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Perspectives of Online CDA Recipients Regarding Development of Expertise Without Apprenticeship

Victoria Lynn Long-Coleman
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education

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Victoria Lynn Long-Coleman

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Dr. Patricia Anderson, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Jennifer Seymour, Committee Member, Education Faculty

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Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University

2021

Abstract

Perspectives of Online CDA Recipients Regarding Development of Expertise Without
Apprenticeship

by

Victoria Lynn Long-Coleman

MBA, Keller Graduate School of Management, 1999

BS, Bowling Green State University, 1978

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Early Childhood Leadership and Advocacy

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

The problem that was the focus of this study is that little was known about how online Child Development Associate (CDA) credential recipients developed practical expertise in early childhood education (ECE) without the benefit of an apprenticeship. Learning the practice of teaching from a qualified *more knowledgeable other* (MKO) through an apprenticeship is a feature of teacher preparation in public school contexts but is missing in preparation for child care teachers. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without a supervised apprenticeship. Vygotsky's social construction of knowledge was the conceptual framework of the study. The research question addressed how online CDA recipients described the development of practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. Ten child care teachers who earned a CDA online were interviewed. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed ECE teachers had little opportunity to be observed by others in teaching contexts and instead relied primarily on trial and error and self-initiated actions to gain practical expertise in teaching. Implications of this study include creation of apprenticeship experiences for assistant teachers by the lead teacher in their classrooms, and recreation of an apprenticeship element that was part of the original CDA program. This study filled a gap in the literature regarding the apprenticeship of child care teachers and may contribute to positive social change by demonstrating the need for ECE apprenticeship experiences that might contribute to better teaching and improved outcomes for young children.

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Dedication

“Daddy”

Otis Edward Long

1936 – 2013

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I acknowledge assistance and support from many.

My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It takes a village to raise a child. -- An Igbo and Yoruba proverb.

I am no longer a child, yet during my doctoral journey, several “families” helped “raise” me.

I sustain myself with love of family. -- Maya Angelo.

My children, Brandon (Danielle) and Jordan and grandchildren, Laila and Naomi; mother, Virgie M. Wilder and sister, Melanie (Ron) Walton, thank you for your love and support.

None of us got where we are solely by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps

-- Thurgood Marshall

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A friend knows the song in my heart and sings it to me when my memory fails.

-- Donna Roberts

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A true partnership is two people refusing to give up on each other.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Individuals who seek employment as teachers in child care centers typically are required to demonstrate an understanding of content knowledge of child development. However, they are not required to demonstrate practical expertise in teaching. For example, a review of state licensing requirements for child care centers that serve children birth to age 5-years-old found that practical expertise training is not required (Whitebook et al., 2016). Teachers of prekindergarten and kindergarten children, in programs that are part of public-school districts, are usually required to hold a state teaching certificate (Gomez et al., 2015). Teaching certification usually includes an apprenticeship under a master teacher intended to develop an individual's practical expertise (Naughton, 2016). Yet, teachers of similarly aged and younger children, in settings independent of school district control, are assumed to have practical expertise in teaching without any sort of supervised apprenticeship (Salamon et al., 2016). Child care teachers are hired upon completion of a content knowledge preparation program alone. One such preparation program accepted by state licensing agencies across the United States is the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential program offered by the Council of Professional Recognition (2020). The CDA program is delivered to preservice or in-service child care teachers either in a classroom setting or entirely online. The focus of this study was an analysis of how child care teachers, working in settings independent of school district control, develop practical expertise in teaching by completing a CDA online without the benefit of the apprenticeship required of teachers working in school district settings.

The results of this study may contribute to positive social change by presenting the development of practical expertise among child care teachers without the benefit of an apprenticeship. In Chapter 1, I present background relevant to this study, the research problem and purpose, and guiding research question. In the next section, I describe the nature of the study, key terms, and the assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations inherent in my research. I conclude with a description of the possible significance of the study.

Background

CDA is the credential awarded by the Council of Professional Recognition for individuals who have completed their assessment that purports to reveal the use of best teaching practice (Council of Professional Recognition, 2020). The CDA offers child care-related content knowledge and skill training for individuals planning to teach children birth to age 5. According to Washington (2013), CDA preparation can include junior or senior high school students considering work in early childhood, child care teachers who are new in the field, and those experienced in the field who have little or no formal education in ECE. Although the CDA program delivery can be in-person or online, in this study I focused on online delivery. In online delivery, the teacher, who is an in-person delivery model, represents a qualified expert or mentor and is not physically present with the student in the classroom (Council of Professional Recognition, 2020). According to the Council of Professional Recognition, over 18,000 child care professionals annually earn a CDA, and over 800,000 CDA certificates have been issued to date (Council of Professional Recognition, 2020). The CDA is the preparation program

of focus in this study because it is accepted across the United States by early care and education licensing agencies. A CDA credential is the qualification needed by teachers to work in private ECE settings for infant/toddler, preschool, and prekindergarten children, and in home-based child care (Bright from the Start, 2019; Washington, 2013).

Although CDA program delivery can be in-person or online, under neither delivery method is the development of practical expertise through an apprenticeship a part of the program (Council of Professional Recognition, 2020). In the CDA program, an independent observer visits the candidate in their work setting just once for only 2 hours, as a way of verifying the candidate's ability to apply program content in real classroom settings (Washington, 2013). This contrasts with the student teaching experience required of certified teachers of prekindergarten and kindergarten, which typically runs full time over one or two collegiate semesters, under the guidance of an experienced classroom teacher (Burns et al., 2016). The lack of apprenticeship in the CDA is typical of preparation for teaching in noncertified early childhood settings generally.

According to Salamon et al. (2016), early childhood practice is based on implicit beliefs and common-sense notions about childrearing, and a naïve view of the fitness of the largely female early childhood workforce grounded in the presumed maternal instincts of women. The presumption that women naturally know how to teach small children has contributed to a lack of attention to the explicit development of practical expertise, and ignorance regarding the possible effect on children of teachers' naïve practices (Salamon et al., 2016). Although an apprenticeship is deemed a necessary part

of a certified teacher's preparation, no study has yet explored how ECE teachers develop or fail to develop practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship.

To verify that a gap in current literature exists, I conducted a Google Scholar literature review between 2015–2019 using the search terms *Child Development Associate*, *CDA*, and *teacher preparation*, which generated 96 sources in the first 10 online screens. I discarded sources that focused on specific United States, regions, or other countries (32), textbooks (seven), dissertations (12), and sources that did not meet the definition of scholarly resources for research (eight). Of the remaining 38 articles, the research addressed three areas: quality and program makeup, teacher preparation, and policies and workforce development. Studies focused on participants' assessment of an in-person CDA model that included various forms of communication (Garner et al., 2015), qualities of home-based child care owners who selected online early childhood training (Durden et al., 2016), and use of narrative pedagogies in supporting in-person CDA completion (Garavuso, 2015). No study explored how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. In this study, I addressed this gap in the literature by examining how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship.

Problem Statement

The problem that was the focus of this study is little is known about how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. The online CDA is an early childhood credential widely accepted in the field (Tomas et al., 2015; Yurdugül & Menzi Çetin, 2015). Federal and state regulators

accept the online CDA credential to fulfill ECE teacher preparation requirements (U.S. Department of Health, Education, & Welfare, 2018; Washington & King, 2017). Washington and King (2017) professed that the central criterion of the online CDA credential is on-the-job, competency-based, demonstrated ability, yet the program requires only a single 2-hour demonstration of that ability, conducted in an observation by a professional development specialist (Washington, 2013). Online CDA candidates are required to complete content knowledge courses, accumulate professional work experience, and create a professional portfolio.

Although the online CDA requires 480 hours of professional work experience, online CDA candidates do not require child care expert supervision. Essentially, online CDA candidates work for lower pay than programs with child care expert supervision. Teaching apprenticeship, or practica, are usually the lengthiest and most realistic exposure to the teaching profession that public school teacher candidates encounter (Schagen-Johnson et al., 2017). Apprenticeship is the mechanism by which student teachers are expected to master instructional practices (Naughton, 2016) to enhance young children's early learning outcomes (Ackerman, 2017). Because a supervised apprenticeship is not part of the online CDA program, the question of how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship formed the problem underlying this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship.

The online CDA program, intended to prepare child care teachers, does not require a practicum experience or apprenticeship (Washington, 2013). One requirement for earning the online CDA credential is the accumulation of 480 hours of professional work experience. Whether in infant/toddler, preschool, or in home-based child care settings, candidates must submit requirements within 3 years prior to the assessment (Council of Professional Recognition, 2020). Yet, there is no requirement that an expert teacher supervises any portion of the hours in the candidate's professional work experience.

The online CDA is popular and widely accepted as an ECE teacher credential for those who work in public and private child care settings (U.S. Department of Health, Education, & Welfare (HEW), 2018; Washington & King, 2017). However, it is unknown how online CDA recipients gain practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. This study may contribute to positive social change by providing insight into how child care teachers gain practical expertise, and how administrators might support child care teacher development, and it may ultimately lead to quality enhancements for young children, birth to age five.

Research Question

A single question guided this study: How do online CDA recipients describe the development of practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship?

Conceptual Framework

Vygotsky (1978) and the theory on the social construction of knowledge formed the conceptual framework of this study. Vygotsky (1978) believed a community, where social interaction occurs, plays a central role in an individual's construction of meaning

and their ability to act with expertise in the completion of tasks. The role of a *more knowledgeable other* (MKO; Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88) in such social interactions is to scaffold the mastery of a complex task by a novice who otherwise might make errors or fail in the task altogether. The task of the MKO is to assess the abilities of the novice in the moment, determine the point at which the novice needs assistance, and to step in to provide that assistance. An MKO's facilitation in authentic environments is a logical connection where they may accomplish the knowledge, skills, and understanding too difficult for a novice to manipulate on their own (Vygotsky, 1978).

Scaffolding is a metaphor that describes the adaptive and temporary support provided by an MKO to a less competent person in the social construction of knowledge (Wood et al., 1976, p. 91). Vygotsky (1978) maintained social interactions are crucial to scaffold the mastery of a complex task by a novice who otherwise might make errors or fail in the task altogether. The MKO facilitates in a novice an increase in content knowledge, an increased ability to recognize and solve problems that arise in the application of knowledge, and an increased understanding of the ways experts think about the content and problems and communicate ideas. Vygotsky (1978) asserted the language of social interaction varies according to the language of the community in which a learner grows, giving the learner tools with which to navigate experiences effectively, and influencing their behavior and world perspective as a community member. Hamad and Metwally (2019) asserted that *scaffolding* in educational settings refers to a variety of instructional techniques a teacher, in the role of MKO, uses to move students progressively toward mastery of a key concept or skill.

The work of Vygotsky (1978) served as the conceptual framework in this study about how online CDA recipients develop practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. I used a basic qualitative design using interviews to gather perspectives of online CDA recipients. I then analyzed interview data using open and a priori coding to explore how participants acquired practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. Online CDA recipients described how they constructed their learning to acquire practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of the apprenticeship that Vygotsky (1978) and Wood et al. (1976) suggested is needed to achieve mastery. In Chapter 2, I offer a detailed explanation of this theoretical framework.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I employed a basic qualitative design with interview questions (Appendix A) to explore the content application of online CDA recipients who teach in public and private, center-based child care programs that serve children birth to age 5. Participants' meanings using open-ended questioning encourage participants to describe their experiences (see Maxwell, 2013). The key concept I investigated was how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. I interviewed 10 recipients with an online CDA credential, who work with children age birth to five in independent child care centers in Southeast, West, and Northwestern United States. Interviewees answered semistructured interview questions derived from the research question. Manual coding via themes formed the data analysis.

Definitions

Apprenticeship: Historically, apprenticeship is a process where the role of an expert or master practitioner is to nurture and develop the skill of the apprentice (or novice) and preserve the professional standards of the association (Knight, 2012). A modern-day apprenticeship typically is a work-training program that combines “on-the-job training with related instruction, typically provided in a classroom setting” (Collins et al., 1989, p. 1).

Child care: Traditionally, child care is the care and education of children, especially as a service while families are working. For purposes of this study, child care refers to programs providing care for children, birth to age 5, in classroom groups in stand-alone centers.

Child care teacher: A person who teaches in programs serving children, birth to age 5.

Child Development Associate (CDA): The CDA is a credential recognizing that an early childhood teacher has achieved competencies to maintain a safe, healthy learning environment, advanced physical and intellectual competence, social and emotional development. The CDA recipient provides children with guidance, families with productive relationships, a responsive program, and professional commitment (Washington, 2013).

Early childhood: Early childhood is the period of life from birth to age 8 (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009) and is an important period of life by which all aspects of development simultaneously and rapidly occur (Pianta et al., 2012).

Early childhood teacher: A person who teaches young children in a formal education program (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). For this study, I defined an early childhood teacher as a person who teaches children ages 4 to 8 years in a public-school setting that is entirely tax-supported.

Online education: This term refers to the delivery of education through digital technology (Davis et al., 2019).

Assumptions

One assumption I made in this study was that participants were representative of the population of online CDA recipients who did not receive any practicum or apprenticeship as part of their online CDA preparation. I assumed participants were honest in their responses. In interview-based studies, researchers depend on the information participants tell them (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I assumed participants are generally representative of online CDA recipients. LeRoux (2017) maintained researching the population specified in a study is essential to the trustworthiness of this study.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of my inquiry was how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. I delimited this study to include 10 teachers of children age birth to 5, who identified as recipients of the online CDA credential and who did not, as part of the program, complete an apprenticeship. I included teachers who work in independently funded child care centers, serving the public. I excluded teachers who work with children older than age 5, who work in a

therapeutic or clinical setting, or lead teachers who work in federal tax-supported programs, like Head Start or school district-sponsored prekindergarten programs. Also excluded were teachers who do not teach in the classroom, such as those who work as center directors, trainers, or in other administrative positions. I excluded recipients of online credentials of other programs and CDA programs delivered in-person or an online and in-person hybrid. My findings may be transferable to other recipients of online CDA programs who work in similar contexts, but that transferability may be limited in settings and with a population different from those I have described.

Limitations

One limitation of my study was its small sample size. A small sample was necessary to examine in detail the experiences of participants as they worked to develop practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. Another limitation was the audio restriction of my sample for only those potential participants having access to the internet for a Zoom telephone call or a telephone for a direct call and limited the applicability of the study's findings. Finally, my understanding of the importance of the expert-novice relationship in developing professional mastery presented a threat to my ability to present a neutral affect in my conversations with participants. I was mindful of my own biases during the interviews and in analyzing the data, to avoid influencing my participants or my analysis or conclusions.

My strategies to guard against partiality included Berger's (2015) report on reflexivity techniques, Connelly's (2016) explanation of audit trails, and verbatim transcription reviewed through Henry's (2015) statement on an inquiry approach. I

created reflexivity by using a journal to capture my thoughts and actions during the research process. The process helped me notice and control the influence of my perspectives during data collection and analysis. In creating an audit trail, I documented the process of conducting the study, including audio recording of responses and verbatim transcription to form a body of data. I included in the data my approach to inquiries I used to make sense of what I experienced. By these mechanisms, I minimized the influence of my perspective.

Significance

This study advanced knowledge in the discipline by addressing a gap in the literature about how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of apprenticeship. This study extended existing research to inform online teacher preparation programs regarding the development of practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. This study may be useful to center administrators to determine how to support novice and experienced child care teachers who are online CDA recipients. Center administrators may find it helpful to know how the participants applied content learned via the online CDA, identified problems and problem-solving protocols, and developed their thinking about ECE when those administrators consider the selection of professional development for teachers and other support teachers may need.

Administrators' investment in their teachers' development of practical expertise is vital to children's outcomes and the child care center's success (Jeon et al., 2016). Teachers who are unfit to teach due to a lack of provision of developmentally appropriate

experiences or inappropriate temperament towards children can have harmful effects on children's learning and development (Donoghue & the Council on Early Childhood Quality, 2017). Lack of developmentally appropriate practice may lead to children's social and emotional withdrawal, possible loss of families to other child care programs, and low teacher morale. When skilled teachers know the conditions and strategies to apply content, resolve issues, and think like a teacher, the use of the strategies increases the likelihood of children developing higher cognitive skills (Liston et al., 2006) and teachers responding proactively. Additionally, center administrators may discover the practical purposes of providing *scaffolding* experiences between MKOs and novices as part of the program's professional continuing education.

This study may contribute to positive social change by exploring how online CDA recipients can acquire practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship, and what mechanisms might be useful in helping novice teachers become experts. Expert teaching in ECE has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on child outcomes (Workman & Ullrich, 2017). This study has the potential to effect positive social change on behalf of young children.

Summary

Child care licensing agencies across the United States accept a popular credential, the CDA, to prepare early childhood teachers for work with children and families (Washington, 2013). The CDA curriculum, delivered in-person or online, does not require the apprenticeship that is an integral part of the preparation for certified teachers. In this study, I addressed a gap in the literature regarding the lack of explicit

apprenticeship as part of ECE teacher preparation, by exploring the perspectives of online CDA recipients in the development of practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. In this chapter, I presented an introduction to the study and key ideas that form the basis for ensuing chapters. In Chapter 2, I present a critical analysis of literature related to the scope of my study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that was the focus of this study is little is known about how online Child Development Associate (CDA) recipients developed practical expertise in early childhood education (ECE) without the benefit of an apprenticeship. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. Distance education has become commonplace in teacher preparation (Martín-Gutiérrez et al., 2017). Divergent in structure and process from mainstream pedagogy, distance education encompasses diverse pedagogical approaches in distinct educational environments (Simonson et al., 2014). One such example is the CDA, a credential awarded to signify a child care teacher's preparation for classroom engagement (Council of Professional Recognition, 2020). Although CDA candidates have a choice of in-person or online delivery, in neither delivery model does CDA preparation include a required apprenticeship (Washington, 2013).

Apprenticeship is a component identified by many authors as an essential element of teacher training (Cohen et al., 2013; Cunningham, 2014; Faulk & King, 2013). Yet, there has been a 14.3% increase in CDAs awarded from 2013 through 2017 (Council of Professional Recognition, 2018). The acceptance and steady increase in the number of CDAs awarded is a reason to analyze the inclusion of the CDA, lacking as it does any sort of practical apprenticeship, as a viable pedagogical approach in early care and education.

In this chapter, I describe in-depth the conceptual framework that underlies this study. Subsequently, I present a literature review on expert-novice development in various apprenticeship contexts, online teacher preparation, and features of the CDA program. However, first I begin with a description of my process to identify relevant literature.

Literature Search Strategy

Through Walden University's Library Home portal, I searched education and multidisciplinary databases available in EBSCOhost, using key terms *Child Development Associate or CDA, early childhood, online or distance teacher preparation, expert-novice research, teacher self-efficacy, and apprenticeship* as broad categories for my primary literature search. I refined my search using subject topics of postsecondary, early childhood teachers, and teacher education. This refinement generated articles from databases Academic Research Complete, American Psychological Association, Early Childhood Research Quarterly, Education & Psychology I+D+i and Editorial EOS (Spain), Education Research Complete, Educational Research and Review, Education Source, ERIC, Library Information Science and Technology Abstracts, PsycArticles, PsycInfo, and SocIndex with full text.

Google Scholar, with linked access to the Walden Library for article retrieval, was the key search engine I used to find literature pertinent to this study. As part of the iterative search process, I mined the reference sections of the articles I retrieved, and additional terms specific to the scope of my study surfaced: *practicum, best practice or developmentally appropriate practice, authentic environments, knowledge and practice,*

pedagogical content knowledge, teacher identity, teacher perception, teacher effectiveness, and teacher intuition. These terms led me to additional databases: Thoreau - Expanded Academic ASAP, GreenFile, Medline, NAP, ProCrest, SAGE, Science Direct, SciVerse, Science Direct, and Thoreau - Social Sciences Citation Index, Springer Science and Business, Taylor and Francis, and Red Fame. I searched Wiley Online Library, Harvard University Press, ResearchGate, SAGE, Psycnet, ERIC, and Taylor and Francis for literature relevant to my conceptual framework, using terms including *social construction, situated cognition, and cognitive apprenticeship.*

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was Vygotsky's (1978) theory on the social construction of knowledge, which emphasizes the vital role of social interaction in socially and culturally formed settings for the development of higher cognition.

Mediation occurs between and novice and a *more knowledgeable other* (MKO; Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88), who selects, modifies, and applies learning materials and other strategies that help the novice gain expertise. These ideas informed my exploration of early childhood teachers' daily experiences for individuals whose teacher preparation programs excluded expert-supervised experiences.

Social Construction of Knowledge

Vygotsky (1978) asserted that learners actively construct their knowledge and meaning from their experiences. Social constructivism, one component of constructivism, suggested that individuals engage in human activity through social, cultural, and language-based interactions (Dewey, 1938). Vygotsky's (1978) contribution to social

constructivism was that MKOs and novices interact to develop cognition through individuals' use of "thought and language" (p.23). When MKOs and novices personalized their thoughts and language, they developed a sense of themselves and their authority to understand their position and influence on each other. Thus, Vygotsky (1978) asserted learning comes before actual development. In essence, thought and language enabled a novice's entry into a culture by way of the MKO (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) maintained that social interaction occurs first in an individual's growth and development, then serves as a mediator between stimulus and response, and finally as the mediator in-context between an MKO and a novice.

The MKO-novice relationship includes a *scaffolding* process (Wood et al., 1976, p. 90), a metaphor that describes a type of learning support. The purpose of *scaffolding* is to enable novices to increasingly learn knowledge and apply skills independently while MKOs gradually adjust the degree of support they provide to the novice (Wood et al., 1976). A major feature of *scaffolding* is the application of the roles of the MKO in the timely support of the learner (Wood et al., 1976). MKOs assist, support, and teach novices new tasks, understandings, and concepts including what and how to critically think and constructively apply their new learning in different situations (Van de Pol et al., 2010). Collins et al. (1989) asserted the sensitivity and skill involved to respond contingently to learners, a hallmark of the apprenticeship strategy, many view as the defining quality of teaching. Apprenticeship is a work-training program that combines "on-the-job training with related instruction, typically provided in a classroom setting" (Collins et al., 1989, p. 1). During the apprenticeship, the MKO-novice interaction

prepares students to teach at the micro-level of interaction, so that there is a clear relationship between sequential tasks, which fits within the macro framework of a planned program (Berger & Hänze, 2015).

The synergy of old with new knowledge and skills leads novices to a socially and culturally constructed cognitive sophistication (Fajardo Castaneda, 2014). Online CDA credentialed early childhood teachers lack this experience with qualified experts (Washington & King 2017), which keeps younger children from reaching higher psychomotor, affective, and cognitive development. According to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social construction, online CDA credential holders must participate in experiences with qualified MKOs.

Social Constructivism as the Framework for this Study

Social construction of knowledge through the mechanism of *scaffolding*, to guide the application and assimilation of pedagogical content knowledge, is inadequate in absence of an apprenticeship or practicum experience (Aydin et al., 2015; Snow et al., 2018). Knowledge construction, not only knowledge reproduction, is crucial in the MKO-novice relationship. Constructing knowledge to apply, analyze, and evaluate to create in a meaningful context (Lave, 1991) are the cognitive skills valuable for mastery, but are often at lower levels in online learning (Firth et al., 2019). According to Vygotsky (1978), the development of thought follows the development of speech, and thought develops from society to the individual. MKOs influence the process of knowing mediated by community and culture. Effective MKOs consider what novices know, then supervise and monitor novices to put their knowledge into practice.

Vygotsky's (1978) viewpoint was that social construction for learning occurs within an MKO-novice relationship, such as that between the participants of the study who engaged with MKOs. Since novices depend on learning best pedagogical practice from MKOs, collaboration in an authentic environment (Lave, 1991) and the quality of the MKO's skills of enculturation (Collins et al., 1989) is critical. Collins et al. (1989) maintained novices utilize MKOs to model, observe, and imitate.

I designed the research question for the study to focus on how online CDA recipients describe their development of practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. Previous studies, such as those by De Bruin (2019) in music education, Papathomas and Kuhn (2017) in middle school rhetoric, Neal Kimball and Turner (2018) in development of qualitative researchers, and Kirunda (2020) in children's literacy development, all used Vygotsky and the idea of scaffolded instruction by an MKO as the basis for research.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), online education is the fastest-growing segment in United States higher education and adopted increasingly in public and private not-for-profit institutions. Online education environments might benefit certain types of engagement yet may also be somewhat of a deterrent to others (Bolliger & Martin, 2018), especially because, like Thomas et al. (2015) pointed out, practical fieldwork facilitated through lecture has been the hallmark of teacher preparation programs. Vygotsky's (1978) and Lave's (1991) perspectives were that novices and MKOs have a mutually beneficial relationship in the learning process. Collins et al. (1989) declared complete immersion in real-life situations helps novices to

perform confidently. However, the exploration of alternative preparation models from the perspective of student-teacher experiences is increasing, given the access, equity, and popularity of online learning (Buelow et al., 2018). According to Dumford and Miller (2018), it may benefit the profession to analyze online child care teacher preparation, which may also foster teaching experts or MKOs in authentic learning experiences using innovative and creative pedagogical methods.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. In the next section, I present literature that describes the reciprocal nature of content knowledge and practical expertise, the role of apprenticeship in developing expertise in various fields, and apprenticeship in early care and education. I conclude with a description of the development of the CDA credential, specifically regarding apprenticeship experience.

Review of the Current Literature

Content Knowledge and Practical Expertise

Content knowledge refers to the mastery of a field through the information that is specific to that field (Teacher, 2019). Practical expertise relates to people's general ability to pursue desired outcomes in everyday tasks by adapting to and shaping salient features of their environment (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2018). Content knowledge and practical expertise have a complementary relationship (Barut et al., 2016). According to Zalta (2012), content knowledge is “knowing about” and practical expertise is “knowing how” (para. 1). Huang (2017) suggested that knowing about something is an intellectual ability

while knowing how is a practical skill. Geerts et al. (2018) asserted that teacher training cannot focus only on the acquisition of knowledge but must develop in teachers an ability to function in the complex, dynamic environment of the classroom, involving people in addition to learning materials.

Practical expertise consists of a continuum of automatic responses, which become routine and detached from conscious thought (Keestra, 2017). True practical expertise, however, is dynamic and always developing, and results in actions that differ among situations and are appropriate for the context (Boscala, 2015). The person who possesses practical expertise in addition to content knowledge can prepare optimally for emerging challenges and is confident in a variety of situations (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2018). The development of practical expertise, then, goes beyond rote mastery of skills, to include the creative application of knowledge to a changing environment (Keestra, 2017). Teachers who accumulate large quantities of content knowledge and possess complex practical expertise can interpret situations accurately and apply information and skills in ways that increase student learning. Expert teachers learn practical expertise in a framework that differentiates cues and content knowledge, with the help of the MKO (Geerts et al., 2018).

According to Keestra (2017), novices of a practical skill taught by an MKO need to understand what in the MKO to follow, acquire the skill the MKO has for themselves, and improve on what the MKO has taught. Otherwise, learning is simply copying the MKO, which does not constitute the development of expertise. Novices can apply practical expertise if they understand the subject matter, can apply that subject matter in

real-life contexts, and continually develop content knowledge and practical expertise, thereby improving the knowledge and skill of their MKO (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2018). This development of practical expertise, separate from and complementary to the development of content knowledge, is the basis for an apprenticeship in various forms, in various contexts.

Apprenticeship Models in Various Contexts

According to Svavarsdóttir et al. (2015), experts or MKOs, regardless of their trade, have comprehensive and authoritative knowledge or skill that enables them to approach and complete intricate tasks effectually. Novices, on the other hand, often require the assistance of an expert or MKO to increase their chance of successful outcomes. Vygotsky's (1978) social construction and Wood et al.'s (1976) concept of *scaffolding* described the core process by which, with the guidance of an expert or MKO in a real-world environment, novices learn to reproduce and apply knowledge. In addition to gaining elemental competence in tasks, for a learner to master expertise, the novice must grasp and assume the "habits of mind" (Costa & Kallick, 2008, para 1) shared by masters or MKOs of their craft. Acquiring habits of mind, Bransford et al. (1999) asserted, elevates the novice's cognitive processes. As novices in various real-world contexts learn to produce new knowledge, they also learn from experts or MKOs under what conditions to consider and apply knowledge in those contexts.

Apprenticeship in the Medieval Guild System

Guilds, an early example of the apprenticeship system, initially appeared in the Middle Ages as religious associations (Richardson, 2008). Over the centuries, guilds

evolved into a channel for social connections and economic trade among merchants and artisans (Ogilvie, 2011). Whereas members of merchant guilds were traders or sellers in a particular category of goods, craft guilds were usually comprised of artisans and artisans in specialties of the time such as weavers, dyers, and fullers in the wool trade, masons and architects in the building trades, bakers, butchers, and soap makers (McLean, 2005). Over time, apprenticeship became less a vehicle for spiritual connections and increasingly an agency through which individuals used their specialized talent to convert raw materials into goods. Merchants who marketed such goods were in positions to affect economic prosperity, advance society, and leverage their influence (Ogilvie, 2011).

Late in the medieval period, from the 12th to the 15th century, membership in a guild was restricted to approved individuals, and the path to approval was apprenticeship (DeMunck et al., 2007). The process of apprenticeship nurtured new talent through master guild members, whose role was to develop the skill of the apprentice and preserve the professional standards of the guild (Aldrich, 2006; Knight, 2012). An exclusive hierarchical system of stages in skill development, from apprentice through journeyman to master, sustained standards of personnel, practices, and traditions of the guild, including business practices and social skills (Unwin, 1996). Master artisans occupied the upper echelon of society and used the apprenticeship system to preserve the quality of their goods and services, create regulations and distribution systems, and maintain integrity in trading practices (Minns & Wallis, 2013). In doing so, the top tier of master artisans in the apprenticeship system evolved to control governments through the guild's economic power.

Societal evolution seriously weakened the craft guilds by the 20th century. As new trades developed outside of the apprenticeship model and access to global markets increased, capital resources became available to individuals independent of existing hierarchies (Knight, 2012). A trend toward anti-establishment entrepreneurship and technological innovations opened avenues outside of the apprenticeship process (Clifford, 2001). However, despite social changes that loosened the control of guilds, elements of the apprenticeship system continue to be the foundation for nurturing new talent and sustainability for a variety of modern trades and professions.

Apprenticeship in Modern America

Remnants of the traditional guild system continued in the modern era. Forsyth (2017) emphasized that cinematic guilds, such as the Screen Actors Guild, continued to have a rigid system of intellectual property protection for American screen actors, directors, and writers. Winton and Johnson (2016) asserted that leadership roles in American education, including educational activism and advocacy, derive from membership in a teacher's union, such as the National Education Association. The Self-Employed Women's Association operated like a trade union that paves the way for women's empowerment and organized women into cooperatives while providing services such as banking, child-care, legal aid, and vocational instruction (Datta, 2003). Caccavale (2017) suggested the need for a national practitioner guild for psychology professionals to address and represent issues that advance provider and patient interests, confront insurers, medicine, and engage in political policy advocacy on the local and national level. National and state distiller guilds and associations consisted of groups of people

who work together and unite on common goals through the cooperative efforts of its members (Suri, 2016). Member services, protection of the integrity of members' services or the value of their products, and political advocacy were often the focus of modern national guilds that call themselves associations, unions, or apprenticeships.

The 1937 Fitzgerald Act, also known as the National Apprenticeship Act, officially authorized and established the national apprenticeship system (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). This act gave the U.S. Secretary of Labor authority over apprenticeship programs, established an office of apprenticeship within the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), and provided for the recognition of state agencies to register and administer apprenticeship programs. In the United States, 25 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico recognizes state apprenticeship operations. In the remaining states, DOL administers apprenticeship. DOL also recognizes apprenticeship occupations and maintains records on all apprenticeship programs and registered apprentices (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). Three occupations with the largest number of apprentices in the United States include electricians, carpenters, and plumbers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

The Department of Labor Statistics reported approximately 410,000 active apprentices in about 19,000 active Registered Apprenticeship programs; however, this data is limited to apprenticeships registered with the federal government or a federally approved state apprenticeship agency. According to the United States Bureau of Labor (2018), unions represented 14.8 million wage and salary workers. Unions support the training of tradespeople, in fields such as electrical and plumbing (International

Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 2019; United Association, 2019), but less formally in other aspects of the building trades, such as frame carpentry and finish carpentry (Alberta Advanced Education and Training, 2012). Labor unions negotiated pay and benefit contracts for members who protect others, such as police and firefighters (Anzia & Moe, 2015), served in a skilled capacity as do miners, farmworkers, and bakers (Autor, 2015), and certified professionals such as teachers, engineers, nurses, and doctors (Kleiner & Krueger, 2008). Guilds, in the form of unions and associations, strived to contribute value to various crafts and professions by ensuring that practitioners represented the knowledge, skill, and attitudes embraced by respected members.

Apprenticeship continued to epitomize the expert-novice relationship in many fields in which verified expertise is essential. Modern-day trade unions, such as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (2019), supported and reinforced apprenticeship in developing and rewarding achievement, leading from apprentice to journeyman, to master level recognition (Perrin, 2017). Even everyday skills, like learning to drive an automobile, included an apprenticeship, such as the requirement that a novice motorist spends time behind the wheel with an expert trainer-driver (Noronha & Endow, 2011). Yet, in some fields today's employers are reluctant to provide workers with apprenticeship opportunities since their investment in training may be wasted if there is little guarantee of apprentices committed to a career (Butler & Loblely, 2016). New hires may be reluctant to commit to a career or an extended period of apprenticeship because the modern information economy created greater insecurity, as workers increasingly updated their skills or change jobs, and also created greater opportunities,

causing workers to change careers frequently (Arman et al., 2015). Gweon et al. (2014) asserted that it is important to know from whom to learn because the development of skills and habits of mind is dependent on the quality of the information held by an expert, the expert's ability to communicate that information effectively, and to scaffold the novices' developing expertise. Not all apprenticeships were equally valuable to the novice or the field. One challenge central to apprenticeships was extending the novice's critical analysis of a practical problem and evaluation of alternative solutions (Mulkeen et al., 2017), and an analysis level that required the guidance of a deeply knowledgeable guide. Despite these issues, modern-day apprenticeships, even in various contexts, continued to advance the interests of their fields and leadership, provided financial protection and bargaining power to apprentices, and promoted advocacy and training for apprentices from experts situated in authentic environments. Internships and residencies are two of the most recognized apprenticeships that continued to exist in the professions in the modern-day.

Internships as Professional Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships were typically part of trade and craftwork, while internships provided an apprenticeship experience for novices in the professional fields (Gunn et al., 2018). For example, physicians completed an internship (Cooke et al., 2010). Clergy carried out a supervised seminary mentorship (Chiroma, 2017). Engineers participated in a supervised occupation or engineering internship (Chavez et al., 2016). Lawyers may have completed a clerkship in an established law office (Strauss, 2017). Nurses engaged in supervised clinical experiences (Tiwaken et al., 2015). Heywood and Cheville (2015)

maintained there are three characteristics of a profession, including established entry requirements and behavior standards, a codified body of knowledge and expertise unique to the profession, and a set of ethical standards that members upheld or suffered sanctions.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a United States policy and research center, identified three elements of professional apprenticeships whose integration is key to assist novices as they acquire an identity of expertise used across all professional practices. These elements included cognitive apprenticeship, subject matter knowledge, practical apprenticeship, methods of applying knowledge to real-world situations, ethical posture, or identification with the field and its principles of conduct (Hold et al., 2015). Bravenboer and Lester (2016) concurred on an integrated approach with an emphasis on the practical phase of development and expressions of competence aligned with the intended outcomes of academic qualifications. Bilionis (2018) integrated purposefulness into the third apprenticeship element of ethical posture, indicating that chance cannot be part of professional identity formation. By intentionally designing learning objectives and activities to integrate learning via knowledge acquisition, application, and moral reasoning, experts in each field transmitted to novices' key elements for professional practice based on the intended outcomes of their internships and residencies.

Magner and Jackson (2018) asserted that experts in fields of practice connect theory to practice and learn to do so through professional apprenticeships. During internship or the school-to-work process, novices experience real-life career decisions

and challenges through a supervised process created in partnership between academia and professional organizations (Sides & Mrvica, 2017). Professional interns acquired knowledge (Zakaria et al., 2018), work experience and exposure to role models or mentors (McHugh, 2017), access to life-oriented problem-solving skills (Nkadimeng et al., 2016), and employer-valued skills (Maertz et al., 2014), and an opportunity to demonstrate professional-level performance in a real-world setting to prospective employers (Dhevabanchachai & Wattanacharoensil, 2017). The internship duration was occupation-related, but typically ranges from a few weeks to 12 months and can be paid or unpaid (Discenna, 2016). Internships, like other apprenticeships, link theory to practice, yet varied in the emphasis on expert and novice professional identity formation. Education is a field of practice with its standards of professional apprenticeship for teacher preparation, which I describe next.

Apprenticeship of Public School Teachers

Onnismaa et al. (2015) demonstrated key elements to a public-school teacher preparation program which included entry requirements for students, intentionally connecting practicum experiences with formal education courses, established a model where experts in school and the schools/community supervise novice teachers, provided connections with a stable network of early childhood centers for field studies, and established mentoring programs. Preservice teachers in state-certified university teacher-preparation programs participated in courses of core and specialized knowledge followed by application in an authentic practicum or student teaching experience (Burns et al., 2016). The degree program may have embedded the practicum experience, or it may have

been in a self-contained course (Whitford & Villaume, 2014). Experts chosen by an administrator of the teacher preparation program based on their ability to model good teaching practice (Ross, 2015) supervised teacher candidates (Edwards et al., 2014).

Student teaching, a capstone clinical experience with college-supervised instruction, demonstrated a novice's content knowledge and best practice application during full-day responsibility in a real-life classroom, under the direction of an experienced teacher (Goldhaber et al., 2016). In this final professional apprenticeship, which occurred before graduation, a student-teacher worked in an authentic classroom chosen by the administrators of the teacher preparation program and supervised by the class lead teacher (Soslau & Raths, 2017). Peters-Burton et al. (2015) contended that clinical experiences and student teaching are important parts of teacher training, in that they provided a fundamental linkage between higher-education instruction and practical ability in the classroom. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2018), all states and certified teacher preparation programs required a supervised professional apprenticeship to teach in the public school system.

Apprenticeship in Early Childhood Education and Child Care

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) described early childhood as the foundation phase of education for children birth to age five. Phillips et al. (2016) asserted "early care and education" (p. 139) encompass two age groups: birth to five and five to eight years, also known as kindergarten through third grade. The U. S. Department of Education (2018) identified ages three to four as Early Head Start and ages four to five as Head Start or prekindergarten (National Head Start Association, 2016). The creators of Environmental

Rating Scales, a group of internationally used early childhood assessment tools, identified birth through age two as infant/ et al. Clifford, & Cryer, 2014), and ages five to 12 as school-age children (Harms et al., 1996). Age was the primary factor that determines the provision of care and education of children under the term ECE. Because early childhood spans birth to age eight, two distinctly different school systems deliver early care and education, taught by diversely prepared and credentialed teachers. The system by which teacher preparation and apprenticeship in ECE depended on the funding structure.

Funding Structures Affecting Early Childhood Teacher Apprenticeships

Families of children in early childhood in the United States have access to both public and private systems for educating and caring for children birth to age five. The United States government used taxes to fund public systems (Herrington, 2015) and providers of private facilities found sources to fund their services (Coley et al., 2016). A third type of funding structure was a hybrid of government and private funding (Richter et al., 2017). Public and private school systems typically had divergent early childhood teacher education and certification requirements, which varied from state to state and setting to setting (Whitebook et al., 2016). States defined the degree and type of certification required for early childhood teachers working in the public school system (Mandinach et al., 2015). Early childhood teachers who worked in independent child care centers also must have met state requirements. These were typically different requirements from those required of public-school teachers. An agency different from the state's department of public instruction managed compliance (Whitebook et al., 2016). In

ECE, a programs' funding structure influenced the programs' teacher education and certification requirements.

According to the Early Childhood Workforce Index (Whitebook et al., 2016), some states required caregivers in licensed child care centers to complete a high school diploma or equivalent, yet some states did not have any education requirements. Licensure is the state's grant of legal authority to practice a profession within a designated scope of practice regardless of certification (Health, Education, & Welfare [HEW], 1971). Publicly funded programs that are state and federally supported have the freedom to require teachers to complete a degree program through an accredited institution of higher education, state certification, or both (U.S. Bureau of Labor, 2018). Certification is the process by which an organization not run by the government recognizes a person who meets established criteria defined by the certificate-granting organization (HEW, 1971). This included public school kindergarten and primary grade teachers, and teachers hired in programs such as block grants under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] of 2015, the most recent subsequent amendment to the No Child Left Behind [NCLB] of 2002 law, state-funded pre-kindergarten, or child care programs in Head Start. Teacher education requirements in privately funded child care settings were more flexible than publicly funded child care programs, including the minimum hours of child care training required, the requirement of a CDA credential, associate degree in ECE, or completion of a non-ECE degree (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018).

Apprenticeship Among Certified Early Childhood Educators

Certified early childhood educators, working in public schools as teachers of children in kindergarten through third grade, traditionally experienced a supervised apprenticeship under an MKO as part of their collegiate requirements for teacher certification (Zeichner, 2017). Fast track teacher preparation programs may not have included a supervised apprenticeship that was completed before a teacher's assignment to a full-time paid teaching position (Taylor, 2016), but a satisfactory demonstration of practical expertise remained a requirement of certification (Redding & Smith, 2016). Such non-certified teachers may have been permitted in some states to work in the public school system while simultaneously working on a path towards certification, which includes demonstrated mastery of practice as well as of content knowledge (Whitebook et al., 2016). Certification of early childhood teachers working in a public school system include at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood, child development, or a related field (U.S. Bureau of Labor, 2018).

According to the National Center Education Statistics (2018), there were initial, professional, and provisional teacher certifications. Initial certification permitted entry-level teachers to work in public school systems. Professional certification permitted experienced teachers to work in the public-school classroom or as school building leaders. Provisional certification provided conditional or temporary permission for teachers to work in public school classrooms while the applicant, such as uncertified educators and non-early childhood degreed teachers, worked towards certification (Evans, 2017). Some states had temporary or emergency certification that permitted

individuals to work in the classroom during times of teacher shortages while the teacher worked towards certification to remain in the classroom (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

Apprenticeships experiences, such as the student teaching experience required of certified early childhood teachers in public school settings, created an influencing relationship between the expert and the novice. Smith and Rayfield (2017) found student teaching provided the novice teacher with opportunities for experimentation in real-life contexts, and novices at the end of their student teaching experience showed growth in their teaching abilities and transformative learning, compared to their status at the beginning of student teaching. Van Schagen-Johnson et al. (2017) explored practicum experiences in an early childhood birth-to-kindergarten teacher education program and found participants who felt energized, relaxed, and compatible in their experience with their cooperating teacher resulted in satisfaction with the practicum and feelings of personal teaching efficacy. However, participants who reported frustration and incompatibility with their cooperating teacher expressed less satisfaction with their practicum experience and reduced personal teaching efficacy. Brown et al. (2019) discovered preservice teachers' feelings of preparedness and actual performance increased significantly during student teaching, following experiences such as observing and participating in classrooms, learning from more than one experienced teacher, and receiving feedback from their cooperating teachers and university supervisor. Apprenticeship experiences reinforced a novice's active engagement, their perceptions of preparedness, and actual performance.

Apprenticeship Among Uncertified Educators in Child Care Centers

Differences in teacher requirements for certified and uncertified educators indicated there are distinctive structural discrepancies (Jang & Horn, 2017). Certification is not mandatory for teachers or assistant teachers working in child care settings or kindergarten through third-grade classrooms in independent and parochial schools (Whitebook et al., 2016). Privately funded child care settings and independent and parochial elementary schools individually determined teacher and assistant teacher educational requirements, to meet or exceed the minimum standards dictated by each state's early care and education licensing agency (Sosinsky & Gilliam, 2011). In privately funded child care settings and independent and parochial schools, minimum teacher education varied from setting to setting. These privately funded programs typically require less teacher preparation than do publicly funded ones.

Federal and state-funded child care programs required additional teacher preparation than what is typical for independently funded child care programs. For example, Head Start is a federally funded program that requires at least 50% of the program's teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood or a related field (National Head Start Association, 2016). For the remaining teachers and assistant teachers working in Head Start, an associate degree in early childhood or related field (National Head Start Association, 2016) or CDA credential (Washington, 2013) would suffice. Other federal and state-funded early childhood programs, such as the prekindergarten program sponsored in the state that is the location of this study, required for lead teachers a bachelor's degree in any area, along with a two-year degree or

technical certificate in child development, and for assistant teachers' completion of the state's paraprofessional program or a CDA (Bright from the Start, 2019). An apprenticeship was not required in Head Start or the prekindergarten program in the target state, nor was it a typical requirement of privately funded early childhood programs generally.

The lack of an apprenticeship requirement for child care teachers may be attributed to what Salamon et al. (2016) described as a presumption that women, who compose most child care teachers, instinctively know how to care for and teach young children and therefore do not need to be guided in how to do it. Apprenticeship was predicated on an imbalance in practical expertise between the novice and the expert in an apprenticeship dyad, but the naïve belief that all women naturally enjoy practical expertise in working with children precluded the necessity of an apprenticeship (Salamon et al., 2016). If no one is a novice, and everyone is an expert, the value of an apprenticeship is moot. However, as Salamon et al. pointed out, the assumption that all child care teachers naturally possessed practical expertise has led to ignorant acceptance of traditional practices over research-informed practices and contributed to the inattention to intentional development of expertise as a condition of professional status among child care teachers. The lack of apprenticeship as part of child care teacher training was based on erroneous beliefs about child care and teaching and may have contributed to ongoing errors in professional practice.

Apprenticeship and the Child Development Associate Credential

The United States government created the CDA credential in 1973 in support of the Head Start program. President Lyndon B. Johnson's 1964 State of the Union address on the *War on Poverty* inspired the creation of Head Start (Bailey & Duquette, 2014). Johnson's call to act on behalf of America's preschool children from families that are poor led to the creation in 1965 of Head Start, a comprehensive child development program (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). Recognizing that one of the greatest threats to quality child care education was incompetent teachers (Lamy, as cited in Cornelius, 1987), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services determined that staff of Head Start needed a specialized teacher preparation program (Vincent & Hamby, 1981). Using funding by the HEW's Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (Council of Professional Recognition, 2020), a task force of 39 child development-related organizations gathered in 1970 to address the challenge of low child care teacher qualifications and inconsistent child care program quality standards (Council for Professional Recognition, 2018; Washington & King, 2017). The consortium, with input from 1200 experts in child development, representing diverse cultural, philosophical, and administrative perspectives (Perry, 1990), worked to establish a curriculum for teacher preparation. This curriculum included four competency areas, creating a rational and developmental context for each of 13 functional areas of competency, and an approach for teachers to learn to apply those contexts (Vincent & Hamby, 1981). The program they developed, the CDA, included an apprenticeship.

When officials at the U.S. Department of HEW launched the CDA in 1974, the CDA consortium's objective was to promote a system of training and credentialing individuals based on "demonstrated competency" (Hinitz, 1996, p. 5). Demonstrated competency described the application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to serve as a teacher for a group of young children in child care settings (Vincent & Hamby, 1981). The consortium described an apprenticeship component of the CDA model as fundamental to the development of teacher competency and the heart of the CDA program (Vincent & Hamby, 1981). Working under the supervision of Head Start teaching professionals, 50% or more of the intern's total training time in the CDA was devoted to apprenticeship with a field supervisor and in collaboration with a local assessment team (LAT), which consisted of an advisor and a parent or community representative (Vincent & Hamby, 1981). The CDA model was intended to prepare teachers to make decisions that combine judgment and expertise (Vincent & Hamby, 1981). Head Start's supervising child care experts made decisions about the intern's training needs and strengths and awarded the credential based on the intern's practice. The final assessment was made in collaboration with the CDA candidate, the LAT, field supervisor, a parent representative, and a CDA representative. In 1975, 34 child care teachers received the first issued CDA credentials (Hinitz, 1996).

According to Vincent and Hamby (1981), the CDA consortium initiated a one-year continuation of their work in program development, following the initial CDA program, called the Child Development Associate Credential Curriculum and Training Project pilot. The purpose was to modify the CDA instructor's guide, previously used

exclusively in Head Start settings, for alternative settings, such as colleges, early childhood projects, infant and maternity homes, and churches. According to Catalani (1993), a pilot in the state of Texas focused on the apprenticeship experience in four community colleges which included hands-on teaching techniques, handouts, transparency masters, and other supplementary materials that complemented the CDA. A project facilitator supervised a secretary and a team of technical advisors, which included an advisory council, one technical assistant facilitator, two technical assistants (TAs), and CDA instructors working in four Texas community colleges.

During the apprenticeship component of the Texas pilot, the number of TA visits per quarter to train the CDA instructors was established via a survey of the program's needs (Catalani, 1993). The advisory committee revised and added apprenticeship activities based upon feedback from the program participants and according to new guidelines in the CDA Council model. The LAT collected information and documentation during each teacher's apprenticeship and transmitted the documentation to the CDA consortium for review and awarding of the credential. The four-member team consisted of the candidate, an advisor who was an early childhood professional with a college degree in ECE or child development, a parent representative, and a CDA representative. The advisor observed the CDA candidate working with children and completed three lengthy reports for the LAT review. As part of the apprenticeship, CDA candidates took primary responsibility for the day-to-day activities of a group of children, prepared a portfolio documenting competency in six competency areas and 13 functional areas, and was an equal voting member of the team. A parent or community

representative collected data from the parents or guardians of children currently in the candidate's care and observed in the candidate's preschool setting. The CDA representative, who was a trained early education professional assigned by the national office, conducted the team meeting and voting procedure according to strict guidelines set down by the consortium to maintain the validity and reliability of the system. This process relied on the presence of in-house degreed or experienced CDA instructors and local assessors, and so was dependent on Head Start or child care community college programs as settings for CDA credentialing.

In 1980, the CDA program, now known as the Child Development Associate National Program, was put under the supervision of Bank Street College of Education in New York. With continued federal funding, the assessment and credentialing program continued under the name, Child Development Associate National Credentialing Program (Hinitz, 1996), and with direct supervision from the Department of Health and Human Services, a successor to HEW. In December 1986, the CDA program became the mission and product of the newly created non-profit Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition in Washington, D.C., an ancillary organization associated with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Perry, 1990). The Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition was renamed to the Council for Professional Recognition (Council for Professional Recognition, 2020). Federal support for the CDA ceased at this time.

During the 1990s, Hinitz (1996) maintained the CDA apprenticeship, but under a new protocol, the teacher chose the LAT members (advisor and parent or community

representative), who assessed the teacher's accomplishments along with one national CDA representative. The LAT assembled information including a teacher-created portfolio, advisor observations, observations by the parent or community representative, and questionnaires completed by parents of enrolled children. Completion of the CDA assessment could take from 12 weeks to more than a year after the submission of the local team's paperwork. However, with the candidate now choosing their local advisor and a parent or community representative, the new CDA structure diluted the validity and reliability of the process and the value of the credential. Simultaneously, the initial popularity of the CDA program began to suffer (Hintz, 1998).

Modigliani and Dunleavy (1990) found some CDA assessment criteria were vague and hard to assess, affecting the validity of the CDA process. This was compounded when candidates could choose their advisor. Candidates may not have known what to look for in an advisor or may not have had a highly qualified person available. Modigliani and Dunleavy (1990) reported that a qualified mentor in an apprenticeship breaks down complex material for the novice to understand and process in a competency-based approach to learning, but when qualified experts were unavailable to CDA candidates in the 1990s, the quality of the training experience was reduced to the level of whatever advisor could be found.

In 1992, the CDA program revised its program to include a choice of two methods of credentialing (Hintz, 1996). One of these, called the CDA Professional Preparation Program or P3, continued to require an apprenticeship (Philips, 1991). This method comprised a one-year training program beginning with the candidate working

under supervision in a child care setting, meeting weekly with advisors, completing assignments, and participating in 120 hours of college seminars. An oral assessment by a CDA representative culminated the program (Phillips, 1991). Overall, this CDA version provided choice and balanced the number of hours per competency, and it enhanced the apprenticeship process by adding two competencies on child assessment and professional and ethical behavior in scholarship in teaching and learning. The second option, called a direct assessment, included new eligibility rules of a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED), 480 hours of child care experience with ages birth to five, and 120 hours of formal training, and culminated in a written examination (Hinitz, 1998). In this method of credentialing, the final exam and 480 hours of child care experience replaced the apprenticeship provided by expert CDA instructors and direct classroom supervision. Although Arzoumanian (1994) found the apprenticeship component of the Child Development Associate P3 model resulted in high levels of engagement between advisors (experts) and teachers (novices), enthusiasm for the apprenticeship relationship on the part of novices, and reflective discussion between experts and novices, the Child Development Associate P3 program that began in 1991 ended in 2006 (C. E. Moore, personal communication, August 27, 2020).

The CDA program of today looks much like the direct assessment model of the 1990s. Candidates are still required to hold a high school diploma or GED, are still required to have 480 hours of employment experience in early childhood settings and are still required to complete a 120-hour training curriculum (Council of Professional Recognition, 2020). The program still culminates in a written examination, although in

2013 the examination was converted to a computer-based multiple-choice test administered at various testing sites by a nationally known testing company. In 2013, a segment for personal reflection was added to the teacher-created portfolio, and a nationwide network of CDA approved independent contractors, called professional development specialists, was created to conduct a single two-hour observation of each CDA candidate and submit observation scores to the council (Council of Professional Recognition, 2020).

In addition, in 2013, the CDA application process moved online and vendors who provide the 120-hour training curriculum were permitted to offer this training online (Washington, 2013). The Council for Professional Recognition no longer offers the 120-hour training itself, either in person or online, but relies on vendors to provide this training. Apprenticeship was a key feature of the original CDA program, composing 50% of a candidate's training in becoming an early childhood professional. As the CDA was converted from a program of the federal government designed to improve quality of Head Start teachers, to a program run by Bank Street College, to a non-profit subsidiary of National Association for the Education of Young Children, to the independently run non-profit the Council for Professional Recognition is today, and as the demand for child care teachers increased, executives streamlined the CDA program, which permitted program accessibility on a nationwide scale. Over 800,000 CDAs, in the United States and abroad, have been issued to date (Council for Professional Recognition, 2020). Compared to the initial apprenticeship at the inception of the CDA and the discontinued Child Development Associate P3 apprenticeship, the current CDA requirements discount the

role of apprenticeship in child care teacher preparation, which permitted an increase in the number of credentials awarded.

In August 2020, I spoke with the interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Council of Professional Recognition to further understand the change in the apprenticeship component of the CDA over the years (E. Moore, personal communication, August 26, 2020). According to the interim CEO, the U.S. Health, Education, and Welfare's Administration of Children, Youth, and Families invested tens of millions of dollars for states to develop local avenues of apprenticeship. It is unclear if this ever resulted in state-required apprenticeship requirements. According to Ullrich et al. (2017), only 11 of the 50 states required more formal education than a high school diploma or GED, and only two required a CDA for all center-based and family childcare teachers.

The transformation of the CDA from a credential program that mirrored the apprenticeship requirements for certified public-school teachers to a program devoid of apprenticeship contributed to the current standard for preparation of entry-level child care teachers. The current standard focuses on the development of content knowledge and substitutes 480 hours of work experience for the formerly supervised development of practical expertise. Teacher preparation and development are crucial to children's outcomes (Jeon, et al., 2016). How online CDA recipients gained practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship forms the problem underlying this study.

Summary

The apprenticeship model is a time-honored, evidence-based process, supported by Vygotsky's (1978) ideas about the social construction of knowledge, Lave's (1991) concept of situated cognition, and Collins et al.'s (1989) cognitive apprenticeship framework. The focus in this study was the online CDA, a credential commonly accepted to meet child care teacher education requirements in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is important to develop a novice's expertise, as demonstrated theoretically and through its use in professions of many different types. Apprentices develop their knowledge, processes, and habits of mind in an apprenticeship. Therefore, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. My study has the potential to advance knowledge on the acquisition of expertise through online instruction. In this chapter, I presented a critical analysis of the literature review on child care teacher preparation about the historical and current-day apprenticeship, and in the era of distance learning. In Chapter 3, I detailed the research design that permitted me to answer the research question that guides my study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how online Child Development Associate (CDA) recipients developed practical expertise in early childhood education (ECE) without the benefit of an apprenticeship. In the major sections of this chapter, I describe the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness. I conclude Chapter 3 with a summary statement.

Research Design and Rationale

One question guided this study: How do online CDA recipients describe the development of practical expertise in ECE without benefit of an apprenticeship? The central concept I investigated was how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. Online CDA recipients do not complete an apprenticeship; they acquire practical expertise independently. By employing a basic qualitative design using interview-based research, Gallagher and Francesconi (2012) asserted participants reflect and report on their means of acquiring skills for content application, which excludes the researcher, and the participant's biased judgments. Starman (2013) maintained interview-based research focused on individual perspectives communicated verbally to the researcher and the interconnections among the study components. Basic qualitative research addresses the cause and meaning of the participant's perspective as told in their own words (Maxwell, 2013).

I could have used phenomenology or case study designs for this study. Like phenomenology, interview-based research is a reflective process in the absence of the researcher and participant's theories and pre-conceived opinions (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012). Phenomenology is limited to a participant's first-person lived experiences (Kung et al., 2018), while interview-based research places no such limitations but instead focuses on interrelationships among the study components. A case study is used to analyze in-depth experiences based on single or multiple case participants or groups, while interview-based research focuses on perspectives communicated verbally to the researcher, rather than recording the experiences in multiple contexts (Starman, 2013). Another alternative design I decided against was a quantitative descriptive method, such as a survey. Quantitative descriptive research addresses patterns that are characteristics of the population or situation being studied (da Silva, 2017), whereas basic qualitative research addresses the cause and meaning of the participant's perspective. In this study, I explored online CDA recipients' perspectives regarding how they developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. In this study, I used a basic qualitative design with interviews to gather online CDA recipients' perceptions of how they developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of a supervised apprenticeship.

Role of the Researcher

In my role as an observer, I created protocols following Råheim et al. (2016) to recruit, select, and interview participants and observe and reflect on my experiences. As argued by Castillo-Montoya (2016), I ensured participants answered each question.

Similar to the work of Roller and Lavrakas (2015), I listened to detect ambiguity and ask additional questions that clarifies the voice of the participant. I followed the research of Jorgenses (2015) which alleged that while interviewing, researchers note the participant's tone inflection in reaction to the questions. Like Castillo-Montoya (2016) claimed, as a participant settles into the telephone process, I wrote details about the context that I feel might inform the interview process. During data analysis, I scrutinized the transcript to reveal participants' collective voices on their means of choosing resources to learn content application in absence of an apprenticeship. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), my role as the observer in this study is the human element of data collection.

My personal and professional relationships may have affected my effectiveness as a researcher. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) found, because I have observed and worked for many years in early childhood and am familiar with center interactions, my experiences posed a threat of influence to my observations. Personal biases and preconceived assumptions may influence a researcher's actions as a human instrument of data collection and their interpretations of their work (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Early in my career, I taught young children in home, center, and elementary settings, and participated in professional development alongside other child care providers and colleagues. Due to my potential for bias and assumptions during data collection, I reflected and incorporated in the transcript instances where my thoughts may influence the participant's responses in my data analysis.

Other ethical issues were possible problems because I conducted my study with child care programs some located within my work territory. The relation between the role

of the researcher and the research has been a recurrent concern in the methodology literature due to the privileged position of the researcher (Råheim et al., 2016). Conflicts of interest define circumstances in professional judgments or actions regarding a primary interest that may be at risk of unduly influencing a secondary interest (Romain, 2015). In addition to the audit strategies and theme recognition techniques, I addressed conflicts of interest beginning with my recruitment strategy. All written communication was through my Walden email. I excluded former and current programs on my caseload from the participant selection process. I acknowledged my personal and professional relationships and leadership roles in writing on the Institutional Review Board application.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population of focus in this study was child care teachers who earned a CDA through online delivery and live in the United States. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor (2018), child care teachers in the United States numbered 1,683,200 in 2018. To date, the Council of Professional Recognition (2020) has issued over 800,000 CDAs, which represents nearly 5% of child care teachers in the United States and the number is growing.

The sampling strategy I used was a nonprobability purposive homogeneous technique (Shama, 2017). My sampling strategy was nonprobability since not all members of the population had a chance to participate in the study. In a purposive sampling strategy, participant selection relies on the criteria and judgment of the researcher (see Shama, 2017). My sampling strategy was homogeneous because the study

required participants to represent specific characteristics. According to Nowell et al. (2017), it is important to select participants using predefined criteria. The criteria for research selection in this study included that the participant was an online CDA recipient, had not experienced a child care apprenticeship, worked as a classroom teacher in a child care center at the time of the study, and understood and spoke the English language. Potential participants self-selected themselves into the study.

I invited 10 child care teachers to participate in this study. Researchers can identify approximately 80 to 92% of themes or concepts during the first 10 interviews with a homogenous population (Guest et al., 2017). The determination of sample size is contextual and partially dependent upon the relevancy of the scientific paradigm under which investigation is taking place (Boddy, 2016). I achieved data saturation when I had enough information that a different researcher could replicate the study (see Nelson, 2017), when continued interviewing produced no new information (see Hennink et al., 2017), or when further coding was no longer feasible (see Morse, 2015). Whether the researcher has enough participants to answer the research questions in a meaningful manner (Mason, 2010) depends on the relationship between saturation and sample size. The sample in this study was homogenous and my purpose was to determine meaningfulness. Ten participants appeared sufficient to achieve data saturation point because no new information followed from the ninth interview. According to Crouch and McKenzie (2006), a researcher managing fewer than 20 participants in a qualitative study mitigates bias and validity.

To identify potential participants, I targeted established Facebook groups that included online recipients of the CDA, specifically Council of Professional Recognition which has over 14,000 followers, a state chapter of the Black Child Development Institute with 528 followers, a Doctoral Dissertation Cohort with 2,300 followers, and Early Childhood Educators Resources and Ideas with 22,000 followers. Social media platforms are internet-based applications that permit users to construct a public profile where they can share content, participate in social interactions, and network with a community of friends by way of a friend request (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Researchers can target readers and spread their work beyond academia to new audiences through social media (Gelinis et al., 2017). My contact protocol began with the Council of Professional Recognition and the state chapter of the Black Child Development Institute. I submitted a request to the administrators of both groups to join and post a social media recruitment flyer. Upon acceptance, I posted a social media recruitment flyer that detailed the research, the criteria needed for potential candidates, and my email address and phone number. The objective of the flyer was to create interest in my project for potential participants or those with knowledge of potential participants to contact me. Three potential participants responded after exhausting all the Facebook ECE groups on my list. One potential participant scheduled an interview, but later cancelled the interview appointment leaving two potential candidates. My contingency plan included posting on my Facebook profile and calling colleagues who are well established in early childhood and asked them to post my flyer on their Facebook page. Over a 4-week period, I secured

three participants, total, who referred me to seven additional participants who met the sample qualifications and agreed to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

One data collection instrument I used in this study was a semistructured interview of nine questions (Appendix A) to guide my conversation with each participant. I developed the research and interview questions to elicit descriptive responses as I asked participants to tell me about their personal experiences in developing practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. I used the semistructured format to clarify a participant's responses when needed by suggesting to the participant that they specify examples or describe experiences. Interview Questions 1 and 2 inquired how they applied knowledge learned in their CDA preparation to real situations in the classroom. Interview Questions 3 through 5 asked how participants identified and manage problems in their work, based on their online CDA preparation. Interview Questions 6 through 8 asked how participants developed ways of thinking typical of a professional teacher. Question 9 asked participants overall how they applied what they learned in their online CDA preparation, even though the program did not include coaching or student teaching.

The assessment of content validity includes using experts to evaluate and rate elements of the instrument used based on the instrument's relevance and representativeness to the content domain (Almanasreh et al., 2019). To assess the validity of my interview questions, I asked one of my colleagues, who is a board member of a national organization where I serve as a volunteer, to confirm the ability of the interview questions to answer my research question and fulfill my purpose in this study. The

colleague is a full-time scholar researcher in ECE at a state university in Western United States. The expert pointed out wording that suggested my assumptions or implied the desired response and questioned sentences where I needed to clarify or elaborate. I revised those questions and reviewed my study for other words that make assumptions or imply bias and sentences throughout the study needing explanation or further development. Although I used open-ended interview questions, the expert recommended that I revise the form of my questions to elicit a wider range of responses from participants and gave me examples. The expert also recommended that I ask some questions in a general way and use follow-up questions to suggest the participant pinpoint specific examples and descriptions of experiences. In my interview closing, the expert suggested that I ask participants for additional comments. Upon the advice of my committee chair, I incorporated the expert's suggestions on asking participants general questions in a manner to follow-up with more specific questions. I added a final statement of the interview session asking participants for final comments.

Another instrument that is heavily relied upon in qualitative research is the researcher's mind, which is the conduit through which all decisions about what is relevant to include will pass (Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). Because my mind is a filter that encompasses my life experiences, my role as researcher increased the likelihood of bias. Strategies I used to mitigate biases were field notes and reflective journaling. I used field notes to describe the behavior of the participant, their actions in the interview, and to describe factual data about the setting (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). I used reflective journaling about my role as the researcher, which served as a filter system through

introspective thinking (see Sutton & Austin, 2015). Daily, I reflectively journaled my thoughts on the research process before, during, and after data collection. I incorporated field and reflective journaling notes into the interview transcript as strategies to reduce the influence, mitigate bias, and establish reliability and validity.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Upon approval by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began the reflective journaling process to record contextual meanings that influenced recruitment, participation, and data collection to incorporate into my findings. Participant recruitment began with my identifying established Facebook child care groups, excluding home-based ECE programs. I identified established Facebook groups according to my knowledge of relevant organizations in early childhood. I prioritized the organizations based on the likelihood of including currently working online CDA recipients in classroom child care settings. After submitting a friend request and receiving approval from the first two Facebook groups on my list, I posted a social media recruitment flyer on each group's Facebook profile. Since recruitment was via social media recruitment and I served in early childhood organizations, locally, regionally, and nationally, my plan was to exclude from participation anyone with whom I had a previous working or personal relationship. I did not exclude anyone.

When a prospective participant contacted me, I briefly explained the research process, I worked with each participant to identify a mutually convenient time to talk. I sent a volunteer confirmation email with the consent form attached that describes the interview details. On the day of the interview prior to starting, I listened while the

participants state the phrase, “I consent” before I began the interview. I began interviews and transcribing as each person volunteered so that recruitment, interviewing, and transcribing proceeded concurrently.

During the interview, I used Zoom technology or a voice recorder to record the interview. The participant responded to interview questions (Appendix A), while I wrote field notes. I confirmed data with the interviewee by asking clarifying questions, as needed, during the interview. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participant for their assistance. After I transcribed all 10 interviews, I sent participants a thank you email, which includes a copy of their interview transcript. I asked participants to review their interview transcripts and alert me to any errors or corrections. When I did not hear from anyone after seven days, I arranged for each participant to receive a \$10 e-gift certificate from Walmart.

Data Analysis Plan

I manually transcribed interviews verbatim and emailed transcripts to participants, as described above, so each participant could confirm the accuracy of the transcription. To prepare the transcript for data analysis, I created a 6-column chart for each transcript to align with Lofgren’s (2013) step-by-step instructions on indexing. I labeled the first column “transcript line” to capture each line of a transcript per row beginning with the first sentence of each transcript. I labeled the second column “codes.” I labeled the third column “categories.” I labeled the fourth column “themes.” I labeled the fifth column “field notes” and incorporated notes from my interview observations that aligned with the appropriate transcript line (Appendix B). I labeled the last column “reflections” and

wrote journal notes from my inner thoughts of the interview that align with the appropriate transcript line. Next, I analyze the transcript.

During my transcript analysis, I began with open coding and transition to focused coding later in the process (Lofgren, 2013). In addition to my reading while I manually transcribed the data, I conducted two readings examining the data with a specific focus each time. According to Lofgren's systematic process of data analysis, there are three readings before conceptualizing the data to determine the results, discussion, and conclusion. Throughout the manual transcription process, I got a general impression of the data and wrote down ideas for open coding and added field notes and reflective journal notes. During the first reading, I read individual participants' transcripts to apply open coding. In the second reading, I read line by line per transcript for focused coding.

I examined the transcript to prepare for coding by making notes of emergent codes and memos that clarify how I constructed codes and their interpretations to determine repetitive themes (Stuckey, 2015). When reading participants' transcripts then examining line by line, I followed Ryan and Bernard's (2003) eight observation techniques to find themes - repetitions, indigenous typologies, metaphors, similarities, differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory-related material. I color coded the same or similar words and phrases and apply codes to ideas. Once I wrote the visible codes in the "codes" column, I reread the unmarked passages of the transcript for not so obvious codes and include them in the chart. Because of my former experience as an early childhood teacher, I had insight into terminology and references of indigenous

typologies. I looked for the participant's use of metaphors and the underlying themes that might produce those metaphors.

I charted similarities and differences, who said it, where it appeared in the text, and name the connection including discrepant cases when a participant contradicts themselves. I looked for linguistic connectors that may indicate casual relationships, such as *because*, *since*, and *as a result*); conditional relations, such as *if* or *then*, *rather than*, and *instead of*; spatial relationships, such as *before*, *after*, *then*, and *next*; and negative words, prefixes, or allomorphs, such as *not*, *no*, *none*, *non*, *un-*, *in-*, *il-*, *im-*, etc., to make the features explicit. I collated the data relevant to each code, determined the pattern, and created categories in the *categories* column. I analyzed for perspectives of the participants and their ways of thinking about people, objects, processes, activities, events, sensitivity to environmental conditions, and interactions. Once I grouped like categories, I looked for a demonstration of theories and concepts and any other data I felt were relevant while staying close to the data. From the grouped categories, I determined the emerging themes and wrote the name of five overarching themes in the *themes* column. I designed the data analysis to ensure I followed procedures that promoted clarity, rigor, and trustworthiness in the study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility relates to the nature of trust (Guest et al., 2012). Lack of trust in the research findings results in misinformation and there is no value in conducting the research. To increase credibility, I sent a draft of the interview questions (Appendix A)

to an external researcher who validated my interview protocol for phrasing, clarity of terminology, sequencing of questions, and alignment, as suggested by Almanasreh et al. (2019). At the beginning of the identification, contact, and recruitment protocol, I began journaling. My participants self-selected into the study based on the criteria posted on the flyer. I wrote field and reflective journal notes and incorporated them into the transcript. I conducted member checking and used strategies to reach saturation. During data analysis, I used Ryan and Bernard's (2003) eight observation techniques to find overarching themes while staying close to the raw data. Credibility as a component of trustworthiness is linked to transferability.

Transferability

Transferability demonstrates how and in what conditions the reader can transfer the contents of the study to other contexts (Schloemer & Schröder-Bäck, 2018). Whether the study is transferable varies based on the reader of the research who deciphers if the study is relevant to the work the reader is considering. I presented detailed, clear information and evidence-based references for the reader to determine if the content and assumptions of this study are transferrable (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I used a thick description that focused on the accuracy of field and reflective journaling notes (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This helped me provide context, social meaning, and researcher reflexivity that may transfer to different audiences, situations, and times. I examined the data for a deeper understanding, including awareness of discrepant descriptions and the contextualization of the discrepancy (Ahmad et al., 2014), which increased transferability and dependability.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of research results over time (Guest et al., 2012). The concern is whether a researcher would obtain the same results if they would implement the same research process. I ensured my results are repeatable and consistent for other researchers to arrive at similar findings, interpretations, and conclusions about the data. I provided a robust and detailed account of my experiences during and surrounding data collection using clear written terminology. I detailed explicit connections to the cultural and social contexts that surround data collection to provide a richer and fuller understanding of the research setting. My attention to dependability allows outside researchers and readers to make the transferability judgments themselves.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the strategies I used to confirm each participant's experiences as their own (Wester, 2011). I was confident the research study's findings confirmed the participants' stories and words. It helped that I am a former center-based child care and administrator and was diligent to reduce my risk of bias in that I experienced a practicum with qualified experts in an in-person, BS degree, teacher preparation program. I was continually aware of my potential for partiality and guarded against it. I conducted reflect journaling, wrote field notes in context, asked clarifying questions during the interview to ensure the findings are in the words of the participants. I conducted data analysis from verbatim transcripts. The journaling, field notes, and using a voice recorder to generate verbatim formed my audit trail. I followed ethical procedures throughout the research.

Ethical Procedures

I protected the participant's rights using protocols that fostered the enforcement of ethical principles. I first sought the approval of Walden University's IRB. I provided informed consent to participants, by giving them the consent form. Before beginning the interview, I asked each participant to respond to having read the consent form verbally with the words, *I consent*. Throughout the recruitment, data collection, and reporting process, I kept participants' identities confidential. I assigned each participant a code name (Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on). I removed participant names from all print data and removed the email addresses of participants from my computer system now that the study is complete. I will keep study materials and data secure, with paper files in a locked drawer and digital files on a password-protected computer. I will retain research materials for five years, after which I will destroy them by shredding paper documents and electronically wiping electronic files.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I outlined the research design and rationale, my role as a researcher, and methodology. This included participant selection logic, instrumentation, researcher-developed instruments, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness including ethical procedures. Chapter 4 contains a comprehensive analysis of each participant's reflections and the findings from the study related to the research question.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to determine how online Child Development Associate (CDA) recipients describe the development of practical expertise in early childhood education (ECE) without the benefit of an apprenticeship. Previous research indicated that the online CDA is popular and widely accepted as an ECE teacher credential for those who work in private child care settings (U.S. Department of Health, Education, & Welfare, 2018; Washington & King, 2017). However, it was unknown how online CDA recipients gain practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. I interviewed 10 early childhood teachers to answer a single research question on how recipients of an online CDA described the development of practical expertise in ECE without benefit of an apprenticeship. In this chapter, I describe the setting of the interviews demographics of participants, presents information on the data collection and analysis including discrepant data, describes evidence of trustworthiness, and presents the results of the study. I concluded Chapter 4 with a summary statement.

Setting

I conducted interviews using Zoom telephone with four participants and by telephone with the remaining six participants, and audio recorded interviews using the recording function of Zoom or a recording application on my cell phone. I conducted the interviews from my home office and interviewees each participated from a self-selected location. There were interruptions in three interviews due to disruptions in the participant's environment, one by a family member, one by the participant's pet, and one

by a coworker. These interruptions were brief, and the interviews continued following each interruption without difficulty. Audio quality was good on all recordings.

Demographics

The sample consisted of nine women and one man with a wide range of child care education and experience in a variety of child care center business structures. Two were part-time assistant directors/full-time lead teachers, three were full-time lead teachers, and five were full-time assistant teachers. Seven participants were employed by two owners who independently owned two centers each with privately funded classes for children birth to age 3, and publicly funded prekindergarten classes. Two participants were employed in a publicly funded Head Start program. One participant was employed in a corporate-owned, privately funded center. Childcare teaching experience ranged from 3 to 26 years. Nine participants had worked with multiple age groups from birth to age 5, and one participant had only worked with infants. Eight participants had prior experience working in different center business models and funding structures. Six participants have had their CDA since 2013, two participants since 2017, and two participants since 2019. Demographic data are presented in Table 1.

Participants came from a variety of professional backgrounds. Two participants were introduced to ECE through vocational high school classes. Two participants were stay-at-home mothers immediately prior to classroom teaching with no ECE training. One participant earned a bachelor's degree in ECE. Three participants were students in an online ECE bachelor or master's degree program that does not include an apprenticeship program. Four teachers were native English speakers and readers; six participants were

English speakers and readers, but English was not their first language. Table 1 is an illustration of participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

| | Gender | Role | Center type/Funding | Age group | CDA year |
|-----|--------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| P1 | Female | Lead teacher | Independent/hybrid | Infants | 2019 |
| P2 | Female | Lead teacher | Independent/hybrid | Infants | 2013 |
| P3 | Female | Lead teacher | Independent/hybrid | Twos | 2013 |
| P4 | Female | Assistant teacher | Independent/hybrid | Threes | 2013 |
| P5 | Female | Assistant teacher | Independent/hybrid | Threes | 2013 |
| P6 | Female | Lead teacher | Independent/hybrid | Fours | 2017 |
| P7 | Female | Assistant teacher | Independent/hybrid | Fours | 2013 |
| P8 | Male | Lead teacher | Corporate/private | Threes | 2017 |
| P9 | Female | Assistant teacher | Head Start/public | Fours | 2019 |
| P10 | Female | Assistant teacher | Head Start/public | Fours | 2013 |

Data Collection

After Walden’s IRB approved the study (approval # 09-14-20-0145257), I began the recruitment process. The recruitment process differed slightly from my plan as described in Chapter 3. First, the initial response from posting my recruitment flyer on Facebook generated three responses, of whom only one potential participant responded to

my request to schedule an appointment. However, this person later cancelled the interview appointment. Subsequently, I contacted colleagues I knew through my participation in various organizations. My colleagues posted the recruitment flyer on their Facebook page and consequently three teachers agreed to be interviewed and these three referred seven coworkers who also agreed to interview. I interviewed 10 teachers.

Second, during three separate participant phone interviews, a child, a dog, and a participant's coworker briefly entered the research environment. I resolved this interruption by stopping the phone interview until the research environment returned to include only the participant and myself. Despite the variation in the recruitment and interview process which could have influenced the data collection plan, I managed those changes so that it would not impede the integrity of the data collection process.

As planned, 10 participants either used a Zoom link for the interview, in which case I activated the recording function of this software, or participants dialed my phone number, and I activated my voice recorder. Each participant contributed to the study during a one-time interview conducted over the phone. I manually transcribed 10 voice recorded phone interviews between interview appointments. Interviews lasted between 40 and 55 minutes. I conducted no follow-up interviews. Once interviews were complete, I proceeded to data analysis, beginning with transcribing the interviews.

Data Analysis

I transcribed each interview manually, a process that took between 4 and 8 hours per interview. I emailed each transcript to participants and requested that they check their transcript for accuracy and notify me of any errors. No

participants requested any change. To prepare the transcripts for data analysis, I created a five-column chart in a Word document for each transcript. Five of the columns I aligned with Lofgren's step-by-step instructions on indexing. I labeled the first column "reflections" and wrote journal notes from my inner thoughts of the interview that align with the appropriate transcript line. I labeled the second column "transcript" to capture each line of a transcript. I labeled the third column "codes." I labeled the fourth column "categories." I labeled the fifth column "themes." I labeled nine rows each with one interview question. As I transcribed each transcript, one sentence per line, I typed the participant's responses to each question in the appropriate row, inserted the field notes using red, and bolded the notes in the appropriate transcript line.

Next, I analyzed the 10 transcripts using the coding and thematic analysis method I described in Chapter 3. Using Lofgren (2013) as an example, I began with open coding and transitioned to focused coding later in the process. First, I read while I manually transcribed the data by interview question, followed by two readings examining the data with a specific focus each time. According to Lofgren's systematic process of data analysis, there are three readings before conceptualizing the data to determine the results, discussion, and conclusion. As I transcribed the first transcription sentence by sentence along with the field notes, I got a general impression of the data and wrote down ideas for open coding. When I completed the first transcription, my first reading included adding my reflective journal notes that aligned with the appropriate sentence and removed the interview questions. I continued this procedure for subsequent transcripts. Having

developed a list of open coding ideas, I created open codes grouped by what category names emerged in the category column.

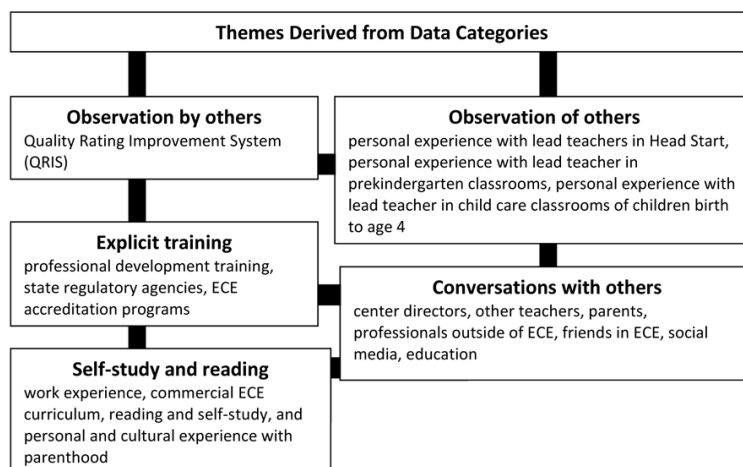
I copied the five-column chart for the first transcript into a separate word document, deleted the reflections and codes column and the field notes. I copied and pasted the remaining nine transcript columns into this word document to create a master table of the 10 participants' transcript sentences. Last, I changed the name of the transcript column to code. Next, I analyze the table for a second reading to focus my coding.

In the codes column, I deleted words to leave behind significant words and phrases per line using Ryan and Bernard's (2003) eight observation techniques to find themes - repetitions, indigenous typologies, metaphors, similarities, differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory-related material. I highlighted the codes to convert text to table. Next under the codes column, line by line, I cut and pasted codes that seem similar, so they came one after another in the table and aligned with the category names in the category column. I added line spaces in the category column and inserted words that provide context of a comment in brackets, as necessary. For the remaining words and phrases, I added each line to existing category names or created additional category names, as necessary.

I identified 196 codes, which I grouped into 19 categories. These categories were Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), personal experience with lead teachers in Head Start, personal experience with lead teacher in

prekindergarten classrooms, personal experience with lead teacher in child care classrooms of children birth to age 4, coworkers, professional development training, state regulatory agencies, ECE accreditation programs, center directors, other teachers, parents, professionals outside of ECE, friends in ECE, social media, education, work experience, commercial ECE curriculum, reading and self-study, and personal and cultural experience with parenthood. To determine the themes, I copied and pasted whole categories so that similar categories, and their codes, were organized one after the other on the Excel file. Then, I copied and pasted categories based on a continuum of participants who gained practical content knowledge from *more knowledgeable others* (MKOs) to participants who had no relationship with MKOs. Participants described insights gained by being observed by others, by observing others through, by engaging in explicit training, from informal interactions with individuals and social media, and from their own self-study and reading. These became the five themes that emerged from the data in this study. The categories and themes are illustrated in Figure 1.

The codes, organized by theme, are presented in Appendix B. The distribution of codes was not consistent across all five themes but ranged from just 17 codes associated with the theme of insights gained by being observed by others to 83 codes associated with the theme of insights gained from self-study and reading. The distribution of codes across themes is illustrated in Table 2.

Figure 1*Themes Derived from Data*

Nearly half of participant responses regarding how they acquired practical expertise in ECE without benefit of an apprenticeship indicated they acquired this on their own, without expert guidance.

Table 2*Distribution of Codes Across Themes*

| Theme | Number of codes | Percentage of total |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Observation by others | 17 | 8.67 |
| Observation of others | 39 | 19.89 |
| Explicit training | 25 | 12.75 |
| Informal conversation | 32 | 16.32 |
| Self-study and reading | 83 | 42.34 |

N=196

Discrepant Data

Three participants contradicted themselves when describing how the CDA program contributed to their practice. Initially in the interview, these participants felt the CDA program was sufficient in providing them what they needed to understand how to apply their knowledge to support children and families. Yet upon answering questions about problem-solving asked later in the interview, these three participants described examples that revealed they did not feel prepared to work with children's behavior challenges, communication with parents and families, and other difficult situations. Participants indicated they gained insights by being observed by others, by observing others, through explicit training, through conversations, and through reading and self-study. In the data analysis, I included both the participants' first declaration about the effectiveness of the online CDA and the subsequent description of the challenges that later revealed to them that they were unprepared.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility in an interview-based study refers to the believability that the data accurately mirror the views of the participants (Guest et al., 2012). To support the accuracy of the data, I followed an interview protocol that was developed with the guidance of an external researcher. I recorded the participants' responses to the interview questions, transcribed those responses verbatim, and sent the transcript to each participant, so they could verify the accuracy of the transcript. I used these procedures to support credibility of my findings.

Transferability refers to the extent that readers can transfer qualitative research findings to contexts beyond the boundaries of a study (Schloemer & Schröder-Bäck, 2018). I supported transferability by providing a thick description of the sample, setting, and the data collection and analysis process. Based on my detailed description, readers can determine if the results of this study can be applied to their own settings and support their research.

Dependability refers to the repeatability of a study with consistent results over time (Guest et al., 2012). I supported dependability by following a clear and consistent study protocol, as described in Chapter 3, by reporting participant fully and accurately, and by deriving results and conclusions from participant data and avoiding reflecting extraneous influences, like my own opinions. I supported dependability in my findings by practicing reflexivity via journaling from the time of IRB approval to the end of data analysis.

Confirmability is the degree to which the results can be corroborated by others (Wester, 2011). I checked and rechecked the data throughout data collection and analysis, to ensure accuracy and to detect any discrepant data, and confirmed by verbatim transcription with each participant. I used my journal and field notes to corroborate my thick description of data collection and analysis. I will retain my raw data for 5 years, should a subsequent researcher wish to confirm my study results.

Results

During the interview, I asked all the participants the same interview questions constructed to answer the single research question, “How do online

CDA recipients describe the development of practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship.” In this section, I will present participant statements to answer the research question. These statements are organized by the themes of insights gained through observation by others, observation of others, explicit training, informal conversations, and prior knowledge and self-study.

Theme 1: Insights Gained through Observation by Others

One theme revealed by participants was knowledge gained by being observed by others, for example technical assistants (TA) via specialists from their local Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) agency. QRIS is a widely used approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs (Cannon et al., 2020). TA specialists may provide coaching, in-person or online education and training, or a combination of both. Four participants described their monthly experience with QRIS. For example, Participant 1 said, “now with Quality Rated [QRIS], you all were the people that came in, and watched, showed us. And I know there were two ladies [TAs] that came in there with me.” Participant 3 agreed, saying

“If some things we don’t understand because [of] sometimes what we do if something happen in our classroom at work and we weren’t sure if we handled it the right way, we would bring it in the classroom, and she [TA] would help us, explain it, ask us what happen, and then we would from that negotiating [negotiate a solution].”

No participant reported being observed by anyone besides the QRIS TA. No one, for example, reported being observed by their state licensing representative, their center

director, or a more experienced colleague. It appeared the QRIS and the *scaffolding* processes became the responsibility of the technical specialists who do not have the daily opportunities or investment as administrators and staff who work in authentic center environments. Participants' descriptions summarized that TA provided teachers information they could immediately apply to their professional needs. Teachers felt interactions with TAs and their guidance improved their skills and increased their confidence about their professional development. Another theme the participants describe were their observation of others, which I describe next.

Theme 2: Insights Gained Through Observing Others

Participants described insights gained from observing others, such as lead teachers and other co-workers. All 10 participants described observing lead teachers to understand the children they worked with. For example, Participant 3 said, "ok when I worked with her [lead teacher], she almost taught me everything she know for the classroom." Participant 10 concurred, saying, "She [lead teacher] was working with more than 20 years. She thought I was a TA [teaching assistant] before. She helped me a lot." Participant 8 indicated, "I had one older [lead] teacher who had worked in the business about 25–30 [years] and had specifically worked at this center 23 years."

All participants described observing teachers to understand the children and the classroom environment. Participant 2 described observations generally saying, "well, you know, you had a lot of different experiences and you were able to observe people." Yet Participant 7 specified observing teachers and said, "I think most of my experience comes from being on the job, just observing other teachers, see what they have, you know."

However, Participant 1 mentioned negative teacher-child interactions and said, “Their [some teachers] way with children is a little bit different. It’s almost like [mimicking the teacher], ‘ok I’ll tell you this, you do what I say, and you do it right now!’” Participant 9 became reflective saying, “unfortunately, not all teachers are there for the children. It’s something you have naturally, you grow it, or you turn it into a ‘monster.’”

Many participants in this study worked as assistant teachers, either currently or previously, and described observing the lead teacher for whom they were assistant. For example, Participant 2, who at the time of this study worked as a lead teacher, described her time as an assistant teacher, saying, “Yes, that was an excellent learning for me but because I wasn’t a teacher at the time, I was an assistant you know, I really didn’t you know, I did whatever the teacher told me to do.”

Participant 4 said

I think because I see all the other people [pre-kindergarten teachers] with college degree, [they] had theirs and how they did it. I think it was a help for me [to] see how to teach. Not that they explained to me like, “oh look.” They was just showing me how they was doing it, by looking at it, and doing it right there in the classroom, but with the [college] courses its teaching you [a] different way.

Participants who worked as assistant teachers in prekindergarten classes or Head Start, suggested the more rigorous credentials required in these positions, compared to those required in child care, contributed to a rich opportunity for learning by observation.

Participant 4 said, “the ladies that were working there [prekindergarten lead teachers]

they had a degree. I would see how they would do with the kids and I would just mimic what they would do.” Participant 2 said, “like when I went to daycare [birth to age 4], it’s a whole different, it’s a whole different field [compared to Head Start].”

Two participants spoke about consultation, diagnostic assessments, and teacher training for individual children suspected to have special needs. Participant 5 said, “we were like having kids with problems. So, she [director] had somebody to come out and observe [the children] from the state. They would give us pointers on how to observe the child or watch him.” Participant 10 described a similar example, saying

Asking the director to make a ticket to that person, so they [state regulatory agency] can come and observe that child and then give me some strategies to help me to how to handle the classroom for that kid and with the other kids.

Neither of these teachers described being observed themselves by these outside experts, or even observing the outside expert as that person worked with the child. Instead, participants who mentioned an outside expert indicated that the child was the only focus of the observation effort.

For many teachers, the lead teacher in the classrooms in which they worked provided the leadership in developing subordinate teachers’ expertise. Participants maintained that their engagement with lead teachers reinforced and expanded their child care knowledge and skills. However, these observations were not described by any participant as a formal component of their teacher preparation, but instead were described as informal experiences dependent on

each participant's curiosity and dedication to learning their craft. In absence of a formal program that includes observation and feedback from experts, the socially mediated process that naturally occurs in center classrooms among teachers aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) theory on social construction of knowledge. Intentionality in a teaching community's social construction of knowledge can differentiate social norms valued as positive and negative child care practice. Participants described when they can link new to established concepts in child care practice, it promotes their need to explore professionally. Participants also described insights gained through explicit training, which I describe next.

Theme 3: Insights Gained Through Explicit Training

Participants described insights gained through explicit training, such as professional development training, training required by state regulatory agencies, and training engaged as part of their center's application for accreditation. Evidence included how participants selected explicit training, the value they ascribed to this training, and the level of initiative required to apply explicit training in developing practical expertise.

In selecting explicit training, participants indicated they had little input into the decision of what training to engage. For example, two participants spoke about training arranged by their employer. Participant 5 said, "I really didn't know where, you know, where to start. So, when my owner start offering those classes [in-center], I just took those classes." Participant 7 concurred, saying, "OK well that is up to my director from the age group I would be teaching at the time they signed me up for that class."

Participants reported their employers purchased a package of online ECE classes for their

employees so they would have the opportunity to select training from a range of options. Participant 5 said, “she gave us the option of my uh well she told us about CCEI [online training class pool]. Well, we did training with them.”

Participant 3 mentioned beginner’s level child care training required by her state of everyone who works in child care and said, “and we do go to classes. My director set us up for classes per year she would tell us I think *Bright from the Start* [state regulatory agency] classes we use, and we have to take those classes once or twice per year.” Participant 3 selected classes her lead teacher selected saying, “she [lead teacher] would go to different classes, schoolbooks, quality from the core, we used to take those classes [together], children’s makeover, quality.”

Participants varied in their assessment of the usefulness of explicit training in improving their practical expertise. Participant 1 said, “one of the things that I thought was very helpful to me was one of those classes where I think *Talk to Me Baby* [online training system]. But yes, there are those classes that we’re supposed to take.”

Participant 2 concurred and said, “I think it was the training that I got from BFTS [Bright from the Start]. And I remember when I went to that class how helpful it was.”

Participant 7 praised her state’s required course in basic child care knowledge and skills saying, “coming from a different country, everything [state regulatory expectations] was different up here [in the United States].” Participant 3 described her efforts to apply learning after attending training and said, “whenever we go to class, [when] I come back [into the classroom], and I practice [what I learned in class].” Participant 7 made clear

that this application was not part of an intentional follow up component of the explicit training, but required participant initiative; she said, “I learned [to apply learning] alone. It’s just different [professional development] classes we go throughout the year, come back to your classroom and apply [what you have learned] to the best of your ability.”

ECE accreditation programs offer explicit training to assist programs to earn recognition from an accrediting agency. Participant 2 suggested that accreditation process encouraged reflection on their teaching practice, saying

I went through a different presentation and it was a lot different. I think it was AdvancED [accreditation process], that’s what it was at (my center).

So, at that time I took AdvancED, it was a lot of work but it, it kinda let’s see now I’m trying to think.

Participant 5 described explicit training from a specialist as part of the NAEYC accreditation process. Participant 5 said, “we did like NAEYC [accreditation process] and so she [the director] has somebody come out from NAEYC. The teacher [asked] from how do that, you know, take notes, take pictures of them?”

Participants described engagement in explicit training as something required and not freely chosen. They suggested that the effectiveness of explicit training was dependent on intentional efforts made by individual participants to apply the training to their own classrooms. Training undertaken as part of an accreditation process inspired reflection on teaching practice.

ECE teachers are adults who choose to work with children. When supervising adults make training decisions for the classroom teacher without their engagement, it may

leave the impression that they assume teachers cannot or will not understand their own needs to facilitate and control their professional development. Participants summarized that longevity in the field, increases their depth of learning and they articulated that their selection of their training needs promote their professional satisfaction. Ultimately, participants felt this feeling of professionalism trickles down into their practice with children. The collaborative nature of explicit training engaged in center-wide experiences suggested insights gained through conversations. These I describe next.

Theme 4: Insights Gained Through Conversations

Participants described insights gained from conversations with center directors, other teachers, parents, friends, and social media. Conversations with center directors were described by participants as directive. For example, Participant 1 said, “[the director] tells us certain things that we needed to work on [in online CDA course materials].” Participant 2 described interactions with their center director as informative of substantive issues, and said, “we really need [the director] to see what’s going on because it’s just gives a better view than, like somebody might say something and somebody says something else.” Other conversations were described as informal interactions among equals.

Participants described engaging with other co-workers about classroom issues in formally constituted teaching teams. Participant 9 described a team approach to problem-solving and said, “as a teaching team, the center director, our other lead teachers, our other assistants, these are still in our teaching team ‘bubble.’” Many of these teacher-to-

teacher conversations were described as happening in formally-constituted teaching teams. Participant 8 talked about such a teaching team, saying

We have what's called staff professional development nights, which we do once a month. We get together as a whole entire school cohort of teachers which was really cool and training and we listen to a seminar and then have a discussion.

Participant 10 described teaching team members working collaboratively on a specific task, saying, "as a team, we need to write documents [assessment]." Conversations within the center, with directors or with teaching colleagues, were organized by the center administration and seemed to address predetermined issues. These formal conversations may have contributed to practical expertise, but that was not indicated by participants in this study.

Conversations with parents were described as more informal and engaged on an as-needed basis in response to issues with specific children. Participant 2 said, "I kinda just had to invite mom to come in a couple of times so that she could help us." Participant 3 concurred saying, "you would ask the parents. I learned you know how to pick her up I know because I ask [parents] questions." Participant 10 also agreed saying, "I went to the parents. I asked for help." Participant 1 described attending an in-person cohort of mothers who discussed child-rearing and sometimes scheduled ECE professionals to attend as guests. Participant 1 reported, "they [mothers] get together and they discuss things. Some of the learning I'm getting now it's through associating with these Millennials that have the babies now."

Conversations with friends were another source of insight for participants.

Participant 10 said

I use a phone, laptop, friends to call, friends is as educated more than me, like [friend's name], and other friends to call and say, 'hey I have this issue, how I'm going to handle, or I need help the situation, how I'm going to do it how, what is the right way to solve that problem?'

Participant 8 talked about the influence of someone with whom she had a personal relationship, saying

My [romantic] partner is honestly one of the greatest influences on me.

We are constantly talking about what we do at work and I think that is one of the advantages [to] me of both of us being in the same field.

Participant 10 said she asks advice of her friend "that works with special needs kids."

A few participants described social media as a source of insight but its use ranged from simply looking up information to responding to comments on a *Facebook* page.

Participant 6 described using social media as a resource for planning classroom activities, and said, "I will go on *Pinterest* and just type in activities for what kind of age group."

Participant 10 said

I belong to [specific *Facebook* page] for social emotional, or one for teachers, I don't remember, but I have like three or four. I'm looking at some teachers [on social media], they put issues their writing and [I] make comments on that.

Participant 6 summed up the influences of conversations with individuals when she said her influences included, “the administration there and the people that I was surrounded by, and parents. Those are pretty much my influences: the people I’m surrounded by, and the feedback I got from everyone in my corner.” Participant 10 concurred and said, “still, I’m learning that I need to have more helpful people above me who have more knowledge.”

Interactions that occurred on time for which employees were paid were pre-planned by the director. Interactions that occurred on participant’s free time or as part of their self-initiated contacts with parents tended to be informal information exchanges. Language is used as social speech to communicate and interact with others. Yet the kind of language may be influenced by the formality of the environment in which language is used. Issues predetermined by others, especially of a supervisory capacity, can inform practical expertise but may have boundaries of language for which employees may not feel they should cross. Participants maintained that the informality of language tends to shed a different light on resolving problems. Candid talk that is open and honest, participants felt removes language boundaries to get to the depth of a problem. Self-initiated development of expertise is the focus of the final theme, which I describe next.

Theme 5: Insights Gained Through Self-study and Reading

Participants described insight gained from application of prior knowledge and through self-study, such as through their education and work experience engaged prior to joining the ECE field, reading and self-initiated education, personal and cultural experience with parenthood, and personal qualities that enabled development of insight.

For example, several participants described their high school education experience as the starting point for their development of practical expertise in ECE. Participant 2 said, “I did vocational school and high school, the childcare part. But I never worked in a childcare setting you know through high school.” Participant 7 said, “our high school, ok we call it vocational. I’m learning regular subjects, early childhood was, so we used I think you guys call it intern or something like that when you send students out to these jobs.” Participant 1 described inspiration gained from working on a degree in nursing, saying, “That [nursing training] had a lot to do with it. I did go, I started nursing school, but I didn’t finish ok.” This participant did not say, however, if their unfinished attempt at a nursing degree led to their career change to the less technical ECE, or if they discovered during their nursing training that aspects of pediatric nursing inspired them to shift their focus to ECE. Participant 4 described arriving at a career in ECE because they could not find training in public school teacher; they said, “I went there, just to have a [ECE] certificate I went to that college and take a class for teaching, but nobody taught me.” Participant 9 described looking explicitly for an ECE degree, saying, “I’m browsing all kinds of educational websites since I go to university pursuing a [online bachelor’s] degree in child development.” Participant 10 said, “so right now, I’m obtaining my [online] bachelors in ECE.”

Only one participant described self-initiated educational experiences. The participant described engaging in webinars, self-selected professional development training, or workshops offered by libraries, health departments, or other entities.

Participant 5 said, “I take classes and even when we don't have to, I try to go beyond that what they require me to.”

Participants described prior work experiences, paid and unpaid, that influenced participant’s decision to work in child care. Participant 5 has memories of her youth saying, “I used to like it [babysitting], so that's how I got into that.” Participant 1 spoke from her experience in nurse’s training and said, “but sometimes you kinda learn something it kind of sticks with you and you have to review it.” Participant 4 began as parent volunteer at her children’s school saying

I used to have my own childcare back in Florida. I started when my kids started going to school, the teachers I use to go to the school I helped the teacher I would teach them [her children] whatever they was learning in school.

These prior work experiences describe an affinity for working with children and working in an educational environment that seemed resonant for these participants.

Two participants cited insights gained through following their center’s commercial ECE curriculum. However, both participants indicated these curricula are limited and required them to find supplemental material. Participant 5 said

We use the Abeka [curriculum], so we have a book, we have it teach lessons. And then we have books too. And then but you have more stuff too that we do the curriculum stuff, but then we add more stuff to it.

Participant 2 talked about the lack of individualism in curricula in child care saying, “when I was in a daycare, all that was like ‘cookie cutter;’ it was already made for them,

the curriculum.” No participants described reading books, websites, articles, or other material related to child development or teaching practice.

Four participants described their personal experience with parenthood as influencing their practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship to teach young children. For example, participant 1 said, “Ah yes, because I knew how I ran my girls [daughters]. I was one for education and yeah, that had and yes, influence on me too. I was a stay-at-home mom.” Participant 3 said, “yes, I know when I started [teaching], the only experience I had was being a mother.” Participant 4 said, “and I had two kids. So, I just teach my children. God blessed me that I was able to stay at home. When they got out of school, I was right there with them.”

Five participants observed personal family experiences from their mothers or parents raising their siblings, other family members, and themselves. For example, Participant 10 describing informal and formal ECE education said, “my mom raised [us]; what she taught me even [though] she's not educated mother, but sometimes a life makes the person [who is] less educated than you are, to educate.” Participant 6 described an inter-generational cohort of parents in her family and said, “they [parents] kind of [learned life lessons] so it follows that so then we begin to teach others and educate others the way we were taught.” Participant 10 listened to discussions of her older siblings as a younger sibling and said, “in my country, all my sisters were teachers for high school, elementary, and [childcare] directors.” Participant 1 said

I live with my sister. She does home school and stuff because she was with another school that was a private black school, but she [participant's

two-year-old niece] will be amazing with the level she's on, because we talk to her and she can talk to you.

Participant 5 said

Just being around you know just keeping through my nieces and nephew when they was little. And so, I just took that experience from there and went from there.

One participant suggested that cultural imperatives influenced their work in ECE.

Participant 1 said

In this world they getting ready to, that they going to be in the future, they gotta speak up. I think our black kids need to start expressing themselves.

Because sometimes we [society] kinda shut our [black] kids down.

Cultural comparison was part of Participant 7's reflection on their growth in teaching, saying

One of the things I recognized were I did not know that there were different kinds of abuse. We [teachers in her naïve home community] see a child come dirty, unkept, you don't just back home we would put that child into a bath, give that child and send that child on their merry way.

Up here [in America], it's like more firm, kind of thing that back home I don't really take it for granted. That's just our culture, it's just our way of, you know, living and being.

Parenting, in the context of nuclear and extended family, and in cultural context, provided participants with insight into ECE practice. Participant 3 said

If the child is crying you know children who cry more, then I know that child need my attention. You know, the child, talk to the child, the child. Just be there for the child maybe the child wants to be held. So it teaches me how because every child needs [attention].

Many participants relied to a great extent on themselves as the source of their expertise, citing trial and error learning, experience, natural talent, and other personal qualities as the basis for their development of practical expertise. For example, Participant 6 said they were encouraged to experiment until successful saying, “I would say just pretty much say trial and error. I was just kind of coming up with new things and seeing what worked and what didn't work.” Participant 10 also described instruction to use trial-and-error learning received from the center director, saying

The director told me, “you need to try to do it by yourself. If it's not working, then come to me.” So even if I have learned no knowledge [to problem solve], I tried to look for it [solutions] so get that to help myself and the child.

Participant 4 described long years of practice in the field saying, “I just know, you know; I just because you learn with children for so long. It's just I learn it.” Participant 5 described and the on-the-job training aspect of ECE work when they said, “I was really excited in my first class. The kids learned stuff [about me], but I learned stuff too [about them].”

Six of the 10 participants described their natural ability for teaching or their affinity for young children as the source of their practical expertise. Participant 9 said

It's something that you inherit, but either you have a grow or you just let it go away from your life. For me it's a mindset thing. It is the way you are wired, part of it, genetically, but it is the way you adapt your life, and you adapt the way you are thinking. Some people I think don't belong to that major [early childhood].

Participant 4 said, "I just come up with these stuff [ideas] and they [children] just go with it." Participant 6 also cited natural ability and said, "honestly just being me being a creative individual that plays a lot [in early childhood]." Participant 8 described what talents they bring to the classroom saying, "I also do calligraphy and visual arts. Oh yeah, I am definitely a creative at heart, most definitely."

Participant 1 described teaching young children as something that starts with the curriculum but requires intuitive action by the teacher to expand on that; they said, "don't just give them [children] what the book say that approach, push them a little bit further, you know?" Participant 7 contrasted innate ability for teaching with skills learned through formal training, saying, "Teachers who are trained versus those who are not trained think... will probably [have] a different answer because the teacher who is trained are looking for certain things, because they are trained, a trained eye and an untrained eye." Participant 8 was similarly reflective and said

In literally every single conversation I have with everybody, I'm thinking in terms of society and how my choices and my words affect others and how that translates to the greater sociological advancement of my community and of America in general.

Participants appeared to believe that their work in ECE was the natural result of their life course up to this point and their natural inclinations and abilities. They relied on their ability to figure things out through trial and error, and even indicated their center director supported an on-the-job learning approach to developing expertise. Participants indicated they did not read in the field and only rarely engaged in educational experiences not required to keep their jobs. Teaching and learning evolves the longer a teacher lives. The experiences, personal and professional, inform their lives and their teaching. Participants in this study, as a group, had an ECE professional career that spanned 3–26 years. Like all people, teachers validate new information based on their pre-existing knowledge or schema to construct meaning for themselves (Vygotsky, 1978). That validation is tied to how they feel about themselves as professionals. Other than the four themes, this last theme described how participants rated their own expertise and self-efficacy for teaching and suggested that these participants were not only satisfied with their work but believed they were in some way destined for it.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study using interviews was to explore how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of a supervised apprenticeship. From 10 online CDA recipients, I collected data through one-to-one interviews over a four-week period with early childhood teachers currently working in child care centers. Participants described the insights into ECE practice they gained from five sources, including observation by others, observing others, explicit training, conversations, and self-study and reading. These five sources were the themes

that emerged from data that included 196 codes and 19 categories. Results of this study indicated that early childhood teachers who do not experience an apprenticeship as part of their preservice or in-service training rely on their natural ability for teaching; trial-and-error; experience with children, including as a parent; insights gleaned from conversations with other people inside and outside the field; and fulfillment of job requirements posed by their center director, accreditation bodies, and their state licensing agency. This ad hoc and multi-directional experience resulted in on- the-job training that appeared to contribute to teacher self-efficacy. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the conclusions of the study and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how online CDA recipients developed practical expertise in early childhood education (ECE) without the benefit of an apprenticeship. I used open-ended questions to interview 10 recipients of an online CDA credential, who work with children age birth to age 5 in independent child care centers in Southeast, West, and Northwest United States. While apprenticeship is a feature of teacher preparation in public school contexts (Naughton, 2016), it is assumed but missing in childcare teacher preparation (Salamon et al., 2016). It is unknown how teachers who earned a CDA credential online gained practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship. The data revealed that online CDA participants believed they gained insight into practical expertise in EC through five pathways, which emerged as themes in this study: insights gained through observation by others, through observation of others, through explicit training, through informal conversations, and through and self-study and reading. I begin this chapter with an interpretation of these findings, follow that with limitations that arose in the conduct of my study, recommendations and implications that derive from this study, and the study's conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study revealed participants' insights that answered the single research question: How do online CDA recipients describe the development of practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an

apprenticeship? My research extends knowledge in the peer-reviewed literature and is presented here in the context of the literature and social constructivism conceptual framework by theme.

Interpretation of Theme 1: Insights Gained through Observation by Others

One theme revealed by participants was knowledge gained by being observed by others, specifically TA specialists from their local QRIS agency. Participants described how instrumental it was to be observed by and receive feedback from a TA while teaching in the classroom, and to be able to also engage a TA in personal consultation services, although these observations occurred only monthly. Participants viewed TAs as experts with practical expertise to share. Participants' experience with TAs aligns with apprenticeship as described by Collins et al. (1989). Zalta (2012) differentiated teacher preparation and training as *knowing about* content knowledge contrasted with *knowing how* to apply content knowledge. Huang (2017) described the difference between *knowing about* and *knowing how* as the difference between intellectual understanding and appreciation of practical skills. Geerts et al. (2018) and Boscala (2015) maintained that acquisition of knowledge is not enough for teachers to function in the child care setting with people and materials. Yet the participants described appreciating TA's *knowing about* or their practical skills as experts in child care settings that are complex, dynamic, and constantly changing.

Participants explained they looked to TA specialists as *more knowledgeable others* (MKOs) delivering evidence-based expertise. Experts with practical expertise apply content knowledge creatively (Keestra, 2017), and can manage emerging

challenges in a variety of situations (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2018). Participants' statements summarized that TAs provided information they could immediately apply to their professional needs which improves their skills and increase their confidence. Wood et al. (1976) argued that scaffolding enables novices to increasingly learn knowledge independently while MKOs gradually adjust their degree of support with the novice. In this study, participants explained they looked to QRIS TA specialists as MKOs delivering evidence-based expertise. Yet TA coaching sessions could amount to as little as 30 minutes per month per teacher. Development of practical expertise requires an apprenticeship relationship with an MKO that includes being observed by the MKO and being provided with scaffolded support to ensure practical success (Wood et al., (1976). No teacher described being observed by anyone else or receiving any sort of individualized guidance from another MKO. It appeared the scaffolding process might have become the responsibility of TAs who did not have the daily opportunities to work with teachers. Although development of practical expertise requires an apprenticeship relationship with an MKO that includes being observed by the MKO and being provided with scaffolded support to ensure practical success, teachers in this study indicated they received very little of this sort of guidance as they endeavored to develop practical expertise in ECE. This suggested teachers needed to do their own observations of what other teachers do.

Interpretation of Theme 2: Insights Gained Through Observing Others

A second theme that emerged from this study was the theme of insights into ECE practice gained through participants' observation of others. Vygotsky (1978) asserted that

learning comes before actual development, so learning through observation might be an important first step in developing one's own practical expertise. Most of the participants began their ECE teaching profession as an assistant teacher or were still working as an assistant teacher, in collaboration with and under the direction of a lead teacher.

Participants felt they gained practical expertise by observing their lead teachers apply childcare knowledge in everyday actions. Participants recalled that their decision to mimic their lead teacher's actions depended on whether the lead teacher's behavior fit into participants' schema of knowledge and experience about childcare and whether the lead teacher's actions seemed to have a positive effect on children. This aligned with Keestra (2017), who said that novices who have access to an MKO must decide what in the MKO to follow, before attempting to acquire the skill the MKO has for themselves, and later improving on what the MKO does. However, Van de Pol et al. (2010) determined the MKO's purpose is to develop novices' understanding of nuances of practice, appreciation for concepts that underlie a field of practice, and powers of critical analysis necessary to think and constructively apply learning in different situations.

Participants did not describe the expert-novice relationship with their lead teachers as MKOs who scaffolds a complex task (Wood et al., 1976) in which they might otherwise make errors or fail (Vygotsky, 1978). As assistant teachers, participants described their responsibility as to provide support to the lead teacher. If they gained practical expertise, it was happenstance. True practical expertise results in actions that differentiate among situations and are appropriate for the context (Boscala, 2015). No participant described intentionally observing their lead teacher as a deliberate practice.

Teachers in this study expressed admiration for their lead teachers and respect for lead teachers who held a college degree in ECE. They credited their lead teacher with teaching them by example. Yet no participant described intentionally observing their lead teacher as a deliberate practice. What I found interesting was what the former and current assistant teachers and current lead teachers did not say. Considering all the opportunities to observe lead teachers as they engaged in interactions, skill building, and cognitive stimulation of children that occur in the day-to-day facilitation of a classroom, most of the participants focused only on responses to challenging behavior.

Although children's behavior can inform teachers on the effectiveness of their lessons in meeting the developmental needs of the child, the appropriateness of environmental arrangement, teachers' classroom management skills, and the effect of teachers' demeanor, teachers in this study appeared to consider behavior as a discrete issue and described a reactive stance instead of a proactive one. This suggested that informal observation of a lead teacher is insufficient to support the understanding of nuances of practice, appreciation for concepts that underlie a field of practice, and powers of critical analysis that Van de Pol et al. (2017) found to be essential outcomes of apprenticeship with an MKO.

The social construction of knowledge requires intentional *scaffolding* of complex tasks, so that observation of a lead teacher that is unintentional and indeliberate is inadequate to develop practical expertise in comparison to an apprenticeship or practicum experience (Aydin et al., 2015; Snow et al., 2018). Participants in this study described

how additional supports would benefit their practice and enhance their ability to apply knowledge, given their lack of a supervised apprenticeship.

Interpretation of Theme 3: Insights Gained Through Explicit Training

A third theme that emerged from the data were insights gained through explicit training, such as professional development training, training required by state regulatory agencies, and training engaged as part of their center's application for accreditation. ECE accreditation programs can be in-center, local, state, regional, or national. Some of the seasoned participants in this study described continuing to take training intended for beginners, sometimes repeating the training sessions because no other training was offered. Other participants took training paid for and chosen by their employer and conducted on-site at the center, or took training purchased by their employer as online group packages from which teachers chose classes according to their interest or the perceived usefulness of a particular class.

Many participants were at a loss to describe their training needs and some participants said they relied on others to suggest classes to take or mimicked the classes their lead teachers took. According to Salomon et al. (2016), a widespread presumption that women naturally knew how to teach small children has supported lack of attention to the explicit development of practical expertise, and the value of explicit training. This contrasted with the professional development experiences required of prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers (Burns et al., 2016). However, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) found that many professional development initiatives at every education level, including online training, do not contain the decisive factors to transfer learning and appear to

typically be ineffective in supporting changes in teacher practices and student learning. Explicit training, alone, may be insufficient to gain practical expertise.

Cianciolo and Sternberg (2018) asserted that practical expertise may precede the ability to recognize a need for explicit training, to select appropriate explicit training, and to profit from explicit training in a way that contributes to development of practical expertise. Costa and Kallick (2008) concurred when they said the novice must grasp and assume the “habits of mind” (para 1) shared by masters or MKOs. Acquiring habits of mind, Bransford et al. (1999) claimed, elevates the novice’s cognitive processes. Without already achieving habits of mind through apprenticeship to an MKO, participants in this study were left to their own initiative and interpretation on how to select and apply explicit training. Therefore, although participants in this study believed they acquired practical expertise through explicit training, their own description of how they selected and learned from this training suggested explicit training added little to participants’ practice expertise. The lack of practical guidance received from MKOs, observation of lead teachers, and explicit training, as described so far, suggests that teachers might seek consultation from others.

Interpretation of Theme 4: Insights Gained Through Conversations

The fourth theme participants described included insights gained from conversations with center directors, other teachers, parents, friends, and social media. Participants described the collaborative nature of teacher cohorts and teams from the perspective of professionalism and inclusiveness, formally and informally, in the teaching profession but did not indicate this as a means of

gaining practical expertise. Community, where social interaction occurs, plays a central role in an individual's construction of meaning (Vygotsky, 1978). Yet, the task of the MKO was to assess the abilities of the novice in the moment, determine the point at which the novice needs assistance, and to step in to provide that assistance, otherwise known as *scaffolding* (Wood et al., 1976). Participants did not describe participation in a *scaffolding* process in how they gained practical expertise through teacher cohorts and teams, nor that they regarded conversational partners as MKOs.

Some participants relied on the leadership of their center directors to direct them, formally and informally, on how to solve problems. Parents, participants described, were consulted about their children, and friends, who either had knowledge in concern or who just served as a sounding-board, helped participants gain perspective in consideration of a practical child care problem. Although directors, fellow teachers, parents, and friends individually may have been sufficiently knowledgeable in practical matters to serve as MKOs, to be effective MKOs must consider what novices know, then scaffold instruction, and monitor novices as they put new techniques into practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, social media, as participants described it, did not include back-and-forth communication, but was primarily a one-way channel by which to provide or receive facts. Social media was cited by participants as a method by which they developed practical expertise, but this did not include expert support for a novice in the development of practical expertise or exchange of supportive feedback.

The informal quality of casual conversations and social media as ways participants described gaining insight into ECE practice might be tied to historic views of

early childhood practice on the fitness of the largely female early childhood workforce grounded in women's presumed maternal instincts (Salamon et al., 2016). Vygotsky (1978) maintained social interactions are crucial to scaffold the mastery of a complex task by a novice who otherwise might make errors or fail in the task altogether, but that these interactions must include an MKO who can provide guidance and correction. MKOs were not part of participants' description of insights gained through conversations. The lack of support from MKOs, as described by participants throughout this study, suggests teachers were left to figure things out for themselves.

Interpretation of Theme 5: Insights Gained Through Self-study and Reading

Finally, the fifth theme that emerged as participants described how they believed they developed practical expertise from application of prior knowledge and through self-study. I included in this theme such mechanisms as participants' education separate from their explicit training in ECE, work experience engaged prior to joining the ECE field, reading, personal and cultural experience with parenthood, and personal qualities that participants described enabled their development of insight. For example, participants described their high school courses in child development, reading of curriculum guides, prior nursing training, and volunteer experience in their own children's elementary school classrooms. These examples may represent Vygotsky's (1978) tenet of social interaction through community and may contribute to personal construction of meaning. Yet these kinds of social interactions do not include guidance from an MKO and so are not sufficient for gaining practical expertise in child care settings.

Participants described their experience as adolescent babysitters and their experiences as a parent and as an observer of parenting in their extended family and in the families of friends. Participants also described their own inventiveness and a willingness to just try something and see if it worked. Experiences described by participants in support of this theme aligned with the work of Salamon et al. (2016), who found that early childhood practice is based on implicit beliefs and common-sense notions about childrearing, and a naïve view of the fitness of the largely female early childhood workforce grounded in women's presumed maternal instincts. The presumption that women naturally know how to teach small children has contributed to a lack of attention to the explicit development of practical expertise, and ignorance regarding the possible effect on children of teachers' naïve practices (Salamon et al., 2016). For example, one participant in this study said her co-workers had to remind her that she that needed to abide by certain health and safety rules that were different from those she followed at home as a mother.

Self-study and reading are part of constructivism, in that Vygotsky (1978) asserted that learners actively construct their knowledge and meaning from their experiences. However, each person's realm of experience is limited, so that collaboration with MKOs is necessary for novices to develop a complete sense of the field and of themselves in it (Vygotsky, 1978). It is critical that novices learn best practices from an MKO, through collaboration in an authentic environment (Lave, 1991) and develop the values and perspectives of experts in the field through enculturation provided by an MKO (Collins et al., 1989). Participants in this study relied on self-study, personal experience,

and reading, as indicated by the fact that 42% of the codes recorded from the data pertained to this theme. This self-reliance bypasses the scaffolding of complex tasks that occurs in a community of practitioners, which underlined Vygotsky's (1978) argument about the social construction of knowledge.

Summary

In this study, participants rarely described experiencing any sort of apprenticeship, in which they were guided in developing practical expertise by a master practitioner whose task was to nurture and develop their skill and develop in them the professional standards of the ECE field (see Knight, 2012). They also did not describe to deliberate efforts on their part to seek sources of insight regarding practical expertise. In fact, participants in my study expressed puzzlement over what I meant by interview questions like, "How did you figure out how to apply that knowledge [from the online CDA preparation program] to what happens in the classroom with real children?" Before answering, each participant hesitated and asked clarifying questions to better understand what I meant by "applying knowledge learned to everyday classroom practice." The idea that *knowing how* is distinct from *knowing what*, to use Zalta's (2012, para 1) wording, so that learning how might be a distinct step in the process of field mastery, was unfamiliar to my participants. Mostly, they said, they just figured it out.

Most participants believed they gained practical expertise and constructed meaning for themselves through observation, training, conversations, self-study and reading. The findings expressed in the participants' own words demonstrated that they did not understand the meaning of the application of practical expertise. Yet a few

participants intuitively knew they were missing something. The lack of apprenticeship opportunities and scaffolded support provided to child care teachers is in contrast to the apprenticeship required of public school prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, as described by Burns et al. (2016). In describing this contrast, this study extends the literature regarding training and development of child care teachers and suggests actions that could be taken to bring the preparation of child care teachers closer to that required of public school teachers. This notion will be addressed later in this chapter. First, I will describe limitations that may affect the transferability or validity of study results.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation that may have affected the results of this study was associated with the need to conduct interviews remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic ongoing at the time of this study. Three interviews were briefly interrupted by a child, a dog, and a participant's co-worker, as each entered the interview environment during three separate interviews. Each participant and I stopped talking until the interview environment included only the participant and myself. No interview was cut short for this reason.

In addition, it is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic affected study results because many child care centers at which participants worked were closed or on reduced enrollment at the time of the study. While this would not necessarily have affected recall of how participants acquired practical expertise in ECE without benefit of an apprenticeship, the disruption of child care center conduct at the time of the study may have affected responses in unknown ways.

Recommendations

I recommend that this study be replicated using a variety of early childhood educators who earned their CDA through online delivery, including providers in home-based childcare settings, military center and home-based childcare programs, faith-based programs, and employer-sponsored programs. Understanding how early childhood teachers who work in a variety of settings describe the development of practical expertise in ECE without the benefit of an apprenticeship may provide insight into transferability of this study's findings.

Another recommendation is to replicate this study with teachers who earned a CDA credential through in-person delivery of the program. The CDA, delivered in-person, also does not include the supervision of a qualified expert or mentor. However, the presence of an in-person instructor, who might be queried on practical problems and who might provide guidance in professional standards of the field, could affect how participants believe they gained practical expertise in their CDA program. Study of participants who chose in-person delivery of their CDA program might also reduce the emphasis of participants in this study on independent and trial-and-error learning. Online delivery may be more attractive to teachers who prefer to work without any supervision, so replication of this study with teachers who chose in-person delivery may yield different results.

My final recommendation is to conduct an observational study, in which a researcher shadows a teacher who earned a CDA online to see what happens that might contribute to the teacher's practical knowledge. Lave (1991) argued that the acquisition of practical knowledge is embedded in an authentic activity which is situated in context,

and that social interaction and collaboration are essential components of the process of acquisition of practical knowledge. By shadowing the online CDA recipient while in their classroom setting, the researcher could observe a teacher's gain of practical expertise through events situated within authentic activities with young children.

Implications

One implication for practice derived from this study is ECE teachers may benefit from individualized guidance from their center directors and lead teachers regarding choice of professional development. Participants in this study described professional development that was selected for everyone in the center, which might not have provided individual teachers with the support they needed or enrolled in professional development that their lead teacher or other teachers enrolled in, without personal reflection on what they needed to learn. Center directors could be more proactive in guiding ECE teachers in choosing professional development based on their individual needs. In this way, teachers may be encouraged to be more reflective on their professional development needs and may benefit more from the training they take.

Another implication derived from this study is that the lead teachers could engage their assistant teachers in an apprenticeship experience. Job duties described or implied by participants in this study indicated that assistant teachers are not treated by lead teachers as lead-teachers-in-training but as if they will always serve in an assistant role. Currently, teacher assistants typically act as bottom-level employees right up to the moment they are promoted to a classroom of their own. There is little effort to intentionally teach assistant teachers how to do what lead teachers do or to provide them

with developmental feedback. Lead teachers typically took no responsibility for intentional *scaffolding* of the development of practical expertise in assistant teachers, but they could take on this role. State agencies could call on center administrators to change the job description of lead teachers to include deliberate action to develop the practical expertise of assistant teachers. Each classroom that included a lead teacher and an assistant already included an MKO to develop the practical expertise of assistants. Center directors who capitalized on the expert-novice structure already existing in their classrooms can do much to support the apprenticeship of assistant teachers and create a professional cadre of teachers who possess practical expertise.

A further implication of this study involves the CDA program itself. As described earlier, the CDA program originally included an apprenticeship component that accounted for 50% of the program. The apprenticeship component was discontinued when the program lost federal funding and became a self-funded entity. An implication, arising from the demonstration in this study that CDA recipients experienced very little or no guidance in development of practical expertise, is that the Council for Professional Development should reactivate the apprenticeship component of the CDA program. I suggest the Council for Professional Recognition partner with organizations that offer paid early childhood teacher apprenticeships or explore again support from federal agencies interested in improving ECE.

The study results present implications for positive social change. The results suggest that ECE teachers who completed a CDA online did not experience much in the way of an apprenticeship, but that they welcomed the

small amount of one-to-one guidance they received from QRIS TAs. The need for apprenticeship seems clear, given that participants described developing practical expertise primarily through trial and error and self-study. Therefore, the intentional addition of apprenticeship in any form would fill a gap in ECE teacher preparation and may lead to better outcomes for children. If center directors were to take advantage of the built-in expert-novice connection already existing in many early childhood classrooms, or if the Council for Professional Recognition were to revive the apprenticeship component of the original CDA, teachers may develop practice expertise in a planned, intentional way. Children would then be taught by teachers who not only “know what” but also “know how,” which should lead to better outcomes for children.

Conclusion

Formal apprenticeship dates at least to the 12th century yet is one component of ECE teacher preparation and professional development that lacks consistency. Because early childhood spans birth to age eight, two distinctly different school systems deliver early care and education, taught by diversely prepared and credentialed teachers. Research is rich in how teachers of public kindergarten to grade three, and preschool teachers in publicly funded programs, are guided in developing practical expertise in teaching. However, teachers who work in independently funded child care centers receive no apprenticeship experience prior to their work in classrooms. This lack of apprenticeship includes teachers who earn a CDA credential through online delivery. Participants in this study confirmed that very little in their experience as employees, including their CDA preparation, included any sort of observation or analysis of their

teaching. Nearly half of participants said they developed practical expertise in ECE through their own self-study and reading, or by trial and error.

The value of apprenticeship has been established across diverse fields of endeavor, and through expert-novice research (Collins et al., 1989; Lave, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). The importance of apprenticeship in early childhood practice was acknowledged even in the original iteration of the CDA (Vincent & Hamby, 1981). The loss of the CDA apprenticeship component has left teachers without any formal method by which to develop practical expertise, so that participants in this study were confused by what development of practical expertise might mean. The results of this study indicated that early childhood teachers welcome the limited guidance they now receive from QRIS TAs, and that they might benefit from more extensive and explicit apprenticeship experiences. Given the importance of ECE in children's social and cognitive development, more extensive and explicit programs of apprenticeship for early childhood teachers may increase their effectiveness and contribute to children's academic success.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. You learned a lot of things in your 120-hour CDA preparation program and in creating your CDA portfolio. How did you figure out how to apply that knowledge to what happens in the classroom with real children?
2. How much have you asked anyone you work with or someone else you know to help you figure out how to apply classroom knowledge you gained in your CDA to the real-life classroom?
3. How did your CDA preparation program and the portfolio process help you to identify problems that come up in the classroom with real children?
4. How did your CDA preparation program help you know how to resolve those problems?
5. How much have you asked anyone you work with or someone else you know to help you identify and resolve problems with children in the classroom?
6. How did your CDA preparation program and the portfolio process cause you to think about children and your teaching role in new ways?
7. How much do you think early childhood teachers think about children and teaching differently than other people do?
8. How much did someone you work with or someone else you know guides your thinking in new ways, so you now think like an early childhood professional?
9. Overall, how did your CDA preparation program and the portfolio process help you become a good teacher, even though your CDA program did not include any sort of real-life coaching or student teaching aspect?

Appendix B: Codes and Themes

| Codes | Themes (<i>n</i>) |
|--|--|
| <p>I think it was the trainings that I got BFTS [state regulatory agency]. And I remember when I went to that class how helpful it was.</p> <p>We were going to work with BFTS as somebody that deals with special needs.</p> <p>And we do go to classes. My director set us up for classes per year she would tell us I think BFTS classes the we use and we have to take those classes once or twice per year.</p> <p>She [lead teacher] would go to different classes, school books, quality from the core, we used to take those classes, children's makeover, quality.</p> <p>We were like having kids with problems. So she [director] had somebody to come out and observe from the state. They would give us pointers on how to observe the child or watch him.</p> <p>One of the things I recognized were I did not know that there were different kinds of abuse. We see a child come dirty, unkept, you don't just back home [her country] we would put that child into a bath, give that child and send that child on their merry way. Up here it's like more firm. Kind of thing that back home I don't really take it for granted. That's just our culture, it's just our way of, you know, living and being.</p> <p>Coming from a different country, everything [state regulatory rules] was different up here.</p> <p>Asking the director to make a ticket to that person, so they [state regulatory agency] can come and observe that child and then give me some strategies to help me to how to handle the classroom for that kid and with the other kids.</p> <p>Now with Quality Rated [Quality Rating Improvement System [QRIS]], you all were the people that came in, and watched, showed us.</p> <p>And I know there were two ladies [Quality Rated technical assistants] that came in there with me.</p> <p>And that [Quality Rated] was very helpful, that was very helpful.</p> <p>But yes now the [Quality Rated] TA [technical assistant] teacher she was helpful, too.</p> <p>I got a lot from CDA, but you all [Quality Rated] took it a step further.</p> <p>She (Quality Rated technical assistant) told me she said I want you to do, I want you to take that class. And I said ok.</p> <p>If somethings we don't understand because sometimes what we do if something happen in our classroom at work and we weren't sure if we handled it the right way, we would bring it in the classroom and she [Quality Rated technical assistant] would help us explain it, ask us what happen and then we would from that negotiating.</p> <p>Quality Rating is completely now its kinda like different. Then you have to now change your mindset because they don't want to teach well they believe the children will learn more by playing than actually learning through paper.</p> <p>We have a coach for the QPI [QRIS] in that we already have but it's a couple times in the year but our coach stop by, watch us doing things.</p> | <p>Participant knowledge gained by being observed by others (17)</p> |

Table continues

| Codes | Themes (n) |
|---|--|
| <p>Yes, that was that was an excellent learning for me [Head Start] but because I wasn't a teacher at the time I was an assistant you know I really didn't, you know I did whatever the teacher told me to do.</p> <p>And then you have all those [Head Start] special educators that come in to review all the stuff or.</p> <p>Like when I went to daycare, it's a whole different, it's a whole different field [compared to Head Start].</p> <p>Because Head Start has all those requirements that you have to do.</p> <p>Head Start and Early Head Start, these agencies are very strict and they teach a lot. I'm an assistant now.</p> <p>Head Start is one of the agencies that is always on top of everything research based, everything is always highlighted program. We keep changing things, trying new things so we can see the best for the children and we are happy with that.</p> <p>I went through a different presentation and it was a lot different. I think it was <i>AdvancED</i> [accreditation process], that's what it was at (my center). So, at that time I took <i>AdvancED</i>, it was a lot of work but it, it kinda let's see now I'm trying to think.</p> <p>We did like <i>NAEYC</i> [accreditation process] and so she has somebody come out from <i>NAEYC</i> the teacher from how do that, you know, take notes, take pictures of them.</p> <p>And I just remember I had to like ask the prek teachers, because they knew more than I did. They, they helped me out a lot.</p> <p>Most of my experience came once I went into the prek. Once I was an assistant in the prek classroom.</p> <p>And the [prek] teachers when they would do their lesson plans, you know that's where I got a lot of my knowledge was like the teaching that they were doing.</p> <p>I didn't really know what I was doing until I went into prek. And I was able to learn what those things in my CDA class how to use them. I'm think because I had a lead teacher I think that's what helped me.</p> <p>The ladies that were working there they had a degree. I would see how they would do with the kids and I would just mimic what they would do.</p> <p>People with the degree and um that they have they own degree. I would see what they would do and I would go for them because they didn't have a CDA.</p> <p>Right, I have to go with the [prek] staff you know like ok if you would try to do this and complete it.</p> <p>I think because I see all the other people [prek teachers] with college degree, had theirs and how they did it. I think it was a help for me, see how to teach. Not that they explained to me like oh look. They was just showing me how they was doing it, by looking at it, and doing it right there in the classroom, but with the courses its teaching you different way.</p> <p>When I was in working in prek, I was in there with the lead teacher. She was just an excellent teacher.</p> <p>There was this one teacher in prek. I would say she taught me a whole lot.</p> <p>I learned a lot from her because she like give me favor, like "I am not covering anything from you. Whatever you don't know, I will show you. I will give you like the freedom to apply." She was that kind of teacher.</p> <p>You learn from that teacher [in the classroom].</p> | <p>Participant knowledge gained by observing others (39)</p> |

Table continues

| Codes | Themes (<i>n</i>) |
|--|--|
| <p>You're going to work with someone that work in that classroom, OK so then you are learning from that teacher that's in there OK.</p> <p>Ok went I worked with her, she almost taught me everything she know for the classroom.</p> <p>She (lead teacher) would go to different classes, school books, quality from the core, we used to take those classes, children's makeover, quality.</p> <p>She [lead teacher] is taking me under her wing, observe, you know, and I work along with her. OK I got this from her (lead teacher), but I learn from experiences on the job</p> <p>Different sources, friends that are in the classroom longer than I have, just stuff like that. I had different sources of information from different angles.</p> <p>I had one older, teacher who had worked in the business about 25–30 [years] and had specifically worked at this center 23 years.</p> <p>I told the [lead] teacher what the child has said to me.</p> <p>The lead teacher where I work with and my coworker they are amazing and we learn from each other we feel like, were a family, a true family.</p> <p>We ask other teachers to intervene and help it becomes less affecting the teachable moments in our classroom.</p> <p>She [lead teacher] was working with more than 20 years. She thought I was TA [teaching assistant] before. She helped me a lot.</p> <p>CDA teacher (center director) tell us certain things that we needed to work on (in course materials).</p> <p>We really need (the director) to see what's going on because it's just gives a better view than the, you like somebody might say something and somebody says something else.</p> <p>My director or assistant director how to handle different situations, so.</p> <p>The administration there and the people that I was surrounded by, and parents. Those are pretty much my influences the people I'm surrounded by, and the feedback I got from everyone in my corner."</p> <p>It was my director, she taught me about infants.</p> <p>My center director, the lead teacher I am working with, they help me the whole time to see things from their own perspective.</p> <p>So she (lead teacher) got behind me and talk to the director</p> <p>I would ask other teachers you know for advice and self-correct</p> <p>Who worked in the daycare with me and they would recommend.</p> | <p>Participant knowledge gained through explicit training (25)</p> |
| <p>Very helpful to me was I think <i>Talk to Me Baby</i> (online training program)</p> <p>OK, now you we did have at one point we did have people to come in (to teach) periodically.</p> <p>Well, like taking the classes. Those classes we have to have so many classes online.</p> <p>One of the things that I thought was very helpful to me was one of those classes where I think <i>Talk to Me Baby</i> (online training program). But yes there are those classes that we're supposed to take.</p> <p>In those cases (Head Start), we (assistant teachers) would do 10 hours (of training</p> <p>[My center] was 10 hours [of training] as well.</p> <p>Oh gosh, it was tons. It (training) was probably 45 hours.</p> | <p></p> |

Table continues

| Codes | Themes (<i>n</i>) |
|---|--|
| <p>Ah yes some of the courses help you when it's some because of the behavior.</p> <p>She (the owner) set up classes for us, too and would have people come out and teach us the classes, you know.</p> <p>I took classes [sponsored by] on Quality Rated [QRIS].</p> <p>I kind of like where we have to take training classes to help us.</p> <p>I really didn't know where you know where to start. So when my owner start offering those classes, I just took those classes.</p> <p>I learned alone. Its just different classes we go throughout the year, come back to your classroom and apply to the best of your ability.</p> <p>OK well that is up to my director from the age group I would be teaching at the time they signed me up for that class.</p> <p>I think that what they call it 10 hours of class [training].</p> <p>Also from the [in center] teachers, classes from them.</p> <p>We have what's called staff professional development nights, which we do once every month. We get together as a whole entire school cohort of teachers which was really cool and training and we listen to a seminar and then have a discussion.</p> <p>It's you know being together as a whole school and really have all the teachers share their ideas I think is such a "powerful, a powerful thing" especially for an early education community.</p> <p>As a teaching team, the center director, our other lead teachers, our other assistants, these are still in our teaching team "bubble."</p> <p>We meet together with the family...the whole center.</p> <p>As a team, we need to write documents (assessment).</p> <p>Work it out with the parents; Ah...we're trying to put her on a sippy cup, so mom I need you to kind of work with me</p> <p>I kinda just had to invite mom to come in a couple of times so that she could help us.</p> <p>You would ask the parents. I learned you know how to pick her up I know because I ask (parents) questions.</p> <p>I went to the parents. I asked for help.</p> <p>They (mothers) get together and they discuss things; Some of the learning I'm getting now it's through associating with these Millennials that have the babies now.</p> | <p>Participant knowledge gained through conversations (32)</p> |
| <p>So I ask when he go back to the doctor, if we think we can get him off the baby food.</p> <p>But I am talking with the parent and she supposed to be sending videos because the child is working with a therapist OK.</p> <p>My partner is honestly one of the greatest influences on me. We are constantly talking about what we do at work and I think that is one of the advantages of me of both of us being in the same field.</p> <p>I have a friend that works with special needs kids.</p> <p>I use a phone, laptop, friends to call, friends is as educated more than me, like Likaa, and other friends to call and say, "hey I have this issue, how I'm going to handle, or I need help the situation, how I'm going to do it how, what is the right way to solve that problem?"</p> | <p><i>Table continues</i></p> |

| Codes | Themes (<i>n</i>) |
|--|---------------------|
| <p>My mom with her teachings. I guess you can say give back from my mom with her teachings they were it was a little different.</p> | |
| <p>I live with my sister. She does home school and stuff because she was with another school that was a private black school but she will be amazing with the level she's on, because we talk to her (her niece) and she can talk to you. She (her live-in sister) went to, she has a master's degree in something but she has taught, OK.</p> | |
| <p>We have to watch our younger siblings and then our nieces and nephews. My mom you know she was the reason that I got into that. Just being around you know just keeping through my nieces and nephew when they was little. And so I just took that experience from there and went from there.</p> | |
| <p>She (my mom) was a housekeeper she went and took care of somebody else kids. Then she had come home and take care of her kids. Just watching my mom because it was like I had my mom she had 8 kids. Then she (older sister) left I had to watch my 2 other younger sisters so I went from there.</p> | |
| <p>They (parents) kind of so it follows that so then we begin to teach others and educate others the way we were taught We're used to that kind of thinking back on how things and how we were taught and how our parents educated us.</p> | |
| <p>My mom raised, what she taught me even she's not educated mother, but sometimes a life makes the person more educated, than you are to educate. So she (her mother) said a lot, taught me a lot.</p> | |
| <p>Also I saw my sisters there was over then. They (her sisters) are also bringing what happened in the school is elementary or high school or middle school.</p> | |
| <p>In my country, all my sisters were teachers for high school, elementary, and (childcare) directors. So there's a lot of issues we discussed at home before when I have experienced migraine, how I handle some stuff, and then I have youngest brothers.</p> | |
| <p>Yeah the internet and then I was studying there was a child development book.</p> | |
| <p>I will go on Pinterest and just type in activities for what kind of age group.</p> | |
| <p>And I would also there was another there were a couple of websites that I had, that I would check out.</p> | |
| <p>At my home, I did research. The internet, I would go on YouTube, I have books that I go through.</p> | |
| <p>And so I did some research first on the subject and first I did the good old Google search and that came with a bunch of really, really scary stuff and then I went and looked at some more scholarly articles</p> | |
| <p>I'm browsing all kinds of educational websites since I go to university pursuing a [online bachelor's] degree in child development.</p> | |
| <p>Once I got my computer, you have the knowledge.</p> | |
| <p>You need to go to look some help in the computer. Like how we know is that maybe somebody was sick. Google internet, they will give us symptoms.</p> | |
| <p>I belong to (Facebook club) for social emotional, or one for teachers, I don't remember, but I have like three or four. I'm looking at some teachers, they put issues their writing and (I) make comments on that.</p> | |
| <p>Because even though I still read up a little bit, I still go to the website, <i>Read Right from the Start</i> and open me a course to read...I think there is more that I can learn.</p> | |

Table continues

| Codes | Themes (<i>n</i>) |
|--|---|
| <p>Oh I use to read a lot, you know, get a lot of books.</p> <p>She gave us the option of my uh well she told us about CCEI (online training classes system). Well, we did training with them.</p> <p>I read enough</p> <p>I've done a lot of reading on Piaget, Vygotsky and all these early educators and early researchers.</p> <p>When I was in a daycare, because all that was like cookie cutter it was already made for them, the curriculum</p> <p>So, like right now we, we came to Cross Street curriculum. They sent like a training, like I'll go in there and be like "so do we get it started?"</p> <p>We use the Abeka (curriculum) so we have a book, we have it teach lessons. And then we have books too. And then but you have more stuff too that we do the curriculum stuff, but then we add more stuff to it.</p> <p>We use TSG (Teaching Strategies Gold) at our center and all the curriculum that's input through TSG.</p> <p>We learn the curriculum to set the basis through observation</p> | <p>Participant knowledge gained through reading and self-study (83)</p> |
| <p>But I'm going to say go back to the nursing that had the child development classes that I had. That had a lot to do with it.</p> <p>I did go, I started nursing school, but I didn't finish ok. That (nursing training) had a lot to do with it.</p> <p>So I did business; I did vocational school and high school, the childcare part. But I never worked in a childcare setting you know through high school.</p> <p>I didn't do the two-year vocational, I had the one year. It kinda helped me though because I remembered some things, but you know I never really implemented them.</p> <p>In Florida, I went and I took a class and um at Nova University. I went there, just to have a certificate I went to that college and take a class for teaching, but nobody taught me.</p> <p>Our high school, ok we call it vocational. I'm learning regular subjects, early childhood was, so we used I think you guys call it intern or something like that when you send students out to these jobs.</p> <p>No, it's (bachelor's degree) in sound engineering. I worked in film for years, in music too.</p> <p>And while I was taking my masters in early education. I just have this degree because as I said, I was already in the course so I didn't have to change the course because a lot of my credits would have been wasted. So I kind of just finished this so I just kind of have to have this certification or anything yet.</p> <p>I remember the first time I learned (about an ECE assessment system), it was at my community college.</p> <p>Well through education, it is the only vivid resource that I always seek and the practical experience through the children in our day and by reading guideline and whatever regulations from my agency.</p> <p>So really I learn from watching the teachers that I thought were had awesome practice that sort of aligned with also the stuff I was reading about what I was studying (master's degree) at Walden (university) and sort of adopted that into my own practice</p> <p>I'm browsing all kinds of educational websites since I go to university pursuing a [online bachelor's] degree in child development.</p> <p>So right now, I'm obtaining my bachelors in ECE (online)</p> | <p><i>Table continues</i></p> |

| Codes | Themes (n) |
|--|------------|
| <p>Some stuff I was already doing, Some of it from just me [knowledge]</p> <p>Well I'm old! I'll be 70 in November and I learn a thing or two!</p> <p>OK that was some book, I did some studying I did on my own.</p> <p>I've been in the field for so long. I stayed there, I worked there for 18 years.</p> <p>It's just that I've learned, some places I was just winging it. Some places it was you were being taught more. It's just things have changed over time a trial little bit.</p> <p>Whenever we go to class, I come back and I practice. In everything that I do in the classroom is something that I can learn from.</p> <p>So I would just read books like I used to get books from the dollar store.</p> <p>Something that I just picked up on my own.</p> <p>I do it a different way than I think the children will be able to receive it.</p> <p>I take classes and even when we don't even we don't have to. I try to go beyond that what they require.</p> <p>Honestly, I would say just pretty much say trial and error. I would pick up a lot just by actually being in in the field, cause I do feel the training they do provide a lot of information in certain things. However, you really get your experience by being in the field. So I pretty much had to learn as I went</p> <p>I was just kind of coming up with new things and seeing what worked and what didn't work.. Sometimes I was able to come up with things on my own.</p> <p>To tell you the truth, there is no "blueprint" to give me. I really just sort of had to rely on my own prowess as a human being eventually and sort of fit in what I think is right with the training I have also learned. I think the hardest part is to know when to use what language and really there's no "blueprint" for doing this. You sort of have to figure it out as you go. I draw more on my life experience, rather than what I learned in the CDA.</p> <p>There just not a lot of oversight and like "this is what you should be doing," you know there's lot of "this is what you shouldn't be doing."</p> <p>I'm like a child. I learn through discovery, through my senses. I learn from my mistakes. It's I feel that it is very rewarding.</p> <p>So I research and I study and write. So even if I have no knowledge, I tried to look for it so get that to help myself and the child. The child, he has some issues, so I went reading</p> <p>The child, he has some issues, so I went reading</p> <p>Because even though I still read up a little bit, I still go to the website, <i>Read Right from the Start</i> and open me a course to read...I think there is more that I can learn.</p> <p>Oh I use to read a lot, you know, get a lot of books.</p> <p>She gave us the option of my uh well she told us about CCEI (online training classes system). Well, we did training with them.</p> <p>I read enough</p> <p>I've done a lot of reading on Piaget, Vygotsky and all these early educators and early researchers.</p> <p>But sometimes you kinda learn something it kind of sticks with you and you have to review it</p> <p>I use to have my own childcare back in Florida.</p> | |

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|---|------------|
| <p>I started when my kids started going to school, the teachers I use to go to the school I helped the teacher. I would teach them whatever they was learning in school</p> | |
| <p>Because there is what I know and there are things I've done before with, oh, since I had my CDA years ago</p> | |
| <p>I just know, you know; I just because you learn with children for so long. It's just I learn it</p> | |
| <p>I used to like it (babysitting), so that's how I got into that.</p> | |
| <p>I've been liked in ECE in my country when I was in high school, but coming up here take me to another level</p> | |
| <p>In the classroom often there is a broken toy or anything like that you got to remove it from the classroom, it cannot stay here. Where I'm coming from children are allowed to play with the broken toys because we don't have it like that. So coming up here was for me, like a waking up. I had to learn that ok it's a different place; you're in different environment. I don't see that as safety not where I'm from. What you see as health issue, I do not see. So coming up here that is something that I had to learn</p> | |
| <p>All these little things what do you call health. What health look like to you. It's something different for me. Like, you throwing away all this food. It's like if they don't eat it, you still have to put it before them. Back home, it's like no, no, no you don't want to eat it, that is fine</p> | |
| <p>Yes I did come with experience. I been doing this since high school that's why I know that help me a lot. It helped me a lot. Coming up here was a learning a different way you guys do things</p> | |
| <p>Don't just give them what the book say that approach, push them a little bit further you know?</p> | |
| <p>I just really believe that teaching has to be a positive. I just want it because it's fun</p> | |
| <p>If your child is singing alllllllllll the wrong songs that is not for children, they can learn everything when it comes to school.</p> | |
| <p>When we have some children that they are four and they wear diapers. And we have some children that they're two, and they don't wear diapers.</p> | |
| <p>So why not teach them, if they can get it</p> | |
| <p>So when they stopped the parents from going to the school and taking Jesus out of the school. Because you got to teach them the fear of God. You got to teach them what God said. I learn that by God giving me the wisdom by listening to other teacher and how I would respond.</p> | |
| <p>Teachers who are trained verses those who are not trained think, then that will probably be a different answer because I teacher who is trained are looking for certain, because they are trained, a trained eye and an untrained eye.</p> | |
| <p>I've always had a passion for social justice, for understanding ecological and sociological problems and issues and so early education seemed like a natural. I was adopted and so I think that played a huge role in understanding my own nature and nurture and how that made me develop through life. In literally every single conversation I have with everybody, I'm thinking in terms of society and how my choices and my words affect others and how that translates to the greater sociological advancement of my community and of America in general.</p> | |

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| <p>It's something that you inherent, but either you have a grow or you just let it go away from your life. For me it's a mindset thing. It is the way you are wired, part of it, genetically, but it is the way you adapt your life and you adapt the way you are thinking. Some people I think don't belong to that major</p> | |
| <p>Still, I'm learning that I need to have more helpful people above me who have more knowledge</p> | |
| <p>I just come up with these stuff and they just go with it. Because you becoming creative and it's all about teaching. I use to come up with just this (children's activities) and that it was just because God was giving what I dared</p> | |
| <p>Because especially the classes that we have the CDA training that we have is just basically, I just put it basically with my own ideas</p> | |
| <p>And honestly just being me being a creative individual that plays a lot</p> | |
| <p>I also do calligraphy and visual arts. Oh yeah, I am definitely a creative at heart, most definitely</p> | |
| <p>Bringing up, with my girls. I was a stay at home mom. Ah yes, because I knew how I ran my girls (daughters). I was one for education and yeah, that had and yes...influence on me too.</p> | |
| <p>Yes, I know when I started the only experience I had was being a mother</p> | |
| <p>And I had 2 kids. So, I just teach my children. God blessed me that I was able to stay at home. When they got out of school I was right there with them. I want my children to be smart, I want my grandbabies to be smart, don't take it lightly, a lot of people take stuff lightly.</p> | |
| <p>As for me as a mom.</p> | |
| <p>When us as Black Americans was not having the time to teach the children. In this world they getting ready to, that they going to be in the future, they gotta speak up. I think our black kids need to start expressing themselves; Because sometimes we (society) kinda shut our (black) kids down.</p> | |
| <p>We can teach them, because I was seeing them in another culture when teaching the children.</p> | |
| <p>One of the things I recognized were I did not know that there were different kinds of abuse. We see a child come dirty, unkept, you don't just back home we would put that child into a bath, give that child and send that child on their merry way. Up here its like more firm, kind of thing that back home I don't really take it for granted that's just our culture, it's just our way of, you know, living and being</p> | |
| <p>And his eyes...I can tell that he observing because he can't use that PediSure. Wants me to hold him with that bottle.</p> | |
| <p>You have to praise him or he does something crazy with the bottle.</p> | |
| <p>So, I quite naturally because she's the child) not feeling well, I am going to learn that child you know her temp too doesn't not rise up</p> | |
| <p>And a I would have to learn how to move that child because the child cannot explain to me, whining and fussing, the child cannot say to me ...I am hungry, I am wet.</p> | |
| <p>OK, one of the things that is did ah I'm going to say observation, observing the kids OK</p> | |
| <p>If the child is crying you know children who cry more, then I know that child need my attention. You know, the child, talk to the child, the child. Just be there for the child maybe the child wants to be held. So it teaches me how because every child needs...</p> | |
| <p>I was really excited in my first class. The kids learned stuff, but I learned stuff too.</p> | |

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| <p>Recently we have a parent come to us and their child was displaying some interesting behavior at home</p> | |
| <p>Well, you know, you had a lot of different experiences and you were able to observe people</p> | |
| <p>I think most of my experience comes from being on the job, just observing other teachers, see what they have ...you know. It's like you learn a lot on the job, too. Just like being in the classroom, you learn a lot, you know</p> | |
| <p>I mean I really watch other teachers. So really I learn from watching the teachers that I thought were had awesome practice that sort of aligned with also the stuff I was reading about what I was studying at Walden and sort of adopted that into my own practice.</p> | |
| <p>Their way (teachers) with children is a little bit different. It's almost like, "ok I'll tell you this, you do what I say and you do it right now!"</p> | |
| <p>Unfortunately, not all teachers are there for the children. It's something you have naturally, you grow it or you turn it into a "monster."</p> | |
| <p>Some people [parents] they're just not...cut out for, to do, to be with more than one kid.</p> | |
| <p>Why would I see a barely he's two going on three and he's slapping his parents outside the daycare, that's not acceptable</p> | |
| <p>They (management) didn't want us to write all negative notes that parents would get upset.</p> | |