INSIDE PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

PROGRAM QUALITY: A CASE STUDY OF

TEACHER BELIEFS AND EMBEDDED

PRACTICES

A DISSERTATION

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TO MY FATHER, WHO BELIVED IN ME AND INSPIRED ME TO BECOME

WHO I AM TODAY, *HOPING I DIDNT MAKE HIM WAIT FOR TOO LONG!*

TO MY HUSBAND, HESHAM, *FOR OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER!*

TO MY SONS,

HADI, HUSAM and YASSIN

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Abstract

A cross-case approach was employed to examine early childhood teachers' perspectives on quality of early childhood programs and how they embed those perspectives in their daily classroom practices. Questions explored teachers' education levels, years of experience, and the ways in which their individual perspectives are manifested in the classroom. Three early childhood teachers were interviewed and observed, each with a different level of education: Child Development Associate (CDA) certification, associate's degree in early childhood education, and bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Each teacher worked in a licensed, nationally accredited program that is rated at the highest level of the Indiana quality rating system, Paths to QUALITY (Level 4). Qualitative methods were used, including analysis of teacher surveys and interview transcriptions, as well as CLASS observations. Results indicated that the three teachers held similar perspectives on the importance of professional development, but they differed on the preferable way to obtain professional development: college education versus in-service training. There was a clear divergence among the teachers regarding the importance of a college degree in relation to manifestations of quality in the classroom. While the three teachers agreed that there is a lack of respect associated with their profession, they did not agree on the reasons behind this lack of respect. Likewise, all three voiced a need for increased support in their roles, but they had varying ideas of what that support should entail. The three teachers also varied in their understanding of the global concept of quality, specifically in regard to the National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation and the quality rating

system. While the teachers holding associate's and bachelor's degrees displayed similar quality implementations, the teacher with a CDA was not observed to apply the same level of quality practices.

This study has implications for practice and for future research. In order to meet professional development needs that can ensure quality practices, teacher education programs and non-formal training agencies need to provide early childhood teachers with professional development opportunities that help them advance their knowledge and link theories to application in the classroom. Opportunities should focus on personal factors and meet the individuality of the early childhood teacher. Policy makers and state administrators need to value the role of the early childhood teacher by providing a classification system that links qualifications to salaries and positions. Compensation initiatives for early childhood teachers should be brought into discussion and linked to the quality rating system's children and dollars received per program. There is a necessity for future research into the perspectives of early childhood teachers in a cross-case study with teachers who hold an early childhood education/child development bachelor's degree. Such future investigation may indicate additional similarities or differences in beliefs on quality in early childhood education and could illuminate potential methods for ensuring that teachers are able to provide the level of quality that is called for.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Context

Early childhood program quality has frequently been addressed by measuring features such as classroom environment, program structure, and the interaction that occurs between the child and the teacher as well as between the family and the teacher. Less attention has been devoted to the analysis of teachers' beliefs and views about early childhood program quality and how they embed these beliefs in the form of daily practices in classrooms. This study will investigate the "inside perspective on quality" (Katz, 1993) by exploring teachers' attitudes towards the phrase "quality of early childhood program" and examining how teachers embed these views as daily practices in classrooms.

Thirteen million young children in the United States— that is three of every five children—are cared for during the day by someone other than their parents. Much of this care is provided by extended family members, friends, or neighbors; an increasing number of children, however, are cared for in child care centers (National Center of

Education Statistics, 1996). Of the thirteen million, 26% attend child care centers, 24% receive child care in family home settings, 5% are cared for by in-home caregivers, 22% are cared for by relatives, and 22% are in the care of their own grandparents (Smith, 2000).

Families struggle to find affordable, quality care arrangements for their children. Full-day child care easily costs $4,000 to $10,000 per year, which is at least as much as college tuition at a public university (Schulman, 2000). Yet more than one out of four families with young children earn less than $25,000 a year (US Census Bureau, 2000), and a family with both parents working full-time at the minimum wage earns only $21,400 a year.

While some child care subsidies are available for low-income families, funds are severely limited. Currently, no state serves all families eligible for child care assistance under federal guidelines. Nationally, only 12% of eligible children who need help are receiving any assistance (US Department of Human and health Service, 2000).

As of 1998-99, 42 states had prekindergarten initiatives that are still in place today, yet most serve only a small percentage of children at risk, and a number of them lack adequate quality standards. Many initiatives support only part-day programs that fail to meet the needs of parents working full-time (Schulman, Blank & Ewen, 1999).

The Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study (1995) found that, overall, good child care is hard to find and that much of the child care in the United States is poor to mediocre. Forty percent of rooms serving infants in child care centers were found to be of such poor quality as to jeopardize children's health, safety, or development. However, in a marketplace where child care teachers and providers do not earn as much as janitors

and cleaners earn an average of $19,650, it is no wonder that professional, quality care is so hard to find. Child care workers earn an average of only $17,440 per year. In addition, child care workers tend to receive no benefits or paid leave (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005).

The settings or contexts for early childhood education differ greatly (Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002). These settings vary by funding sources, licensing regulations, mission statement, hours of operation, staff qualifications, classroom ratios, surrounding communities, and many other factors. Within the home context, children are cared for by their parents or by other relatives or caregivers in their own home. Children attend family child care homes that are either licensed, registered by the state, or unregulated. Within the center or classroom context, children are cared for in part-day and full-day programs. Part-day programs include private preschools that are typically not regulated by the state; Head Start, which is federally monitored; and prekindergarten programs, which are usually monitored by the state. Full-day programs include child care centers that operate under various auspices: nonprofit, faith-based, independent private for-profit, and private for-profit chains (Saluja et al., 2002).

Because of families' child care needs and the diversity of children in need of care, the early care and education industry has expanded in size and complexity. Current estimates suggest that the industry has a paid workforce of 2.3 million with slightly more than half (52%) working in the over 300,000 regulated programs, which include roughly 120,000 centers and 214,000 home-based businesses (Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2002; National Association for Regulatory Administration & National Child Care Information Center, 2006). Early care and education programs in the private sector

are small; more than 80% employ 20 or fewer workers. State funded prekindergarten programs and Head Start programs are delivered in both public and private settings. Paid jobs in the child day care services industry sector, which include both child care and preschool, are projected to grow 38% over the 2004 to 2014 period, compared with the 14% employment growth projected for all industries combined (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

The role of child care and early childhood education is growing in our society and continues to evolve. Researchers have begun to more fully understand the complex interchange between the development of young children and the quality of various contexts in which they develop. Our understanding of what young children can learn and do, and how supportive contexts can strengthen learning, is expanding (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001).

Nevertheless, quality child care is important for the well-being of young children, and higher quality ought to result in better outcomes for children. According to Bowman et al. (2001), historically there have been two separate and conflicting traditions in the United States that can be encapsulated in the terms of child care and preschool. However, early care and education cannot be thought of as separate entities in dealing with young children.

In response to state and federal mandates, such as the No Child Left Behind legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 2001), state accountability programs at the elementary and secondary levels are directly equating aggregated child outcomes with quality, which led to the use of aggregated test scores in federally funded early childhood programs to assess their quality. President George W. Bush's *Good Start, Grow Smart*

initiative in 2004 placed a great importance on the National Reporting System (NRS), which required Head Start local programs to provide test score data to a centralized database. Federal program administrators subsequently reviewed these data as an indicator of program effectiveness (Lambert, Abbot-Shim, & Sibley, 2006).

As this culture of accountability reaches down into early childhood education and attempts to define quality as indicated solely by aggregated child outcomes, there is an increased importance on strategies to measure quality in early childhood education as a means to understand the process involved in meeting the needs of children and families served by the childcare industry.

While most parents and child care professionals agree on core definitions of child care quality, there is less agreement regarding what constitutes best practices that should be embedded by teachers. For example, some parents and providers believe that young children should select their own play activities, while others advocate a more structured approach to early learning (Wishard, Shivers, Howes, & Ritchie, 2003). Opinions regarding child care practices and quality appear to be deeply embedded within value and belief systems that are rooted in ethnicity, community, and social class (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

There are different views on how to measure quality in early childhood programming. Lillian Katz is an early childhood researcher whose work has established the foundation for research to seek understanding of quality of early care and education and its components. In her work, "*Five Perspectives on Quality in Early Childhood Programs*" (1993), Katz summed up that quality can be assessed by identifying selected characteristics of the program, the setting, the equipment, and other features, as seen by

the adults in charge of the program. This approach is called an assessment of quality from

a top-down perspective. Another method of quality assessment defined by Katz is called

a bottom-up approach. This is to find how the program is actually experienced by

participating children. A third approach is called an inside-outside approach, which is to

assess how the program is actually experienced by the families it serves. A fourth

perspective is one from the inside, which considers how the program is experienced by

the staff that works within it. A fifth perspective takes into account how a program serves

the community and larger society. This is called the outside perspective on program

quality (Katz, 1993).

In the time since Katz's research, useful measures of quality have been developed.

The National Association for the Education of Young children (NAEYC) recommends

seven structural, cognitive, and social factors that policy makers should consider in order

to achieve high quality: 1) comprehensive professional preparation; 2) adequate staff to

child ratio and staff compensation; 3) stimulating learning environments; 4) adequate

regulation and monitoring system; 5) community resources available for families; 6)

individualized support to promote learning; and 7) valid multiple indicators of children's

progress (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Quality care involves providing quality cognitive stimulation, rich language

environments, and the facilitation of social, emotional, and motor development. Adequate

care can occur only in the context of good physical care and warm, affective

relationships. Children construct knowledge actively, integrating new concepts and ideas

into their existing understandings. Educators have an opportunity and an obligation to

facilitate this propensity to learn and to develop receptivity to learning that will prepare

children for active engagement in the learning enterprise throughout their lives (Bowman et al, 2001).

Bowman et al. (2001) argue that promoting young children's growth calls for an early childhood setting that supports the development of the full range of a child's capacities and that serves as foundation for school learning. As the child is assimilated into the culture of education in a setting outside the home, early childhood programs must be sensitive and responsive to the cultural contexts that define the child's world outside the school or center, and they must build on the strengths and support that those contexts provide (Bowman et al, 2001). Katz and other researchers have identified structural factors, such as group size, staff to child ratios, and staff qualifications, as important influencers of quality of care. In particular, the level of education of early childhood teachers, obtained through pre-service or in-service teacher education programs, is a significant predictor of the quality of care provided. Research by Burchinal, Roberts, Riggins, Ziesel, Neebe, and Bryant (2000), Darling-Hammond (2000), and Whitebook (2003) suggest that better-educated early childhood teachers have more knowledge and skills and are more likely to create richer learning activities that are appropriate to the learning needs of the children in their care. These teachers are also more likely to be better prepared to solve problems when they encounter challenges.

Although understanding teachers' beliefs systems regarding teaching and learning can be informative about the manner in which their practice is constructed, there is little literature regarding how the personal and educational experience for early childhood teachers mediates their actions in their professional work and affects the ways in which they manage challenges. There is a need to understand the connection between a

teacher's personal beliefs and educational background and their practices in the classroom (Brownlee & Berthlesen, 2006). For example, Brownlee (2001) noted that individuals with relativistic beliefs were more able to conceive of teaching as facilitating rather than transmitting knowledge.

Brownlee and Berthelsen (2006) developed a conceptual framework that relates personal epistemological beliefs and learning outcomes in early childhood teacher education programs. Early childhood teachers choose the profession with existing personal factors: abilities, motivation, knowledge and beliefs; then they go through a process of learning more about the profession. If teachers get more training and education, this will lead to a product of new or revised beliefs and practices of teaching and learning.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

Well-prepared teachers are a crucial element in quality early childhood education. They ensure effective teaching, which in turn maximizes children's opportunities in developing skills needed for school readiness. Once children begin kindergarten, they are taught by professionals with at least a four-year college degree. Early childhood education teachers are far less prepared. Fewer than half of preschool teachers hold a bachelor's degree, and many never attended college (Barnett 2004). Other industrialized countries have more rigorous qualifications for preschool teachers than does the United States. For example, most three and four-year-olds in France attend public schools in which teachers are required to have the equivalent of a master's degree (Barnett, 2004). America's preschools vary widely in teacher education requirements, to some extent because standards vary across the different government agencies that sponsor and

regulate Head Start, preschools, and other child care programs. The result is that preschool education is less effective than it should be.

Preschool programs operated by public schools employ the best-educated teachers. Nearly 90% of preschool teachers in public school systems have at least a four-year degree. Most teachers in public schools have a teaching credential or license beyond completing a bachelor's degree, such as taking courses in teaching methods, having had supervised teaching experiences, and passing a test of teaching knowledge and skills (Barnett 2004). Less than one-third of Head Start's teachers have at least a four-year college degree. Others have some college and many have a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, which may not require college courses. While Congress has increased the accountability of Head Start for enhancing children's school readiness, it was reluctant to substantially raise the standards for Head Start teachers, requiring only that half of all teachers have a two-year college degree by 2003 (NIEER, 2003). Until Head Start teacher qualifications and compensation are raised, it is unlikely that the program will fully produce the large educational gains for disadvantaged children that were the impetus for the creation of Head Start (Bowman et al. 2001).

Bowman et al. (2001) report that state government regulated and funded child care provides little support for teachers' quality, with the lowest teacher education standards of any early childhood programs. As a result, compensation is poor and teacher qualifications vary significantly, with less than half the teachers in child care centers holding four-year college degrees and many having just a high school education. Forty-two states require no formal education beyond a high school diploma for teachers in child care centers. Many states require some kind of preparation specific to early childhood

care, but this can be as little as a few hours of training. Only two states, California and New Hampshire, have a minimum requirement that includes training obtained through college courses.

One dynamic area in which programs particularly fall short is staff qualifications and training. High quality early childhood services depend on well-trained personnel using coherent and developmentally appropriate education-based approaches. Therefore, staff characteristics and resources available for training must be considered in the design of quality enhancement.

The belief that teachers with higher qualifications have significant positive effects on the quality of classroom has been established in numerous studies (Saluja et al, 2002, Cassidy, Buell, Pugh-Hoese, & Russell, 1995, The National Child Care Staffing Study, 1997, & Wishard et al., 2003). While a number of studies demonstrate that higher levels of teacher education and training correspond to a higher quality of care and developmentally appropriate teaching practices, other studies investigating the importance of a high level of teacher education have found a lack of relationship between teacher education and program quality. This current study examined beliefs about quality and quality practices for teachers who have different levels of education and training.

Yet just how the nature of educational experience for early childhood teachers influences how they practice their profession in the classroom on a daily basis has not been explored. Thus, the intention of this study was to investigate early childhood teachers' educational backgrounds as they inform not only the teachers' beliefs about quality, but their classroom practices as well. In their article "Personal epistemology and relational pedagogy in early childhood teacher education programs" (2006), Brownlee

and Berthelsen introduce the theoretical framework on studying epistemological beliefs to gain insights into how to promote effective teaching and learning across educational settings. Their article (2006) developed a conceptual framework that relates personal epistemological beliefs to learning outcomes in early childhood teacher education programs.

The current study adopted Brownlee and Berthelsen (2006)'s framework for understanding the personal factors that lead teachers to choose early childhood education as a profession, the nature of training and education that early childhood teachers have received before or after employing in early childhood program, and how these factors have shaped teachers' beliefs about quality. In addition, this study analyzed the effects of these factors and their connection to teacher practice.

In addition to revealing how teachers' personal experiences and education impact their classroom practices, this study also used this model to better understand beliefs as a significant learner characteristic or personal presage factor. This relates to why early childhood teacher education contexts should take into account such characteristics in learning and training programs.

There is not enough data on early childhood teachers that identify the nature of their epistemological beliefs, their beliefs about children's learning, and the manner in which their reflective responses on practices observed align with these beliefs.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

Child care programs, while differing in educational philosophies and purpose, generally intend to provide activities that the program believes will promote children's development and achieve positive outcomes for children. Programs and teachers plan and

implement strategies or practices that will help to achieve these goals. Within traditional theories, practices are defined as "ways of doing things" or ingrained habits rooted in beliefs, expectations, traditions, and relations.

The purpose of this research is to identify teachers' beliefs about the definition of quality in early childhood programs and how this is reflected in their classroom practices, using the framework identified by Brownlee and Berthelsen (2006). This study examines how teachers' beliefs and practices are shaped by educational experiences. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What perspectives do early childhood teachers, with different educational backgrounds and varying years of experience, have on quality early childhood programs?

2. In what ways do early childhood teachers' perspectives on quality programs manifest themselves in classroom practice?

<div align="center">Significance of the study</div>

Early childhood program quality has been addressed frequently by measuring features such as classroom environment, program structure, and the interaction that occurs between the child and the teacher as well as between the family and the teacher. Less attention has been devoted to the analysis of teachers' beliefs and views about early childhood program quality and how they embed these beliefs in the form of daily practices in classrooms. This study investigated the "inside perspective on quality" (Katz, 1993), explored teachers' attitudes toward the phrase "quality of early childhood program," and examined how teachers embed these views as daily practices in classrooms.

This study has particular significance in identification of early childhood teachers' beliefs regarding their quality practice. Although much research has centered on the quality of early childhood programs, fewer studies have used qualitative methods to focus on the quality of early childhood programs. This study also compiled qualitative documentation regarding teachers' beliefs toward their practices and quality in relation to their beliefs about the nature of knowledge they are gaining. While other studies have quantified quality of early childhood education in relation to teachers' characteristics, this study sought to qualify teachers' own perceptions, beliefs, and practices regarding the term quality.

Although a need for highly qualified teachers in the field of early childhood education is demonstrated by research, the role of early childhood teachers in high quality programs remains uncertain. The present study sought to emphasize the teachers' own beliefs about their roles in high quality programs.

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

Quality Perspectives:

There are many ways quality can be assessed, measured, or evaluated: by identifying selected characteristics of the program, the setting, the equipment, and other features, as seen by the adult in charge of the program, teachers, parents, community and children (Katz, 1993). This study examined quality as it is perceived from inside, that is, by the teachers.

Epistemological Beliefs:

Teachers' beliefs exist on many levels from personal to global and serve as overarching frameworks for understanding and engaging with the world. They can be thought of as guiding principles teachers' hold to be true that serve as lenses through which new experiences can be understood. Teachers' beliefs may be formed without evidence and sometimes in the face of contradictory evidence. They are a part of teachers' identities. Beliefs, and their influence, tend to be unexamined by teachers because many are implicit, unarticulated, or unconscious (Brownlee and Berthelsen, 2006). In this study, teachers' beliefs that were examined are related to quality of early childhood programs and their daily classroom practices based on their personal experience and educational background.

Quality Practices:

Practices are ingrained habits within institutions. In the case of early childhood programs, practices are the ways of doing things-strategies that child care programs and teachers intend to use and actually do use to enhance children's development. Examples of practices include reading to children with the intention of helping them to be ready to enter school with pre-academic skills or assigning children to specific caregivers with intention of building more trusting relationships. Practices are about *what* to teach as well as *how* to teach. They are intentional strategies used to achieve an adult goal whether the goal is to have

children in quiet lines to the bathroom, to have all the children recognize 10 letters, or to bolster self-confidence (Wishard et al., 2003). There are two main quality practice measures: one involves looking at the process quality, an example measure being used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS: Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008); the other is to measure global structural quality, an example measure being the Environment Rating Scales-Revised (ERS-R) developed by Harms and Clifford (2005) at the Frank Porter Graham Institute (ers.fgp.unc.edu). This study aims to define the quality perspective as a process of interaction between the teacher and children. This study will use CLASS scores of three broad domains of teacher-student interactions: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. These three domains are comprised of 10 specific dimensions of teacher-student interactions: positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for student perspectives, behavior management, productivity, instructional learning formats, concept development, quality of feedback, and language modeling. This study did not use the ERS-R, as the classroom environment is not the perspective of quality for this study. In this study, quality practices were defined as routines or activities that are embedded within teacher-child interactions: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. These three domains are comprised of specific dimensions of practices or teacher-child interactions: 1) positive climate; 2) negative climate; 3) teacher sensitivity; 4) regard for student perspectives; 5) behavior management; 6) productivity; 7) instructional learning formats; 8)

concept development; 9) quality of feedback; and 10) language modeling (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008).

Child Development Associate (CDA):

The CDA is a credential that is awarded in the United States to those who have completed a list of requirements, including 120 hours of training, set forth by the Council for Professional Recognition, and who have successfully passed the verification visit to work with Infants/Toddlers or Preschoolers. There are several settings toward which a CDA can be awarded: Center-based Infant/Toddler, Center-based Preschool, Family Child Care, and Home Visitor. This is an entry-level credential for early care and education providers (Council for Professional Recognition, cdacouncil.org).

Accreditation:

This study was conducted in a NAEYC accredited program. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)'s Early Childhood Program Standards evaluates 10 key areas: relationships, curriculum, teaching, assessment of child progress, health, teachers, families, community relationships, physical environment and leadership and management.

Paths to QUALITY:

This study was conducted in a level 4 Paths to QUALITY (PTQ) program. PTQ is Indiana's statewide child care quality rating system. The main components of

most state QRS programs are: 1) a set of quality standards that apply to home-based and center-based child care; 2) a process for objectively assessing child care quality and maintaining accountability; 3) a system of training and technical assistance to help child care providers improve quality; 4) incentives to encourage providers to reach higher levels of quality; and 5) public information to inform parents about what the QRS is and how to use it when they make child care decisions.

Assumptions of the Study

1. It was assumed that teachers would respond to interview questions in a truthful manner and that no attempts to falsify or misrepresent beliefs would occur.

2. It was assumed that teacher practices during classroom observation would represent their daily practices and not misrepresent them due to the researcher's presence.

Limitations of the Study

First, the sample of teachers interviewed and observed for this study was purposefully selected to include teachers from each qualification category: high school diploma (or working towards a CDA), associate's degree, and bachelor's degree. The sample was selected purposely to reflect different educational qualifications. Teachers were selected from one exemplary early childhood program; different teachers' qualifications were not investigated across different early childhood programs that differ in auspice affiliation or funding sources.

Second, this study did not use a rating instrument to measure the global quality of the classroom in terms of classroom space and furnishings, personal care and routines,

program structure, language and reasoning, or parent-program structure. However, the selected program was an accredited program where quality was rated using ERS-R which measure these factors. CLASS was used to provide an assessment of the classroom in terms of quality practices related to emotional climate, classroom management, and instructional support. Results from CLASS were not compared to other classrooms in other accredited or not accredited programs.

Third, this study did not evaluate or assess the effect of teachers' beliefs about quality or classroom quality practices in relation to child outcomes.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Studying quality in early childhood programs necessitates studying teachers' different perspectives. Little research has been conducted to study quality from the teachers' perspectives. This study examined early childhood teachers' perspectives on quality and how they embed those perspectives in their daily classroom practices.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview of Quality Research

Historical Background

Historically, measurement of quality of early childhood programs has been conducted for different reasons. Following World War II, initial child care research was performed with a focus designed to examine the effects of child care on maternal attachment. This research was based on cultural attitudes, influenced by such early childhood researchers who contended that parental full-time childrearing, particularly in early years, was essential to healthy psychological development (Lambert et al, 2006). Subsequently, a significant body of research has shown that children demonstrate typical development in high quality child care settings.

Due to the increased use of child care and the realization that child care was not a temporary phenomenon but rather represented a change in child rearing practices (Lambert et al., 2006), a second phase of child care research was conducted. This research was designed to define and measure the critical component of quality. This research started with the Abt study in the 1970s and continued through the 1990s with the National Institute of Child and Human Development. This large-scale federally-funded research established new paradigms that focused on structure and process using complex

research designs based on theoretical models (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A third stage of research that began in 2000 is focused on child outcomes and school readiness, as school readiness is increasingly considered the marker for quality in early childhood education. This shift has been influenced by the increased public investment in Head Start and child care to support family sufficiency (Lambert, et al., 2006).

The current social, economic, and political climate calls for answers about the effectiveness of early childhood programs in preparing children to succeed in school. A most recent response to the call for more consistent standards in this regard has been the emergence of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), which provide "star rating" (Azzi-Lessing, 2009), similar to those for hotels and restaurants, to denote the level of quality achieved by individual early care and education programs. The number of stars awarded corresponds with the program's demonstrated success in meeting widely accepted standards of quality. Although QRIS are promising mechanisms for assisting parents in identifying and choosing high quality programs for their children, only a handful of states have integrated their QRIS with their licensing standards, and the role that these systems will play in expansion of prekindergarten remains to be seen (Azzi-Lessing, 2009). The National Institute for Early Childhood Research (2007) argues that while there is anecdotal evidence that QRIS is having positive effects on program quality and child outcomes, little exists to back up that assertion (NIEER, 2007).

The National Research Council has examined the states' child care quality enhancement initiatives and concluded outcomes have shown relationship between structural attributes, child-caregiver interactions, and children's developmental progress that suggest many state initiatives are targeted on aspects of child care settings that have

potential for enhancing developmental outcomes; however, this is not sufficient to conclude that states' initiatives are necessarily effective in enhancing child care quality (US General Accounting Office, 2002).

Few states have evaluated the effectiveness of their initiatives to increase the quality of early childhood programs. Only Massachusetts, Washington, and Florida have implemented a research design and methodological approaches that isolated initiative effects and produced conclusive findings regarding quality in early childhood care (Lambert et al., 2006). Florida's study found that reduced child-to-teacher ratios and increased teacher education contributed to higher program quality and gains in child development. The state of Washington found no effect of compensation on teacher retention. Massachusetts confirmed that low compensation was related to low retention.

Current research provides directions on targeted quality improvement, but there is little specific guidance on how to modify or increase cost effectiveness in approaches to improve quality.

Structural Factors

Research concluded that there are three purposes to measuring quality in early childhood programs. First, the measurement of quality for the regulation of child care evaluates a program against mandatory standards. Similarly measuring quality for accreditation is a form of voluntary accountability to high standards. Both systems represent the application of summative evaluation of early childhood programs. Second, the evaluation of programs for quality improvement and development is formative in nature. In early childhood education, formative evaluation strategies typically take place as programs prepare for accreditation and monitoring visits. Finally, the measurement of

quality in early childhood programs takes place in empirical research (Lambert et al., 2006).

Many studies have focused on the link between process quality and structural factors of early childhood programs such as low adult/child ratio and small group size, higher ages, low staff turnover, and staff training. The National Child Care Staffing Study in 1988 gathered information on staffing and quality from samples of child care centers in five metropolitan areas (Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, Phoenix, and Seattle) and returned to the study sites in 1992 and 1997. In 1988, the study found that the quality in these centers was barely adequate. Better quality centers have higher wages, lower teaching staff turnover, better educated and trained staff, and more teachers caring for fewer children. In addition, the study found that centers with better quality operated on a non-profit basis, were accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and were located in states with higher quality standards (National Child Care Staffing Study, 1997).

Few studies had been devoted to the impact of state licensing standards on program quality. Ceglowski and Davis (2004) studied the changes in licensing legislation regarding lead teacher qualifications and structural factors in Minnesota and how such changes impact the quality of care. The study used information about licensing standards, structural indicators, and public policy changes that could increase challenges in raising quality of early childhood programs. Ceglowski and Davis (2004) aimed to describe recent changes in the Minnesota child care system and policies in order to assess the overall level of support for quality care in the state. Also, the authors compared policies and standards in the state of Minnesota to other states in order to assess ways in which

states support quality of early childhood programs. Findings of the study indicated that Minnesota's licensing requirements are similar to or better than other states. The state had a higher percentage of accredited programs than the national average, spent more than average on quality initiative, and met the recommended standards on inspection (Ceglowski & Davis, 2004). Still, with all these positive indicators, researchers found that there were other indicators that led to concern about quality of early childhood programs, such as "limited training requirements for family child care home providers, low rate of staff retention, low wages, large caseload per licensing staff, and low percentage of accredited child care centers and homes" (p. 353). The authors explain that the changes in legislation, the growing use of variances from licensing standards, and elimination of the accreditation bonus led to diminishing of the infrastructure that supports quality early childhood programs. Ceglowski and Davis (2004) recommended high licensing standards, as well as fully funded and staffed licensing agencies to ensure proper enforcement. Additionally, Ceglowski and Davis (2004) recommended increased support for accreditation. The need to link quality to accreditation standards, such as high salaries and more qualified staff, is highly recommended in this research.

Another quality study was conducted by Saluja et al. (2002). The purpose of this study was to fill the gap in current information regarding early childhood workforce and structural features of center-based early childhood programs. The other purpose was to assess practices, beliefs, and barriers to practice. The need for this study was due to the increasing number of children in child care, as 65% of mothers with children under the age of six are in the labor force. The study focused on comparing centers across sponsorship categories (program types: for-profit versus non-profit; within a for-profit

setting, independently operated or operated by a national or local chain; within a non-profit setting, affiliated with Head Start, a public school, a religious organization, or another type of non-profit such as YMCA) on the basis of structural features of quality as defined and identified by previous research and studies: teacher education, wages and turnover, and child-to-staff ratio. Other features of early childhood education include cultural representation of teachers of young children and the hours that these programs operate. The features vary among program types, but overall results indicated that the majority of teachers are women, 78% are white, and 50% of them earned a college degree.

In their study of child care programs and teacher practices in relation to quality and children's experiences, Wishard, Shivers, Howes, and Ritchie (2003) aimed to identify practices articulated by programs and teachers, to examine whether and how articulated practices vary by ethnicity, to examine associations between child care practices and child care quality, and to examine how both practices and quality influence children's experiences in child care.

LoCasale-Crouch, Konold, Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early, and Barbrian (2007) conducted a quality study of state funded preschool programs to address the question about federal and state efforts and investments in these types of programs to raise school readiness of children entering kindergarten. The study was based on the growing body of research indicating that child outcomes improve as a direct result of high quality experiences in early childhood education classrooms.

This study describes profiles of observed quality across 692 American classrooms in 11 states participating in the National Center for Early Development and Learning

Multi-State PreKindergarten and State Wide Early Education Program studies and examined associated teacher, program, and classroom characteristics. The study used empirical clustering procedures on this large sample of classrooms that is advantageous to detect classroom typology related factors that interfere with children's emotional and academic development. For this study of observed classroom process quality, the authors used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). "CLASS dimensions have been shown to significantly predict gains in children's achievement and social functioning in prekindergarten" (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2007, p.5).

The study findings conclude that association between teacher characteristics and program characteristics were generally not significant. However, the poorest quality profile of classroom was associated with classroom poverty level, suggesting that the children who need the highest quality educational experience have teachers who are struggling the most to provide it (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2007). This research studied teacher beliefs and practices by interviewing early childhood teachers and observing the classroom quality process to provide insights about internal and external factors that lead to understanding the issues that teachers struggle with daily.

<div align="center">Teacher Characteristics</div>

Studies have indicated that the education of early childhood teachers has affected the quality of their early childhood programs (Whitebook, Howe, & Phillips 1990; Cost Quality and outcomes Study Team, 1995; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Early Child Care Research Network, 1996). Spodek and Saracho (2007) presented an analysis of recent research studies on the relationship of teacher preparation to early childhood program quality. In selecting the studies, they used a set of

criteria that consisted of an implicit or explicit assumption of teacher preparation related to early childhood program outcomes; a publication of a scholarly, refereed document between 1989 and 2004; a presentation as a study; and a focus on the preschool period. The study generated results in three areas: professional development of the teachers, the importance of a bachelor's degree, and educational standards for early childhood education teachers (Spodek and Saracho, 2007). The study outcomes indicated that the quality of programs improved with better educated teachers. Thus, the early childhood education teachers' professional development was considered a critical component in the education of young children.

According to Lambert et al. (2006), more than 50% of the classrooms studied did not approach the standard of good, quality care. It was assumed that the results may be attributed to the fact that only 10% of those teachers who were serving low-income families had a two-year college degree. In contrast, 28% of those teachers who were serving low-income to moderate-income families and 62% of those who were serving moderate-income to high-income families had a higher education degree. McCarty, Lambert, & Abbot-Shim (1998) showed that Head Start teachers' beliefs and practices contributed to the quality of their classrooms. Teachers who had a higher educational level provided a high or moderate quality in their classrooms, more appropriate practices, better instructional activities, and positive response to families. These results supported the hypothesis that the teachers' educational level influenced their beliefs about instructional practices and that improved education can modify their beliefs in a developmentally appropriate way (Spodek and Saracho, 2007).

Other studies supported this assumption. Early childhood teachers with a higher educational level used easy-to-follow directions and innovative, high-level activities to motivate children (De Kruif, McWilliams, Ridley & Wakely, 2000). In addition, it was found that the children in these teachers' classrooms had better social, language, and cognitive abilities (Howes, 1997; Bowman et al., 2000; Dwyer, Nueman, & Koh, 2000).

Studies indicated that a bachelor's degree and specialized early childhood training affected the teachers' behavior and the quality of their early childhood program. Howes, Burchinal, Pianta, Bryant, & Early (2008) also found that a bachelor's degree was important. Teachers were more responsive to children and provided more activities that promoted language development and emergent literacy than did teachers without a bachelor's degree. Teachers who had a bachelor's degree and some additional specialized content in child development or early childhood education were found to perform better and were considered to be qualified teachers (Barnett, 2004).

Cassidy, Buell, Paugh-Hoese, & Russell (1995) conducted a study evaluating a professional development model that builds on the goal to improve qualifications of early childhood teachers and the link between qualifications to higher classroom quality. The study was supported by the National Day Care Study and National Child Care Staffing studies that found an impact from regulated features of quality such as ratio, group size, and teacher qualifications. Studies such as the National Day Care Study (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979) and Clarke-Stewart and Gruber (1984) reported a relationship between classroom quality and behaviors related to high quality; a much higher relationship between education specific to child development and high quality early childhood education (as cited in Cassidy et al., 1995, p.172).

The National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook, Howes, &Phillips, 1989)

and Berk (1985) supported the need for this model of professional development stating

that formal education, regardless of the field, was the best predictor of appropriate

caregiving and positive behavior in the classroom. Moreover, Snider and Fu (1990) found

strong correlations between teachers with a bachelor's degree in early childhood linked to

high quality infant and toddler programs (as cited in Cassidy et al., 1995, p.173).

The study by Cassidy et al. (1995) was a quantitative study that looked into the

implementation of the first year participation in TEACH. The study hypothesized the

overall improvement between pre-test and post-test on measures of teacher beliefs and

practices and overall classroom quality. The study examined the effect of community

college coursework on the beliefs and classroom practices of teachers in child care

centers. Thirty-four teachers participated. Nineteen of the teachers had received

scholarships to attend community college programs in child development and early

childhood education (treatment group), and 15 were used as comparison teachers.

Treatment included completion of at least 12-20 credit hours of community college

coursework.

Procedures used to collect data were classroom assessments, including classroom

observations and brief interviews with classroom teachers. The Early Childhood

Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) was used to assess classrooms of children ages three

to five years old. The classrooms with infants and toddlers were assessed with Infant-

Toddlers Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). In addition, two subscales of ECERS and

ITERS entitled appropriate caregiving (includes items related to adult-child interaction,

supervision, and guidance) and developmentally appropriate activity (includes items

related to materials, schedule, and activities) were analyzed separately. The subscales were developed by means of factor analysis in the National Child Care Staffing Study. These subscales were included because it was believed that these were the areas of ITERS and ECERS most likely to be affected by teacher education. Due to the small size of the sample, scores of ITERS and ECERS were combined for the participants and comparison group. (This is appropriate, as the two scales measure the same constructs of overall quality system with same 1-7 rating scale, and the subscales of the instruments have been found to be highly correlated.) Teachers completed two self-report questionnaires: the Teacher Beliefs Scale (TBS) and the Instrumental Activities Scale (IAS).

Results of this study revealed significant gains for quality of classroom (using ECERS and ITERS) and showed that teachers' beliefs after the treatment were more developmentally appropriate. According to authors, these study findings lend further support to the premise that improving teachers' educational qualifications is related to quality.

Cassidy et al. (1995) evaluated one-year participation by measuring classroom quality before and after participation in the scholarship program. The findings of this study supported the premise that improving teacher educational qualifications is related to improved knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and higher quality classrooms. The study is one of the first attempts at demonstrating a direct relationship between exposure to college level coursework and changes in beliefs and classroom behavior that utilized pre-test and post-test design. Still, not enough information exists

from this study or others about the relationship between improved working conditions and compensation level to improved quality practices in early childhood classrooms.

In 1997, the National Child Care Staffing Study supported Cassidy et al.'s work indicating that over the past decade many program models have emerged as promising ways to address the problems of child care quality and workforce stability. These initiatives are: the U.S Army Child Development Services Caregiver Personnel Pay Plan, the Head Start Expansion and Quality Improvement Act, and the TEACH Early Childhood Scholarship Project. The study findings report that approximately one-third of child care centers employ welfare recipients, sometimes at less than the prevailing wage and often with limited training. In 1997, the study found that more child care centers received public dollars than in 1988, allowing more of them to assist low-income families with child care costs. But because this increased public funding for child care was rarely targeted to quality improvements or increased compensation, these dollars have not resulted in better wages or lower staff turnover. Child care centers continue to experience very high turnover for teaching staff, threatening their ability to offer quality, consistent services to children (National Child care Staffing Study, 1997).

The educational requirements for early childhood education teachers have been a concern to those in the field. Children are at risk, since states and communities do not seem concerned with early childhood teachers' qualifications. Statistics indicate that fewer than 50% of lead teachers of three- and four-year-olds in early childhood programs have a four-year college degree (Saluja et al., 2002). There was a widespread discrepancy between the effects of qualified early childhood teachers and programs' policies and practices. The Head Start Act (1998) required that, as of September 2003, at least 50% of

its teachers would have at least a Child Development Associate credential, an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, or an advanced degree in early childhood education or an applied subject.

The United States has not established national standards or certification processes for teachers of young children (Bowman, et al., 2001). States' child care regulations have instituted marginal requirements for the education of their teachers. Most states require teachers to be at least 18 years of age, hold a driver's license, and have no criminal record. Early childhood teachers in the private sector do not need a college degree in early childhood education, and only 21 states require them to attend any pre-service training (Barnett, 2004). Educational requirements for state-funded preschool programs range from 24 credit hours to a master's degree. More than half of the states that provide state-funded preschool require teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (Barnett, 2004).

Research has suggested that better educated early childhood teachers have more knowledge and skills and are more likely to create stimulating learning activities that are appropriate to the learning needs of the children. Well-trained teachers have shown greater curriculum understanding and greater knowledge in implementing quality standards. However, little is known about how teachers define their role, evaluate their knowledge, and evaluate their classroom practices.

<div align="center">Teacher Beliefs and Practices</div>

A growing body of research has examined the relationship between epistemological beliefs and teaching. The understanding of teachers' belief systems about teaching and learning can be informative about the manner in which their practice is then

constructed. Arredondo and Rucinski (1996) concluded that teachers with more sophisticated and relativistic beliefs are more democratic, empathetic, innovative, and able to use more effective strategies. Brownlee (2001) found that pre-service teachers with native epistemological beliefs (dualistic) tended to have a simplistic view of classroom problems. Pre-service teachers with more sophisticated epistemological beliefs are more likely to see complexity in classroom problems and seek out alternative viewpoints before deciding on course of action.

The development of epistemological beliefs was first investigated by William Perry (1970). In research with university students, Perry found that, over time, progressively more complex and integrated ways of viewing the world developed as students progressed through their studies (as cited in Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006, p.18). The first position is *dualism*, where individuals view knowledge as simple, certain, and able to be transmitted by authorities. The second position is *multiplism*, where individuals acknowledge that as well as absolute truth, there are some things that cannot be known with any certainty. Therefore, personal opinions are acceptable until truth can be determined. The third position is *relativism*, which involves a belief that knowledge is actively and personally constructed and evaluated. Moore (2002) argue that more recently, the term conceptual relativist is preferred because it distinguishes more clearly between a view of relativism as anything goes and one that is based on evidence and therefore the best possible truth given the current evidence (as cited in Brownlee and Berthelsen, 2006, p.18). The final position, related to commitment, is when individuals hold beliefs in relativism, but particular beliefs are more valued than others and represent a commitment to such beliefs.

In 1986, Belenky, Clinchy, Traule, and Goldberger also investigated epistemological beliefs. They interviewed 135 women from academic and non-academic backgrounds and analyzed their responses to a number of open-ended questions designed to examine their thinking and development about moral, cognitive, and identity issues. From this research, Belenky et al. described a sequence of positions of epistemological development that closely aligned with the sequence described by Perry (1970). Positions include received (dualism), subjective (multiplism), procedural (relativism), and constructed (commitment) (as cited in Brownlee & Berthlesen, 2006).

In the 1990s, Baxter Magolda described epistemological development similarly to Perry and Belenky, et al. Once per year over a seven-year period, Magolda interviewed more than 100 college students who completed short answer responses to open-ended questions on a Measure of Epistemological Reflections (MER). He described ways of knowing on a continuum of development that differed by gender. Relational modes of knowing that are open, flexible, connected, and responsive are more typical of female ways of knowing. Magolda described the positions as absolute (dualism), transitional (multiplism), independent (relativism), and contextual (commitment). Furthermore, changes in epistemological beliefs are contextually bound, situated in the specific learning experiences that are afforded to the individual so that the roles of peers and the educator in the learning process, as well as the manner in which learning is evaluated, needs to be considered. Thus, epistemological beliefs are socially constructed, and the best method of epistemological inquiry is through naturalistic studies. This theory stands in contrast to earlier developmental theories that were more psychologically informed. Magolda assumes that the meaning that individuals derive from their experiences

depends partially on their epistemic assumptions, partially on the nature of dissonance that they experience when they encounter others with different assumptions, and partially in the context in which the dissonance occurs (as cited in Brownlee & Berthlesen, 2006, p.19).

Brownlee (2001) noted that individuals with relativistic beliefs were more able to conceive of teaching as facilitating rather than transmitting knowledge. Brownlee (2001) examined teachers' understanding of children's learning and how this knowledge influenced their teaching practices. Teachers who believed that the focus in their teaching should be on children's behavior rather than children's thinking saw learning as reproduction and teaching as transmission. Teachers who saw children as competent thinkers considered children's learning a process of interpretation and teaching as a constructivist endeavor. In relation to child development and classroom teaching, Brownlee (2001) proposed that children in constructivist child-centered environments have increased motivation, decreased stress, and increased problem-solving and language skills compared with children in a transmissive teaching environments (as cited in Brownlee & Berthlesen, 2006, p. 20).

<div align="center">Theory Relevant to Research Questions</div>

Epistemological Teacher Beliefs

Research has indicated that better-educated early childhood teachers have more knowledge and skills and are more likely to create richer learning activities that are appropriate to the learning needs of children. These teachers are also better equipped to solve problems when they encounter challenges in the classroom (Barnett, 2003). But the understanding of how the nature of the educational experience for early childhood

teachers mediates their actions in their professional work has not been studied, as the study of teachers' epistemological beliefs was conducted on teachers who teach older children (Brownlee and Berthelsen, 2006).

Brownlee and Berthelsen (2006) argue that students (who will become early childhood teachers) come into teacher education programs with a breadth and depth of knowledge about children and teaching that they have developed through experience and observation. If they view the teaching and learning of young children as common sense, they will experience difficulties when confronted with new theories and ideas that require conceptual change as learning outcome (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006). Teacher preparation programs need to help students to use deep approaches to learning because such approaches are expected to lead to learning and teaching outcomes in which new knowledge connects to pre-existing beliefs about teaching young children (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006). At the same time, this deep approach also involves questioning and critical evaluation that requires students to seek and understand what supportive evidence is available and to reflect on its meaning. This evidence-based approach to critical thinking is the basis of relativistic thinking. While epistemological beliefs exist as an influential personal presage factor, the teacher educator can influence deep learning through pedagogical and assessment strategies that lead to desired learning and teaching outcomes (Brownleee & Berthelsen, 2006).

The Brownlee and Berthelsen framework states that in order to enable early childhood teachers to become aware of, reflect on, and reconstruct their early childhood knowledge base and their epistemological beliefs, it can be demonstrated that "teaching is a situational presage factor which can impact learning processes and products where

connected teaching encourages a balance of both relational modes of knowing and impersonal modes" (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006, p. 24). Making connections between personal knowledge and beliefs and scientific knowledge encourages more sophisticated ways of knowing. This can be encouraged by providing early childhood teachers with training that embeds relational pedagogy that focuses on connecting personal and theoretical knowledge.

The current study adopted Brownlee and Berthelsens's framework for understanding the nature of learning in the context of early childhood teacher training. This model assumes that early childhood teachers (students) come to any learning situation with beliefs, abilities, knowledge, motivations, and personality traits that are part of the component of the model called "personal presage factors." These personal characteristics then interact with the "situational presage factors" to enable the individual to develop motivation to engage in a particular learning experience. The students use a learning strategy that should support this motive in order to achieve learning outcomes desired or required.

<div align="center">Summary and Transition to Chapter Three</div>

Many families, community members, and policy makers might think an early childhood program's quality is assured if state licensed, but licensing is not always an assurance of quality. Typically it means only the program is meeting the essentials to prevent injuries and harm to children. A strong research based definition of quality states that high quality early childhood programs positively support children's outcomes and development.

From a research point of view, there is a need to distinguish between structural and process quality from the perspective of what the child experiences. Classrooms include structural components such as adult/child ratio, group size, physical environment, learning materials, literacy materials, and other resources, which affect quality. These components are quantifiable variables that can be measured through state licensing regulations or accreditation standards. However, these variables interchangeably influence the quality process or the daily classroom experience. The process involves interactions and activities that take place in the classroom.

These variables and experiences will be considered high quality and developmentally appropriate when the ways in which children develop and learn are taken into account (Bredkamp & Copple, 1997). In order for this to happen, teachers play an essential role by understanding how these variables interchange and affect children's outcomes. No matter what dimensions of quality are being examined, one of the most crucial variables leading to high quality early childhood programs is the teacher. As presented in the section above, teacher education and training is a vital for early childhood program quality. Studies have shown that teachers' educational attainment relates positively to teachers' beliefs about appropriate classroom practices. This study examined teachers with different educational levels, employed in a licensed, nationally accredited early childhood program, regarding their beliefs about quality and the quality processes they practice in their classrooms.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

Child care programs, while differing in educational philosophies and purpose, generally intend to provide activities that the program believes will promote child development and achieve positive outcomes for children. Programs and teachers plan and implement strategies or practices that will help to achieve these goals. Within traditional theories, practices are defined as "ways of doing things" or ingrained habits rooted in beliefs, expectations, traditions, and relations.

The purpose of this research was to 1) identify teachers' epistemological beliefs about the definition of quality in early childhood programs; and 2) observe their actual practices in their classrooms using the framework identified by Brownlee and Berthelsen (2006). This study examined beliefs and practices and how these articulations are shaped by educational experiences.

In order to identify early childhood teachers' epistemological beliefs concerning the term "quality" in early childhood programs and to examine their practices in their classrooms, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What perspectives do early childhood teachers, with different educational backgrounds and varying years of experience, have on quality early childhood programs?

2. In what ways do early childhood teachers' perspectives on quality programs manifest themselves in classroom practice

Overview of Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, a case study approach, to examine the research questions stated above for each teacher. According to Langabach, Vaughn, and Agaard (1994), a case study is the in-depth study of a thing, an institution, a person, or any defined cultural group. In the current study, each teacher is a case under investigation. A case study is useful when the problem demands emphasis on the pattern of interpretation given by subjects and determining the particular pattern of factors significant in a given case (Foreman, 1984). With the goal of understanding the contextual nature of the formation of attitude by a particular group in a specific setting, the case study approach is compatible with the phenomenon under investigation.

<u>Data Collection</u>

For data collection, this study relied on multiple collection methods to facilitate the triangulation of data. Data collection included 1) a survey to obtain initial information and recruit participation in the study; 2) in-depth interviews of three teachers who are employed at the same program; and 3) observations of teachers using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) quality practices descriptors.

The first source of data was a teacher survey given to early childhood teachers employed in a nationally accredited early childhood program with multiple sites. The survey was distributed to all teachers employed at the program at all sites and was used to help recruit three teachers for interviews and observation. Teachers responded to

questions related to their educational background, content of training, years of experiences, and quality practices as defined by CLASS.

The second source of data was in-depth interviews. The selected three teachers were interviewed using in-depth, phenomenological-based interviewing techniques that inspired the interview questions for this study. The design of the early childhood teacher interviews reflected three features of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing (Seidman, 2006). Part one of the interviews put the participants' experiences in context by asking them to tell as much as possible related to the topic from the past up to the present time (Seidman, 2006). The focus was on the teachers' personal factors related to how they became a preschool teacher, how their beliefs of what it means to be a good teacher changed over time, an analysis of their own training, and a reflection on how that training has influenced their beliefs as a teacher and thus enhanced their practice. In part two of the interviews, which occurred after using CLASS to observe the classroom, questions were structured based on the concrete details of the participants' present experiences and daily practices as teachers. Questions were also driven by observed practices and answers to the survey questions. In this part, the main goal was to identify the details of their daily teaching and quality practices (Seidman, 2006) in order to define each participant's reflection on the definition of quality in early childhood education and how quality is perceived. The teachers analyzed their own program practices based on what is defined as quality by the current study and shared their own input as an essential factor in the quality process (Seidman, 2006).

The third data source was observation notes obtained from observing each teacher in the classroom using the CLASS (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). This tool is a

theoretically-based and empirically-supported observation instrument designed to assess the quality of interactions between teachers and students in the classroom. The CLASS measures three broad domains of teacher-student interactions: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. These three domains are comprised of 10 specific dimensions of teacher-student interactions: 1) positive climate; 2) negative climate; 3) teacher sensitivity; 4) regard for student perspectives; 5) behavior management, 6) productivity; 7) instructional learning formats; 8) concept development; 9) quality of feedback; and 10) language modeling. Observations started at the beginning of the day and continued in cycles for at least two hours. A minimum of four cycles were completed for each classroom.

<div align="center">Qualitative Procedures</div>

Procedures for the qualitative study of teachers' beliefs and practices of quality in their classroom were as follows:

1. Permission from the Institutional Review Board was secured on February 2011.

2. Study participants were recruited from one exemplary early childhood program in large metropolitan area with multiple sites to ensure sample representation. The program is a non-profit child care center, is nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and is rated at the highest level, Level 4, of the Indiana quality rating system, Paths to QUALITY. Description of the study was provided with risks and advantages to program administration and participating teachers in February 2011 (see Appendix A).

3. Teachers' surveys were collected in February and March 2011.

4. Teachers' interviews conducted from March to May 2011.

5. CLASS observations were conducted by researcher on April and May 2011.

6. Data was analyzed continuously.

<div align="center">Sample</div>

Participants in this study were recruited to reflect educational qualifications that are held by teachers in the field of early care and education. The sample included a teacher with a Child Development Associate (CDA), a teacher with an associate's degree in early childhood education, and a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Participants were asked to voluntarily participate in this study. Participants were recruited regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

<div align="center">Qualitative Measures</div>

This study is a qualitative study that sought to probe deeply into a research setting in order to obtain understanding about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them (Gay and Airasian, 2000).

One of the qualitative methods used to collect data was a teacher survey (Appendix C). The survey served as a recruitment tool to identify teachers with a high school diploma/GED or working towards a CDA, teachers with an associate's degree in early childhood education/child development, and teachers with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education/child development. The survey served as an introduction to interview questions and participants and provided summary and follow-up talking points for the interviews. The survey questions included demographic and personal information, such as educational status, numbers of years teaching, and involvement in professional development. Surveys also asked teachers to describe classroom practices as they relate

to the general areas on the CLASS instrument: emotional support, classroom

management, and instructional support (see Appendix D).

A second method used in the current study was interviewing. The purpose of

interviewing in qualitative studies is to gather descriptive information in participants'

own words that will help the researcher to understand how participants interpret terms

and concepts to be studied. The use of early childhood teachers' interviews in this study

provided insights into how they perceive and construct their beliefs about quality of early

childhood programs. In this study, the development of interview questions by the

researcher was guided by existing literature and research on quality and teacher beliefs.

Each participant was interviewed three times. The first interview covered personal

factors on how the teacher chose the early childhood profession, the teacher's

understanding of quality pre- and post-training, and the teacher's years of experience.

Questions were:

1) Why did you choose this profession?

2) Upon starting your career in early childhood education, what was your

    perception of what made a good early childhood teacher, and how has that

    perception changed?

3) Describe how your training has changed you as a teacher.

4) What do you think is more important: a degree or in-service training?

5) How has education or training changed your understanding of your role as an

    early childhood teacher?

The second interview addressed practices as defined and described by the current

study and CLASS. Questions were:

1) What is your definition of quality early childhood programs?

2) What is your program educational philosophy?

3) Describe your classroom emotional support.

4) Describe your classroom management.

5) What are your behavioral management techniques?

6) What are the instructional learning formats you use in your classroom?

7) What do you know about early childhood standards?

8) What do you know about the quality rating system (Paths to QUALITY)?

9) What do you know about accreditation?

The third interview helped to look more deeply into teachers' understanding of quality. Questions were based on the first two interviews to seek understanding of the teachers' definitions of quality. Questions considered beliefs about the profession itself. Questions were:

1) What do you think makes a teacher a good teacher?

2) How do you define quality in early childhood programs?

3) What do you think of the training provided? Does training add to your abilities as a teacher?

4) What content of training adds to the quality of your classroom?

5) What aspects of quality are implemented by you as a teacher? What barriers and challenges do you face in implementing quality?

6) What is the role of your program administration in delivering a quality program?

7) What do you think the early childhood profession is lacking that is essential to deliver a quality program and why?

8) What activities in your classroom indicate quality?

9) What do you know you should change in order to have high quality classroom?

10) What support do teachers need in general and you specifically?

The third method used to collect data in this study was observation of participants (early childhood teachers) in their own classrooms using CLASS (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). This current study adopted CLASS domains as definitions of quality practices. The CLASS was selected for this study because the tool is a system for observing and assessing the quality of interactions between teachers and students in classrooms. It measures instructional and social interactions, which are proven to be indicators of quality practices. The tool provides other aspects of quality that aren't assessed in-depth by the Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS). The ECERS evaluates physical environment, basic care, curriculum, interaction, schedule and program structure, and parent and staff education. The data from CLASS's three broad domains of teacher-student interactions (Pianta et al., 2008)—Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support—was compiled as follows:

Emotional Support

Positive Climate: Reflects the overall emotional tone of the classroom and the connection between teachers and students. Practices to be observed to assess positive climate are: relationships, positive effect, positive communication, and respect.

Negative Climate: Reflects overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom between teachers and students (e.g., anger, aggression, irritability). Practices to be observed to assess negative climate are: negative effect, punitive control, sarcasm/disrespect, and severe negativity.

Teacher Sensitivity: Encompasses teachers' responsiveness to students' needs and awareness of students' levels of academic and emotional functioning. Practices to be observed to assess teacher sensitivity are: awareness, responsiveness, student comfort, and teacher effectiveness at addressing problems.

Regard for Student Perspectives: The degree to which the teacher's interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view, rather than being solely teacher-driven. Practices to be observed to assess this domain are: flexibility and student focus, support for autonomy and leadership, student expression, and restriction of movement.

Classroom Management

Behavior Management: Encompasses teachers' ability to use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior, including presenting clear behavioral expectations and minimizing time spent on behavioral issues. Practices to be observed to assess this domain are: clear behavior expectation, proactive guidance, redirection of misbehavior, and student behavior.

Productivity: Considers how well teachers manage instructional time and routines so that students have the greatest number of opportunities to learn. Practices to be observed to assess this domain are: maximizing learning time, routines, and preparation.

Instructional Learning Formats: The degree to which teachers maximize students'

engagement and ability to learn by providing interesting activities, instruction, centers,

and materials. Practices to be observed to assess this domain are: effective facilitation,

variety of modalities and materials, student interest, and clarity of learning objectives.

Instructional Support

Concept Development: The degree to which instructional discussions and activities

promote students' higher-order thinking skills versus focusing on rote and fact-based

learning. Practices to be observed to assess this domain are: analysis and reasoning,

creating, integration, and connection to the real world.

Quality of Feedback: Considers teachers' provision of feedback focused on expanding

learning and understanding (formative evaluation), not correctness or the end product

(summative evaluation). Practices to be observed to assess this domain are: scaffolding,

feedback loops, promoting thought processes, providing information, and encouragement

and affirmation.

Language Modeling: The quality and amount of teachers' use of language-stimulation

and language-facilitation techniques during individual, small-group, and large-group

interactions with children. Practices to be observed to assess language modeling are:

frequent conversation, open-ended questions, repetition and extension, both self and

parallel talk, and advanced language. (Pianta et al., 2008). [See Appendix C: CLASS

Overview Chart]

Data Analysis

This study used cross-case analysis to describe three early childhood teachers'

beliefs and practices regarding quality of early childhood education programs. Cross-case

analysis is a research method that can mobilize knowledge from individual case studies. The mobilization of case knowledge occurs when researchers accumulate case knowledge, compare and contrast cases, and in doing so, produce new knowledge (Khan &VanWynsberge, 2008). The cross-case search for patterns keeps investigators from reaching premature conclusions by requiring that investigators look at the data in many different ways. Cross-case analysis divides the data by type across all cases investigated. One researcher then examines the data of that type thoroughly. When a pattern from one data type is corroborated by the evidence from another, the finding is stronger. When evidence conflicts, deeper probing of the differences is necessary to identify the cause or source of conflict. In all cases, the researcher treats the evidence fairly to produce analytic conclusions answering the original "how" and "why" research questions (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993).

Data were collected through teacher surveys, audio-taping the three teacher interviews, and using CLASS as an observational tool after the first interview. For this study, a bottom-up analysis was applied to transcripts and observed quality practices to look for similarities and differences in teacher's beliefs about quality and practices. Audiotape transcripts from teacher's interviews were reviewed to identify categories for teacher statements about quality. Similarly, the classroom observations were reviewed to identify dimensions that might point to similar or different approaches and practices. Data related to each teacher was examined as a single case study. Each teacher's data was analyzed in order to understand her own personal factors and situation.

The teacher survey, interviews, and CLASS observations provided a breadth and richness of qualitative data through which to analyze teachers beliefs regarding quality

early childhood programs and how they embed these practices in their classrooms. All data was transcribed and scrutinized for potential categories, dimensions, or patterns of responses, and qualitative assertions were formulated. Using a constant comparative method of data analysis, a separation of data into discrete concepts which could be systematically categorized was employed in order that theoretical constructs could emerge explaining the phenomenon under study (Glaser and Stratuss, 1967). Teacher surveys were collected in the first phase of the study, with an initial first interview following in two weeks.

As a result of methodologies described in previous chapters, three cases formed the basis of this research. Each case is presented separately to reflect personal factors in pursuing a career in the early childhood profession, beliefs on quality terms and definitions, reflection on in-services and (ongoing) training and formal (credit based) training, perception about the teacher's own role in quality, defining quality practices, and description of how quality practices are implemented in the teacher's own classroom.

Yin (1994) suggests that appropriate causal links can be analyzed within complex case studies using modes of analysis such as pattern matching, non-equivalent dependent variables as patterns, rival explanation as patterns, and simpler patterns. In this study, analysis of data was carried out by continually reading, rereading, questioning, and thinking deeply. Statements were taken from the transcribed interviews and analyzed by listing each teacher's statements or phrases, and assigning a code to what was said. This process was also used for information gained from observations and the teacher survey for each case. Glaser & Stratuss (1967) method of constant comparison of incidents started to generate theoretical properties of the category. Then each case was analyzed for

truths not only in regard to research questions, but also to what was unexpected, new or extraordinary. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), these truths are not universal truths, but truths as they pertain to each teacher. Analysis occurred by testing what appeared to be truth gained from analysis of interviews, teacher survey, and observation of each case. Analysis also included coding themes and patterns emerging from data and then checking those patterns against the data and propositions (Seidman, 2006). Using this method of constant comparison enables the process of reflection by the researcher to compare incidents to properties and to make theoretical sense of each case comparison.

Watt (2007) stated that reflexivity is mostly essential in this type of research; testing ideas, questioning participants, and examined the emerging ideas of truths and themes against the transcribed statements were crucial. As the data were reduced to what Stake (1995) called assertions, there was a need for testing and validating these assertions from which subsequent propositions could be made.

For this study, data triangulation was included, which meant to confirm data validity by obtaining data from second or third methodological sources (Stake, 1995). This was done with each case by comparing interview transcriptions, observation notes, and teacher surveys. This process clarified what was said and what was meant by each case and what was observed with each teacher.

Data collection concluded when the participants began to repeat what they had shared previously, and analysis of data concluded when no new assertions could be made from the data. From the analysis and interpretation, a narrative was constructed and written in such a way that the reader has a sense of indisputability (Miles, 1979) regarding the outcome of the inquiry.

In this study, the qualitative case study was a particularly suitable methodology for dealing with critical problems of early childhood teachers' quality beliefs and practices (Merriam, 1988). This study sought understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices by gathering a descriptive data in the teachers' own words and actions that helped to develop insights on how teachers interpret the terms "quality" and "practice" in their classroom. Use of three data sources affords the potential of unveiling in-depth understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices.

CHAPTER IV:
PRESENTING EACH TEACHER'S CASE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine early childhood teachers' perspectives on quality and how they embed those perspectives in their daily classroom practices. Additionally, this study sought to examine teachers' personal factors in choosing the field of early childhood teaching, as well as the educational backgrounds and training opportunities that shaped teacher beliefs and practices.

Research Questions

The following questions were examined:

1. What perspectives do early childhood teachers, with different educational backgrounds and varying years of experience have on quality early childhood programs?

2. In what ways do early childhood teachers' perspectives on quality programs manifest themselves in classroom practice?

Participants

Subjects in the study included three early childhood teachers who were recruited from an exemplary early childhood program with multiple licensed and accredited sites. A teacher survey was distributed to all program (all sites) teachers. A total of 120 surveys

were sent with return rate of 60%. Of the returned surveys, 45% were completed by teachers who have CDA and are working towards an associate's degree in early childhood education, 45% completed by teachers with a bachelor's degree in early childhood or a related field, and 10% completed by teachers who hold an associate's degree in early childhood.

Considered a limitation for the current study; only one teacher volunteered in each category. For teachers with high school level education or working towards a CDA, only one teacher volunteered. Of the teachers with an associate's degree in early childhood education or child development, only one teacher volunteered. Of the teachers with a bachelor's degree, four teachers volunteered, but when contacted three declined participation.

By selecting teachers with different educational backgrounds, the study sought to examine differences and similarities in beliefs about quality from a teacher with CDA, a teacher with an associate's degree in early childhood education, and a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Each teacher identified herself as female. Two teachers identified themselves as White European and one teacher identified herself as Latino. The study also examined differences and similarities in teacher's beliefs based on years working in early childhood programs. Teachers had various years of experience working in early childhood settings. Two of the teachers' experience was categorized from 6 to 13 years in early childhood, and one had 18 years of experience.

Table 1. Teacher survey Results: Participants' Demographic Summary

Education Level	Gender	Ethnicity
CDA	Female	Latino
Associate's Degree	Female	White European
Bachelor's Degree	Female	White European

Table 2. Teacher Survey Results: Participants Training and Experience

Education Level	Years of Experience	Age Group Taught	Years at Program	Number of Workshops per Year
CDA	13	2, 3	2	6-10
Associate's Degree	18	3, 4, 5	6.5	11-15
Bachelor's Degree	6	3, 4, 5	2	6-10

Case One: Ms. Molly

"I didn't choose this career—this career has chosen me. I didn't know what to do

after high school. My mother advised me to take some classes in high school that

prepared me to understand a little bit what is child care is about."

This was how Ms. Molly started telling me how she found her way to early

childhood programs and describing her ethnicity as Latino, and her age as late twenties.

She enrolled in early childhood courses in high school (vocational high school) that

introduced child care to her and led to a Child Care Provider Certificate. Courses were

completed within two years. Ms. Molly explained that the program *"was like an adult*

education program where people can get their GED and complete high school."

She goes on to tell me how she always loved to be with children, and she thought

her mother advised to take child care courses in high school based on her desire to care

for children. Ms. Molly thought her love to work with children would lead her to a social

work career; her love was driven by her own childhood memories. She remembered when

she was a little girl going through foster care and how her social worker was her

advocate. During the interview, Ms. Molly shared that her childhood was not easy and

that she struggled with disabilities herself. She wanted to be like her advocate and make a

difference in young children's lives.

"When I was young, my family was dysfunctional and we had a lot of social

services. So I always liked how I was treated by my case worker and social worker and

how they advocated on my behalf. I had an advocate who stood up for me, and I wanted

to be like her."

After finishing the certificate, Ms. Molly thought her love of children would take her to elementary education and elementary schools where she could teach young grades. However, her sister and sister's husband needed someone to take care of their two young children while they were working, so Ms. Molly moved in with them and was her nephew and niece's nanny for nine years.

When Ms. Molly got married and started her own family, she started to look for *"a real job."* She worked at her first child care job for few months as a floater where she learned about the Child Development Associate (CDA) and eventually enrolled at the local community college. The child care center she worked at was a for-profit center and she was not pleased with the working conditions there, so before finishing her CDA and getting her own classroom, she quit working at the for-profit center and obtained a job at a faith-based (registered ministry) child care center. She also had to quit that job very soon, as that center was nothing she expected. She explains that *"I had to be responsible for a large number of children. The ratio was not right at all. Without help, I felt overwhelmed."* She then found her current job, where she had been working for two years as a co-teacher at the time of the interview and was able to complete her CDA credential.

"Finding different ways of doing things is my challenge in how to enhance my skills. I feel like I am doing the same things over with children, and I need to be creative and not be afraid to ask. I need updated training about new stuff. CDA helps but isn't enough."

In the first interview, Ms. Molly explained her thoughts and beliefs about the training and educational experience that prepared her as a teacher. Her first educational

and learning experience in early childhood was through the vocational school early childhood classes. In these classes, she learned how to develop lesson plans and how to interact with young children. She shared that the program allowed for hands-on experience, practicum on a high school level, CPR training, and safety/health training. She remembers working together as high school peers to develop and implement lesson plans *"We had opportunities to discuss together our lesson plans, and after we implemented them we discussed them again."*

As a vocational high school program, Ms. Molly's training was more directed to administrative information, learning about rules in health and safety, training on new ways to interact with children, and learning how to take indoor activities outdoors and bring outdoor activities indoors.

She shares the benefit of CDA training by explaining: *"I was afraid of families— worried about negative comments from parents about me. Training helped me to communicate better and to understand how to separate my own biases and respect their own. I understood there is no right way when interacting with families, but that the key is respect."* Even though these courses were helpful, she adds, the CDA classes (four classes equal to 12 credit hours) at the community college can be improved and were often repetitive. She stated that CDA training and classes helped her to be more organized, taught her to search websites to help families with resources, and taught her to use resources for classroom projects and to do lesson plans.

Ms. Molly believes that in-service training is *"important to build creativity and things that can't be done by college training. While a degree will give knowledge about other things, it isn't important if we don't know how to apply the training. I need a*

training to do my job and teaching in the classroom.” In the second interview, we visited

these thoughts again, and she clarified that there is no difference between in-service

training and a credential or degree training at the college level. Furthermore, she thinks

in-service workshops are deeper, more interactive, and that she learns better in those

settings. Then, I asked her if she thinks a degree or credential attainment is not important

for an early childhood teacher. She replied, *“A degree and credentials make you proud. It*

makes you feel you have accomplished a goal in your life. When I obtained my CDA from

a college, I was very proud because I was the first in my family to go to a college

setting.”

Ms. Molly thinks the early childhood teacher should have the experience of

working with children and families and how to socially interact with children and

families. The teacher needs to be an educator, needs to know what she is getting herself

into, and needs to have the passion to work with young children. She also indicated that

the teacher should have knowledge about what to do in the classroom *“When I was an*

assistant teacher I had no idea what the lead teacher was doing. And believe me isn’t

only watching children all day—we don’t sit around.” She believes that over the years,

early childhood teachers have been getting better, learning more (by going to training and

obtaining a CDA), and doing more (actively involved in classroom). She continues by

saying *“Our job is not an easy job, but hugs and smiles make it worthy. When we look at*

their faces and see they are learning something new…”

In the third interview, we visited her role and the role of early childhood teacher

again. She thinks that to be a teacher for infants to five-year-old children, a person should

have patience to tolerate children’s behaviors and backgrounds, should be loving, and

should be knowledgeable. She believes that experience and passion makes what we know of a well-rounded teacher. She perceives a good teacher as one who knows the children's needs *"I try to know my classroom children's needs. By observing them during activities and routines, by getting the family involved, by maintaining verbal or written communication to respond to their concerns and questions, by greeting them when they drop off and pick up children, and by conversing with them."*

Ms. Molly believes her program's educational philosophy is a good example of characteristics of quality early childhood programs: *"Children learn through play."* She explains that they observe children daily, then develop lesson plans that are based on individual educational needs. She thinks this is a respect thing and that respect to the individual person is a defining element of a quality program. It is important to put children first no matter what they are interested in. She shares that her program and her classroom are implementing the *"Reggio Emilia approach."* When I asked her to explain more, she answered *"I am sorry but I am just learning that."* (None of the activities observed in her classroom indicated implementation of the Reggio Emilia approach).

She thinks another element of quality programs is strong leadership. When the center director gives staff feedback based on observation, she shared that *"We always get feedback, not necessarily a positive feedback."* Quality programs, according to her, invest in teacher training and education, which her program does. On the other hand, it is necessary to be responsive to teachers' needs for the supplies and materials that they will need to implement lesson plans. *"I am not very creative. I try to implement a lot of art activities because children like art. I like to implement new things to be creative. My challenge is how to enhance my skills to create lesson plans. I feel like I am doing the*

same things over and over with the children. I need to be creative and not be afraid to

ask people (other center staff) to help me."

When I asked her in the second interview of challenges facing her in

implementing quality in the classroom, she said she thinks her lack of creativity is an

obstacle to implementing a quality classroom. She thinks that she is not organized enough

to keep up with paper work, observing children, and trying to incorporate her

observations in her lesson plans. She feels quality programs should allow time for paper

work, not only during nap time, but have staff available to cover for her when she needs

to work on planning and paper work.

She personally feels she has all the support she needs to produce quality activities,

and she thinks that her program is adequately compensating her for what she does—that's

why they do not provide extra planning time. I asked her about the program's level of

quality rating system and accreditation, and she thinks both require a lot of paper work.

They involve a list of things to do and follow, and she worries about having all this work

done to prepare for when she will be observed. *"Frankly, I don't know much about these*

two things we are doing…."

Emotional Support

When Ms. Molly answered the teacher survey question about positive climate

practices in her classroom, she described positive climate as, "*The emotional tone of the*

classroom is loving and understanding towards each child."

During classroom (two and three years old children) observation, Ms. Molly's

positive climate practices were characterized by maintaining physical proximity to

children, often leaning forward, sitting on the floor, bending down to talk to children, and

crouching down to their levels. She played ball with them, standing on her knees so she could be at their level while throwing the ball to them. Children were sitting around her on mats and appeared interested in spending time with each other and comfortable with close proximity to one another. Two children stood on the sensory table laughing and sharing materials.

It was evident that Ms. Molly's cheerful and engaging mood had a positive effect on her students. The children showed excitement and enthusiasm for playing on the sensory table, with Ms. Molly sitting on her knees playing with them. When Ms. Molly provided verbal support, saying *"I like how you play with Easter egg*s," a child turned, smiling, and gave her a hug. Positive affect was returned and accepted. Ms. Molly showed interest in what children were saying and engaged in social conversation with them.

Positive affect. Ms. Molly smiled and laughed with children at multiple occasions, such as when they acted out the book they were reading with her.

Positive Communication. Ms. Molly freely responded to children's efforts with positive comments such as *"Thank you for throwing your plate in the trash…you are very helpful."* Ms. Molly demonstrated physical affection by patting Christopher on the head and smiling at John while touching him on the head.

Respect. Ms. Molly's voice was warm and calm; she encouraged children to respect each other. When Christopher grabbed a book from David and said *"This is mine,"* she encouraged Christopher to ask David if they could read the book together. When asked about negative climate practices in her classroom, Ms. Molly's response was, *"We don't encourage a negative climate; we teach and encourage positive*

reinforcement among the children in our care." During observation, there were no negative climate practices embedded in Ms. Molly's classroom.

<u>Classroom Management</u>

Ms. Molly's response to the teacher survey question regarding behavior management practices in her classroom was, *"Just redirect."* When observed in classroom, Ms. Molly's behavior management practices were as follows:

Clear Behavior expectations. Ms. Molly did not often explicitly state behavioral expectations for activities, for children's play at the sensory table, or during book reading. The only occasion when this occurred was when one child climbed a shelf, she noticed, reminded him to get down, and said, *"We don't climb shelves. Feet on the ground only."* In general, children appeared to understand the classroom rules as they transitioned from circle time to snack table, washing hands, and then to free centers time.

Proactive. Ms. Molly appeared to anticipate possible problems. As she noticed one child pulling a book away from another and saying *"Mine,"* she said, *"Christopher has been reading this book. Why don't you find another book about sharks? We have two others."*

Redirection of Misbehavior. Ms. Molly paid attention to positive behavior and gave positive comments such as *"Thank you for taking your plate to the trash"*, *"I like how all of you are sitting nicely in your chairs and eating your snack"*, *"Good job, Ann, using your words to ask for more"*, and *"Thank you all for cleaning up."*

Student Behavior. Children were complying with Ms. Molly's redirections, and there were no displays of aggression or defiance.

During observation, Ms. Molly practices concerning productivity were:

Maximizing Learning Time. Ms. Molly did not provide children with multiple activity choices; rather, she sat with them on the floor reading a book and kept reading the book several times. Children moved around as she repeated the book. At first, the sensory table was closed, and she did not open it until she saw that the children were starting to get tired and started banging on the top of the table. She provided them with balls to play with, but she kept the whole group with her, even though John did not want to play with balls. She kept redirecting him to balls. There were plenty of activity centers, but they were not available for children to use, and children did not try to explore by themselves. They played only with what she offered, and a lot of them were wandering around. Children stopped the activity literally when she moved away from them, and she reminded them what to do again and again. During observation, ten minutes of teacher-child interaction were lost when the assistant teacher came into the room and started chatting with Ms. Molly about weather, and who (staff) was working at the center that day.

Routines. The children appeared to know what to do as Ms. Molly placed their bagels and juice on the table for them. As they finished eating, they put their plates in the trash and helped clean up. There was a lot of wandering observed, and Ms. Molly and her assistant kept engaging in their own conversations when children needed attention; a child started crying when another one pulled a ball away from him, and there was no response from Ms. Molly or her assistant.

Transition. After they finished their snack, children took their plates to the trash and helped clean up. As Ms. Molly finished cleaning up, they were wandering around not approaching any center.

Preparation. The classroom was well-furnished with a variety of materials. Ms. Molly did not encourage children to use different choices. She opened the sensory tables after two children start banging on the top of the table. Materials on other centers were not accessible and ready for children. She took balls out of storage and asked all children to join her.

In her response to the teacher survey question regarding instructional learning format, Ms. Molly wrote, *"Learning environment happens by creating an environment that allows children to move freely from one center to another. Also, we base our lessons off of children's developmental needs."* But during observation there were no instructional format practices such as effective facilitation, variety of modalities and materials, student interest, or clarity learning objectives observed.

Instructional Support

In her response to the teacher survey, Ms. Molly described concept development practices in her classroom: *"I don't think children at this age are able to develop concepts.*"

Analysis and Reasoning. There were no attempts to develop children's understanding of ideas and concepts observed. There were no instructional opportunities observed. One occasion for a teachable moment on capitalization was not utilized. When she was reading a book about sharks, children were not asked questions or given opportunities to ask questions. One child pointed to a picture, but Ms. Molly did not recognize his need to comment, so there was a missed opportunity for reasoning and questioning.

Creativity. No opportunities for planning or producing meaningful products were observed. When children insisted on using the sensory table, there were not enough materials or enough variety of materials to be used creatively; only scrap papers and few Easter eggs.

Integration. Ms. Molly did not remind children of real life concepts such as shapes when they were playing with Easter eggs on the sensory table.

In response to the teacher survey question asking about quality of feedback, Ms. Molly wrote, *"Children praised for all efforts."* During observation, no practices related to the feedback domain were observed; i.e., scaffolding, feedback loops, etc.

In response to the teacher survey question about language modeling in her classroom, Ms. Molly wrote *"We ask the children open-ended questions throughout the day and throughout the activities, and we encourage children to use positive language in the classroom."* During observation, none of the language modeling domain practices were observed; i.e., frequent questioning, repetition, or extension.

Case Two: Ms. Louisa

"I got married so young. I got married at 17. I was planning to study accounting

at IUPUI, but all plans changed as I start having children. When my children

were young I couldn't work out of the home because it was very expensive to put

my children in child care and find job myself that would cover the cost for child

care. But my family needed extra income. At that time, my husband was working

on a military base. So I decided to have my own family child care home."

Ms. Louisa had been an early childhood educator for over eighteen years, with an

associate's degree in early childhood education. Two semesters ago she started her

bachelor's degree. She describes her ethnicity as White European. She had been with her

current early childhood program for over six years. Prior to her work in this accredited

center, she worked in different programs. When her children were young, she couldn't

work out of the home, as it was expensive to work and have her children in child care.

She knew she would not be able to find a job that would cover the cost for child care, but

her family needed an extra income. At that time, her husband was working on military

bases. She and her husband decided she would open her own family child care home

(FCCH). Ms. Louisa knew that to open a home on the base, she would have to follow

certain guidelines regarding the setting, such as house size, group size, ratio, and

nutrition. She contacted the base Child Care Programs Office. She got help from the base

personnel to set up the FCCH. Guidelines within the base's child care programs required

that she should have to undergo Basic Orientation to complete safety, health, and CPR

training modules. In addition, she had to complete a Child Abuse Prevention training

module prior to operating her FCCH. The base provided her training on business

operation as well. To stay open as a FCCH on the base, she had to annually complete 24 training hours on safety, health, age appropriate guidance, parent and family relationships, and family development and environments. Her FCCH was inspected regularly by the base personnel to ensure ratio and group size guidelines were followed.

When Ms. Louisa's children grew up and started going to school, she started working in the base child care centers. As her husband transferred from one station to another, she was able to obtain a teaching position at one of the child care centers at each base. In order to do this, there was a huge shift in training requirements by the Office of Child Care Programs for the base child care centers. Within the first six month of employment, she had to complete 36 training hours on child development, age appropriate activities and discipline techniques, CPR and emergency medical procedures, regulations, nutrition and meal services, and child abuse and neglect prevention.

All centers that Ms. Louis worked at on the different bases were accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She completed her Navy Child Care Provider Training Modules. Ms. Louisa describes her training modules as *"Just like the CDA, where I was observed after each module by the curriculum specialist."*

The curriculum specialist served as training coordinator to the base child care centers. To keep her position as classroom assistant teacher, Ms. Louisa had to complete these training modules and be credentialed as a Navy Child Care Provider.

When Ms. Louisa's family moved to Indianapolis, she applied for work at her current early childhood program and has been working there since. She started as an assistant teacher, and within nine months of being hired moved up to a lead teacher

position. At this time, she enrolled for her associate's degree at the local community college.

> *"I came to find why we are doing child care the way we are doing it: Not only because we have to follow the licensing guidelines or follow center requirements. I discovered we are doing it because it is research-based and it is the best for children. I learned why we are doing play-based and inclusion and all."*

Ms. Louisa believes that education enabled her to see the importance of theories that guide her classroom practices and empowered her to support classroom activities with the reasoning behind why the activities are useful. She believes that while college education and her associate's degree courses gave her the specific application of theory and the in-service training, the ongoing workshops she attends for professional development give her the ability to tailor theory to meet the needs of young children in her classroom. She indicated that while degree courses give the theoretical rationale and knowledge of different theories and approaches, informal professional development allows for child-specific application in classroom.

Ms. Louisa believes that both her associate's degree courses and the informal workshops she has attended have helped her *"Give up ownership of classroom"* and start having children lead, giving them a choice to apply themselves more. She also said that she learned to give up worksheets and indicated that even if other teachers in her center are still using worksheets, her education and training helped understand how to change her peers' practices and think of children as facilitators of learning.

> *"I wish I had known more in the past. Yes, when I was a FCCH provider I was able to create lesson plans, but now I know early childhood education isn't*

babysitting. I evaluate my experience as a FCCH provider and being school

teacher. In the classroom I am doing more curriculums and I have curriculum

training that helps me to do my job. Yes, I had materials and supplies before, but I

didn't utilize them from a curriculum point of view. In FCCH, curriculum training

was missing. The training was more about following health/safety/nutrition

guidelines to stay licensed. When I started working in base child care centers, at

the Navy bases, I started to learn about curriculum and how to use it in my

classroom. We used a lot of the project approach."

Ms. Louisa thinks that all early childhood teachers, even FCCH providers, need to

know more about curriculum and incorporate children's needs in their setting. She shared

that after 18 years of working in different early childhood program settings, she is sure

"our" role is not merely babysitting. She feels that the role of center director is more

effective than a FCCH provider who is busy ensuring safety and health standards are met,

usually without assistance from another adult, which leaves little time for planning

activities and observing children. She said, *"I think if I was still a FCCH I wouldn't get*

more than a CDA."

Ms. Louisa indicated that it is a common misconception that the early childhood

teacher is a babysitter and that early childhood teachers need to be perceived as

professionals. But she believes that in order to achieve professional status, early

childhood teachers will have to take the necessary action to get educated. She shared that

she has some co-workers who are there just for pay checks, but teachers overall deserve

respect from parents and an understanding that they are contributing to the education of

their children. She also believes that early childhood teachers are increasingly seeking

education and obtaining degrees, which helps gain respect for the field. She stated that she tries to teach parents about her role by sharing what she is doing with their children and by sending home projects, pictures, and newsletters. She has her biography posted in the classroom, highlighting her education, her experience, and her philosophy of teaching young children. But she indicated she does not know whether or not parents read it.

During the second interview, I asked Ms. Louisa to describe quality early childhood programs. She believes that a quality early childhood program should be a welcoming environment to families and children. Teachers should know how children learn and use that to guide curriculum. Ms. Louisa clarified that instruction in early childhood classrooms should not be like the current kindergarten or first grade classrooms, but it should build on knowledge of what we know these children need to be successful in kindergarten and up.

According to Ms. Louisa, one early childhood quality component lies within the teacher planning activities that respect children's choices, respect their family backgrounds, encourage families to become part of the learning process, promotes activities that are driven by children's interests, and provides opportunities to accommodate different learners. Ms. Louisa sees a changing role for the teacher through embedding quality programs. One example of an approach she thinks is changing the role of teacher is the Reggio Emilia approach. This approach helped her understand that the real quality early childhood education occurs when both teacher and children learn together, which is opposite of the traditional approach where teachers struggle with planning. Personally, she thinks that Reggio Emilia helps her to plan based on children's

interests. She adds that the project approach has also helped her figure out how to plan around children's interests.

Ms. Louisa perceives her role in quality as a learner with the children rather than just handing the children information, *"We gather information together, and then I do not do everything by myself. Children in the classroom are free to use materials, and together we plan what we are going to do and talk about. It is a project approach."*

Ms. Louisa went further and explained that a quality program's philosophy should be building to give the kids what they need as individuals and to reflect understanding of how the children learn. She shares that her program philosophy adheres to that concept, but it takes the extra step and adopts the NAEYC philosophy. *"I read an NAEYC position paper that indicates families are welcoming in early childhood programs and teachers should know that kids are not necessarily the product of the same cookies cutter and it will be boring of we think so. But I think my program philosophy supports all the things I described as components of quality."*

Ms. Louisa perceives her program accreditation as a higher step to ensure that the program is implementing its mission and philosophy, which is driven by NAEYC principles such as Developmentally Appropriate Practices. She explained that when her program enrolled in the Paths to QUALITY (PTQ) rating system, it was *"a piece of cake"* compared to all the work the program has done to meet NAEYC accreditation. She believes both accreditation and PTQ will give parents assurance they are making the right choice by selecting an accredited program and a Level 4 PTQ. *"Parents will know program is beyond just being licensed, they will know that staff have knowledge of the*

curriculum they use, and are trained. Also, parents will be sure that kids are attending the program to learn and to have a good quality experience, not just to be babysat."

Ms. Louisa went on to say that while a program can plan and design steps to accreditation and enrollment in a rating system, it is the actions of the teachers that are vital in ensuring quality. When a program is accredited, they will make it known by hanging a banner or putting a statement in the program's handbook, but parents will be aware of this from their interactions with the teacher. It will be evident whether or not the teacher is knowledgeable and is required to observe what is in the handbook.

Another challenge that Ms. Louisa shared during the interview is *"Respect from parents*." She believes that parents are not aware of the educational experiences she is providing for their children and that they view her as someone who takes care of their child while they go to work and may be just a babysitter. She wondered if that image had been created by the low pay of early childhood teachers. She whispered that she wonders if some of the parents have considered that with such low wages, few students want to go to school for early childhood education and become educated enough to educate kids.

Ms. Louisa perceives that the role of program administration is essential for a teacher to be able to have a classroom with high quality. When I asked her to elaborate, she explained: By backing up the teacher when there is an issue with parent. *"It does happen all the time, because of lack of respect from parents."* She added that material provision is also important. Since she implements activities based on children's interests, she does not have a month ahead of time to inform the office of what she needs, so it is important for materials to be provided in a timely manner. When classroom activities and themes are children-driven, the materials needed the following week are indicated by

what kids like as a product of the previous week. All of the planning in her classroom is based on observing children and following their lead and interest.

Ms. Louisa shared that *"We can go almost all day and not see admin, even to say hello. They do not come to the classroom."* She explained that they use the annual performance evaluation to discuss classroom weakness, and she wonders how they know what the strengths or weaknesses are if they don't visit or observe her classroom.

She continued to explain the lack of support to teachers in her role in delivering quality early childhood programs by stating that it is the whole profession's problem. The need to motivate teachers does not only lie in monetary support. Teachers also need emotional support, extra help when needed, strong teacher and parent relationships, appreciation, and recognition, along with reasonable compensation and benefits. It is also important that teachers are matched with a co-teacher who has the same beliefs and philosophy. She also believes more respect for her field could be gained by hiring early childhood teachers who have experience and are willing to pursue training or education. Ms. Louisa believes that both support for education and on-going training is vital for a teacher's role in quality of early childhood programs. The importance of formal education and degree attainment gives teachers understanding of the reason why we do things the way we do in early childhood classrooms *"College courses help me understand why I need to obtain that specific training."* She believes that while a degree provides the theoretical knowledge, specific application of theory happens through the in-service training. She gave an example of the Creative Curriculum training she went through. The program offered three nights within six weeks of training to teach staff how to implement observation into lesson plans. She thinks this is the best practical approach

to use in the classroom. The training helped staff understand how to use observation and document it in their lesson plans. Ms. Louisa gave another example, of training that specifically followed the Reggio Emilia approach. She clarified, *"I learned about these different approaches in my college classes."* But she learned how to implement the approaches at workshops and in her on-going training. She thinks both college classes and workshops helped her to compare and analyze these approaches and select aspects of each that will fit her classroom's specific needs. Ms. Louisa also noted that her college courses and in-service helped her to build confidence in her communication skills to work with parents.

Ms. Louisa believes that education is an important step in professionalizing her field and that there are too many teachers in the field who lack adequate education and who do not share a true passion for early childhood care. She explained *"I stayed because I like it so much and have passion for it. I got my CDA and associate's degree because I wanted to learn about different philosophies of education. Continuing education is also important in this field, since each site or center has their own rules and regulations. However, there are some things that can't be taught and that have to be experienced by being in a classroom with children."*

She hoped her degree and education would help her to work with children, to understand them, and to create a classroom setting that would build their learning skills to help them meet school expectations. The early childhood associate's degree, according to Ms. Louisa, gave her the abilities and skills to build quality classrooms that help prepare children for kindergarten. But she thinks furthering her education and getting a bachelor's degree in early childhood education— specifically taking more college level courses on

literacy and math in early childhood—will make her an equal of a kindergarten teacher and help her better understand kindergarten expectations.

Emotional Support

Ms. Louisa's response to the teacher survey question to "describe your practice of positive climate" was: *"Very positive, calm, and orderly most of the time."*

During the interview, Ms. Louisa described classroom emotional support quality practices as, *"The teacher needs to know the children she has in her classroom, as each child is going to be different, and expectations from the teacher should be different."* She explained that she has three girls in her classroom who always travel in one pack and do not make lot of good choices, so they need careful guiding. She asks them regularly about their plans and what they are involved in. She explains she does that because she knows they might start being insensitive to each other and one of them will feel left out. She gives them different choices and is working to guide their behavior toward positive interaction. She referred her ability to do that to the education and training she has received. Ms. Louisa's classroom 's age group is 3 to 5-years old.

Relationships. Ms. Louisa consistently maintained close proximity to children; she was either down on the floor with them or in a low chair as she interacted with them. During free play time, Ms. Louisa sat in a low chair with five children on small rectangular table. The children were engaged in writing "what I want to be when I grow up." Because she involved herself in the activity rather than simply watching, she conveyed interest in what they were doing. She continuously praised children through words and eye contact, saying things such as *"Good job, Meredith!"* Children approached her warmly, for instance, by standing close to her while she helped another

child write his name. She engaged in social conversation with Alexis, who was expressing that she wants to collect cloths when she grows up. Laughing, Ms. Louisa commented, *"What do you want to collect cloths for?"* Alexis remarked, *"Because I want to."* Ms. Louisa and the children shared smiles and enthusiasm when they talked about how Meredith wants to be a ballerina when she grows up and how John wants to be a doctor like his parents who are both medical students.

Positive Affect. Ms. Louisa's tone of voice and body language were upbeat and conveyed enjoyment. She turned around when David came in with his mother and greeted them, saying that his book that was left at the previous day had been found. David moved around the room with his mother and decided to play with the sand box.

Positive Communication. Ms. Louisa demonstrated verbal and physical affection; she kept looking at the children's work to admire it and made comments such as *"Good job,"* and *"I like how all of you are writing your names."*

Respect. Ms. Louisa made eye contact and used a respectful tone when she talked to the children. She asked Allie, *"Allie, can you pass the crayons so Penny can choose the colors she wants, please*?" When Allie passed the crayons she said, *"Thank you, Allie!"*

In her response to the teacher survey, Ms. Louisa described negative climate as *"Minimal occasional irritability."*

During classroom observation using CLASS, there was no negative climate observed.

Ms. Louisa's response to describe teacher sensitivity was:

"Varies from child to child. We strive to improve on this. Some children are easily distracted."

During observation using CLASS, Ms. Louisa's quality practices regarding teacher sensitivity were as follows:

Awareness. Ms. Louisa was always scanning the room to see how the various groups of children were doing and would specifically check on children with whom she was not working directly. For example, at one point she saw three girls walking towards the shelf, so she asked, *"What you girls plan to do?"* One of them replied "*We are going to play with puzzles,*" and each took a puzzle and sat on the floor. Ms. Louisa praised them by saying *"Great! You are following the rule and playing with puzzles on the floor!"* While Ms. Louisa was working with a small group she saw a sixth child come from the sand table and stand beside the table where children were writing, so she asked *"Do you want a piece of paper to write what you want to be when you grow up?"* He replied *"No, I am thinking about what I want to do next."* She continued *"So what do you plan to do?"* He replied *"I want to see what others are doing."* She then allowed space for him and let him engage in questioning what different groups of children were doing.

Responsiveness. Ms. Louisa was responsive to children's comments and requests; she offered consistent well-phrased responses that were reassuring to children. For example, a child came from behind her while she was helping another child write his name and said "*Ms. Louisa*?" She responded by saying, *"Adam, I am helping George write his name. Would you like to grab a piece of paper and join us?"* The child responded, "*No, I want you to play with me at the sand table."* She replied *"Ms. Trisha is sitting by the sand box. I am sure she would love to join you. I need to finish with this*

group this activity, and then all of us can read a book together." She acknowledged the child's desire to play with her, let him know why she could not play with him at that moment, and helped him to figure what else to do.

Address problems. Whenever difficulties came up in the classroom, Ms. Louisa promptly resolved them. For example, while she was helping George write his name on his drawing of what he wants to be when he grows up, another child finished his work and started asking George *"Why do you want to be a doctor? I am going to be a teacher."* George started pushing the child, and she intervened and said, *"We can disagree on what we want to be when we grow up, but we need to use words, not our hands, to express that."* She went on to say, *"Why don't you ask George why he wants to be a doctor? Maybe he will tell you the reason."* Immediately George and the other child started to have a conversation on their career choices and started laughing and smiling with each other.

Children demonstrated that they feel safe with Ms. Louisa. This was evidenced by how they sought her out to share successes. An example of this was when George asked Ms. Louisa to help him write his name and in addition asked her if she could help him write his thoughts. During observation, several children were calling out and telling Ms. Louisa what they want to be when they grow up. At circle time a child called out *"I have this book at home Ms. Louisa."* These comments show that the students feel comfortable with their teacher.

In her response to the teacher survey question regarding emotional support and regard for student perspectives quality practice, she stated, *"50/50 of activities are large blocks of center free-choice time."*

During observation, Ms. Louisa's quality practices were categorized into:

Flexibility and student focus. Throughout the observation, Ms. Louisa did not rigidly adhere to an agenda but rather went with the flow of child interests. During the "what I want be when I grow up" activity, she observed one child stand up after a few seconds, so she said, *"Do you want to finish yours now?"* The child shook his head and walked towards the sandbox, so she said *"Would you rather play at the sandbox now? If so, that's ok; you can finish your activity later."* During the free play time, she followed the children's lead and observed and commented on their interests. For example, when three girls moved away from the sandbox and picked up puzzles, she commented, *"What a good idea to do some puzzles!"*

Ms. Louisa encouraged children to make activity choices independently instead of imposing an agenda determined by her interests or timeline. Ms. Louisa allowed much of class time to be the child's choice, letting them choose what they wanted to work on. She was attentive to whether or not they needed help or encouragement. When a child expressed that they did not need assistance, she allowed them to be self-sufficient. For example, when the three girls moved away from the sandbox and went towards the puzzle stand, she asked if they found what they were looking for. They replied, *"We got it, Ms. Louisa."* Another example occurred when the class was getting ready to go outside. She saw two children try to help each other, so she offered *"Do you want me to help you?"* They said no, so she continued and asked, *"Do you know what is wrong with this sweater?"* One of the children said, *"Yeah, it is upside down and I will fix it."* She smiled and said *"Good job!"*

Student Expression. Children in Ms. Louisa's classroom were free to talk, comment, and question throughout the activities. She encouraged them to express their ideas with her questions and comments on their work, she encouraged children to share their views with the "what are you going to be when you grow up" activity, and she listened attentively when they responded. The children talked to each other while working at the same table. During circle time, she asked children what they saw on the book cover. One child said stripes and she continued to ask them to identify the colors of the stripes and asked, *"What else do you see?"*

Restriction of Movement. In Ms. Louisa's classroom, there was no restriction of movement. Children moved around and changed centers and activities as they liked. They knew where to find materials and how to use them freely and independently. One example was the three girls deciding to go from the sandbox to the puzzle stand. Another example was the child who moved from the activity center during the "what I want to be when I grow up" activity to the sandbox. Only time children were restricted from moving around was during snack time.

Classroom Management

Ms. Louisa responded to the teacher survey question regarding behavior management quality practice by saying, *"This is much better than one year ago. The two-teacher team has parallel expectations and similar guidance techniques. The later closing, however, is different. Children get little guidance or boundaries."*

During observation, quality practices observed concerning behavior management:

Clear Behavior Expectation. In Ms. Louisa's classroom, children had no problems meeting expectations. During the two-hour observation, there were no rules

stated, but children seemed to understand and follow guidelines. Examples: During free choice time, children knew where to go and asked for help when needed; during transition to circle time and snacks, children knew their spots and lined up without Ms. Louisa needing to restate where they needed to be.

Proactive. Ms. Louisa used many proactive management strategies. She was actively monitoring children who were playing in pairs or working in groups. She was frequently praising appropriate behavior that she observed. Examples such as "Good job," "I like your work," "Thank You", "Do you need help getting puzzles?" "We use words to resolve our agreements not our hands," "Good idea", "Will you please pass the markers to Meredith?" will you please take the crayons back?" Another example during circle time, a child said "I have this book at home." Ms. Louisa reminded him *"Others don't have it, so let us wait for them to hear the story."*

Redirection of Behavior. Misbehaviors were not observed, but a lot of praising took place.

Student Behavior. In Ms. Louisa's classroom, children's behavior consistently met expectations, i.e., no child's name was called to follow specific rules and none of the children engaged in behavior that was outside the parameters of what was expected during the classroom activities.

During the interview, Ms. Louisa explained her behavior management practices by *"…We have our own classroom set of rules, we go over them every day, and we develop these rules together, simple and written. My kids are good about the rules because they own it. We developed it together. They approach me or the assistant teacher if there is something wrong. We have a lot of different activities and movements that will*

keep them interested and busy. I monitor the whole room all the time so I can redirect and anticipate if any conflict will occur and be proactive about it. The example of the three girls is one example- I check on them regularly. They like to be together, but they can hurt each other's feeling. Another thing, we don't wait for learning time. Everything we do includes learning that keeps children interested, engaged, and busy!"

She explained her productivity practices; children have the freedom to move around the classroom and involve themselves in variety of experiences in one day. They do their own work and research. She explained that in her classroom children do not exhibit any behavioral problems, except for the three girls who habitually hurt each other's feelings. She lets them play together, but she tries to help them resolve their own conflicts until they are being friendly with one another again. During observation, quality practices were observed in regard to Ms. Louisa's classroom productivity:

Maximizing Learning Time. In Ms. Louisa's classroom, *c*hildren were consistently engaged in learning activities since there was always something for them to do. Children were moving from the sandbox, to blocks, to the puzzles and manipulatives section, to book areas, to art easel. When they finished with one activity, they would choose another freely instead waiting for turns or teacher direction.

Routines. In Ms. Louisa's classroom, children were very aware of routines. When Ms. Louisa told the group at the sandbox to start cleaning up because the class would be gathering on the rug soon, they started cleaning up independently, picking up from the floor and arranging chairs. The assistant teacher switched off the light for a second, and immediately children at all centers started to put materials away and move to the rug. Ms. Louisa sat on the rug engaging with children who had finished cleaning up. There was no

wandering around not knowing where to put materials back. Another example occurred as circle time was coming to an end, and she announced that she would call children's names to go and wash their hands. Children independently got up and washed hands as their names were called, took a juice cup, and sat down to eat their snack.

Transition. In Ms. Louisa's class, transitions were very efficient. Children moved from centers to the rug for circle time with no time wasted. When children were getting ready for the outdoors, they walked to their cubbies and put on coats with no assistance or time wasted, then moved without reminders to the door to line up. Hand-washing for snack for 17 children took only five minutes.

Preparation. In Ms. Louisa's class, there were no delays from one routine to another or from one activity to another. Ms. Louisa and her assistant were prepared with accessible materials on shelves that were accessible to children. There was no delay for a child to choose or start an activity because materials were locked.

In her response to the teacher survey, Ms. Louisa described the instructional learning format in her classroom as *"Instructional Format: we are now trying hard to do much more child-initiated projects. We always have wide variety available and all centers open each day."*

During classroom observation, Ms. Louisa displayed the following quality practices:

Ms. Louisa expanded the children's involvement in activities, she visited with children by effective questioning, she engaged and participated in their activities, and she talked with each child at her small table and commented on their work, asking and answering questions.

Variety of Modalities and Materials. Ms. Louisa's class had a wide variety of hands-on materials such as puzzles, blocks, art materials, writing materials, books, sandbox, and more. This facilitated children's movement from one center to another, and they were free to choose and engage in creative play such drawing, playing with different textures in the sandbox, and building blocks.

Student Interest. In Ms. Louisa's classroom, children were engaged in their centers, engaged in conversation with each other, and focused on the activities they had chosen.

Clarity of Learning Objectives. As the "what I want to be when I grow up" activity commenced, Ms. Louisa explained the following objective to her small group: *"We are learning about different careers, so you can read this book (in the middle of the table) about them and choose what you will be when you grow-up."* She followed up and made sure children expressed why they want to be what they have chosen by asking why they were choosing specific careers. At circle time, she asked, *"What do you think the letters on the cover page say?"* Children answered*, "The title and author name."* She followed up and asked, *"What if we have two names? What does that mean?"* Children answered, *"That means the book has an author and illustrator."* She then asked, *"What if there is only one name?"* Children responded, *"The author is the illustrator too!"*

Instructional Support

Ms. Louisa's response to the teacher survey question on concept development quality practice was *"We need to do more "investigative study" type work to use those higher order skills."*

During observation, Ms. Louisa's quality practices regarding concept development were:

Analysis and Reasoning. Ms. Louisa asked many questions such as, *"Why do you want to collect cloths when you group up?"* During circle time, she asked children, *"What does contagious mean?"* and *"We have one name on the cover, what does that mean?"* These kind of questions, according to CLASS, are called rote questioning, or close-ended questions, and do not encourage children to think more deeply about concepts.

Creating. In Ms. Louisa's classroom, there were many opportunities for children to generate their own products, such as drawing and using different types of materials to create their own projects. Ms. Louisa repeatedly asked children what they wanted to do next if she noticed them wandering from one center to another.

Integration. When children were at the "what I will be when I grow up" table, Ms. Louisa put the book about different careers in the middle of the table. When a child said that he wants to be a doctor when he grows up, Ms. Louisa reminded him to flip to the page where the book discussed medical professions.

Connection to Real World. When George mentioned during the "what I will be when I grow up" activity that he is going to be a doctor, Ms. Louisa said, *"Is that what your parents are studying at college (name)?"* However, when children pointed to the book cover at circle time and identified the stripes, she did not relate the features of the book cover to their shirt colors or any other relevant objects in the room.

Ms. Louisa's response to the teacher survey question regarding feedback quality practice was, *"We ask many open-ended thought-provoking questions to gauge learning. We do still struggle to make all assessment authentic."*

During observation, Ms. Louisa displayed various forms of practices regarding the feedback domain:

Scaffolding. During the observation there were plenty of examples of scaffolding activities. During circle time, she gave the children hints about the title of the book by asking, *"What do you see?"* The children answered, *"Stripes!"* Ms. Louisa asked, *"What is wrong with these stripes?"* A child answered, *"They are on the girl's body."* Ms. Louisa continued, *"What else you see on the cover?* They answered, *"Letters."*

Feedback Loops. Ms. Louisa did not provide feedback loops, although during observed activities she had opportunities to engage in feedback loops. For example, during circle time, as she was reading "The Crazy Stripes" book, she read that the character in the book has changed her dress 42 times, and asked, *"Do you have any idea what the number 42 is like?"* She did not engage in an exchange but pointed immediately to the number 42 on the board and continued the story.

Prompting Through Processes. On a few occasions, Ms. Louisa asked children to explain their thinking such as when she asked the girl *"Why do you want to collect cloths?"* But she did not question the response further.

Providing information. When children asked about what the word contagious meant, Ms. Louisa explained *"When you wash your hands you get rid of germs that could move from one person to another and make all of us sick. This is what contiguous means."*

Encouragement and Affirmation. Ms. Louisa offered encouragement and affirmation as children participated in activities. She provided recognition such as *"good job"* and *"good idea,"* and she said, *"I am so proud of all your work."* She increased children's involvement and participation through her enthusiastic responses to their drawings of what they want to be when they grow up: *"Oh you want to be a ballerina…You like ballet…How wonderful!"*

In response to the teacher survey question about language modeling practices, Ms. Louisa's response was, *"We role model conversations for children who need it. We are close and available to assist when needed to help them find words to express wants and needs, as well as to interact socially with peers. In large group, each child is invited to share in discussions but is never put on the spot or forced to speak."*

Ms. Louisa's language modeling quality practices during observation were:

Frequent Conversation. Throughout the observation, Ms. Louisa consistently engaged in conversation with the children, and peers were continually talking to each other. She encouraged children to converse with her by responding to their conversation and following up on what they said with relevant questions or comments that kept the verbal exchange going. She praised children who were talking with each other as they worked.

Open-ended Questions. Many of Ms. Louisa's questions required more than one word answers. For example, when a child said, *"I want to collect cloths when I grow up!"* Ms. Louisa asked, *"Why do you want to collect cloths?"* When she was helping George write his name, he *said "I want to be a doctor when I grow up."* She asked *"Why do you want to be a doctor?"* Some questions were close-ended; for example, during

circle time, she asked *"When you go to the doctor and he asks you to stick out your tongue, what do you do?"* The children stuck out their tongues and demonstrated. But the exchange of this open-ended opportunity ended there.

Even though she asked close-ended questions at the beginning of the circle time, such as *"What do you see on book cover?"* these questions engaged children in back-and-forth discussion and therefore facilitated the use of language.

Repetition and Extension. Ms. Louisa frequently repeated child comments, engaging them in language by saying things such as *"You want to be a ballerina!"* and *"Oh, you want to be a doctor!"* She also extended children's comments; for example, when George said he wants to be a doctor, Ms. Louisa said *"You want to be a doctor because your parents are both attending college (name) to become doctors."*

Self- and Parallel-Talk. Ms. Louisa mapped much of the children's behavior with language. She said *"Let me see what you are drawing... I am so proud of your work!"*, *"Let me get you more colors to use so everyone of you can have enough"*, *"I like the way you are helping him to put his sweatshirt on"* and *"I need the scissors. David, can you grab the scissors from the shelf...Here are the scissors...Oh, three of them...Thank you, David."*

Advanced Language. There were a few times that Ms. Louisa incorporated advanced language into her dialogue. She pointed out that the book she was reading to the class was written by an author and that pictures are done by an illustrator. She used advanced vocabulary words such as "contagious." However, she did not map these words onto known concepts.

Case Three: Ms. Nancy

"From the time I was in first grade I wanted to be a teacher and be a

kindergarten teacher. I enrolled at college with a major in elementary education. I did

student teaching for third grade, kindergarten, and then preschool. I loved that age of

preschool and younger. Immediately after I finished my student teaching, I was offered a

pre-k teacher position at the same site. I accepted because I loved that age of kids. I took

some early childhood elective courses and changed my major to early childhood

education with a teaching license and kindergarten endorsement...I like what I do and

what I went to school for, and I really have a passion for it. I loved it more after student

teaching. I know that what I do is impacting children in ways that will help shape their

future."

Describing her ethnicity as Caucasian, Ms. Nancy enrolled at a four-year

university immediately after finishing high school. She intended to major in elementary

education, and her dream was to teach on the elementary level in a public school. After

starting her student teaching at an early childhood center, she changed her major to early

childhood education. She was offered her first job at the same child care center

immediately after she finished her student teaching. Her first classroom was an

infant/toddler classroom.

At the time of our interview, she had been teaching in early childhood programs

for over six years and she had been with the current program for two years. She now is

teaching in classroom for 3- and 4-year-olds.

Ms. Nancy feels that some people end up going into early childhood education by

accident. For instance, someone might be babysitting and realize they have a love for

children and can do a great job caring for them. While a degree helps an early childhood teacher learn how to interact with children, a degree can't give the passion for the field that is needed to be a quality teacher. She shared with me a lot of her friends and family wonder why she does what she does, even with her degree. She says that although she has a teaching license that allows her to teach kindergarten, she has a true passion for the career she is in.

"You have to have passion to do it," she says. She believes that a teacher should always have the genuine desire to be positive, because young children are very impressionable. *"Children should know that a teacher is there for them to take care of them. They should know that their teacher is someone who wants to help them learn."* Ms. Nancy feels that a good teacher should be able to care about children and should show this by constantly interacting, engaging in activities with them, and by observing what children are doing and interested in. She said that teachable moments arise from interacting, engaging, and observing.

She went on to explain that passion is not enough if teachers don't have necessary skills from training and that in order for the early childhood teacher to be effective, both a degree and in-service are necessary. She shared that when she first went into the field, one of her mistakes was to repeat the same activities without considering the children's needs for variety or fresh engagement. Through her training, she learned to be aware of this. *"Working with 3-year-olds, I have to consider the attitudes and needs they are coming with by paying attention to what want to do or do not want to do. The biggest thing I have learned is how to adapt to their changing needs. They guide their learning."*

Ms. Nancy feels that her training during degree attainment at the four-year college helped her to understand her role as a teacher. She clarified by stating that since she had been hired first at the center where she did her student teaching, she knew the routines and set-up from other teachers and other people who helped her to adjust. Additionally, she already knew the children. While these things made her transition to becoming a teacher easier, she enjoys going to trainings and workshops that help her continuously build on her skills. However, she points out that already having a degree in early childhood education means that she has high expectations of continuing education and in-service training. As a bachelor's degree holder, the most effective training she can experience is hands-on training and that being able to choose her own training ensures that it will provide her with relevant information to take back to the classroom. She gave examples of a recent training session she attended called a Guidance Seminar, which discussed how to implement guidance in early childhood classrooms. She felt that the seminar met her needs as a teacher, as she is now teaching 3- and 4-year-old children who can be difficult to guide. Sometimes, however, she is forced to go to training that she doesn't need—for example, Safe Sleep Training—and she feels as though this wastes her time. The most effective training is training that builds on what she already knows of child development and teaches her how to create activities using music, touching, seeing, and hearing to meet different learning styles in the classroom.

As the role of the early childhood teacher evolves, Ms. Nancy also said that it is important for teachers to be open to change, be able to learn new approaches and how to do things differently, and be able to get children interested in a variety of activities. *"In my old program, I learned to do visual learning, Audi learning, music learning, and how*

to adapt to activities of different kinds of learning so that everyone can get something out of it."

Ms. Nancy thinks that quality programs are defined by an atmosphere that is welcoming to families from various backgrounds and embraces children's individuality. When you walk into a classroom, it should be evident that the children are learning, even if it looks like they are playing. This is also evident by the teacher, who should be engaging in activities with the students. She thinks that a quality program will have highly positive teacher interaction and materials that are age appropriate and culturally sensitive to children's needs and backgrounds. She feels that a quality classroom needs to be set up so that children can use materials on their own without requiring a teacher to get things out for them.

Ms. Nancy shared that her program's educational philosophy is mainly "Children learn through play." The quality of her program is driven by children who are involved in their own learning. The program is adapting to the goals of Creative Curriculum, although she feels that sometimes the program is putting contrasting ideas together. As an example, she pointed out that the program is trying to implement the Reggio Emilia approach with the Creative Curriculum methodologies. *"We tried Reggio Emilia, but I don't think we're set up for such an approach. Our space doesn't allow for explorative or community learning. We don't have enough staff to help in documentation, we can't leave materials out for long periods of time, and we have to rotate materials. Reggio Emilia requires a classroom to have materials for long learning processes. I am hoping the program philosophy is aiming to provide care and learning to the early childhood experience, rather than focusing on changing curriculum every now and then."*

When asked about her views on quality classrooms, Ms. Nancy said quality classrooms are characterized by an energetic atmosphere and by children who are actually learning by doing and are busy and engaged. Rather than posting a lesson plan to meet quality or accreditation guidelines or to impress parents, the classroom should be a lesson plan in action. *"Quality is not defined by what curriculum is used. I think, honestly, it goes back to what you can see from the children. The children are learning interaction. If the classroom provides a quality atmosphere that will be reflected in the children."*

Another vital element of quality is teacher interaction. She feels that sometimes early childhood program budgets might limit the program's ability to have materials and supplies, but good teachers will create activities driven by children's interests by using inexpensive and real-life materials from the children's homes and cultures. She added that if you have a good teacher, children are characterized by happiness and excitement with whatever materials are available to them. She continued to explain that she does not know if all teachers define quality similarly to her. She points out that we have adults in the early childhood classroom who have no idea how to talk to young children or treat them. *"They may say negative things to the child or about the child. They forget that children can pick up inappropriate conversations in the classroom. When I talk to my assistant, it is for a few seconds about activities and what to do next. I think these teachers have a lot of time on their hands that could be used to interact with children. We also have some older teachers who have health problems and can't get up or get down on the floor. I don't know what the solution is. All I know is there could be better ways to interact with children. This is happening in early childhood classrooms because everyone*

is doing their own stuff with no standard *format."* She has strong feelings toward such behaviors from adults in the early childhood classroom, given her passion for the profession and a belief that when you work with young children, you devote your attention and time to them.

Ms. Nancy also pointed out that one barrier to effective interaction is in regards to child-teacher-ratio. She believes that in order to have high quality programs and classrooms, regulations regarding classroom ratio should change, especially for 3-year-olds. She said the current ratio is too high. She justifies this by saying, *"They need more individual attention. Children crave attention, and it is important to give it to them equally. I need fewer students in the classroom so I can spend time with each of them equally, not only when they need me. It will reinforce positive climate in the classroom."*

When she was asked about quality initiatives such as the quality rating system (Paths to QUALITY) and accreditation, she stated that she is very familiar with both, and she is aware that her program is a level 4 rated PTQ program and NAEYC accredited. She thinks PTQ is rating availability of materials, how classroom are set up and prepared, planning time, and staff qualifications. She feels her role is to make sure things are happening regardless of whether they are rated or not. *"I do not ensure children are developing fine motor skills just because we are rated, but because it is my responsibility as a teacher to help them gain those skills so they know how to hold a pencil or a crayon, cut paper, and be ready for writing."* She adds that for accreditation they stage pictures and other displays for NAEYC, but they should be doing that at all times. So, according to her, accreditation is a not true assessment of what is going on every day.

Ms. Nancy believes that the teacher provides implementation of high or low quality though her attitudes and demeanor. She personally keeps her positive attitude, stays close and interacts with children, and plans every day based on children's interests and lead. She does not adopt an authoritative attitude or dictate what will be done during the day. Still, she is faced with challenges to keep up that attitude and demeanor. She listed challenges as a lot of paper work, children who do not adjust well to classroom routines, lack of family collaboration, lack of a referral system, and lack of resources provided by the program.

She feels her program administration can more effectively support her in delivering a high quality program by having a center leader [her site director] who is open and supportive. She shared that her director is always in her office and rarely comes out to classrooms. *"The director should be able to run things smoothly and get materials for classrooms on time. Sometimes they ignore requests, and the only feedback is during the annual evaluation."*

Ms. Nancy thinks teachers are lacking the essentials to deliver a quality classroom. When she was asked what these essentials are, she shared *"First, for me personally as a bachelor's degree holder, I need ongoing training. Not necessarily college courses, but continuing education that will keep me up to date on issues such as autism. Second, our profession lacks professionals, and we are not respected by our own field, because not all adults in classrooms are professional or educated enough to be treated respectfully as professionals. Third, the profession lacks recognition."* She shared that she is often asked whether she went to school for her career. People need to

recognize there is college major called early childhood education in order to have highly qualified teachers.

In regards to the problem of lack of professionalism in her field, Ms. Nancy believes that there is a group of adults who are in the early childhood classroom who are there just to babysit and that the profession needs to do a better job in hiring staff. *"We are not just babysitters. Parents need to ask their children what they learned and realize that we are following curriculum and teaching with intent and purpose. We are seeking outcomes."* To further help cultivate an image of professionalism and respect, the early childhood profession should adopt a classification of positions that would be paid accordingly. *"We are at the level of low income. Our role is important, so we need to be more adequately compensated."* In addition, she called for an education mandate: All early childhood teachers should have at least a two-year degree with student teaching experience before teaching on their own in the classroom. The field needs to hire only degree-seeking individuals and make it a rule to fulfill standards as professionals.

Ms. Nancy described her classroom practices as high quality practices; they lead to skills development and involve interactions that lead to learning such as literacy and math skills in age-appropriate activities. She explained that she uses the state early childhood standards (Foundations) to ensure activities and practices lead to outcomes and meaningful learning.

Emotional Support

When she filled out the teacher survey, Ms. Nancy described her classroom's positive climate practices as *"Teachers sit and interact with children through play and conversation."*

When observed in her classroom using CLASS, her practices regarding positive climate were categorized into:

Relationships. Ms. Nancy maintained close proximity with children, sharing their activities and engaging them in conversation. During transitioning to circle time, she was all over the room, close to children and talking to them. When children were drinking water from the fountain, she asked a child *"Are you ok? Do you need help? I will push the button for you to drink, ok?"* As she was standing at the doorway watching children drink water from the fountain, a child approached her and said, *"Ms. Nancy, Cliff said hush to me."* Ms. Nancy responded, *"Tell him that isn't nice."*

Positive Affect. Ms. Nancy smiled, laughed, and shared enthusiasm with children as they cleaned up from free choice times to circle time, sang a clean-up song with them, and helped them to put materials away. Children displayed excitement over their activities as they went through the day. But during circle time, they seemed restless. For example, three children walked away and two children started complaining to Ms. Nancy with remarks such as *"He touched my head."* and *"My shoe is untied."*

Positive Communication. Ms. Nancy used positive comments to respond to children's behaviors and actions. For example, when they were cleaning up, she said, *"Good job"*, *"Thank you for putting those away"*, *"Thank you for sitting on the rug"*, and *"Sit on the rug, please."*

Respect. Ms. Nancy demonstrated high levels of respect, using names, speaking in soft, warm tones and using respectful language such as "please" and "thank you."

On the second interview, she was asked about her classroom emotional support practices and shared that *"Every child needs different kinds of support. They sometimes*

don't get enough attention from home or positive attention from home. They need

attention all the time. For example, a child asked me to kick the ball for him. I responded

and I encouraged him to seek out another peer and to play with."

When Ms. Nancy responded to the teacher survey question about negative climate

practices in her classroom, she replied, *"Teachers try to maintain positive climate and*

deal with negative behaviors as they happen by redirection or by moving the child to

another area." When observed in her classroom using CLASS, there were a few

instances of negative affect among children, including fighting over books and yelling

and touching each other even when the child said *"I don't like you to touch me."* There

was no punitive control, sarcasm/disrespect, or severe negativity practices observed in

Ms. Nancy's classroom.

When she was asked about teacher sensitivity practices, Ms. Nancy wrote on her

teacher survey *"Teachers are available to children and do individual activities to assess*

children and also talk to them about emotions." When observed in the classroom, Ms.

Nancy's practices regarding teacher sensitivity were:

Awareness. As children started washing their hands to eat lunch, Ms. Nancy

anticipated the need for the stool to be under the sink so shorter children could wash their

hands. She noticed that John needed extra help when he was trying to drink from the

fountain and asked him, *"Do you need help?"* She further pushed the button for him so

he could drink. At lunch, Cameron, who just transferred from the 2-year-old room, had

difficulty holding his taco shell. She noticed and approached him and helped him to hold

it. At the end of circle time, Isaac started touching David's head, and David cried *"No,*

don't touch my head." She helped the children resolve their argument.

Responsiveness. Ms. Nancy responded when children indicated need for attention. During circle time a child said, *"My shoe is untied."* She said, *"Hold on, in a second I will help you. I just need to finish this."* A couple of times she noticed children were disengaged during circle time and had moved to other places, so she invited them to come back, but she was not persistent when they found another activity to do. After she finished reading the story at circle time, she used the rug as transition time by singing or reading the children's favorite books while the assistant teacher put food on plates. One child said "Ms. Nancy I want to sing *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*." She replied, "We will do that together after everyone has eaten." Ms. Nancy repeatedly addressed children's problems and concerns. Quincy told her *"Ms. Nancy, can you call my mom? I don't feel well."* She responded *"If you still aren't feeling well after lunch, we will call your mom. You know she works, so we can only call her if it is serious."*

Student Comfort. Children appeared comfortable seeking support from Ms. Nancy; for instance, when a shoe was untied, when one child touched another, and when one did not feel well.

When surveyed through the teacher survey, Ms. Nancy described regard for student perspectives as: *"Teachers get involved in child-driven activities and lead activities sometimes. If the child is interested, they may get involved. If not, nothing is forced. Teachers use child interests to plan activities."* During observation, Ms. Nancy's regard for student perspectives was characterized by:

Flexibility and Student Focus. During circle time, Ms. Nancy showed flexibility as some children decided to choose activities other than sitting on the rug. Three children took puppets out and started playing together, and two children went to the tool table and

played together. She encouraged the puppets group to use them on the floor and not to stand on couches so no one would fall.

Support for autonomy and leadership. Ms. Nancy conducted circle time with the group that wanted to do calendar and story, and the other groups were free to choose what they wanted to create with puppets and tools.

Student expression. There were many opportunities for children to talk and express themselves. Children talked openly to Ms. Nancy, and she asked questions and encouraged them to share their ideas, such as when she was reading the book and asked *"Can you tell me what is on this picture?"* and *"Do you think he can carry all of these trash cans?"* Cameron told Ms. Nancy that Quincy sat on his lunch chair; she encouraged Cameron to tell Quincy to take another seat.

Restriction of Movement. Children in Ms. Nancy's class were able to move about freely.

Classroom Management

In her response to the behavior management question in the teacher survey, Ms. Nancy stated that *"Children and teachers make rules together and review them periodically. Teachers place themselves in the room to prevent issues when possible."* During observation, practices related to behavior management domains were:

Clear Behavior Expectations. Ms. Nancy reminded children before circle time that they would need to clean when the light was switched off. She reminded them that they needed to wash hands and reminded them to potty prior to lunch. Children seemed to know all of the rules and expectations in the classroom. When clean-up started, everyone moved around and put materials where they belong. Immediately, they lined up to get a

drink before circle time and came back to sit on the rug without reminders. On two to three occasions, children were reminded to keep their own hands to themselves and to not climb on furniture.

Proactive and Redirection. While sitting on her chair to read a book, she saw two children starting to fight by touching heads, and she immediately called their names and moved them to two different spots.

Student Behavior. During observation, children were well-behaved with minor examples of two children who displayed mild conflict towards each other, but it was very brief and did not escalate.

During observation, Ms. Nancy's productivity practices were:

Maximizing learning time. During observation time, clear activities were planned or initiated during free choice centers, circle time, and lunch. Children chose where to go when they finished with a center, or if they did not like to participate in large group activities. Materials and centers were open to children regardless of whether or not they were open to all children.

Routines. Children were able to clean up and start new activities with help or without help, and Ms. Nancy provided clear instruction about clean-up times. Children moved smoothly to lunch tables and found their own seats (labeled with their pictures).

Transition. Transition from free choice times to circle time had few delays; Ms. Nancy was unable to start the circle activity immediately, with the assistant teacher busy putting lunch on plates. At some points she was responsible for supervising all 16 children at the same time. Younger children started to wiggle around and stand up. She reminded them to sit on their spots so they could do the calendar.

Preparation. The centers were set up ahead of time with materials readily available to the children.

Ms. Nancy's practices regarding productivity were characterized by well-prepared activities. Children knew their routines and there was little time lost due to the arrival and management of lunch.

Ms. Nancy's answer to the teacher survey regarding instructional learning format was *"Teachers place materials in centers based on children interests and engage in activities with children so that learning is maximized."* During observation, her practices regarding this domain were:

Effective Facilitation. Throughout the observation, Ms. Nancy facilitated the children's engagement by participating in their activities and maximizing their involvement. For example, at circle time, she said *"This is a new month, and our new month doesn't start with an A anymore. It starts with M. So what month could that be?"* Also: *"If yesterday was a Wednesday, what day is it today?"* Ms. Nancy asked questions that expanded children's involvement; for example, *"Let's see what the weather is today…Let us look from the window…Is it snowing? Is it raining? Is it windy? Is there sunshine?"* Children were very engaged, answering questions with excitement in their voices.

Variety of Modalities and Materials. In Ms. Nancy's class, all of the centers were available to the children, with a variety of hands-on opportunities and interesting materials to work with. At the art table, there were different colors of paper, glue, paper towel rolls, and scissors. At the water table, there were containers for pouring and filling, as well as other objects in a variety of colors. The tool table had different hands-on child

safe tools such hammers, screw drivers, etc. Children were consistently interested and involved in activities. At circle time, children answered Ms. Nancy's questions about the book she was reading; they answered her questions about the calendar. The three children sitting on the couches playing with puppets were laughing while engaging in social conversation.

Clarity of learning objectives. Children at the circle rug appeared aware of how they should be focusing their attention. They followed the teacher's lead to point to the month and the day. Ms. Nancy focused on the activities that the children were doing and moved their attention to the window so they could observe and respond to her question about what the weather was today. At this specific activity, the learning goal was clear: identifying weather for the day. Then she summarized: Today is Thursday, the month is May, and the weather is sunny.

Instructional Support

Ms. Nancy's response to the teacher survey question about concept development was *"Instruction given for activities and discussion is mostly child led. Teachers will facilitate discussion to ask more advanced questions and promote thinking skills. Rote facts (colors, numbers, and letters) are practiced so they are remembered."* During observation, there were practices related to concept development:

Analysis and reasoning. Few opportunities for analysis and reasoning were provided. Ms. Nancy asked questions regarding the day of the week, the month, and the weather to allow children opportunities to engage in high-order thinking. Also, during the story reading, she pointed to a picture in the "Trashy Town" book of the trash man carrying a lot of trash cans, and she asked *"These are a lot of trash cans…Can he carry*

all of these?" One child answered *"I can,"* but she did not engage in more questioning with him.

      Creating. During circle time, Ms. Nancy was asking about the day and the month, explicitly aimed to having the children recall facts from previous days and build on their concepts. Questions about the weather indicated that Ms. Nancy encouraged children to create their own ideas and thoughts.

      Integration. Circle time questions and comments led to integrating concepts about the month and day.

      Ms. Nancy responded to the teacher survey question about quality of feedback practices by saying *"We focus on process, not product, and do most assessments through informal observation of the children."* During observation, her quality of feedback practices were:

      Scaffolding. On a few occasions, Ms. Nancy used children's responses as opportunities to scaffold learning by providing hints or assistance; for example, during circle time, she said *"Yesterday was Wednesday, so what is today?"* and *"Our month starts with an M…What month could it be?"*

      Feedback Loops. There were occasions where back and forth exchanges occurred during circle time and at the water fountain, where Ms. Nancy asked and waited for answers. However, there were no observation notes indicating exchanges were sustained for long or that they elicited higher concepts.

      Providing Information. Ms. Nancy clarified incorrect information and provided specific feedback in response to children's comments or actions. For example, when a child said *"It is time to clean up,"* Ms. Nancy clarified, *"When it (clock hand) is on*

eleven, it is time to clean up." She also clarifies the difference between the long hand and short hand on the clock.

Encouragement and Affirmation. Ms. Nancy offered encouragement in response to children's efforts and comments by saying things such as *"You are a good helper"* and *"You are washing your hands well."*

Ms. Nancy responded to the teacher survey question regarding language modeling by saying *"Teachers are constantly conversing with children, using their language, and also incorporating new vocabulary and ideas into the conversation."* During observation, her practices in language modeling were:

Frequent conversation. Ms. Nancy talked regularly with and to children and appeared interested in the children. Conversation*s* were typically initiated by Ms. Nancy and limited to one or two back and forth exchanges.

Open-ended questions. During observation, Ms. Nancy asked questions that invited children to use more complex language; examples included *"What is the weather outside?"* and *"Is it snowing outside?"* but extended conversation was not developed as a result of these conversations.

Self- and parallel-talk. There were several instances of Ms. Nancy engaging in parallel talk, such as *"You are sitting on your chair"*, *"You choose your favorite book"*, and *"You are putting the magnet on the right place."*

<center>*Summary*</center>

In this chapter, an in depth description of each teacher case was presented; each teacher described her own personal journey to finding the profession of early childhood education, her individual thoughts on training and education, reflections on her own role,

and descriptions of her classroom practices. Each teacher was also observed in the classroom. In the next chapter, this in-depth description informs the cross case analysis that addresses the research questions.

CHAPTER V: CROSS CASE COMPARISON

In the previous chapter, each teacher case was presented and contexts were provided so that the reader might more fully understand the responses given by each teacher. In this chapter, a cross analysis of the three cases and evolving themes which were revealed will be presented, followed by a brief summary of teacher beliefs and perceptions in regard to the research questions. In the following part of the study, each teacher name will be followed by abbreviation of her educational qualification to remind the reader about which teacher is being referred to; i.e. Molly, (CDA); Louisa (AA); and Nancy (BA).

Emergent Themes: Cross Case Analysis

Analysis of data began by coding statements and phrases from the teacher survey, interview transcription, and CLASS observations. From these data, categories were created by looking at patterns in the data. From these categories, the following themes emerged: 1) My passion and love to care for children is not enough; 2) We are not baby-sitters; 3) Quality classroom means to know the children; and 4) Support.

My passion and my love to care for children is not enough

The theme of "my passion and love to care for children is not enough" is common for the three teachers. Regardless of how they came to the early childhood profession, it

was a common theme that they are doing what they do every day because they are passionate about children and care about young children.

The study results present three different journeys of three females who vary in experience and education, but who found the profession in unique ways. It was not the first choice for any of them. Louisa (AA), wanted to study accounting, but before she was enrolled in college she got married. When her family started to grow and needed extra income, she opened her own family child care home and then she found the early childhood world. Louisa (BA), enrolled in college out of high school, but she enrolled in elementary education— her dream was to teach kindergarten and first grade. She had taken some early childhood courses as electives, but did student teaching in a child care center and found the early childhood education world. Molly (CDA), who came from a troubled childhood, had some learning disabilities that kept her sheltered, and she worked as a nanny for nine years for her own nephew and niece. Then she got married and had to find a job, so she found the early childhood world.

The three teachers hold the same position, lead teacher, at the same exemplary program. Prior to coming to this program, their experience ranged from few months to 11 years. They had worked in different settings ranging from family child care home, military child care center, for-profit, non-profit, and child care ministry.

The three teachers' educational and training background prior to becoming a lead teacher in this exemplary program ranged from partially completing a CDA to graduating from college with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

Even though the theme of "my passion and love to care for children" has served as a common ground for continuing to work in the field, each of the three teachers made

comments that indicated a belief that passion is not enough to become a highly effective early childhood teacher or to provide high quality early childhood experiences in their classroom. Similarly, their comments agreed that this passion and love needs to be fed by training and education in order to meet the needs of the children in their classrooms. While all three teachers agreed that professional development is the right source to feed passion, they perceived professional development differently. Molly (CDA) felt that her passion was fed by the CDA training (classes) at the community college in that they helped her to gain confidence in communicating with families. However, when it comes to her daily practices she depends more on in-service training that helps her to be creative in the classroom. She felt being credentialed or degreed in early childhood education does not give her as much knowledge or enable her to have effective lesson plans as does the hands-on training. Louisa (AA) felt her passion was fed with both the degree track and in-service training. She thinks that college education helped her to find the relevance of what she is doing in classroom activities and gave her specific application of theories, but in-service training and ongoing workshops gave her the ability to tailor theory to meet the needs of individual children in her classroom. Nancy (BA) felt that both the degree and in-service training are equally important to build on passion and love for children, but she goes further and criticizes how some training (in-service and workshops) is irrelevant in regards to classroom practice, but teachers need them to meet licensing requirements.

The three teachers agreed that the profession needs trained and educated teachers who have passion for caring for young children. Louisa (AA) thought furthering her education and getting her bachelor's degree in early childhood education will put her on the same level as a kindergarten teacher and help her better understand the expectations

her students will face once they reach kindergarten. She thinks that she needs additional college level classes on literacy and math in early childhood , which will empower her to improve her students' school readiness. While Nancy (BA) felt her bachelor's degree is beneficial from an academic standpoint, she needs advanced on-going training that respects where she is currently in her profession and will address needs such as behavioral management and autism spectrum disorders. Molly (CDA) indicated that college is not where she needs to get her training from.

The study results within the theme of "my passion and love for children is not enough" indicate that the three teachers perceive a quality early childhood program as a process that takes more than having passion and love for children. The theme resulted in identifying the need for professional development. There was a clear difference from each teacher on preferable approaches: the need for in-service and on-going workshops to build on what they already know and give them more ways to apply theories (Louisa, AA and Nancy, BA); degree and in-service helped to build confidence and communication skills to work with parents (Molly, CDA); no need to further education or obtain a degree if in-service will help in daily practices (Molly, CDA and Nancy, BA); having a degree in early childhood makes their expectation of trainings and in-service higher (Nancy, BA and Louisa AA).

While the three teachers shared their beliefs about the importance of training and education and the preferable approach to professional development to feed their passion, it was helpful to observe how they embedded what they learned from these trainings in their classrooms. On classroom management practices, Nancy (BA)'s quality practices regarding instructional learning format included hands-on opportunities and interactive

materials and techniques. She facilitated learning by getting involved in activities, asking questions, and letting children explore. All children were actively participating in their chosen activity. Similarly, Louisa (AA)'s quality practices of instructional learning format were embedded by her moving around the room to facilitate children engagement. Children were independently working and had interesting and engaging materials to maintain their focus. For both teachers, their beliefs about knowing children and building curriculum based on child needs matched their quality practices. Molly (CDA)'s practices in this domain did not matching her beliefs or CLASS descriptions, as classroom activities and materials were not available to children to encourage their independent engagement. Rather materials were in the closet and the sensory table was closed.

<p style="text-align:center">We are not babysitting</p>

The theme of "we are not babysitting" describes the three teachers' beliefs about how their profession is perceived and why there are so many different levels of quality in early childhood programs. The three teachers shared, each at different points during their interview/observation process, the same statements that indicated that the role of early childhood programs is not babysitting. The three teachers' comments agreed that parents often don't realize the educational experiences occurring in their classrooms. This parental attitude is attributed to a lack of respect. All three teachers indicated they feel that many parents view them and their centers as little more than babysitting their children while they go to work. Louisa (AA) shared that she is looking forward to the day parents will recognize that they are "educating" their children and there is "learning" involved from the time children are dropped off until they are picked up. Nancy (BA) shared that it is not just parents who think she is "just babysitting." Even her friends and

family members ask if she really went to school just so she can teach in a child care center. The three teachers' comments agreed on the importance of program administration to change that image with parents and the public by knowing and recognizing what the teacher is doing every day in her classroom, rather than just visiting the classroom when there is an issue with a parent or new curriculum needs to be implemented.

In their analysis for reasons contributing to this image of early childhood educators, two teachers' comments (Louisa, AA and Nancy, BA) discussed the issue of compensation. Low compensation in this field categorizes them as low-paid labor rather than as professionals. Molly (CDA), on the other hand, felt she is well compensated for what she does.

Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) further expressed that the "babysitting" stereotype could be eliminated through education. Defining the early childhood field as an educated profession could happen if more early childhood teachers take steps to get educated. Nancy (BA) called for an education mandate, stating that teachers should have at least a two-year degree with student teaching experience before they can teach on their own in an early childhood classroom and that child care centers should hire only degreed or degree-seeking teachers.

Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) suggested that in order to professionalize the field, the early childhood profession should adopt a classification of positions that are paid accordingly. These positions should require early childhood teachers to further their education and attain degrees, as is required of teachers in public schools. The compensation dilemma would be addressed by the availability of educated early

childhood teachers. They emphasized that the role of the early childhood teacher is evolving and that those who created the "babysitter" image need to be open to change and willing to learn new approaches. One way to achieve this is through professionalization of the field and increased educational requirements. Once a child enters elementary school, they will be taught by professionals who have at least a bachelor's degree. They felt that the early childhood teacher should also be on that level to ensure the quality needed for school readiness.

Additionally, Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) commented on how vital a role the early childhood teacher plays in ensuring quality for their program. A significant aspect of this role is implementing components required for quality initiatives such as accreditation and the quality rating system. Programs rely heavily on teachers to make sure requirements are being met in the classroom and are evident to quality raters and parents. Sustaining the status of national accreditation and level 4 in the quality rating systems means more than hanging a banner in the hallway—it means that practice in the classroom should reflect these initiatives. While Molly (CDA) was not as familiar with these quality initiatives, she understood the importance of implementing the philosophy and goals of her program into how she runs her classroom.

Another reason contributing to the image, according to Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA), is the hiring and employment policies in the early childhood field. They thought there are too many in the field without diplomas who will have been there for long time not because they want to be part of the field, but because they need regular paid jobs with weekend off. Nancy (BA) stated that there is a group of adults who are in early childhood classroom s who are there just to babysit. She shared that the early childhood

profession needs to do a better job in hiring staff. Regardless, the three of them believed that the early childhood teacher is doing more than just babysitting and they take pride in what they are doing. They thought that currently early childhood teachers are seeking education and getting degrees to be with children and teach them.

Results discussed through the theme of "we are not baby sitters" indicated the three teachers' beliefs about their role in the process of quality; it takes more than baby-sitting. In order for the early childhood classroom to have high quality, teacher image is important. All three of them agreed on the importance of professionalizing the field by hiring teachers who will have a desire to educate children, are willing to educate themselves in order to do so, and will take the profession seriously.

It was helpful to link the theme of "we are not baby-sitting" to the instructional support quality practices observed in the three teachers' classrooms to validate their beliefs about their role. Results from the quality practice "Concept Development" support beliefs that emerged in the teachers' discussions of their role. Statements shared in interviews by Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) indicated that quality classroom teachers should embed what they learned in college about child development. They also understood the importance of incorporating what they learn from on-going professional development opportunities. This was evident in their classrooms during the observations, as they each occasionally used discussion and activities that encouraged analysis and reasoning, and these opportunities were interspersed with more rote types of learning. During her observation, Molly (CDA) did not make attempts to develop children's understanding of ideas and concepts, and there were no instructional opportunities provided or teachable moments capitalized on. For example, when she was reading a

book about sharks, children were not asked questions or given opportunities to ask questions. One child pointed to a picture, but the teacher did not recognize his need to comment, so there was a missed opportunity for reasoning and questioning. For creativity, no opportunities for planning or producing were provided in the classroom. When children insisted on using the sensory table, there were not enough materials available to be used creatively.

Louisa (AA) had plenty of examples of scaffolding "practice" activities. For example, during circle time, she gave children hints about the title of the book (*The Crazy Stripes*) by prompting them: *"What do you see?"* The children answered *"stripes",* and she asked *"What is wrong with these stripes?"* A child answered *"They are on the girl's body."* She continued, *"What else you see on the cover?"* And they answered *"Letters."* These practices correspond with her belief that quality means knowing the children and knowing how to support their development. However, she did not follow through with feedback loops effectively; after reading that the character in the book had changed her dress 42 times, she asked the class if they knew what the number 42 looks like. Rather than engage in an exchange, however, she pointed immediately to the number 42 on the board and continued the story.

Nancy (BA)'s scaffolding practices were similar to those of Louisa (AA). On a few occasions she used children's responses as opportunities to scaffold learning by providing hints or assistance; for example, during circle time she said *"Yesterday was Wednesday, so what is today?"* and *"Our month starts with an M…What month is it?"* While there were examples of Nancy (BA) incorporating feedback loops during circle time and at the water fountain, the exchanges were not sustained and did not elicit higher

concepts. There were no scaffolding or feedback loop practices observed with Molly (CDA).

"Language Modeling" practice is the quality and amount of the teachers' use of language stimulation and language facilitation techniques during individual, small-group, and large-group interactions with children. Practices to be observed to assess language modeling are: frequent conversation, open-ended questions, repetition and extension, self- and parallel-talk, and advanced language. While these components were not observed in Molly (CDA)'s classroom, Nancy (BA) asked questions that invited children to use more complex language. Examples of this included *"What is the weather outside?"* and *"Is it snowing outside?"* But these questions were not used to generate further conversation. Louisa (AA) engaged children in conversations and encouraged them to talk and express their thoughts. She encouraged them to use language with peers. She frequently mapped her own and children's behavior with language and repeated and extended their verbalization. But during observation for all three teachers, there were no examples of advanced language being mapped onto concepts already understood by children.

Quality classroom means to know children

The theme of "Quality classroom means to know children" emerged from results when teachers reflected on their role and how they can be supported in that role. In general, statements from the teachers described a quality program as a welcoming environment for families and children. Knowing the children also means knowing and respecting their family backgrounds, encouraging families to become part of the learning process, planning activities are driven by children's interests, and providing opportunities

to accommodate different learners. They believe that the early childhood teacher should know how children learn and use that to guide curriculum. All three teachers shared in their comments that planning activities that respect children's choices is a main component of quality. Nancy (BA) expressed her feeling that while sometimes early childhood program budgets might limit materials and supplies, a good teacher will create activities driven by awareness of children's interests and use inexpensive, real-life materials from children's homes and cultures. She added a good teacher can instill excitement and creativity in students regardless of materials available to them.

Louisa (AA) perceived quality in the classroom by knowing the child as a learner *"We gather information together…Children in the classroom are free to use materials and we plan what we are going to do together. It is a project approach."*

Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA)'s comments agreed on the result that a quality program's philosophy should be building to give the kids what they need as individuals and should reflect understanding of how the children learn. Louisa (AA) shared that her program philosophy reflects that and that it takes the extra step and adopts the NAEYC philosophy. Both teachers agree with their own program philosophy "learn through play" and implement this in their classrooms. Molly (CDA) shared that having a quality classroom means the teacher interacts with children by observing them and putting their interests first. She specified that although she knows that student interests drive learning and activities, she still struggles to articulate that in lesson plans.

Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) reflected that labeling their classrooms with national accreditation or a level 4 quality rating is directly linked to them "knowing the children" and implementing activities to meet this need. Louisa (AA) perceived her

program accreditation as a higher step to ensure that the program is implementing its mission and philosophy, which is driven by NAEYC principles such as Developmentally Appropriate Practices. She believes both accreditation and Paths to QUALITY (PTQ) give parents assurance that they are making the right choice by selecting an accredited, level 4 PTQ program *"It is not just licensing. Staff have knowledge behind curriculum to ensure a quality learning environment."*

Both Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) pointed out that it is important for teachers to know the children in their classroom regardless of accreditation or rating requirements. Nancy (BA) gave an example: *"I do not ensure children are developing fine motor skills just because we are rated, but because it is my responsibility as a teacher to help them gain the skills to hold a pencil or a crayon, cut a paper and be ready for writing."*

As this theme "quality classroom means knowing the children" emerged from interview transcriptions and the teacher surveys, it was observed that practices manifested in classroom supported these beliefs. Respectively, the three teachers' classrooms displayed emotional support and connection with children that was characterized with warmth and enthusiasm during interactions with children; verbal and nonverbal behavior suggested respect and genuine interest. The three teachers talked with children about their lives outside school, and their proximity and verbal exchanges indicated that the teachers value their relationships with children in the classroom.

As for the teachers' awareness and responsiveness to children's needs and level of development, observed as teacher sensitivity quality practices for this research, the results indicate that Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) offered a good demonstration of how it is possible to be sensitive to the entire class even when the teacher is working intensively

with a small group, engaging in circle time reading, or eating snack/lunch. They both

repeatedly checked on all children and made sure all children were doing well. Louisa

(AA) spent time with five children, but she was able to talk to other children at other

centers. Children were very comfortable approaching the teacher and interacting with her

and other children. Nancy (BA) was consistently aware of and responsive to children and

able to resolve problems in timely manner. Children freely participated and felt

comfortable sharing their ideas and working with her. Molly (CDA)'s classroom

practices differed in this regard from the other two teachers. Children were frequently

disengaged and depended on her to provide activities for them, children did not move

freely around the room, and centers were not welcoming and engaging for them.

Another quality practice tied to the theme of knowing children is "regard to

student perspectives." Results indicated that Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA)'s practices

were largely child-directed, and they placed emphasis on children's interests and points

of view by giving them choice of activity and following their leads. There was no

restriction of movement, and there were constant opportunities for child talk and

expression. During Molly (CDA)'s observation, none of these practice aspects were

recorded, which does not match her statements during the interview that led to the

emergence of the "knowing children" theme.

Analyzing the three teachers' process of classroom management was helpful in

understanding how the quality practice of productive use of time was demonstrated.

Results indicate that Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA)'s classrooms were characterized by

learning time that maximized children's opportunities to be consistently involved in

learning activities, and children seemed to know how to go about their activities. Molly

(CDA) did not provide children with multiple activity choices to ensure that their interests were utilized. She sat with them on the floor reading a book and kept reading the same book several times as children moved around. During this time, the sensory table was closed, and she did not open it until she saw that the children were becoming tired and some of them started banging the top of the table. She provided them with balls for play, but she kept the whole group with her. Although it was clear a child did not want to play with balls, she kept redirecting him to balls. There were plenty of activity centers, but they were not ready for children to use, and children did not try to explore by themselves. They played only with what she offered, and a lot of them were wandering around. When the teacher moved away, children would immediately stop the activity, and she repeatedly had to remind them what to do. But her practices regarding transition and routines were similar to those of Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA); children followed routines and transition very effectively.

The results of the classroom observation indicated that Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) incorporated their beliefs regarding knowing their students into quality practices in their classrooms. Both teachers displayed knowledge of their students' needs and interests. While Molly (CDA)'s beliefs were similar to those of the other two teachers, these beliefs were not embedded in her classroom practices.

Support

The themes previously mentioned: 1) passion and love to care for children is not enough; 2) we are not baby-sitters; and 3) quality classroom means to know the children, led to the fourth theme, which is support. The three teachers felt there should be a support

system for early childhood quality programs. They listed three areas of needed support: administration and emotional support, professional development, and compensation.

All three teachers' comments indicated that program administration support is essential for a teacher to be able to have a classroom with high quality. One important support role of administration is that of feedback. The teachers all felt that their program administration should provide more constructive, timely feedback to teachers to help them deliver program quality in their classrooms. Rather than providing feedback only when something goes wrong, administrators should use positive feedback to reward and motivate teachers. Additionally, the teachers expressed that they are often not adequately supplied with materials needed for the classroom. If the program is implementing a philosophy based on lessons that are led by child interest, the administration should provide materials adequate to accomplish this.

Louisa (AA) explained that she thinks program administration should have a stronger presence in the center and in classrooms. She said, *"We go almost all day without seeing administration. They do not come to the classroom to say hello."* She went on to say that her administrators use the annual performance evaluation to discuss classroom weakness, but she wonders how they know her classroom strengths or weaknesses if they do not visit or observe her classroom.

In addition to administration feedback, all the teachers commented that they need more assistance from support staff. Often, there are time challenges to completing necessary paperwork or administrative classroom duties while also teaching and interacting with children, which is contrary to quality practice. "*To have enough time some days, I am not ready to leave at the end of the day. If I spend time during the day*

prepping for an upcoming project or working on paperwork, I have to sacrifice one-on-one time with children."

The three teachers receive the same amount of ongoing professional development (in-service) in order for their program to keep its state license and rating level. The teachers noted that they all receive similar training and that there is no differentiation based on education or experience. Each one of the teachers felt her on-going professional development support should more effectively meet her needs for the classroom. Louisa (AA) shared that when she was hired with her current program, she was able to start her associate's degree and complete it in five years, but she felt that with eighteen years of experience, her needs are different than someone who has an associate's degree without that extensive experience. Nancy (BA) enrolled in a four-year college immediately upon graduation of high school. Although she enrolled as an elementary education major, she discovered the early childhood teaching profession through her college student teaching. Prior to working in this program, she worked in another accredited non-profit center, and her total years of experience were six years. Accordingly, she felt she needs support from her program for more advance specialized training. Molly (CDA)'s schooling and training have been more focused on child health and safety and administrative aspects of early childhood care. She said that her training has helped her understand how to communicate with parents more effectively, but she does not feel like she has been trained to adequately create lesson plans.

Another area Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) both had strong feelings about was that of early childhood teacher compensation. They believed that quality and professionalism are linked to compensation, and that compensation should correlate with

education and experience level. Both commented that this would encourage current or potential early childhood teachers to pursue education. Molly (CDA) felt that she is well compensated for her work.

Summary

Review of the three teachers' backgrounds, education levels, interview transcripts, and classroom observation periods revealed their beliefs regarding quality practices and how these beliefs are embedded in the classroom. From this, four prominent themes emerged: "passion and love to care for children is not enough," "we are not baby-sitters," "quality classroom means to know children," and "support."

Molly (CDA) found her way to the early childhood profession nine years after graduating from high school. It was a job that did not require training prior to hiring, and she believed she had the passion to start working in a for-profit child care center. She learned about the CDA after she started working there. Her total years of working experience are three years.

Louisa (AA) found the early childhood profession when she needed a job that would allow her to generate extra income while also having her own children with her during the day; she opened her own family child care home. It happened that her home was on a military base where she needed to follow specific regulations and training standards to keep the home in operation. When her children got older, she began working at accredited military based child care centers where they mandated her to have her Child Care Provider Certificate within six months to keep her job as a teacher assistant. She later completed an associate's degree as well. Her total years of experience are eighteen years.

Nancy (BA) had college experience prior to working in the early childhood classroom. Even though she enrolled in college to become an elementary teacher, she changed her major to early childhood education after completing her student teaching in an early childhood center. Her total years of experience are five years.

Findings in the current study indicate that in order to have quality processes in the classroom, professional development is needed to support teachers' roles in that process, as the teachers discussed throughout the theme of "passion and love to care for children is not enough." They linked professional development to the concept of highly effective teachers who have more than passion. Professional development is important to help in planning activities and creating a classroom environment that incorporates the knowledge of child development theories. Professional development also helps in knowing how to interact with children at developmentally appropriate levels and how to recognize their needs.

Two of the teachers, Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA), strongly linked quality to education and to professionalization of the field. They called for increased educational requirements and emphasized that in-service training and on-going professional development are equally important as a college degree, but that the training must be relevant in order to be effective. The three teachers' comments agreed that there is a lack of respect for early childhood teachers and that the field needs to address that issue in some way. Their comments also agreed on a need for increased administrative support and felt that their program administration can support them by having hiring and employment policies; providing positive feedback; providing on-going professional development both specialized and college track; and providing time for planning and

paperwork. The three teachers varied again on this support system; Louisa (AA) and

Nancy (BA) believed compensation will bring respect to their role and recognition to the

educational experience they are providing in their classrooms. The three teachers'

comments varied in implementing what they believed to constitute quality practices.

Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) were similar in their beliefs and implementations regarding

quality, while Molly (CDA)'s comments often differed.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify three teachers' beliefs about the quality in early childhood programs and how teachers embed these practices in their classrooms. As the teacher survey, interviews, and CLASS observation were coded into categories, themes began to emerge as threads tying the data together. The answers to the research questions were revealed within these themes.

Research Questions

1. What perspectives do early childhood teachers, with different educational backgrounds and varying years of experience have on quality early childhood programs?

2. In what ways do early childhood teachers' perspectives on quality programs manifest themselves in classroom practice?

Perspectives of Early Childhood Teachers with Different Educational

Backgrounds and Different Years of Experience

The four themes revealed in the previous chapter: "passion and love to care for children is not enough," "we are not baby-sitters," "quality classroom means to know children," and "support" have provided information that are relevant to the first research question. The three teachers interviewed and observed each hold a lead teacher position

at an accredited program. One has a CDA, one has an associate's degree in early childhood education, and one has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Each teacher joined the profession based on a passion for working with young children.

The teachers' personal stories about how they found their way to the profession and how they ended up as a lead teacher in an exemplary program is a testimony for the Child Care Staffing study (1988, 1997). One teacher started as working in a child care center without minimum educational or training in early childhood, and one teacher was able to start a family child care home without specialized training or holding educational credentials related to early childhood. This is relevant to the Saluja et al. study (2001), which states that the educational requirements for early childhood education teachers have been a concern to those in the field and that children are at risk since states and communities do not seem concerned with early childhood teachers' qualifications. This is in agreement with the discussion of the theme "we are not babysitting" that emerged from the three teacher interviews.

Statistics indicate that currently less than 50% of lead teachers of three- and four-year olds in early childhood programs do not have a four-year college degree (Saluja et al., 2002). The Head Start Act (1998) required that as of September 2003, at least 50% of its teachers would have at least a Child Development Associate credential, an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, or an advanced degree in early childhood education or an applied subject. Two of the teachers interviewed, one with an associate's degree and one with a bachelor's degree, thought that early childhood teachers should be required to obtain at least a two-year degree, regardless of program affiliation.

The variation in the three teachers' qualifications reflects the fact shared by Bowman, et al. (2001) that the United States has not established national standards or certification processes for teachers of young children. States' child care regulations have instituted marginal requirements for the education of their teachers. Most states require teachers to be at least 18 years of age, hold a driver's license, and have no criminal record (Early & Winton, 2001). Non-public school early childhood teachers do not need a college degree in early childhood education. Only 21 states require them to attend any pre-service training (Mitchell, 2001).

Educational requirements for state-funded preschool programs range from 24 credit hours to a master's degree (Barnett, 2004). More than half of the states that provide state-funded preschool require teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

The current study's findings emphasize the teachers' beliefs in the importance of professional development as a support to the quality process and linked professional development to the concepts of quality and effective teaching. The belief that teachers with specialized early childhood education professional development have a significant positive effect on the quality of the classroom had been established in numerous studies (Saluja et al, 2002, Cassidy, Buell, Pugh-Hoese, & Russell, 1995, The National Child Care Staffing Study, 1997,& Wishard et al., 2003). The three teachers differed on the best ways for early childhood teachers to obtain training. Similar to a number of studies revealing that the higher level of teacher education and early childhood training, the better the quality of care and developmentally appropriate practices delivered to young children, other studies investigating the importance of a high level of teacher education

have found a lack of relationship between high level of teacher education and high level of program quality. This correlates with the opinion of one of the teachers in this study, the teacher with a CDA, who minimized the importance of a degree. Still, policy studies have found that one dynamic area in which programs particularly fall short is staff qualifications and training (Barnett, 2004). High quality early childhood services depend on well-trained personnel using coherent and developmentally appropriate educational approaches. Therefore, staff characteristics and resources available for training must be considered in the design of quality enhancement.

Cassidy, Buell, Paugh-Hoese, & Russell (1995)'s study evaluated a professional development model that builds on the goal to improve qualifications of early childhood teachers and identifies a link between qualifications and higher classroom quality. The results from the National Day Care study (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979) and National Child Care Staffing study (1997) confirmed the impact of regulated features of quality such as ratio, group size and teacher qualifications. Studies such as the National Day Care Study (1997) and Clarke-Stewart and Gruber (1984) reported that high classroom quality leads to education specific to child development, increased social skills and age-appropriate behavior, increased child cooperation, and higher attention span. The degree-holding teachers in this study expressed beliefs that go hand-in hand with this, as they expressed that professionalization of the early childhood field and increased education and professional development would ensure higher quality in the classroom. This is similar to the National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook, Howes, &Phillips, 1989) and Berk (1985), which found that formal education, regardless of the field, was the best predictor of appropriate care giving and positive behavior in the classroom.

Moreover, Snider and Fu (1990) found strong correlations between teachers with a bachelor's degree in early childhood and high quality in infant and toddler programs.

The three teachers' program is an exemplary program that is non-profit and accredited. Still, they shared their concern about compensation and linked it to lack of professionalism in the field and lack of recognition from the public. These beliefs are consistent with the Child Care Staffing Study (1997), which concluded that child care teaching staff continue to earn unacceptable low wages, even in a relatively high quality child care centers. Real wages for most child care teaching staff have remained stagnant over the past decade. Teachers at the lowest-paid level earn an average of $7.50 per hour or $13,125 per year. Wages for the highest-paid teacher within child care centers, which constitute a small segment of the overall child care workforce, averages $10.85 per hour or $18,988 per year (Child Care Staffing Study, 1997). The Child Care Staffing Study (1997) found that independent nonprofit centers are more likely to retain their teachers than other types of programs.

For this study, the three teachers believed that to achieve quality, both monetary and emotional support is needed. They felt that their program administration "non-profit" can support them by having hiring and employment policies, positive feedback, on-going professional development; specialized and college track, and provide time for planning and paperwork. The three teachers varied again on this support system; Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) believed compensation will bring respect to their role and recognition to the educational experience they are providing in their classrooms.

These perceptions are relative to the National Child Care Staffing Study (1997) that indicated that over the past decade many program models have emerged as

promising ways to address the problems of child care quality and workforce stability. These initiatives are: the U.S Army Child Development Services Caregiver Personnel Pay plan, the Head Start Expansion and Quality Improvement Act, and TEACH Early Childhood Scholarship Project. The study findings report that approximately one third of child care centers employ welfare recipients, sometimes at less than the prevailing wage and often with limited training. In 1997, the study found that more child care centers received public dollars than in 1988, allowing more of them to assist low-income families with child care costs. But because this increased public funding for child care was rarely targeted to quality improvements or increased compensation, these dollars have not resulted in better wages or lower staff turnover. Child care centers continue to experience very high turn-over for teaching staff, threatening their ability to offer quality, consistent services to children (National Child care Staffing Study, 1997).

Early childhood teachers' perspectives on quality programs manifest themselves in

classroom practice

As the three teachers perspectives on quality and their role in the process emerged through the four themes, the themes also helped in identifying the differences between how the three teachers manifest these beliefs in their classrooms.

The three teachers believed that in order to be effective, planning activities and classroom environment should incorporate the knowledge of child development theories that build on children's interests and involve effective interaction and communication between the child and teacher. Louisa (AA) and Nancy (BA) felt that their college education supported them in incorporating developmentally appropriate practices. These beliefs related to the Cassidy et al. (1995) study, which is a quantitative study that looked

into the implementation of the first year participation in TEACH. The study hypothesized the overall improvement between pre-test and post-test on measures of teacher beliefs and practices and overall classroom quality. The study examined the effect of community college coursework on the beliefs and on classroom practices of teachers in child care centers. Thirty-four teachers participated; 19 were teachers who had received scholarships to attend community college programs in child development and early childhood education (treatment group), and 15 were used as comparison teachers. Treatment included completion of at least 12-20 credit hours of community college coursework.

The Cassidy et al. study (1995) supported the premise that improving teacher educational qualifications is related to improved knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and higher quality classrooms. While their study was one of the first attempts at demonstrating a direct relationship between exposure to college level coursework and changes in beliefs and classroom behavior that utilized pre-test and post-test design, findings of the current study are relevant as Louisa (AA)'s and Nancy (BA)'s quality practices were described on the CLASS manual on the high end of middle or high range of interactions.

The above results indicate teachers' beliefs about quality are tied to their own practices and planning of activities in their own classroom, rather than just structural factors that led to their program being an exemplary. The teachers' beliefs about their role as essential to the process of quality are well supported by the Wishard, Shivers, Howes and Ritchie (2003) study that identified practices articulated by programs and teachers to examine whether and how articulated practices vary by ethnicity, to examine

associations between child care practices and child care quality, and to examine how both practices and quality influence children's experiences in child care. Studies have indicated that the education of early childhood teachers has affected the quality of their early childhood programs (Whitebook, Howe, & Phillips 1990; Cost Quality and outcomes Study Team, 1995; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Early Child Care Research Network, 1996).

Another quality study was conducted by Saluja et al. (2002). One of the study's purposes was to assess practices, beliefs, and barriers to practice. The study focused on comparing centers across sponsorship categories (program types: for-profit versus non-profit; within for-profit setting, independently operated or operated by a national or local chain; within non-profit, setting affiliated with Head Start, a public school, a religious organization, or other types of non-profits such as the YMCA) on the basis of structural features of quality as defined and identified by previous research and studies: teacher education, wages and turnover, and child-to-staff ratio. Other features of early childhood education include cultural representation of teachers of young children and hours that these programs operate. Results from Saluja et al. (2002) study indicated that teachers with higher educational qualifications and specialized early childhood/child development training had more developmentally appropriate practices in their classrooms, regardless of their program affiliation. This matches the classroom practices of both teachers in this present study who had college degrees in that their activities were led by child interest and need.

Implications for Practice

Almost everyone involved in the field of early childhood education recognizes the importance of having an effective early childhood workforce in programs that serve young children and families. It is less clear how to go about ensuring that all early childhood practitioners have the essential knowledge and skills they need to be effective in the process of quality. Increasingly, policy makers are turning to professional development as the solution to adequately preparing practitioners or helping them improve their instructional and intervention practices. This focus on effective practices is associated with the goal of improving child outcomes as part of the standards and accountability movement. However, strikingly little scientific research exists to indicate exactly what approaches to professional development are most likely to enhance practices (Bowman et al, 2001). The current study findings encourage professional development entities; teacher education programs and non-formal training agencies need to provide early childhood teachers with professional development opportunities that help them in advancing their knowledge and link theories to application in the classroom. Opportunities should focus on personal factors and meet the individuality of the early childhood teacher. In the present study, it has been seen that teachers in early childhood classrooms have a variety of education and experience levels and thus require different training if they are to provide the same level of quality that is built on child development theories, developmentally appropriate practices, and early childhood classroom instructional methodologies. Brownlee (2001) indicated the need for developing education and training for early childhood teachers based on personal factors and learning styles. There is a need for the early childhood teacher to actively engage in learning

experiences that lead to the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions and the application of this knowledge in practice (Cassidy et. al,, 1995).

Across the nation, the early childhood field experiences an annual turnover rate of 30%, which is quite high when compared to the 6.6% annual turnover rate among public school teachers. Data indicate that approximately 40% of early childhood educators anticipate leaving the field within the next five years. However, providers who earn higher wages report that they intend to stay in the field longer and those who receive more benefits are less likely to choose other work given the opportunity to do so. Teacher turnover is harmful for young children, who need secure, stable relationships with caring adults. Classrooms with high teacher turnover rates also are characterized by poorer social interactions and lower levels of engagement in play and learning activities (Howes & Hamilton, 1993).

Adequate compensation for early childhood professionals is necessary in order to support a stable, highly qualified workforce charged with the responsibility of caring for and educating the youngest and most vulnerable citizens. In Nebraska and in the Midwest, research found that early childhood professionals receiving higher compensation, including wages and benefits, provided higher observed quality of care. Providers receiving higher levels of compensation are more likely to provide positive developmental experiences for young children, such as activities promoting language and literacy, large and small motor development, music, movement, artistic expression, learning activities, and strong social relationships (Thornburg, Edwards, Peterson, Raikes, Torquati, Summers, Wilcox, Hegland & Atwater, 2005). Such providers are also

more likely to be warm and nurturing, and provide a safe and healthy environment for young children (Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001).

Policy makers and state administrators need to value the role of the early childhood teacher by providing a classification system that links qualification to salaries and positions. Compensation initiatives for early childhood teachers should be brought into discussion and linked to the quality rating system. Studies by Bowman et al. (2001) and Barnett (2004) confirm the early childhood field as one of the lowest paying fields.

Implications for Research

Several teachers who completed the teacher survey had a bachelor's degree in a related filed (elementary or secondary education) and other fields (chemistry, holistic education). None of them volunteered for the interview and observation. Another aspect of the lack of education in the early childhood field is that there are many teachers in the field who have four-year degrees in subjects that are not early childhood education. Investigating the perspectives of these teachers and comparing the results with teachers who hold an early childhood education/child development bachelor's degree may indicate further similar or different beliefs on quality in early childhood education. Results from Saluja et al. (2002) and Cassidy et. al. (1995) indicated teachers with specialized early childhood degrees had practices that are relevant to child development and professional development practices.

As this study was a qualitative study that provided an in-depth look at only three teachers with different educational backgrounds, other qualities as well as ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status may have impacted the results from each teacher.

Investigating beliefs of teachers with the same qualifications may provide information on dynamics such ethnicity and demographics. Wishard et.al (2003) conducted a study to measure the intensity of caregiver-child involvement to capture positive initiations, and facilitate peer interaction. Their observation also involved snapshots for learning and play activities to capture activity as set up by the teacher. They found a positive correlation between a teacher's practices and their culture, ethnicity and level of education.

While there is no available research on comparing early childhood teachers with an associate degree in early childhood education and early childhood teachers with a bachelor degree in early childhood education, this study found that the classroom practices of the associate's degree teacher and the bachelor degree teacher were matching. Investigating associate degree and bachelor degree classroom practices will be helpful in decisions regarding limited funds available for teachers' preparation programs.

Conclusion

As more states implement quality rating systems in United States, more teachers are coming to the realization that their role is more than just what is widely perceived as "baby-sitting." They realize their role as educators, and they are eager for specialized training and education that will help them prepare children for school. But these teachers are challenged by how the public and families perceive their role, the lack of adequate benefits and compensation they receive, and the lack of structure and support they sometimes face within their programs. Given the strong link between teacher education and quality outcomes in early childhood education, it is vital that guidelines are established to ensure that teachers have adequate education and training. It is also important that programs be held accountable for the support and feedback provided to

teachers and that teachers are adequately compensated for the educational services they are providing. Meeting these objectives would result in higher quality programs and thus optimal developmental and educational opportunities for the young children in those programs.

The call to professionalize the field of early childhood education has been sounding for decades. Policies should function to support early childhood professionals so that they can provide high quality care and education for young children. This study recommends that child care policy makers should provide economic incentives for early childhood professionals to enhance the quality of care and education in their programs, increase compensation for early childhood professionals providing high quality care for children whose tuition is paid by state subsidies, develop strategies to maintain competitive wages and benefits for providers in the child care workforce in order to retain the most talented professionals, and encourage business and industry to invest in high quality child care as an investment in their own workforce.

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APPENDIX A
PROGRAM LETTER

2/10/2011

Dear_____,
I would like to request the participation of your program in my doctoral research "Inside perspectives on early childhood program quality: a case study of teachers' beliefs and embedded practices of quality."

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' beliefs about quality in early childhood programs and how they embed these perspectives in their teaching practices. Findings from this study may help early childhood programs understanding teachers' professional development needs.
I am looking for three teachers to participate in the study. To be eligible to participate in this study, each teacher must be working in _____ program and have either a high school diploma, an associate's degree in early childhood education, or a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development. All of the teachers at your agency's multiple sites will complete a teacher survey. I will provide you with the results of the survey, in order to help your program initially understand how your teachers perceive specific terms of quality. I will also use the survey to recruit the three teachers needed for the study. The survey will not include any identifying information, unless teachers volunteer to participate in the study.

For the purpose of this project, each of the three teachers selected will be interviewed at least three times; each interview will last for one hour. Interviews will take place at a public place such as public library, outside their work place and not during their work hours. In addition, I will observe each of the three teachers once, for at least two hours, during classroom routines and activities, using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The selected teachers will sign informed consent as required by the Institutional Research Board. The anticipated research period is from February to July, 2011.
The research will be completed under supervision of Dr. Pat Clark at Ball State University. Please feel free to contact either myself or Dr. Clark if you have any questions about this research.
Thank You

Principal Investigator: Faculty Advisor:
Hanan T. Osman, Ph.d Candidate   Dr. Pat Clark, Associate Professor
Early Childhood Education   Early Childhood Education
Ball State University   Ball State University
Muncie, IN 46037   Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone (859)492-2030   Telephone (765)285-8571
Email: htosman@bsu.edu   Email: pclark@bsu.edu

APPENDIX B
TEACHER SURVEY

1. Educational Status
(Check one)

___ High School Diploma/GED
___ Working towards a Child Development Associate (CDA)
___ Associate's Degree, what area? _____
___ Bachelor Degree or more, what area? _____

2. Gender
___ Female
___ Male

3. Ethnicity
___ White European
___ African American
___ Latino
___ Asian
___ Others, Specify _____

4. Training

How many workshops/in-service you attend per year?

___ 1-5
___ 6-10
___ 11-15

5. Please describe content of trainings/in-service/workshops

3. Teaching Career

How many total years have you taught?
____ Years

How many years have you taught in this program?
_____ Years

4. Describe your classroom practice regarding:

Emotional Support
Positive Climate (overall emotional tone of the classroom and the connection between teachers and students)

Negative climate (overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom between teachers and students e.g., anger, aggression, irritability).

Teacher Sensitivity (Encompasses teachers' responsivity to students' needs and awareness of students' level of academic and emotional functioning)

Regard for child perspective (The degree to which the teacher's interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view, rather than being solely teacher-drive).

Classroom Management
Behavior Management (Encompasses teachers' ability to use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior, including presenting clear behavioral expectations and minimizing time spent on behavioral issues)

Instructional Format (The degree to which teachers maximize students' engagement and ability to learn by providing interesting activities, instruction, centers, and materials)

Instructional Support

Concept Development (The degree to which instructional discussions and activities promote students' higher-order thinking skills versus focus on rote and fact-based learning)

Feedback (Considers teachers' provision of feedback focused on expanding learning and understanding (formative evaluation), not correctness or the end product (summative evaluation)

Language Modeling (The quality and amount of teachers' use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques during individual, small-group, and large-group interactions with children)

Note:
This survey is part of doctoral research, if you would like to further participate in the study, please contact Hanan Osman at hosman@bsu.edu or (317)288-4669. Participation in the study is voluntarily. Participant will receive a $25.00 gift certificate to Boarders. If you decide to participate, please fill the following information:
Name: Phone or email:

Disclaimer
Your participation in this study will not affect your T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® INDIANA scholarship. Hanan Osman is a doctoral student at Ball State University and conducting this study as part of completion of doctoral dissertation.

Thank you for participation

APPENSIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) Why did you choose this profession?

2) Upon starting your career in early childhood education, what was your perception of what made a good early childhood teacher, and how has that perception changed?

3) Describe how your training has changed you as a teacher.

4) What do you think is more important: a degree or in-service training?

5) How has education or training changed your understanding of your role as an early childhood teacher?

6) What is your definition of quality early childhood programs?

7) What is your program educational philosophy?

8) Describe your classroom emotional support.

9) Describe your classroom management.

10) What are your behavioral management techniques?

11) What are the instructional learning formats you use in your classroom?

12) What do you know about early childhood standards?

13) What do you know about the quality rating system (Paths to QUALITY)?

14) What do you know about accreditation?

15) What do you think makes a teacher a good teacher?

16) How do you define quality in early childhood programs?

17) What do you think of the training provided? Does training add to your abilities as a teacher?

18) What content of training adds to the quality of your classroom?

19) What aspects of quality are implemented by you as a teacher? What barriers and challenges do you face in implementing quality?

20) What is the role of your program administration in delivering a quality program?

21) What do you think the early childhood profession is lacking that is essential to deliver a quality program and why?

22) What activities in your classroom indicate quality?

23) What do you know you should change in order to have high quality classroom?

24) What support do teachers need in general and you specifically?

APPENDIX D
CLASS OVERVIEW- DOMAINS' DESCRIPTION

Domain	Dimension	Description
Emotional Support	1. Positive Climate	Reflects the overall emotional tone of the classroom and the connection between teachers and students.
	2. Negative Climate	Reflects overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom between teachers and students (e.g., anger, aggression, irritability).
	3. Teacher Sensitivity	Encompasses teachers' responsivity to students' needs and awareness of students' level of academic and emotional functioning
	4. Regard for Student Perspectives	The degree to which the teacher's interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view, rather than being solely teacher-driven.
Classroom Management	5. Behavior Management	Encompasses teachers' ability to use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior, including presenting clear behavioral expectations and minimizing time spent on behavioral issues.
	6. Productivity	Considers how well teachers manage instructional time and routines so that students have the greatest number of opportunities to learn.
	7. Instructional Learning Formats	The degree to which teachers maximize students' engagement and ability to learn by providing interesting activities, instruction, centers, and materials.
Instructional Support	8. Concept Development	The degree to which instructional discussions and activities promote students' higher-order thinking skills versus focus on rote and fact-based learning.
	9. Quality of Feedback	Considers teachers' provision of feedback focused on expanding learning and understanding (formative evaluation), not correctness or the end product (summative evaluation).
	10. Language Modeling	The quality and amount of teachers' use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques during individual, small-group, and large-group interactions with children.

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APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title

Inside perspectives on early childhood program quality: a case study of teachers' beliefs and embedded practices of quality

Study Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' beliefs about quality of early childhood programs and how they embed these perspectives in their teaching practices. Findings from this study may help early childhood programs understanding teachers' professional development needs.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criterion

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be working in the selected early childhood program and have either a high school diploma, an associates degree in early childhood education, or a bachelors degree in early childhood education or child development.

Participation Procedures and Duration

For the purpose of this project you will be interviewed at least three times; each interview will last for one hour. In addition, you will be observed one time in your classroom by the researcher using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) for at least two hours during routines and classroom activities.

Audio or Video Tapes

For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio taped. Any names on the audiotape and observation notes will be changed and coded to pseudonyms when the tapes are transcribed. The tapes will be stored in locking file cabinet in the researcher's office for three years and then will be erased.

Disclosure of Alternative Procedures

N/A

Data Confidentiality or Anonymity

All data will be maintained as confidential. No identifying information such as names will appear in any publications or presentation of the data.

Storage of Data

Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office for three years and will then be shredded. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on researcher's password protected computer for three years, then deleted.

Risks of Discomfort

There is no anticipated risk from participating in this research. You may choose not to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable and you may quit the study at any time.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the researcher. Please feel free to ask any questions of the researcher before signing this form and at any time during the study.

Benefits

While there are no expected benefits for individuals participating in the study, the results of the study may help us understand the professional development needs of early childhood teachers.

IRB Contact Information

For one's right as a research subject, you may contact the following: Research Compliance, Sponsored Programs Office, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu

Study Title Inside perspectives on early childhood program quality: a case study of teachers' beliefs and embedded practices of quality

****

Consent

1, _____, agrees to participate in this research project entitled, "Inside perspectives on early childhood program quality: a case study of teachers' beliefs and embedded practices of quality." I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on previous page) in this study.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator: Faculty Advisor:

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