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Educators' Perspectives Regarding Challenges Implementing the HighScope Curriculum and Support Needed

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Charmaine Christopher

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Walden University

2021

Abstract

Educators' Perspectives Regarding Challenges Implementing the HighScope Curriculum
and Support Needed

by

Charmaine Christopher

MEd, University of the West Indies, 2006

BEd, University of the West Indies, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Since 2008, the Ministry of Education in Grenada, where this study took place, started curriculum reform with the implementation of the HighScope curriculum in preschools. The problem is that many teachers faced challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges when implementing the HighScope curriculum, which involves balancing child-initiated and teacher-directed activities, and the support they need for executing the curriculum effectively. The conceptual frameworks that guided the study were Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Both theories reinforce the need for children to be social and active in the learning process. A total of 14 participants were recruited for this study: 12 preschool teachers, including three preschool teachers from four different preschools, and two early childhood education officers. Open coding and thematic analysis were used during data analysis. The key findings related to challenges included: lack of resources, educators' resistance to curriculum change, and insufficient support provided for teachers. Teacher participants also revealed a need for increased professional development and training to support teachers, provision of teaching and learning materials, frequent supervision and monitoring by early childhood education officers, and parental involvement and Education. Results have implications for positive social change that could lead to policy changes to improve training for teachers, additional resources allocated to the classroom, and methods to improve the implementation of the HighScope curriculum that could lead to better outcomes for children.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The early years of a child's life involve healthy development and opportunities to have academic success (Addisu & Wudu, 2019; Crampton & Hall, 2017). This early period is critical for children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Kimosop (2018) said there was a need for effective implementation of early childhood curriculum with adequate support for teachers. Teachers play a critical role in curriculum implementation, and at times, they are faced with challenges during the process (Mligo, 2016). In this study, I focused on the many challenges teachers face implementing the HighScope curriculum, which involves balancing child-initiated and teacher-directed activities, and the support they may need for effective implementation. The need to understand challenges teachers face and support needed for implementation of the HighScope curriculum can lead to finding ways to effectively implement the curriculum. As a result, this can impact the future of young children, thus bringing about positive social change both for students and educators.

In Chapter 1, an overview of the study is presented. This chapter includes a summary of background literature on curriculum implementation. The problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions of key concepts or constructs, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance to social change are presented in this chapter. Chapter 1 ends with a summary of the main points and a transition to Chapter 2.

Background

Teachers face many challenges balancing child-initiated and teacher-directed activities while attempting to implement the curriculum effectively (Charles & Williams, 2018; Riley-Ayers & Figueras-Daniel, 2018). The HighScope curriculum is a structured curriculum that focuses on active participatory learning (Rajab & Wright, 2018), and is aligned with a child-centered approach as it involves active learning in which children learn from interactions with peers, adults, and materials (Gulcicek et al., 2019). In implementing a preschool curriculum that used a child-centered approach, Mligo (2016) found that early childhood educators faced many challenges implementing the curriculum such as lack of knowledge of child-centered pedagogy and inadequate teaching and learning materials, and did not receive support implementing the curriculum. Ntumi (2016) found that preschool teachers faced challenges in implementing early childhood curriculum. Ntumi (2016) noted that teachers did not understand curriculum and had limited learning and teaching materials needed to implement it.

In this study, the conceptual framework is Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories related to cognitive development. These theories involve how an individual perceives, thinks, understands, and learns. Piaget (1926) said children construct their own knowledge through interaction with the social and physical environment. Active learning is a key tenet of Piaget's theory. Vygotsky (1986) said children's thinking is guided by their social interactions with competent others and cultural contexts. Social interaction can enhance children's mental language and social development (Gordon & Browne, 2017). Interactions with competent helpers such as caregivers, peers, parents, and

teachers can lead to meaningful assistance for children as they develop cognitive skills. Through direct experiences with the environment, children's cognitive skills can be developed. Therefore, social interaction is critical in the teaching and learning process (Omaga & Alieto, 2019). As a result, early childhood educators and caregivers play an important role in facilitating learning in young children.

Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories form the basis for curriculum principles and practice in early childhood programs. Based on the tenets of these theorists, one can gain knowledge and understanding of how children learn, grow, and develop. The HighScope curriculum is grounded in Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories. Experiences provided through the HighScope curriculum are the core of the learning process and are based on cognitive theories of how children learn. The constructivist approach is the belief that children actively seek knowledge (Gordon & Browne, 2017). The constructivist approach involves the active role children play in learning (Gordon & Browne, 2017). As a result, the constructivist classroom is child- and learning-centered where children are active and initiate learning activities, and teachers provide a rich social environment that supports social interactions (Gordon & Browne, 2017). Therefore, early childhood programs and curriculum that promote active participation in a child-centered learning environment effectively support development in cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor skills (Aktulun & Kiziltepe, 2018; Roessingh & Bence, 2019). As a result, quality early childhood programs and curriculums are important in the instructional process (Slavin & Chambers, 2017).

In this study, I build on existing research regarding curriculum implementation in early childhood settings. I seek to fill the gap in practice, as there is no research that has been conducted in Grenada that explores perspectives of early childhood educators regarding challenges in terms of implementing HighScope curriculum, and the support they need executing the curriculum effectively. Increasing the understanding of challenges teachers face can lead to finding ways to effectively implement the curriculum. As a result, this can impact the future of young children, thus bringing about positive social change both for students and educators.

Problem Statement

The problem is that many teachers face challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum, which may need additional support in order to execute curriculum effectively. Mligo (2016) said early childhood educators face many challenges such as lack of knowledge of child-centered pedagogies that were required, qualification in the area of early childhood education, overcrowded classrooms, poor learning environments, and inadequate teaching and learning materials. There is an increase in the number of children entering prekindergarten and preschools in the United States (Child Trends, 2019). The percentage of children enrolled in prekindergarten and preschool programs increased from 21% in 1994 to 30% in 2017 (Child Trends, 2019). According to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (2017), for the academic year 2015 to 2016, 88.4% of preschoolers (3, 4, and 5 year-olds) attended preschools in Grenada. The quality of early childhood programs determines children's readiness for primary school and performance levels (Haslip & Gullo, 2018). High-quality early childhood programs have

positively influenced development in all areas for young children, which results in a positive impact on school readiness (Bailey et al., 2017; Bakken et al., 2017; Lipsey et al., 2018). Early childhood curriculum is a key component of an effective early childhood program through which goals for child development are achieved (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016). Teachers play a critical role in early childhood curriculum implementation (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019; Ntumi, 2016; Nyland & Ng, 2016).

Since 2008, the Ministry of Education in Grenada, where this study took place, started curriculum reform with the implementation of the HighScope curriculum in the preschools. The HighScope curriculum is a structured curriculum that focuses on active participatory learning as children are involved in a balance of child-initiated and teacher-planned activities (Charles & Williams, 2018; Rajab & Wright, 2018), and clearly aligns with a child-centered approach curriculum. Based on emerging research, there is a move towards child-centered approach curriculum (Peckham, 2017; Vaishali & Misra, 2019). A child-centered curriculum involves emphasis on children's interest, active learning, and play-based teaching and learning (Muller et al., 2018; Ozturk, 2016; Sharkins et al., 2017). The HighScope curriculum is aligned with this approach as it involves active learning in which children learn from interactions with peers, adults, and materials (Gulcicek et al., 2019).

Although researchers have focused on the challenges faced by the teachers in implementing new curriculum that is play-based or child-centered, few researchers have explored the perspectives of early childhood educators about the challenges in terms of implementing HighScope curriculum and the support they need implementing the

curriculum effectively. Since this study took place outside of the U.S., this study was needed to fill the gap in practice, as there is no research that has been conducted in Grenada that explores perspectives of early childhood educators regarding challenges in terms of implementing HighScope curriculum, and the support they need executing the curriculum effectively.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators regarding the challenges involved with implementing HighScope curriculum, and the support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively. According to Krahenbuhl (2016), teachers' voices need to be heard to adopt and use child-centered approaches to teaching and learning. There is a need for greater understanding of challenges when implementing the HighScope curriculum and support educators need to implement the curriculum effectively in Grenada. Teachers are critical to the effective implementation of the curriculum (Ntumi, 2016), and the support teachers feel they need can provide direction in terms of helping them with overcoming challenges of curriculum implementation (Baron et al., 2016; Krahenbuhl, 2016). In this basic qualitative study, I seek to fill the gap in practice by exploring the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum, and the support they need in order to execute the curriculum effectively.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the perspectives of early childhood educators about the challenges involved with implementing the HighScope curriculum in Grenada?

RQ2: What support do early childhood educators perceive they need to execute the HighScope curriculum effectively in Grenada?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories relating to cognitive development as the basis for curriculum design, principles, and practices. These theories involve how an individual perceives, thinks, understands, and learns. Piaget's theory of cognitive development forms the basis of the HighScope curriculum. It involves the context in terms of how young children learn. Knowledge and skills are built via a continuous process that involves modifying understandings that children bring to every situation. Piaget (1926) said the opportunity to be physically and mentally involved in learning is important for cognitive development during the early years. This helped in understanding what is involved in implementing a child-centered curriculum.

The conceptual framework for this study is also based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. This was the contextual lens for understanding the roles teachers play during the teaching and learning process. Vygotsky's theory involves children's thinking as guided by social interactions with competent others and cultural contexts. Social interaction can enhance children's mental language and social development (Gordon & Browne, 2017). Interactions with competent helpers such as caregivers, peers, parents, and teachers can provide lead to assistance for children as they develop cognitive skills. These aspects of the sociocultural theory of cognitive development guided my understanding of how the role of the teacher and caregiver facilitate learning in young

children during the implementation of the HighScope curriculum. As a result, it was used for guidance in terms of how cognitive development is fostered during the early years.

Piaget and Vygotsky's theories were the conceptual frameworks for my study, and they were critical for understanding the challenges early childhood educators face implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they need for effective implementation of the curriculum. Both theories are applied in child-centered classrooms or programs where children are active and initiate learning activities, and teachers provide a rich social environment and support social interactions. Piaget and Vygotsky's theories form the basis for curriculum design, principles, and practices in early childhood programs. The constructivist approach involves active roles children play in learning (Gordon & Browne, 2017). The constructivist approach is based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

Piaget and Vygotsky's theories of cognitive development informed the research questions. I used both theories to explore perspectives of early childhood educators regarding the challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for executing the curriculum effectively. As a result, I gained an understanding of what early childhood educators perceive to be challenges in implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively.

Piaget (1926) said young children need direct experiences to develop cognitively. Vygotsky (1986) said social interaction is critical during the learning process. Play is critical in the development of language and literacy and in terms of understanding how children approach learning (Gordon & Browne, 2017). Vygotsky and Piaget's theories

related to cognitive development were the basis for understanding data collected during interviews with early childhood educators. The theories served as conceptual lenses for this basic qualitative study in terms of both collection and analysis of data gathered from interviews. Thematic coding was used while reading transcripts from interviews. Chapter 2 includes a more thorough explanation of the conceptual framework.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I used a basic qualitative approach to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they need for executing the curriculum effectively. A basic qualitative design is appropriate for this study because it allowed me to explore the different perspectives of educators and analyze data. Twelve preschool teachers, including three preschool teachers from each of the four different preschools, two different educational districts, and two early childhood education officers participated in the study, which was a total of 14 participants. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with preschool teachers and two early childhood education officers.

Qualitative research involves experiences, behaviors, and social contexts without statistical or numerical procedures (Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This research design is preferred since it creates opportunities for understanding phenomena from participants' point of view. This is critical for my study as I seek to understand the ways teachers see, view, and approach challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively. As part of this qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were used which involved

focused and conversational approaches and open-ended questions. The aim of this study was to gather rich and detailed information via participants' independent thoughts. Using semi-structured interviews was an opportunity to focus on issues that are important as they relate to the purpose of my study.

A quantitative approach involves close-ended questions as well as tests and surveys resulting in yes or no responses, along with numerical data and statistics (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Semi-structured interview sessions were conducted with participants for a total of 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews took place via Zoom and Skype from a location of participants' choosing due to COVID-19. I conducted my part of the interview from my home office to ensure privacy and confidentiality of participants. Semi-structured interview sessions began with collecting basic demographic information, open-ended questions, and clarification of responses. Open-ended questions allowed me to find out participants' perspectives about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they need to implement the curriculum effectively.

Definitions

The following educational terms were used throughout this study. These terms are important for the reader to understand this study.

Active learning: The involvement of students in activities in a learning environment where they are provided with opportunities to construct knowledge and take control of their own learning process (Krahenbuhl, 2016).

Child-initiated activity: These are self-chosen activities by children which provide the opportunity for them to display autonomy and control their own learning (Robson, 2016).

Constructivist approach: The approach that learners actively construct knowledge based on prior experiences and teachers guide and facilitate the process (Isik, 2018).

Curriculum Implementation: Curriculum implementation involves ways teachers deliver instruction and assess students by using specified resources. This can include suggestions for instruction, scripts, lesson plans, and assessment tools relate to objectives (Nevenglosky et al, 2019)

Early Childhood Education (ECE): Early childhood education refers to the programs for young children aged 3 to 6. The aim of these programs is to prepare children for primary education (Li & Chen, 2017).

ECE officer: The Ministry of Education has assigned officers to provide support for teachers from preschool to grade three (3-8 years). The officer is responsible for monitoring and supporting teaching and learning at the early childhood level in each educational district (Miller et al., 2020).

HighScope curriculum: The HighScope curriculum emphasizes a hands-on child-centered approach that involves a daily routine where children get the opportunity to plan, engage in small and large group instructions, and play indoors and outdoors. Adult-child interaction is a key component of the program, and teachers play an important role in providing learning experiences and supporting development in all domains (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020).

Teacher-directed activity: This is an activity that is determined by the adult that involves a specific task that the child had to complete individually or with help from the adult (Robson, 2016).

Assumptions

Assumptions are attributes of a research study that are not regulated by the researcher but are supposed to be true to make the data process valid (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My study was based on three assumptions. First, I assumed that all early childhood educators provided honest responses based on their experiences implementing the HighScope curriculum. This is important so that accurate data were provided regarding challenges in implementing the HighScope curriculum and support for executing the curriculum effectively. Second, I assumed that semi-structured interviews would lead to accurate information which would help to answer the research questions and achieve the purpose of this study. Third, I assumed that my present position in the field of early childhood education did not negatively impact the study. I did not directly work or interact with any of the participants in a supervisory role. I assisted in facilitating professional development sessions with teachers once per year. These assumptions were necessary so that participants do not feel coerced to either participate in the study or answer questions. All participants were encouraged to answer each open-ended question candidly during interviews.

Scope and Delimitations

Early childhood educators are trained in implementing the HighScope curriculum at the preschool level (Charles & Williams, 2018). This curriculum is designed to

promote active learning (Gulcicek et al., 2019). In this study, I explored perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for executing the curriculum effectively in Grenada. It is important to understand early childhood educators' perspectives regarding the curriculum implementation as they play a significant role in this process and can provide additional information regarding what must be done to enable teachers to successfully implement the HighScope curriculum.

Participants in this study were 12 preschool teachers, including three preschool teachers from each of four different preschools, two schools from two different educational districts in Grenada, and two early childhood education officers who served 3 to 5-year-old children at the preschool level. There was a total of 14 female participants. All educators were employed in public preschools where the HighScope curriculum was implemented. Presently, the HighScope curriculum is not implemented in private schools as it is not mandatory; therefore, private school teachers were excluded. In all included schools, teachers received training regarding implementation of the HighScope curriculum, and early childhood education officers provided support to preschool teachers implementing the curriculum.

The study was further delimited in terms of participants and geographical location related to educational districts. Early childhood education officers and preschool teachers came from two educational districts, as these were districts with early childhood education officers since officers in other districts were retired and not replaced; however,

teachers at my district were excluded as participants. As a result, the study was narrowed to other school districts.

Transferability is possible with other preschool settings that provide a child-centered curriculum that includes opportunities for play and interactions in learning centers. It is important to note that findings can inform other settings about challenges in implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they need for executing the curriculum effectively. Participants were from two school districts. Results from my study may be transferable to schools in other districts in Grenada that have similar settings or use the HighScope curriculum.

Limitations

Limitations for the study involved sample size and methodology. The small sample size of 12 early childhood educators and two early childhood education officers is a limitation. The views of the small sample size may not reflect all preschool teachers and education officers who are trained to implement the HighScope curriculum. This study was also limited in terms of methodological weaknesses of the qualitative approach used. The use of the qualitative approach for this study can lead to researcher bias.

Transferability was addressed by ensuring that rich, thick descriptions of the setting and findings were provided in the study to help reduce biases.

Limitations were addressed by explaining biases so readers could understand how I may have come to specific interpretations in terms of the data. I have strong feelings about what should happen at the preschool level in terms of the implementation of the HighScope curriculum to reflect high-quality early childhood education. I minimized

biases by keeping a reflective research journal, and I followed ethical guidelines from the Belmont Report (1974) for data collection and analysis. First, I showed all participants a copy of draft findings and engaged in member-checking in order to reduce biases during the data analysis process. Then, I had an expert reviewer to examine my findings to help minimize any biases that may have happened during the data analysis process.

Significance

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum the support they need in order to implement the curriculum effectively. High quality early childhood programs require a developmentally appropriate curriculum that provides young children with the opportunity to develop in all areas (Lipsey et al., 2018). The HighScope curriculum is used in many early childhood programs such as Head Start in the U.S., which enrolled 848,000 3 to 5-year-olds between 2016 and 2017 (Child Trends, 2019). It is also used in Grenada, where this research took place. Teachers face many challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and may need additional support executing the curriculum effectively. The results of this study will be used to fill a gap in practice and provide insights regarding challenges teachers face implementing the HighScope curriculum. Understanding challenges teachers face and support needed for effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum can lead to finding ways to effectively implement the curriculum. This can impact the future of young children and bring about positive social change both for students and educators.

The findings of this study can contribute to the field of ECE. Based on findings, administrators could use information to determine if professional development and curriculum support that is currently being provided to enable teachers to effectively implement the HighScope curriculum is making a positive impact on teaching and learning. This can lead to modifications in professional development and decisions about curriculum implementation. Results can impact young children, thus bringing about positive social change both for students and educators.

Summary

Preschool teachers play a significant role in early childhood curriculum implementation (Ntumi, 2018). However, in the process of curriculum implementation, teachers face many challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and may need additional support implementing the curriculum effectively. As a result, this can negatively impact learning outcomes for students (Ntumi, 2018; Taylor et al., 2016). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for executing the curriculum effectively.

Data were collected via semi-structured interviews of preschool teachers and ECE officers. The results of this study can be applicable to other public-based preschools that are implementing the HighScope curriculum or other play-based curriculum that includes child-initiated and teacher-directed activities. Chapter 2 includes an overview and review of literature related to the study. Vygotsky and Piaget's theories of cognitive

development are discussed in further detail, and recent research related to the research topic is presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for executing the curriculum effectively. The problem is that many teachers face challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and may need additional support implementing the curriculum effectively. In this chapter, a review of literature regarding early childhood curriculum implementation is presented. The chapter begins with the search strategy I used to find research on my topic.

The HighScope curriculum provides experiences for young children through the process of active participatory learning. However, as the curriculum is implemented, many teachers face challenges and may need support to effectively implement the curriculum. Muller et al. (2018) recommended further research regarding the struggles and successes involved with implementing child-centered practices that can determine challenges are faced by educators and if suggestions provided for success can be beneficial. Research studies are discussed in Chapter 2 along with the conceptual frameworks which are Piaget and Vygotsky's theories of cognitive development. The chapter ends with a synthesis of research that supports the need for this study.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted an extensive review of literature on early childhood curriculum implementation. In the process of investigating research related to this study, I used several search engines. Walden's University Library yielded information from: EBSCOHost, Education Research Complete, SAGEJournals, ProQuest, Taylor Francis,

Education Source, and ERIC. I focused on articles that were peer-reviewed and published between 2017 and 2021. Key words were: *early childhood education curriculum, early childhood program, curriculum implementation, constructivist approach, child-initiated, challenges in implementing curriculum, and HighScope Curriculum*. I also searched the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States website, which assisted in gathering statistics and information related to Grenada. I also searched the HighScope Educational Research Foundation website for additional statistics and research regarding this curriculum.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frameworks for this study were Vygotsky and Piaget's theories relating to cognitive development as the basis for curriculum design, principles, and practices. These theories involve how an individual perceives, thinks, understands, and learns. Vygotsky and Piaget's theories involve a social constructivist approach to learning. Researchers have used these theories as a foundation for research related to early childhood education, early childhood curriculum models, literacy and language development, play, and child-centered classrooms. This study explored perspectives of early childhood educators regarding challenges involved with implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's cultural theory involves principles and practices that are the core of the HighScope curriculum. According to Terrell and Watson (2018), the social environment plays an important role in facilitating children's development and learning.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development is useful in terms of describing children's mental, language, and social development which is supported and enhanced by social interactions (Veraksa et al., 2016). Curriculum experiences must involve children gaining different concepts, ideas, attitudes, and facts based on direct influences of the social environment. Learning emerges as a natural result of effective interaction and social communication with the environment (Omaga & Alieto, 2019). Adults and teachers focus on being models for children as they speak, answer questions, and provide assistance. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory involves the zone of proximal development (ZPD), scaffolding, and the importance of play in the learning process. This theory helped in terms of understanding adult interactions that area is a key component of the HighScope curriculum.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

One of the key concepts of Vygotsky's theories is the ZPD. I used this concept as a lens to view the curriculum structure that shows young children need to be supported as they learn and the need for developmentally appropriate experiences. Learning occurs in a social context, and as children interact with a more knowledge able partner, their cognitive competencies are enhanced with support provided (Omaga & Alieto, 2019). The ZPD represents the range of learning that a child is capable of with the help from a more competent adult or peer partner (Morrison, 2015; Putman, 2017). Based on the child's ZPD, there are tasks the child cannot complete even if help is provided by an adult or peer, tasks the child can accomplish with help and then there are tasks the child is able to accomplish without support (Terrell & Watson, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD is an

environment in which children can learn new behaviors and skills with support from others (Shabani, 2016). Everyday experiences play an important role in children's development (Omega & Alieto, 2019). Teachers must create the ZPD by setting up learning environments where children can learn new skills and behaviors as they interact with others (Veraksa et al., 2016). Through everyday experiences or interactions, adults can provide meaningful guidance and support to children as they develop cognitive, social, physical, and emotional skills.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is another key concept associated with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Scaffolding instruction within young children's ZPD is important as they learn and develop new skills (Terrell & Watson, 2018). Scaffolding is the gradual process of providing various types of support and guidance in the ZPD. Scaffolding allows children to complete challenging tasks that they could not complete independently by providing necessary assistance (Veraksa et al., 2016; Vygotsky, 1986). When children are learning a new task, they need competent partners to scaffold by providing support through conversations, examples, and encouragement to reinforce their efforts (Newman, 2018; Shabani, 2016). As a result, scaffolding builds on children's strengths in terms of what they achieve as their cognitive competencies are enhanced and they become independent learners (Pyle et al., 2018). As children master skills, less assistance is needed from adults; the scaffold is gradually reduced or removed (Omega & Alieto, 2019). The child gets to the level where the task can be completed independently. Educators should

implement the curriculum with competent adults who can help children by providing necessary support.

Importance of Play in the Learning Process

Play is valued as important for learning and development in young children (Bautista et al., 2019). Vygotsky (1978) said complex activities of children are created from social and cultural contexts. Play is viewed as a significant source of development for young children and a tool for learning (Ahmad et al., 2016; Prioletta & Poliszczuk, 2018; Sawyer, 2017). The social interactions that occur through play are critical for children's development and affect mental processes during preschool (Cakiroglu, 2018; Given et al., 2016). Vygotsky believed social interaction and collaboration with others can transform children's thinking, thus promoting and enhancing their cognitive development (Edwards & Bird, 2017). Teachers have a significant role in helping students access the world, and the quality of interactions determines students' achievement. Children learn through social interactions, so experiences play a significant role in children's development (Pyle et al., 2018; Vygotsky, 1966). The sociocultural theory plays an important role in supporting the development of early learning skills in children through observations (Given et al., 2016). The sociocultural theory is highlighted as this research focuses on the implementation of the HighScope curriculum where play and interactions are critical to development.

Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

Both Vygotsky and Piaget's theories have influenced early childhood education. Piaget's theory of cognitive development involves children's different views of the

world. As children interact with people and objects in their environment, changes occur in terms of their conceptions of the world (Pyle et al., 2018). Piaget (1926) said knowledge and skills are built via a continuous process that involves modifying understanding that children bring to every situation. Piaget (1926) said the opportunity to be physically and mentally involved in learning is important for cognitive development during the early years. Children acquire new information as a result of interactions with the environment (Baroody & Diamond, 2016). As a result, children have an active role in gaining knowledge about the world. The quality of the environment and nature of experiences play significant roles in cognitive development. The learning environment must be well organized and opportunity for play is part of activities provided. Play and development, active learning, and stages of development are central tenets of Piaget's theory. Piaget's theory provides a conceptual structure and view of young children linked to the curriculum model used in this study. The HighScope curriculum promotes the child as an active learner who interacts with people and materials in learning environments. Teacher-child interactions are critical to support children as they understand the world (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020).

Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

Piaget (1977) said cognitive development occurs in four stages. The stages are marked by specific accomplishment in terms of thinking and problem solving. The first stage is the sensorimotor stage which occurs from development from birth until about 2 years (Hanfstingi et al., 2019). The sensorimotor stage involves children's first actions based on simple reflexes via senses and motor skills to solve problems that are related to

objects and people (Cakiroglu, 2018). The second stage is the preoperational stage, which lasts from 2 to 7. At this stage, children begin to use language for thinking and communicating with others (Bormanaki&Khoshhal, 2017; Piaget, 1973). Children's thinking at this stage depends highly on what they see and perceive concretely. The third stage is the concrete operational stage from 7 to about 11 years (Hanfstingl et al., 2019). At this stage, children develop communication skills as they master conversation tasks and use logic to solve problems (Piaget, 1973; Sharkins et al., 2017). These logical thinking skills that are developed lead to an understanding of classification patterns. However, children are not yet able to separate these skills from concrete situations. The fourth stage is the formal operational stage, which begins at about 11 years old; children now have methods of deductive logic or ways of thinking as they can apply logical principles to abstract situations (Ahmad et al., 2016; Piaget, 1973; Sharkins et al., 2017).

Play and Development

Piaget (1973) said children have an active role in gaining knowledge and understanding about the world. Knowledge and understanding are constructed through physical and mental activity (Kaur, 2017; Snow et al., 2018). Building knowledge and skills involves a continuous process of constructing and what children bring to learning situations (Bodrova& Leong, 2015; Cakiroglu, 2018). Piaget (1973) said children are active constructors of knowledge and understanding through assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation and accommodation are adaptation processes that enable children to make changes in their mental models to adapt (Hanfstingl et al., 2019; Piaget, 1973). Assimilation involves processing information that fits to a schema, and

accommodation involves adapting current levels of thinking or schema to take new information into account (Bormanaki&Khoshhal, 2017).

As children play, they assimilate new ideas and take in sensory information through their interactions with people and objects and incorporate this into their existing knowledge of people and objects (Piaget, 1962; Sharkins et al., 2017; Theodotou, 2019). In situations where new information does not fit into existing schema, children experience disequilibrium (Bormanaki &Khoshhal, 2017). However, through assimilation and accommodation of new information, children can develop a balance between existing and new schemas, which is equilibrium (Hanfstingl et al., 2019). As a result, children try to master new ideas by adjusting their current idea to the new idea (Bormanaki & Khoshhal, 2017; Piaget, 1926). This allows children to learn something new and achieve new levels of understanding, which is a state of equilibrium (Hanfstingl et al., 2019; Kaur, 2017). As learning is an active process, the HighScope classroom includes interactions and activity areas that cater to children's developmental needs .

A basic qualitative research approach was used for this study because it allowed me to explore challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and support needed and interpret it based on preschool teachers' and early childhood education officers' perspectives. Vygotsky and Piaget's theories served as guides for this study. These theories helped me design research questions. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory helped in terms of understanding social interactions which support cognitive development. Piaget's theory of cognitive development involved active participation for cognitive development. In considering Vygotsky and Piaget's theories, I explored

challenges teachers face in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they may need. As data were collected and analyzed, theories of cognitive development were considered.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

In the following sections, I reviewed literature related to preschool teachers' perspectives of early childhood educators challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively. After I reviewed literature, I recognized many common themes across different research studies. The themes were curriculum reform, early childhood curriculum implementation, HighScope curriculum, challenges implementing curriculum, constructivist approach, and support needed for curriculum implementation. These themes were identified as current research on challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and support needed. I will now discuss the highlighted themes in detail.

ECE Curriculum

Early childhood education is a dynamic field and over the years there has been emphasis on early care and development focusing on access and quality (Haslip & Gullo, 2018). Early childhood curriculum involves many elements such as views of children as learners, appropriate practices, expected teaching subject matter, and socio-cultural values to be promoted (McKenney & Bradley, 2016; Wood & Hedges, 2016). Factors such as a well-defined curriculum and successful curriculum implementation are critical for quality experiences for young children that can result in positive impact on development (Duncan et al., 2015). An early childhood curriculum is an important

component of any early childhood programme and its use is mandated in many countries (Logan et al., 2015; Zhu, 2015). The main focus of early childhood curriculum is to address all the developmental domain of children (Dilek, 2016). Many early childhood curricula continue to emerge around the world (Haslip &Gullo, 2018; Gulcicek et al., 2019). However, it was noted that many of these curricula are grounded in mainstream curricula models such as HighScope, Montessori, Bank Street, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf (Gulcicek et al., 2019; Khomais&Gahwaji, 2019). These mainstream curricula are reflected in different early childhood curricula based on different aspects or characteristics. According to Gulcicek et al. (2019), countries are inspired by these mainstream curriculum models that highlighted child-centered approach, taking into consideration differences children may have and developmental characteristics of children (Ekici, 2015). Rajab and Wright (2018) noted that Self-learning Curriculum for Kindergarten is based on the HighScope curriculum model. Gulcicek et al. (2019) conducted a study to examine which mainstream curriculum models are included in Turkish Early Childhood Curriculum. Gulcicek et al. (2019) found that most areas of the curriculum such as objective or characteristics reflected traces of mainstream models. As components of these curricula are used, the positive impact is realized. The Reggio Emilia approach helps children develop positive relationship with each other and as a result they develop good communication and play skills (Hong et al., 2017). As it relates to Waldrof curriculum, children's artistic, creative thinking and drawing skills are enhanced (Park, 2018).

Early childhood education curricula are generally based on learning and developmental theories (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019; Rajab & Wright, 2018; Tuncer, 2015). Khomais and Gahwaji (2019) conducted research that focused on theories and principles of three models of early childhood curricula which included HighScope. Researchers found that curricula foundation was in the same theories that form the basis of early childhood education. The theories were Piaget's cognitive learning theory that emphasizes development of logical thinking when children are provided with experiences and rich stimulating environment. The socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky also formed the basis. This theory focused on the need for social interaction in the learning process (Gulcicek et al., 2019; Khomais&Gahwaji, 2019; Wood & Hedges, 2016). The environment was identified as key to the child's learning and development and this was grounded in environmental theories of learning. John Dewey's theory involves interacting in a rich environment with peers and adult as important for learning (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019). However, there are other theories that are adopted in these curricula. These include brain development, environmental and theories based on a local context (Gulcicek et al., 2019; Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019).

Early childhood education curricula is grounded on principles that guide decision teachers make and pedagogical practices (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019; Mligo, 2016; Taylor et al., 2016). According to Khomais & Gahwaji(2019), early childhood curriculum emphasizes culturally and developmentally appropriate practices that involves learning through exploration, imagination and play. The best models of early childhood curricula stress learning involving direct experiences, problem solving, and knowledge

construction during social interaction. This involves child-centeredness and play-based learning (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019; Mligo, 2016). The role of the teacher in terms of relation to the child is a fundamental element (Biesta et al., 2015; Mligo, 2016). The interaction between teachers and the child has a significant role to play in enhancing the teaching and learning process. It is critical for effective curriculum implementation (Gulcicek et al., 2019). Teachers are recognized as change agent in the process.

According to Kim et al. (2019), early childhood educators are responsible for curriculum implementation by delivering curriculum goals and standards to children. The learning environment plays a significant role in early childhood education (Nyland & Ng, 2016; Yang & Li, 2019). A rich environment has to be created with stimulating experiences, exploration and sensory learning that are supported by competent adult or peer (Taylor et al., 2016; Yang & Li, 2019). However, Gulcicek et al. (2019) noted that the organization of learning environment and materials can be different based on the curriculum. In Montessori learning environment, practical and sensory areas are created to support learning while the HighScope places emphasis on home-like items in the centers. The principle of family and community involvement is also a critical component of the learning environment as children do not only learn in a classroom setting (Gulcicek et al., 2019; Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019).

Curriculum Reform or Change

Curriculum reform or change is a complex process that can be challenging for educators (Chimbi & Jita, 2019; Gleeson et al., 2020; Nyland & Ng, 2016; Petrova & Zapotocna, 2018; Zindi, 2018). Curriculum reform in early childhood has focused on

wide spread modern educational principles on teaching practices, child development and student learning (Baron et al., 2016). The reform is done to create early childhood curriculum models to meet needs of the unique social and cultural condition in different countries (Li & Chen, 2017). Change can be both rewarding and positive which depends on individual teacher's attitude and approaches in terms of implementation of the curriculum (MacDonald et al., 2016).

Policymakers tend to forward curriculum reform and change without putting appropriate structures in place to ensure implementers or teachers are competent enough to implement changes at the classroom level (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017; Nevenglosky et al., 2019; Soysal & Radmard, 2017). Ganon-Shilon and Schechter (2017) indicated that countries tend to move quickly into curriculum reform without providing the necessary support to help teachers implement the changes. Also, a top-down administrative approach was used without consultation with teachers. Teachers were not prepared for change and they were required to prepare for implementation (Li & Chen, 2017; Gleeson et al., 2020). In many cases, the lack of knowledge resulted in no buy-in for the new curriculum (Chimbi & Jita, 2019). Although teachers may be resistant to curriculum change as it relates to implementation (Prendergast & Treacy, 2017), this is sometimes seen as dislike for the curriculum. Chimbi and Jita (2019) conducted a study on how teachers interpret the new curriculum and how their understanding influenced implementation of new reform. Researchers found that curriculum reform was done without adequate preparation of teachers to perform their roles. The lack of knowledge on

the change process made teachers appear to be resistant but it was just lack of knowledge on the reform process (Chimbi&Jita, 2019).

According to Chen (2017), teacher education is critical in the reform process as teachers are directly responsible for implementation of the curriculum. It was noted that teachers need sufficient time to understand the change process (Clasquin-Johnson, 2016; Wang & Lam, 2017). Professional learning is critical to motivate and empower teachers as they implement curriculum change (Govender, 2018; Taylor et al., 2016). There is a need for extensive training implementing curriculum reform. Clasquin-Johnson (2016) reported on a study conducted to investigate how professional development, physical resources and instructional support influenced teachers' responses to curriculum change. The results indicated that the professional development programme was not appropriate to adequately meet the needs of specific groups of teachers. Govender (2018) found that teachers were not satisfied with the amount and quality of training received. As it relates to instructional support, support from heads of department and coach was limited. However, collegial support was evident even if it was slow and gradual (Clasquin-Johnson, 2016).

Constructivist Approach

The constructivist learning theory is one of the developments that had gained traction in educational circles (Miller-First & Ballard, 2017). It is classified as best practices in terms of explaining how people come to gain knowledge (Krahenbuhl, 2016). Most early childhood programs implement curricula that are grounded in constructivism. This approach to cognitive development emphasizes that children construct knowledge

through interaction with adults, peers, and materials (Muller et al., 2018; Pardjono, 2016). The constructivist ideas and practices forward how knowledge is produced highlighting the child as active in constructing knowledge (Muller et al., 2018; Pyle & Danniels, 2017; Shah, 2019). The constructivist approach to teaching and learning has its origin from the work of cognitive psychologists such as Dewey, Vygotsky, and Piaget (Muller, 2018; Shah, 2019). Learners are not blank slates but bring their background knowledge and other cultural factors to the learning situation. Constructivists believe that learners construct their own knowledge through experiences with adults, peers and the environment (Shah, 2019). The focus is on the learner in that the teacher supports the learner to ensure it is not just channeled from teacher to student (Tan, 2017). According to Tiilikainen et al. (2019), the classroom is a place where teachers support students during the learning process.

The value of constructivist learning theory cannot be understated as it is important especially for educational practices (Booyse & Chetty, 2016). Researchers indicated that learners benefit from such approach as it results in significant success in enhancing student learning (Krahenbuhl, 2016; Shah, 2019). Learners become self-motivated, leading to effective learners that take responsibility for their own learning (Booyse & Chetty, 2016). According to Shah (2019), the move from traditional method to a more constructivist approach has led to educators challenging students to construct their knowledge and as a result, the needs of many more students are met. Based on research conducted by Dev (2016), constructivist methods positively impact academic performance and problem solving ability of primary school students in the area of

learning language. The researcher found that the constructivist teaching approach provided opportunity for students to be engaged or active in the process which enhanced achievements in English. The class was able to minimize their difficulty in different concepts associated with English Language (Dev, 2016). Constructivist practices in the classroom show great success in promoting student learning (McNally & Slutsky, 2016; Shah, 2019). As when children are engaged, they gain deeper knowledge of concepts.

Although there are advantages to using constructivist approach in the classroom, there are challenges in using the constructivist pedagogy (Shah, 2019). Teachers noted that materials provided during implementation did not meet the goals of constructivist approach (Muller et al., 2018). Constructivist approach has been misinterpreted and misused which resulted in practices that are not effective in addressing needs of students (Muller et al., 2018; Shah, 2019). Constructivist approach focuses on a balance with teacher- and student-directed learning where the teacher has a significant role in the learning process (Shah, 2019). Shah (2019) found that teachers had the idea that they do not need to be expert in the content they will be delivering since children construct knowledge on their own. Teachers expected children to teach themselves. Teachers had challenges in following the constructivist approach in terms of their roles as teachers and difficulty implementing constructivist practices (Krahenbuhl, 2016). Teachers had self-doubt and not recognizing that getting an understanding of constructivism was a process that takes time (Muller et al., 2018). It was a challenge understanding constructivism or the constructivist theory and having to move beyond the traditional way of assessing that included memorization of information. The assessment practices were not aligned with

the pedagogical principles of the constructivist approach (Muller et al., 2018). It must be noted that Shah (2019) recommends when using constructivist pedagogical practices, teachers should be mindful not to present learning as entertainment or expect children to teach themselves. This can lead to poor results and ineffective learning (Shah, 2019).

HighScope Curriculum

The HighScope curriculum is a mainstream curriculum that is widely used in many countries and it has inspired development of other early childhood curriculum used in other countries (Gulcicek et al., 2019; Jenkins & Duncan, 2017; Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019; Qamar et al., 2012). The curriculum is play-based, child-centered, and emphasizes active learning. It is designed to promote high-quality early childhood education for young children (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020; Epstein, 1993; Qamaret al., 2012). The aim is to support the child in development of important skills while considering the child's interest and providing opportunities for choice (Rajab & Wright, 2018; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). Teachers support learning by creating a stimulating environment that allows children to interact with an adult or their peers (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020; Qamar et al., 2012).

Child development theories are clearly embedded in the HighScope curriculum (Rajab & Wright, 2018). The curriculum is extensively based on Piaget's cognitive theory and the role it plays in construction of knowledge through experiences and supportive environment (Hohmann & Weikart, 1995; Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019; Rajab & Wright, 2018). The social-cultural theory of Vygotsky clearly embedded in HighScope, which involves social interaction in learning. The learner has to be actively

involved in learning process in terms of seeking and constructing meaning. There has to be social interaction and collaboration in the teaching and learning process. According to Rajab and Wright (2018), the curriculum is aligned with the constructivist approach that focuses on adults providing support for children as they interact with materials and others. Piaget's theory is the basis for the constructivist approach to learning, teaching methods and education reform (Du Plessis, 2020). John Dewey's philosophy of progressive education has also influenced the HighScope curriculum (Hohmann & Weikart 1995). This is reflected in the curriculum through opportunities to be engaged in real life experiences in a playful way (Qamar et al., 2012).

HighScope Principles

The curriculum is based on five key principles: active learning, adult-child interaction, learning environment, daily routine and assessment (Gulcicek et al., 2019; HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020; Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019); Rajab & Wright, 2018). These principles form the basis for decision making and guidance in terms of the practices used (Gulcicek et al., 2019). Teachers can use these principles to decide on choices and decisions as it relates to the learner, content, teaching methods, strategies, learning environment, and relationship with other adults including family members (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019; Rajab & Wright, 2018).

Active Learning

The HighScope curriculum involves active participatory learning, and it is the cornerstone of the curriculum (Morrison, 2015; Qamar et al., 2012; Rajab & Wright,

2018). Active learning involves learning by doing. Children are given opportunities to be involved and engaged (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020; Lerkkanen et al., 2016). It is believed that active participatory learning through play is critical for a child's development. According to Mikser et al. (2016), the concept of the HighScope active learning is that of active participation of the learner in the learning process through interaction with peers, adults and environment to meet learning outcomes. Children select materials based on their interest and they can explore and manipulate materials as they learn (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020). In this process, the learner is able to solve problems, express self, think critically and transfer their learning into different situations or take control of their own learning (Mikser et al., 2016). As a result, the learner has to be supported based on developmental level and needs (Mikser et al., 2016). Samuelsson et al. (2006) noted that as children are engaged, the role of the teacher is to support the children during learning. This involves adult scaffolding of the learner; the role of teachers is that of facilitator. The learner and teacher are involved in construction of knowledge (Rajab & Wright, 2018).

Key development indicators (KDIs) are the building block of the HighScope curriculum. There are a total of 58 key developmental indicators that highlight the objectives of the curriculum (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020). These indicators are the behaviors that are expected for the children as they interact in the learning areas (Gulcicek et al., 2019). The KDI's are approaches to learning, language literacy and communication, social and emotional development, physical development, Mathematic, Social Studies, Science and Technology and Creative Arts (Gulcicek et al.,

2019). In planning activities, the different categories are used with materials and active participation.

Learning Environment

The curriculum places great emphasis on the learning environment and its role in the learning process. These include both indoor and outdoor learning spaces and they are organized in specific areas of interest for children which provide opportunities for children to make choices, decisions and solve problems (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020; Gulcicek et al., 2019; Qamar et al., 2012). The teacher's roles includes planning activities for students based on needs and interest, assessment, designing the learning environment and providing behavior guidance (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019). The interaction between the child and the learning environment is critical to development (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019). The learning environment must be rich with stimulating experiences, exploration, sensory learning and interaction (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019). The interest areas are organized with different materials that children can easily access, that are open-ended, real-life, and labeled so they can be returned after use. According to Daly and Beloglovsky (2015), open-ended materials allow children to build on their understanding of concepts and enhance their cognitive abilities. The interaction between children and the adult is of great significance but the physical space is also important (Schaefer, 2016). Schaefer (2016) conducted a research on ways classroom materials influence learning. Results showed that based on teachers questioning, this can influence how children use materials during play. Another aspect is the relationship with family and community which is a significant component. The

experiences must not just be limited to the experiences in the early childhood classroom. The curriculum emphasizes rich and stimulating environments (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020). The physical environment is very important. The arrangement of the environment is critical to support learning and many of the activities are done individually and in small groups (Rajab & Wright, 2018). The teacher provides support in the process.

The learning environment is carefully arranged to ensure active learning and development of problem-solving skills (Yang & Li, 2019). In the classroom, there are learning centers or interest areas such as block area, book area, sand and water that help to support active learning. A comfortable space is created to encourage children to play freely as they select the areas, they plan to play in. Outside play is forwarded and school must have an outside area for play with equipment such as swings and slides (Gulcicek et al., 2019).

Adult-Child Interaction

Adult-child interaction is a significant principle of the curriculum relating to interaction in the child's learning and socio-cultural context (Boeckmann & Nichols, 2015; Gulcicek et al., 2019). The child is viewed as having different needs and are able to complete certain task at different age. Through interaction with materials, peers, and adults, the child develops competences (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020; Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019). Adults are viewed as facilitator in the teaching learning process (Rajab & Wright, 2018). According to Gulcicek et al. (2019), teachers have a great role to play in setting up the environment for learning and ensuring there is

connection with the teacher and child's family. There are many adult-child interaction strategies such as adult participating in play and talking with children as they play (Gleeson et al., 2020). This support encourages children to solve problems and the teacher gets to extend on children's learning in the process (Khomais & Gahwaji, 2019; Morrison, 2015).

Assessment

Assessment is an important aspect of the curriculum and there is an effective evaluation system that focuses on the quality of the curriculum (Boeckmann & Nichols, 2015; Gulcicek et al., 2019; HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020). The HighScope curriculum involves the daily observation of children's experiences throughout the daily routine (Gulcicek et al., 2019). The KDI's form the basis for the record keeping process during observations. According to Gulcicek et al. (2019), the HighScope curriculum places significant emphasis on assessment. It involves the intentional observation of children in their learning environment and sharing of information with parents to ensure they can continue to support children at home (Gulcicek et al., (2019). The tools that are used for assessment are the Preschool Child Observation Record (COR) that is used to record children progress and the Preschool Quality Assessment (PQA) that can be used to evaluate the quality of the HighScope curriculum (Gulcicek et al., 2019; HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020). The child observation record (COR) is a comprehensive assessment tool that is used for assessment. Anecdotal notes are taken about each child based on the developmental areas and portfolios are kept of students' work. Using the PQA, learning environment, daily

routine, adult-child interaction, curriculum planning and assessment, parents' involvement, and program management are evaluated (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020). These two assessments can provide a good evaluation of the child's progress and the quality of the HighScope curriculum (Gulcicek et al., 2019)

Daily Routine

A key area of the HighScope approach is the daily routine which establishes a common framework for engaging children throughout the day (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020). The daily routine includes set time for various activities for preschoolers such as plan-do-review, small group time, large group time, and outside time. Plan-do-review is a segment of the daily routine where children get time to plan what they will do in the interest areas, share their plans, work on their plan and then report on what was done during work time (Gulcicek et al., 2019). In this segment, children have the opportunity to choose activities they would like to be involved in (Gulcicek et al., 2019; HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020). During small group time, the teacher initiates learning activities for the children based on the learning outcomes, children's interest and what is happening on a local basis. The daily routine also includes greeting time, clean up time; break and transition time (HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2020).

Challenges to Effective Curriculum Implementation

Early childhood educators face many challenges during implementation of a curriculum (Boeckmann & Nichols, 2015; Nevenglosky et al., 2019; Ntumi, 2016; Taylor et al., 2016). In a study conducted by Ntumi (2016), to ascertain challenges preschool

teachers face in the implementation of an early childhood curriculum, found that preschool teachers lacked knowledge about the early childhood curriculum, teaching and learning materials to work with, and there was lack of parental involvement (Mligo, 2016). According to Balogi and Makhubele (2018), lack of funding, materials and training for educators were stumbling blocks to curriculum implementation. It was noted that factors such as teachers, teaching, and learning materials influenced the effective implementation of the curriculum (Clasquin-Johnson, 2016; Taylor et al., 2016). According to Aquino et al. (2017), insufficient instructional materials, inadequate space for large class sizes, lack of parental support, and lack of teacher training were challenges teachers faced implementing the curriculum. Boeckmann and Nichols (2015) in the review of the HighScope curriculum in Grenada, found that learning to share control of conversation with children and participating in children's play were challenging. Teachers noted that this was even more challenging with teacher-child ratio more than 8:1 (Boeckmann & Nichols, 2015).

Lack of Knowledge About the Curriculum

Early childhood educators are expected to be knowledgeable and competent in their job (American Institute for Research, 2016; Balogi & Makhubele, 2018). As early childhood educators, teachers are critical in the implementation of a curriculum (Bell, 2015; Lochner et al., 2015). Teachers not having a good grasp of early childhood curriculum can result in problems as it relates to the content of the curriculum (Ntumi, 2016). According to Mligo (2016), implementation of the curriculum was challenging as teachers' lacked knowledge of child-centered pedagogy and curriculum that they were

expected to implement. Teachers lacked knowledge in terms of how information has to be presented and ideas to ensure children were making sense of the information (Mligo, 2016). Govender (2018) conducted a research to explore teachers' perspectives on reform as it relates to curriculum implementation. The aims were to gain knowledge on the challenges, support and professional development received to facilitate change. The results showed teachers felt they did not have pedagogical content knowledge to enhance areas of the teaching process in terms of the context of curriculum change they were expected to make (Govender, 2018).

According to Nyland and Ng (2016), lack of clarity with the design of the curriculum and what teachers are expected to do; showed they do not have the same concept of change. This can indeed affect the implementation process. Teachers had difficulty in transferring ideas into practices especially when the principles were different to what they have been using (Henward et al., 2019; Nyland & Ng, 2016; Qamar et al., 2012). Teachers faced challenges planning for play activities as it is less structured and teachers found it quite difficult to implement guided play in the classroom (Pyle et al., 2018). It is important that teachers feel confident in the implementation process to ensure effective implementation (American Institute for Research, 2016).

Lack of Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teachers were not provided with adequate support in the form training that can help them better understand early childhood curriculum (Balogi & Makhubele, 2018; Mligo, 2016). The administrators did not provide frequent training that was needed to keep teachers up to date on trends in early childhood curriculum (Ntumi, 2016).

Govender (2018) found that the lack in sustainable professional development programmes was a major constraint facing staff members implementing the curriculum. Teachers were dissatisfied with training workshop offered in terms of quality and quantity (Govender, 2018). Teachers lacked knowledge on the implementation of child-centered curriculum and had limited professional development sessions. This affected implementation of the preschool curriculum that was provided (Mligo, 2016). Inequalities in training and the accessibility to ensure all staff member received the initial training were lacking in the process (Taylor et al., 2016).

The need for ongoing teacher education in terms of how to configure and adapt their strengths and skills while implementing the pedagogical practices were needed (Boeckmann & Nichols, 2015; MacDonald et al., 2016; Nevenglosky et al., 2019; Ntumi, 2016). Teachers are expected to interpret curriculum philosophies and transfer this to practices in the classroom. This result in teachers not using developmentally appropriate methods for teaching preschool children as preschool children were taught as primary school children. The principles of teaching young children were not followed (Mligo, 2016). This was further supported by Boeckmann & Nichols (2015), noting that adult-child interaction which is central to effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum, needed more work to be done in this area. Additional training and practice should be done in areas of sharing control and participating in children's play (Nichols, 2015). Cheung (2017) and Rajab and Wright (2020) highlighted that it was problematic for teachers having to directly implement western creative pedagogy such as the child-initiated approach in Chinese context where there are cultural differences. Tan (2017)

noted that it was a challenge for educators as they were of the belief that constructivist approach and the transmission approach were not compatible.

Professional development needed to assist teachers in building content and teaching practices were not ongoing (Govender, 2018). Gokmenoglu and Clark (2015) noted that implementation of the curriculum has failed due to lack of adequate professional development provided by leaders. Leaders tend to assume that once teachers have the expertise in the content area, they can successfully implement the curriculum (Govender, 2018). This may not be the case; therefore, there must be collaboration from different stakeholders (Haslip & Gullo, 2018; Nyland & Ng, 2016). It is important to have programs that prepare teachers for the change process (Haslip & Gullo, 2018; Nores et al., 2018). Balogi and Makhubele, (2018) posited that training should be practical sessions onsite with the opportunities to transfer the theoretical that was provided during training. This must be done to ensure consistent implementation of the curriculum or programme. Taylor et al. (2016) noted that teachers that received in-service training were the ones that more likely implemented the practices forwarded. In order to embrace and implement curriculum, teachers have to be familiar with details of the curriculum to avoid the potential of becoming overwhelmed (MacDonald et al., 2016).

Insufficient Resources

Inadequate teaching and learning materials was another challenge that teachers faced implementing the early childhood curriculum (Miller-First & Ballard, 2017; Mligo, 2016). The teaching and learning facilities at the learning centers were not adequate to ensure effective implementation of the curriculum (Balogi & Makhubele, 2018). Balogi

and Makhubele (2018) noted that the facilities lacked appropriate playground, classrooms and rest areas. Teachers were not supported by administrators in terms of the provision of teaching and learning materials and facilities for implementation of the curriculum (Mligo, 2016). Many centers lack swings, appropriate toilet facilities to accommodate all children and this made it difficult to provide quality services that ensured good quality program at early childhood centers (Balogi & Makhubele, 2018). Sufficient resources are needed to ensure effective teaching and learning. The limited materials affected the teaching and learning process especially where there is overcrowding in the classroom space (Govender, 2018).

Lack of Parental Involvement

The lack of parental involvement in the education of their children can negatively affect implementation of the curriculum (Aquino et al., 2017). Ntumi (2016) revealed that parents were unconcerned about early childhood education at the preschool level. The parents' perceptions of early childhood education were that of wasting time, not recognizing that it is a serious place for learning. Parents were powerful stakeholders in the process that did not support the agenda as it relates to curriculum reform (Nyland & Ny, 2016). Parents did not have a clear understanding of play in the learning process as they equated play as just having fun. They forwarded that children were sent to school to learn, not just to play (Nyland & Ng, 2016). However, in the study conducted by Mligo (2016), parental involvement was examined. The results showed that during implementation of the new curriculum, parents lacked the awareness about their roles in the process in terms of their collaboration with teachers to enhance students' learning

(Mligo, 2016). This was supported by Aquino et al. (2017) who stated that parents were not cooperating with teachers to support the learning process.

Elements or Circumstances that Influence Curriculum Implementation

There are many elements or circumstances that influence the quality of the implementation of curricula. Researchers highlighted these factors such as the teacher, students, resources and materials, and support from stakeholders (Balogi & Makhubele, 2018; Ntumi, 2016;). According to Phillips et al. (2017), teacher receptivity and consistency during curriculum implementation especially in lessons delivery were significant predictors of the quality of implementation. It was noted that teacher education was not a key predictor that influenced the quality of implementation (Phillips et al., 2017). Mc Neill et al. (2016) found this to be true as the preparation training session provided for teachers before the implementation process begins is vital. Teachers must fully understand the goals and objectives of the new curriculum. The use of materials is vital in the early learning environment and it plays an important role in implementation of a new curriculum (Ntumi, 2016). Ntumi (2016) and MacDonald et al. (2016) recommended that administrators provide the necessary teaching and learning materials and frequent training to ensure the effective implementation of an early childhood curriculum. Balogi and Makhubele (2018) showed that poor infrastructure, inadequate training of early childhood teachers and poor financial support, monitoring, and evaluation were challenges teachers faced when implementing the early childhood development programmes. MacDonald et al. (2016) found this to be true, that teachers' experiences during preparedness can influence their ability to embrace or resist change. It

was noted that teachers that taught for over 10 years had less fear or resistant to curriculum change (MacDonald et al., 2016).

The support from the school administrators is required for success in the curriculum implementation process (Govender, 2018; Kimosop, 2018). Kimosop (2018) noted that head teachers played a key role in the implementation of the curriculum by providing appropriate materials, giving advice on curriculum matters, and encouraging parents to support teachers in the process. However, the support that head teachers needed was not provided by the Ministry of Education official in terms of how to supervise the curriculum. According to Govender (2018), based on policy, educational officials are required to visit schools during the term to monitor and provide guidance to teachers. However, it was noted that objectives were not achieved due to the lack of support as noted in the policy (Govender, 2018).

Support During Curriculum Implementation: Professional Development

Professional development sessions are critical in providing support for teachers as they implement a new curriculum (Nevenglosky et al., 2019; Smit & du Toit, 2016; Weiland et al., 2018). The lack of training or quality guidance can affect implementation process (Bell, 2015; Weiland et al., 2018). The implementation of a new curriculum requires that teachers are aware of their role in the process. Gray and Ryan (2016) noted that 43% of the early childhood educators lacked knowledge about their role in the curriculum implementation process at the primary school level. This points to the need for training to help teachers understand the curriculum. Professional development is critical in implementation of the curriculum. According to Nevenglosky et al. (2019),

there is a need for administrators to provide the necessary professional development sessions for teachers as they implement a new curriculum. Nevenglosky et al. (2019) found that teachers were concerned about lack of information that will allow them to successfully implement the curriculum. Teachers can indeed benefit from professional development as this can enable them to develop a level of comfort and important competences implementing the new curriculum (Cetin et al., 2016; Coldwell, 2017; Lia, 2016). It is important that the relevant sessions are provided (Lia, 2016). As teachers implement a new curriculum, anxiety can be an issue; however, Margolis et al. (2017) and Hall (2015) have noted that quality professional development can help to maintain teacher confidence and reduce anxiety. Administrators must be strategic in the areas for professional development as it must be relevant to the needs of teachers (Baird & Clark, 2018; Bakir et al., 2016; Bautista et al., 2016). MacDonald et al. (2016) found that it is important to provide quality professional learning opportunities to support teachers in their delivery of the curriculum.

Summary and Conclusions

An extensive literature review was completed related to the challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum, and the support needed for effective implementation at the early childhood level. As I reviewed literature, there were many themes that were common among the various studies that I included in this research study. The studies reviewed on challenges implementing early childhood curriculum, and support needed for effective implementation highlight challenges faced, and the need for greater support during the implementation process. Even though researchers have

previously noted the challenges in early childhood curriculum implementation (Baron et al., 2016; Ngwenya, 2020), few researchers have explored the perspectives of early childhood educators about the challenges implementing HighScope curriculum, and support they need implementing the curriculum effectively. This study will fill the gap in practice regarding challenges early childhood teachers face implementing the HighScope curriculum, and the support they need in the process. The information can lead to making recommendations to provide guidelines for implementing the curriculum or a child-centered curriculum to early childhood educators and how the challenges can be addressed with additional support.

In chapter three, an overview of the research design is provided. I present a basis qualitative research study that explored the perspectives of early childhood educators regarding challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for executing the curriculum effectively. An in-depth description of the research design is provided. The topics in chapter three include the role of the researcher, participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data analysis plan, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum, which involves balancing child-initiated and teacher teacher-directed activities, as well as the support they need for executing the curriculum effectively. In Chapter 3, I describe the research method for the study. Chapter 3 includes the research design, its rationale, and the role of the researcher. Details regarding how participants were selected, data collection, and data analysis plan are also outlined. I discuss trustworthiness issues, highlighting issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability, along with ethical procedures. The chapter concludes with a summary of key components of research methods.

Research Design and Rationale

To explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum, and the support they need for executing the curriculum effectively, these research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the perspectives of early childhood educators regarding challenges involved with implementing the HighScope curriculum in Grenada?

RQ2: What support do early childhood educators perceive they need to execute the HighScope curriculum effectively in Grenada?

The central concepts of this study include challenges involved with implementation of the HighScope curriculum and support needed for effective implementation. Early childhood curriculum is an important component of early childhood programs (Akinrotimi & Olowe,

2016) and there is a need for effective implementation (Kimosop, (2018). The role of the early childhood educator in implementing the HighScope curriculum is critical (Rajab & Wright, 2018). Understanding the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they may need for effective implementation needs to be explored, since this can lead to finding ways to effectively implement the curriculum.

I used the basic qualitative research design to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators. The qualitative design focuses involves processes to examine a phenomenon using descriptive data from experiences of participants (Creswell, 2013; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative research is used to explore a key concept or central phenomenon where data are analyzed and the researcher identifies themes that emerge (Creswell, 2016). Qualitative research allows the researcher to use subjectivity, while emphasizing data collection and analysis (Silverman, 2016). The quantitative research design was rejected as it was not aligned with the research question. In quantitative research, the focus is on hypothesis testing while qualitative research involves how participants experience the phenomenon in terms of gaining meaning (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is aligned with the purpose of the study, which is to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators regarding challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for executing the curriculum effectively. Exploring teachers' perspectives required a research design that allowed me to gain information regarding specific experiences teachers have in the classroom.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), basic qualitative research design involves obtaining a clear picture of the phenomenon through the perspectives of participants involved in the study. The qualitative research design involves an open-ended approach where participants can construct meaning from their experiences and situations (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017; Schwandt, 2015). I opted for the basic qualitative research design to ensure rich and thick descriptions were collected from early childhood educators via semi-structured interviews. After considering the purpose of the study, the basic qualitative approach enabled me to gain insight regarding challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum. Such information may not be available with a quantitative approach. By using this research design, I was able to answer the research question by providing rich descriptions of how participants interpret their experiences and make sense of what exists in the classroom .

Other research designs were considered before the basic qualitative approach was selected. Grounded theory was considered but rejected. The grounded theory design involves establishing a theory from data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Gaudet & Dominique, 2018). The aim of this research was not to build a substantive theory but explore perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for executing the curriculum effectively.

Another design that was considered was phenomenology. Phenomenology research involves the everyday real-life experiences of participants. It can be used to explain how participants experience a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2016; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). I focused on challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope

curriculum and support needed which involves collection of data at only one point in time instead of over a period of time. The study aim is not to look at how participants experience a specific phenomenon but to focus on their perspectives. The case study approach was also rejected. The case study approach involves a research question or issue as it relates to real life situations with the intention of determining the how and why of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2016; Silverman, 2016). In my study, the focus is not observations of the participants in real life situation. After considering this method, the basic qualitative research is best for the study and helped to explore research questions. This will help readers understand the phenomenon in terms of experiences involved with implementing the curriculum, and support they need to ensure effective implementation.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher had an important role to play in terms of quality of the results of the research. As the sole researcher, I was responsible for all areas of the study which includes recruitment of eligible participants, data collection, transcribing, analysis, storing all data, and reporting of results. A key role involves creating interview questions and interviewing participants in a respectful, neutral, and non biased manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My role as the researcher was to record the perspectives of participants while asking open-ended questions and analyze data. In this study, data were collected via semi-structured interviews.

Over the past 24 years, I have worked in the area of ECE. During this period, I worked as an early grade teacher, ECE officer, and facilitator of professional development sessions. As an ECE officer, I am responsible for supporting early

childhood teachers on a daily basis. On a professional basis, I have facilitated professional development sessions once a year for some of the early childhood teachers involved in the study. However, in my role as an ECE officer, I did not serve in any supervisory role with participants or provide support on a daily basis. Preschool teachers are not involved in the study in the district that I serve. Although I am an ECE officer, participants were not selected from schools within the educational district where I work. Potential participants are not directly under my supervision as they are not part of the educational district where I work; therefore, I do not have any supervisory connections with any participants. No potential participants were directly supervised by me. As a result, I do not have interactions with them on a daily basis. However, I have a professional relationship with ECE officers, as they are my colleagues. These relationships did not hinder the data collection process in anyway. They provided a list of names and contact information of preschool teachers, but they did not know final participants' names, as I assigned pseudonyms. I do believe my role was beneficial for this study because of my knowledge regarding training teachers received as it relates to the implementation of the HighScope curriculum. My familiarity with the topic and learning environment will enrich understanding.

I was aware that the potential for researcher bias exists during the research process. It was important that I remained unbiased during all interactions or communications with participants and ensured data collection was not influenced by my personal thoughts and feelings. It was important to be cognizant of biases and manage them effectively. This leads to a valid study. In order to mitigate and reduce biases based

on my experiences as an ECE officer and professional development facilitator, I used several steps to validate of my study such as transcript reviews, peer reviewing, and keeping a journal. I showed participants a summary of draft findings from individual interviews. This helped me check the accuracy of findings and increase the validity of my study. To reduce any biases, a peer reviewer (see Appendix A) checked interview questions prior to the beginning of interviews, and reviewed data analysis to check the accuracy. A reflective journal was used to document my reflections as they related to my biases, beliefs, and assumptions. Keeping a journal allowed me to address influences, perceptions, and background knowledge. I also maintained a professional demeanor during the interview process and kept my personal beliefs and knowledge to myself.

Methodology

Participant Selection

I used purposeful sampling to intentionally select all participants for the study . This strategy allowed me to intentionally select educators to obtain a better understanding of the central phenomenon. These participants were critical to the study, since they were familiar with the preschool program and were implementing the program in the school. It was critical that participants met set criteria to ensure in-depth insights about their experiences to effectively answer research questions. This ensured participants were knowledgeable about the problem or phenomenon in the study and expressed their willingness to participate in the study .

I recruited 12 preschool teachers and two ECE officers to participate in the study. All participants were a preschool teacher for over 2 years in two specific educational

districts, received training regarding the implementation of the HighScope curriculum, and were presently implementing the HighScope curriculum in the classroom. For the ECE officers, the criteria were that participants works for the district or directly supervised preschool teachers at selected educational districts for at least 3years, in addition to knowledge about the HighScope program.

The sample size for qualitative research varies. Data saturation was achieved during data analysis to assure that the number was sufficient for answering the research questions. Based on the two educational districts, the goal was to have 12 preschool teachers and two ECE officers who met the selection criteria. Participants included three preschool teachers from each of the four different preschools and two ECE officers who participated in the study, a total of 14 female participants. The size of the participants is critical in qualitative research. According to Patton (2015), there are no specific rules for size in qualitative research. Also, the study has two research questions. The sample included educators from different educational districts. Based on data saturation, 14 participants were adequate for the study as data became repetitive. Semi-structured interviews were used, and the smaller sample allowed for a more manageable study and realistic way of understanding challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and support needed as opposed to frequency of activities. This was critical based on time and resource constraints.

Purposeful sampling was used to select the 14 participants for the study. The focus was to select participants who could provide relevant data based on the phenomenon. Participants were preschool teachers and early childhood educators

working for preschools implementing the HighScope curriculum. I applied to Walden University's Institutional Board (IRB) for approval to conduct research. After approval was granted (approval #01-04-21 -0663233), I sought permission from the Ministry of Education to carry out research in districts. Preschool teachers were identified by ECE officers who supervised them. Officers were asked to submit a list of names and contact information for preschool teachers who met criteria for participation in the study. Based on the list, potential participants were selected and via email, a detailed letter of invitation to voluntarily participate in the study was sent to each participant. As educators responded by expressing their interest to participate in the study via email, phone conversations were held with potential participants to provide further details regarding the study. Consent forms were sent via email so they could understand the study. Participating preschool teachers and early childhood educators replied via email if they consented. Participants selected were provided with contact information to clarify information if necessary.

Instrumentation

The data collection method for this research was semi-structured interview and I created the data collecting instrument, interview questions. I used WhatsApp, and Skype to conduct interview with preschool teachers (Appendix A) and ECE officers (Appendix B) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of any particular platform depended upon the technology that participants had or what was convenient for them. The interviews were appropriate for this qualitative research as the aim was to gain educators' perspectives about challenges teachers face implementing the HighScope curriculum, and

support needed for effective implementation (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The questions for the semi-structured interview were developed by the researcher in order to address the research questions. The questions provided an opportunity for a natural conversation where the participants were able to express themselves. As part of questioning, it was possible for the researcher to gain clarity and assess the relevancy of responses given. The interview questions were researcher-produced to ensure the questions asked are specific, relevant, and open-ended to ensure the participants can freely articulate their responses. The questions were set to obtain early childhood educators' perspectives about challenges teachers face implementing the HighScope curriculum, and the support they need for executing the curriculum effectively.

The sufficiency of the data collection instrument to answer the research questions was established as the instrument allowed greater responses and more descriptive responses from participants as the opportunity was provided to ask open-ended questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I was able to control the flow of questions using open-ended questions. Since the research focused on getting participants' perspectives and insights directly, semi-structured interview was quite appropriate. Semi-structured interviews also allowed the opportunity for follow up questions to probe deeper and gain clarity from participants.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment Procedures and Participation

Recruitment procedures followed the requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Walden University. After approval from the Institutional Review

Board (IRB) (approval # 01-04-21-0663233), I requested permission from the Ministry of Education to conduct research in districts. After I obtained approval from the Ministry of Education, the signed notification of approval from the Ministry of Education was submitted and confirmed by Walden IRB. I then contacted district ECE officers for the names and contact information of preschool teachers that met the criteria. I then selected from the list, preschool teachers who were invited to participate in the study. An email was sent to preschool teachers and ECE officers that were selected based on specific criteria. The email included an introduction, purpose of the study, and invitation asking for informed consent to participate in the study. Then, a consent form was sent via email so potential participants could understand the study. The informed consent form included purpose of the study, what is expected of participants, how data will be collected, ethical guidelines, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality and privacy of data, process for withdrawal, and contact information. The potential participant was given 24 to 48 hours to review the study requirements before consenting to participate. The participating preschool teachers and early childhood educators replied with the email stating, 'I consent.' A phone conversation was held with preschool teachers and ECE officers to provide further details on the study, verify that criteria are met for selection and schedule a date for the interview. The participants were allowed to keep a copy of the consent form. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to promote confidentiality.

Data Collection

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Each participant chose the location, medium, date, and time for the interview. Interviews were conducted via

WhatsApp, and Skype. Participants were interviewed individually at their place of residence to ensure privacy and comfort. The duration for the interview was 45 to 60 minutes. The protocol for the interview was explained to participants including the voluntary nature in that participant can withdraw from the study at any time or for any reason. Participants were reminded of the need to audio record the interview so it could be transcribed later. The participants were informed that an audio-recording device will be set up to document the interview and hand notes will be taken. The interview was recorded and dated for future reference. I conducted a debriefing at the end of the interview and allowed participants to ask questions or make a comment on any aspect of the interview process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I asked participants for an additional 30 minutes another time to verify responses to ensure that responses are accurately represented. I also expressed thanks to participants reminding them that they can request a copy of the transcribed interview at any time. The interview responses remained confidential, and participants were contacted later to review the data analysis. The data collection events took place over a period of two weeks as seven interviews were conducted per week.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis plan included thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Saldana, 2016). The qualitative data analysis software used was Atlas.ti 9. This software was used to assist in transcription of the interviews, coding transcripts, and grouping the codes that emerge into categories and themes. Semi-structured interview responses from the recording were transcribed and the notes from the interview were analyzed. This was

done to answer the research questions that focused on challenges teachers faced implementing the HighScope curriculum, and support needed for effective implementation. The research questions provided a focus for data collection and the structure of the semi-structured interview questions. The data analysis began with pre-coding as I read the questions first, then I read the interview transcripts and notes prior to beginning the coding process as indicated. This involved listening to the interview recording several times, reading the interview transcript, and making notes (Creswell, 2015). After this was done, I coded the data using open coding. The focus was on identifying common terms and phrases based on the participants' responses that are relevant to the research question. This then led to grouping the codes that go together. I identified relationship among the data or groups of codes that can go together by establishing categories and themes.

The next stage in the coding process was thematic analysis. This included identifying parts of the text to generate categories, then searching the text for emerging themes, labeling themes, and then establishing themes for the report (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). If there were any discrepant cases, these were documented and reported as this increased the validity of the results. To address any discrepant cases, a review of the coding process was done to ensure participants' perspectives were accurately recorded.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important area of qualitative research. The researcher must ensure the data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted with rigor and in an ethical manner

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). There are several strategies that can be used to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research. Researchers focus on credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability to establish the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Silverman, 2016).

Credibility involves the extent to which the research findings are consistent with reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The use of the semi-structured interview during the data collection process provided the opportunity for an in-depth understanding of early literacy development. This helped to address the issue of researcher bias and inconsistencies (Patton, 2015). I crossed check audio-recordings of interviews and the transcripts to ensure both were aligned. I kept a reflective journal to record my observations before, during, and after interviews. Also, to enhance credibility, I used member check by allowing participants to review the summary of draft findings to ensure accuracy of information. The summary of the draft findings was sent via email after the interview was completed. The participants had an opportunity to make the necessary corrections. Participants were allowed to discuss with the researcher to clarify, add, or modify to help validate the data collected. An expert reviewer that holds a doctorate in education checked the interview questions prior to the beginning of the interview, and reviewed data analysis to check accuracy of the information and bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In qualitative study, transferability involves the ability to transfer and generalize findings so that if another study is done in another setting, it may produce similar data (Creswell, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I enhanced transferability by selecting schools

that were typical in terms of implementation of the HighScope curriculum across two districts. This was also established by variation in the participants selected, I included both early preschool teachers and early childhood education officers that provided instructional support to teachers. The participants came from different educational districts. The variation was in the area of demography and years of experience teaching at the preschool level. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to collect rich, thick descriptions that will enable readers to understand the key areas of the study and to determine if the results can be transferable to other situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability in qualitative research involves the extent to which the processes and procedures used for analyzing data can be tracked (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To enhance dependability, an audit trail included detailed description of methods used to collect and analyze data and description of the participants' selected, and sampling methods. The data will be kept for about five years so that it can be reviewed if there is a need at any point. I also used a research journal to document my reflections, questions, perceptions, biases, and decisions during the study to assist with the audit trail. All these strategies helped to enhance dependability and enhance confirmability.

In qualitative research, confirmability refers to the accurate depiction of participants experiences without predisposition (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). One method I used to ensure conformability was to keep a researcher's journal. In this journal, I recorded my own reflections, questions, perceptions, biases, and decisions as it relates to the study. I followed the strict protocols for data collection and analysis. I had debriefing

to corroborate the data and findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is important to maintain detailed record of all the procedures used in conducting the research and checking to ensure the data is collected as planned. The participants checked a summary draft of findings for accuracy as part of a member checking process. An expert reviewer that holds a doctorate degree in education also reviewed data analysis to increase the validity and credibility of the study. Maintaining details records of data analysis, keeping a journal, participants reviewing a summary draft of the findings, and having an expert reviewer review data analysis helped increase trustworthiness of my study.

Ethical Procedures

It is critical that research is conducted in the most ethical manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a researcher, I have a responsibility to follow the ethical guidance to ensure the results of the study can make a valuable contribution to the academic policy in early childhood education. The ethical practices used during the research process can safeguard research participants and improve the validity of the research. All participants must be protected from harm or risk and safeguard their rights both during and at the stage of presenting the findings. To enhance ethical quality, there were key procedures that were followed related to participants and data processing.

I requested approval to conduct the research from Walden's IRB and then the Ministry of Education. Obtaining approval ensured that all ethical procedures were in place to carry out the research and participants were protected. Potential participants were given a letter of invitation and it was made clear to each participant the voluntary nature

of the research. Participants were informed that they can withdraw at any time without any penalty. All participants were informed of the details of the study including purpose of the study and procedures such as steps that will be taken to protect information and privacy (Gaudet & Dominique, 2018). The participants were required to read and sign the informed consent form before they can participate in the research.

Interview protocol was followed, and the early childhood educators were given the opportunity to review the answers given during the interview for any errors or misinterpretations. All demographic information, which included the names of schools and participants were kept confidential as pseudonyms were used when referring to participants (Yin, 2016). All identifying information was left out of the report to protect participants from being known by the public. To ensure confidentiality and protection of data, data stored on the computer were password protected on a computer located at home. Any hard copies of materials from the study will be kept for five years locked in my home office. Participants who wanted to withdraw, this was honored, and participants were asked to send an email indicating their decision.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided details description of the methodology of the study that was used. Included in this chapter are a description and rationale of the research design, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis, issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The basic qualitative study was selected to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum, and support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively. This approach was

selected to ensure in-depth descriptions were provided to understand the challenges teachers face in implementing the HighScope curriculum, and the support needed for effective implementation. The sample for the research consists of 12 preschool teachers and two ECE officers for a total of 14 participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and the data were analyzed using open coding and thematic coding. Several measures were in place to ensure the study is conducted in an ethical manner. These measures included keeping participants data private to ensure participants are not known to the public and data were secured. In Chapter 4, a detailed presentation of research findings based on data analysis is presented.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about the challenges in implementing the HighScope curriculum, which involves balancing child-initiated and teacher-directed activities, and the support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively. The research questions for this study were:

RQ1: What are the perspectives of early childhood educators about the challenges involved with implementing the HighScope curriculum in Grenada?

RQ2: What support do early childhood educators perceive they need to execute the HighScope curriculum effectively in Grenada?

In Chapter 4, I reviewed settings in which the study occurred as well as demographic and characteristic information about participants. Second, I present a description of the data collection process and methods used for data analysis and results. Third, I describe evidence of trustworthiness. Finally, Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of answers to the research questions.

Settings

Participants were all female early childhood educators employed by the Ministry of Education. Participants included 12 preschool teachers and two ECE officers from two educational districts in Grenada. Education officers' roles and responsibilities included supervision and monitoring of the early childhood program from preschool to third grade. This included monitoring the implementation of the HighScope curriculum in preschool settings. All participant officers were attached to the district or directly supervised

preschool teachers in selected educational districts for at least 3 years and were knowledgeable about the HighScope program. Criteria for participation in this study for preschool teachers were that they had to be preschool teachers for over 2 years within two specific educational districts, received training regarding the implementation of the HighScope curriculum, and was implementing the HighScope curriculum in the classroom. All participants met the criteria.

Participants' years of service in the education system ranged from 3 to 43 years. For preschool teachers, years of implementing the HighScope curriculum ranged from 3 to 13 years. As it relates to level of qualification, three participants had bachelor's degrees, four participants had associates degrees, one participant had a diploma, three participants possessed a certificate, and one participant passed Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) ordinary level Subjects CXC/GCE O'Level subjects. CXC is an institution that provides secondary school leaving examinations and GCE is a secondary examination conducted by institutions across the United Kingdom.

Data Collection

After approval from the IRB (approval #01-04-21-0663233), I requested permission from the Ministry of Education to conduct research. Following approval from the Ministry of Education, a signed notification of approval from the Ministry was submitted and confirmed by Walden IRB. I then contacted district ECE officers for names and contact information of preschool teachers who met criteria. I then selected from the list preschool teachers who were invited to participate in the study.

I sent an email invitation to 14 potential participants, including preschool teachers and ECE officers. The email included an introduction, purpose of the study, and invitation asking for informed consent to participate in the study. During the same week that the invitation was sent, I received responses from all 14 participants indicating consent to participate in the study. Telephone conversations were held individually with each of the 12 preschool teachers and two ECE officers. I described the study over the phone and verified that each potential participant met criteria. Once it was determined they met the criteria, pseudonyms were assigned to participants.

An expert reviewer was used for my study. The expert reviewer selected holds a doctorate in education and worked in the education field as a teacher, principal, district education officer, and deputy chief education officer. Prior to conducting interviews, I emailed the expert reviewer a confidentiality agreement to be signed. After the agreement was signed, I emailed interview questions to the expert reviewer to ensure questions were valid and clear. The expert reviewer responded indicating that questions were clear and aligned with the research questions. The expert reviewer also reviewed the data analysis.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with a total of 14 participants, which included 12 preschool teachers and two ECE officers. Due to this study taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were held via WhatsApp and Skype since they were most convenient to use at the time. Zoom and Facetime calls were not needed. Eleven participants were interviewed individually at their place of residence to ensure privacy and comfort over a 2-week period. Three participants were interviewed in offices to ensure a noise-free space, privacy, and ease of access to Wifi. I

chose my home office with the door closed to interview all participants to ensure privacy and confidentiality during WhatsApp or Skype calls. Interview protocols were followed, and participants granted permission to be audio recorded. Each interview was recorded using a cell phone recorder. During interviews, I kept a reflective journal to document my reflections and minimize my biases and beliefs as part of the audit trail. I took notes and highlighted responses where there was a need to ask follow-up questions, seek clarification, or ask for elaboration. I kept notes based on responses where I liked to ask follow-up questions and sought clarification or elaboration before I asked the next question. At the end of each interview, I expressed thanks to each participant for participating in the study. Recording of each interview was saved on my password-protected computer to ensure all data were kept secured.

The recordings of the interview were then uploaded to the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti.9. The software was used during the transcription process, but the transcription was done manually. Software features were used for playing audio and typing interview recordings. I then reviewed transcripts to ensure accuracy and spelling errors. Spelling errors and inaccurate information were identified and corrected in transcripts. All transcripts were saved, and while there were no unusual circumstances encountered during data collection, there was one variation in the initial plan for transcription, which involved using the software to transcribe the data. Transcription was done using ATLAS.ti 9 software. Software features were used for playing audio and typing interview recordings. I decided to manually transcribe interviews to be able to scrutinize the entire data set before starting the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process included transcribing data collected from semi-structured interviews, coding transcripts, and organizing codes that emerge into categories and themes, and then completing the member-checking process. The first step in the data analysis process was to transcribe audio recordings from interviews. Audio files were uploaded to ATLAS.ti 9 software from which they were transcribed manually and saved using the software on my personal password-protected computer. I read transcripts three times to ensure accuracy based on audio recordings.

The process began with precoding as I read transcripts multiple times to gain an understanding of what each participant was saying and engaged in interview transcripts and notes. Manual coding was done using ATLAS.ti 9 to manage and analyze data. Using ATLAS.ti9 software, I examined each transcript individually and coded data using open coding. This allowed me to label information in text that was meaningful and stood out. I highlighted sentences and paragraphs that were salient from transcripts and captured voices of participants. The two research questions and the conceptual framework were used as guides to identify codes. Using ATLAS.ti 9, codes were identified for each transcript and labeled. Some of the main codes that were assigned to the data were: teacher control, learning activity, mindset, resistance, no corners or centers, lack of materials, giving children choices, lack of willingness to accept change, help from officers, no parent help at home, school visits, need play items, poor adult-child interaction, small classroom, coworker support, training, resources for teachers, and little

training. These codes involved teachers' classroom behaviors, needs, challenges, and attitudes.

After a list of codes was created, they were grouped into several categories involving similar ideas. Categories that were created were: negative attitude toward change, instructional supervision, workshops, parents assisting children, play materials, inadequate in-service training, lack of teaching and learning materials, and insufficient visit to schools by education officers. Next, categories were created and merged into themes. I reviewed interview transcripts along with codes and categories to develop themes. Themes that emerged from data based on the research questions were: lack of resources, educators' resistance to curriculum change, insufficient support provided for teachers, increased professional development and training to support teachers, provision of teaching and learning materials, frequent supervision and monitoring by ECE officers, and parental support.

Although discrepant cases are common in qualitative research, there was no evidence of discrepant cases that emerged from the data. I checked for discrepancies by reviewing data collected from semi-structured interviews and compared findings to emerging themes. This was done by carefully going through interview transcripts, ensuring that nothing said was overlooked, and all transcripts represented exactly what participants said during interviews. Finally, participants had the opportunity to review a draft summary of findings to check data analysis.

Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively. The research questions which guided this basic qualitative research study were developed with the goal of exploring the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges involved with implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they perceive they need to execute the HighScope curriculum effectively in Grenada. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' perspectives regarding the research questions and results are based on analyses from interviews. In this section of the chapter, findings of the study are organized in sections based on themes that emerged. Furthermore, representative quotes have been included to clarify points under discussion.

Themes Based on RQ1

In understanding the perspectives of early childhood educators, RQ1 was: What are the perspectives of early childhood educators about the challenges involved with implementing the HighScope curriculum in Grenada? The results of semi-structured interviews were organized according to three themes and presented in detail in the following sections (see Table 1).

Table 1*Themes and Categories Based on Research Question 1*

Themes	Categories
Lack of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning materials • Human Resources • Infrastructural resources • Financial Resources
Educators' resistance to curriculum change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative attitude to change • Lack of buy-in to child-centered approach • Primary teachers do not understand or value what is done at the preschool • Fixed mindset: teacher-centered approach
Insufficient support provided for teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient visit to schools by early childhood education officers • Inconsistency in the information provided by education officers • Inadequate in-service training • Lack of pre-service HighScope training • Parents' limited understanding about and involvement in the HighScope curriculum

Note. Table shows the themes and categories that emerged from the data. The categories are associated with each of the themes. The themes are the challenges educators faced implementing the HighScope curriculum.

Lack of Resources

One theme that consistently emerged from all interviews was lack of resources. All participants claimed that lack of resources was a challenge as they implemented the HighScope curriculum. Participants revealed that the availability of teaching and learning materials is very important during the implementation of the curriculum, since the curriculum involves active participatory learning. There were not sufficient materials available for use in the classroom. PM said, "I would say, sometimes materials are not available. I try to use the things that I have in my environment as much as possible, but sometimes materials are just not available." PN explained:

The provision of appropriate and sufficient materials: sometimes you find teachers do not have materials for children to be able to problem solve, think critically, investigate, and explore. This can not happen because there are not sufficient and appropriate materials for children.

Several participants noted that lack of materials affected the quality of instruction and experiences for children in the classroom. Implementation is compromised by lack of resources since curriculum is play-based; children are required to have materials to work with and be actively engaged throughout the daily routine. PH said:

Sometimes a little material you may want to bring out a specific lesson and then you have to fish around to get the materials. I think is the materials because sometimes the teachers will say I can do it that way but we don't have the materials to bring it out.

Children are also affected negatively by lack of availability of materials, as teachers may not be able to assess them effectively based on KDIs. PD said:

We don't have material available. This means, if we don't have available materials, some things in the KDIs, some skills, basic skills, probably would not be developed. We may not get to see if the children were really indicating to us what is happening because the materials were not available to help make this possible.

Many participants raised concerns that children need variety of materials that are attractive, materials that will bring out their creativity and excite them but this can be very costly. Most of the participants indicated that schools do not have adequate financial resources which make it difficult to consistently procure materials needed to support teaching and learning. PM said, "So the materials are a main factor. It can be costly, sometimes you have to get a variety of materials which may be very costly. So this is one of the main challenge I have." PB concurred:

For instance, you might want to do a project with your students, craft sticks are not cheap. If you want to give children variety, want to give children choices, you have to spend so much and it's expensive for teachers.

Lack of adequate space in and outside of the classroom is also a challenge as it prevents children from being comfortable to explore and develop skills during the daily routine. Some participants indicated the schools lack appropriate furniture and outdoor play equipment for children. The lack of outdoor play equipment is specific for building large and fine motor skills. PF explained:

I am also looking at my classroom having more resources as well so that the HighScope curriculum can be at its best. Also, an area for my children to be able to explore on the outside of my classroom is needed as well. Inside the classroom, I would like to have seating available for my student, so that I myself will be able to spread them out more in the classroom and they can be more comfortable when exploring in the daily routine.

Participants expressed concerns about small classroom space that impedes effective implementation of components of the routine such as setting up learning centers or corners. PB said, “Resources - availability of resources and an adequate environment to facilitate the practice of HighScope is needed. In order for HighScope to be as effective, we need to have the space. We don't have this space.” PB went on to say:

So some corners cannot fit. The children, they do not have space to move and with new COVID protocols, everything going on in the world now, it is very difficult for HighScope to be effective with that limited space.

Some participants strongly felt that lack of assistant teacher to help in the classroom has made it difficult to effectively scaffold or support children during components of the daily routine. PB said, “So sometimes it takes away from you. We don't have teaching assistants in the classroom.” Also, a quick turn over of teachers that have received HighScope training and they are moved out of the preschools to other grades has created a challenge with curriculum implementation. PK said:

One I can think of is the quick turn over of teachers. So, you may show up in a school and there is a change over with the teacher, which means that the training you would have provided, the teacher would have left.

Although teachers received training, there are still teachers with limited knowledge about the HighScope curriculum. This affects the quality of instruction in the classroom. PB stated, "When you have teachers who do not really understand what it is they have to do or do not understand. The new teachers for instance, who don't understand the HighScope curriculum." PJ also highlighted this concern. PJ said, "Teachers say this three levels things they don't know about that, they can't do that. I think these are all hinderances to proper implementation of the HighScope curriculum."

Educators' Resistance to Curriculum Change

Another theme that emerged was that many participants expressed concern that some teachers have a negative attitude towards change and as a result some teachers are resistant to change. Some older teachers are set in their ways and not willing to adapt to change. PK stated:

Another one of the challenges we face is breaking away from the old way of doing things. Persons are still stuck to the old way of doing things. We are finding it a challenge to get some of them to break away and stick to what is right that they are supposed to be doing.

Some teachers have this fixed mindset or attitude where the teacher is transmitter of information or knowledge and directs each activity thus not providing opportunities for active participatory learning. As a result, some teachers are resistant to change the

teacher-centered approach and move to both teacher and students sharing control. PK said:

We came from a period of teacher directedness. The teacher shows up in the classroom and teaches. You get the feeling, the teacher is the holder of all information. She knows everything and is impacting knowledge to the children by just talking to them.

Teachers persist in doing what they have always done and are uncomfortable with change. PJ further stated, “I heard old teachers in the system say it. I even heard some of them say, I only teaching HighScope if the supervisor comes. If the supervisor not there, things as normal.”

Participants shared the concern that teachers are of the view that children have been learning with the previous approaches so there is no need to change it. There are early childhood educators who think differently about how they should work with young children as forwarded by the HighScope curriculum and they lack knowledge about the curriculum. As a result, there is the challenge of lack of buy-in to the new approach to teaching young children. Some preschool teachers lack knowledge about the importance of play in the teaching and learning process. For example, PJ said:

There is this mindset that HighScope is like wasting time. HighScope is only play. There is this mindset that we have been having results in the old way, why bring in something new that takes away control from us and places it in the hands of the child. So this is the mindset some of the teachers have. I heard a lot of them

saying they have been teaching for all the years and nothing happened, so I think mindset can affect implementation.

Several participants also highlighted culture of the school and community as a challenge. Some teachers are not willing to adopt the curriculum to our culture or context. PB explained, “One of the things that I think we need to be mindful of is adapting to our culture, to make it more effective. I think that is where we have some of the challenges, for some of our teachers.” Similar sentiments were stated by PK, “Our culture is something that could be a challenge to what we would like to see happen in the classroom.” Teachers perception of the curriculum is that it is suited for another country and not applicable for Grenada. PB said, “Sometimes you hear teachers talking about that is an American approach, how do they expect it to work here.”

Insufficient Support Provided to Teachers

Participants in the study pointed out that insufficient support was provided to teachers from ECE officers or the Ministry of Education in terms of school visits, professional development opportunities and training. PM stated, “So if more support is given from persons coming in to visit, I believe that the curriculum would be, you know, more effective within the classroom for both teacher and students.” Supervision provided to teachers was limited as officers did not visit schools on a regular basis. In referring to visits to schools from ECE officer, PK shared, “I think if we have more of that, in our school, I will do better. I know for a fact supervision is limited and we should have more supervision.” The visits to schools to observe lessons and provide feedback were not

enough. PK stated, “So sometimes the period we should be in the school working with children and teachers, I think it is not sufficient. I think it is a big problem.”

Some participants articulated their concerns about inconsistency in information from the ECE officers during school visits. There were inconsistencies as it relates to the information about practices implementing the HighScope curriculum. At times, information shared by ECE officers varied from one officer to another. PJ said that one officer might say this is how something has to be done and another officer tells you something different. PJ explained:

One supervisor tells you one interpretation. One supervisor interprets something one way and they will tell you this is the way to do it. Another supervisor will pass by and ask you why you doing that and that is not the way to do it.

Many participants discussed that in- service training and professional development opportunities for teachers, especially new teachers, were inadequate in terms of quality and quantity. PJ stated, “The ministry should look into that and have it more regular in terms of personal development for preschool teachers. I also think maybe, they wait to long. We basically have training once a year.”The training was not frequent enough; it generally took place during the two weeks summer holiday.

There are new teachers in the classroom that do not have knowledge and skills to implement the curriculum effectively. PL said, “And I also think that we need to do some more training, because we have some new teachers coming into the system, and some of them have not really grasp it or understand how the curriculum works.”PL elaborated:

Teachers need training in the Highscope curriculum especially delivering during the small group, how to go about teaching or getting to children during small group or even through out the day-small group or large group. These two areas,I think teachers need training with the curriculum.

In addition, participants highlighted lack of pre-service HighScope training before a teacher started teaching in the preschool. Teachers are hired without knowledge about the HighScope curriculum, and they are expected to implement it.PM said:

I was just thrown into the classroom, when I went back to my school and the HigScope was implemented. This was new to me so being fresh from college it was very hard for me to implement the HighScope curriculum.

Another participant indicated that it was difficult to implement the HighScope curriculum. PA elaborated, “Initially, initially, it was difficult for me. It was challenging for me to implement it because not knowing much about it and having to implement it was very challenging.”

Participants also identified the challenge of parents’ limited knowledge about and involvement in collaborating with teachers in their children’s learning.PD said, “When considering stakeholders, the parents are the first point of contact for children. This posed a great challenge in the early implementation of the HighScope curriculum.”Some parents do not understand the curriculum and as a result have unrealistic expectations of both teacher and children. PJ explained, “I have had the issue where parents asked, how come we did not see a worksheet. I will have to explain that the lesson we did today, did

not need a worksheet.”PJ felt strongly about parents expectations and went on to further elaborate:

A lot of parents will not sit down and speak with their children to see what they know. All they know is that they come at the end of the term and see a big portfolios with a lot of papers and a lot of this and that. This to had been a sort of hinderance to effective implementation of the curriculum.

Participants also expressed concerns about parents lack of knowledge about the curriculum. PI said:

One challenge that stands out is that sometimes the parents do not really understand the curriculum and they will look for more from the students. For example, they may expect the child to be writing at a certain age or they want to see more work from the students and maybe the child does not reach that level yet or the child is not at that developmental stage.

The limited support from parents in terms of colloboration with teachers and assistance for children was noted. PF stated “The challenges also in the home visit; visiting the parents on a regular basis. Sometimes you have parents who are disagreeing with the visitation.”PF explained, “You learn about challenges and difficulties first hand when speaking to the parents about assisting them.”

There was also a lack of resources for teachers to use for their own professional development such as books,curriculum materials, newslettters and journals. Participants stated that these are needed to do the job in the classroom. PK said, “One of the

challenges I did not mention is materials. Teachers need materials for doing the job in such as books, curriculum materials, newsletters, journals. All those things are lacking.”

Themes Based on RQ2

The early childhood educators shared their perspectives on RQ2: What support do early childhood educators perceive they need to execute HighScope curriculum effectively in Grenada? The results of semi-structured interviews were organized according to four themes and presented in detail in the following sections (see Table 2).

Table 2

Themes and Categories based on Research Question 2

Themes	Categories
Increase professional development and training to support teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Pre-service training • Peer coaching
Provision of teaching and learning materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional learning communities • Play materials • Basic classroom materials for the job • Curriculum support materials • Availability of funding/financial support
Frequent supervision and monitoring by early childhood education officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional supervision • Monitoring of the early childhood centers • Regular school visits
Parental involvement and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents assisting children • Motivation • Parents’ awareness about and involvement in the HighScope curriculum

Note. Table 2 shows the themes and categories that emerged from the data. The

categories are associated with each of the themes; the themes are support educators need

to effectively execute HighScope curriculum.

Increased Professional Development and Training to Support Teachers

All participants indicated that they have received training for the implementation of the HighScope curriculum; however, they expressed the need for ongoing professional development and training workshop to develop their knowledge and skills. PK, for example, highlighted the view that teachers need training to build their understanding of the HighScope curriculum in specific areas. This can be training and accreditation from the HighScope foundation. PL explained, “Teachers need training in the Highscope curriculum especially delivering during the small group.”

Participants expressed concerns for new teachers in the education systems that have not received sufficient training or training at all. These teachers need support on a regular basis. PL shared, “Taking the new teachers out once a month from the classroom for a day, for training on different aspects of the daily routine. So they will have a better understanding of how the HighScope curriculum is implemented.” Training for teachers in terms of curriculum implementation ought to be an ongoing process that gives teachers the opportunity to implement effectively.

Some participants expressed their views that the workshop sessions must be more interactive, inovative and diverse in terms of methods used. The workshop should also include sessions where teachers can show best practices. PJ shared, “Ministry could have some more inovative workshops.” PB concured with this point by stating, “While we have the workshops and stuff like that for actual content, maybe we could try to find a

different way to make it more hands-on and interactive for the teachers. So have practical rather than more theoretical.”

Participants also related the fact that they need support in terms of ongoing workshop and training to keep current and up to date with implementing the HighScope curriculum. PH shared, “I think they need a refresher now and then, you know. You know when you get complacent you might just sit back, rock back, and tell yourself all is well. We could have little refresher now and then.” PG expressed, “We need some more refresher courses. Sometimes you do things and you may get kind of stagnant in certain areas, so we might have one day refresher course in certain areas, something like that.” Some participants responses were a plea for additional support in terms of materials for not just for children to use but for supporting teachers as they implement the curriculum. PF said, “We need some more literature for reading. The reading literature: meaning that HighScope has a very vast library of different books and information on how we can proceed in different activities.”

Participants indicated that support needed includes professional learning communities and peer coaching where teachers share their experiences with each other, regular collaborative planning for instruction. PN explained:

I also think that probably they can do a little bit more networking with persons who have fully understood the curriculum and has been properly implementing it. So they can do networking with with each other in order to improve.

Pre-service training is another area highlighted by many participants. Teachers need to get HighScope training before they are hired to teach in preschools. PA stated, “I

think teachers should be trained to implement HighScope before they are sent to the classroom to learn it.” PL expressed, “And I also think that we need to do some more training for teachers, because we have some new teachers coming into the system, and some of them have not really grasp it or understand how the curriculum works.” This experience or support will help them gain knowledge about the HighScope curriculum.

Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials

All participants expressed that sufficient resources are critical to ensure the effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum. Teachers need support from educational administrators as it relates to the provision of teaching and learning materials. PC said, “I am aware of all the economic constraints, problems, but I think that more materials can be given as well.” Participants stated that the HighScope curriculum involves a child-centered approach to teaching and learning. The children must be engaged and actively involved in activities, as a result, they need materials to provide these experiences on a daily basis. PD said, “We need to have, I need to have a wider variety of materials for children to work with.”

Participants discussed that teaching and learning materials needed for effective implementation of the curriculum must be of different variety. There should be items for learning centers, outdoor equipment, basic stationery such as copy paper, markers, and craft items. PD stated, “In terms of physical resources in the class, things like paint, glue, paper, and stuff for Science areas.” PD went on to share that variety is needed, “Wide variety of different materials for different learning centers, particularly the Math and Science areas.” Teachers need both indoor and outdoor resources so that the curriculum

can be effectively implemented. PF explained, “Also, an area for my children to be able to explore on the outside of my classroom is needed as well. Inside the classroom, I would like to have better seating available for my student.” Participants reported that schools lack funds and they are unable to purchase many of the necessary resources needed for teaching and learning.

Frequent Supervision and Monitoring by ECE Officers

Although participants received support through school visits, participants clearly felt that frequent supervision and monitoring by ECE officers were support needed for effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum. They viewed supervision and monitoring as a way of providing support for teachers during implementation of the curriculum. PN stated, “So, I think that continued monitoring, supervision and probably direct coaching are needed.” The ECE officers need to visit classrooms more regular to observe and provide guidance. PK stated, “Something I think a lot of. We need to be there more often. I do not think it is often enough.”

The frequent visit to the classroom is a wonderful opportunity to observe lessons and provide feedback to teachers and on how they are managing changes as they implement the curriculum. PN explained, “Yes, I would have said monitoring and supervision where officers will do follow-up to check to see how teachers are doing after training.” PB expressed that it must involve giving feedback after observation. PB stated, “The supervision will be like our ECE officer coming in and maybe spending the day with us and observing the routine, then giving us feedback according to what they would have seen during the daily activities.” The support must involve lesson study where

capable teachers demonstrate a lesson, or demonstration of activities. PB stated, “I believe modeling and demonstrations because while supervisors may come and might critique a lesson or an activity or your environment, teachers need to see it done.” PE supported this. PE explained:

If we have more visits to the school; the officers coming into the schools to see how the lessons are done and guide us as to how it should be done. or if we are doing it correctly or incorrectly.

Parental Involvement and Education

Participants reported that parents have an important role to play in their children’s learning and their involvement is needed for effective implementation of the curriculum. PF expressed, “We can also have parents support. Parents support is emphasized within the HighScope curriculum, parents intervention, and getting feedback from the parents as well. These are the support we will need.” Similar thoughts were expressed by another participant. PK said, “I think if we could have more support from parents and business community too; if we get more support, which will be really good.”

Participants noted that it is critical to get parents more involved and knowledgeable about the curriculum. PB stated, “One of the things is to get the parents more involved.” Participants shared the concern for more parent education about the curriculum. PL stated, “It’s just that we need to educate the parents more on what is happening in the classroom so that they will be able to help the children.” As parents show interest in their children’s learning, this will motivate children to do better in school. PL said, “I find if parents get more involved in school, I think we will have

children do a lot better.”Some participants indicated that if parents are aware of the curriculum, they can hold teachers accountable which can lead to quality curriculum implementation in the classroom. PK explained:

The principal said that a parent complained she did not see the message board. If parents are aware of what the curriculum is and what should happen in the school based on the curriculum, this will help, and it is really important for us.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important component of qualitative research and the researcher must ensure data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted in an ethical manner (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I took many steps to ensure the study reflected the perspectives of participants and not personal bias. As outlined in Chapter 3, the strategies that are related to trustworthiness were implemented. The following strategies were discussed in this section to ensure trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability.

Credibility

To ensure credibility, I used semi-structured interview to collect data which provided the opportunity for an in-depth understanding of early childhood educators perspectives about challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and support teachers need to effectively execute the HighScope curriculum. I audio recorded interviews and transcribed each interview. Then the audio recording was cross checked with interview transcripts to ensure both were aligned. I kept a reflective journal during

data collection process to document my reflections as it relates to my biases, beliefs, and assumptions.

Another strategy that was implemented to ensure credibility was member checking. I emailed a draft summary of the findings to each participant. The participants were asked to review the summary of the draft findings to ensure accuracy of information. All participants reviewed the draft and confirmed the accuracy of information without any changes.

In addition, an expert reviewer assisted with credibility of the study by reviewing interview questions and findings. The expert reviewer selected holds a doctorate in education and worked in education field as a teacher, principal, district education officer, and deputy chief education officer. The expert reviewer reviewed interview questions and indicated that it was aligned with the research questions. I emailed a draft of the findings to the expert reviewer. The expert reviewer reviewed the findings and indicated that the study was clear, and no biases were found.

Transferability

Transferability involves the ability to transfer and generalize the findings so that if another study is done in another setting, it may produce similar data (Creswell, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data collection process that was outlined in this Chapter was followed as outlined. I selected schools that were typical in terms of implementation of the HighScope curriculum across two educational districts. This enhanced transferability. I also selected both preschool teachers and ECE officers from two different districts with different years of teaching experience. This ensured variation in the participants selected.

The early childhood education officers provided a list of contact information for preschool teachers that met selection criteria. Using the list, I selected 12 preschool teachers along with two ECE officers and emailed participants an invitation to participate in the study. All participants responded and agreed to participate in the study. Due to this study taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were held via WhatsApp and Skype. All interviews were done via WhatsApp and Skype as these were selected by participants since it was most convenient to use at the time. Zoom and Facetime calls were not needed. Eleven participants were interviewed individually at their place of residence to ensure privacy and comfort over a 2-week period. Three participants were interviewed at a workplace office with closed door to ensure a noise free space, privacy, and ease of access to Wifi. I chose my home office with the door closed to interview all participants to ensure privacy and confidential during our WhatsApp or Skype calls. The participants were actively involved in the interview and responded to questions.

The descriptions provided as it relates to data collected, selection of participants, and data analysis helped with transferrable (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The information from this study that can be transferred to other preschool implementing the HighScope curriculum includes challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and support teachers need to effectively execute the HighScope curriculum.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research involves the extent to which the processes and procedures used for analyzing the data can be tracked (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ensure dependability, I used a research journal, member checks and audit trail. Since I

was also an ECE officer, I kept a reflective journal and recorded my reflections, questions, biases, and decisions during the study. As part of the audit trail, I kept the original documents of the interview audio recordings, interview transcripts and reflective journal notes. The data will be kept for five years so that it can be reviewed if there is a need at any point. Member checking was conducted after data were analyzed. A draft of the findings was emailed to each participant for review, and they all confirmed the accuracy of the interpretation of the data from the interview.

Confirmability

In qualitative research, confirmability refers to the accurate depiction of the participants experiences without predisposition (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ensure confirmability, I kept the researcher's journal; I followed strict protocols for data collection and analysis, member checking and had an expert reviewer review the findings. In the researcher's journal, I recorded my own reflections, questions, perceptions, biases, and decisions as it relates to the study. Notes were taken during the interview and as data were analyzed. As it relates to following strict protocols, I maintained detailed records of all procedures used in conducting the research and checked to ensure data were collected as planned.

The findings were reviewed by both participants and an expert reviewer. The summary draft findings were emailed, and participants checked a summary draft of the findings for accuracy as part of the member checking process. Participants confirmed accuracy of the interpretation of the data from the interview. The draft findings were also emailed to the expert reviewer and the draft was also checked. The expert reviewer

indicated that no biases were found, and the data was clear. All these strategies used assisted with the confirmability of this research.

Summary

The research questions that guided this study focused on the early childhood educators' perspectives about challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and support needed to effectively execute the curriculum. The data showed the perspectives of early childhood educators regarding the challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum that included the following: lack of resources such as teaching and learning materials, educators' resistance to curriculum change, and insufficient support provided to teachers in areas such as professional development and school visits. The challenges affect the quality of experiences provided in preschool settings. In addition, the data showed that support early childhood educators need to effectively execute the HighScope curriculum included: increase professional development and training to support teachers, provision of teaching and learning materials, frequent supervision and monitoring by early childhood education officers and parental involvement and education.

In Chapter 5, I discuss interpretation of the findings and then present an explanation of limitations of the study. In addition, I present recommendations for future research and discuss implications for research findings. I also highlight the social change impacts that could result from this study. Finally, I present conclusions of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum which involves balancing child-initiated and teacher-directed activities, and the support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively. Building on existing research that was conducted on curriculum implementation at the early childhood level, I seek to fill an existing gap in practice regarding the many challenges teachers face when implementing the HighScope curriculum. It was important to conduct this study to understand the challenges teachers face and support needed for effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum, which can lead to finding ways to effectively implement the curriculum in early childhood settings.

The findings in this study indicated that as early childhood educators implemented the HighScope curriculum in preschool classrooms, they were faced with many challenges. These challenges include lack of resources, educators' resistance to curriculum change, and insufficient support provided for teachers. Many participants explained that the HighScope curriculum guiding principle involves active participatory learning where children must be engaged via appropriate materials, supportive environment, and adults. Participants believed these challenges can negatively affect the quality of instruction and support provided to students. Participants also believed that early childhood educators need support to be able to effectively implement the HighScope curriculum. Types of support identified as needed for effective implementation of the curriculum were increased professional development and training

to support teachers, provision of teaching and learning materials, frequent supervision and monitoring by ECE officers, and parental support. In this chapter, I present my interpretation of the findings, describe limitations of the study, discuss recommendations for further research, and conclude with implications for positive social change and a summary of Chapter 5.

Interpretation of the Findings

This study was guided by two research questions. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum and the support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively. Data sources were interviews with preschool teachers and ECE officers. I interpreted the findings of this study in the context of peer-reviewed research that was reviewed in Chapter 2 and the conceptual frameworks of Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Interpretation of findings as they relate to each research question are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

RQ1

RQ1 was: What are the perspectives of early childhood educators about the challenges involved with implementing the HighScope curriculum in Grenada? The findings indicated that teachers face challenges when implementing the HighScope curriculum in early childhood settings or preschools. Challenges include lack of resources, educators' resistance to curriculum change, and insufficient support provided

for teachers. These findings are consistent with research indicating that educators faced challenges implementing a new curriculum.

Through interviews, participants identified lack of resources as a major challenge in terms of implementation of the HighScope curriculum. Participants noted insufficient teaching and learning materials as well as limited space and furniture in some classrooms affected the quality of instruction. Lack of resources for teachers to help them gain knowledge as they implement the curriculum was a challenge. This included the provision of books, curriculum materials, newsletters, and journals. Aquino et al. (2017) said insufficient instructional materials and inadequate space for large class sizes were challenges teachers faced in implementing the curriculum. Balogi and Makhubele (2018) said lack of materials was an impediment to curriculum implementation.

Participants in this study said lack of adequate teaching and learning materials negatively affected quality of instruction and experiences provided to children. In turn, this affected curriculum implementation, as the HighScope curriculum requires the use of materials since it is play-based curriculum; children need to be actively engaged with materials. Limited materials affect the teaching and learning process (Govender, 2018). Learning emerges as a natural result of effective interaction and social communication within the environment. Play is viewed as a significant source of development for young children; it is a tool for learning (Ahmad et al., 2016; Prioletta & Poliszczuk, 2018; Sawyer, 2017). The notion of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development was important in terms of understanding how lack of materials can negatively affect curriculum implementation.

Balogi and Makhubele (2018) noted that early childhood development centers lacked playground equipment and basic infrastructure. Five participants indicated that some schools did not have outside play areas or equipment for outside play. This was also a challenge as daily routines required outdoor space during the outside time component of the daily routine. Outdoor play equipment is necessary for building fine and large motor skills. Piaget's theory of cognitive development involves active participation for cognitive development. Lack of play areas and equipment can be a challenge in terms of effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum (Derman-Sparks, 2016). Five participants said there were limited human resources at the school. Assistant teachers were unavailable to help provide support in the classroom as they implemented the HighScope curriculum, especially during small group time. Participants noted lack of help in the classroom, which made it difficult in terms of following the daily routine. A challenge related to human resources involves early childhood educators' lack of knowledge about the HighScope curriculum.

Early childhood educators are critical during the implementation of curriculum. Ntumi (2016) said teachers not having a good grasp of early childhood curriculum can result in problems which relate to the content of the curriculum. The findings in this study supported this claim. Some early childhood teachers lack knowledge about the HighScope curriculum. It is important to note that this can affect the quality of instruction provided in the classroom.

Another challenge highlighted by two participants was that after preschool teachers received training regarding the HighScope curriculum, some were moved to

other grades in the school, and this affected implementation. Throughout my literature review, no research was found regarding early childhood teachers who received curriculum training moving from a specific level to another grade.

Participants said another major challenge in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum was insufficient support provided to teachers from ECE officers in the areas of training, professional development, and school visits. Findings from the current study indicated that in-service training and professional development provided for teachers were inadequate as they relate to quality and quantity. In this study, teachers indicated that training is needed as some teachers have limited knowledge about the HighScope curriculum, especially new teachers. Training was not frequent enough or interactive. Mligo (2016) said preschool teachers were not provided with adequate support in the form of training to better understand the early childhood curriculum. Preschool teachers felt they did not have pedagogical content knowledge to enhance in terms of the context of curriculum.

Recent research indicated that during the implementation of a new curriculum, preschool teachers were not provided with adequate support in terms of training and professional development. Training was not frequent enough and preschool staff was dissatisfied with the quality of the workshop conducted. This was confirmed in this study. Although teachers received training, in-service training and professional development sessions were inadequate as they related to quality and quantity.

Participants said that although teachers received training, many teachers had limited knowledge about the HighScope curriculum, and this was a challenge in terms of

implementation. Mligo (2016) said implementation of the curriculum was challenging since some preschool teachers lacked knowledge regarding child-centered pedagogies and curriculum that they were expected to implement. Additionally, five participants expressed their concerns about lack of preservice HighScope training before teachers began to teach in preschool. It was noted that teachers are hired without knowledge about the HighScope curriculum. These teachers lack knowledge and skills to effectively implement the curriculum.

Parents are key stakeholders in the education of their children, and their lack of involvement can affect the implementation of a curriculum (Aquino et al., 2017; Boeckmann & Nichols, 2015). Participants raised concerns that some parents see play in the learning process as just for the purpose of fun. Some participants explained it was a challenge that some parents have limited knowledge about and involvement in their children's learning. Mligo (2016) said during the implementation of a new curriculum, parents lack awareness about their roles in the process as it relates to collaboration with teachers to enhance students' learning.

Many participants highlighted educators' resistance to curriculum change as a challenge in terms of implementing the HighScope curriculum. Participants expressed concerns that some teachers had negative attitudes towards change, and as a result were resistant to curriculum change. Some older teachers were not willing to adapt to change. Some teachers were resistant to the new curriculum. Chimbi and Jita (2019) said teachers may resist curriculum change in terms of implementation, and this is sometimes seen as dislike for the curriculum. Participants believed that some teachers lacked knowledge

about the curriculum, and as a result they did not buy in to the new curriculum or teaching approach.

Five teachers indicated that teachers felt the HighScope curriculum was not applicable to Grenada. This finding also added to attitudes of resistance. Cheung (2017) said it was problematic for teachers to implement western creative pedagogy such as child-centered approaches in countries where there are differences in cultures.

Piaget (1926) said learning takes place through constructivist processes as children are active constructors of knowledge. The HighScope curriculum provides opportunities for children as active learners who interact with people and materials. By implementing the HighScope curriculum, teachers shift from teacher-centered approaches to more child-centered approaches. According to five participants in this study, it was problematic for teachers to adapt to the new approach.

RQ2

RQ2 was: What support do early childhood educators perceive they need to execute the HighScope curriculum effectively in Grenada? Findings indicate that early childhood educators need support to execute the HighScope curriculum effectively in Grenada. Types of support educators perceived they needed were increased professional development and training to support teachers, provision of teaching and learning materials, frequent supervision and monitoring by ECE officers, and parental support. This finding is consistent with research indicating that educators need support as they implement a new curriculum.

All participants agreed that for teachers to effectively execute the HighScope curriculum, they need support in terms of training and professional development. Participants have received training, but they expressed the need for ongoing training and professional development opportunities. PK noted their need to have this ongoing training to build curriculum in specific areas that are lacking. Nevenglosky et al. (2019) said there is a need for administrators to provide ongoing professional development sessions for teachers as they implement the curriculum. Teachers can benefit from such sessions as they help them develop comfort and important competencies when implementing a new curriculum.

Participants expressed the need to have workshops that are more interactive and diverse in terms of methods. It must include demonstrations for teachers. Balogi and Makhubele (2018) said training must be practical with opportunities to ensure consistent implementation of the curriculum.

All participants identified provision of teaching and learning materials as support teachers need to execute the HighScope curriculum effectively in Grenada. Participants indicated that resources are critical for the implementation of the HighScope curriculum since it focuses on active participatory learning. Teachers need support from administrators in the provision of teaching and learning materials and infrastructural resources. Ntumi (2016) recommended that administrators must provide the necessary teaching and learning materials for the teachers to ensure effective implementation of the early childhood curriculum. The findings are also aligned with Vygotsky (1986) and

Piaget(1926) theories relating to cognitive development as the basis for curriculum design, principles, and practices.

The HighScope early childhood curriculum is rooted in Vygotsky(1986) and Piaget (1926) theories. Understanding these theories as the foundation of the HighScope curriculum helped explain the challenges faced by teachers and support needed for effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum. The need for children to be actively involved in experiences with people and object is the foundational idea of both theories and the HighScope curriculum. Vygotsky'ssociocultural theory is highlighted as this research focuses on implementation of the HighScope curriculum where play and interactions are critical to the development. In addition, Piaget (1926) believed that as children play, they assimilate new things and ideas, that is, they take in sensory information through their interactions with people and objects and incorporate this into their existing knowledge of people and objects. Both the theories support and the findings show the need for additional materials to facilitate active learning for the children in Grenada.

Six participants highlighted the need for this ongoing supervision and monitoring by ECE officers to support effective implementation of the curriculum. Teachers need regular school visits where lessons are observed and ECE officers provide feedback for continuous improvement. This finding is supported by Govender (2018), who noted that educational officers are required to visit schools to monitor and provide guidance to teachers. In addition, parents are key stakeholders in the teaching and learning process (Nyland & Ny, 2016). Participants in this study confirm that parents have an important

role to play in curriculum implementation. It is important that they collaborate with teachers and gain knowledge about the curriculum so they can assist children in improving their learning outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations that arose from the execution of this qualitative research study were centered on population or sample size and the methodology used. The study's population was limited to preschool teachers and ECE officers in two educational districts. All participants were from public schools and it would be interesting to have had the perspectives of teachers from other educational districts and private preschool. Including participants from other educational districts and the private preschools might also increase transferability.

The use of the qualitative approach for this study and the researcher as the only one responsible for collection of data and analysis, can lead to researcher bias. I have strong feelings about the effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum. To control biases, I kept a reflective journal to record reflections and biases. I also included member checking and had an expert reviewer to review the study findings. In addition, the expert reviewer reviewed data analysis and confirmed the accuracy of the analysis.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, all participants shared the benefits of the HighScope curriculum to children. They expressed their views about the curriculum use in the classroom. I recommend that future research be done on the impact of the

HighScope curriculum on areas of development. Longitudinal research can be conducted to follow a group of students to determine the impact of the curriculum.

Additionally, the participants of the study were from two educational districts and only public preschools. Public preschools are the schools that are managed and financed by Government. I recommend that future research replicate this study in different districts and with private, and public preschool teachers. By expanding the research, it will ensure a wider range of participants' perspectives about challenges and support needed to implement the curriculum effectively. Different districts and groups of preschool teachers may provide additional and/or different information. By expanding the research, this may allow early childhood educators and administrators to generalize and/or transfer the results more to their own settings.

Seven participants spoke about lack of parental involvement and knowledge about curriculum. Some parents are just not showing interest in their children's learning and this negatively affects the effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum. Additionally, more research is needed that focuses on parents' perspective about the HighScope curriculum implementation at the preschool level. The research could focus on play-based and child-centered approach. Finally, findings from this study indicated that some teachers have a negative attitude towards curriculum change and a fixed mindset to the traditional, teacher-centered approach to teaching and learning. A recommendation for future research based on this finding is to explore teachers' perspectives of play-based, child-centered approach in the education of young children at the early childhood level.

Implications

Through interviews, all early childhood educators identified challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and support needed to execute the curriculum effectively. In providing support needed for effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum, educators must consider both Vygotsky (1986) and Piaget (1926) theories. These theories are aligned to the HighScope curriculum as it highlights principles and practices that are the core of the HighScope curriculum. Exploring challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum and support early childhood educators perceive they need for effective execution of the curriculum could lead to better understanding of challenges and ways to address challenges. The implication for positive social change can involve students, early childhood educators, administrators, and policy makers. Positive social change can come about by administrators or the Ministry of Education becoming aware of the early childhood educators' challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum, and providing support needed for effective implementation. The results have implications for positive social change that could lead to policy changes to improve training for teachers, additional resources allocated to the classroom, and methods to improve the implementation of HighScope curriculum that could lead to better outcomes for children.

Conclusion

In this basic qualitative study, I explored the perspectives of early childhood educators about challenges in implementing HighScope curriculum, and support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively. Fourteen early childhood educators

were interviewed: 12 preschool teachers and 2 ECE officers. Many teachers face challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum, and may need additional support executing the curriculum effectively (Alfonso, 2017; Cheung, 2017). This study seeks to fill the existing gap in practice on the many challenges teachers face implementing the HighScope curriculum and support they need for implementing the curriculum effectively.

The findings of the study revealed that early childhood educators are faced with many challenges implementing the HighScope curriculum. The challenges include lack of resources, educators' resistance to curriculum change, and insufficient support provided for teachers. These challenges affect the quality of instruction provided at the preschool level. To effectively implement the HighScope curriculum, preschool teachers need support in terms of increase professional development and training to support teachers, provision of teaching and learning materials, frequent supervision and monitoring by early childhood education officers, and parental involvement and education. The findings from this study may inform administrators, policy makers, early childhood educators, and stakeholders of the challenges educators face implementing the HighScope curriculum and the ways they can support teachers for effective implementation of the curriculum. This study could also lead to policy changes on how teachers are trained and resources that are allocated to the classroom. In addition, if HighScope curriculum is implemented more effectively, implications for positive social change can also lead to better outcomes for children.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Preschool Teachers

Demographics

What is your highest level of qualification?

What is the specific area of your highest level of qualification?

How long have you been a preschool teacher?

How long have you been using the HighScope Curriculum in your classroom?

1. Tell me about your professional development sessions related to the implementation of HighScope program. 1a. What was most positive about the session? 1b. Were there any negatives?
2. Describe your understanding of the HighScope curriculum as it relates to the guiding principles?
3. What is your perspective on balancing child-initiated and teacher-directed activities in the preschool classroom? 3a. Can you give me an example of how this occurs in your classroom?
4. What factors do you think influence the effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum?
5. What has been your experience trying to implement the HighScope curriculum? 5a. What is working? 5b. What is not working well?
6. Tell me about the challenges you are currently facing regarding the implementation of the HighScope curriculum.
7. What support you received in implementing the HighScope curriculum?

8. What support do you feel teachers need to be able to successfully implement the HighScope curriculum?
9. What else will you like to share as it relates to the implementation of the HighScope curriculum?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for ECE Officer

Demographics

What is your highest level of qualification?

What is the specific area of your highest level of qualification?

How long have you been in the current position?

1. Tell me about your roles and responsibilities as an early childhood education officer.
2. Tell about your routine during a visit at the preschools.
3. Explain your understanding of the HighScope curriculum as it relates to the guiding principles?
4. What is your perspective on how teachers are balancing child-initiated and teacher-directed activities in the preschool classroom?
5. Tell me about the challenges teachers are currently facing regarding the implementation of the HighScope curriculum.
6. What factors do you think influence the effective implementation of the HighScope curriculum?
7. Tell me about the professional development teachers received regarding the implementation of the HighScope curriculum.
8. What support did you or the Ministry of Education provided for teachers relating to the implementation of the HighScope curriculum?
9. What support do you feel teachers need to be able to successfully implement the HighScope curriculum?

10. What else will you like to share as it relates to the implementation of the HighScope curriculum?