Interconnectedness between Teachers' Beliefs about **Curriculum, Planning, and Implementation**

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Research Questions

Teachers' beliefs about curriculum could influence their practice, classroom quality, and child outcomes (Hamre et al., 2012; Wen et al., 2011). However, there is limited understanding of how preschool teachers perceive their curriculum and apply it to their planning and enactment of instruction.

The purpose of this study was to explore preschool teachers' beliefs about their curriculum and how that manifested in planning and instruction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) What are preschool teachers' perceptions of how their curriculum, planning, and enactment of instruction support children's learning?

2) How are these perceptions aligned across curriculum, planning, and enactment of instruction?

Method

PARTICIPANTS

- 18 preschool teachers
- 8.9 average years of teaching experiences (range from 0.5 to 30 years; SD = 8.63)
- 38.9% (n = 7) working in private schools, 27.8% (n= 5) working in Head Start, and 11.1% (n = 2) working in public schools.
- 72.2% (n = 13) of teachers holding a bachelor's degree or higher, and the remaining 27.8% (n = 5) having associate's degree
- 66.7% (n = 12) using Create Curriculum, and 33% (n = 6) using a teacher/school created curriculum

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES

Participants completed a background interview where they described how their curriculum supported children's learning. They then engaged in two planning and stimulated recall interviews (Schachter & Freeman, 2015). During these interviews, teachers were asked to explain their thinking in support of planning and enactment of instruction.

Using thematic analysis, we reviewed the data for confirming, disconfirming, and elaborating patterns. To address the second research question, we focused on the interconnectedness between teachers' perceptions of the curriculum, planning, and their enactment of instruction (Braun & Clark, 2006).

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Results

Perceptions of How Curriculum, Planning, and Enactment Support Children's Learning

Teachers endorsed a range of beliefs about how their curriculum supported children's learning. These beliefs were evidenced with more nuance in their planning for instruction. However, during teaching teachers on referenced beliefs about learning related to children's interests and skill development.

Figure 1. Most Frequently Reported Beliefs about Children's Learning

Curriculum	Planning
Children's Interests (n = 10) "It allows them to build on their skills and necessities through their interests, which is really important because if they're interested in learning about it, you won't go very far." – Valencia	Following Interests (n = 9) "If I see they're interested in bugs or whatever it may be, that's where I do my activities or how I plan my lesson plans." – Michelle
	Anticipating Interests (n = 4) "I thought that they would really enjoy the restaurant dramatic play stuff." - Holly
	Fun (<i>n</i> = 4) "I just kind of took the fun approach to it, too, to show that the polar bear is telling us to smile." – Melinda
Skill Development (n = 4) "It doesn't just focus on math and reading, which aren't the most important things for early childhood, like, focus . It's on the whole picture of, like, social, emotional, and that's super important for when they enter kindergarten." – Melinda	Skill Development (n = 12) "I think games are a great way to help teach following directions, taking turns, social interaction." – Emma
	School Readiness (n = 2) "They'll be going to kindergarten, so be able to help them with recognizing their letters and blending words together and understanding what syllables are." – Latisha
Thematic Learning (n = 2) "Then we do themes, so, you know, we are able to use fun themes that kids can relate to help them learn in the world around them and their academics." – Rosanne	Existing Theme (n = 9) "We've been talking about winter animals, so we did penguins" - Lacey
	Teaching Tool (n = 4) "It goes along with the theme of mittens and snow things. But then it's also we're counting how many animals. We're guessing, predicting, taking it home." – Janice

Alignment Across Curriculum, Planning, and Enactment

Overall, teachers' beliefs about curriculum, planning, and enactment were infrequently interconnected; with only 11.11% of teachers having alignment across beliefs about curriculum, planning for instruction, and enactment of instruction.

Enactment Teachable Moment (n = 7)ts (n = 9)*"He's passionate about it, but he's"* d in bugs or interested in it so I am gonna, like where I do explore everything that he's interested in my lesson in versus me just trying to come up lle with something." – Eli ests (n = 4)Engagement (n = 6) l really enjoy "They're not gonna learn if they don't play stuff." have um, if they're not interested in the activity anymore." – Sheila Fun (n = 2)approach to "I'm trying to figure out how to make olar bear is sure that everyone gets an opportunity Melinda to do the academic stuff, as well as the fun stuff." – Holly (n = 12)School Readiness (n = 11)way to help *"Some children go to kindergarten are* ons, taking not even knowing how to hold a pencil. "—*Emma My job is to make sure that they can* (n = 2)follow directions, try to hold a pencil.² -Ruthergarten, so **Content-Specific Skill** (n = 8)recognizing ng words *"I just as like a kind of a math concept"* ding what of like comparing measurement." atisha – Macey Age-Related Skill (n = 7)(n = 9)*"That's important in kids this age, too."* And them, along with, like I guess the out winter literacy domain too, to clearly, she's guins..." able to turn the pages the right way." -*Macey* (n=4)General Skill (n = 2)theme of *"It's good for them because of their"* But then it's confidence with reading and they might w many want to be able to retell a story, so it's

more like cognitive development

there." – *Eli*

Teachers endorsed a range of beliefs about curriculum. However, they tended to apply fewer but more specified beliefs in their planning, and only focused on children's learning connected to interests and skills in their enactment of instruction. Beliefs about curriculum, planning, enactment infrequently interconnected.

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Discussion

IMPLICATIONS

• **Practice:** Professional development may need to support teachers in understanding how to integrate their knowledge of children's learning across their planning and enactment of instruction.

• **Research**: More research is needed to understand how teachers use their knowledge about children's learning in their planning and instruction and how that matters for children's learning.

• **Policy:** More policies to support teachers' professional development around curriculum implementation may be needed.

References

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