and procedures for recruitment of practitioners were described. Data collection consisted of semistructured interviews. I outlined the data analysis to give the reader insight into how the study was conducted. In the data analysis, I connected the data to the central research question, included the type of analysis and procedure for coding, and any programs used for data management. Ethical procedures included the treatment of human participants, institutional permissions, confidentiality, and other ethical concerns. The results of this study are outlined in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students. Snowball sampling was used to recruit prekindergarten practitioners from a school district in a southeastern state. The practitioners were recruited through referrals from practitioners in the district. The research questions for this study were designed to attain a deeper understanding of the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation concerning The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. The purpose of this chapter is to present the analysis of data, which includes descriptions of the participant selection process, participants' demographics and characteristics, and the procedures for data collection and analysis.

The following research questions were used to gather qualitative data required for the reliability of this study:

RQ1: What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?

RQ2: What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of their own competence and motivation when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?

Setting

The setting for this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was a southeastern state in the United States, specifically, a school district with classrooms

designated for at-risk 4-year-old students. The schools were public elementary and early childhood schools and varied according to grades served. Three sites were elementary schools serving children from Prekindergarten 3 (age 3) through Grade 6 and one site was recently converted from an elementary school to an early childhood center to serve 3- and 4-year-old students only. By selecting multiple sites, the overall study is viewed as being vigorous (see Yin, 2014). The reason for the selection of multiple sites was to allow analysis across settings.

The four sites that were chosen were (a) Elementary School #1, (b) Elementary School #2, (c) Elementary School #3, and (d) Early Childhood Center #4. Numerical identifiers were used for each site. The city has a population of 244,076, and is 47.01% Caucasian, 41.58% African American, 4.29% Two or more races, 2.95% Other race, 0.41% Native American, 0.07% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 3.69% Asian. The median household income is $47,137 (State and County Quick Facts, 2019). The city has a child population of 49,700 (ages 0–17). Fifty eight percent or 28,610 of the children are economically disadvantaged (Below 200% FPL) and live in families that struggle to meet basic needs such as housing, food, childcare, utilities, and transportation (State and County Quick Facts, 2020).

Participant Demographics

In an urban school district in a southeastern state, seven prekindergarten practitioners expounded on their perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students. Each practitioner provided personal perspectives for this study. To

ensure confidentiality, I assigned each participant an alphabetical and numerical identifier. I gathered the participants from three elementary schools and one early childhood center in the school district. Each school was assigned a numerical identifier. All participants were prekindergarten practitioners at the early childhood level. Experience ranged between 9–20 years. All participants taught at-risk students; in classrooms with the SPI+ designation. Five participants taught early childhood located in elementary schools and two participants taught students at the early childhood center.

I used questionnaires to aid in selecting only those practitioners who implemented the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program to at-risk 4-year-old students. The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) contained demographic questions as well as those focused on the use of the curriculum. The questions addressing curriculum implementation and at-risk students helped to determine if the practitioners met the criteria for participation. If practitioners implemented the curriculum to at-risk 4-year-old students in classrooms designated as SPI+ classrooms, I selected them. If they did not implement the curriculum to at-risk 4-year-old students in classrooms designated as SPI+, I did not select them to participate in the study. Responses from the participants on the demographic questionnaire showed that 100% of the participants were female, and held degrees in early childhood education, interdisciplinary studies, and elementary education.

Table 1 provides a brief summary of the participants' alphabetical and numerical identifier, highest degree obtained, site, years of teaching experience, years teaching 4-year-olds, and years of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program implementation.

Table 1.

Research Participants

Participant	Degree	School	Years of Teaching Experience	Years Teaching 4 Year-Olds	Years of Curriculum Implementation
P-1	Bachelor's Park & Recreation Management	#4	2	1	1
P-2	Bachelor's Elementary Education	#4	13	6	5
P-3	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education	#4	3	2	2
P-4	Master's Interdisciplinary Studies	#2	24	16	5
P-5	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education	#1	21	20	3
P-6	Master's Elementary Education	#3	2	1	1
P-7	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education	#2	20	20	3

Data Collection

The data collection process commenced once approval was obtained from Walden University's IRB (approval number 09-25-19-0501637), the school district's research department, and the site administrator of each school. I used snowball sampling to recruit participants from three elementary schools and one early childhood center in one school district. I included exclusion questions in a demographic questionnaire to ascertain appropriate participants. The exclusion questions ensured the prekindergarten

practitioners were involved in the daily implementation of the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in classrooms with at-risk students. Study participants were required to be prekindergarten practitioners who implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program daily, in classrooms designated as SPI+ with 4-year-old students enrolled.

I used purposeful sampling to select the prekindergarten practitioners at the sites presented (Table 1) because the practitioners could provide meaningful information and insights to the study (see Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Seven prekindergarten practitioners were selected. Each selected prekindergarten practitioner participated in face-to-face or telephone interviews. Participants received an electronic invitation to participate in the study and were informed about the purpose of the study, the interview process, and treatment of data, and maintenance of confidentiality. Participants signed and returned their consent form to me electronically. I reviewed the consent form and each participant received a copy before the interview began. The participants and I signed the consent forms. I conducted in-person and telephone interviews.

Data collection occurred over a 2-week period, with an average of three interviews each week. Five participants conducted telephone interviews and two were carried out face-to-face. Participants suggested a day and time that was most suitable with their schedule. For the face-to-face interviews, I accommodated the participants at a location of their convenience, away from their classrooms. The length of each interview varied based on the amount of information shared by the participant and lasted 30–45

minutes. I conducted each interview in a single session in a one-on-one semistructured format. I asked each interviewee the same questions to guarantee that the same general information was collected from each interviewee. Interviews were recorded on an EVISTR hand-held digital voice recorder.

I conducted the following post-interview protocol: I (a) thanked interviewee for participating, (b) reminded interviewee of treatment of data and confidentiality, (c) disclosed that future interviews will not occur, and (d) disclosed that interviewees will be contacted electronically to review a summary of study findings for accuracy. All interviews were audio-recorded on a hand-held digital recorder. I transcribed the interview transcripts verbatim. Member checking was implemented to ensure credibility and accuracy of the data (see Creswell, 2013). Participants reviewed a summary of the study findings for accuracy of interpretations and validation. Participants were given 24-48 hours to complete their review. None of the participants had any additional information or comments to contribute. All data collected for the study are secured in a locked cabinet in my home. All electronic data are password protected on a personal computer. I am the only person with access to the locked cabinet and password.

Data Analysis

In this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews, I explored prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students. I asked each participant the same nine open-ended interview questions. I transcribed each recorded face-to-face or telephone interview, prior to analyzing the data.

During the transcription process, I became more familiar with the data (see Creswell, 2013). I first analyzed data through a priori coding (Implementation Practices, Knowledge, Experiences, and Feelings) based on the study's conceptual framework and literature. Next, I applied open coding to the raw data to search for repeated words, phrases, and concepts that could answer the research questions. Then, I applied axial coding by organizing the open codes into categories according to their similarities (see Creswell, 2013). The qualitative data analysis software system, QDA Miner Lite was used to help organize the raw data and store the data safely.

Interview Analysis

I used Creswell's (2013) step by step approach for qualitative data analysis and found it to be beneficial in helping me in analyzing the interviews. The six steps include (a) organize and prepare data, (b) review and become familiar with the data, (c) begin to code the data, (d) generate themes, (e) discuss the findings, and (f) validate the findings.

Step 1: Organize and prepare data. During the first step of analysis process, I prepared and organized the data collected. This was accomplished by gathering all audio recordings and notes taken during the interviews. I matched the interview protocol (see Appendix B) and transcript to the alphabetical and numerical identifier assigned to each practitioner. Next, I matched the practitioner with the numerical identifier assigned to their corresponding school.

Step 2: Review and become familiar with data. I listened to the recordings several times. I then transcribed the data. After transcription, I read the data three times to become familiar with the data.

Step 3: Begin to code the data. I used three phases to code the data (a) a priori coding, (b) open coding, and (c) axial coding. In the first phase (a priori coding), I read the transcripts two times without making any notation. I read through the data again to identify important words. I used a color highlighter (orange) to identify any parts [words and excerpts] that seemed relevant to the research question(s), and the a priori codes, and marked them as such in the margins. The a priori codes are based on constructs from the conceptual framework and related literature. The a priori codes were: 'Implementation Practices,' 'Knowledge,' 'Experiences, and 'Feelings.' Four large categories developed during analysis of the a priori codes. Table 2 shows the a priori codes applied to the data, categories that developed, participants' identifier, and excerpts from the interview transcripts.

Table 2

A Priori Coding for Research Questions One and Two

A Priori Code	Categories	Participants' Identifier	Excerpts
Implementation Practices	Lesson Planning	P-7	"I look at the lesson plans and pull materials."
		P-3	"The teaching strategies were basically like lesson plans."
		P-1	"You can modify your lesson plans online."
		P-4	"I also like that the lesson plans and guide are there."
Knowledge	Levels of understanding about the curriculum	P-7	"This is an easy curriculum to follow, so eight to ten."
		P-1	"I would say a seven just because I know and have learned about all the resources"

(*table continues*)

A Priori Code	Categories	Participants' Identifier	Excerpts
		P-5	"I would say moderate because it came with lots of books to guide"
		P-3	"I'm moderate due to when I started teaching it"
Experiences	Novice to expert skills with implementation	P-6	"I was fairly new to it so it was overwhelming"
		P-2	"I was hired two days before the start of school"
		P-3	"My first experience was short because I came in mid-year"
		P-7	"From my years of teaching, this is an easy curriculum to follow."
		P-1	"I had more experience with the younger ones, so I started teaching prek."
Feelings	State of mind about implementation	P-1	"When they're [children] not able to do it, sometimes it makes me doubt if I'm doing enough as a teacher"
		P-5	"It had lots of books. I was overwhelmed at times."
		P-4	"There are moments of course where frustrations comes into play"

Second Phase (Open Coding). Once a priori coding was complete, I employed open coding for the second phase. I searched the transcripts line-by-line for significant and repetitive words, phrases, and concepts. I color-highlighted them blue. After highlighting, I wrote the words, phrases, and concepts in the margins of each transcript. I then created labels for portions of data and used a color-highlighting system to group them into codes by similarities and other common themes. I reviewed the codes and created categories and subcategories as needed. Forty-six open codes, five categories, and two subcategories emerged. A listing of the open codes and examples of excerpts that fit

each code can be found in Table I1. Table 3 shows the categories that developed, examples of open codes, participant identifier, and excerpts from the interview transcripts.

Table 3

Open Coding for Research Questions One and Two

Open Codes	Categories	Participants' Identifier	Excerpts
Hands-on learning	Effective implementation of activities	P-4	"Doing the activities in their centers often works best"
		P-7	"We do lots of hands-on learning experiences"
	a. Use of classroom centers during implementation	P-6	"We go into the centers and complete our activities"
		P-3	"It provided the children with hands-on learning experiences"
Teaching Guides	Resources used to provide instruction	P-2	"The curriculum books helps you"
		P-3	"The creative curriculum came with intentional teaching strategy guides"
		P-7	"Comes with a teaching guide"
		P-4	"I also like that the lessons and guides are there, so I'm not overwhelmed"
Training	Professional development provided by school officials	P-2	"In certain trainings we've had, the people from Creative Curriculum taught us"
		P-5	"I've done lots of trainings"
		P-1	"I went to classes for the creative curriculum, online resources, literacy, and how to further your teaching."
Doubt and challenges	Primary concerns expressed about curriculum	P-2	"It can be challenging at times. I was pretty much teaching myself."
	a. Practitioners' independent learning of curriculum	P-1	"When they're not able to do it, sometimes it makes me doubt if I'm doing enough as a teacher."
		P-5	"In the beginning, some of the information, I felt it was too much"
		P-3	"I had to learn on my own and from my co-teacher."

(table continues)

Open Codes	Categories	Participants' Identifier	Excerpts
Teacher assistants and curriculum coaches	Support and assistance to implement the curriculum	P-7	"I review the lesson plans with my assistant"
		P-6	"My assistant and I rotate the activities and centers"
		P-3	"I relied on the curriculum coaches"
		P-4	"The curriculum coaches were always available"

Third Phase (Axial Coding). For the third phase, I used axial coding to identify relationships among the labels created through a priori and open coding. I organized the codes into categories according to their similarities. I documented the categories and codes in a notebook and search for patterns in the categories. I counted the frequency of words or phrases identified as codes in the interview transcripts. I compared and arranged the codes into various categories to discover connections between the data and research questions.

Step 4: Generate themes. I reviewed the axial codes then arranged the codes into various categories to discover connections between the data and research questions. Next, I analyzed and condensed the codes. I then organized the data and generate meaning of the interviews. I reviewed the data several times to determine ways in which the participants' interview responses answered the questions. I reviewed the codes and combined them with any similar new codes that emerged. I grouped the codes into themes that emerged. I organized the newly generated themes in a list and identified significant concepts. Next, I organized the information by matching the theme that answered each research question. I reviewed the themes to ensure alignment with the

conceptual framework, related literature, and research questions. Table 4 shows the categories that emerged, number of participants who responded, and themes.

Table 4

Axial Coding Categories, Themes, and Research Question Connection

RQ1: What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?		
Categories	Number of Participants Who Responded	Themes
Instructional challenges	5	Theme 1 Practitioners encountered challenges during implementation.
Student-centered learning approaches	5	
Successful interactions	6	Theme 2 Student-centered approaches used by practitioners lead to successful practitioner-student interactions.
RQ 2: What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of their own competence and motivation when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?		
Feelings of doubt in the practitioners' ability to effectively implement the curriculum	7	Theme 3 Levels of knowledge and feelings of doubt in the curriculum impacted practitioners' ability to implement the curriculum effectively.
Professional development received to enhance implementation	7	Theme 4 Initial guidance, support, and comprehensive professional development from school officials will enhance curriculum implementation

Step 5: Discuss the findings. I compiled the information into results based on the themes that emerged and reported all discrepant data. The results of the data revealed four significant themes related to the research questions. Two themes emerged for RQ1 and two themes emerged for RQ2. A listing of the categories and related themes that emerged from the data during analysis is shown in Table 4 (pg.82).

Step 6: Validate the findings. I utilized an external auditor to review the development of codes, themes, and findings. The auditor is a professor at a university in a southern state. She holds a doctorate in in special education from a university in a northern area of the US. Upon feedback from the auditor, I organized the data interpretation of the interviews. I compiled and shared a summary of the results in Chapter 4. In the summary, I described the participants' profiles, sites, and used the alphabetical and numerical identifier in the descriptions. Participants were not to be identified, and confidentiality was guaranteed.

Specific Categories and Themes

The responses from the prekindergarten practitioners were beneficial in acquiring information on their perspectives of self-efficacy when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program and perspectives of their own competence and motivation during implementation. The categories (see Table 4) were developed based on the grouping of similar codes that originated from the transcripts (see Laureate Education, 2016). Teaching experience and implementation varied by participant. All but one participant had previous teaching experience with 4-year-olds before implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. P-1 stated, "I became interested in teaching, so I obtained a provisional license and began teaching first grade." P-1 discussed switching to prekindergarten because of her previous experience as an assistant daycare director. She remarked, "This was my first school year teaching PreK."

A common category emphasized was the practitioners' overall positive experience in implementing the curriculum. Six out of seven participants reported an

overall positive experience. P-2 felt the curriculum was “good for the kids.” P-3 explained, “It is a unique curriculum.” She also advised other practitioners to keep all materials organized because of the plethora of useful resources that accompany the curriculum. P-4 mentioned in her interview, “It’s been good. Like with any curriculum, you have to adjust.” P-5 also stated that her experience implementing the curriculum was “good.” P-6 remarked, “I’m still learning, but so far, so good.” P-7 replied, “It is a wonderful curriculum for pre-k. It is good for my students.” Of all the practitioners, only one speculated about the curriculum’s effectiveness. P-1 was curious and interested to see how the curriculum “will turn out in the long run.” She wondered if the curriculum will “stick because of the non-academic parts.”

The prekindergarten students’ next transition will be to the kindergarten grade level. Some practitioners mentioned kindergarten despite not specifically being asked questions about kindergarten readiness or preparation for kindergarten. P-5 stated, “I think the kids got a little preparation for kindergarten.” P-1 pondered if The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program prepares the students. She questioned, “does it really prepare them for kindergarten?” P-2 spoke about other grade-level teachers and their beliefs that the curriculum does not prepare the students for kindergarten. Although she did not specifically mention how she felt in terms of kindergarten preparation, P-2 stated, “I think the research I’m reading makes me feel like this is a good curriculum for these kids.”

I gained an understanding of the viewpoints and feelings the practitioners professed through the use of semi-structured interviews to explore the perspectives of

prekindergarten practitioners about their self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, with at-risk students. This basic qualitative study analysis revealed that practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation during the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, with at-risk students, reflect more commonalities than differences. A detailed description of significant themes are found in the results section of this chapter.

Discrepant Cases

In research, inconsistent and nonconforming data may exist (Patton, 2015). During the data analysis stage of my research, I did not discover evidence that opposed the findings. Therefore, further analysis was deemed unnecessary. If inconsistent data were found, I would have reviewed the data and address the variances between the findings.

Results

I explored prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation during the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program through this basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews. The practitioners implement the curriculum with at-risk students. In this section, I describe the results of the responses that I collected during the interviews with the seven prekindergarten practitioners. I used nine open-ended interview questions to help decipher themes. The interview method allowed me to develop an understanding of the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool

Program. Practitioners were able to provide in-depth and thorough responses through the interview method. The interview questions, theory alignment for each item, and the research question's correlation to the interview question are found in Table J1.

The following is a summary of findings based on the research questions that guided this study. I analyzed the themes based on the research questions.

RQ1. What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program? This question helps to identify the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of their self-efficacy when implementing the curriculum. In keeping with Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, practitioners answered related questions associated with their beliefs in their implementation practices. Interview Questions five, seven, and eight addressed this research question. Through the interviews, two major themes emerged regarding RQ1. They included: (a) practitioners encountered challenges during implementation, (b) student-centered approaches used by practitioners lead to successful practitioner-student interactions. I discuss each of the themes below.

Theme 1: Practitioners encountered challenges during implementation. More than half of the practitioners conveyed some form of implementation challenges when asked how they felt when implementing the curriculum to their at-risk students. P-2 explained, "It can be challenging at times, especially for the ones with IEPs." She went on to explain the curriculum as being generally easy to implement with 4-year-old students, but when a student exhibits behavioral issues, implementation becomes difficult. For some practitioners, implementing the curriculum was easiest when they

were prepared and planned accordingly. P-4 expressed that there are moments of frustration. She explained that frustration could occur for a variety of reasons, such as a change in schedule and routine, children's lack of interest, or from the type of activity planned for the day.

Practitioners expressed the importance of the children being engaged and presenting fun lessons. If not, practitioners and students become frustrated. P-5 and P-1 described a similar dilemma they faced during implementation. P-5 spoke about the challenges of not wanting to transition to another lesson because the students haven't mastered the current one. P-1 commented about wanting to do more with the activities. She remarked, "We do different small group activities each day, and sometimes if I haven't gotten to every student, I like to stay on that topic." P-1 felt that it was essential to remain on a topic and not move on until her students have shown understanding. P-4, P-3, P-6, and P-7 described feeling "okay" or "good" when implementing the curriculum. P-3 felt okay because she "relied on the curriculum coaches who come out and guide me through the curriculum." P-6 felt okay because she uses the guides to help with the curriculum activities.

Question number five was a two-part question. I asked the practitioners if they had opportunities to provide on-going feedback regarding the district's curriculum. All seven participants responded they were able to give feedback about the curriculum. Practitioners shared feedback with the district coordinator, and curriculum coaches, and each other. P-1 stated, "I've definitely had opportunities to give feedback to the higher-ups or district leaders." P-3 mentioned being able to ask the curriculum coaches specific

questions. She went on to state, “We were allowed to provide feedback.” P-2, P-4, and P-6 specifically mentioned opportunities to provide feedback to district coordinators and curriculum coaches.

Theme 2: Student-centered approaches used by practitioners lead to successful practitioner-student interactions. When speaking about how they implemented the curriculum so that the students were active participants in their learning environment, five practitioners mentioned the word “*centers*.” Additional keywords mentioned by practitioners were “*activities”* and “*hands-on*.” I asked practitioners to explain how they implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program so that the students were active participants in their learning environment. P-6 said, “I try to make it fun as possible.” P-6, P-2, P-7, and P-1 described working with their teaching assistants and rotating the curriculum activities. During implementation, students in P-6’s classroom may work outside, sing and dance, or complete activities in the classroom centers such as dramatic play, science, or writing. In her classroom, P-2 and the paraprofessional [assistant] alternate entering the centers with the students. P-2 explained that each day is different. She commented, “It could be different in every center. We have lots of conversations, and we do observations too.” In her class, P-5 gives her students opportunities to choose which activity or center they would like to be a participant. The students visit various centers throughout the day.

Paraprofessionals play a crucial role in curriculum implementation. Once practitioners complete lesson plans, the practitioners share and discuss implementation strategies with their paraprofessionals. In her classroom, P-7 begins by looking at the

teaching guides to know which study [theme] they'll be implementing. She continues by looking at the lesson plans and pulling needed materials. She explained, "I review the activities with my assistant and decide where in the room we will implement our small group lessons." Practitioners felt that implementing the curriculum in the centers often works best because the students are playing and learning at the same time. Practitioners also felt that less interruption takes place when the children complete activities during the allotted center time of the day. P-1 discussed observing her students for clues about the students who require additional help, and students who can work independently. P-1 said, "I'll modify the learning like every teacher does, for what my students need throughout the week, and then I'll adjust my lesson plans." Practitioners involve the children as much as possible and provide ample hands-on learning experiences. P-3 and P-4 discussed completing child-friendly and student-centered activities. P-3 described the hands-on learning experiences that take place in her classroom. She provided an example, "If we are talking about a tree, we will go outside to do your lessons. It's very hands-on."

Six out of seven practitioners discussed the students and parents as the factor that motivated them or made them feel successful in their implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. Each participant reported finding motivation in watching students exhibit examples of learning through their interaction with the curriculum and teachers. P-7 described feeling successful when the children enjoyed a lesson and learned something new. She also mentioned the feedback received from the families leaves her with a feeling of success. P-1 stated, "It is the a-ha moments that you get." A moment of sudden insight may occur when a student recalls part of a story or

identifies a problem. For other practitioners, seeing the excitement in the children, when students seek adults out of show an accomplishment, and when the children show interest in a topic is a sign of success. Seeing the parents interested and happy students are other successful factors described by practitioners. P-2 was the only practitioner who answered the question in terms of motivation rather than success. The curriculum coaches visiting and assisting in the classroom was her motivating factor. She explained, "If I were feeling out of sorts and out of place about how I was implementing the lesson plans, they would provide me with motivation and different tools."

RQ2. What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of their own competence and motivation when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program? I considered the constructivist theory (see Vygotsky, 1978) when answering RQ2. Interview Questions two, three, four, and six addressed this research question. Through the interviews, two major themes emerged regarding RQ2. They included: (a) levels of knowledge and feelings of doubt in the curriculum impacted practitioners' ability to implement the curriculum effectively, (b) initial guidance, support, and comprehensive professional development from school officials will enhance curriculum implementation. I discussed each of the themes below.

Theme 3: Levels of knowledge and feelings of doubt in the curriculum impacted practitioners' ability to implement the curriculum effectively. Practitioners reported variances in their perceived knowledge levels of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. Four practitioners described their perceived knowledge level as high (P-2, P-4, P-5, and P-7), two explained theirs as moderate (P-3 and P-6), and one

responded with a moderate-high (P-1). Practitioners were asked to rate how knowledgeable they were about The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. The scale for high had a range from eight to ten. The level for moderate had a range from four to six, and the level for low had a range from one to three. P-2 explained, “I would say I’m at a nine. Just because I got so much training, and I've been observed and rated three times. And I think you learn a lot with the rating and so I think with that, and the training, and the rating, I feel like I'm very knowledgeable about it.”

P-4, P-5, and P-7 described their ranges between eight and ten. Practitioners who implemented the curriculum for a few years felt it was easy, and the accompanying curriculum guides were great resources. P-3 and P-6 felt they had moderate knowledge of the curriculum. P-3 started implementation mid-way during the school term. She commented, “I didn’t get the proper training of The Creative Curriculum in the beginning.” P-6 felt her range stemmed from learning about the curriculum on her own and the training received. P-1 described her knowledge level as a moderate to high. She said, “I would say pretty much a seven just because I know and have learned about all the resources it [curriculum] has, and I have been utilizing everything.”

All of the practitioners mentioned “doubt,” during the practitioners’ interviews when asked about factors that created feelings of doubt in their implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students. P-6, P-3, and P-5 believed that being new practitioners to the curriculum contributed to the doubt they felt. P-3 began implementation mid-school year and thought she didn’t have enough background knowledge to implement the Creative Curriculum. P-5 explained that in the

beginning, some of the information was too much. P-3 and P-5 expressed that things got better throughout the school term. As the school year went on, practitioners received professional development and worked with the curriculum coaches, who allowed them to resolve doubts. P-6 and P-3 believed that being new practitioners caused doubt. P-1 was very descriptive in her response to the question and spoke on experiencing doubt about books, the stories she read, and age-appropriateness. She felt that when students expressed little interest in some of the topics or displayed unhappy reactions, is a signal of a red flag.

Practitioners mentioned feelings of doubt appearing from the activities they implement and wonder at times if the lessons and activities were developmentally appropriate. P-7 stated, “Once you get into it and learn about your children, the challenges and doubt fade away.” One practitioner questioned the books she read to the students. The length of lesson implementation caused doubt for P-4. Implementing lessons and themes for six week periods becomes tedious. The opinions of fellow practitioners who have negative opinions about the curriculum caused P-2’s doubt. None of the practitioners described doubt as long-lasting and found resolution. Some found relief by following the curriculum guides.

Theme 4: Initial guidance, support, and comprehensive professional development from school officials will enhance curriculum implementation. The practitioners’ experiences about the type of guidance and support received during their introduction to the curriculum varied. Two of the seven practitioners described their initial experience as learning independently. Both practitioners used the words *“self-*

taught and *teaching myself."* P-2, who began her employment two days before the start of the school term [September], described several curriculum boxes on a table in her classroom, and no one available to show her what to do. P-2 received her first curriculum training in early October. She replied, "But, I was pretty much teaching myself about the curriculum until I started getting more into the training." P-3, who began teaching after school term had begun explained that most of the curriculum was self-taught. She responded, "I missed out on a lot of the professional development about how to incorporate The Creative Curriculum, so I had to learn on my own and from my co-teacher."

P-6 and P-4 discussed the curriculum teaching guides and the curriculum coach. Even though the curriculum kits included guides and resources, there was a lot they had to do and learn. Practitioners mentioned the curriculum coaches. P-6 and P-4 were able to give feedback to their curriculum coach, who was always available. P-4 and P-1 were not overwhelmed because of the supplementary lesson plans and guides. P-7, one of the practitioners with the most years of teaching experience, found the classroom resources to be helpful. All practitioners discussed the professional development and training received. Practitioners described professional development opportunities they participated in regarding The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. They described instructional strategies and topics covered, when, and where. All practitioners participated in professional development held at locations in the district, in their classrooms [naptime] with the curriculum coach and online.

Practitioners participated in professional development related to the curriculum content. P-1 found the online curriculum tools to be accessible and beneficial. P-2 participated in a plethora of professional development, including social-emotional, behavioral, math, and literacy. P-1 named literacy, social-emotional, and behavioral as the top three professional development opportunities in which she participated. P-3 also listed science as a topic. She described social studies and technology and instructional strategies that included "how to use the mighty minute cards and book discussion cards." P-4 and P-5 participated in professional development about math, language and literacy, communication, technology, and the importance of asking open-ended questions. Technological training consisted of working with the iPads, Hatch Early Learning, and Teaching Strategies assessments and PALS. P-7 also spoke about technology and assessments. She commented, "We completed curriculum-related PD, the iPads, Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), and Teaching Strategies Gold System for the assessments." P-6 did not list specific topics and described her professional development as on-going. She explained, "I would say continuous because my curriculum coach is always available. She comes into the classroom and works with the children and me."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility and trustworthiness are essential and strengthens qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). I employed various strategies for evidence of trustworthiness. The strategies include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews. I field-tested the interview questions to

ensure thoroughness and alignment with the research questions. During the development of the interview questions, two experts in the early childhood field reviewed my interview questions and provided recommendations. The experts were a professor who received her doctorate in early childhood education and the department chair for a community college who received her doctorate in early childhood education. Semi-structured questions allowed the participants to share their perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students.

Credibility

Credibility is viewed as the foundation to guarantee the accuracy of qualitative research data. Credibility is linked to the data collection instruments as well as the research design (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim to analyze the data across practitioners and within schools. I did not conduct follow-up questioning. Participants were provided a two page summary of the findings. Credibility was established through the member-checking process. All of the participants agreed with the results and did not have any questions or concerns on the findings.

Developing credibility and a positive connection with the participants was essential in gathering accurate and valuable data. I also found credibility by using rich, thick details of the data to describe the findings (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To reinforce the credibility of the results, I used a systematic transcribing process, which included repetitive transcript reviews, thematic analysis, and a rich, detailed description of the results.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of the study results may be applied to other groups or settings (Bengtsson, 2016). The context of the study was clearly described so the reader would determine the transferability of the results from the study to other settings. Transferability was increased by saturating the research with descriptive data about the methodology, participants, and setting. The results garnered from this study may increase the body of knowledge that relates to prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of preschool curriculum used with at-risk students. The results of the study may also bring about additional data to transfer to other research about practitioners of at-risk students.

Confirmability

Confirmability certifies that the findings are generated from the participants' responses, and not researcher biases. Throughout the research, I kept a reflective journal and used it to document my thoughts and feelings as they arose, and my personal biases as they were recognized. I also developed an audit trail. The records about how the study was being conducted increased both the dependability and confirmability of my study. During the development of the codes, themes, and findings, I utilized an external auditor to review the development of codes, themes, and findings. The external auditor for this basic qualitative design is a professor at a university in a southeastern state who has a doctorate in Special Education from a university in the northern area of the US. The external audit was beneficial in assessing the trustworthiness of my study (see Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

Summary

This section addressed the data analysis and the results of the study. This study was constructed on two research questions and explored prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program used with at-risk students. Other supportive content includes the setting, data collection, and evidence of trustworthiness. A basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews was used for this study, and seven prekindergarten practitioners from a school district in a southeastern state presented their personal perspectives. During data analysis, I used Creswell's (2013) six steps approach to analyze the findings. Four themes emerged (see Table 4), which I used to explore differences and similarities in perspectives among the practitioners.

The practitioners' responses from their interviews revealed an array of perspectives about their self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, used with at-risk students. The responses from participants to RQ1 about perspectives of self-efficacy when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, showed that the challenges encountered by practitioners contributed to their beliefs in their ability to implement the curriculum effectively. I found that more than half of the practitioners experienced implementation challenges, such as working with children with special needs, lesson planning, disruption in routines and schedules, and modification of lessons to meet the needs of the children. The teaching methods used by practitioners and relationships with the students also contributed to the practitioners' beliefs in their

implementation capabilities. The practitioners ensured that students were actively engaged in curriculum activities. It was also crucial that the activities were intentional, child-friendly, implemented in the classroom centers, and performed in small groups. Though challenges existed, all of the practitioners expressed positive feelings in their implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. Feelings of motivation and success occurred when the students demonstrated interest in activities, understanding, and when they receive positive feedback from parents.

Based on the responses to RQ2 about practitioners' perspectives of their own competence and motivation when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, the majority of practitioners felt knowledgeable in their implementation skills. The few practitioners who felt less knowledgeable attributed being new to the curriculum as a factor. All practitioners expressed feelings of doubt in the curriculum. Doubt originated from being new practitioners to the curriculum, curriculum materials used, developmental appropriateness of lessons and activities, and viewpoints of other practitioners about the curriculum. The initial guidance and type of professional development from school officials have impacted the practitioners' perspectives and also served as motivating factors in their implementation of the curriculum. Whereas only a few practitioners described learning the curriculum on their own, the majority received guidance from the curriculum coach, used the teaching guides, and additional resources to aid in their implementation practices. Professional development was a key topic addressed. All practitioners participated in professional development and training

regarding The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program and felt the professional development received improved their implementation of the curriculum.

Chapter 5 is comprised of an interpretation of the findings and a discussion of the limitations of the study. Information such as recommendations for further study and social change implications are included.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews sought to determine prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, with at-risk students in a southeastern state in the United States. Seven prekindergarten practitioners of 4-year-old students participated in the study. I used individual, face-to-face, or telephone interviews to obtain data. Through the analysis, themes were revealed and explored from conversations with the participants. Minimal research examines early childhood practitioners' perspectives of curriculum implemented with at-risk children. Understanding the practitioners' perspectives of curriculum implementation in early childhood classrooms with the at-risk population will help lead to a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Chapter 5 includes the research findings as they connect with current literature and Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research are provided in this chapter. I used a qualitative method for this study because qualitative research focuses on understanding, interpreting, and explaining phenomena (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Through the qualitative approach, I gained an understanding of the prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. The practitioners in this study shared their perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in their implementation of the curriculum.

Interpretation of the Findings

I obtained approval from the Walden University IRB before data collection began. I used the following research questions to gather qualitative data for this study:

RQ1: What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?

RQ2: What are prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of their own competence and motivation when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program?

The participants were asked nine questions pertaining to their perspectives of of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of the curriculum. I generated four themes and analyzed them based on the research questions. Two themes were in alignment with the practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy and two aligned with the practitioners' competence and motivation implementation. The findings of this study indicated that the practitioners' experiences during implementation influenced their perspectives about The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program.

I evaluated the interpretations of the findings through the constructs of the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), and the literature for this study. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his skills and the capability to use the skills to achieve a projected outcome. Constructivism highlights the significance of how humans construct knowledge through personal experiences. In early childhood learning environments, practitioners facilitate children's education and development through intentional and meaningful learning experiences. When classroom

experiences are rooted in developmentally appropriate practices, children are provided opportunities for pre and post kindergarten success (Brown, Feger & Mowry, 2015).

RQ1 revealed that practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy had a significant impact on their implementation practices with the at-risk students in the urban school district in a southeastern state where this study was conducted.

Theme 1: Practitioners encountered challenges during implementation. More than half of the practitioners encountered challenges in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in their classrooms. Practitioners view the curriculum differently according to the curriculum framework in their early learning settings (see Wood & Hedges, 2016). Practitioners expressed feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. I found that practitioners with fewer years of teaching experience encountered more challenges. P-6 said, "I was fairly new to it, so it was overwhelming." Another "new" practitioner also shared her feelings in her skills and capability to implement the curriculum effectively. P-2 stated, "I was hired quickly, two days before school started." The conceptual framework supported the findings of this study. According to Bandura (1977), an individual's self-efficacy will impact on how that person addresses the profession or duty

Theme 2: Student-centered approaches used by practitioners lead to successful practitioner-student interactions. Teaching methods were the same for the majority of practitioners and students were active participants in their learning environment. Practitioners found the learning centers [dramatic play, math, blocks, etc.] to be an ideal location to implement their lessons. Engaging the students in child-friendly

and hands-on activities were necessary for implementation success. P-3 stated, “If we are studying trees, we will go outside.” P-4 remarked, “I make sure the activities are not too teacher-directed.” In high-quality prekindergarten programs, practitioners implement developmentally appropriate curricula to engage students in active and language-rich learning experiences (NCQTL, 2015). Constructivism plays a vital role in the construction of meaning from experience. Vygotsky (1978) believed that children could receive effective instruction when practitioners build upon the children’s prior knowledge and scaffold learning. Evident in literature is that in the classroom environment, the practitioner scaffolds learning and supports students through guided participation (Muhonen et al., 2016). The curriculum content that students experience is an integral part of learning and development. Results of a study by Sabol and Pianta (2017) found that high-quality programs are valuable and address standards and various domains to ensure students develop in ways that support their well-being and school readiness.

Most of the practitioners in the study viewed the students’ responses to the activities and lessons, feedback from families, and the interactions between the practitioner and student as motivating factors and evidence of successful implementation. The early learning experiences [developmentally appropriate] that young children are exposed to create the foundation for future educational success (NAEYC, 2016). P-7 explained that successful implementation was evident when “The children enjoyed it [lesson] and learned something.” P-6 felt that “Seeing the parents and children happy” were motivating factors, and P-2 expressed feelings of success when the children displayed excitement and “constantly seek you out to show what they’ve done.” The

results of a study by Eun (2006) revealed that the relationship between a practitioner and child could direct how much a child can learn. Teaching methods used by practitioners in early childhood environments have been linked to self-efficacy beliefs (Perren et al., 2017), and a practitioner's self-efficacy for the task of teaching is fundamental for implementation success (Bandura, 1977). Students display achievements in vocabulary and oral comprehension skills when practitioners engage them in meaningful discussions and positive interactions (see Wasik et al., 2016). Researchers have also found that with positive interactions, students often exhibit reduced behavior problems and positive emotional adjustment (Domitrovich et al., 2017).

RQ2 revealed that practitioners' competence and motivation had an impact on their implementation practices of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program.

Theme 3: Levels of knowledge and feelings of doubt in the curriculum impacted practitioners' ability to implement the curriculum effectively. The practitioners had different levels of knowledge about the curriculum. More than half of practitioners recognized their knowledge level as high and the rest ranked their level as moderate. P-4 stated that she was "knowledgeable about it," and P-7 felt it was an "easy curriculum to follow" based on her years of teaching experience. Others felt a moderate level of knowledge because teaching guides were available and based on years of implementation. The findings of this study are supported by Vygotsky's (1978) theory of constructivism. Constructivism holds that everyone embraces a diverse viewpoint about an experience centered on his or her prior experiences. Evident in literature was that curriculum materials should support the learning of both student and teacher learning

(Arias et al., 2016; Ball and Cohen, 1996). According to Cobanoglu and Capa-Aydin (2015), the teachers' dedication and reliability to the curriculum are most reliable when their beliefs aligned with the approach.

All of the practitioners expressed feelings of doubt in their ability to implement the curriculum effectively. P-1 doubted her ability to effectively implement the curriculum when the students are not able to complete a task. She stated, "Sometimes it makes me doubt if I'm doing enough as a teacher." P-2 felt that "other teachers" influenced the doubt she felt but some practitioners felt the number of years of implementation led to feelings of doubt. According to Mligo (2016), practitioners' inexperience with the curriculum affects implementation and creates an unfavorable learning environment for students. When a curriculum is suitable for students and practitioners who are confident in their ability to implement effectively, it aids in the development of the whole child (Landry et al., 2017).

The findings were supported by the conceptual framework of (Bandura,1977), who believed that self-efficacy beliefs differ by circumstances and adjust over time.

Theme 4: Initial guidance, support, and comprehensive professional development from school officials will enhance curriculum implementation.

Practitioners receive important initial guidance and support from school officials. Most of the practitioners explained that the support received from the curriculum coaches was beneficial, whereas others relied on resources such as teaching guides and other curriculum materials. Two practitioners described receiving little initial guidance and independently learned the curriculum. All practitioners gave feedback to school officials.

According to Vygotsky (1978), everyone embraces a different perspective about experiences according to his or her prior experiences. Evident in literature is that practitioners' views and attitudes toward instruction play a critical role in their classroom practice (Tomas & Jackson, 2017). It is through experiences that people develop skills, and practitioners' perspectives are based on their experiences (Wilkinson & Jones, 2017).

All practitioners received professional development and training to enhance and support implementation. Practitioners participated in a plethora of content levels such as literacy, science, technology, math, as well as assessments. Professional development opportunities were provided in the district and at local and state conferences. All practitioners found the professional development to be beneficial to their implementation of the curriculum and teaching practices. Under the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), practitioners have been guided in developing more child-focused learning environments that place the child at the center of instruction.

Additionally, people develop skills through experiences acquired in their community settings, where learning occurs in a cultural context (Wilkinson & Jones, 2017). It is through professional development opportunities that practitioners learn how to adapt their instructional practices to meet the needs of the students. The results of a study by Slavin et al. (2014) revealed that refining the aptitude of practitioners is fundamental in professional development. Practitioners' beliefs and attitudes toward instruction play an essential role in their classroom practice in the quality, occurrence, and content of instruction (Rietdijk et al., 2018). The findings of this study are supported by the conceptual framework, which is based on the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky,

1978) and the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The findings are also supported by the literature review found in Chapter 2.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of this basic qualitative using semistructured interviews. I limited this study to prekindergarten practitioners who identified in the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) that they purposefully implement The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in their classrooms. This study was limited to practitioners teaching in classrooms within the same school district. Another limitation was only prekindergarten practitioners who taught to at-risk students aged four were selected. The practitioners' knowledge of only The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program the curriculum was another limitation of the study. Practitioners in other prekindergarten classrooms with different designations and curricula would have responded differently to the findings of the study.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic interrupted the preferred data collection method (face-to-face interviews). Only two face-to-face interviews were completed before switching to telephone interviews for the remaining five practitioners. I intended to collect data from eight participants, but I was only able to attain data from seven before schools in the district were closed by order of the governor. The use of only seven practitioners of at-risk students was a limitation that may have affected the results of my study. Therefore, I provided in-depth descriptions of the participants (see Santiago-Delefosse Gavin et al., 2016). Further research is required to find a trend in prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum, used with at-risk students.

Researcher bias was a limitation that may affect the results of my study. As the researcher of the current study, I reflected upon my previous professional experience with The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program and my implementation to at-risk students. I searched for biases while I conducted my research and documented my assumptions and potential biases throughout the study, in a personal journal (see Creswell, 2013). I disclosed my professional status to safeguard the interview and data collection processes. Data collection and analysis were explained precisely (see Avenier & Thomas, 2015), and this study added to research about prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum implemented with at-risk students.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program used with at-risk students. The literature regarding practitioners' perspective of prekindergarten curriculum with at-risk students is limited. In this study, I found that practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation impact their implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program, and these findings add to the body of knowledge concerning prekindergarten practitioners and curriculum implementation. The following recommendations are suggested for future research:

Guidance and Support

The first recommendation is for researchers to conduct research that examines the methods used by school officials to introduce practitioners to the curriculum,

resources, and implementation approaches. Practitioners must be provided opportunities to study and learn about the curriculum so that they gain an understanding of the concepts. Based on the findings of this study, some practitioners were not provided initial guidance and learned the curriculum on their own. The results of a study by Cobanoglu and Capa-Aydin (2015) revealed that the practitioners' commitment and reliability to the curriculum strengthen when they believe in the curriculum approach. By identifying the strategies used by school officials, curriculum developers, and school leaders could design a systematic method that could be used across other prekindergarten and educational settings. Another recommendation is for researchers to conduct research that explores the importance of or the effects of peer collaboration in prekindergarten learning environments. In this study, I found that practitioners with more years of teaching experiences and years of implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program had a stronger sense of self-efficacy and competence in their implementation of the curriculum. When a new curriculum is adopted, or practitioners are new to the field, school officials and practitioners will have additional research that identifies the benefits of observation, sharing ideas, and offering support on a peer level.

Professional Development

The third recommendation is for researchers to conduct research that examines meaningful and comprehensive professional development for practitioners of at-risk students. Practitioners must engage in experiences that will provide opportunities to attend to the needs and well-being of all their students. Based on the findings of this study, practitioners felt that The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program was literacy-

rich. Research has shown that at kindergarten entry, the mathematics and literacy skills of children from low-income backgrounds are delayed at least one-year behind children from high-income backgrounds (Dorman et al., 2017; Duncan & Murnane, 2014). Practitioners in this study participated in professional development offered by school officials on various subjects. However, I found that literacy and technology were crucial topics. Curriculum content and implementation are significant in the academic development of students. Other researchers have studied curriculum content and found that students who are engaged with content in thoughtful ways are better able to develop skills related to all domains (Barnett & Frede, 2017; Yoshikawa et al., 2013).

At-Risk Students

The fourth recommendation is for researchers to conduct research that examines the prekindergarten curriculum implemented to at-risk students and the effects on kindergarten readiness. Although the topic of kindergarten readiness was not included in the interview questions, I found that some practitioners were skeptical about the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing the students for kindergarten. Researchers have shown that kindergarten readiness can be credited to the experience children had with the curriculum used (Claessens et al., 2014; Wenz-Gross et al., 2018). This recommendation will connect the study findings to curriculum evidenced to promote kindergarten readiness for at-risk students (Bouck & Maher, 2019; Shogren, & Plotner, 2012).

Implications

There are possibilities for positive social change from this study. Social change is the ability to bring awareness, change in cultural standards, or values about a topic. The aim of the current study was to implement social change through the recognition of practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in their implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in their implementation. There is sufficient evidence that supports early childhood curriculum (Duncan et al., 2015; Wood & Hedges, 2016). However, minimal research supports prekindergarten perspectives of curriculum implemented with at-risk students.

In the current study, practitioners expressed challenges encountered during implementation, feelings of doubt in their ability to implement the curriculum effectively, and a need for guidance and support from school officials. Under the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), individuals embrace a different perspective about an experience centered on his or her prior experiences. I also found moderate to high levels of curriculum knowledge among the practitioners, that professional development received enhanced implementation, and child-friendly and hands-on learning experiences were the preferred methods for all practitioners. Social reactions affect the views recipients hold of themselves, which will support or change their environment (Bandura, 1989). After analyzing the data, I concluded that practitioners' self-efficacy beliefs, competence, and motivation impacted their implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program in their classrooms.

To contribute to positive social change, two specific levels are highlighted. They include (a) school district and (b) practitioners.

School District

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program was a new curriculum to the school district, and practitioners have differing views about their self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in its implementation. Implications for positive social change include improved awareness in the school district about prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of curriculum and how their perspectives may influence implementation. Practitioners need guidance and support to implement the curriculum effectively.

Practitioners

Practitioners are crucial in the implementation of the curriculum. Practitioners scaffold learning and implement learning activities to meet the needs of the whole child effectively. Research has shown that practitioners must decide which content to apply, and how to effectively implement the content while being aware of the developmental levels of their students (Ogunnaike, 2015). Implications for positive social change include awareness of the importance of professional development opportunities outside of what is offered by school officials and professional development that encompasses content about all early learning domains. Practitioners could actively seek professional development that is specific to the needs of the students in their classrooms.

The data collected from this study may have significance by providing direction and guidance for school officials on how to advise practitioners regarding the

implementation of the curriculum in the classroom. Officials may gain an understanding of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students. Insights from this study may also aid early care and education programs in the planning and implementation of best practices of an effective curriculum for at-risk students.

Conclusion

The perspectives of practitioners of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program is significant, and this understanding is a central element of this study. There exists research on early childhood practitioners who teach at-risk students and their perspectives of the curriculum implemented in their classrooms, but little research on prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program. Implementation practices of early childhood practitioners have been impacted by the required instructional standards (Chen & Zhang, 2017; Goldstein & Bauml, 2014). Practitioners must use specific instructional materials and implement explicit content that is appropriate for their students. Researchers have reported on the strategies teachers use to support learning experiences of all children while developing effective strategies for teaching state standards in suitable and responsive ways (Drake et al., 2014; Goldstein & Bauml, 2014). Researchers have also highlighted components of practitioners' perspectives about teaching children and implementing various curriculum (Herman & Pinard, 2015).

I hope that results from my study will lead to a greater understanding of prekindergarten practitioners' perspectives of self-efficacy, competence, and motivation in the implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students. The information from my study may increase practitioner motivation, competence, and self-efficacy while helping them develop effective strategies for teaching state standards in meaningful ways. I believe this information can be used to enhance strategies practitioners might use to support developmentally appropriate, intentional, and meaningful learning experiences for students, especially those at-risk.

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Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

Practitioner's Name _____ Date_____

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

____High School or equivalent (e.g., GED)

____Some College, no degree

____Vocational/Technical School

____Associate degree (e.g., AA, AS)

____Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)

____Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, Med)

____ Professional degree (e.g., MD, DDS, DVM)

____Doctoral degree (e.g., PhD, EdD)

____Other_____

What is your degree major?

____Early Childhood Education

____Special Education

____Elementary Education

____Interdisciplinary Studies

____Family and Consumer Science

____Other_____

What is your gender?

_____ Male

_____ Female

_____ Prefer not to answer

How long have you been teaching? _____

How long have you been teaching (or taught) 4-year-old students?
_____

Do you or did you implement The Creative Curriculum for Preschool in your classroom?

_____ Yes

_____ No

How long have you been implementing (or implemented) The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program? _____

How many students are (or were) enrolled in your class?
_____

Is (or was) your class designated as State Preschool Initiative Plus (SPI+) classroom?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Please return completed questionnaire to Navine Fortune at _____.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Date:

Time:

Location of Interview:

Interviewee:

Pre-Interview

A. Describe the purpose of the study
B. Describe the interview process
C. Describe treatment of data and maintenance of confidentiality
D. Review informed consent form
    a. Researcher; Background Information; Procedures; Participate in a semistructured interview; Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study; Right of Refusal and/or Withdrawal; Privacy; Contacts and Opportunity for Questions;
E. b. Statement of Consent: Begin audio recording
F. Begin the interview

Post-Interview

G. Thank interviewee for participating
H. Remind interviewee of treatment of data and confidentiality
I. Disclose that future interviews will not occur.
J. Disclose that interviewees will be contacted electronically to review summary of interview transcript for accuracy.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your teaching background (Social Constructivism)
2. Describe your experiences when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students? (Constructivism)
3. On a scale of 1-10 with 8-10 being high, 4-6 (moderate), and 1-3 (low), how knowledgeable are you about The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program? Why do you feel this way? (Social Constructivism)
4. What, if any, professional development opportunities have you participated in regarding The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program? Please describe instructional strategies and topics covered, when, and where. (Constructivism)
5. How do you feel when you are or were implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students? Do/did you have the opportunity to provide ongoing feedback regarding the district's curriculum? (Self-efficacy)
6. Tell me in as much detail how you implement/implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students so that they are/were active participants in their learning environment. (Constructivism)
7. What factors either motivate/motivated you or make/made you feel successful in your implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students? (Self-efficacy)
8. What factors create/created feelings of doubt in your implementation of the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students? (Self-efficacy)
9. Are there any other remarks you would like to share about your experience as a practitioner who implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students? (Constructivism)

Table D1. Open Codes

Code	Participant	Excerpt
Feels good	P-6	"So far, so good"
	P-1	"I've had good experiences."
	P-4	"It's been good."
	P-2	"You'll see its good for kids."
	P-5	"I felt good."
	P-7	"It was good for my students."
Overwhelming	P-6	"I was fairly new to it so it was overwhelming."
	P-3	"We were transitioning to the new curriculum which was overwhelming."
	P-5	"It had lots of books. I was overwhelmed at times."
	P-2	"I was hired quickly, two days before school started."
	P-4	"There are moments of course where frustrations comes into play."
Feels okay	P-6	"I feel okay about it."
	P-5	"I think it's okay."
	P-3	"My experience with the curriculum was somewhat okay."
Books	P-2	"Reading the books, the curriculum book is helpful"
	P-5	"It came with lots of books."
	P-1	"Some of the books that we read; I question."
Training	P-6	"I'm a four to six because of the training."

(table continues)

Code	Participant	Excerpt
	P-2	"I cannot begin to tell you how many trainings I've participated in."
	P-5	"I've done lots of trainings."
	P-3	"I didn't get the proper training."
	P-7	"I've had training on CLASS."
	P-4	"I was trained on working with the iPads, hatch early learning, and the assessments."
Materials	P-7	"I pull materials"
	P-3	"We had the mighty minute cards, book discussion cards"
Technology	P-7	"Trainings about working with iPads"
	P-5	"Technology was one of my first trainings."
	P-3	"PD also included technology."
	P-4	"We've had pd on various content…technology."
Math	P-5	"It had some math and number activities"
	P-4	"We've had pd on various content…math"
Science	P-5	"We had science trainings."
	P-3	"They did science and social studies."
	P-4	"We've had pd on various content…science."
Social-Emotional	P-2	"Trainings on social-emotional and behavioral issues"
	P-5	We had social-emotional training."
Behavior	P-2	"With 4-year-old it's easy unless they have behavioral issues."

(table continues)

Code	Participant	Excerpt
Literacy	P-2	"Lots of training with instructional strategies about literacy"
	P-5	"Felt like I had to focus on literacy"
	P-4	"It is literacy heavy."
Guides	P-7	"Comes with a teaching guide"
	P-2	"The curriculum books help you"
	P-3	"The creative curriculum came with intentional teaching strategy guides."
	P-4	"I also like that the lessons and guides are there so I'm not overwhelmed."
Success	P-2	"The kids get excited and constantly seek you out to show what they've done"
	P-5	"When they do an activity and show me and they feel proud"
	P-1	"Success is the a-ha moments that you get."
	P-4	"When they ask if we can do an activity again tomorrow"
	P-6	"Seeing the parents and children happy"
	P-7	"When we successfully implement a study and the children enjoyed it and learned something"
Feedback	P-7	"I receive feedback from families."
	P-5	"I share my thoughts"
	P-6	"Yes, I give feedback."
	P-2	"There are opportunities to discuss it with every instructor."
	P-3	"We were allowed to provide feedback."

(table continues)

Code	Participant	Excerpt
	P-1	"I've definitely had opportunities to give feedback to the higher-ups."
	P-4	"Yes, the coordinator was always available."
Centers	P-6	"We go into the centers"
	P-2	"I bring up the question of the day in centers."
	P-7	"We do it during center time."
	P-5	"The math center was the most popular."
	P-4	"Doing the activities in their centers often works best."
Activities	P-6	"I rotate the centers."
	P-1	"For example, I'll add activities that will help them practice holding."
	P-7	"We review the activities and decide where to implement."
	P-3	"It provided the children with hands-on learning experiences."
	P-4	"Well, the activities are child-friendly."
Themes	P-6	"We've been doing the same theme."
	P-7	"Each study is like a theme."
	P-4	"With some of the lessons and themes, staying on them for us to six weeks becomes boring."
Professional Development	P-6	"I've had continuous professional development."
	P-2	"In certain trainings we've had, the people from Creative Curriculum taught us."
	P-7	"We had curriculum related pd"
	P-3	"As the school year went on, I gained insight and receive professional development."

(table continues)

Code	Participant	Excerpt
	P-5	"We had, math, science, behavior and social-emotional too."
	P-4	"We had pd on various content."
	P-1	"I went to classes for the creative curriculum, online resources, literacy, and about how to further your teaching."
Curriculum Coach	P-6	"Curriculum coach is available"
	P-3	"I relied on the curriculum coaches"
	P-4	"The curriculum coaches were always available."
Challenge	P-7	"The CLASS rating can be nerve-wrecking"
	P-2	"It can be a challenge at times."
	P-3	"I didn't get the proper training of the creative curriculum."
	P-1	"I'll add a little more challenge for them, like cutting on a line"
	P-4	"There are times when I want to do more academically."
New	P-6	"I'm a fairly new teacher."
	P-7	"Children enjoyed it and learned something new"
	P-2	"I was hired two days before the start of school."
	P-3	"My first experience was short because I came in mid-year."
	P-4	"Like, with any new curriculum, you have to adjust"
Different	P-5	"The children went into different centers."
	P-2	"The activities could be different every day."
	P-1	"It has different things to focus on such as vocabulary and different physical things."

(table continues)

Code	Participant	Excerpt
A-lot	P-2	"I went to a lot of trainings."
	P-3	"I missed out on a lot of pd."
	P-4	"It has lots of additional resources."
Resources	P-6	"It has lots of resources."
	P-7	"The classroom resources are helpful."
	P-3	"You are pulling book discussion cards and implementation cards throughout your implementation of the curriculum."
	P-4	"It has lots of additional resources."
	P-1	"I know and have learned about all the resources it has."
Observation	P-2	"I've been observed and rated three times."
	P-1	"I observe the children to see where they are and who needs additional help."
Small Group	P-7	"Decide where we will implement the small group lessons"
	P-1	"We do different small groups every single day."
	P-4	"Doing activities in their centers…they are playing and learning at the same time"
Hands-On	P-7	"We do lots of hands-on learning experiences."
	P-3	"It's very hands-on"
	P-4	The activities are child-friendly. I make sure they are not too teacher-directed."
Assistant/Para-professional	P-6	"My assistant and I rotate the activities and centers."
	P-7	"I review the lesson plans with my assistant."
	P-2	"My para and I go into centers with them."

(table continues)

Code	Participant	Excerpt
Self-Taught	P-2	"I opened it myself and looked through to figure it out."
	P-3	"Everything was self-taught"
High (level of knowledge)	P-2	"Eight to ten, I feel very knowledgeable about it"
	P-7	"From my years of teaching, this is an easy curriculum to follow, so eight to ten."
	P-1	"I would say pretty much a seven just because I know and have learned about all the resources."
	P-4	"I will say eight to ten. Now that I've implemented it for a few years"
Moderate (level of knowledge)	P-5	"I would say moderate because it came with lots of books to guide."
	P-3	"I'm moderate due to when I started teaching it."
Doubt	P-7	"The doubts fade away"
	P-2	"Doubts come from other teachers."
	P-5	"In the beginning, some of the information, I felt it was too much."
	P-3	"Working with the curriculum coaches, I was able to resolve my doubts."
	P-1	"When they're not able to do it, sometimes it makes me doubt if I'm doing enough as a teacher"
	P-6	"Just being new or when the children seem bored"
	P-4	"There are times when I want to do more academically."
Topics	P-5	"It had some topics the children didn't know."
	P-3	"They gave us topics and the time frame to cover the topics."
	P-1	"I like to stay on the topic so I'm not jumping around to different things."
Kindergarten	P-2	"They don't feel like it's preparing them for kindergarten."

(table continues)

Code	Participant	Excerpt
	P-5	"I think the kids got a little preparation for kindergarten."
	P-1	"Does it really prepare them for kindergarten?"
Modification	P-7	""You learn to adapt"
	P-5	"I started out doing the lessons, but then I added different things to help them."
	P-1	"I'll modify the learning like every teacher does"
Lesson Plans	P-7	"I look at the lesson plans and pull materials."
	P-3	"The teaching strategies were basically like lesson plans."
	P-1	"You can modify your lesson plans online."
	P-4	"I also like that the lesson plans and guide are there."
Developmentally-Appropriate	P-7	"I wonder if the activities were developmentally appropriate."
Coordinator	P-6	"I give feedback to the coordinator."
	P-2	"People from downtown brought trainers to the classroom"
	P-4	"The coordinator and curriculum coaches were always available."
Learning	P-6	"I'm still learning."
	P-4	"They are learning and playing at the same time."
Read	P-6	"Because of what I read"
	P-2	"I have been reading studies online about how important it is for children not to be sitting in a chair for 3-4 hours."
	P-5	"It takes a lot of time to read all the books."

(table continues)

Code	Participant	Excerpt
	P-1	“Some of the books, we read, I question”
	P-4	“When the children want to hear a story again”
Choices	P-5	”Let them come back when they want”
	P-7	“We do it during center time so we’re not pulling the children away.”
Teacher	P-6	“Other teachers”
	P-3	“I learned from a co-teacher.”
	P-2	“Other teachers talk to me about their doubts of the curriculum”
	P-7	“We do it during center time so we’re not pulling the children away.”
Fun	P-6	“I try to make it as fun as possible.”
	P-4	“As a teacher though, I make sure the children are engaged, make everything they do fun.”
Assessment	P-4	“I been trained on the assessment part which is teaching strategies”
	P-5	“They also teach us how to do the assessments like PALS.”
	P-7	“We did trainings on assessments with the teaching strategies gold system.”
Open-Ended Questions	P-1	“The curriculum allows the children to really explore by asking open-ended questions.”
	P-4	“We ask them open-ended questions.”

Table E1. Interview Question, Theory, and Research Question Alignment

Interview Questions	Theory Alignment	Research Question's Correlation to the Interview Question
1. Tell me about your teaching background	Constructivism	
2. Describe your experiences when implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students?	Constructivism	RQ2
3. On a scale of 1-10 with 8-10 being high, 4-6 (moderate), and 1-3 (low), how knowledgeable are you about The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program? Why do you feel this way?	Constructivism	RQ2
4. What, if any, professional development opportunities have you participated in regarding The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program? Please describe instructional strategies and topics covered, when, and where.	Constructivism	RQ2
5. How do you feel when you are or were implementing The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students? Do/did you have the opportunity to provide ongoing feedback regarding the district's curriculum?	Self-efficacy	RQ1
6. Tell me in as much detail how you implement/implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students so that they are/were active participants in their learning environment.	Constructivism	RQ2

(table continues)

Interview Questions	Theory Alignment	Research Question's Correlation to the Interview Question
7. What factors either motivate/motivated you or make/made you feel successful in your implementation of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students?	Self-efficacy	RQ1
8. What factors create/created feelings of doubt in your implementation of the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students?	Self-efficacy	RQ1
9. Are there any other remarks you would like to share about your experience as a practitioner who implemented The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Program with at-risk students?	Constructivism	RQ2