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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA: A CASE STUDY WITH

IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHIOPIAN IMMIGRANTS

by

Fadila Adam

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate in Education.

Hamline University

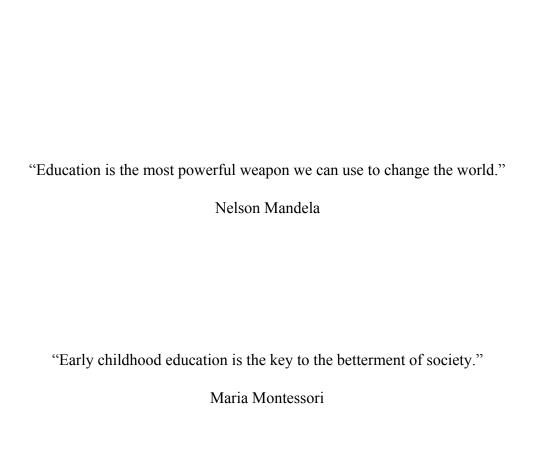St. Paul, MN

May 2020

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my committee members: Trish Harvey, Mohamed Mwamzandi, and Ellen Radel, who supported me through this incredible journey. Your advice, invaluable assistance, and encouragement have empowered me to complete my dissertation. I am grateful for Sara Wise's dedicated support and guidance. I am very appreciative to individuals who participated in this study; your input has made this research study possible.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my parents, Abdalla Doyo and Badria Abdulkadir, who supported me through my lifetime of education. I'm deeply indebted to my lovely children, Aisha, Hamza, Asmaa, Yusra, and Najma, who gave me the courage to overcome any obstacles in life in order to graduate with honors. Your mommy is so proud that you let me complete this dissertation with your love and support. I'm extremely grateful to my warmhearted partner, who supported me in every step in completing my dissertation. My success would not have been possible without the support and nurturing of my dearest, outstanding husband, Yahya Adam.

"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world."

Nelson Mandela

"Early childhood education is the key to the betterment of society."

Maria Montessori

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As an early childhood educator, I facilitate learning, support families, and provide meaningful resources to create better living conditions for families. I joined the doctoral program in education at Hamline University to advance my career as well as to find answers to why early childhood education was not given much attention and opportunity in the Ethiopian schools. Despite the importance of early childhood education as it prepares children for school readiness, as well as building a strong foundation in their lives (UNESCO, 2006a), the Ethiopian government has minimal interventions, preschool education is not compulsory, and none of the budget was allocated towards early learning (Woldehanna, 2011). With fifteen years of early childhood experiences and educational leadership in our program, I wanted to investigate early childhood education in Ethiopia where I originated. I focused on a qualitative case study to find out Ethiopia's research-based practice that was used in early childhood settings. This is important to me because I care about my country and I want to educate Ethiopian families that I work with here in St. Paul, Minnesota, on the importance of early childhood education.

As an early childhood educator, it is my responsibility to support families in their well being and promote positive learning for children as a whole. My professional experiences have provided me with effective skills to study other educational systems abroad. My doctoral degree in education has guided me in my current teaching as well as helped me advocate for the early childhood education system in Ethiopia. In my research, I am interested in addressing the following research questions in relation to

developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) : 1) *What are the early childhood teaching methodologies being used in the Ethiopian education system?* 2) *What are the teachers' qualifications in Ethiopian early childhood education?* and 3) *What are teachers' perceptions of early childhood education in Ethiopia?* I conducted a qualitative case study in one of the early childhood schools in the Addis Ababa region in Ethiopia for a period of a month (November 6-December 6, 2019).

My Journey

My career and experiences have prepared me to find out why some Ethiopian families here in St. Paul, Minnesota struggled to take advantage of early childhood education in the environment where there are many possibilities. In addition, I want to understand why early childhood education was not valued in Ethiopian communities. Having a strong background in early childhood education has placed me in the position to find answers in order to assist families here in St. Paul, as well as anyone who is interested in the topic. My journey has shaped me to explore other learning opportunities in early childhood education such as Ethiopian research-based practices, and their teaching methodologies.

As a younger learner, I started my schooling in Kenya as a first grader even though I originated from Ethiopia. In Kenya, early childhood education is not common, so most students are first introduced to formal education in the first grade. I did not learn much about early childhood learning until college. My undergraduate experiences with the educational system in the United States gave me the opportunity to broaden my knowledge in the early childhood field. Since my educational foundation began as a first

grader, it was eye-opening for me to investigate and explore the early childhood field from the American educational perspective. I was amazed at the extent to which attention and support were given to young learners. The comprehensive system that was put in place to facilitate their learning process was far beyond anything that I had experienced as a young learner. I did not have the opportunity to engage in early learning due to cultural and educational system limitations.

In my observations, the education system in Ethiopia differed greatly in its approach compared to the American educational system. I struggled in school because there were not many resources that supported me. The reason became clear to me as I was introduced to Early Childhood Learning as a sophomore in college. Early childhood coursework was not part of the education curriculum in Kenya when I was a young learner. Choosing to specialize in the early childhood field gave me a better understanding of teaching young children and of its invaluable contribution to the educational process. According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2019), early childhood is defined "as the period from birth to eight years old, is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak. During this stage, children are highly influenced by the environment and the people that surround them" (para 1). By taking this path as an early childhood education specialist, I am working to make sure that other children have a better early childhood education than I received. Furthermore, I have been able to expand my knowledge and skills, fulfill my personal goals, become a productive community member, and be instrumental in the educational process of young learners.

Fifteen years ago, I began my career in Early Childhood education. I currently work in an Early Childhood program (Early Head Start) at Community Action of Ramsey and Washington Counties (CAPRW) in St. Paul, Minnesota. As an educator who immigrated to the U.S., I enjoy working with families from diverse cultural backgrounds. As a home visitor/parent educator, I focus my teaching and support on families and their children, ages birth to three years old. I have a caseload of eleven families that I visit on a weekly basis. During my home visits, parents are encouraged to share their cultural experiences. I support families with their needs, educate them on topics such as parenting or school readiness, and help them teach their children the fundamentals of early learning. I also provide them with useful resources in order to easily transition them into the school system.

Every experience that I have engaged in has taught me lessons that were beneficial in my teaching career. I believe that every child, regardless of their background, has the right to quality education. In the early childhood program, I attend conferences and trainings to acquire new information that is significant in my field and provide support to my working families. In addition, I engage in monthly small and large professional group discussions. In this environment, as a team of home visitors, we support and learn from each other. For students who need extra help, I refer them to additional support, such as special needs services. In the home visiting program, parents and children are both engaged in the learning process and are allowed to interact in a safe and comfortable environment. This process is also very enriching for me as a facilitator and has improved my ability to better serve the community. Moreover, these experiences

enable me to be compassionate and more understanding of others as I engage in early childhood education in Ethiopia. For example, my work with families in Minnesota has given me a better understanding of the culture of Ethiopia and also some of the beliefs and values that Ethiopian people hold around education.

As a supportive community member, it is important for me to respect the values and ideas of the families I serve. Through community engagement, families' contributions are respected and shared responsibilities are recognized. Block (2009) stated that:

> Communities are built from the assets and gifts of their citizens, not from the citizens' needs or deficiencies. Organized, professionalized systems are capable of delivering services, but only associational life is capable of delivering care. Sustainable transformation is constructed in those places where citizens choose to come together to produce a desired future. (p. 14)

It is my responsibility as a leader to guide new families to the relevant resources. Most of these families have strength and courage to overcome the obstacles they encountered in their homeland. Since the majority of them are new to this country, and they are low income, they face several challenges, such as language barriers, poor living conditions, and lack of transportation. During the family visit, an interpreter who speaks the family's native language accompanies me to help the parents communicate their needs. For example, with the interpreter and parents present, I assist in completing forms that Ramsey County requires in order to issue benefits to the family. These benefits, such as food, housing, and medical coverage, are essential for families to survive. "Programs

assist families in meeting their own personal goals and achieving self-sufficiency across a wide variety of domains, such as housing stability, continued education, and financial security" (Head Start, 2020a, para 1). Moreover, I connect families to community resources in order to make them aware of additional support programs that are available to them. It is a learning experience as well as a beneficial process that helps families participate in neighborhood services.

The Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties (2018) stated that, "Early Head Start's mission is to help children and parents achieve their full potential through high-quality child development and family support services" (para 1). One such service focuses on providing quality education to pregnant mothers and young children. As a home visitor/parent educator, I provide educational materials to engage families in early learning, as well as support them in their parenting practices. Throughout this coaching and mentoring process, I engage in building a positive relationship among family members.

I am interested in investigating early childhood education in Ethiopia in part because of my ethnicity. I am Ethiopian, although I was raised and educated in Kenya before I joined the American education system years ago. But also I hope to learn about Ethiopian early childhood education in order to better serve Ethiopian families that I work with here in the United States, as well as families in Ethiopia. With my background knowledge, I plan to share my research outcomes with the school; in addition, I hope to provide ideas and input on how to work with children and their families in the Ethiopian school system.

As a researcher, it is important for me to investigate the early childhood practices used in Ethiopia's educational system. Since the private sector has the majority of influence on early childhood education across Ethiopia, I am interested in exploring an early childhood center in Addis Ababa where "the private sector, NGOs [Non-Government Organizations] and the community usually invest in the development of pre-school programs and facilities. The parents support their children through the payment of tuition fees and provision of educational materials" (UNESCO, 2006b, p. 4). This implies that children from low-income families and those who live outside the urban areas do not have the privilege of attending school. In Ethiopia, compulsory education spans from ages 7 to 12. Even though pre-primary education and kindergartens (ages 4 to 6) are operated by private sectors, the ministry of education has the power to develop the curriculum, issue institutional licenses, and set supervision for the early childhood programs. In addition, there is no evidence that early childhood learning takes place before the age of three (UNESCO, 2006b).

Unfortunately, my philosophy on early childhood education conflicts with the way that Ethiopian early childhood education is presented. "Quality basic education, as an essential tool of development, is still far from reaching millions of children and their families in Ethiopia" (Edo, Ali, & Perez, 2002, p. 3). It was eye-opening for me to learn that early childhood in Ethiopia is one of the most neglected sectors in education. Mulugeta (2015) stated that children lack appropriate educational materials and spaces to play and explore learning: "Most of the pre-schools are located in unsafe places or are not

appropriate for pre-school education because the facilities were not in line with the health and developmental needs of young children" (p. 138).

In Ethiopian early childhood education, family wealth is a significant factor in children's educational opportunities. A study presented by Woldehanna (2016) stated that "the results show that the baseline family wealth index has a significant effect on the probability of preschool enrollment, where children from high-income families tend to have much higher probabilities of enrollment than children from lower-income families" (p. 512). Parent education is also a factor in children's enrollment, whereas family migration and separation has been a factor in lowered enrollment opportunities. The data also indicated that children with preschool experiences have significantly higher cognitive scores compared to children without preschool experiences. In addition, "Children with preschool experience were more likely to enroll in formal schooling at age seven with better early grade progression at age eight, than those without these experiences" (Woldehanna, 2016, p. 513). Other studies concluded that children who were given the opportunity to attend preschool centers had better outcomes than children without a preschool education (Woldehanna & Araya, 2017). "In spite of the increased recognition of the importance of learning in the early years, in Ethiopia, too many children still do not have access to any form of early education programs before starting school" (Education for All, 2015, p. 6).

I conducted a qualitative case study in the Addis Ababa region because of the availability of preschool centers there. English is one of the main languages spoken in Addis Ababa compared to other cities in Ethiopia. However, in order to get a better

glimpse of the Ethiopian early childhood setting, I requested to conduct my research in a regular school and not in private schools. Due to language needs, the director of the schools in Addis Ababa suggested one of the schools for my choice of research. The study included data collected from classroom observations, teachers' interviews, and physical artifacts such as curriculum. This process of data collection lasted for a month (November 6-December 6, 2019) in order for me to gather enough information at the school. I used the formal classroom observation form that I created which focused on ten effective Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) teaching strategies. NAEYC (2020) described DAP as a framework designed to reflect research-based practices that promote a child's optimal learning and development. This study is significant for parents, teachers, administrators and anyone who is interested in the topic here in the Twin Cities and abroad.

In summary, as an early childhood educator, it is my responsibility to support families in improving their living standards through education and to provide them with useful resources. Even though early childhood education has been proven to be beneficial to young children, the Ethiopian government struggles to provide the basic right to many children in the country. Despite studies that have supported the concept that early learning builds a strong foundation in children's lives and reinforces brain development (Center on the Developing Child, 2020; Kassam, 2020; Gallagher, 2015), the Ethiopian government has not emphasized enough on early learning since their mandatory schooling has been established at age seven. Moreover, early childhood education has been unevenly established in Ethiopian communities.

Conclusion

My educational experiences and career advancement gave me the courage and tools to explore Ethiopian's education system. In my study, I wanted to find out if research-based practice (developmentally appropriate practice), as presented by NAEYC (2009), has been enforced in Ethiopian's early childhood education. Throughout a qualitative case study, I gathered data that supported answering my research guiding questions. In this study, my hope was to find out why some Ethiopian families in St. Paul, Minnesota lacked motivation in taking advantage of early education. With the same lens, I am also interested in knowing more about early childhood education in Ethiopia. The next chapter details more information regarding Ethiopian early childhood education.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

In this study I researched early childhood education in Ethiopia where I originated. Early childhood is defined "as the period from birth to eight years old, is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak. During this stage, children are highly influenced by the environment and the people that surround them" (UNESCO, 2019, para 1). In my review of related studies, I discovered that early childhood learning from birth to three years has not been widely researched in the Ethiopian educational system. Due to the dearth in research that serves ages birth to three, I focused on children ages four to six in the early childhood programs.

This chapter describes early childhood education in Ethiopia. Having the knowledge from the literature review, as well as many years of experiences in early learning enabled me to find answers why some Ethiopian families in St. Paul were not interested in early childhood education. In addition, I investigated why early childhood education was not widely accessible in the Ethiopian communities. My research centered on the following areas: early childhood learning with the Early Head Start model, a summary of developmentally appropriate practice, an overview of early childhood in Ethiopia, and teachers' qualifications and preschool enrollment in the early childhood setting in Ethiopia. My main goal was to answer the research guiding questions as follows: 1) *What are the early childhood teaching methodologies being used in the Ethiopian education system?* 2) *What are the teachers' qualifications in Ethiopian early childhood education?* and 3) *What are teachers' perceptions of early childhood*

education in Ethiopia? The literature review presents information regarding early childhood education in Ethiopia. I examined the roles of students, parents, teachers, and school administrators in order to effectively understand early childhood education in Ethiopia.

Early Childhood Learning: Early Head Start Model

The learning that occurs in early childhood sets the stage for all future learning and development of the child into adulthood. Healthy brain development is one of several factors that contribute to positive early childhood learning. Brain development is rapid in early childhood, and is crucial to learning. The process of brain development, which is the basic architecture of the brain, occurs over a period of time. It is "an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. Early experiences affect the quality of that architecture by establishing either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the learning, health and behavior that follow" (Center on the Developing Child, 2020, p. 1). One major process of brain development, *serve and return*, is the volley interaction between the child and caregiver where the child does something and the caregiver responds appropriately. In the absence of *serve and return*, the brain's architecture does not perform its function, which will affect a child's learning and behavior.

Further, the power of the brain to accommodate flexibility of changes happens in the early years in a child's life; brain flexibility lessens as it becomes mature and handles complex functions (CDC, 2020). "A growth-promoting environment that provides adequate nutrients, is free of toxins and is rich in social interactions with responsive

caregivers prepares the developing brain to function well in a range of circumstances"
(Center on the Developing Child, 2016, p. 7).

Kassam (2020) in a TED talk, "How to Expand your Baby's Potential with
Education from Birth," pointed out that 80% of brain development occurs before age
three. Kassam also emphasized that children's early years of life lay the foundations for
future learning. Children's early experiences in life predict future success. Since Kassam
is an internationally certified Montessori teacher at the infant, toddler and preschool
level, their background knowledge and experiences speak to the importance of early
childhood education. Kassam mentioned that early learning was not prioritized even
though researchers have shown that children's brains accumulate information at large
before age three. It is important for parents and educators to invest in the early years for
children's success. Kassam also stated that preparing a learning environment that is rich
with experiences starts with a few toys at the children's level in order to effectively
explore learning independently. Kassam highlighted that electronic toys put little ones
into a passive mode, while wooden toys encourage young children to engage in
creativity. Kassam emphasized that a creative learning environment set at a child's level
promotes children's learning, imagination, and independence. Observing children closely
enables caregivers to adapt the environment to meet a child's learning needs (Kassam,
2020).

In Gallagher's TED Talk "The Healthy Child: Assembly Required" (2015),
Gallagher, who is a scientist and clinical associate professor at the University of North
Carolina, Chapel Hill, School of Education, elaborated the importance of early childhood

learning. Gallagher stated, "healthy children do not come pre-assembled, work is required." Gallagher shared that babies who received intervention of high quality child care had better outcomes compared to babies who did not receive any intervention. Investment in high quality learning for babies had positive impacts on adult lives. Gallagher pointed out that a healthy environment, language interaction, and warm interactions with adults are required for babies to become productive citizens of the future (Gallagher, 2015).

Another factor that contributes to early learning is the opportunity for young children to explore in a high-quality learning environment. A well-organized classroom that is creatively designed encourages children to participate and engage in learning (Head Start, 2020b). "Young children strive to make sense of the world in which they live. They try to organize the visual images and concrete objects in their environment into meaningful systems" (Isbell, 2020, p. 1). It is important that educators provide learning materials for students that will support their development and learning. An educator should "provide sufficient variety and quality, but not so much as to overwhelm the children. And plan for integration of learning across domains, as well as what you'll need to individualize for the children in your group" (Head Start, 2020b). Creative learning environments build a child's imagination and foster successful learning. For these reasons, educators must invest in early learning in order for children to have a meaningful and productive life.

Effective planning, nurturing, and teaching practices are also important building blocks in early childhood learning. These teaching practices allow students to "foster

trust and emotional security; are communication and language rich; and promote critical thinking and problem-solving. They also support social, emotional, behavioral, and language development; provide supportive feedback for learning; and motivate continued effort" (Head Start, 2020d, para 1). As educators, it is important to utilize these effective teaching practices to foster a strong learning foundation for young children.

Head Start (2020c) presented an effective framework that supports early childhood learning (birth to 5 years old) as an essential element in teaching practices (see Figure 1 on pg. 23). The house framework has five elements: foundation, first pillar, second pillar, roof, and center. In the foundation section, teachers provide nurturing, responsive and effective interactions and engaging environments. Implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices are central to the first pillar. The second pillar covers the ideas of using screening and ongoing assessment of children's skills. The roof section represents highly individualized teaching and learning, while parent and family engagement is the focus of the center section. With this house framework, educators are well prepared to teach young learners and are equipped to effectively support families. The house framework also establishes that education is a collaborative effort that requires a strong connection between students, parents, and teachers.

Figure 1. House Framework (Head Start, 2020c)

The house framework has been implemented in the Early Head Start programs. Early Head Start is a federally funded, community-based program that was established after the reauthorization of the Head Start Act in 1994. The program was designed to serve infants, toddlers under age 3, and pregnant women. "Early Head Start provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants and toddlers and their families, and pregnant women and their families" (Central Missouri Community Action: Early Head Start, 2020, para 1). The program was established to provide a safe learning environment and to enhance the quality of care in the areas of cognitive, physical, and social and emotional development for infants and toddlers. The Early Head Start program acknowledges parents as their children's first teachers and helps them achieve self sufficiency (CMCA, 2020).

Early Head Start also supports comprehensive child development services in the home. Home visitors guide parents in ways to enrich their children's development and improve school readiness. They also assist families in identifying their strengths and

outlining future goals. Home visitors contribute to positive birth outcomes by providing important information to pregnant women. They educate parents on how to be their children's first teacher and connect them to other support systems within the community. According to the Florida State University Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy (2016):

> Our Home Visitors encourage families to participate in Group Socializations, otherwise known as 'Play Groups.' Play groups help parents discover new learning activities to do with their children at home. Families meet and form friendships with others in the program. These linkages broaden the networks of support, and offer opportunities to contribute and help each other. This leads to a strong sense of belonging within the community. (para 1)

Apart from learning about their children's development, parents have the chance to participate in the Parent Committee that makes decisions for their programs. Parents are also encouraged to join the program's Policy Council to effectively advocate for their children and community.

Early Head Start principles were designed to establish healthy attachments between parents and their children. Services were built to emphasize strengths-based and relationship-centered approaches in order for families to address their needs beginning during pregnancy and continuing until the age of three years (Head Start, 2016). The program was based on four main elements: child development, family development, community building, and staff development.

Early Head Start programs were created to serve the families through both full-day and full-year program options to ensure a supportive setting, build strong relationships, and provide developmentally appropriate care and services. Families can enroll their children in the program option that best fits their needs. The Early Head Start program services include: center-based, home-based, and family child care, or a combination of those services (Head Start, 2016).

In general, the Early Head Start program has been a supportive system for many low-income families in our communities. Families have the opportunity to grow in safe, healthy environments and learn how to independently fulfill their needs. The program fosters strong relationship bonds between children and their parents. In addition, parents have the power to advocate for their children and be part of the community. Overall, the Early Head Start program improves the living conditions of families in need.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Summary

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) acknowledges and supports the effort of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) in a child's early years of learning. DAP is a framework designed to reflect research based practices that promote a child's optimal learning and development. "DAP is the heart of all the NAEYC's work and resources" (NAEYC, 2020, para 2). Educators and caregivers use developmentally appropriate practice to meet children where they are while challenging them to meet their achievable goals.

According to Copple and Bredekamp (2009), in developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), the teachers should understand their students well enough to support

them in reaching their achievable goals as well as challenging goals. "Developmentally

appropriate practice does not make things easier for children. Rather, it means ensuring

that goals and experiences are suited to their learning and development *and* challenging

enough to promote their progress and interest" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. xii). In

developmentally appropriate programs, children benefit from experiences that are

presented through child-guided as well as teacher-guided techniques. They also gain

knowledge from activities that are planned, teacher-guided, interactive small-group and

large group experiences (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) stated that there are five key areas that early

childhood professionals presented in developmentally appropriate practices. These

practices are: 1) creating a caring community of learners, 2) teaching to enhance

development and learning, 3) planning curriculum to achieve important goals, 4)

assessing children's development and learning, and 5) establishing reciprocal

relationships with families.

First, in developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), professionals create a

caring community of learners that supports children's learning and development. "The

foundation for the community is a consistent, positive, caring relationship between the

adults and children, among children, among teachers, and between teachers and families"

(Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 16). In a caring community of learners, everyone

contributes to one another's well-being and learning. Secondly, in the approach of the

developmentally appropriate teaching practice, students benefit from both adult-guided as

well as child-guided experiences because in both situations it is the teacher's

responsibility to stimulate, direct, and support children's learning and their development (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Third, in developmentally appropriate practice, teachers plan using a specific curriculum so that students can achieve their learning goals. Children benefit from programs that have a well-established curriculum that has been planned and implemented and Early childhood programs should have a curriculum that is in written form. "Teachers use the curriculum and their knowledge of children's interests in planning relevant, engaging learning experiences; and they keep the curriculum in mind in their interactions with the children throughout the day" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 20). Effective curriculums guide teachers in implementing significant teaching while taking into consideration students' learning goals and their interests.

Fourth, it is important for teachers to assess students' learning goals and their development in order to effectively plan, implement, and evaluate the classroom experiences in which learning takes place. "Teachers cannot be intentional about helping children to progress unless they know where each child is with respect to learning goals" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 22).

Lastly, for students' success, teachers must establish reciprocal relations with families. The developmentally appropriate practice emphasizes the need to work in collaboration with parents while maintaining mutual respect, work on shared goals, and to be able to negotiate conflicts toward achieving shared goals (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Effective teachers also use a variety of strategies during teaching to meet students' interests and learning goals. They intentionally implement scaffolding to assist students toward progression in all areas of learning and development. In developmentally appropriate practice, teachers focus on goals that are challenging and achievable while teaching students. "The most effective learning experiences build on what children already know and can do but also encourage them to stretch a reasonable amount toward a new level of achievement" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 38).

Besides scaffolding (the process where teachers gradually reduce the support as children learn new skills or understanding), in developmentally appropriate practice, effective teachers use different learning venues of teaching to address a variety of learning purposes in the early childhood classroom environment. In a classroom of students above age 3, at least four forms of learning need to happen. These four learning formats are large groups, small groups, play/learning centers, and daily routines (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Students have the opportunities to explore different learning venues with teachers' support throughout the day.

Abu-Jaber and Gheith (2010) shared that research shows that teachers who engaged in developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) had a significantly better gain on scaffolding strategies after the training compared to teachers who did not engage in developmentally appropriate practice. Students who participated in DAP curricula had the opportunity to explore problem-solving, critical thinking, and intellectual risk-taking. "DAP provides children with choices that allow for individual differences and ensure success for all" (Abu-Jaber & Gheith, 2010, p. 70). Moreover, teachers demonstrated that

students who participated in developmentally appropriate practice showed benefits in a child-centered approach compared to students who did not participate in developmentally appropriate practice (Abu-Jaber & Gheith, 2010).

According to Lee, Baik, and Charlesworth (2006), in developmentally appropriate practice, teachers provide the opportunities for students to engage in active explorations, hands-on activities, and encourage students to use natural curiosity. DAP helps students maximize their learning in small groups where students are capable of learning exploration with or without adult guidance. Lee, Baik, and Charlesworth (2006) pointed out that in an experimental study "DAP guidelines can provide the foundation for concrete teaching skills or strategies for scaffolding and that a teacher training program that incorporate such concrete teaching skills and strategies of scaffolding can have a positive effects on Korean kindergarten teachers with DAP beliefs" (p. 942). Teachers who used developmentally appropriate practice seemed to have effective strategies in teaching techniques and participated in ongoing professional development activities.

Bredekamp and Copple (1997) stated that developmentally inappropriate practices include learning environments with insufficient supplies of learning materials, large classes, and insufficient adult-child ratios. "Class sizes too big and adult-child ratios inadequate-making it difficult for teachers to know children and their families well" (p. 123). Copple and Bredekamp (2009) elaborated on the difference between developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practice (see Table 1 on p. 30).

Table 1

Developmentally Appropriate and Inappropriate Teacher Practices (adapted from Copple & Bredekamp, 2009)

Developmentally Appropriate	Inappropriate Practice
Teachers allow extended time periods during learning centers (at least 60 minutes) in order for children to engage and explore activity deeply, i.e., dramatic play, construction, etc. (p. 153)	The time given to students is too brief (15 to 20 minutes) to engage in any complex activities. (p. 153)
Teachers use different formats of teaching such as large groups, small groups, choice time (in interest areas), and routines to meet students' learning goals.(p. 154)	Teachers overuse one or two teaching formats in the classroom. Small group approach is not taken into consideration, which is the effective learning style. (p. 154)
Teachers present many chances for students to work together with each other in order to solve problems as well as develop social skills. (p. 155)	Teachers provide minimal opportunities for students to engage in social interaction with one other. (p. 155)
Teachers use a written curriculum to plan teaching and to adjust teaching styles and learning experiences in order to meet program goals. (p. 161)	Teachers lack flexibility or do not adapt curriculum (if any published by school) to meet students' interests. (p. 161)
Teachers create many opportunities for students to engage throughout the day in fine motor skills, i.e., puzzles, playdough, drawing, blocks, etc. Teachers provide scaffolding whenever needed among students. (p. 164)	Teachers provide fine motor activities that are too difficult for students to tackle or set unrealistic expectations. (p. 164)
During daily teaching, teachers read aloud to students both in small and large groups in order to promote students' engagement as well as comprehension. (p. 165)	Teachers fail to promote student enjoyment and engagement during reading or they do not read daily to students. (p. 167)
Teachers encourage and help students to participate in their own writing efforts. Teachers display students' writing in the classroom. They also display alphabet and shapes for students to explore. (p. 169)	Teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in worksheets i.e., tracing letters and rote exercises, in order to improve their handwriting. (p. 169)

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is a healthy development approach used by educators or caregivers in early years as a foundation to build a child's future well-being and success. Teachers need to understand children's interests and their developmentally appropriate practice in order to effectively support them in achieving their goals. As an educator, it is important for me to acknowledge these research-based practices in early childhood education and be able to apply them in my research.

Early Childhood Education in Ethiopia: An Overview

UNESCO (2019) defined early childhood education as the education of young children that occurs from birth through age 8. "Early childhood is a sensitive period marked by rapid transformation in physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development" (UNESCO, 2010, p. 2). NAEYC's "Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs represents a sustained vision for the early childhood field and more specifically for the programs that prepare the professionals working in the field" (2009, p. 1). Children benefit greatly when teachers present a curriculum that is well-planned, and intentionally implemented with cultural sensitivity (NAEYC, 2009).

The UNESCO article presented in 2006 stated that children who participated in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs have demonstrated improvement of school readiness, are more likely to enroll in first grade, and have lower rates of delayed enrollment, dropout, and grade repetition and increased completion and achievement. "Early childhood sets the foundations for life" (UNESCO, 2006a, p. 7). Despite the benefits of early childhood education, Ethiopia's "government has very

limited intervention in this critical stage of education. The point is that preschool education in Ethiopia is not compulsory and neither is any budget allotted by the government for it" (Woldehanna, 2011, p. 116).

In Ethiopia, students begin school at age seven at the primary level. The educational system was designed in the following cycles: primary for six years (ages 7 to 12), lower secondary for four years (ages 13 to 16), and upper secondary for two years (ages 17 to 18). Students face challenges in attending school because of insufficient resources, "approximately 16% of youth have no formal education and 54% of youth have attained at most incomplete primary education, meaning that in total 70% of 15-24 year olds have not completed primary education in Ethiopia" (National Education Profile, 2018, p. 1).

Despite a shortage of resources in many schools, teachers' qualifications play an even more important role in students' success. Teachers' qualifications and experiences in Ethiopia determine whether or not the students are 'on-task' versus 'off-task.' Students demonstrate 'on-task' behavior when they follow the teacher's instructions in the classroom, while 'off-task' behavior proves its opposite. Teachers whose students demonstrate 'on-task' behavior showed that they have better classroom management and are more successful at engaging students in their learning (Frost & Little, 2014).

In addition, teachers who have more teaching experience and have earned degrees are more likely to keep students 'on task' during class activities. Teachers who lack qualification, thus have less experience, have higher chances in leading students 'off-task.' Students have a better opportunity to be involved in student-centered activities

when the class size is small. Students spend limited time 'on task' if they are in large

class sizes. Due to limited resources and economic challenges, there is a shortage of

teachers across the country. "Good quality teachers are very unevenly distributed, with

richer and more urban areas much more likely to have teachers who are better qualified

and not absent. Class sizes also tend to be larger in poorer rural areas" (Frost & Little,

2014, p. 107). Qualified teachers have effective ways of keeping students engaged in

learning especially in urban schools compared to rural schools.

According to Mitchell (2015), teachers in Ethiopia with minimal qualifications do

not have the opportunity to teach in government sectors. They are appointed to teach in

the community schools until they meet the teachers' qualification requirements. These

community schools were established by local communities with support from the *Save*

the Children program. *Save the Children* also sponsors community school teachers

through a certification process. The schools are given government status once all teachers

in the school meet the qualification requirements (Mitchell, 2015). In addition, teachers

who spend more time outside the classroom for preparation positively impact their

students' learning. It is suggested that policymakers should consider allocating more prep

time for teachers in order to invest in quality teaching (Verwimp, 1999).

Ethiopian schools also face challenges in meeting the demand of private tutoring.

Since education is highly valued in Ethiopia, private tutoring is becoming an alternative

to public school (Melese & Abebe, 2017). Private tutoring sessions seem to be in high

demand in the community as students benefit from them greatly. Due to tutoring success

approaches, parents, peers and friends encourage students to join tutoring classes.

Because of tutoring services, students receive more one-on-one attention than they do in school (Melese & Abebe, 2017). Students participate in a very competitive national examination, which pressures parents to provide private tutoring sessions. Ethiopia provides free education all the way through university level, but since private tutoring is growing at such a high rate, education policymakers are concerned as this may increase social inequality between those who can pay for private tutoring and those who cannot, effectively destroying the value of a free education policy. However, teachers are underpaid, making it difficult to meet their living needs. Thus, teachers have created supplemental income through private tutoring. These private tutoring sessions take place after regular classes and are taught by either the same teachers from the mainstream schools or different teachers (Melese & Abebe, 2017).

In Ethiopia, special needs students have limited access to education. In addition, they face hardships such as poverty, war, ignorance, and diseases as Ethiopia is still a developing country. Students with physical disabilities face challenges because they cannot access buildings or other essential structures such as ramps or elevators. Very few special needs students participate in learning due to a shortage of adaptive training resources. Special needs staff are highly needed to support special needs students. "They stressed the need for staff trained in special needs education" (Malle, Pirttima, & Saloviita, 2015, p. 64). Overall, the schools have severe teacher shortages in the areas of special needs, which greatly impacts student learning.

Students with special needs have requested counseling programs to help them select suitable careers. Curriculum and counseling need to be modified in order to address

special needs training as well as special needs students. Persistent efforts from the community are required to change discriminatory attitudes towards students with special needs. In addition, students with physical disabilities need better transportation access and accessibility to colleges and local communities. Studies have shown that sign language interpreters are academically beneficial for students with hearing impairment (Malle, Pirttima, & Saloviita, 2015).

In summary, there are many challenges that early childhood educators face in Ethiopia. Lack of teachers' qualifications and experiences determines how students are being taught in the classroom. Parents are facing challenges with private tutoring as well as a lack of adequate materials for special needs children. Since the Ethiopian government places huge emphasis on learning at age 7, early childhood has not been recognized as part of the learning process. In this study, I highlight the importance of early childhood education in order to present that information to Ethiopian families who are here in Minnesota, United States as well as families in Ethiopia. In general, educators and noneducators need to understand the value of early childhood and the impact it has on a child's life.

Teachers' Qualifications in Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, has a rare concentration of early childhood education programs. Since the government has limited engagement in early childhood and teacher training, the private sector has played a major role in establishing early childhood programs (Tigistu, 2013). In 1986, Addis Ababa secured the Preschool Teachers Training Institute (PTTI), which was the main training in the country. Teachers

spend three months of coursework in preschool preparation. The coursework included 12 modules:1) preschool pedagogy, 2) child psychology, 3) health, 4) nutrition, 5) language development, 6) pre-math, 7) environmental education, 8) art and crafts, 9) music, 10) health and physical education, 11) preschool management and 12) play (Hoot, Szente, & Mebratu, 2004).

In Ethiopia, the majority of preschool teachers have limited training skills. "Currently, in Ethiopia, qualified kindergarten teachers follow a one-year training programme offered by Colleges of Teachers' Education upon completion of grade 10" (Mulugeta, 2015, p. 138). Tigistu (2013) stated that people who worked in the Early Childhood Education Care (ECEC) field have professional qualifications of a bachelor's or master's level of education in either sociology, psychology, geography, multicultural education or educational leadership. In the fields mentioned, individuals with these qualifications had minimal to no connection to early childhood education. "Apart from the kindergarten teachers and teacher trainers, the other groups of personnel do not have direct contact with early childhood settings and are mostly working in management, curriculum development, policy designing, and leadership roles" (Tigistu, 2013, pp. 154-155). Since professional teaching plays an important role in enhancing the quality of education, Ethiopia has made significant efforts in getting teachers to upgrade their qualifications (EFA, 2015).

In Ethiopia, preschool education is managed by the private sector and mainly developed in the urban areas. "Even the large majority of the kindergartens and the teacher training colleges have been owned by the private sector" (Tigistu, 2013, p. 157).

Preschool education has been viewed differently compared to education at higher levels. Since the government has minimal interaction with early childhood sectors, the training fees of primary and secondary teachers are covered by the government, while preschool teachers are required to pay for their own training (Tigistu, 2013).

In early childhood education, curriculum and pedagogy should be excellent because it is fundamental to all early childhood education initiatives.

Curriculum experiences in preschools are planned for a wide range of abilities, and children's abilities should be regarded as fluid rather than fixed, meaning that early childhood educators should anticipate frequent developmental changes in the young child. Keen powers of observation are fundamental to providing quality programs and competent preschool teachers use these thoughtful observations of children to provide relevant supportive educational experiences. (Jalongo et al., 2004, p. 145)

In Ethiopia, preschool education lacks consistency in its curriculum. For example, preschool centers in the Kebele neighborhood and government-owned preschools use the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education, whereas privately owned preschools do not follow the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education. This implies that there is minimal supervision and implementation of the curriculum in Ethiopia's early childhood education system (Mulugeta, 2015). Addisu and Wudu (2019) stated that curriculum was not implemented effectively by teachers as per school policy. "The objectives of the curriculum were unable to address all domains of children's development" (p. 187).

The Ethiopian public school system has limited resources to support their teachers in training in order to effectively teach students. Curriculum does not align nor respond to students' diverse needs or communities. "Efficiency of the education system is low with about 30% of children enrolled in grade 1 dropping out in the first year of school" (Edo, Ali, & Perez, 2002, p. 6). The school system does not incorporate the diverse social-economic and cultural realities of Ethiopia such as nomadic or pastoral lifestyles. Teachers struggle to meet students' needs during teaching. As Haile and Mohammed (2017) stated about Ethiopian education, "Lack of appropriate curriculum deteriorated quality of education that is desired" (p. 30). However, one of the lessons that was drawn from international experience is an effective curriculum that needs to be play-based and designed to cover learners' physical, cognitive, language, social, emotional, cultural, motivational, and artistic needs (Rossiter, 2016). In addition, Copple and Bredekamp (2009) emphasized the importance of curriculum as:

> It provides the framework for developing a coherent set of learning experiences that enables children to reach the identified goals. Whether the curriculum is a published product or one written by teachers, it must be effective and comprehensive in addressing all the developmental domains and important content areas. (p. 42)

It is significant for early childhood educators to implement and follow the constructive curriculum that would engage children in reaching their learning goals.

In conclusion, most preschool programs are managed by the private sector; Ethiopia's government has minimal involvement in the early childhood arena. Teachers

have limited opportunities for training; they are required to pay for their own training. Due to inconsistency in the early childhood curriculum, few teachers follow the curriculum that was set by the Ministry of Education. Overall, Ethiopian's preschool education is given less attention compared to primary and secondary education. In some cases, "A large number of teachers and school heads were not qualified to teach in the ECCEs (Early Childhood Care and Education) as per the national qualification standards" (Dinka, 2017, p. 21).

Preschool Enrollment in Ethiopia

Preschool enrollment in Ethiopia depends on families' economic status. Woldehanna (2016) stated in a study that more than half of urban children had the opportunity to attend preschool, whereas children in rural areas have not experienced preschool. Most children begin preschool at four years old and they are expected to be in preschool for two and a half years before joining primary school at age seven. Ethiopian parents are required to pay for their children while in preschool, and "the subsector is dominated by fee charging preschools," (Woldehanna, 2016, p. 512), which places a burden on families. In Ethiopia, children whose parents are financially capable are able to attend preschool, whereas children whose parents are not financially stable are not able to enroll their children in preschool. Besides, there is a noticeable division between rural and urban preschools. "In urban areas, there is a diversity of non-governmental providers. Wealthier parents tend to send their children to private preschools, while some poorer parents use the limited faith-based facilities. In rural areas, only a few non-governmental organizations provide preschool services" (Tefera, 2018, p. 194).

The study also indicated the importance of preschool on children's cognitive development. When examined between two groups of treatment and control, the preschool (treatment group) demonstrated significantly higher cognitive scores compared to non-preschool (control group). In addition, "preschool experience was found to have a strong impact on enrollment in primary school and grade progression" (Woldehanna, 2016, p. 514) for children in Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) presents inequality of access to education for all the children. Since most of the ECCE programs are located in cities, the majority of rural children have no access to preschool education. It is a struggle for all Ethiopian children to access preschool due to lack of government financial support. Moreover, some preschool classes struggle to meet children's daily needs such as books, toys and other educational materials. In addition, Mulugeta (2015) claimed that "some [Ethiopian] centers lack potable water and could be environmentally inadequate due to lack of space for play and learning because most of them operate in buildings not originally constructed for that purpose" (p. 138). It is a challenge to maintain quality child care in the absence of governmental support. In addition, Ethiopian early childhood education "suffers from lack of quality" (Admas, 2016, p. 65). "Teaching and learning process practice in both private and public was not as per National ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) Quality standard" (Haile & Mohammed, 2017, p. 30).

Another factor that limits access to education in Ethiopia is poverty. Specifically in rural areas, Ethiopian families struggle to make ends meet. Since the majority are farmers, they desperately need their children's labor in order to survive and "they cannot

afford to let their children attend school for more than a couple of years. On the other

hand, in the urban areas, children are generally attending schools up to higher grades, but

only a few are able to attend college" (Szente, Hoot, & Tadesse, 2007, p. 279). When

faced with challenges of survival, educational opportunity is a luxury for rural families in

Ethiopia. Not only do challenges exist in the family homes, schools are suffering, too. For

this reason, there is a huge need for governmental support to improve rural education.

"Without greatly expanded governmental, nongovernmental and private support,

however, educational institutions in Ethiopia are unlikely to create the types of teachers

that children of the world deserve" (Hoot, Szente, & Tadesse, 2006, p. 192).

Governmental help includes financial support for rural families in order for their children

to attend schools or access education.

Conclusion

The literature review presented an overview of Ethiopian early childhood

education. It also provided its model for early childhood learning, a summary of

developmentally appropriate practice, and an overview of early childhood education in

Ethiopia. Teacher qualifications and preschool enrollment also play an important role in

student success. Private tutoring is an ideal way for students to flourish and do well on

their examinations, but due to the cost, it is unavailable to many children. Effective

approaches need to be established so that special needs students have a fair chance in

education.

The literature review pointed out many facts about early childhood education. As

for my understanding, this information and my background knowledge and experiences

gave me the opportunities to unfold the reasons behind some Ethiopian families not being motivated in early childhood education. Throughout this research, I gained a better understanding of early childhood education in Ethiopia and was able to support Ethiopian families here in the United States. The following chapter presented the research methods used and its effective process of data collection.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

As an early childhood educator, it is my professional and personal goal to investigate early childhood education in Ethiopia in order to effectively support families that I work with here in St. Paul, Minnesota. In my teaching, this research information has broadened my knowledge and given me a better understanding of the Ethiopian families' perspectives. With this information, I hope to find answers to why some Ethiopian families here in St. Paul, Minnesota lacked interest in early childhood education. In a broader perspective, I wanted to explore early childhood education in Ethiopia. In my study, I focused on the following research questions: 1) *What are the early childhood teaching methodologies being used in the Ethiopian education system?* 2) *What are the teachers' qualifications in Ethiopian early childhood education?* and 3) *What are teachers' perceptions of early childhood education in Ethiopia?*

In this chapter, I focused on the research paradigm in which I executed a qualitative design. A case study was my effective choice since I was able to collect different sources of information that supported my study. In the case study approach, I gathered data from interviews, classroom observations, and physical artifacts. Moreover, I paid close attention to find out if the research-based approach, which is developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), was part of their teaching practices in Ethiopian early childhood education. More elaborating of the setting and participants of the study were mentioned in this chapter. I conclude with data analysis and the summary of the chapter.

Research Paradigm Rationale

I implemented a qualitative design in which I engaged in "organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 367). In this design, a case study approach was effective because I gathered data in the form of observations/note taking, interviews, and collecting documents such as the curriculum rather than in a controlled environment. Thus, the emphasis is on qualifying what is being said rather than quantifying charts and numbers. This research study took place in a school in the Addis Ababa region. During my four-week research trip I was able to interview ten teachers and to take observational notes during their teaching.

Qualitative Case Study Design

The main advantage of a case study is the convenience of using multiple sources during data collection (Yin, 2017). I chose to conduct a case study because it was an effective approach to collecting data that focused more on interviews and classroom observations. Before my trip to Ethiopia, I submitted an Institutional Review Board (IRB) document for approval. After Hamline University approved my IRB form, I traveled to Ethiopia to conduct the study and collected data within a period of four weeks. I conducted teachers' interviews, classroom observations and gathered artifacts including curriculum for my data. I interviewed ten preschool teachers in one of the early childhood settings in Addis Ababa. I used a checklist tool that aligned with ten effective Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) teaching strategies during classroom observations in order to investigate if teachers used the DAP as it was described and

which was supported by the National Association for the Education of Young Children

(2020). Curriculum documents were collected as part of the data process. The teachers

had the opportunity to review the consent form and sign it before the interview process

began.

I observed the classrooms, and then conducted the teachers' interviews. There

were nine classrooms with three sections including Prep (students ages 6),

KG-kindergarten (students ages 5), and PreKG-pre-kindergarten (students ages 4). Each

section had classroom A, B, and C. I observed all nine classrooms during teaching. The

teachers used both Amharic and English languages. Teachers in Prep and KG classes

used both languages when communicating with students, while teachers in PreKG used

Amharic language. Due to language needs, I interviewed teachers who taught Prep and

KG classrooms and spoke the English language. The interviews took place in the staff

meeting room during teachers' prep hours.

Observation. As Yin (2017) stated, "Observational evidence is often useful in

providing additional information about the topic being studied" (p. 122). During

classroom visits, I used observations as a way of collecting data. I focused on how the

teachers delivered their lessons to the students and how they engaged with the students in

the classroom. I used the Formal Classroom Observation Form that I created, which

focuses on ten effective DAP (Developmentally Appropriate Practice) teaching strategies

(see Appendix B). From the observations collected, I wanted to find out whether the

practices were developmentally appropriate or inappropriate for young learners. "The

observational method relies on a researcher's seeing and hearing things and recording

these observations, rather than relying on subjects' self-report responses to questions or statements" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 208). In this case, I documented classroom activities and other relevant information that I witnessed in the classroom. I implemented a recording system where I paid close attention to how often a particular behavior occurred and its duration. I observed and documented the teaching methodologies that teachers used in the classroom.

Over the course of a month at the school, I observed the classroom activities and documented teaching methodologies using a checklist tool aligned with ten effective DAP teaching strategies. My main goal was to find out if the early childhood center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, implemented DAP as described by NAEYC.

Interviews. "Interviewing is an active process where interviewer and interviewee, through their relationship, produce knowledge" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 21). I conducted interviews and gathered information from the teachers in the school because this was an important technique for collecting data and answering my guiding questions. I interviewed early childhood teachers whom I observed in their classroom using a set of interview questions that I created (see Appendix A).

I was able to gather sufficient information from the interviewees. The interview process can save time if the interviewer has identified suitable candidates and can complete the interviews within a short period of time. Since I had four weeks to collect data, this methodology allowed me to gather more data than if I relied solely on observations.

During the interview process, I recorded the participants. As McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated, "Tape or digital recording the interview ensures completeness of the verbal interaction and provides material for reliability checks" (p. 360). Before proceeding with each interview I obtained consent from all participants. I informed them about the study, confirmed their willingness to participate, and explained that they could withdraw at any time from the study. Moreover, the interview took place in the staff meeting room where teachers did their teaching preparations.

Physical artifacts. In addition to conducting interviews and observing classrooms, I also collected artifacts of the curriculum to support my research. "Physical artifacts may have less potential relevance in the most typical kind of case study. However, when relevant, the artifacts can be an important component in the overall case study" (Yin, 2017, p. 125).

With school administrators' permission, I was able to get a copy of the school's curriculum. I was also given a copy of the school's annual lesson plans which I used as an additional form of documentation, and discussed more in context in the next chapter. Overall, the classroom observations, data from interviews, and the artifacts of the curriculum enabled me to collect sufficient information to support my study.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted entirely within the school. I made connections with the school director prior to my arrival. The school has nine classrooms, which are grouped into three sections. The first section was identified as Prep classrooms; it had three classrooms, Prep A, Prep B, and Prep C. The second section had three classrooms as

well; they were KG (kindergarten) A, KG B and KG C. The last section also had three classrooms: PreKG (pre-kindergarten) A, PreKG B and PreKG C. Every class had two main teachers with approximately 35 students.

Upon arrival in Addis Ababa, I visited the school, made contacts with school administrators, teachers and students, and started building relationships. With the school administrators' approval, I moved forward in exploring the classrooms while documenting my observations. Since I focused on how teachers conduct their teaching, I obtained teachers' consent before the study began. I focused on interviewing ten teachers for my research study.

During my interviews and informal interactions with teachers, I found that teachers from Prep and KG classrooms communicated with me in English, whereas teachers from PreKG classrooms communicated only partially with me in English. The main language spoken in the school was Amharic and I observed that teachers communicated with students in both Amharic and English throughout the day. Due to language needs, I interviewed teachers from Prep and KG classrooms who spoke and understood the English language.

Data Analysis

Based on the data analysis, I gained a better understanding of the early childhood program. Throughout the qualitative study, I was able to construct, as well as understand, the educational influences in the teaching practices used at the school. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) stated, "...research interviews have the purpose of producing knowledge"

(p. 4). I found the qualitative interview to be one of the most effective ways of data collecting in the case study.

I transcribed the interviews by listening to them a few times. Since transcribing was time consuming, I set aside a period of time to focus on transcription. As I transcribed each interview, I gained much information that was especially helpful when I analyzed the data.

> Researchers who transcribe their own interviews will learn much about their own interview style: to some extent they will have the social and emotional aspects of the interviews situation present or reawakened during transcription and will already have started analyzing the meaning of what was said. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 207)

Throughout transcribing, I focused on repeated words or phrases and highlighted them with colored markers. Of the highlighted words and/or phrases, I grouped the words/phrases into themes such as teaching methods, curriculum, requirements of a teaching degree, the community views, appropriate age for students to start learning and early childhood affordability. I explained these themes in detail in the next chapter. I used these themes to analyze the data. In addition to analyzing the interview, I used the observation information and physical artifact to analyze data.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the methods used in the study. A qualitative case study was implemented in order to collect sufficient information for the data. The research focused on interviews, classroom observation and curriculum use at one of the early

childhood education centers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. With the information gathered, the

data was analyzed in a qualitative format. The following chapter presented the results of

the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Chapter four shares the results of the research study including interview results, observation results, and the summary of curriculum gathered as physical artifacts. Throughout this journey, my interest was to find answers for the following research questions: 1) *What are the early childhood teaching methodologies being used in the Ethiopian education system?* 2) *What are the teachers' qualifications in Ethiopian early childhood education?* and 3) *What are teachers' perceptions of early childhood education in Ethiopia?* With these research guiding questions, my goal was to find out more about early childhood education in Ethiopia. Through these results, my purpose was to gain a better understanding of why some Ethiopian families here in St. Paul were not interested in early childhood education.

The interview results are explained in detail and summarized in Table 2 (see p. 54) and Table 3 (see p. 56). Table 2 addressed interview questions 1 and 2 from the first guiding question, and interview question 2 from the second guiding question. Table 3 focused more on interview questions 3, 4 and 7 from the third guiding question. Classroom observations in relation to developmentally appropriate practice and inappropriate practices were analyzed in Table 4 (see p. 58). I concluded the chapter with the summary of curriculum received as a physical artifact. In addition, I described the school/classroom environment where the study took place.

Interview Results. Table 2 provides information that was collected during the interview process with 10 preschool teachers. The numbers on the first column represent

the teachers, followed by themes identified (i.e., teaching methods, curriculum, and the requirement of a teaching degree). When I asked the participants/teachers, "Tell me about your teaching methodologies that you are using in the classroom," participants/teachers gave a variety of methods that were being used in the classroom setting. Teachers identified diverse teaching methods such as question and answer, student-centered activities, demonstration, presentation, visual aids, lecture, storytime, and singing. Even though teachers mentioned different teaching methods used in the classroom, their actual teaching in the classrooms covered lecturing and demonstrations.

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) mentioned that teachers use curriculum which is in written form to guide their planning and implementing learning experiences. With regards to the curriculum, I asked the participants during my interview, "What kind of curriculum are you using to develop the lesson plan?" Nine out of the ten teachers responded that there was no curriculum being used, but teachers indicated that they create their own annual lesson plans from the textbook provided to them by the administration. Teacher 2 stated, "We don't have any curriculum but the school gives us a textbook and guidance. According to that, we {are} going to out {create} the annual lesson plans then we develop weekly lesson plans" (11/19/2019). While Teacher 5 said, "The school doesn't have {a} primary curriculum. The one teacher who came from England. I think she designed the curriculum from England and she designed the book by her own curriculum so we are using the book and we out {create} some annual curriculum lesson plans" (11/26/19). It seems that all of the teachers were familiar with the annual lesson plans that they designed for their classrooms in the beginning of the school year (in

August) and they implemented these annual lesson plans throughout the school year.

These annual lesson plans provide a guide for teachers to implement teaching in the

classrooms but are very different from the curriculum described by Copple and

Bredekamp (2009). They both agreed that teachers need to keep students interested while

planning: "Teachers use the curriculum and their knowledge of children's interests in

planning relevant, engaging learning experiences; and they keep the curriculum in mind

in their interactions with the children throughout the day" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009,

p. 20). If planning took place in the beginning of the school year (in August), that implies

that teachers did not plan the lesson plans with students' interest in mind. According to

Copple and Bredekamp (2009), guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice,

Ethiopian teachers did not follow the research based approach in teaching.

When I asked the teachers, "Does the program require a teaching degree before

you start teaching in this field?", seven out of the ten teachers stated that a teaching

degree was not required while teaching in the school, but the majority of them held a

preschool certificate (1 year of teacher's training) or preschool diploma (3 years of

teacher's training) (see Table 2 on p. 54). Both the certificate and diploma training

programs occur for students who completed a 10th grade level of education. Two

teachers indicated that they had degrees in civics, and language and literature, but none

held early childhood degrees. With different background knowledge and no early

childhood degree, it is difficult for teachers to implement effective early childhood

teaching methodologies. Table 2 demonstrated details regarding themes that were

highlighted from the interview questions. It appeared that teachers were not required to

have teaching degrees in order to teach young children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Without the proper background knowledge and content information in the education

field, teachers lack the expertise in teaching students in the best approach. The table

below summarized the following themes: teaching methods, curriculum and required

teaching degree.

Table 2

Interview Results (Interview Questions 1 and 2 from First Guiding Question; Interview Question 2 from Second Guiding Question)

Teacher	Teaching Methods	Curriculum	Requirement of Teaching Degree
1	Questions & Answers, Student centered	No curriculum but create weekly and annual lesson plans	Not required but diploma & certificate, civics degree
2	Student centered, Grouping	No curriculum but text book to develop annual lesson plans	Not required but a year of preschool certificate
3	Asking & Answering, Lecturing	No curriculum but create annual lesson plans	Yes
4	Different materials like books, boards	Yes curriculum with book to create annual lesson plans	Not required but preschool certificate & diploma
5	Questions & Answers, Storytime	No curriculum but use books to create lesson plans	Not required but language & literature degree
6	Student centered	No curriculum but use annual lesson plans	Not required but certificate
7	Visual Methods	No curriculum but use annual lesson plans	No
8	Demonstration, Singing songs	No curriculum but develop ourselves	Not required but diploma
9	Presentation, Oral questions	No curriculum	A diploma
10	Student centered, Demonstration	No curriculum but annual lesson plans	Yes

Table 3 presents common themes that emerged from interviews with the ten

preschool teachers in the school: the community's views of early childhood education,

the appropriate age for students to start learning, and early childhood affordability. When

I asked them, "How does the community view early childhood education?", more than half of teachers interviewed shared that there was minimal acknowledgment of early childhood education within the community. Teacher 1 stated: "...the community does not give status or value. They do not respect you, you are teaching small kids" (11/19/2019). Unfortunately, early learning was not appreciated or valued by the majority of community members. Lack of early childhood acknowledgment in the community in Ethiopia, echoes the lack of families not interested in early childhood here in St. Paul, Minnesota.

As noted in Table 3 (see on p. 56), when I asked the participants/teachers, "From your understanding, when do you believe young children start learning?", nine out of ten teachers believed that learning began at age 4. These teacher's beliefs contradicted the studies that were done by Center on the Developing Child (2020), Kassam (2020), and Gallagher (2015) in which they stressed the importance of early learning as it builds a strong foundation and it strengthens the brain development in children' lives. UNESCO (2019) agreed that children from birth to eight years old go through remarkable growth with brain development. It is significant for educators to acknowledge early childhood development and support them with useful resources.

In the question I presented during the interview, "Is early childhood education affordable to every child in the community?", nine out of ten teachers explained that learning in early childhood sectors was not affordable for every child in the community. As Teacher 6 stated, "No, because it's expensive" (11/20/2019). Apart from the teacher's input, studies have shown that parents are required to pay tuition fees and provide

educational materials in order for their children to attend preschool. Due to financial struggle, children from low-income families and those from outside the urban areas do not have the opportunities to attend school (UNESCO, 2006b). Despite the increased recognition of early learning in Ethiopia, many children do not have the opportunity of attending early childhood education (Education for All, 2015).

Table 3 elaborates on detailed interview results from 3, 4 and 7 from the third guiding question. The following themes were merged from the interview questioning such as community views, student's start age of learning, and early childhood affordability.

Table 3

Interview Results (Interview questions 3, 4 and 7 from Third Guiding Question)

Teacher	Community's Views	Student's Age of Learning	Early Childhood Affordable
1	No respect nor value	4 years	No
2	Progress at the moment; previously not purposeful	4 years	No
3	Not very nice but this time is good	Around 4 years	Yes
4	Not important	4 years	No
5	Some people respect it	4 years	No
6	Is more aware compared to before	4 years	No
7	Respect high school teachers more than early childhood teachers	5 years	No
8	Not valued	4 years	No
9	It's good	4 years	Yes
10	Community value children to be educated	4 years	No

I summarized interview results within the main themes described above i.e. teaching methods, curriculum, requirements of teaching degree, the community's view,

students' age of learning and early childhood affordability. This interview piece was part of the qualitative case study. Observation results were elaborated in the next chapter.

Observation Results. In my classroom observations, I used a checklist tool that aligned with ten effective DAP (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) teaching strategies to find out whether teachers were using developmentally appropriate or inappropriate practices for young learners as determined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Table 4 (see on p. 58) below presents the results of my classroom observations. I observed three sections, including Prep (ages 6), KG-kindergarten (ages 5) and PreKG-pre-kindergarten (ages 4). Each session had three classrooms, A, B, and C. I completed the observations during their teaching sessions. The observations were conducted for a period of a month (November 6-December 6, 2019). I spent two hours in each classroom observing teachers and documenting the classroom environment.

During these observations, I focused on teaching practices to determine whether the teachers followed the developmentally appropriate practice. DAP (developmentally appropriate practice) is a research-based effective teaching approach that NAEYC recognizes in childrens' early years of learning, promotes their optimal learning, and their development. I categorized Table 4 in three columns. The first column presented practices that were developmentally appropriate that need to take place in the early childhood environment. The middle column described the practices that do not meet the DAP guidelines. The last column shows the classroom observations notes taken during the visits. The table below explains in detail the classroom observations in relation to developmentally appropriate practice and inappropriate practice.

Table 4

Developmentally Appropriate/Inappropriate Practices in Relationship to Classroom Observations

Developmentally appropriate practice	Developmentally inappropriate Practice	Classroom observations
Teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in learning centers (at least 60 minutes).	Teachers provide few chances for students to engage in activities (15-20 minutes).	Teachers focused on teaching math and reading; there were no learning centers set up in the classroom.
Teachers use different formats of teaching.	Teachers use only one or two teaching formats.	Teachers used large group teaching; they mainly lectured and demonstrated/ or used visual aids.
Teachers present many chances for students to work together.	Teachers provide minimal opportunities for students to work in groups.	Students worked individually on classroom assignments.
Teachers use a curriculum that is a written document to plan teaching and to meet program goals.	Teachers lack a flexible curriculum (if any published by school) to meet students' interests.	Teachers did not use any curriculum; they used annual lesson plans to guide their teaching.
Teachers create many opportunities for students to engage throughout the day in fine motor skills i.e., puzzles, playdough, drawing, blocks, etc.	Teachers provide fine motor activities that are too difficult for students to tackle.	Teachers provided the opportunity for students to write in their journal and draw pictures during teaching lessons.
During daily teaching, teachers read aloud to students both in small and large groups.	Teachers do not read daily to students.	No reading was observed, whether in small or large groups.
Teachers encourage and help students participate in their own writing efforts. Teachers display students' writing in the classroom.	Teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in worksheet activities.	Teachers directed students to complete worksheets during math lessons. They also encouraged students to practice letter writing on a worksheet. Teachers' work samples were displayed in the classroom.

From the classroom observations, it seemed that the teachers did not use the research based teaching approach of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). Apart from focusing on DAP, the classroom atmosphere was not established according to the developmentally appropriate practice. Students' work efforts were not displayed in the classroom at the child's level but teachers' work samples were. Students did not participate in small groups nor engage any learning centers as DAP suggested, but the class held a large group of about 35 students. Students were expected to sit and work in their desk areas except when they were excused for breaks and recess. In developmentally appropriate practice, teachers present many opportunities for students to engage in group work. During my classroom observations, students worked individually and group or teamwork was not observed. Students listened to the teacher's instructions and participated in class whenever the teacher asked them questions. All the teachers followed the same teaching styles and delivered the same lessons. Teachers used lecturing and demonstration methods of teaching the students but DAP suggested teachers to use different formats of teaching.

In addition to the teaching approach, students engaged in instructional teaching during the two hours morning period, then followed by lunch break and recess. Students brought their packed snacks and lunches every day during weekdays. Per school policy, students were required to wear school uniforms; teachers were required to wear a white coat. Parents provided transportation for the students, as well as paid school fees to maintain the building, teacher salaries and covered students' textbooks and worksheet

books. The pictures below present more detailed information regarding the classroom

environment, i.e. classroom Prep, KG, and PreKG.

Figure 2: View of the Prep Classroom

Figure 3: Front View of KG Classroom

Figure 4: Back View of KG Classroom

Figure 5: Left View of KG Classroom

Figure 6: Right View of KG Classroom

Figure 7: View of PreKG Classroom

The pictures above briefly present the snapshot of three classrooms. A quality learning environment that Kassam (2020) stressed was not identified in the classroom. Kassam acknowledged that creative environments that are designed at the child's level promotes child's learning, imagination, and independence. Isbell (2020) addressed the importance of students engaging in concrete objects in their environment in order to make learning meaningful. Head Start (2020b) identified the importance of educators providing learning materials that support students' learning and development. With all these factors in place, the classroom environment lacks learning materials that support students' learning. It is also considered as developmentally inappropriate practice when there is a lack of classroom materials for students to explore creativity and imaginations, according to Copple and Bredekamp (2009).

The classroom settings and its decorations have a powerful message for the classroom community. Definitely the classrooms were not established with developmentally appropriate practice in mind such as teachers' work samples displayed on the wall at teacher's level, students working on worksheets, and the lecture/demonstration methods of teachings. Teachers created the classroom atmosphere without students' interest or knowledge of their learning goals which contradicts the guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice.

As for the classroom rules and routines, students followed them and knew their classroom responsibilities. Most of the instructional teaching took place in the morning sessions. Before class hours began, the school held an assembly. During the school gathering, teachers did the following: greeted one another, as well as students, important

messages of the day were announced, and the Ethiopian flag was raised as everyone sang the national anthem in Amharic. Then, the crowd breaks into their classroom where the teachers taught mathematics, reading, Amharic, and spoken English before lunch break. After lunch break, students engaged in recess and played outside on the playground. More individual work and homework assignments were discussed in the afternoon sessions before students left for the day. During transitions, students enjoyed singing songs in both English and Amharic.

Apart from the classroom environment, students engaged in small group play on the playground. They communicated with each other and took turns during playtime. Mostly, students were able to solve their disagreements. In a few cases, I observed students asking teachers to intervene to settle the conflicts. This implies that students were able to work together during socialization and demonstrated problem solving skills.

As for independence skills, students were able to take care of their personal needs such as washing hands before eating their meals. Students seemed to understand the school's rules and routines and follow them with very minimal guidance from teachers. It appeared that there were positive interactions between students and their teachers. Students seemed to have good relationships with other students in different classrooms and grade levels. The school seemed to have positive energy among the administrators, teachers and students. In addition, students were dropped off and picked up by their parents in the front of the school gate that was monitored by the security guard while the school was in session.

Curriculum

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) expressed the importance of teachers using well-established curriculum in order for students to achieve their learning goals. Teachers also implement and follow the curriculum in their planning to acknowledge students' learning interests and engage them in their learning experiences. Per developmentally appropriate practice guidelines, it is significant for teachers to use curriculum as a tool to guide their teaching in effective ways. As for my data source, I requested and received a copy of the curriculum from the assistant director on the first day that I visited the school. During my classroom observations, it became clear that the teachers were not using the curriculum during their teaching. I asked the teachers directly during classroom observation if they used the curriculum. All of the teachers shared that they never used the curriculum, but they did use the annual lesson plans that they designed at the beginning of the school year (in August). Teachers from each session worked collectively and created their annual lesson plans. During my discussion/interviews with teachers, the curriculum did not seem to be of any use to them, but they stressed the importance of using the annual lesson plans to guide them in their daily teachings. I noted that teachers taught the same materials and implemented the same teaching methodology in each age-appropriate session.

As I studied the school's curriculum, I noticed that the document was not complete. The table of contents of the curriculum did not match the information presented in the curriculum as a whole. In regards to the annual lesson plans, teachers included subjects taught, and activities and student's goals were addressed. Teachers

followed the lesson plans during their teaching, not the school's curriculum. Even though

annual lesson plans were used as a guide in teaching, it became clear to me that the

research-based approach was not evident. According to Copple and Bredekamp (2009),

teachers are required to plan curriculum with an understanding of students' interests and

goals. If the lesson plans were designed in the beginning of the school year (August) and

set to be used for the whole school year, it definitely contradicts developmentally

appropriate practice (research-based approach) that was acknowledged by Copple and

Bredekamp.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized research results collected in the school of Ethiopia. The

data highlighted facts from interview results, observation results, curriculum of the

school. I also included some pictures of different classroom environments to paint out the

classroom structures and its surroundings. Some classroom descriptions as well as

teachers' and students' responsibilities in the classroom were identified. The school also

presented facts that do not support the implementation of developmentally appropriate

practice as Copple and Bredekamp (2009) explained in their theory. In other words, the

classroom settings, methods of teaching, absence of the curriculum, lack of group work

and teachers' work samples displayed on the wall indicates developmentally

inappropriate practice established in the school. The next chapter summarized the

conclusions of the study and provided useful recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

The chapter summarizes the research study in which I included the five main key findings in relation to the literature review. In completing this study, I gained a better understanding of Ethiopian early childhood education and plan to educate families on the importance value of early childhood education. In my research journey, I answer the following guiding questions: 1) *What are the early childhood teaching methodologies being used in the Ethiopian education system?* 2) *What are the teachers' qualifications in Ethiopian early childhood education?* and 3) *What are teachers' perceptions of early childhood education in Ethiopia?* The research data analyzed enabled me to fulfill my personal and professional goals. The chapter concludes with limitation of the study as well as recommendations for future researchers.

Major Findings and Connection to the Literature Review

The results of the study pointed to the five keys findings. These findings include the importance of early childhood education, quality learning environment, early childhood education in Ethiopia, developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and curriculum. With these major findings, I was able to draw implications for practices for this study and connect these findings to the literature review.

Importance of early childhood education. As an early childhood educator, it was important for me to understand Ethiopian early childhood education, which is totally different from what I have experienced in the United States during the last fifteen years. Throughout my experiences, I learned how early learning creates a productive future for

young children. Children who receive some form of early childhood education have better outcomes than children with no early childhood experiences (Woldehanna, 2016). Early childhood education establishes a strong foundation for learning in later years (UNESCO, 2006a). Healthy brain development contributes positively to early childhood learning. Rapid brain development occurs before birth and continues to adulthood (Center on the Developing Child, 2020). It is important for educators/caregivers to establish and maintain early learning for young children.

Because of my extensive training and research in the field of early childhood education, it was challenging for me to understand and accept the values and views of the teachers in the school of Addis Ababa. Community views regarding early childhood played an important role in teachers' motivation in teaching at the school. The community does not fully support early childhood education, which contributes to the teachers' belief that children start learning at age four or five. If the community does not support early learning and teachers do not agree that learning happens before four/five years, it seems there was little to no attention placed on children from birth to three years old. This means that students are not exposed to formal early learning until they go to the school. This contradicts the importance and value of early childhood education that the literature review presented in this study, as well as my own philosophy of early learning.

Quality learning environment. A quality learning environment is essential for young children who need to explore their surroundings. It is important for educators/caregivers to provide learning materials that support children's development and learning (Head Start, 2020b). Creative learning environments foster children's

imagination as they explore their surroundings. Early learning builds a meaningful and productive life for children to engage in successful learning. Kassam (2020) mentioned that it is significant to have a learning environment that is rich with a few toys at a child's level in order to effectively explore learning independently. Kassam also acknowledged that a creative learning environment set at a child's level promotes learning, imagination and independence.

Gallagher (2015) also stressed the importance of early childhood. Gallagher stated that babies who received the intervention of high quality child care have better outcomes in their lives compared to those who do not not receive any intervention. For babies to have a productive future, educators/caregivers need to establish a healthy environment, provide language interaction and develop warm connections with adults. It is crucial for educators/caregivers to establish and maintain early learning so that children can have successful and productive lives.

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) acknowledged in developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) that it is effective for teachers to display students' writing or their projects in the classroom. It is considered developmentally inappropriate for teachers to use worksheets in the early childhood classroom. As a research based practice, educators need to encourage students to participate in their own effort while engaging in various classroom activities and to avoid the use of worksheets.

It is essential for educators to establish a quality learning environment for students to promote learning, independence, imagination, and creativity. These are the learning objectives that help foster productive adults. In the classrooms I observed in Ethiopia, the

practices and setting was not always conducive to a quality learning environment suggested by the research. Even though students had good relationships with their teachers, students often completed worksheets during their lessons. I did not observe learning materials that allowed students to explore learning independently. Students' work projects or samples were not displayed in the classroom, but rather teachers' work samples were displayed around the classroom. Lack of classroom materials, worksheet use, and the display of teachers' work samples in the classroom rather than student work contradicts established developmentally appropriate practice. Apart from the classroom atmosphere, students demonstrated the ability to socialize, be independent, and problem solve among their friends. There was definitely a positive energy in the school environment and students seemed to enjoy learning at the school.

Early childhood education in Ethiopia. It was eye-opening for me to learn that early childhood education in Ethiopia has received so little attention, especially compared to my experience teaching in the United States. In Ethiopia, the "government has very limited intervention in this critical stage of education. The point is that preschool education in Ethiopia is not compulsory and neither is any budget allotted by the government for it" (Woldehanna, 2011, p. 116). Even though the Ethiopian government has not placed much emphasis on preschool education, UNESCO (2006) shared that students who participated in ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) programs have shown improvement in school readiness, are more likely to enroll in first grade, have lower rates of delayed enrollment, dropout and grade repetition, and increased completion and achievements.

In Ethiopia, teachers' qualifications and experiences play a main role in determining students' success. Teachers with qualifications and experiences tend to engage students in better learning opportunities in which their class sizes are small and often focus on student-centered activities. Due to limited resources and economic challenges in Ethiopia, there is a shortage of qualified teachers and they are unevenly distributed with urban schools getting more resources than rural areas (Frost & Little, 2014).

Mulugeta (2015) mentioned that Ethiopian preschool teachers have limited training skills beyond grade 10. Moreover, early childhood teachers who do have degrees often have degrees that are unrelated to early childhood education such as sociology, geography, multicultural education or educational leadership (Tigistu, 2013) and thus have limited experiences and expertise in the early childhood field. An early childhood degree was not required by the school I visited. While the majority of the teachers have early childhood diplomas or preschool certificates that qualified them to teach in the school setting, none of them had a four-year degree in early childhood education. Due to limited resources and expertise in early childhood education, teachers struggle to implement effective teaching methods as well as conduct research based practice approaches in the classroom due to their lack of a teaching certification.

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). Developmentally appropriate practice is a framework designed to reflect early childhood research based practices that promote optimal learning and development. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) acknowledged and supported the effort set by DAP's

research based practices in the child's early years of learning (NAEYC, 2020). With a developmentally appropriate practice approach, teachers and caregivers meet children at their level and provide scaffolding techniques to help them reach achievable goals. Students benefit from activities that are planned, teacher-guided, interactive small-group and large group experiences (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). It is important for educators to implement different learning venues in order for students to explore and engage in creative learning throughout the day.

Students who engage in a developmentally appropriate practice curricula have the opportunity to explore problem-solving, critical thinking, and intellectual risk-taking (Abu-Jaber & Gheith, 2010). Lee, Baik, and Charlesworth (2006) pointed out that in developmentally appropriate practice, teachers have the opportunity to engage students in active exploration and hands-on activities and to encourage curiosity during learning. With the DAP approach, students have the opportunity to maximize their learning in small groups where learning exploration occurs with or without adult support.

Bredekamp and Copple (1997) highlighted developmentally inappropriate practice in the early childhood settings, which included insufficient supplies of learning materials, large classroom sizes, and inadequate adult-child ratios. With inappropriate practice, it is a challenge for educators/caregivers to provide learning opportunities for students to maximize their optimal learning development. For these reasons, as teachers it is important to implement a developmentally appropriate practice (research based practices) approach during early learning in order to understand children's interests and effectively support them in achieving their goals. As educators/caregivers it is crucial to

maintain a strong foundation for young learners to build their future well being and success.

In the research study, I had the opportunity to interview ten teachers in the school. I used a checklist tool that aligned with ten effective developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) teaching strategies during classroom observations to investigate if teachers in Ethiopia used DAP (developmentally appropriate practice) as research based practices supported by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The findings from the observations indicated that teachers in the school used a couple forms of teaching i.e., lecture and visual aids. Both modes of teaching were used together to present lessons to students in a large group. I did not observe the different teaching methods that the teachers stated in their interviews. In relation to developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) approach, the teaching methods practiced in this school do not meet DAP research based practices as presented by NAEYC.

Curriculum. Copple and Bredekamp (2009) stated that in developmentally appropriate practice, teachers use a written form of curriculum to effectively plan teaching while taking into consideration students' learning goals and their interests. It is important for educators to implement a well-established curriculum in early childhood settings so that children benefit from planned activities and engage in learning experiences. Not only did Copple and Bredekamp mention the importance of curriculum in early childhood, Head Start (2020c) pointed out that implementing research-based curriculum is one of the five essential elements that support the foundation of the house framework. In this house framework, educators are well prepared for teaching young

learners and effectively support and work collectively with students, parents, and teachers.

Curriculum plays a huge role in guiding educators to implement meaningful and effective teaching. NAEYC confirmed that children benefit greatly when teachers use a curriculum that is well-planned and intentionally implemented with cultural sensitivity (2009). Curriculum is also used to plan for a wide range of abilities to meet students' needs (Jalongo et al., 2004). As educators, it is important to implement and use effective curriculum and its pedagogy since it is the foundation of all early childhood education initiatives.

Implementing an effective curriculum presents great benefits in early childhood learning. Despite the importance of curriculum in the learning settings, there is minimal implementation of the curriculum in Ethiopia's early childhood system (Mulugeta, 2015). Addisu and Wudu acknowledged that teachers did not implement the curriculum effectively as per school policy (2019). Due to limited resources in the Ethiopian school system to support teachers in their training, the curriculum does not align nor respond to students' diverse needs or the needs of the community. "Lack of appropriate curriculum deteriorated quality of education that is desired" (Haile & Mohammed, 2017, p. 30). In Ethiopia, due to inconsistency in the early childhood curriculum, few teachers follow the curriculum guidelines set by the Ministry of Education.

The school I observed had a curriculum that seemed to have no effect on the teaching. Teachers created annual lesson plans at the beginning of the school year (in August) to guide them in their teaching. However, these lesson plans were created

outside of the curriculum and with materials (such as textbooks) that were different from those indicated in the curriculum. Despite the fact that developmentally appropriate practice emphasizes the importance of implementing curriculum for students' learning and development, the school does not align its practices with developmentally appropriate practice (DAP).

As I looked through the curriculum of the school, I noticed that it was not complete as a document. The table of contents did not match information that was presented in the whole document. This might be why teachers did not use the curriculum in their teaching since it was an incomplete document. This indicates how not having a well-written curriculum can affect the quality of early childhood education in the school.

Implications for Practice

As an early childhood educator, this research study has given me the opportunity to explore an early childhood education center in Ethiopia. With the information gathered, I am hoping to share this knowledge with the families that I work with, with the school where the research was conducted, and anyone else who might be interested in the topic. The following are the main highlights and recommendations from my study:

- Advocate for the importance of early childhood education. Early childhood is a period where young children explore learning in an effective environment and adult guidance. With this support, children experience remarkable brain development (UNESCO, 2019). Furthermore, Gallagher (2015) mentioned that babies who received the intervention of high-quality child care received better outcomes in their future compared to babies who did not receive any intervention.

It is significant to invest in high quality learning for babies in order to have a positive impact in adult lives (Gallagher, 2015). Early learning builds a strong foundation for children's future learning success. It is important for Ethiopian teachers, community, and government officials to understand the effectiveness of early learning. Having a better understanding of early childhood education through research and resources would allow for more effective teaching.

- Implementing early childhood research based practices are essential in the school to provide optimal learning opportunities, as well as support teachers in providing effective teaching strategies. NAEYC (2020) acknowledged the developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) as an effective approach in children's early years of learning. Developmentally appropriate practice framework was designed to reflect research based practices that are set to promote a child's optimal learning and development. Educators/ caregivers need to use developmentally appropriate practice to meet children where they are while challenging them to meet their achievable goals.

- A creative learning environment is crucial for children's brain development. Kassam (2020) pointed out that a creative learning environment which is set at a child's level promotes children's learning, imagination and independence. Young children engage in learning opportunities in a quality learning environment. A well-organized classroom that is creatively designed encourages children to participate and engage in the learning (Head Start, 2020b). Apart from having a creative learning environment, it is significant for educators/caregivers to provide

learning materials in order to support children's learning and development and provide sufficient variety and quality, but not so much as to overwhelm the children. Teachers are encouraged to make plans for integration of learning across domains, as well as individual needs for the children in their group as referenced in the video (Head Start, 2020b, pp. 5-6).

- Early childhood education values the implementation of the curriculum use in the field. Curriculum is the tool used by early childhood educators to effectively plan teaching while taking considerations of children's learning goals and their interests (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). NAEYC also emphasized the value of curriculum use in early childhood education. Children greatly benefit from the curriculum when the teacher uses it effectively as a guide that is well-planned and intentionally implemented with cultural sensitivity (2009). "Lack of appropriate curriculum deteriorated quality of education that is desired" (Haile & Mohammed, 2017, p. 30). Without a curriculum guide, educators/caregivers struggle to meet their children's learning goals and development.

- As an educator, it is important for me to share this study with our early childhood program (Head Start & Early Head Start). Since our program works with many Ethiopian families here in St. Paul, Minnesota, it will be beneficial for the staff to gain this knowledge in order to support families. My hope is to present this study to early childhood educators during our annual meeting. Moreover, the study will be shared electronically for anyone interested in learning more about early childhood education in Ethiopia.

Limitations

This study highlighted several insights on early childhood education in Ethiopia. Despite the gain of knowledge summarized in this study, there was one limitation that was presented. Amharic language was mainly spoken across the school; English was part of the language used by the school but it was not familiar to some staff and students in the building. I used English to communicate with teachers who spoke the language during the interview process. My limitation of the study was not being able to communicate English with the PreKG teachers who only spoke Amharic.

Recommendation for Future Research

While the literature review presented the importance of early childhood education, this study showed what early childhood education looks like in one school in Ethiopia. Even though the research on the importance of early learning is well established, my interviews at the school revealed that teachers believed that early learning began at four or five years of age. This indicates a gap that needs to be addressed. It will be beneficial for future researchers to focus on early learning, especially from prenatal to three years to be more broadly understood in Ethiopia. With this information, educators/caregivers will have a better understanding of early childhood education.

The data revealed that the school did not implement developmentally appropriate practices in their teaching. Data also revealed that the teachers did not utilize the curriculum and instead, relied on teacher-generated lesson plans. It would be interesting to research more early childhood schools in Ethiopia to see what other research based

practices approach or curriculum that the schools have in place. Moreover, it would be useful to find out if Ethiopian early childhood education follows the general standards set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) regarding research based practice and curriculum use in the early childhood environment.

Economic inequality plays a large role in the Ethiopian education system. Due to economic factors, children from high-income families tend to attend early childhood centers much more regularly than children from poor families. Future researchers may consider research in the area of social economics or social justice and how the government plays a role in creating justice among its citizens. Hopefully, with more research conducted in the early childhood areas, the government might be prompted to allocate funding for early childhood education.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the research on early childhood education and to investigate the early childhood education practices in Ethiopia. Because of my work with Ethiopian families in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and my initial literature review, I was interested in exploring Ethiopian early childhood education in order to understand and better serve the families I work with. I conducted teacher interviews, completed classroom observations and collected the curriculum in order to have a better understanding of Ethiopian early childhood education. The literature review highlighted the importance of early childhood education, provided a summary of developmentally appropriate practices, and summarized an overview of early childhood education in Ethiopia, including teachers' qualifications, and preschool enrollment.

The data gathered through interviews, classroom observations and curriculum provided answers for the following guiding questions: 1) *What are the early childhood teaching methodologies being used in the Ethiopian education system?* 2) *What are the teachers' qualifications in Ethiopian early childhood education?* and 3) *What are teachers' perceptions of early childhood education in Ethiopia?* As I concluded this research, I highlighted five main learning areas of this study: importance of early childhood education, a quality learning environment, early childhood education in Ethiopia, implementation of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and curriculum.

Studies have supported that a healthy brain develops effectively during early learning; early childhood education sets a strong foundation for children's future lives. Early learning is the key for a child's future success, however in Ethiopia, most early childhood learning begins at age four. It is important to advocate for education in the years of the prenatal stage through the third year in a child's life in order for productive learning to happen. It is also crucial for teachers/caregivers to implement research based practices (developmentally appropriate practice) in their workframe to meet students' at their level and be able to support them in their learning and development.

Curriculum implementation is another fact that supports educators in delivering meaningful and effective teaching. Since the use of research-based practice (developmentally appropriate practice) and curriculum was not part of the school in Ethiopia, future research needs to investigate more early childhood centers in Ethiopia in order to find out their research based practices. Creative learning environment also plays an important role in a child's development as it fosters independence, creativity and

imagination. There is a huge need for Ethiopian early childhood education to consider implementing quality learning in order for students to explore and engage in creative work instead of paying attention to worksheets which limits their learning abilities.

This research finding has summarized the study and provided useful suggestions for a better approach in the Ethiopian early childhood education. The information gained throughout this research was beneficial to me as I gained more knowledge in the topic. My hope is using the research study to educate Ethiopian families here in St. Paul, Minnesota and everyone who is interested in the topic. In the following section, I will be sharing a recent discussion that happened between me and my working family during our home visit.

Personal Story in Connection to My Research Study

During February 2020, I visited one of my Ethiopian families that I had been visiting regularly for the last year. In the process of our discussion, I shared with the mom transition plans and steps to be taken in order to register her son in the Head Start preschool program because in a few months he would be transitioning out of our Early Head Start program. Mom agreed with the plan and we started filling out the Head Start application. Before signing the application, mom shared the process with her husband regarding future preschool learning for their son. The dad was not on board with the process since he felt that his son was too young and not ready for Head Start preschool.

The following week, I visited with dad and explained the importance of early childhood education. I shared with him that his son would benefit greatly in the Head Start classroom where he could build social skills that he would not learn at home. I also

shared briefly with the parents my research topic regarding early childhood education in

Ethiopia and how early learning sets the foundations for children to succeed in the future.

After our discussion, dad agreed to sign up his son for the Head Start program. Both

parents were excited to hear that their son was accepted into the preschool program; they

are both looking forward to their son beginning preschool for the 2020-2021 school year.

This is one successful example of how my research study positively contributed to the

decision of a family that I currently work within our Early Head Start program.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1) Guiding Question:

- *What are the early childhood teaching methodologies being used in the Ethiopian education system?*

    1. Tell me about your teaching methods that you are using in the classroom.

    2. What kind of curriculum are you using to develop the lesson plans?

    3. What factors do you consider while preparing lesson plans? Do you team teach/individually teach the lesson plans?

    4. Is the teaching curriculum designed by the management team or is it created by classroom teachers?

    5. Do teachers get training on how to teach students? How often is teacher training being offered?

    6. Explain the strength of teaching methods you are using in the classroom.

    7. What are the challenges you face while using these teaching methodologies?

    8. Are there any support staff or groups that will assist teachers in case they face any difficulties?

    9. Are the lesson plans being supervised by managers or are they left to the discretion of classroom teachers?

2) Guiding Question:

- *What are the teachers' qualifications in Ethiopian early childhood education?*

    1. Explain the teaching experiences that you have in teaching early childhood.

    2. Does the program require a teaching degree before you start teaching in this field?

    3. What is your teaching philosophy/ beliefs about early childhood?

    4. Are there trainings available for teachers to attend in order to improve their quality of teaching?

    5. What are the challenges that teachers face in the early childhood field?

    6. Are there any support systems that teachers engage in in order to assist one another?

    7. Who oversees the teachers' qualifications and assists teachers in maintaining them?

    8. As a program, are there guidelines on how teachers manage classroom discipline? Does the school provide training for the guidelines?

    9. Do teaching qualifications have an important role in teachers' lives before the hiring process?

3) Guiding Question:

- *What's your perception of early childhood education in Ethiopia?*

    1. Have you had early childhood experiences as you were growing up?

    2. From your experiences, is early childhood education being valued and respected?

    3. How does the community view early childhood education?

    4. From your understanding, when do you believe young children start learning?

    5. What's motivated you to work in the early childhood setting?

    6. What's your goals in the future in regards to early childhood?

    7. Is early childhood education affordable to every child in the community?

    8. How does the government view early childhood education?

    9. What struggles do you face while teaching in early childhood education?

Appendix B

Teacher Formal Classroom Observation Form

Teacher's name: _____   **Date:** _____

Grade/ Subject: _____   **Time:** _____

Directions: The researcher will use this form to document during formal classroom observations. During the observations, she will focus on the 10 effective DAP (developmentally appropriate practice) teaching strategies that are presented by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children).

1. **Acknowledge** what children do or say. Let children know that we have noticed by giving positive attention, sometimes through comments, sometimes through just sitting nearby and observation.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident
2. **Encourage** persistence and effort rather than just praising and evaluating what the child has done.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident
3. **Give specific feedback** rather than general comments.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident
4. **Model** attitudes, ways of approaching problems, and behavior toward others, showing children rather than just telling them.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident
5. **Demonstrate** the correct way to do something. This usually involves a procedure that needs to be done in a certain way.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident

6. **Create or add challenges** so that a task goes a bit beyond what the children can already do.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident
7. **Ask questions** that provoke children's thinking.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident
8. **Give assistance** to help children work on the edge of their current competence.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident
9. **Provide information** directly giving children facts, verbal labels, and other information.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident
10. **Give directions** for children's action or behavior.	**Specific Examples:** __Evident __ Not Evident