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Capstone Project
The Kindergarten Environment:
Finding Alternatives to Reduce Overcrowded Classrooms

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Abstract

This study will address the difficulties young children have when are placed in overcrowded kindergarten classrooms. Creating an effective and constructive learning environment for the early childhood years must be in a positive learning climate in a school for young children. Motivation, skills and communication amongst teachers, students and parents is a place where children receive guidance and encouragement, security and trust from the responsible adults around them.

A major element that establishes a child's learning and guides their success is the physical environment where he/she is. When teachers cannot engage their young students in learning activities, then the teaching-learning process and teacher-student communications will not prosper. This is an issue many families are fearing the worst in schools: Overcrowded classrooms. School and state officials should observe student-teacher ratio and determine if it has a relationship to the quality of teaching and student learning. If there is an impact, possible solutions to reduce overcrowded classrooms in kindergarten – 3rd grade should be contemplated. Various researchers have proven that young children placed in overcrowded classrooms have had a decline in academic scores, less teacher-student interaction and attention, less opportunity for small group activity and concentrated attention (Anderson, 2015). This can not only affect a child's own enjoyment of school and learning, but kindergarten readiness

The Challenge

Properly prepared classroom environments can make the most of the opportunities to foster children's lifelong motivation and engagement in learning through exploration, discovery, and opportunities for discussion in the early learning years. Skills, knowledge and retention in a small classroom contributes to a positive environment that is conducive to learning. However, research has proved that overcrowded kindergarten classrooms does not produce high quality education.

Epri's (2016) findings on overcrowded classrooms revealed that the lack of individualized attention to students and student-teacher ratio slows down the progress of students' learning. The challenge is to prove that overcrowded classrooms cannot provide the highest of quality in all early childhood classrooms and settings.

Problem Statement

Currently, overcrowded classrooms affect all children's ability to learn (Frontier Academy, 2014). Researchers do agree that lower class sizes, at least in the earliest grades, are linked to positive educational benefits such as better test scores, fewer dropouts and higher graduation rates, especially for disadvantaged children (Higgins, 2014). However, overcrowded classes can have devastating effects on young children and a teacher's morale are limited more than teaching; Higgins (2014) stated, "Many teachers find themselves spending more time controlling classroom organization and coping with students' behavior" (p. 7).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2014): Crowded classroom conditions not only make it difficult for students to concentrate on their lessons, but inevitably limit the amount of time teachers can spend on innovative teaching methods, cooperative Schools that suffer from overcrowding may utilize several strategies to ease the crowding. (p. 7)

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), which in 2013 conducted one of the most comprehensive early education studies, reported that the economic recession exacerbated America's woes (Johnson, 2015). Currently, America's public education system is, at this point, ill-equipped to provide the level of government support that low-income families need to ensure that every child is walking into kindergarten prepared.

Rathbun & McFarland, (2017) clearly noted: Modifying physical structures, portable classrooms or using classroom space room originally intended for noninteractional purposes, utilizing scheduling options, including staggered lunch schedules, year-round schedules, and split-day schedules are options to examine to reduce the burden of overcrowding in kindergarten. (p. 5)

School and state officials should observe the quality of teaching and student learning, student-teacher ratio, see the impact that overcrowding has, and analyze possible solutions to reduce overcrowded classrooms (Anderson, 2015). As educators, we must know that overcrowding in the classrooms results in consequences, interrupts academic success and the individualized attention each child needs (Johnson, 2011).

Representative List

Asodike, J.D., & Onyeike, V.C. (2016). Managing large classes in developing countries. *Global Journal of Educational Research*, 15(1), 31-39. doi:10.4314/gjedr.v15i1.4

It has been acknowledged that overcrowded classrooms affect the quality of education in kindergarten. Teachers find management and teaching effectively in large classes is overwhelming. This article explored the concept of large class size, its characteristics and management (Asodike, & Onyeike, 2016). These two researchers emphasized how small classes are easier to manage, easier for teachers to provide individualized help to students, facilitate teaching effectiveness, and above all mean less work for teachers.

Epri, M.L. (2016, May). A case study on the impact of large classes on student learning. *Contemporary PNG Studies: DWU Research Journal* Vol. 24. Retrieved from http://www.dwu.ac.pg/en/images/Research_Journal/2016_vol_24/8_Epri_M.pdf

Research literature on large class sizes have underlined issues found in this research study. According to one report, ‘an overcrowded classroom that has exceed classroom space than the number of students it was designed to accommodate, results in greater demand on existing resources and infrastructure that need to be used for effective learning’ (Earthman, 2002, p. 10). Researchers, Yaman and Uygulamada (2009) have concluded that large classes can force teachers to lose control in student-centered activities and focus more on teacher centered lessons.

Harris, L. (2016). Class sizes: Time for a reality check. *ATA News*, 48(4), 7.

Harris (2016) explains that schools across the nation have K–3 classrooms with more than twenty students. In Edmonton and Alberta, Canada, enrollment numbers and class sizes for the school year 2015-2016 have well over exceeded its maximum enrollment. Their statistics show that out of 62 school jurisdictions, 53 (85 percent) exceeded class size guidelines for K–3; a 10 per cent increase from 2012/2013 (Harris, 2016).

Khan, P., & Iqbal, M. (2012). Overcrowded classroom: a serious problem for teachers. Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, KPK, Pakistan. Retrieved from Parveen Khan et al./ Elixir Edu. Tech. 4910162-10165

Khan, & Iqbal (2012) found a positive correlation between the viewpoint of teachers and students. Their results showed that over crowdedness weakened the quality and quality of teaching and learning with serious implications for achievement of educational goals. Salem-al-amarat (2010) conducted a study which aimed to identify the classroom problems faced by the teachers in public schools. He concluded, “the problems in the classroom, and schools in general, are considered one of the most serious factors facing the component of the educational process” (Khan, & Iqbal, 2012, p.9).

Suleman, Q. (2014). Effects of classroom physical environment on the academic achievement scores of elementary school students in Kohat Division, Pakistan. *International Journal of Learning & Development*. ISSN 2164-4063. Vol. 4, No. 1 Doi:10.5296/ijld.v4i1.5174 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijld.v4i1.5174>

Suleman (2114) emphasized why classroom environments should be well equipped and simplified. A productive classrooms' physical arrangement provides students with effective instruction and promotes comfortable learning conditions. In his journal, he stresses the importance of physical environments affects the overall performance of the school.

Leadership Principles

One of the most important things we can do to nurture leaders is to create an atmosphere that encourages mentoring and learning (Scott, 2010). Leadership is a developmental process related to the idea of change and leadership being an agent of change in an organization.

We need to encourage leaders to join professional organizations, invite them to serve on committees, and let them know that they can make a difference in the lives of children (Scott, 2010). Janet Gonzalez-Mena (n.d.) firmly believes that a leader is one who is out-spoken, guides, directs and an authority – a character of being a servant leadership. To be a successful and effective leader, I need to focus on my personal growth, focusing on skills and abilities that are learned and developed early in life. Equity and social justice is an important issue in early care and education programs and in childrearing.

Northouse (2016) noted: A 'servant leadership' is an approach that leaders are attentive to the concerns of their followers, empathize with them, and nurture them. Servant leaders put followers first, empower them, and help them develop their full personal capacities. Furthermore, servant leaders are ethical. (125)

Individuals who utilizes a 'skill approach' acquires knowledge and abilities that are needed for effective leadership (Northouse, 2016). In being a great leader, Luis Hernandez (n.d.) believes 'passion' is an attribute of being a leader. He claims that passion is required when one meets with teachers, one who can get the attention from audiences or participants and giving it back. Such leaders possess personality characteristics that emphasize on skills and abilities. Physical and personality characteristics, competencies, and values focus the personal attributes

A 'trait approach' to leadership concentrates on the idea that great leaders are born with the given abilities, and not a learned ability (Northouse, 2016). I view a leader is one who is optimistic and one who takes on challenges; In early childhood, effective leadership is vital to the success of education and care settings. Being a skilled and committed leader helps shape teaching and learning, the opportunity to create and sustain high-quality learning environments (Mettiäinen, 2016).

Mettiäinen (2016) stated: These practices include: identifying and articulating a vision; ensuring shared understandings, meanings and goals; effective communication; encouraging reflection; monitoring and assessing practice; commitment to ongoing professional development; distributive leadership; building a learning community and team culture; encouraging and facilitating genuine family and community partnerships; and striking the balance between leading and managing. (p. 3)

'Transformational leadership' for children is an important step for improving schools and ultimately the lives of students (Göncü, Main, Perone, & Tozer, 2014). It includes deep human qualities, changes that reflect shared vision and purpose, and is an individual and collective ethical responsibility (Mettiäinen, 2016).

Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is a process that often incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership" (Northouse, 2016).

Leadership is about determination; As a challenge, leaders do many other things, such as organizing and managing resources, and making connections with children and staff, families, communities and other organizations.

‘Adaptive leadership’ is about how leaders encourage people to adapt—to face and deal with problems, challenges, and changes (Northouse, 2016). Adaptive leadership focuses on the change required of people in response to changing environments. In an adaptive challenge, I am concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. I must prepare and encourage people to cope with change. The practice of leadership takes place in an authority structure. In an adaptive challenge, the authority structure—the people in charge—can contribute, but others must participate as well. Their problem becomes part of the solution itself. (Hall, 2013).

The demands on educational leaders are evolving. The role of educational leadership, its responsibilities and options involve working with teachers and other education professionals on plans to improve educational programming and outcomes (Creighton University, 2017). Creighton University (2017) concluded: It is imperative to work and communicate with others, including teachers, staff, and students and their families. Relationship building is essential to effective educational leadership, and it is vital to acknowledge, and support the roles and contributions of all stakeholders. (p. 2)

Leaders play vital roles in organizations. Understanding leadership approaches and the various of leadership principles will develop the skills required to act as effective and productive leaders. An educational environment in which opportunities for positive change can only be accomplished by a true leader.

Literature Review

Article 1:

Abdolreza, G. (2016). Investigating the Impact of Environmental Factors on Learning and Academic Achievement of Elementary Students: Review. *International Journal Of Medical Research and Health Sciences*, Vol 5, Iss 7S, Pp 360-369 (2016), (7S), 360.

- 1. The challenge:** In this journal, Abdolreza (2016) presented variable evidence distracting students in overcrowded classrooms; inadequate space and poor construction planning contributed to this issue.
- 2. The key point/take away:** This study examined the impact of each classroom of elementary students in the year of 2015-2016 in Ahvaz, Southwest of Iran. Cluster sampling was completed by using appropriate distributions and questionnaires that were divided among students.
- 3. Personal and professional connections:** Abdolreza (2016) confirmed that sufficient space is one of the most important environmental features needed for learning and socializing comfortably. (p. 5).
- 4. The idea for using the findings:** Hermance’s achievement questionnaire, observation checklist to examine the physical parameters of learning Schools’ open space) and personal interviews with students were the data collection tools used (Abdolreza, 2016).

Article 2

Achilles, C. M., et al. (2012). Class-size policy: The Star experiment and related class-size studies. NCPEA Policy Brief, 1.2.

1. **The challenge:** This journal reviewed the Tennessee Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) and compared findings on Pupil-Teacher Ratio calculations in U.S. elementary schools.
2. **The key point/take away:** Achilles (2012) noted that students in small classes (12:1) in kindergarten through third grade (K-3) gain short and long-term achievements. In the early grades, smaller class sizes are most effective in instructional planning (Achilles, et al. 2012).
3. **Personal and professional connections:** To proceed the benefits of class-size reduction efforts, teachers and staff must modify instructional practices. A class-size initiative should incorporate what long-term class-size research has determined are important steps for obtaining successful schooling outcomes (Achilles, et al. 2012).
4. **The idea for using the findings:** The benefits for K-3 obtained in the STAR Experiment are supported by research, longitudinal experiments and other Class-Size Reduction (CSR) studies, and reveals the learning, teaching, and outcomes in young children (Achilles, 2012).

Article 3

Adams, A.R. (2013). Cooperative learning effects on the classroom. Northern Michigan University. Retrieved from https://www.nmu.edu/education/sites/DrupalEducation/files/UserFiles/Adams_Anthony_MP.pdf

1. **The challenge:** The purpose of this literature review is to analyze cooperative learning strategies on student achievement, specific learning techniques and literacy content effective in smaller classrooms.
2. **The key point/take away:** Cooperative learning strategies results in positive dependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, social skills, and group processing (Adams, 2013).
3. **Personal and professional connections:** Cooperative learning groups have active dependence, face-to-face interaction, student motivation and retention of the learning material are evident.
4. **The idea for using the findings:** The effect of teaching model based on cooperative learning has generated positive results. Students who have taken an active role in learning move from 'I am asked to learn' to 'I want to learn' (Hunag & Su, 2010).

Article 4

Akhtar, S., Zamora, N., Arif, M., & Hussain, I. (2012). Problems faced by students and teachers in the management of overcrowded classes in Pakistan.12(5), 364-372.

1. **The challenge:** The present study aimed at investigating the problems faced by teachers and students in the management of **overcrowded** classrooms in public sector **schools** in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The design of study was descriptive (Akhtar, Arif, & Hussain, 2012).

2. The key point/take away: Studies on the effects of class size had been conducted. Increasing population had affected the educational system in this country; teachers have had to cope with at least thirty students in kindergarten classrooms that is basically meant for twenty students.

3. Personal and professional connections: Students learning in smaller classes score higher on achievement test versus students in overcrowded classrooms (Akhtar, Zamurad, Arif, & Hussain (2012).

4. The idea for using the findings: The higher the student to teacher ratio, the less likely students are to be attentive (Zamurad, Arif, & Hussain, 2012). Non-productive activities lead to stress on the teacher's classroom management and it is apparent that disruptive behavior on children's learning have uncontrollable outcomes.

Article 5

Anderson, R.H. (2015). The principals of faces: Overcrowding. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_195510_anderson.pdf

1. The challenge: This journal noted that schools that accommodates more than the maximum number of children faces difficulties in instruction and curriculum development, teacher morale, supervision and public relations (Anderson, 2015).

2. The key point/take away: Some of the problems that accompany overcrowding are: Less individual attention given to each child; less opportunity for small group activity; reduction in time and space, fewer work areas and interest activities within the classroom.

3. Personal and professional connections: Extra resources including school funding should be provided to reduce overcrowded classrooms that are well-over the student: teacher ratio.

4. The idea for using the findings: A room-by-room physical analysis would provide data on the floor space per student, environmental features (heating, bathrooms, etc.), non-classroom areas in the building, daily and weekly class schedules would reveal the concerns on overcrowding.

Article 6

Anna, D. (2014, September 17). School places crisis 'will lead to overcrowding and long journeys for pupils'. *Evening Standard*. p. 4.

1. The challenge: School officials examined where new schools are desperately needed and is struggling for solutions to reduce overcrowding.

2. The key point/take away: Overcrowded kindergarten classrooms in London will become the "new normal" for children if nothing is done to address the school places crisis (Anna, 2014).

3. Personal and professional connections: There are concerns supporting the construction of free schools. To develop the need for new schools requires a Strategic Market Assessment to highlight what type of schooling is needed in different parts of London (Anna, 2014).

4. The idea for using the findings: Anna (2014) concluded with this saying, "Such assessment would help London to develop where it wants its schoolchildren to be" (p. 1).

Article 7

Asodike, J.D., & Onyeike, V.C. (2016). Managing large classes in developing countries. *Global Journal of Educational Research*, 15(1), 31-39. doi:10.4314/gjedr. v15i1.41.

1. The challenge: In this journal, Asodike, & Onyeike (2016) described what a large class size environment is like and its characteristics. The very high student/pupil-teacher ratios common in some countries make it virtually impossible for teachers to deliver effectively and productively. Although there exist many benefits of smaller classes, some teachers have no choice in this matter of class size (Asodike, & Onyeike, 2016).

2. The key point/take away: When classes are large, effective teaching becomes a very big problem teacher. There are problems of identification and that of being able to organize students to work together as a group (Asodike, & Onyeike, 2016).

3. Personal and professional connections: Small classes are easier to manage, easier for teachers to provide individualized help to students, they facilitate teaching effectiveness, and above all mean less work for teachers (Asodike, & Onyeike, 2016).

4. The idea for using the findings: Large classes hinders a teacher's ability to manage time, requiring more time to be devoted to instructional tasks and behavior issues leaving less time for actual instruction (Asodike, & Onyeike, 2016).

Article 8

Baker, B. D., Farrie, D. and Sciarra, D. G. (2016), Mind the gap: 20 years of progress and retrenchment in school funding and achievement gaps. ETS Research Report Series, 2016: 1–37. doi:10.1002/ets2.12098

1. The challenge: Baker, Farrie, and Sciarra (2016) explored achievement gaps that developed and identified insufficient school funding, resource distribution, and achievement among students from large classrooms. The assumption was that greater resources, additional school funding systems, could help raise academic outcomes and reduce overcrowding.

2. The key point/take away: The objective was to provide convincing evidence that state finance policies have consequences in terms of the distribution of resources. Empirical testing showed the awareness that increasing investments in schools allows greater access to resources as measured by staffing ratios, class sizes, and the competitiveness of teacher wages.

3. Personal and professional connections: In their review, they expected overcrowding reduces equitable and adequate funding, increases class sizes and decreases in teacher salaries.

4. The idea for using the findings: Both academic and class size reduction can be an effective strategy for closing socio-economically based achievement gap (Baker, Farrie, & Sciarra, 2016)

Article 9

Chingos, M.M. (2014, August). The impact of a universal class-size reduction policy: Evidence from Florida's statewide mandate. Program on Education Policy and Governance. John F. Kennedy School of Government. Harvard University

1. **The challenge:** A possible remedy to overcrowding in kindergarten is reducing class size that will require schools to hire many new teachers. Chingos (2014) finds evidence that schools do not always hire applicants with the strongest academic record.

2. **The key point/take away:** According to his research, a voter-passed initiative that amended the state constitution required that class sizes be reduced until they fall below set limits. At least 24 states have mandated or incentivized class-size reduction (CSR) in their public schools. Resources that were provided to reduce class size will have a larger impact on student outcomes than resources that districts can spend as they see fit (Chingos, 2014).

3. **Personal and professional connections:** Schools that participated in the 1985 STAR experiment received additional resources to meet pupil-teacher ratio (Chingos, 2014).

4. **The idea for using the findings:** In his conclusion, In November 2012, Floridians voted to change caps on class size in elementary schools. By the beginning of the 2013–14 school year, class sizes were to be reduced to no more than 18 students in kindergarten (Chingos, 2014).

Article 10

Condition of America's public school (2014). U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss/publications/2000032/index.asp?sectionid=8>

1. **The Challenge:** In this article, the U.S. Department of Education (2014) noted, “Schools suffering from overcrowding have used many strategies that include: modifying physical structures that can be used as additional rooms, investing in portable classrooms, using classroom space intended for no instructional purposes or adjusting scheduling options that includes year-round schedules and split-day schedules” (p.2).

2. **The key point/take away:** The most common of the practices used by schools were strategies based on how space is used. Overall, 36 percent of schools reported using portable classrooms, and 20 percent reported the creation of temporary instructional space (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

The U.S. Department of Education (2014) concluded: Among schools reporting that they created temporary instructional space, one-quarter (26 percent) reported doing so to a great extent to reduce crowding, while 34 percent did so to a moderate extent to ease overcrowding, and 38 percent did so to a minor extent. Few schools used off-site instructional facilities (8 percent) or used portable spaces other than for classroom purposes (9 percent). Among those schools that reported using the other space-related practices, about one-fifth of the schools did so to reduce overcrowding. (p. 4)

3. **Personal and professional connections:** As a professional connection, newspaper articles and research studies have found that a reduction in school funding have raised concerns and drawn attention to the over crowdedness that effects of teaching and learning.

4. **The idea for using the findings:** Enrollments greater than 5 percent is considered more than the building's capacity, and overcrowded. (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In today's schools, it is not unusual to see that classrooms now regularly exceed thirty students, and it is not uncommon for there to be more than forty students in a single class.

Article 11

Connell, N. (2015). Capital promises: Why NYC children do not have the school buildings they need. Educational Priorities Panel.

- 1. The challenge:** Cornell (2015) examined overcrowding in New York City. Such issues will be eliminated, and all city children will have smaller class sizes with access to art/music rooms libraries, science labs, and physical fitness activities in the rest of the state (Connell, 2015).
- 2. The key point/take away:** New York City's school budgets are so low that class sizes remain large and there are not enough personnel needed to staff specialized spaces (Connell, 2015).
- 3. Personal and professional connections:** In his findings, he found that the Department of Education had to recalibrate the need for additional portables and additional teacher-aides to end overcrowding (Connell, 2015).
- 4. The idea for using the findings:** Construction of additional spaces and additional teacher-aides would suffice the problems if done in the 2013 school year.

Article 12

Dahley, A.M. (2014). Cooperative learning classroom research. Retrieved from http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~andyd/mindset/design/clc_rsched.html

- 1. The challenge:** This project examined the changing needs of elementary public schools to develop more appropriate class size for the cooperative learning classroom (Dahley, 2014). Schools are transforming regular classrooms towards cooperative groups as the model for learning (Dahley, 2014).
- 2. The key point/take away:** Dahley (2014) briefly defines cooperative learning teaches student creativity and independence. Furthermore, students who work more effectively in well-organized classrooms and small groups succeed rather than classrooms that are cluttered and unorganized.
- 3. Personal and professional connections:** One of the essential elements of cooperative learning in small classrooms is the development of social skills (Dahley, 2014). Children learn to take risks and are praised for their involvement. They can compare views of others rather than their own.
- 4. The idea for using the findings:** In cooperative learning, group teachers must know their students well. Teachers must consider the different learning skills, cultural background, personalities, and even gender when arranging cooperative groups (Dahley, 2014). However, this is not possible in larger classes.

Article 13

Department moves to relieve overcrowded classrooms (Dec. 2012). Africa News Service, Viewpoints in Context. link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A245157553/OVIC?u=minn4020&xid=4460f25a.

- 1. The challenge:** In this article, a school's plan was to build adequate facilities in five districts that are considered poverty-stricken and have many young children coming from urban localities.

2. The key point/take away: Overcrowding in primary school Matsafeni Primary, led to 200 pupils being crammed into one room. Principal Andries Ngobeni requested financial aid and boarding facilities for pupils from Grade R to Grade 12 to address the issue of overcrowding (Africa News Service, 2012).

3. Personal and professional connections: Education Director, Reginah Mhaule has promised that pupils at KaMhlushwa Primary will move into their new brick-and-mortar classrooms by the beginning of the 2013 school year (Africa News Service, 2012).

4. The idea for using the findings: Twenty-four classrooms equipped with a computer and art center, a library, lunch room, and smaller pupil – teacher ratio will be created.

Article 14

Graue, E., & Rauscher, E. (2012). Researcher perspectives on class size reduction. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 17(9), 1-26.

1. The challenge: In this paper, Graue, & Rauscher (2012) anticipated class size reduction can amend new policies that developed through a convergence of political and economic situations.

2. The key point/take away: This line of analysis recognizes that something changes in smaller classes beyond the number of people in the room (Graue & Rauscher, 2012). Teacher action is essentially different in overcrowded classes, and class size reduction is largely an action that needs to be addressed (Graue & Rauscher, 2012).

3. Personal and professional connections: Like cooperative learning, effective teachers of small classes individualize teaching, have clear expectations, are less distracted by discipline problems, and balance teacher-directed and child-centered teaching (Graue & Rauscher, 2012).

4. The idea for using the findings: Evidence suggests that political groups support class size reduction including teacher unions and organized parent group (Graue & Rauscher, 2012).

Article 15

Ho, D., Lee, M., & Teng, Y. (2016). Size matters: The link between staff size and perceived organizational support in early childhood education. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 30(6), 1104-1122.

1. The challenge: This study aimed to examine the relationship between staff size and overcrowding in the context of ECE. The study filled the gap about the relationship of staff size and ‘Perceived Organizational Support’ (POS) in ECE.

2. The key point/take away: Lee & Teng (2016) defines the sets of quality criteria for in early childhood settings should be as follows: Concepts of the educators and their values, as well as their understandings of early childhood and early education; favorable child/staff ratios; the level of certification and professional development of educators; and the adequacy of buildings, resources and learning environments. (p. 2)

3. Personal and professional connections: The results of the studies in school size indicate that teachers who work in small schools will hold positive work-related attitude (Lee & Teng (2016).

4. The idea for using the findings: Their research has indicated that school size is a key factor influencing various aspects of school management and school outcomes. The more students a preschool has, the larger the amount of education vouchers can be redeemed from the Education

Bureau. Larger preschools receive more financial support than the smaller ones (Lee & Teng (2016).

Article 16

Kim, J. S. (2016). The relative influence of research on class size policy. *Brookings papers on education policy* 2016(1), 273-295. Brookings Institution Press.

- 1. The challenge:** In this study, Kim (2016) suggested that reducing class size has its largest effects on the achievement of minority and inner-city children during the first year of formal schooling (Kim, 2016). Class-size reductions are beneficial for specific groups of students, subject matters, and teachers.
- 2. The key point/take away:** If a new policy is adopted and people become convinced that the promised benefits are real and worth the cost, the program will not only continue but will also grow rapidly in size (Kim, 2016).
- 3. Personal and professional connections:** Resources for minority and disadvantaged students would be distributed for those who benefit the most from smaller classes (Kim, 2016).
- 4. The idea for using the findings:** State legislatures had endorsed expensive policies to decrease class sizes in all schools and beyond the early elementary grades (Kim, 2016).

Article 17

McMullena, & Rouseb (2012). School crowding, year-round schooling, and mobile Classroom Use: Evidence from North Carolina. Calvin College, Department of Economics. Retrieved from <http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/academics/business/economics/faculty/rouse/2012-05-01%20Revised%20EER%20Submission%20-%20School%20Crowding%20and%20Student%20achievement.pdf>

- 1. The challenge:** When classroom space is used more efficiently, teachers can teach in many unoccupied classrooms. however, if teachers are not given use of extra classroom place to balance their curriculum and teaching, a students' academics would lead to lower achievements.
- 2. The key point/take away:** McMullena & Rouseb's (2012) brought empirical evidence that has led to a significant amount of variation in school crowding, additional mobile classroom use and changes in school calendar days. Both researchers concluded their research on overcrowding:
 - Severely crowded classrooms have a negative impact on academic achievement.
 - Additional classrooms and year-round schooling have a positive impact on overcrowding (p. 5).
- 2. Personal and professional connections:** It is necessary that policy makers have precise detail, data, statistics when making choices on school facilities. Common solutions will partially remedy the crowding impact. In some cases, policy makers find significant changes such as mobile classrooms are cheaper than additional construction.
- 4. The idea for using the findings:** The use of additional mobile classrooms would provide a productive learning environment equivalent to a regular in-school classroom. In their study,

McMullena & Rouseb (2012) confirmed that students placed in mobile classrooms can achieve academic success and such substitute classrooms are beneficial in highly overcrowded schools.

Article 18

Overcrowding in California's schools: An epidemic that is getting worse (2012). UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education and Access (UCLA/IDEA). Retrieved from <http://justschools.gseis.ucla.edu/about/index.html>

- 1. The challenge:** In this review, conducted by UCLA, additional resources for constructing new schools should go to communities with the worst overcrowding.
- 2. The key point/take away:** California has more students per class than any state except Utah. Overcrowded California schools enroll up to 5 times the number of students. 800 students attend South Gate Elementary School—a school designed for 600 (UCLA, 2012). By 2015, California will need schools for an unpredictable number of students (UCLA, 2012).
- 3. Personal and professional connections:** The state evaluated statistics and resources to know where the problems are coming from, and act, through law and policy, to correct problems as soon as they occur (UCLA, 2012).
- 4. The idea for using the findings:** In 2010, over 85,000 “portables” or “trailers” were the classrooms for 35 % of California's public-school students (UCLA, 2012).

Article 19

Robert E. Slavin, R.E. (2014). Making cooperative learning powerful. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct14/vol72/num02/Making-Cooperative-Learning-Powerful.aspx>

- 1. The challenge:** Studies have found that most teachers do not use cooperative learning regularly, despite extensive research supporting it. It is the "learning" in cooperative learning that is too often left out (Robert, 2014). However, children working together and motivated in small groups get along and enthusiastically helping one another learn in an environment seen in small-group classes.
- 2. The key point/take away:** Children become more acquainted and more comfortable.
- 3. Personal and professional connections:** Students are put into teams and instructed to "help one another." Helping one another is a good thing, but kids will do a lot more of it if they share a team goal (Robert, 2014).
- 4. The idea for using the findings:** Cooperative learning groups is a team comprised of diverse students who care about helping one another learn—and about the success of the team itself (Robert, 2014). Children placed in cooperative learn groups know they can depend on one another for help.

Article 20

Wang'eri, T.W & Okello, L.W. (2014). Role overload, teacher-pupil-ratio, school type, years of teaching experience, gender and burn out as factors related to work stress among primary school teachers in Kasarani Division, Nairobi County, Kenya. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science G: Linguistics & Education. Volume 14 Issue 1: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal* Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA). Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X. Kenyatta University, Kenya

1. The challenge: Wang'eri, & Okello (2014) conducted research to confirm the overcrowding factors among school teachers in Kasarani. This study focused on lessons taught per week and class size on overloaded teachers. Data collected from 120 teachers concluded a 50.83% work overload against 43.33% who reported slight overload while only 5.84% reported no overload. The study suggested that by reducing class size and work load, the education structures and policies would make a teacher's job more manageable and more productive.

2. The key point/take away: A 1:40 teacher-student ratio is one major factor affected by these changes. The study favored that manageable classrooms can be done by reducing class size and workloads.

3. Personal and professional connections: The results of the study revealed that many teachers who reported experiencing work overload came from teacher-children ratio and working with more than twenty-five children.

4. The idea for using the findings: Teachers working in large classrooms cannot provide a more structured environment which would contribute to less work stress.

Impacting Young Children, their Families and the Early Childhood Field

Overcrowding provokes parenting behaviors and they are more likely to engage in punitive parenting, which consequently, intensifies the level of children's distress (Evans, 2016). Research has also proved that the lack of parent-teacher-child relationships and communication decreases the social, emotional, and psychological stages in young children and grows more intense if they are consistently placed in overcrowded classrooms even in higher grade levels (Rappaport, 2006).

Overcrowding in classrooms interrupts the phases of interpersonal behaviors, motivation and cognitive development. Evans (2016) found that overcrowding produces psychological distress. Overcrowding discourages children's motivation to perform tasks; children show abrupt, disruptive behavior and demonstrate the lack of independence (p. 5). His studies concluded that overcrowded classroom activities result in constant interruptions, less cooperative play and uncontrollable behaviors among young children.

Tayeg (2015) stated: Teachers have always preferred smaller classes because with smaller classes they have more time to investigate and observe, to introduce and model more effective methods of instruction. On the contrary, teachers felt that they were forced to use routine methods when they were assigned larger classes. In overcrowded classrooms, attention became centered upon achieving a reasonable group standard rather than stimulating each student to advance accordingly to his capacity. (p. 19)

In overcrowded classrooms, teachers and various studies have confirmed it is unmanageable to concentrate on all group and individual activities (Tayeg, 2015). Academics is unachievable and the control of working with students has been proven difficult (Tayeg, 2015).

Current Literature Informing Research-based Actions

In my research, I have noted that overcrowded classrooms, particularly in kindergarten, hinders a child's ability to function normally, socialize and gain the teacher-student relationship he/she should be introduced early at a young age.

Kopko (2016) clearly noted: Children are more likely to withdraw and show behavior problems in overcrowded situations. Furthermore, teachers in crowded classrooms are more apt to be exhausted, annoyed, and less patient than teachers in smaller classrooms. They also lose instruction time due to noise distractions and have a compromised teaching style. (p. 1)

In 2012, McKenna and Pugh studied the quality of teaching in classes consisting of less than 10 to 20 children versus classes consisting of 30 to 43 children. In the variety of activities, they observed that in the smaller groups there was more control, participation and cooperation, and, also noted a greater percentage of activities was still very oriented (p. 22).

In 2013, Danowski performed a study to verify if McKenna and Pugh's findings were conclusive. Evidence from the above studies concluded that there was more the individualized instruction in smaller classes than in larger classes (Tayeg, 2015).

In 2014, McKenna and Pugh confirmed: Teachers that have been taught and have developed the skills and techniques of teaching in small classrooms of young children, special training must be provided to exhibit the ability and experience to teach in large classes. (p. 22)

Critical Analysis

Based on the research conducted by researchers, I have discovered that when teachers cannot engage their students in learning activities, then the teaching-learning process and teacher-child communication will not prosper. It is an issue when many families are fearing the worst in schools: Overcrowded classrooms at the beginning of kindergarten. Because of this dilemma, many families say their children are not receiving the education they are supposed to (Adesula, 2017). Tayeg (2015) had concluded, "The quality of interactions is adversely affected due to the lack of space for moving around the class and the overwhelming number of students that the teacher must deal with" (p. 94).

A major factor that determines a child's success in learning is the physical environment where he/she is. According to Adesula (2017), "Creating a conducive learning climate for the early childhood years must be in a positive learning climate in a school for young children" (p. 2). It takes motivation, skills and communication amongst teachers, students and parents; this is a place where children receive guidance and encouragement, security and trust from the responsible adults around them.

Short-, Mid-, and Long-term Goals

Short-term Goal: I must take into consideration that the quality of teaching in overcrowded kindergarten classrooms interrupts academic success and individualized attention. School and state officials should study the relationship between the quality of teaching, student learning and student-teacher ratio in order to examine the impact that overcrowding has, and examine possible solutions to reduce overcrowded classrooms.

Mid-term Goal: Suggestions to install portable classrooms, use unoccupied classrooms (e.g., computer, art or gym rooms) and hire kindergarten teacher-aides would limit class sizes.

Long-term Goal: Seek public input for school expansion and the possibility of constructing new schools.

Advocates of smaller classes confirm there exists a multitude of benefits in smaller classrooms (Johnson, 2012). Rising student accomplishments, individualized attention to students, higher teacher morale, and more time for teachers to focus on instruction rather than on classroom management are impossible to attain in overcrowded classrooms.

Extra teacher aides would provide individual attention, and assist students who are struggling. This helps teachers focus on students who need additional aid. Projects such as school additions, construction of new schools or placing portable classrooms would lessen load on teachers. In my experience, I know that smaller class sizes prove to be more effective when it comes to academics, attention, retention and interaction between me and my students because of my low student-teacher ratio. Smaller groups provide ample room for a more learning environment. I have taught in a large group of young children and it is a very uncontrollable environment. The level of noise produces more disruptions and disciplinary actions is not the solution. I experience more behavioral problems and projects are not completed due to constant interruptions. Activities are limited and I encounter less cooperation.

In my short-term goal, I need to take into consideration that the quality of teaching interrupts academic success and individualized attention. Preparing to hire kindergarten teacher-aides would limit class sizes would be my mid-term goal and seeking public input for school expansion and the possibility of constructing new schools would be my long-term goal.

Series of Action Plan

Action Step 1: Building Relationships

Overcrowding in a kindergarten classroom is an issue that teachers, parents, families, school officials and the community need to collaborate and communicate. Building relationships amongst others allows effective and productive collaboration (Bruno, 2013). When building relationships with families, I must care about their opinions and concerns; As a teacher, I am the role-model, leader and advocate with the ability to collaborate and work well that I know is an asset for team effectiveness. Effective leaders are open-minded and respectful of others' views. They display optimism and enthusiasm, confidence and decisiveness. They persevere and do not permit setbacks to derail an important initiative they are pursuing (Tarr, 2010).

According to Northouse (2016): A collaborative relationship is one in which members can stay problem focused, listen to and understand one another, feel free to take risks, and be willing to compensate for one another. To build an atmosphere that fosters

collaboration, we need to develop trusting relationships based on honesty, openness, consistency, and respect. (p. 370)

Relationships with agencies and institutions in the community can help a program achieve its goals and connect families with resources that support children's healthy development and learning (NAEYC, n.d.). Stakeholder groups must establish relationships by building parents, families and communities to foster, guide, nurture, and support the development of every child. 'Class-size Matters' is a non-profit nonpartisan organization that is dedicated in providing information on the significant and wide-ranging benefits of smaller classes. They also advocate for improving school overcrowding in all districts, and elaborate more on parent decision-making in the field of education policies.

In New York City, The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) convenes hearings on school overcrowding, class size reductions and focuses on two goals: 1) To improve and reduce kindergarten classroom size conducive to the learning environment; and 2) To improve overcrowded classrooms implemented by the reduction of class sizes in accordance with the Contract for Excellence agreement (Farkas, 2012).

Action Step 2: Form Advocacy Groups

There are many responsibilities advocacy groups share. According to Kieff (2009), these include:

- recruiting others
- researching the problem and solution
- defining goals
- developing strategies
- choosing effective tactics
- creating informative and persuasive materials
- maintaining focus and motivation
- fundraising, and
- being a spokesperson (p. 143).

In conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) is a national organization who work in state education agencies. For years, members represent school districts of our nation that currently have concern on overcrowding. The question is: What changes or alterations do schools need in reducing overcrowding and to make education for young children more responsive? The answer is: Reducing class size, and assuring every child access to an encouraging and motivating environment (p. 2). Advocacy groups not only have more power and visibility but have the capacity to get more done. It is essential to develop an advocacy group early in the process of implementing an advocacy agenda (Kieff, 2009).

Action step 3:

Conduct meetings with councils, parents and school officials

According to Kieff (2009): Meetings provide a way to maximize a group's function. It is important to make the most of meeting times by having a clear agenda that is distributed before the meeting and by having a facilitator who can work for consensus among the group, manage conflict, and keep members focused on the goal (p.142).

The public interest is my concern and I must have the strength to guide them, the courage to move forward, and be the advocate for their support. Because leadership involves influence, leaders often have more power than followers, they have an enormous ethical responsibility for how they affect other people (Northouse, 2016). In 2015, more than 2,000 people protested in Richmond to draw attention to elementary public schools. According to the Virginia Education Association (VEA), they stated, "Our Virginia school system is seriously underfunded and as a result, students who attend overcrowded classrooms are facing the consequences in the quality of education (p. 4). Virginia PTA President Brenda Sheridan joined the rally. On behalf of the people of Virginia, she said "Our community consists of families and children. We want local and state leaders and administrators to observe and rectify overcrowding in our schools. The time has come to reduce class sizes and allow our teachers to actually teach our children" (p. 2).

Action step 4:

Communicate (write, call, or meet) with Local, State, or Federal Policymakers

Early childhood professionals are constantly communicating with policymakers about the needs of children of all ages and their families. It is challenging to communicate effectively about the complexity of early childhood development. Kieff (2009) noted, "When you communicate with advocates, you (1) share information and ideas, (2) get the message across, and (3) keep the message alive in the public consciousness is an important part of any effective advocacy plan (p. 153).

Coalitions create membership criteria, hold regular meetings, and create their own agendas (Shultz, 2003). Coalitions often create a legislative or regulatory task force whose main function is to:

1. research legislators' position statement and voting records to determine their positions;
2. identify legislators to sponsor needed bills that will benefit coalition's constituency;
3. recognize community groups that are addressing overcrowding issues and are willing to collaborate (Kieff, 2009).

Local media such as local profit-based newspaper, radio, and television stations delivers messages to the public and policy makers. Many agencies, PTAs, outside organizations, neighborhood associations, publish newsletters and often welcome news articles that highlight issues and resources related to young children and their families (Kieff 148). It is necessary to communicate, acknowledge and support the roles and contributions of all stakeholders and it is imperative to work and communicate with others, including teachers, staff, and students and their families. **A press release** encourages the public to listen and read articles about an upcoming event or tell a persuasive story on issues that affect infants, young children, and their families.

Since I have been teaching in small classrooms, I know that overcrowding in kindergarten classes causes consequences. 'Adaptive leadership' is about how leaders encourage

people to adapt—to face and deal with problems, challenges, and changes (Northouse, 2016). I am concerned with values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals, and I must prepare and encourage people to cope with change. In an adaptive challenge, the authority structure—the people in charge—can contribute, but others must participate as well. Their problem becomes part of the solution itself (Charry, 2012).

Social Change

Leadership is about determination; As a challenge, leaders do many other things, such as organizing and managing resources, and making connections with children and staff, families, communities and organizations (Tarr, 2010). As a social change, I must establish the characteristics of good teachers, be persuasive, open-minded, flexible, confident, and an expertise early childhood education and development. As a leader in my career, I am willing to try different approaches if I run into achievement gaps or barriers.

Social change benefits the community, families and children by recognizing the importance of how education affects the success in education. Adults must not only care about the effects on overcrowding, but must seek improvements, alternatives and other resources seen smaller classrooms.

Effectiveness of My Action Steps

In my short-term goal, I know it is very clear that teaching in overcrowded environments, where the number of students exceeds the acceptable limit, effective teaching is not possible. I know that the quality of teaching in overcrowded kindergarten classrooms interrupts academic success and individualized attention. If school and state officials observe and compare small classrooms versus large classrooms has, they can see the quality of teaching and student learning makes a difference to the success of young children.

Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Changing positive social change requires to fully understand and consider how each change might positively or negatively impact the system for improvement. Advocates recognize a child or family is in crisis and seeks support for them. Advocacy in all its forms seeks to ensure that people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in society, can:

- Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them.
- Defend and safeguard their rights.
- Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives (SEAP, 2017).

Skills are what leaders can accomplish, whereas traits are who leaders are (i.e., their innate characteristics). Leadership skills are defined as the ability to use one's knowledge and competencies to accomplish a set of goals or objectives (Northouse, 2016). For me, being a leader is one who takes the initiative, has the motivation and can represent a role-model for many to inspire and follow. According to Northouse (2016), "Human skills are 'people skills.' They are the abilities that help a leader to work effectively with followers, peers, and superiors to accomplish the organization's goals. Human skills allow a leader to assist group members in working cooperatively as a group to achieve common goals" (p. 44).

Leadership builds on the core principles and best leadership practices of the early childhood care and education field. These include relationships of mutual caring and respect; sharing knowledge; reflective, intentional teaching; and collaboration among the staff and between staff and the program leader (Derman-Sparks,2015).

Louise Derman-Sparks is one leader who has impacted positive social change by recommending that teachers should intervene with issues pertaining to educational success. Children learn to be proud of themselves and of their families, to respect human differences, to recognize bias, and to speak up for what is right. It is key that I become knowledgeable about current issues in the field of early childhood receiving local and national attention.

My Knowledge Gained to Continue Social Change

One of the most important things we can do to nurture leaders is to create an atmosphere that encourages mentoring and learning (Scott, 2010). Leadership is a developmental process related to the idea of change and leadership being an agent of change in an organization. We need to encourage leaders to join professional organizations, invite them to serve on committees, and let them know that they can make a difference in the lives of children (Scott, 2010). Janet Gonzalez-Mena (n.d.) firmly believes that a leader is one who is out-spoken, guides, directs and an authority – a character of being a servant leadership. To be a successful and effective leader, I need to focus on my personal growth, focusing on skills and abilities that are learned and developed early in life. Equity and social justice is an important issue in early care and education programs and in childrearing.

I know that ‘passion’ is an attribute of being a leader. Passion is required when I meet parent, children and the community. I must be a leader who possesses personality and characteristics that emphasize on skills and abilities. Physical and personality characteristics, competencies, and values focus on my personal attributes.

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DEDICATION

In 1994, I had undergone major brain surgery where Dr. Eun Kyu Lee and her team of neurosurgeons successfully removed .07 cm from my right, front temporal lobe due to a car accident I had sustained in 1987. In the past eight years, I have earned many degrees, and earning the most prestigious one has given me the inspiration and fulfillment in my career and education. With over twenty-year experience, I am blessed to be able to teach young children and adults in the field of Early Childhood Development.

I am dedicating my final product to Ms. Carol Merritt. Twenty-one years ago, she was my first instructor at Sacramento City College who taught me the fundamentals in early childhood. I have learned children are brought into this world as a gift from God. You have given me the motivation and support to move forward and for this, I will always be grateful.

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- My wife - Catherine
- My sister - Dianneh Bowden

My Children

- Tiffany-Ann D. & Pauljohn Corpuz
- Jason R. & Vi Rodriguez
- SSgt Cody W. Rodriguez & Adane D. Quijano

My Grandchildren

- Jessilyn T. Rodriguez-Corpuz
- Jaceb X. Rodriguez-Corpuz
- Jordan P. Corpuz
- Alexander J. Rodriguez
- Isabella A. Rodriguez

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As a professional in the field of early childhood education, I realize the importance of children in our daily lives. They are a gift from above, nurtured with the love and support from the hands of those who care for them. Be gentle, be kind, but mostly be grateful for the beautiful child/children you have brought into the world; you are their inspiration, their role model and their first teacher.

Jay