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Abstract

The research is based on the Early childhood educators and parental perspectives towards the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. Hence, the primary objective of this study was to understand the different perceptions of both teachers and parents.

As this research is based on qualitative research, the researcher used two methods such as interview and ranking methods to explore the participants' perception of this study. The study based on two preschools and used the convenient sampling method to conduct the study due to the easy accessibility of finding information. Parents and teachers were the two categories selected from these preschools to conduct the interview and ranking method. To conduct the interviews, I created two sets of interview guides for both participants. The ranking method was based on the seven areas such as proper government guidance, introduce best teaching methodology to teach the curriculum, introduce an English medium national preschool curriculum, practice letter writing in the preschool, Children needs more activity-based curriculum, Curriculum should be nature-based and preschool curriculum should change according to the modern children. The participants were given the chance to rate the most important to least by using 1-7 numbers.

Three theories were used in this study such as social constructionism, risk society, and different curriculum methods. These theories helped me to analyze the participants' perceptions from a broader perspective. However, it is found that research participants' perceptions have been shaped according to their society and culture. By considering the future of their children most teachers and parents have given their ideas to enhance the preschool curriculum through proper government guidance. They also emphasize the significance of letter-writing practices, English medium curriculum in order to succeed their children's future.

Preface

May all the blessings of triple gems! I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude and deep regard to my Supervisor, Prof. Ida Marie Lyså for her exemplary guidance, valuable feedback, and constant encouragement throughout the research project. Her valuable suggestions led to an immense help throughout my research work. Her perceptive criticism kept me working to make this study a much better way. Working under her was an extremely knowledgeable experience for me.

My appreciation also extends to all NTNU childhood studies lecturers and also our student advisors who helped me to make this project a success.

I am very pleased to convey my special thanks to the research participants who invested their time in my interview process. It is a privilege to thank all the Nursery management staff in Sri Lanka who supported me to find information for the research project.

Finally, I wish to offer my heartiest gratitude to my beloved parents, loving husband, my dear friends and all my relations for their encouragement and support.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Early childhood education in Sri Lanka

Early childhood education is one of the significant institutions for children below school age. Parents and teachers also play a vital role in children's lives when giving education to children. Thus, in this project, I explore the parent's and teacher's perspectives towards the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. Young people under the age 5 need proper stimulation as well as the life skills for day-to-day activities. It is believed that value-related knowledge earns at the early stage of life. Hence, it is important to have a valuable curriculum that enhances the children's physical, social and emotional skills. However, due to the current world pandemic situation whole   Sri Lankan education system has been affected.

When considering the different countries, it is explicit that they practice many methods which suit their country's context. In Finland, they practice a play-based method that guides the children through practical implementation (Kangas et al.,2019). In Austria, and Belgium the preschool education is not mandatory for the kids and they do not have a national curriculum for the preschool. In countries such as Norway, Netherlands, Italy, Finland, Denmark Preschool education is not compulsory, but all these countries have a national pre-school curriculum (Kayhan et al,2012).

Early childhood education policies are varied from country to country. These policies serve different objectives. However, the main aim of these early childhood education development programs is the readiness of the children for school and support for their socio- emotional development. For some countries, this is to help the labor market and for some countries to promote gender equality for education. Some believe this helps to develop cultural values, cohesiveness within the communities (Bertram et al, 2016). However, these outcomes reveal that different countries have different expectations which suit their cultural values and beliefs.

When focusing on the Sri Lankan education system education is state-funded and free for all the people. The government also provides free textbooks and school uniforms for all the children in Sri Lanka (Liyanage,2014). While the public school offers the Sri Lankan curriculum, the private schools provide the national and the British curriculum. Thus, there are many controversies when selecting a preschool for younger children. However, most of the parents try to select public or private schools which match to their expectations.

To overcome these issues, it is significant to explore the adult perspectives which determine the children's education. Understand what teachers and parents expect from a curriculum and explore the place for the children within this competitive environment has given significant attention to this study.

Sri Lanka is a multinational country including 4 main nations such as Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, and Burger with varied socio–economic and cultural aspects. The Government Preschool curriculum is a generalized syllabus that focuses on all the children's development regardless of socio-economic and cultural aspects. Recently many private schools have been established

and these schools focus more on varied internationally recognized curriculums rather than the national curriculum. Parents are given the opportunity to choose a good quality preschool for their children. This may differ from parents to parents (Nisskaya, 2018). The issue pertains when focusing on the urbanized schools where most of the parents seek modernized playgrounds, preschool materials as well as an updated curriculum that matches modern society. Mostly the urbanized parent's preference is to educate their children in a high-quality school-based environment with a good curriculum. This is mostly due to the competitive interviews for entering the school after preschool. However, this directly influences the younger children's lifestyles, and it makes children exhausted in their early stages.

It is proven that most of the Sri Lankan preschools are privately own (National Education Commission Sri Lanka,2019). According to the Unicef, (2020) these schools are regulated under quality standards and most of the parents are unable to afford these private preschools. Several government departments have ratified many regulations for the development of early childhood education in Sri Lanka, but little has been acted upon. It has been revealed that preschools violate the basic need and standards of preschools. This is due to the less facilities which they have used in the schools. Besides, the governmental preschools the so-called "Montessori" has often charge a high school fee. However, they are mostly practicing the Montessori method and some of these pre- schools tend to mix the national curriculum as well.

COVID-19 virus has rapidly spread and also threatens all the people in the world regardless of nationality, race, religion as well as the level of education. Due to the pandemic situation, this study also has to face many challenges throughout the fieldwork of the study. One of the major challenges was to change the methods of the methodology. When considering the Sri Lankan children, who have privileged background learn with the support of their parents online. However, Disadvantaged children remained shut down with this crisis due to fewer facilities. This pandemic situation has exposed many inadequacies as well as the iniquities in the current education system. The conventional schooling style is changing due to the current inaccessibility to schools in most countries. Mostly the Sri Lankan education purpose is to maintain a continuous learning environment while many students have to find their resources and money to access the Internet, Radio, and Television.

Considering the need and the current requirement in Sri Lanka, EFSL (Education Forum of Sri Lanka) has identified many issues and challenges and make recommendations for policy makers. The research which they have done recently revealed that 60% (Gamage,2020). of household-aged school, children have no internet. The other major issue is the lack of devices. Most of the families only have a smartphone and this would not be possible to deliver distance learning properly. Parents cannot substitute for the teacher and this also a challenge for both parents as well as teachers. It is also emphasized that 97% of Sri Lankan people have mobile phones while only 50% of people having internet accessibility in Sri Lanka (Gamage,2020).

The challenges due to this crisis will not be ending soon. The economic situation of every country is not the same when comparing the developed and developing countries. Thus, spending on education has to be compromised in the future. It is predicted that even if the countries were able to avoid the second wave of this COVID-19 pandemic the country's economy will decrease from 6% in this year (Schleicher,2020, p. 7). Hence, this could be affected towards education massively.

As I have worked as a preschool teacher in Sri Lanka, I experienced that many preschools practiced various curriculum apart from the national curriculum and I saw people also have different expectations when selecting the preschools in Sri Lanka. Thus, this curiosity led me to think about how other countries childhood shaped in their early years. However, this motivation of children and education led me to study the global children and their childhood. Thus, it is a privilege to mention that I got the opportunity to study at the Norwegian science and technology Childhood studies 2 years master program under the department of education and lifelong sciences. This master's program wider my knowledge in many ways and in the final year I selected the research topic to study early childhood education in Sri Lanka.

The program aims to cover the state of childhood in western countries as well as South countries. In this program, researchers tend to research various subject topics and some of the topics such as children's s rights, street children and health, childhood obesity and modern technology, Children's livelihoods, and children and education. By giving the significance of the children and education, I explore the current preschool curriculum and parent's and teacher's perspectives towards the national preschool curriculum as my final year master thesis.

There are many cultures and different societal structures globally. Each of these cultures carries its living standards. Thus, this program led us to rethink the children and their voices in different contexts of the world. However, this project also aims to understand the pre-school education system via the adult lens.

1.2 Aim of the project and research question

The primary objective of this study is to understand the early childhood educators' and parents' perspectives towards the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. By exploring these perspectives, I intend to analyze the perception of the current preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka and its significance towards the kids in their early stage of life.

There are many controversies in the national Preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka because many preschools do not fully practice the national curriculum, but they combine a mixed method by applying various other methods. The Montessori method which is introduced by the Association of Montessori International (AMI) is popular within this context. However, many preschools practice various other curriculums except the national preschool curriculum. However, most parents' preferences are relying on the English medium curriculum-based early childhood centers. Thus, educators use varied strategies to attract children to their preschools. The problem is that the government has not introduced an English medium preschool curriculum, but teachers translate the guiding books according to their knowledge levels. This happens due to the parental demands towards choosing the best school for their children. But the actual problem is what do they expect from a curriculum?

The research questions aim is to find the perceptions of the adults towards the preschool curriculum. These perceptions may create the pathway to analyze the existing issues and challenges of the present curriculum. Thus, this helps overcome the future advancement of the issue-free curriculum.

- How do early childhood educators and parents perceive the national preschool curriculum?

- What are the barriers and challenges of the national preschool curriculum?

- What needs to be changed for the future advancement of the curriculum?

The first question focuses on how educators and parents perceive the national preschool curriculum. As we can see there are many controversies about the preschool curriculum so it is significant to understand both parent's and educator's perspectives towards the curriculum. The current curriculum is known as the integrated curriculum which focuses on a child's holistic development in physical, emotional, and social aspects. But the problem arises with how adults view this curriculum for child development.

The government has not introduced an English medium curriculum for preschools. However, there are many teacher training centers established in Sri Lanka besides the governmental institutions. These private institutions mostly affiliate with international organizations and they proceed with curriculums that are different from the national preschool curriculum designed by the government. Most of these urbanized private preschools combine the government curriculum as well as the other curriculums to provide a better service for the requirements of modern parents. However, most preschool educators face many challenges and barriers when carrying out the preschool curriculum.

It is significant to understand what changes should be taken to change the national preschool curriculum. The question arises with why many preschools do not follow the national syllabus and apply many alternative curriculums besides the national syllabus. If the curriculum is not updated according to the current expectations of parents as well as the modern child, it is significant to develop according to the present generational requirements. Thus, the purpose of this question is to understand what educators and parents consider to be a change for the better progress of the national preschool curriculum.

1.3 Significance of the study

It is considered that humans' early stages are the most important stages of life. When entering preschools, Children are separated from their comfort zone and arriving at a new place where they can gain more social, physical, and emotionally healthy environments. Thus, preschool is one of the significant places where children gain the basis for their lifelong progress. The skills and knowledge which they develop through the preschool help to develop their future human being. Hence, this study is based on the preschool curriculum which they learn in the preschools. Even though the preschool curriculum was created by a professional committee panel there are various issues and challenges which parents and teachers face in their daily routine. Thus, this study focuses on understanding the preschool curriculum and its necessary implementations for the issues and challenges of the national pre- school curriculum in Sri Lanka.

As this study is based on the preschool curriculum it is significant to understand the content of the curriculum. A curriculum framework should help the teachers to plan their activities in the preschool centers and also it should enhance the children's holistic development. To establish a well-organized curriculum proper standard should be implemented throughout the

curriculum and also in the learning process. Parents also should have their knowledge to understand the curriculum. Thus, understanding parents' and teacher's perspective towards child holistic development is immensely significant in this study.

1.4 Childhood Studies

A growing number of researchers have advocated that children are significant human beings and also their voices should be considered and heard. 1980 s' the childhood concept began to emerge with a new paradigm. Earlier the developmentalists have narrowly focused on children developing into human beings. The sociologist perspective also holds an individualistic perspective where they do not think of children as part of the society. However, childhood studies have given their foremost place to the child within this novel paradigm of childhood studies. Thus, children are considered active research participants. Corsaro, Qvortruop, James and Prout, Christensen, Punch, Montgomery are some of the pillars of childhood studies. Children are considered as a 'being' than a 'becoming' (Qvortrup, 1994) which means that children are competent social beings and also competent social agents (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000). This also stresses that childhood is a social construct and children an active constructor who can build their knowledge (Mayall, 2000).

In this study, I apply the social constructionist perspective which was initiated by Berger and Luckmann. These pioneers explore how knowledge was constructed and its nature. However, this theory shows that knowledge is constructed by interacting with the members of the society (Andrews, 2012). This theory explicitly emphasizes that people's habits and routines are influenced within its society. Hence, rather than finding the new knowledge individuals follow the same routines which are embedded within its social structures. When applying this theory into this research shows how adult perspectives are shaped by their social structure and its direct influence on children.

The problem arises with do children have a say in decision making. Thus, in this research actor-oriented perspective emphasizes the significance of children as social actors. The concept of agency has conceptualized children as thinkers and doers (McNamee, S. 2011). Thus, it is important to understand how far this curriculum voice the children's preferences.

Sri Lankan preschool education has been discussed via many areas. Hence, there are many discourses built on the Sri Lankan preschool curriculum. According to the surveys it is found that there is a lack of quality preschool education. Many reasons have been found out such as lack of teacher learning materials, classroom infrastructure, lack of quality teaching, and most importantly the curriculum. It has been found out that lack of standards in the early childhood curriculum. There is also a discourse about the preschool monitoring and evaluation system. These issues emphasize the lack of clarity of the monitoring systems (world Bank ,2014). Researchers have revealed many problems and challenges due to the intense preschool curriculum (Rajapaksha & Chathurika,2015). There are many statements and positions that have been drafted for developing early childhood education in Sri Lanka. But little has acted upon for future enhancement. Thus, identifying the various type of discourses

regarding Sri Lankan preschool education is focused on the theoretical approaches of this study.

1.5 Thesis structure

The introductory chapter provides an overview of the early childhood education of Sri Lanka and information which relates to the research study. As each country carries different education systems, this chapter aims towards the Sri Lankan education system and the issues and challenges of the current pre-school education system. The research objective of this study is to explore the early childhood educators and parental perception towards the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. Hence, this chapter discusses the problems, challenges, and future provisions to enhance the quality of pre- school education via research questions. Further, the chapter focuses on the significance of the study. As this research is based on childhood studies, the chapter introduces the theories which apply to explore the research topic. Hence, the chapter provides background information about the research study.

The 2nd chapter is the context chapter which focuses on the in-depth information about Sri Lankan society and its overall education. This context chapter further discusses Sri Lankan education history and structure, institutions who are responsible for the ECD education in Sri Lanka as well as the current national preschool curriculum in detail. The 3rd chapter focuses on the methods used to explore the research study. The study bases the qualitative research methodology and explores the participants' perspectives through the interview and ranking methods. This chapter further explains the sample size of the study, research location as well as the limitations that were faced in the study. Chapter 4 consists of the theories which are used in this research study such as social constructionism (Lester et al.,2007), risk society (Rasborg,2012), and the different curriculums. These theories are used to support to understand the participant's perspectives in a broader way of this study. Chapter 5 is the analysis and discussion chapter which investigates both teachers' and parents' perspectives in a broader perspective. Further, the discussion section engages with the theories of this study by understanding the teacher's and parents' perspectives. Finally, chapter 6 provides a summary of the overall chapters and emphasis the key findings of this research study.

Chapter 2 – Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the Sri Lankan education system and its depth of information. To get the knowledge of the Sri Lankan education system it is significant to understand the Sri Lankan culture as well as its society. Thus, the chapter focuses on the background information of Sri Lanka and its social class dimensions. These class dimensions help to understand the different perspectives of parents and teachers of this study. The chapter also focuses on the Sri Lankan education history, education policy, institutional context of pre-school education, and contemporary issues of pre-school education. Thus, this chapter presents the issues and challenges of current preschool education.

2.2 About Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian ocean which is located between the Laccadive Sea in the west and the Bay of Bengal in the east. The island covers an area of 65,610 km². Colombo is the largest city in Sri Lanka and this research is based on one of the suburb areas in Colombo. Sri Lanka consists of various multi-ethnic groups and religious groups. However, Sri Lanka has given its foremost place for Buddhism. The country considers Sinhala as the main language and the official language in Sri Lanka. There are other spoken languages such as Tamil and English. However, Sinhala is the most spoken language in Sri Lanka.

The country has the highest literate level when compared with the other south Asian countries such as Maldives and India. According to the UNESCO data, in the 15-24 year category, the literate level is 98.8% and in the 65 years and older category, the literate level is 79.1% (UNESCO, 2020). When considering pre-primary education, gross enrolment has relatively increased from 2010 to 2017 and it has slightly decreased in 2018 (UNESCO, 2020).

According to the world bank report Sri Lanka is considered as the lower-middle-income country with an average GDP per capita of USD 3,852 (World Bank, 2020). The total population of the country is 21.8 million (World Bank, 2020). Sri Lanka has to undergo 30 years of civil war, and this ended in 2009. However, the economy started to grow after the war in the period of 2010- 2019 with an average of 5.3 percent (World Bank, 2020). When considering the current situation, the economy has severely impacted Sri Lanka due to the covid-19 health crisis (World Bank, 2020). Due to this pandemic, people struggle with their daily incomes irrespective of various social classes.

2.3 Childhood in Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan culture and society have different values and norms. This also differed according to the rural and urban contexts. Sri Lanka has a very close culture where children are very dependent on their parents even after they grow up. As this study conducts in Colombo childhood differs from the rural context. Most of the children in urban contexts get the chance

to access quality education with many teaching aids. It is proven that according to the 2016 data, Colombo is the lowest poor household percentage of 0.6% (Department of census and statistics,2020). It is also estimated that Colombo has the highest distribution of employees. These ideas show that Colombo city is considered as the most facilitated area and easy access to people's needs and wants. However, children who live in these city areas tend to get more exposure to society from their early stage of life as they live in this economized busy environment. Mostly the nuclear families are visible in this urban area and they are more individualized in order to achieve their life goals.

2.4 Sri Lankan education history and structure

Sri Lankan education system has a long history of over 2300 years. It is said that the Sanskrit language came from India with the establishment of Buddhism with the set of monks sent by King Asoka to Sri Lanka. The Portuguese captured Sri Lanka in 1905 and they ruled the country for 150 years. After the Portuguese establishment, Dutch ruled the country for another 150 years. However, the British led the mass education system for Sri Lankan education in the 19th century. Nevertheless, the national re-awakening started in the 19th century. In 1942 The ministry of education DR. C.W.W Kanangra initiated a committee to inspect education very well and they form the English language in every school to make use for all the children irrespective of the communities. However, the national heroes initiated the Buddhist schools with the English education, and these schools enriched with Buddhist values. 1960 considered as another landmark of the Sri Lankan education system where the government established a national education system (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013).

However, this shows that people's thought patterns and lifestyles have changed to think English as a valuable language for education which impacted the whole education system of Sri Lanka.

When compared with the other developing countries in the world Sri Lankan education system is considered one of the progressive indicators in basic education. The education is free from pre- school to university level with all the facilities. The government also provides free textbooks and uniforms to all the children in Sri Lanka. There are 10,162 schools in Sri Lanka both private and public (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013). The contemporary education system has been divided into many categories such as Pre School Education(ECCD), Primary Education, Junior Secondary Education, Senior Secondary Education, Tertiary education.

2.5 Social class dimensions in Sri Lanka

Poalo Urio (Urio, 2013 as cited in Ekanayake & Guruge,2016) has emphasized that society is structured based on four elements. Those four elements are socio- biological structure, the structure of norms (formal and informal), economic structure, and the informational structure (Ekanayake & Guruge,2016). However, this can be changed according to societal functions. In modern society, people have categorized society according to living standards, wealth, and power. When considering the Sri Lankan society, earlier the societal structure is mostly based on the caste system. The living conditions in Sri Lanka have become the main parameter that

depicts today's social stratification. Hence, it has become hard to identify what determines the social class in present Sri Lanka (Ekanayake & Guruge,2016).

The following table emphasizes the social class structure of Sri Lanka. This table supports the identification of how different classes have shaped the different perspectives in their lifestyles. Education has also been categorized according to the class structures and parents tend to choose the pre-schools and schools according to these class structures.

Most of the participants in this research belong to the middle-class category and they both speak the language of English and Sinhala. But it is significant to consider that some parents and children are not eligible to use the English language fluently. However, this is the general societal structure which emphasizes through this table. When considering education, it also depends on the income of the families. As many who tries to find a national reputed school after the pre- school irrespective of the class structure. However, most parents who are middle and high-class category tend to get a private pre-school education in Sri Lanka.

Class	Speech	Dress	Mode of Travel	Education	Employment	Living area
High	English	European	Luxury Vehicles	Elite school	Executive Professions	Exclusive Suburbs
Middle	English/ Mother Language	Shirts Trousers Clothes & Jacket	Cars, Van Three-wheelers Motorbikes	Government National School	Non-executive Professions, Small scale business	Small towns Villages
Low	Mother Language	Sarong Cloths& jacket	Bicycle Walking public transport	Rural school	Labor	Colony Village shanty

Table 2.5.1: Manifestations of social class differences in Sri Lanka (Ekanayake & Guruge,2016, p. 105).

2.6 Colombo - As the place of highest education facilities

Colombo is considered the capital city of Sri Lanka which carries many social variations. The city of Colombo is considered one of the richest cities as well as the most available Human resources in the country. As Colombo is the main city this includes a variety of socio-economic, political, cultural, and varied educational structures. Among these variations, people hunt for the best education systems and best schools for their children within this main city of Colombo. This led to the high density of people and also their focus is on the higher social reputations.

As this research is based on the Colombo area it is significant to understand its society and the class dimensions of the society. Colombo city consists of many reputed government schools as well the private schools. These private schools mostly consist of an international

curriculum. Sri Lanka has a very complicated as well as a highly competitive education system. Many who tries to enter the reputed schools by competing with the examinations. However, this cannot be generalized for the rural areas due to the socio-cultural, economic variance (Perera,2009).

 The problem of being selected to a reputed school pertains not to the upper-class families but it is the challenge for the lower-class people as well. Though the Sri Lankan education system is free for every citizen in Sri Lanka extra costs for the other necessities create conflicts between people. However, in order to compete with these challenges parents, influence their children towards education from their early stage of life.

2.7 Institutional context

The central government is the responsible authority for ECD education in Sri Lanka. However, the responsibility has been divided into provincials according to the new amendment in Sri Lanka. Ministry of Women and Child affairs (MWCA) is the major institution that is functioning under the Children's Secretariat which is accountable for mandating the ECCD. This institution is conducting programs for Early childhood care and development to promote the child's physical and mental health of the child. Currently their major is to formulate the policies and regulate the programs for early childhood care and development.

However, pre-primary education is offered in many forms such as local authorities, religious parties, voluntary organizations as well as private parties. It is estimated that 90% (Nawastheen, 2019) of children are involved in preschool education. The current education system has a top-down approach where the Ministry of Education is the center for all the education management systems in Sri Lanka. Even though the ministry of education is the central authority for all the management purposes, provincial councils have the authority to implement the policies in education at the grassroots level. There are nine provincials, but they are not entitled to make any decisions regarding the curriculum development and implementation.

However, other institutions are operating under the ministry of education namely, Departments, Statutory Boards, and public enterprise. There are main statutory boards under MOE(Ministry of Education) namely, National Education Commission (NEC), National Institute of Education (NIE), National Library and Documentation Service Board (NLDSB), and National Book Development Council of Sri Lanka (NBDC). NIE is one of the major institutions which develops the curriculum and responsible for conducting training for personnel (Nawastheen, 2019).

2.8 Budget allocation

It is estimated in 2018 that there are 16, 578 (World Bank Group, 2014) early childcare development centers. When considering the history of budget estimation there is a minimum budget allocation for Early childhood education in Sri Lanka. The investment for ECE is estimated in 2012, 19 million (World Bank Group, 2014) of Sri Lankan Rupees which is

equivalent to 0.0008% (World Bank Group, 2014) from the national budget. However, this is considered as one of the lowest budget allocations for pre-school education. When considering the 2013 statistics it has raised to 30 million SLR, but this has reduced to 22 million SLR in 2014 (World Bank Group, 2014). The world Bank states that Sri Lanka is one of the most average public expenditures on early childhood education when compared to middle-income countries. It is estimated at .03 percentage of GDP (World Bank Group, 2014).

2.9 Main ideas of National pre-school curriculum

Sri Lankan preschool education is named as the integrated curriculum and their objective is to enhance the child's holistic development via this integrated curriculum. It is significant to focus on the main learning areas of the current national preschool curriculum (Teacher's guide for early childhood education, 2016).

1.   Develop ethics

2.   Society and culture

3.   Develop language abilities

4.   Aesthetic and creative arts

5.   Living and non-living world

6.   Develop math concept and critical thinking

7.   Develop physical education

The curriculum is based on these themes and each theme has many activities for children to learn about the specific theme very well. It is significant to understand what consists of each theme. In the ethics theme, children learn personal hygiene such as how to eat food healthy, the importance of main meals, and also aware of child abuse and how to protect themselves. In the next theme of culture and society children gain knowledge of the environment and learn about their cultures. In the language abilities, children will enhance their reading abilities by explaining the different pictures, conversations between teachers and students, and also activities to improve children listening capabilities. Aesthetic and creative art theme children engage with a variety of paint activities, dance, drama, and music. Living and non-living theme children learn the things that are alive and not alive in the world. The living things are classified as the things that grow and develop in our nature. Children observe nature and talk with their teachers about what they observed in the environment. For example, different tree shapes and colors. Likewise, children learn these things through interaction with the environment. A math concept is one of the significant areas where children will improve their logical capacities. In this category, children learn 1-5 numbers, different shapes and comparisons, and measurements.

These themes main aim is to enhance children's holistic development. Apart from these themes, the curriculum has also included the other activities needed for a child's everyday

life. However, according to the national preschool curriculum, the preschool general day plans should be followed accordingly (Teacher's guide for early childhood education, 2016). In physical education, children enhance their fine motor and gross motor skills through play activities in pre-school. When considering the daily schedule of the preschool first the teachers should welcome the kids and start the school with religious activities such as worship lord Buddha or praying for God. Then teachers should engage in a friendly discussion. As the next task children should engage with activities according to weekly/daily themes. After these activities children will get playtime. After that children will get a break. Creative activities will proceed after the break and finally, children should tidy up the preschool with the help of their teachers before they leave the pre-school. However, these activities are general daily schedules that have been presented in the teacher's guidebook in pre-school. These daily activities aim to improve the child's physical and social skills by practicing the preschool curriculum.

2.10 Sri Lankan Policy of Preschool Education

The Children's Secretariat in the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affair (MCDWA) is the executive agency that implements the ECCE policy in Sri Lanka. With the 13-amendment provincial councils have the authority to implement and monitor the local level agencies which are under the provincial councils.

The government has introduced a national policy for education in 2019 (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019) by focusing on the overall education system in Sri Lanka. However, they have circulated a policy for preschool education as well. Sri Lankan national policy care and development emphasize the value of early childhood education. They consider one of the significant areas of development as a child's brain with the period of conception to age 5. As the children's Secretariat is the main agency for pre-school education in Sri Lanka their main responsibility is to formulate programs as well as coordination and assessment. In 2004 they have circulated a policy for the first time for early childhood care and development which focuses on the child's overall development starting from conception to 5 years. However, this has revised in 2019 and focuses on the integrated early childhood education services to enhance the quality of preschool education. According to the 13 amendments 1987, the Provincial Council has the authority to govern and supervise the preschools in Sri Lanka.

2.11 Contemporary issues of preschool education

Pre-school education is not compulsory for children in Sri Lanka. As preschool education run in different organizations, children learn from different environments. According to the 2019 data, there are 19,668 preschools and more than 70% of the preschools govern by private organizations. It is estimated that only 19.8 govern by the public authorities. The other 6.8

% conducts via religious parties and 3% by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019).

However, it is significant to understand the age categories of the school enrollment. 3- 5 years-old preschool children enrollment is 55.6 % (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019).

When considering the gender category, male children are higher than the female children who enroll for the preschools in this age category. There is also a considerable disparity among the rural, urban, and estate sectors when focuses on the children's preschool enrollment in Sri Lanka.

It is estimated that only 59.9% (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019) of teachers who work in the preschools have passed their Advanced Level examination. It is a must to complete a one-year teacher training certificate but only 83% of teachers have completed this qualification and it is estimated the 9.5% who has not completed the basic qualification.

Most preschools conduct privately and publicly, but these private schools are managed to gain profits when considering contemporary society. Most of the private organizations conduct preschools with the limited space and the current policy has been poorly designed to change these issues in the preschools.

The main challenge of preschool student enrollment is that many children under 5 years do not go to school due to several issues of access to the quality of preschool education. According to 2017 national education commission data it is estimated that only 55.6 % of 3- 5 years of children enrolled in pre-schools (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019). This has changed district wise and the most reason for the high absence rate for the preschool's children is that not having the pre-schools close to the children's home. The other issue is private preschools' high enrollment fee which they have to pay for the preschool and parents have not gained the expected outcome from their children from these pre- schools. The other major challenge that researchers have recognized with the lack of school facilities to cater to special needs education. Even though the government has introduced new guidelines and standards to increase the quality they have not reached the expected achievement in the past years. Even though the government expects to increase the quality of the preschools, infrastructure facilities are low. One of the major issues is that do not have age-appropriate learning programs for individuals (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019).

When considering the above factors, it is explicit that the pre-school curriculum has some issues and challenges when implementing the curriculum for all age categories. Thus, it is significant to implement a proper strategy to enhance the quality of the preschool curriculum.

Many other issues have been identified by the government as well as different research and many other non-governmental organizations. Unicef has identified the following issues regarding the pre-school curriculum in Sri Lanka.

- Pre-school curricula is not promoting the positive behaviors of children.

- There is a lack of stimulation in socio-emotional, motoric, socio-emotional, and cognitive competencies (Unicef,2020).

There are no proper standards for teacher entry qualifications for preschool teachers. However, this shows that without proper education it is difficult to give the right education for children. It is found that the teacher-child relationship is significant in order to enhance the quality of the preschool education system. Thus, increasing the teacher qualification is also an important factor in order to keep the quality of the preschool curriculum.

It is a joint responsibility of both teachers and parents to raise a child. Thus, it is significant to understand the child's needs and wants their lacking areas of development with the proper communication of parent and teachers.

2.12 Overcoming the issues via new Policy

The government has identified the six areas of development in preschool education and these areas namely, Equitable access to preschool education, Quality in preschool education, Preschool education workforce development, parental, family and community participation, Data, research, evaluation and documentation, Governance, and financing (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019). According to these six areas, they have formed the following policies.

> Policy 1: All preschool-aged children in Sri Lanka should be ensured equitable access to an inclusive preschool education.

> Policy 2: All preschool-aged children in Sri Lanka should be ensured high-quality learning opportunities that increase their holistic development and school readiness.

> Policy 3: All preschool teachers and personnel involved in the capacity of guiding preschool children should be well-qualified, participate in relevant initial and continuous professional development, and supported by efficient and effective policies, decent working conditions, professional autonomy and career pathways.

> Policy 4: All families and communities should be active participants and collaborators in children's learning and development during the preschool years, working together to strengthen both pre-primary programmes as well as family practices.

> Policy 5: Policy actions should be based on the best available evidence and support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice.

> Policy 6: Preschool education in Sri Lanka should be ensured through a cohesive and well-aligned system, with effective and accountable governance, and arrangement of national and provincial government budgets, to equitably meet the needs of children and their educators.

14

Figure 2.12.1: Education Policy

Source: (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019).

This new policy shows that the government has focused on the child's overall development and these new policies are helpful for the development of an updated curriculum. However, the issue regarding the implementation as well as applying these strategies are complicated.

2.13 Summary

In this chapter, Sri Lankan education and its background information have been explored. The income of Sri Lankans as well as how various social class dimensions define the benefits of their daily lifestyle to understand the research objectives of this research study. As the study is based on the Colombo preschools, the chapter focuses on the education facilities and the nature of education in the Colombo District. As this research aim is to understand the different perspectives of the national curriculum it is significant to explore the preschool policy which is enacted by the government at present. Thus, understanding the issues and challenges in this policy as well as focus on the current preschool education challenges has been explored further in this chapter. The next section chapter emphasizes the main idea of the preschool curriculum to get a general understanding of the national pre-school curriculum.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As it is indicated in the title this chapter describes the research methodology which is used in the research. The methodology is based on the qualitative research study thus, the chapter outlines the nature of the qualitative research as well as its main features. Parents and teachers are one of the significant pillars of the children where they gain new experiences and knowledge. Thus, understanding the research participants of this study and the background information of the research location will be explored in the next section of this chapter. Adult perspectives were explored by using online interviews and ranking methods. Research ethics and reflexivity are some of the paramount sections of this chapter that reveals the transparency of the research project. Finally, the limitation and challenges emphasis the Covid- 19 pandemic and its influences and the other issues occurred during the research process.

3.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a way of social investigation of how people feel and experience the world they live in (Holloway & Galvin 2017). Many research uses qualitative approaches for different purposes such as to explore humans' behaviors, feelings, and experiences. Qualitative research is generally used for investigative research namely ethnographic research, naturalistic, anthropological research, field research as well as participant-observer research (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). There are various ways of conducting qualitative research.

Many types of research use various methodological approaches according to research design and its aims. Ethnography is one of the oldest qualitative research methods which was used by many sociologists and anthropologists in order to explore the cultural variations of humans all around the world. These ethnographic researchers used to stay with the community and investigate the cultures by using different techniques such as interviews, observation as well as explored the documentary sources (Quick & Hall, 2015).

Qualitative research carries certain characteristics from quantitative research. Qualitative research moreover emphasis on the descriptions instead of testing hypothesis. Subsequently, unstructured data are used in the research in order to capture the relevant information from its participant's point of view. Sometimes, the observer often used audio and videos to collect the data. Not only that but also many documentaries such as newspapers, maps, magazines, and diaries commonly used in the research process. At present visual data has become more prominent with varied availability sources on the internet. As the third feature qualitative research leads to subjectivity. This means that research social and personal views shape the research.

Reflexivity is also one of the significant notions of qualitative research. Reflective research helps the researcher to see himself in a critical perspective throughout the research process.

"Reflexivity is commonly viewed as the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgment and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome" (Berger,2015,p.220).

However, though the sample is small in-depth analysis has been used in many qualitative studies. Instead of focusing on the statistical data, qualitative research determines on the verbal description and interpretations (Hammersley & Campbell, 2012). Hence, Qualitative research is not predetermined. Qualitative research is considered context-bound (Holloway & Galvin 2017) and it is significant to have context sensitivity when conducting these qualitative researches. Reflexivity is another main characteristic of qualitative research that emphasizes the self-monitoring of the researcher's role (Holloway & Galvin 2017).

In this research study qualitative methodology was used to explore the perspectives of the parents and the teachers. As methods of this study, interviews would be helpful to get a clear understanding of the perspectives of both parents and teachers. Semi-structured interviews are considered mostly informal. But it may provide the possibility to ask questions freely in any order (Ennew et.al, 2009). As the second method of this study, the ranking method is used to identify the most and least important areas in this research. As the core participants of this study are adults, their diverse ideas can be rate down differently.

As qualitative research often focuses on society's values and its experiences here my research intent is to explore the different perspectives of parents and the teachers on the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. Thus, it is significant to understand the location of the study as well as the background information of my research participants and the nature of the preschools of this selected location.

3.3 About the research location

It is significant to understand the background of the field context. The research is conducted in Sri Lanka, Piliyandala which is 18 kilometers away from the main city of Colombo. This suburb is considered a relatively more populated suburb located in Colombo western province. According to the department of *Divisional secretariat Kesbewa* the total population of the Piliyandala district is 255175 (Divisional secretariat, 2020). Within this suburb, there are more than 140 preschools registered under the Divisional Secretariat and most of them are privately owned. Piliyandala district is considered as a Sinhala majority area where it has other minor ethnic groups as well.

Figure 3.3.1: Map

3.4 About the two preschools

When considering the two schools which I Selected for the research is within the Piliyandala city. The selected schools conduct a mixed curriculum both in the local language (Sinhala) and English. These preschools also use the national curriculum which has been introduced by the Sri Lankan government. However, these preschools are not fully using the national pre-school curriculum. But they mix various other international-based methods.

In one school children's population is 80 and this pre-school consists of 6 teachers. There are three categories of age groups in these preschools namely as follows.

- Playgroup: 2 ½ years

- Level 1 : 3-4 years

- Level 2: 4-5 years

This Preschool consists of 7 children in the playgroup class. Level 1 consists of two classes and both classes consist of 19 children. There are two classes for level 2 which consist of 15 students in one class and 16 children in the other class.

When considering the curriculum practice in this school, they practice international curriculum apart from the national curriculum introduced by the government. Montessori method is one such example. This method has introduced by Dr. Maria Montessori. This school practice AMI (Association Montessori International) based curriculum.

Apart from this, they practice internationally recognized systematic methods which enhance the child's reading and writing capability. Though the national curriculum has not introduced English as a subject this preschool teaches English as a subject. This school practices various extracurricular activities apart from the given curriculum. They organize sports days, English

days, Night camps, Picnic for children and Field trips which relate to the subject they practice in the schools.

The other school consists of 20 children and 3 teachers. This school also has categorized into 3 classes namely :

- Play Group – 2 ½ years

- Lower class- 3+ years onwards

- Upper Class- 4+ years onwards

This school also practices Montessori method and the national preschool curriculum. They teach the national curriculum both in Sinhala (Local language) and in English languages. They use modern equipment which is a tablet computer to teach different subjects. This Preschool also conducts various extracurricular activities for the children apart from the national curriculum. The school has separated Friday for extracurricular activities and this day most students play with their toys and they will perform many activities with sand and water.

3.5 Methods and approaches

Two methods were used in order to conduct the fieldwork of this study. These methods are namely interviews, and the ranking methods. This section provides detailed information about these two methods as well as the pros and cons of these methods.

3.5.1 Interviews

Qualitative interview research tries to understand the world from the subject's perspective to get the ideas and experiences before the scientific clarification. Interviews appear easy to conduct. However, it is difficult to conduct if the researcher does not use good communication skills with research participants. Interviews drive for various purposes. The research interviews centered towards the daily conversations of the research participants and this is considered as a professional discussion where knowledge is constructed between the interviewer and interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Interviews deal with phenomenology. This emphasizes that human's lived experiences are analyzed through the interviews. There are various types of interviews namely, face-to-face interviews, group interviews, telephone interviews, and e-mail or internet-based interviews. The interview process is one of the significant areas of the research. Selecting participants for the research is important for any study. As this qualitative research is not generalizable the sample size of the interview participants can be small. Thus, the sample for the interviews are purposeful. Interview protocol is one of the major areas of the study which gives the researcher to look into the deeper interview structure (Bolderston, 2012).

There are three types of interviews namely:

1. Structured interviews

2. Un- structured interviews

3. Semi-structured interviews

Structured interviews have pre-scheduled questions and Unstructured interviews have a flexible format of questions that are based according to the interviewer. This has no closed format questions. The semi-structured interview is a mixed method of structured and semi-structured interviews (William, 2011). An unstructured interview is a way of asking open-ended questions from its participants. The researcher's main aim is not to superimpose the ideas of the interviewee rather interviewer tries to get the participant's insights (Given, 2012).

In this study, I used the semi-structured interview method which focuses on the predetermined questions. Though it is predetermined questions it is open-ended where the researcher has the capacity to reach in-depth information about the research. This is also a flexible way to follow-up questions and gives the space for the interviewee to elaborate on what they consider important about the topic. As this research focuses on teachers' and parents' perspectives this method helps to understand their views in a wider aspect.

When considering the interview questions, it is significant to design easy questions at the first in order to build a good rapport with the participants of the study. However, piloting the interview questions before the interview happens will give comprehensibility of the researcher's research questions.

Many of the researchers practice interviews as a good method. This shows that interviews have many advantages. This reveals the social cues of the interviewee and this creates a supportive background for the research (Opdenakker, 2006). When considering the face-to-face interviews, it helps to create an explicit view of the participants. Proper communication and well interaction between interviewer and interviewee lead to revealing many clues at the end of the research interview.

It is significant to explore the disadvantages of the interview method as well. As interviews are considered as synchronous communication this creates a lot of time and cost for the interviewer. Cost is varied according to the place. Conducting an interview by yourself might not cost a lot. However, transcribing will give more time and cost. Ambiguity is another disadvantage where the participants might deliver various interpretations. Sensitivity can be seen in the interviews that participants try to change the information during the interviews. Not only that they might get different experiences after the interview process and this can lead to a change of the descriptions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is significant to understand the research topic as well as the research questions before selecting the type of interview. For example, Group interviews do not provide accurate data if the interviewer focused on more sensitive topics.

Creating proper interview questions will ease both parties in the research process. It should be short, the conversational tone also precise about the factor. Before using the interview questions, it is significant to launch a pilot study with a few participants. This will minimize the complications in the future. There are many types of interview questions:

- Introductory Questions

- Follow – up questions

- Probing questions

- Specifying questions

- Direct questions

- In direct questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009)

In this research study, I used the above several types such as introductory questions as well as the probing and specifying questions. I asked the interviews to explain more about the statements they expressed by using the probing question category.

In this study, I use a set of semi-structured interview questions to explore the answers for my study. Two sets of interview guides are used to interview teachers and parents. The interview questions are based on three categories where the educational background of the teachers and subsequently their perspective towards the education and finally the issues, challenges, and their suggestions are focused on the interview guide. The parental questions first focused on the curriculum-based questions as well as their ideas about the curriculum. Secondly, educational perspectives and finally issues and challenges where parents face when educating the children were focused on the questionnaire.

The interview guide is based on the Main questions as well as it also has follow-up questions to make the questions easy for the research participants as well as support myself to get the best output answers for the research questions. Semi-structured interviews help in this study to receive more open-ended responses as well as to get in-depth information.

3.5.2 Ranking method

The ranking is a method that participants indicate the relative significant elements by giving a numerical value for it (Kesby, 2000). As the core participants of this study are adults, their diverse ideas could be rated differently. However, by giving the ranking method it will create a possibility to get useful answers as well as the solutions for the problems and challenges regarding the national preschool curriculum of Sri Lanka. Ranking helps to prioritize the predilection. The ranking has main categories of topics.

1. Priorities and preferences

2. Criteria and reasons

3. Wealth and status research (Ennew et al.,2009).

Generally, researchers use the method when they want to understand some priorities among the set of statements. Ranking requires choosing and list down the priorities from a series of options. If the ranking statements are high in number many alternatives can be used as an approach to success the method. One method is, ask respondents to rank them according to their preferences. However, this can lead to unranked middle statements. Then the least important and the highest important priorities can be listed down rather than focusing on the middle categories.

Most of the researchers comment that research results produce through the ranking by series of rating questions. However, this creates certain disadvantages and advantages as well. Ranking creates a burden on participants where participants have to use their cognitive abilities. Thus, mental fatigue affects the quality of the data gathered in the research process(Heyman & Sailors, 2016). This method also creates another disadvantage where participants unconsciously try to rate the known subject at the first which is discussed by the researcher at the beginning of the research.

The ranking method used in this study to find a conclusion by approaching some solutions for this study. Thus, I asked participants to rate down the statements about the preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka by giving them some options. Biasness leads to a false conclusion and often misleading. Biasness is when someone gives their preferences without giving equal chance to others. Thus, to avoid biases of the ranking method I asked participants to provide their views about what needs to be enhanced within the curriculum in Sri Lanka and ask them to rank their suggestions accordingly.

3.6 Ethical reflection of the research

Research ethics mainly associate with the research participants. This helps to protect the dignity and the welfare of the participants. There is a wide range of ethical considerations when conducting research. It is important to understand that researchers should respect ones own culture, society, religion, values, economic status without any discrimination. Ethics is considered a branch of philosophy that deals with the right and wrong of decision-making.

Privacy and confidentiality, respect, Privacy rights are some of the important aspects when researching with children. Hence, maintaining "assent" (Cocks, 2006) by creating trust between the researcher and its participants is paramount important. Privacy is one of the vital factors in every research. Privacy emphasis the protection of one personal information. There are various methods to protect ones privacy. In this study, I anonymize the research participants as well the institutional names to protect their privacy.

Further, I informed my research participants that voluntary participation in the research is necessary. Thus, ethics of inclusion should not be forceful. It might be a difficult procedure to get informed consent from the participants. However, providing accurate clear information creates trustworthiness between both parties.

Providing the right information about consent create a better relationship between the researcher and the participants. Informed consent considered as one of the vital factors when referring to research ethics. The researcher should explain all the information required for consent in the research (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). Hence, it is significant to incorporate with the introduction and the purpose of the study where research subjects will be followed. This is in a way of right to autonomous where individuals get the self – confidence. Thus, the informants can participate in the research activity by knowing the possible threats and benefits of the study (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). There are several key aspects in privacy and protection. Giving information, understanding, individual competence and voluntary

participation are some of the key elements. This emphasizes that when accurate information is given the capable participants understand and consent for participating voluntarily (Holmes, 2009).

Trustworthiness is another significant concept that should practice when involving the research participants. This has two sets of standards. The first is to figure out whether the researcher meets the general standards of the research field and subsequently, whether it's sensitive to ethical matters. These two factors are interconnected. If the practices not up to the standards it will not ease the research process. Credibility is another significant area of research. In order to maintain the credibility of the study, prolonged engagement with participants, use of triangulation as a method and participant authentication creates the credibility of the report (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

At the present, the internet has become a serious issue in research ethics. Many researchers tend to research via the internet. However, this creates several ethical challenges such as privacy, intellectual property rights, confidentiality, and validity. However, internet-based research has many advantages. Less cost and less time consuming are one of the greatest benefits which can achieve by the researcher itself. Thus, I was able to save time and money by conducting my fieldwork via the internet. This also helped to reach the research informants quickly and effectively. To access the participants globally internet-based research method is considered as one of the easiest methods. However, confidentiality can be considered as one of the serious issues in this method (Holmes, 2009). When conducting this study online was challengeable in order to get the trustworthiness of the participants in the beginning. However, in this study right information as well as the mutual relationship with research participants led to an in-depth conversation.

However, in order to start up my research fieldwork, I have to get the approval from relevant two pre-schools in Piliyandala city. The owners of the preschools were willing to participate in the research voluntary after I had explained the research. All of the participants willing to participate in the research by understanding the significance of this study. With the pandemic situation, I chose skype as the method to conduct my interviews. Finding parents who were willing to participate via the internet was challenging. However, I maintained a good relationship with the preschool principal and showing them the expected outcome of my master thesis, which supported me to reach the parents via pre-school principals for this study.

I provided a separate sheet of paper which explain all detailed information about my research such as what is it about, what is the purpose of the research, the university which I am enrolled in, how do I protect and store the collected data as well as how long will the data being stored. Getting verbal consent to participate in the research made my participants at ease to contribute to the research confidently. Hence, most of the participants willing to contribute to the research after informing me how I secured their privacy and confidentiality.

3.7 Researcher role and the Reflexivity

When considering the participants of this study, there are two categories are used such as preschool educators and parents from the two schools. When considering the relationship

with the research participants of the study I maintained a mutual disclosure with my participants. This helped to reveal the challenging experiences they face in everyday life as well as helped me to understand the different perspectives of the parents and teachers. The trust and the privacy of all the information during the conversations ease me to proceed with interviews without any doubts from the research participants.

"Reflexivity should be a central part of the research process with children, where researchers critically reflect not only on their role and their assumptions but also on the choice of methods and their application" (Punch, 2002,p.323).

As our comprehension would depend on our values and experiences all these affect how we perceive things in life. However, when considering myself as the researcher in this study my conceptual ideas were different from the participant's answers. Hence, I realized that different experiences shaped different ideas and thoughts and, the expected outcomes could be different from my perception.

3.8 Sample size of the research

The research was conducted by selecting two preschools. From each preschool, I selected 3 parents and 3 teachers for this study. All these participants are female. This is because all Sri Lankan preschool teachers are female and when considering the parents mostly Sri Lankan culture shaped up with the motherhood when talking about children. Thus, considering the convenience I selected female participants to proceed with the fieldwork of this study. Altogether 12 research participants contribute to this study. As the sampling method of this study, I selected the convenient sampling method due to the easy accessibility of the participants within my region.

There are two types of sampling techniques namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The probability sampling emphasis the equal chance of including its participants in the sample. However, non-probability sampling deals with a small number of the sample where it associates with the real-life phenomenon. This non – probability sampling method mostly use in qualitative research designs(Taherdoost, 2018).

The convenient sampling method is also known as the non-probability sampling method. Most researchers use this method as a non-random sampling method where the target population meets easy access of geographical proximity, the readiness of the given time as well as voluntary participation for the research. There are pros and cons of the convenient sampling method. Mostly this method is affordable for the researchers and the research participants are easily accessible. Also, this will help to reach the known target group for the researcher rather than focusing on the unknown participants of the research. Thus, this helps to avoid the limitations of the study.

The major disadvantage of the study is the biasness. This may occur due to the high level of self-selection of the researcher (Etikan et al., 2016). Less generalizability creates another issue for the study where it does not show the entire population.

However, it is important to understand that if there is a little variation of the population the sample size is less significant (Saunders et al., 2009). Despite all these limitations, I used the convenient sampling method in order to recruit participants for this study.

3.9 Limitations of the study

The major issue raised with this study is with the Covid- 19 Pandemic. I aimed to conduct a focus group discussion as the first method of this study. However, with the government restrictions due to the pandemic, I had to rethink other methods which suit my study. Thus, pre-scheduled interviews had to convert into online interviews. Thus, Technological issues as well as sending all the necessary information via email and phone created a difficult situation between the researcher and the participants of the study. Although interviews were conducted successfully the most disadvantage factor is not having face-to-face discussions. Hence, Participants' in- direct language and other gestures as well as creating mutual trustworthiness was more complicated with these online-based interviews.

The ranking method was also strenuous to conduct with the research participants. I asked research participants to come up with their topics in order to rank and prioritize the important topics and the least topics. However, participants were hesitated to come up with their topic suggestions. Thus, I created the ranking topics by considering the significant areas where they mentioned throughout the interviews of this study.

3.10 Chapter Summary

The methodology chapter reveals some significant notions of qualitative research. As qualitative research explores the different cultural aspects, values, and experiences of people qualitative research methods were useful to explore the different perspectives of the adults of this study. Due to the global Pandemic situation, the expected methods have changed to online-based methods which gained both pros and cons for this study.

In the method and approaches section, the value of the interviews and ranking methods as well as the disadvantages of these methods were focused to understand the practical aspect of using these methods in this research study. However, the researcher maintained the ethics of the research by understanding the ethical standards when conducting research. As a researcher of this study, I enthusiastic to maintain the reflexivity through the research project of this study. Finally, the chapter focuses on the limitations and the challenges which occurred throughout the research.

Chapter 4- Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the theories in order to discuss the topic of early childhood educators' and parents' perspectives towards the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. The content focuses on three dimensions of theories namely, social constructionism, Risk society, and different preschool curriculum methods. Social constructionism theory focuses on how society has been constructed through different values, knowledge, and systems. Risk society emphasizes the future uncertainties which people experiences in day-to-day life and this theory shows how people cope with future challenges. As education has become a significant notion to deal with these risks different preschool curriculum methods are illustrated in this chapter. These theoretical concepts support the research to understand the broader views of both parents and teachers.

4.2 Social constructionism

Burger and Luckmann are considered as the pioneer of the social constructionism theory. They considered that some sort of solidity in society occurs through social order and this determines an individual's action. Thus, their idea was that people interact within the society and they create specific mental representations for their actions (Lester et al., 2007). Thus, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's social Construction theory can be further discussed as follows.

- Beliefs about reality is constructed in social actions.

- Social institutions and individuals are created in social interactions.

- The beliefs which are created in social interaction play a vital role in constructing or reconstructing the individuals and institutions (Liebrucks 2001, p. 365).

According to the first thesis of Burger and Luckmann emphasis that social processors are the main actor of the beliefs and the second thesis shows a stronger argument which means that reality is also constructed, and it has applied to persons and institutions but not applies to nature. However, they concede that a person's biology also sets limits for our constructions. The third thesis is a combination of the two factors which means that not only the social processors construct the person but also oneself beliefs and actions affect the social processors (Liebrucks 2001).

However, social constructionism is a broad concept that applies in several research fields such as psychology, political science, disability studies and etc. It is significant to understand how childhood is socially constructed. One of the core elements of childhood as a socially constructed is that childhood differs according to its societies. Further, it argues that childhood is socio-culturally variable rather than biologically determined (Hammersley, 2017).

By understanding the social constructionist perspective towards childhood more broadly Montgomery stated that;

"Social constructionists look at how categories are constructed, how bodies of knowledge are built up and how childhood and adulthood are seen and understood in any given society." (Montgomery, 2003, p.46).

These categories are widely visible in Sri Lankan society. Each society has certain types of structures and people have categorized it as high class, middle class, and lower class. These classifications determine the living styles of the people in that society. However, we can say childhood is both re and deconstructed for children as well as they do it by themselves. When considering the universal child there is no definitive explanation of what a child should be. This is relative and depends on its social structure (King, M. 2007).

The new paradigm of childhood studies emphasis childhood as a social construction where human beings as a collective form of structural and cultural element of many societies. James and Prout are one the pillar in Childhood studies who discusses:

"Childhood is understood as a social construction. As such, it provides an interpretive frame for contextualizing the early years of human life. Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity is neither a natural nor a universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies" (James and Prout 1997,p. 8).

Social constructionism has several discourses because the western notion does not have a universal meaning for childhood. These discourses cannot be eliminated without understanding its grassroots. Cultural analysis and most of the discourse analysis ask questions such as how children in the society are constructed? what are the values they associate with? And how adults create children's world and what are the practices of societies. However, one thing which can be proved through social constructionist discourses is that people sense the world via their own political and social situation in the world (Montgomery,2003).Many critiques underline that adult's excessive interference towards the children's future-oriented interest but not consider children as a being itself (Giesinger,2017). Thus, there is another discourse in children's participation in the social context. Valentine exemplifies this as:

"childhood studies argue that children are excluded from participation because social spaces and conventions are adult-centric and do not allow for children's cognitive and physical particularities"(Valentine, 2011,p.351).

Giddens is one of the pillars who discuss the social structures of the society and he claims the "social practices ordered across the time and space" (Giddens, 1984,p.972). He specified that structure and agency are interconnected entities in which people are the actors of social structures who create different values and norms. In this Giddens structuration theory, he does not perceive the individual actors or society as the total. But moreover, considered the order of society with time and space.

With time and space, every society has created its social structures. He further believed that social structures reproduced and transformed through individual acts. But he emphasized that humans change according to time and space. Social systems transform according to the global

formations. Thus, this structuration process is central to the reproduction of the existing structure (Falkheimer,2007).

The notion of structure is highly emphasized in the Giddens structuration theory and he reformulates the structure and agency into a different form. By refusing the conceptualization of structure he explained that structure gives the form and shape, but it is not actual and the structure exists merely through human agents. Agency also does not contain within the individuals, but he referred it as a flow or pattern of the people's actions. He believed that social systems are real, but they do not have a physical existence. Thus, he claims that besides the agency and structure space and time as the central concept for the structuration theory (Pozzebon,2013).

Similarly, Sri Lankan society has also changed according to its social structures. Especially in education, adults' aim towards education has transformed for achieving many benefits in order to compete for the current education system in Sri Lanka.

4.3 Risk Society

 As we can see society has turned into a more modernized world while reaching many challenges and issues day by day. Technology has one of the major areas where people have transformed into a more modernized world. The notion of "risk society" has been introduced by Ulrich Beck and he emphasizes the risk associate with the pollution of modern society.

"Risks, according to Beck (1992 [1986]: 19–20), are a product of industrial modernization; they are the unintended consequences of the rapid development of science and technology in late modern (capitalist) society" (Rasborg, 2012, p.4).

Beck creates one of the critical theories of society. He shows that modern society produces a "context of alienation" where people cannot eliminate the alienation individually but it affects everyone without any discrimination. Beck defines risk as "a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself" (Beck, 1992, p.21 as cited in Lyså,2021, p.127). When considering the Risk society there are two types of risk which namely naturally occurred such as earthquakes, drought, etc. The second form of risk named" manufactured risk" is hazardous and unpredictable. These man-made effects create more uncertainties and people experiencing the consequences of their actions made before. This is known as the "reflexive modernization" which means the "boomerang" effect where people have to face sudden challenges which are not planned before (Wimmer et al.,2006, p.337). However, this "reflexive modernization" creates many challenges in the day-to-day living of people. Thus, Beck emphasis people in society handle risks rather than considering wealth and power.

Today the individual life has become generally determined by its society. However, this is known as individualization. In Ulrich Beck's notion of Risk society, he mentioned the notion of individualization. Beck emphasis two notions of risk society in order to aware as individuals. He mentioned the first 'wave' is to free the individuals from its feudal social structure and religious dogma which they can select the new forms of the way of life. The second wave he named the 'individualization push' (Sørensen & Christiansen,2013,p.41) which means individuals are free themselves within the community and forced to live a unique life that is

separated from society to invent their own life. Beck emphasis that individualization provides through the labor market and the current educational systems. As a side effect of this and also the welfare systems provide a secure environment for the children. He further mentioned that welfare driven labor market enhances the demands of mobility as well as education and labor market-based competition among individuals (Sørensen & Christiansen,2013). Thus, we can say;

"The individualized society is defined as a society where individual choice and particular life forms become predominant in relation to collective action and social communities" (Rasborg,2017, p.230).

However, this individualism has become the social structure in the present society. Mostly the lives have been adjusted according to the rules and regulations of the labor market, welfare state, and the education system. Thus, individualism is not an isolated concept and humans are forced to create their biography. Each individual has to choose their way of lifestyles but within the frame of once society (Wehner & Abrahamson, 2004). However, this notion of individualization is addressed in two significant dimensions. The social facts are there in the modern society with its origin and second is individualization is a basic fact and also a problem of contemporary life. Beck has pointed out the individualizing impact on the development of education. He mentioned that mass consumption of higher education questioning the traditional lifestyles as the time devoted to education systems inspire oneself to reflect themselves and discover new ways of life. However, this individual motivation, as well as social mobility, occurs through the educational systems. This helps oneself to interpret their own lifestyles rather than one's representation of social class (Hurrelmann, & Neubauer, 2012).

As we can see risk is everywhere in every society. Thus, every society strives the children to achieve the best in education and also the way they live. The kindergartens are the best example which trains the children to become the best character. According to the research conducted based on Chinese kindergarten, it is found the best interest of the child build to cope the future challenges and risks. This is to be prepared for the stronger individuals for the future (Lyså,2021). Likewise, Sri Lankan people also prepare their kids to overcome future challenges by giving them the proper education.

4.4 Different preschool curriculums

Several theories address early childhood education. These theories are mostly based on the cultural, historical, and activity theories. However, when considering the 21st century most of the curriculums are based on play activities. But within different countries and societies, they have organized their curriculum which matches their context. According to the international contexts many theoretical frameworks have provided how a curriculum framework should be organized. These curriculums are mostly based on the cognitive, social, and physical developmental domains. However, the appropriateness of these curriculum theories has been problematized in present societies (Wood, 2020).

Although there are many preschools curriculum practices, this section provides the dominant approaches which is practicing in the world. This different curriculum also influences the

preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka and it is significant to understand these different approaches in this section.

There are three main curriculums namely, Anglo-Saxon and Nordic, and central European curriculum. This Anglo Sexan curriculum is mostly based on the tests and they use this method in order to evaluate child abilities and skills. This is mostly used in countries such as US and Great Britain. European tradition focuses on the activity-based curriculum. For example, the Swedish curriculum's purpose is to enhance the lifelong learning and development of social and communicative proficiencies. When considering the Nordic countries such as Sweden, Finland, Norway they all have the national curriculum which named as child-centered. However, there are some arguments and criticisms for these curriculums. As an example, Burgess et al. emphasize based on the study of the Australian curriculum, self-learning or external teacher training was not appropriate if the educators do not get the proper systematic support (Brodin, et al. 2015). Thus, it is significant to apply the curriculum which matches to ones own country.

Most countries try to enhance the play-based curriculum for preschools to free the children from the latest technologies. Australia is such country which has given their attention to the play-based curriculum and their purpose is to enhance the healthy growth of the child. They have suggested that children should engage in physical activities for at least 180 min each day (Ebbeck et al. 2019).

Montessori method is another curriculum Developed by Dr. Maria Montessori and this aims to develop children's academic skills and life skills. This is considered one of the oldest methods practiced in many countries. Montessori method concepts create the "freedom of movement" in children. Via this concept, she aimed towards the association of members of the society through observation learning (Schilling. K,2011).

When considering the Sri Lankan context, the Sri Lankan government has introduced an integrated curriculum that aims to develop a child's overall development. This curriculum consists of seven areas of development. However, most preschools combine other curriculums widely known in the world to enhance the quality of the preschool curriculum.

However, most of the preschools have generalized what parents and children need from a preschool. Most of the parents search for a preschool with their interest in the curriculum and its teaching methods. Parents have different expectations when selecting a preschool for their children. There are three categories of parents "overcoming setbacks," "child-centered," and "contradictory" (Nisskaya,2018). Nisskaya mentioned that overcoming sets back group of parents seek a preschool which is located away from their home but has qualified teachers and a rich environment. The second set of parents are child-centered and they search for an emotionally healthy environment for children and contradictory category parents do not seek proximity and the curriculum of the preschools.

These critical perceptions are a platform to understand the parent's perception through different lenses. As they have diversified perceptions, they tend to choose curriculums which match for their interest and their knowledge levels. Thus, some parents seek diversified curriculums such as activity-based, play-based, Montessori methods except the national integrated curriculum. However, this fieldwork context also parents emphasize the importance

of practicing different curriculums with the national curriculum. Thus, I would disclose there is an interconnection between social constructionism and the selected curriculums for each school.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter aims to identify the different theoretical concepts which support the research topic. As Sri Lankan society has different social stratification in the society, society determines oneself behavior and perceptions. Education and society are interconnected and people in a specific society decide their children's education according to their knowledge. Thus, this chapter focuses the social constructionism as a theory that will explain how Sri Lankan early childhood education has been constructed according to its society. Thus, the risk is very visible within the context of Sri Lanka. There are many pitfalls in preschool education in Sri Lanka and teachers and parents use many ways to minimize these issues in the future. Hence, understanding the notion of risk society is significant in this study. Finally, different curriculum methods emphasize diversified concepts which practice in the world, and these various concepts have also influenced the early childhood educators' and parents' perspectives.

Chapter 5- Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter has analyzed the interview and ranking methods perspectives that were gathered in the field. In order to make the reader more familiar, 1st section has given a brief introduction about the Sri Lankan preschool context. Subsequently, in the 2nd section, the analysis chapter provides detailed information about the research participants. These participants background details supported me to analyze their perspectives which are collected in the fieldwork. In the 3rd section of perceptions of preschool curriculum, both teacher's and parents' perspectives were analyzed. This section further categorized into subheadings such as proper government guidance, improve teaching methodologies, Introduce an English medium curriculum, letter writing practice in the preschool, and lastly the activity-based curriculum and curriculum changes according to the modern society. As the core of the findings, both participants of this study commented on enhancing the government guidance. Most teachers and parents have given a high value for introducing an activity-based curriculum in preschools. However, there are both similarities and contradictory perspectives highlighted in this chapter. In the 4th section of this study, overall thoughts and ideas are discussed by including the theories of this study such as social constructionism, risk society, and the different curriculum methods of preschool. This research analysis outline 3 research questions. These questions help to analyze the early childhood educator's and parents' perspectives towards the national pre-school curriculum in Sri Lanka.

· How do early childhood educators and parents perceive the national preschool curriculum?

· What are the barriers and challenges of the national preschool curriculum?

· What needs to be changed for the future advancement of the curriculum?

The interview guide addresses several other questions which relate to preschool education in Sri Lanka. Early childhood educators and parents are the two categories of participants of the study and there are two sets of interview questions generated to understand the different perspectives of these two categories.

5.2 Preschool context in Sri Lanka

The Ministry of education is the center for all education implementations. However, the Institute of Women and Child affairs (MWCA) is the major institution that is accountable for mandating the ECCD. This institution is conducting many programs to develop a child's physical and mental health. Their main task is to formulate policies and regulate the programs for early childhood development. However, the National institute of education is the main department that develops the curriculum. The last pre-school curriculum was designed in 2016 (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019) and this curriculum is named the integrated curriculum published by the Ministry of education which focusses the 7 areas of

development such as ethics, society and culture, language abilities, aesthetic and creative arts, living and non-living world, math concept and critical thinking, and physical education. In the ethic theme, children learn good habits such as eating healthy, personal hygiene, etc. Society and culture theme develops child knowledge about the culture and society. Children will improve their language abilities by discussing various topics with their teachers through pictures and stories. In the aesthetic creative art sections, they learn, music, dancing, art, and craft. In the living and nonliving world, they sense the living and non -living things around them.

However, in 2019 (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019) they have updated the new policies for preschool education by considering the development of early childhood education. 2004 considered as the first national policy for early childhood care and development and this policy focuses to develop the child's holistic development. This policy was revised in 2019 by focuses on early childhood education through integrated ECD services to improve the quality of pre–school education in Sri Lanka.

According to the 2019 data, there are 19,668 preschools and most of these schools are privately owned (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019). Most of the government preschools practice the national integrated curriculum while privately owned preschool mixes the curriculums both national curriculum and various other international curriculums. According to the 2019 data 55.% (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2019) of 3-5 age category enrolled in the preschools. Most of the parents enroll their children in private preschools due to the good facilities and understanding the significance of the international curriculums which they practice in these preschools. All the preschools are open on weekdays between 8.30 a.m. to 11.30 in the morning hours. Some private pre-schools conduct daycare services after the pre-schools. Government preschools proved free education for all the children while privately owned preschools charge a fee according to the level of facilities and education they provide in the preschools. This study is based on a suburb area of main city Colombo and most of these private school monthly fee is based on an average cost which matches to its social and geographical background.

5.3 Parent and teacher participants

As the background of the interview first I asked preliminary questions from both parents and teachers. These questions facilitated me to understand the different educational backgrounds as well as different viewpoints from their educational systems. When considering the teachers from two schools, all the teachers have qualified with the required qualification of preschool diploma. In addition to this diploma, 3 of the teachers have the qualification of NVQ level 4 which is a vocational certificate offered by the government. These teachers had qualified with a higher diploma in counseling and some other international courses which support the children's learning in preschools. When considering the years of experience, it was very varied among early childhood educators. Two teachers were having 3-5 years of experience and the other teachers had more than 12 years of experience as preschool teachers. These early childhood educators have gained these experiences from different preschools where they employed before and also one teacher who had foreign experience in a preschool of an East

Asian country. This teacher had 2 years of working experience as a preschool assistant teacher.

To get familiar with the parents, I asked their age to understand how these perspectives were shaped within a specific age category. Hence, I found that all the parents are between the age of 27- 30 age category. Subsequently, I asked some basic questions about their occupation and their current thoughts on the preschool curriculum. Most of the parents have heard about the national curriculum but none of them had any in-depth knowledge about the preschool curriculum.

This preliminary analysis of the level of education, age, occupations as well as years of experience, facilitated me to get a basic understanding of teachers and parents of my research study. These categories further assisted me in how they perceive the national preschool education within their scope of education and experience.

5.4 Perceptions of preschool curriculum

Several questions were asked to understand the perspectives towards the national preschool curriculum. Both parents and teachers play a significant role in children's education. They are the one who leads the children for their education to achieve the futures goals and objectives. Hence, their different perspectives are significant to understand how they perceive the current pre-school education. Thus, the interviews and the ranking method helped me to understand the convergences and the disparities of parent's and teacher's perspectives. In this chapter, I have divided the subheadings according to the ranking statements to give an explicit overview of the analysis. Since these were the topics focused on the interviews, I decided to structure the analysis according to the seven areas. The seven areas of the ranking method such as proper government guidance, introduce best teaching methodology to teach the curriculum, introduce an English medium national preschool curriculum, practice letter writing in the preschool, Children needs more activity-based curriculum, Curriculum should be nature-based and preschool curriculum should change according to the modern children. These 7 areas of ranking statements give the understanding of participant's most and least prioritized area in order to improve the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. It is significant to understand the number 7 is the highest rating and number 1 is the lowest ranking value given in the ranking exercise. However, this shows both participants' most significant and the less ranking values.

Considering the positive aspects, some teachers commented that the current education system has a variety of subjects which helps to develop the child's skills and abilities. They also emphasize subjects such as aesthetics and sports are very essential subjects which provide a good value to the children. However, they emphasize the interactions of the different subjects as well as the extracurricular activities that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As this research consists of two categories of participants of teachers and parents, they have different values and different perspectives. As they come from different experience levels and different backgrounds their thoughts and values towards the government might be different. When considering the Sri Lankan context, it has different class structures and these social

class structures play a different role in the society. Most of the parents of this study are working parents in both governmental sectors and private sectors. However, few parents do not engage in any occupation. When considering the teachers of this study all of the teachers are qualified with a Diploma in early childhood education and other required qualification for the early childhood educator's position. Most of these teachers represent the age between 30-40 category apart from two teachers who were in their early 20's. In this sense, participants' knowledge and experience from different backgrounds helped this research to identify through varied perspectives.

5.4.1 Proper government Guidance

Proper government guidance is very much significant in order to make the correct decisions and implement the rules and regulations for ones own country. In the Sri Lankan context, government plays a major role in funding education for all levels including the universities as well. However, there are many positive and negative aspects in Sri Lankan education system education.

As the negative aspect of the current education system, both teachers and parents discussed the excessive education pressure towards the children from their early stage of life. Most of the parents and teachers commented that our education system creates pressure on young children. They expressed that most of the children stay leisurely and freely in preschool and this changes when they begin school in grade 1. Many of the participants expressed that the Sri Lankan education system is framed along with examinations. Thus, most of the parent's focus is to achieve the best result from the grade 5 scholarship examination. Mostly the children will get the closest school to enter Grade 1. But these suburb areas schools are not much facilitated as the popular schools in the main city of Colombo. As most of the parents do not get a chance to enter their children into the best government schools, this scholarship examination is one of the best opportunities to secure a space in the popular schools by achieving high scores from this examination. Parents also emphasize that this method makes children more exhausted from their early stage of life and they become excessively stressed due to the current education system. Thus, many of the parent's idea is to let the child be free in their childhood rather than giving them the burden of education. One parent commented that,

> "Sri Lankan schools are categorized according to the popularity. As Sri Lanka
> is a developing country this categorization continuously appears in society.
> Hence, examinations have become a vital part of the Sri Lankan education
> system. My idea is that it is better to break this barrier of popularity school
> and give all children equal opportunity to learn in their selected school".-
> *parent*

The interviewee commented that most of the parent's aim is to enroll their children into popular schools which are ranked by the government. Mostly the popularity determines the quality of education and also the best facilities which the school can provide the children.

 Another parent commented that,

"Government should give opportunities to all children to educate in the well-facilitated school with quality teaching aids. When parents see the difference of schools are highly facilitated and fewer facilities, we try to give the best to the child by selecting the well-facilitated school" - **parent**

As this is not a very easy process to get selected for a reputed school, children experience pressure from the education system which starts from the elementary levels. Even though parents and teachers had the same thought of excessive pressure towards the children, they all follow the current education pattern of Sri Lanka. However, most of all the participants had the thought that current Sri Lankan education should change.

" I think children have a heavy workload in the upper grade in the school. There are many subjects to study and children get exhausted due to these excessive subjects. If the education authorities can reduce the subjects and include practical subjects which match to their future, it would be a good effort"- **teacher**
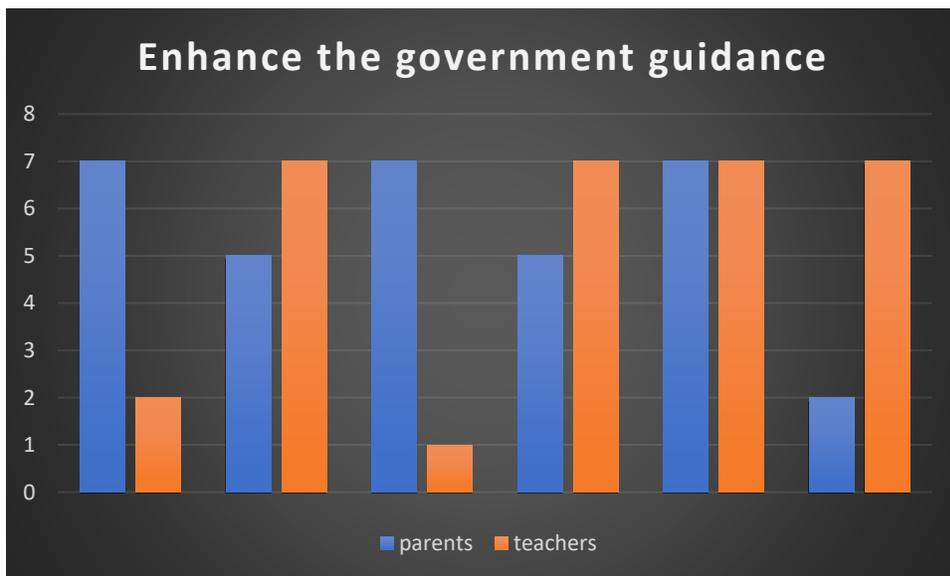

Figure 5.4.1: Enhance government guidance

However, as they express their views in the interviews, in the ranking method, both of the participants have given much more significant levels to improve the government guidance. Mostly the teachers have emphasized that government guidance is very essential to minimize the issues of preschool education. Most of the teachers highlighted that it is important to guide for a proper teacher learning process to maintain the quality of the preschools. Mostly the teachers address that the monitoring and evaluation process is weak. Hence, teachers commented that it is difficult to deal with the issues which they arise daily. The other issue which they emphasize is that teacher's monthly meetings are not effective to solve the problems of the preschool teachers. Teachers commented that most of these monthly meetings are very conventional and they repeat the discussions whereas they have not found the solution for those issues. They also commented that they are lack developmental

measures for children or curriculum upgrades. Thus, they emphasize the lack of proper guidance from relevant authorities.

Throughout the discussions, it is explicit that there are many negative aspects of government guidance. Here in this analysis, it is visible that parents and teachers have different perspectives when commenting on the lack of government guidance. While parents are seeking the best school for children to educate, teachers expect to deliver the education without any conflicts. Thus, teachers try to find the best solution via the government to minimize the issues which they experience in the preschools. However, when considering the parents perspectives it is explicit that they seek a quality education with equal facilities for all the children.

5.4.2 Improve teaching methodologies for children

Most of the educators commented that it is significant to improve the teaching methodologies which match contemporary children. They emphasize that though there are monthly teaching meetings, most of the educators do not voice up for improving new ways of teaching methodologies. Further, they emphasize most preschools routinely perform the activities to fulfill the tasks and objectives of the curriculum. A young teacher commented,

> " *Some teachers do not like to change from the traditional teaching ways.*
> *Even we want to implement new teaching ways those experienced teachers*
> *get the initiations. In that case, it is difficult to execute new teaching*
> *methodologies''. -* **teacher**

This comment shows, some teachers have used the old teacher-centered methods which they have used and practiced in the past and they do not want to change according to the current requirement of the children. However, she criticized these thinking patterns are not good for children as they are eager to learn new things from preschools. These ideas show that how people's past values and norms are existing within the Sri Lankan context of education.

Then, early childhood educators highlighted the essentiality of enhancing play and activity-based child-centered learning moreover. The following graph proves these thoughts that most early childhood educators have highlighted the significance of enhancing teaching methods.
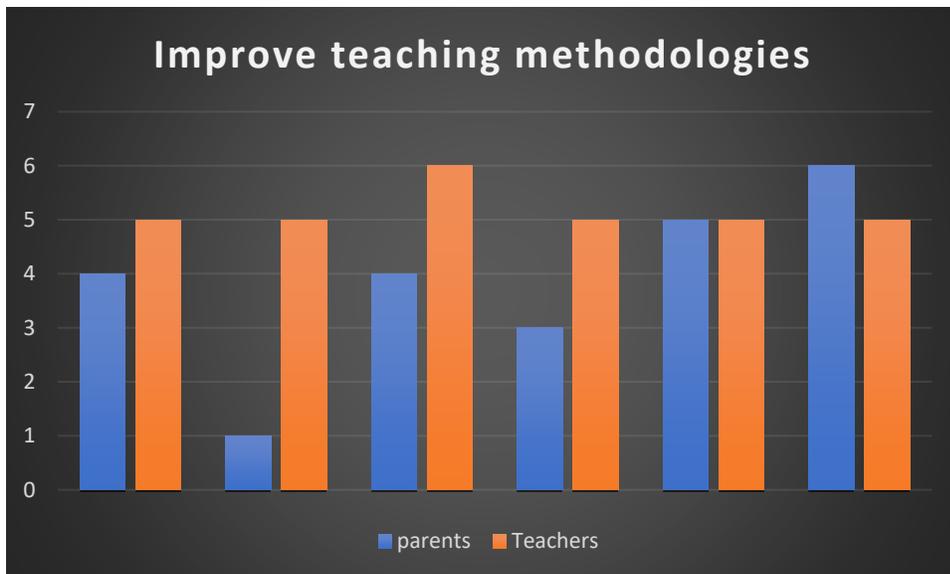
Figure 5.4.2: Improve teaching methodologies

When considering the parents' thought of improving teaching methodologies parents have not given a much significant level when compared to the teachers in the ranking exercise. This might be due to the less knowledge about the new teaching methodologies. But one parent commented in the interviews,

> *"Currently my child is learning new things through different methods. Especially she learned how to pronounce words very easily with the new method they used in the preschool. But when compared to the other pre-schools they are not much practicing these various new activities."- **parent***

It is explicit that different schools have different methods of teaching. However, parents have selected the schools which match their priorities. Anyhow these thoughts of the parents emphasize that parents' perspectives towards implementing new methodologies average lower when compared with the teacher's ranking. That is because those teachers are much more familiar with the teaching methodologies. A teacher commented that,

*"Yes, we practice various methods in the school. I think the methods we use in the pre-school are child-friendly and it is more practical than our current national curriculum. So, we combine these methods with our national curriculum to give the best to our kids". – **teacher***

Another teacher commented that,

> *"We practice AMI curriculum method because it is very clear and specific to practice in the preschool. It gives clear instructions such as how to carry a chair, how to roll a mat, and etc. This is easy for children to follow as well and we also feel comfortable when there is a guideline" – **teacher***

These ideas show that there are teachers who add many new ways of methods to give their children an easy learning experience. They further commented that children are very much likely to work with these methods as they are enthusiastic to explore new things.

5.4.3 Introduce an English medium curriculum

English has become one of the pivotal languages in Sri Lanka apart from the main languages. Thus, most of the parent's idea is to bring up the children according to the modern world and also for their future development.

> "I think English is very essential for our children. sometimes we do not get the best government schools even though we applied for our children. So, we tend to send our kids to an international school by thinking about the significance of English in their future. However, I believe English should be added to the preschool curriculum by understanding the future of our children." - **parent**

Thus, most of the teachers and parents emphasized, the need of introducing English as a subject or an English medium national pre-school curriculum. They commented that English is an essential subject for today's children, and they emphasize government has not included or instructed them to practice the English medium national preschool curriculum. A teacher commented,

> "We practice and teach English in our preschool because we think children need it for their future. Especially the children who plan to go for the international school after the preschools need to learn the English language".- **teacher**

As the present society moreover focuses on children's education some parents intend to educate their children in an international curriculum-based school environment. These modern requirements of parents may conflict with the national pre-school curriculum if they selected government pre-school for their children. Thus, these current social expectations have been influenced by the younger children's lifestyles as well. Most of the early childhood educators have emphasized on the English medium curriculum is much more significant to present society. However, they also suggest it is important to add English as a subject in the current preschool curriculum. One of the teachers expressed,

> "We can't completely change the national preschool curriculum to English because there are different knowledge levels of teachers and parents. However, it should be translated into the English medium curriculum, and teachers who are able to teach the curriculum in English would be benefited. But adding English as a subject to the pre-school curriculum is very essential".- **teacher**

However, when comparing the teachers' and parents' perspectives it is visible that teachers have highlighted a greater significance level rather than the parents. However, some parents also commented that English is an essential requirement for children's future, and they emphasize on an early stage of life is the best stage of life to improve language abilities.
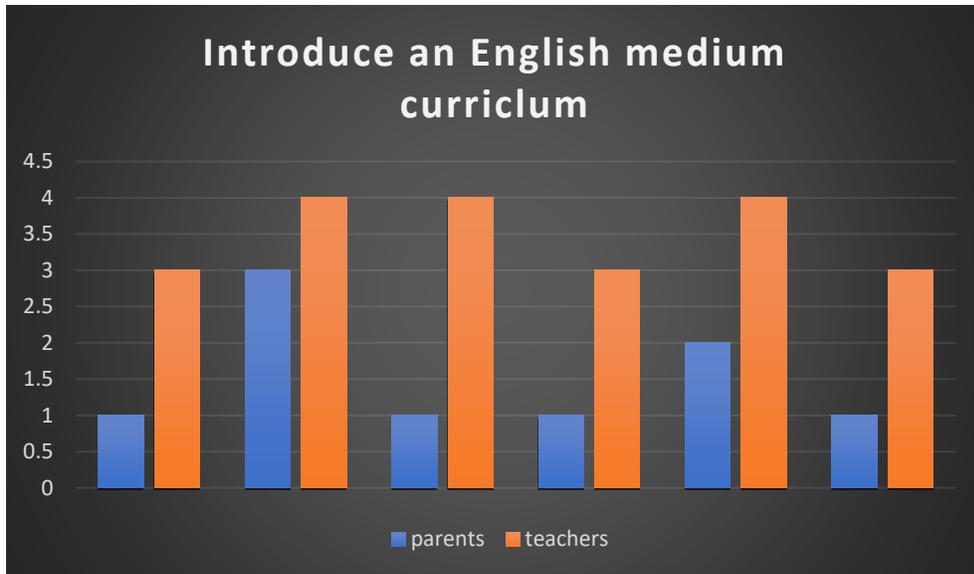
Figure 5.4.3: Introduce an English medium curriculum

Further, the research participants of this study emphasize the mismatch of the Sri Lankan education curriculum and existing labor market demands. They mentioned that mostly today's children prepare to gain the best education without improving the practical skills and knowledge of the social world and the subjects. Participants also emphasized that children prepare from their younger age to learn the excessive subjects in the schools which are less practical. To overcome these challenges, some participants suggested reducing the subjects in the schools and prepare children for their future employability by introducing the practical subjects for the school syllabus.

5.4.4 Letter writing practice in the pre-school

Letter writing in the preschool is another aspect that focuses throughout the interviews in both parties. In the preschools, they learn both English and Sinhala letters and in the final stage of the preschool, they start to write the small words. Most of the Interview participants emphasize the negative and positive sides of letter writing in the school. In the ranking method also, they have highlighted these variances as follows.

In this graph, it is explicit that most of the educators have overall given a higher significance level than the parents. Respectively, most of the parents indicated an averagely lower value when compared to the educators.
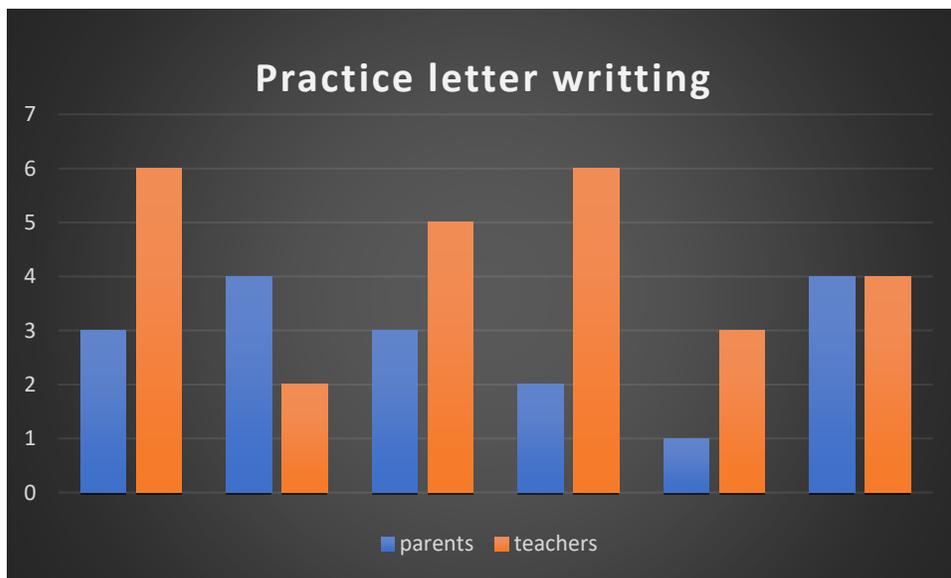
Figure 5.4.4: Introduce letter writting in the preschool

However, there are positive and negative feedbacks towards the letter-writing practice in preschool. These varied perspectives are, moreover, explicit in the interviews as they had the chance to express the detailed information of their perceptions. Thus, they emphasize that it is not a requirement to practice letters in preschools according to the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. One of the teachers expressed,

> *"Yes, it is important to practice letter writing in the preschool. But we do not do it by force. If children willing to learn, we introduce letters in the preschool. But it has not been mentioned in the government curriculum. However, parents also expect children to know letters before they enter primary school. On the other hand, primary teachers also expect children to write letters when they come to school".- **teacher***

However, this has become a massive pressure for teachers and children. Thus, they stated that the balance between the other activities and the letter writing is significant within the preschool. They articulated that, letter writing in the pre-school cannot be ignored by understanding the need of the next school level of children. However, this shows that there is a gap between the preschool curriculum and the primary curriculum in Sri Lanka. As primary school teachers expect varied educational requirements, such as knowing how to write letters from preschool children, younger children might feel conflicted if they have not learned letter writing in the preschools. Thus, these varied perspectives of primary teachers have also influenced preschool teachers' and parents' perspectives towards preschool education. However, a parent commented that,

> *"My elder child is now schooling, and I would say, it was very easy for him to capture the letters in the grade 1 school because he learned all the letters in the pre-school. I think in the playgroup (2 and a half) age they play in the preschool and in level 1 (age of 3 - 4) they start to pre-write.*

*So, it is good to introduce and write letters at the age of 4 as they are ready to learn".- **parent***

However, parents expect to educate their children in all the possible ways to make education easy for their children in the future. These parents represent the society of Sri Lanka. It is interesting to see how their thought and ideas are shaped according to the needs of their future society. There is another teacher who expressed his thoughts on letter writing practice in the preschool.

" *We have included letter writing in both English and Sinhala because today parents expect us to know letters when they finish the preschools. Some parents complain our school do many activities but not practice letters every day. We have explained to them the significance of practical activities more than the letter writings, but they do not agree. But this might be different if you can visit a very rural area or highly urbanized area. In that sense, we have to understand the current trends and parents' expectations of this area" – **teacher***

This comment emphasizes how society impacted preschool education to create these types of curriculums. It is visible from these ideas that teachers have to understand the parents' expectations and also the location and the people's expectations in that specific area when creating a curriculum.

5.4.5 Activity-based curriculum

Most of the teachers' and parents' emphasis on a more activity-based learning environment is preferred, rather rely on the books from their early stages of life. In the above table of ranking these perspectives are highly valued by both participants. The following graphs prove the significance level of introducing a more activity-based curriculum.
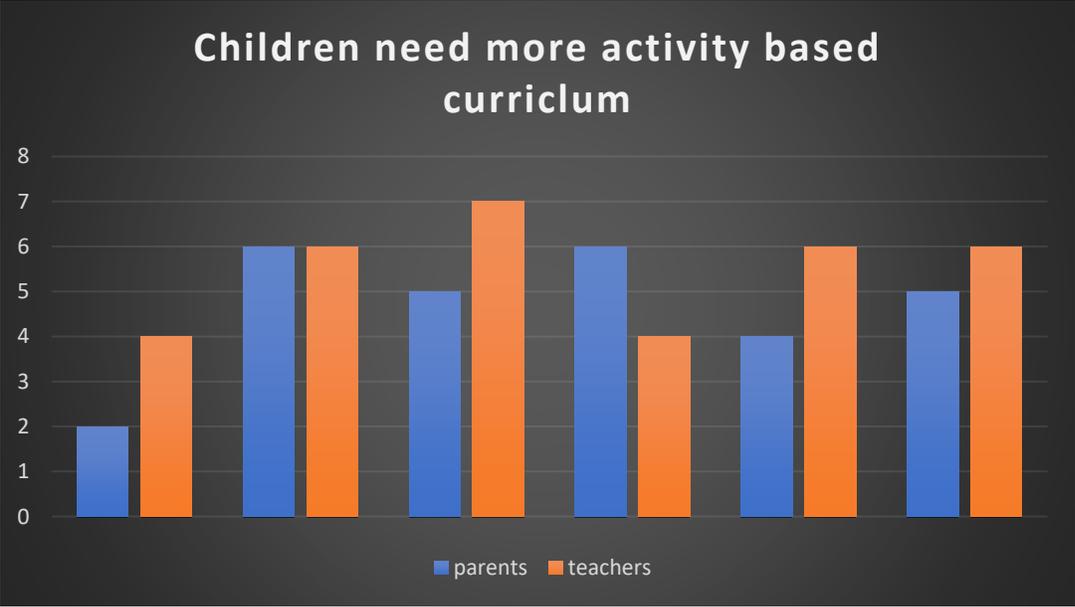
Figure 5.4.5.1: Activity-based curriculum

In the interviews, preschool educators emphasize that they use different preschool curriculums to add more activities to the current national preschool curriculum. Most of the parents also agreed with these other curriculum methods, as they see that it benefits their children. For example, one of these schools organizes many weekly activities apart from the daily lessons in the preschools, such as rainy days, mud days, paint days, etc. On a rainy day, they let the children get wet in the rain and enjoy the day freely and teach them how to change the wet clothes and how to be safe in the rain, etc. However, interviewee's thoughts are that many children lack the knowledge of these areas of activities and most of the parents commented that these activities should be worth practicing in every preschool to enjoy their early childhood. Thus, they believe these activities enhance the child's, physical mental, and social wellbeing. This moreover converges with the nature-based curriculum as parents have given a much more significant level towards the nature-based curriculum.
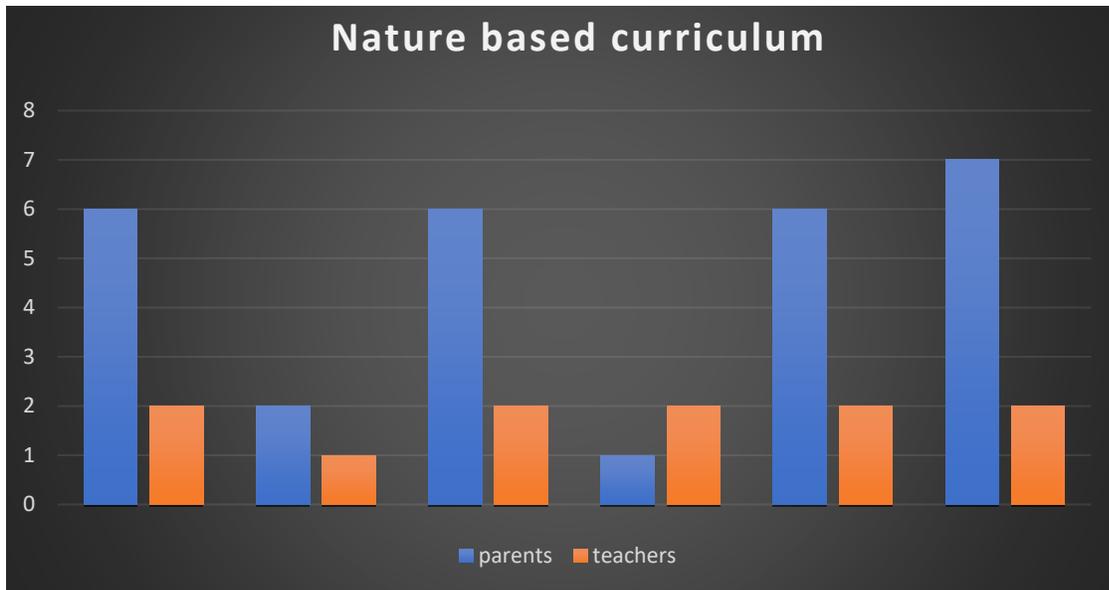
Figure 5.4.5.2: Nature based curriculum

The emphasis that activities based on nature will enhance the child creativity, problem-solving skill, and their concentration skills. Most of the parents thus have rated a highly significant level in the following rankings. However, teachers have given a low significance level towards the nature-based curriculum. They have given much more significance towards the other values such as activity-based learning, improve best teaching methodologies, and improving the proper government guidance. Hence, this shows that research participants have, moreover, rated according to their level of significance.

5.4.6 Curriculum should change according to the modern childhood

Some research participants mentioned that Sri Lanka consists of rural and urban communities and the current national pre-school curriculum matches better for rural communities rather than urban. Further, they commented that highly urbanized children are facilitated with modern devices and much use of modern technology. Today parents' and teachers' perspectives have changed according to modern values of society. When considering today's children, they are more technologically advanced with the new devices. A teacher commented,

> *"Our curriculum needs to be updated because children are not like ancient times. They are more advanced and more knowledgeable due to social media and the internet. This curriculum is so simple for children and so we need to add many interesting and interactive activities to teach them".-*
> ***teacher***

Other teachers had the same perspectives of modern childhood. They also mentioned that, as they are with the technology most of the time, their interest is based on the visual screens. Thus, they easily learn the basic educational information via the internet in their early stage

of life which is planned to be covered in the pre- schools. However, there are positive and negative outcomes that affect children at their younger age.

Thus, some educators emphasize the need for an updated curriculum that matches the modern child. But translating the national preschool curriculum to an English medium curriculum would be problematic as Sri Lankan society consists of different class structures. While some are fluent in English some does not have this ability of speak or read the English language. Hence, their suggestion is to formulate a curriculum in both languages and via this, curriculum conflicts can be reduced.
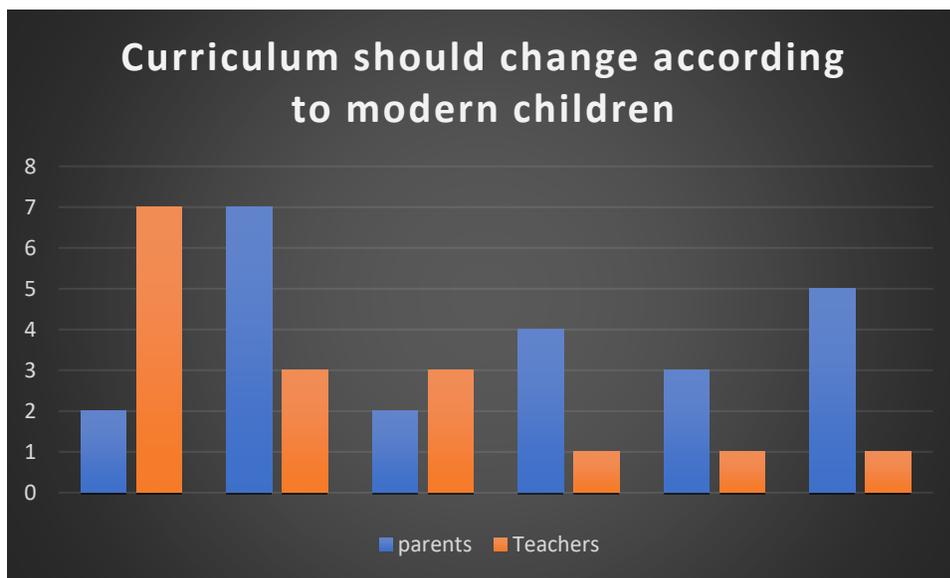

Figure 5.4.6: Curriculum should change according to the modern children

In the above rankings, it is explicit that Parents have highlighted the significance of changing the curriculum to a stronger degree. However, two participants from both parties have rated that this as the most significant factor. When compared to both participants, parents have rated average higher levels than the teachers.

In the interviews also, many parents suggested to include foreign curriculum methods that match the current national preschool curriculum is beneficial for children to improve their abilities and skills. These ideas show that most of the participants thought are to develop the curriculum which matches modern society, and their thought is also to enhance the curriculum with new methods and curriculums. However, modern childhood conflicts start with competitive education. As parents have different perspectives towards each child, they try to give the best quality education which enhances the child's knowledge. Most early childhood educators also commented that today's parents are very passionate about educating their children. This is mostly connected to the future challenges they experience in the current Sri Lankan education system.

5.5 Discussion

In the analysis, I found some negative and positive feedback from the participants of this study. In order to nuance the different participant's different perspectives, both interview and ranking methods immensely benefited further discussions. The following table shows the ranking variances which are provided by each parent and teacher of this study. It is significant to understand that there are differences and convergences between the interviews and the ranking method. However, it is explicit that teachers and parents have listed their priorities in the first place in the ranking exercise and the following table provides the visibility of those variances and similarities. As the analysis is structured according to the ranking statement, here in the discussion it provides the overall viewpoints by applying the theories of social constructionism, risk society, and different curriculum methods.

When understanding the convergences and the differences of this table, *proper government guidance* and the *activity-based curriculum* place the highest-rated category of both teachers and parents. When considering the *Introduce best teaching methodology* rankings, teachers have given the much priority more than the parents of this study. As teachers are very much familiar with the teaching aids of the preschools, they have prioritized these areas in the ranking activity. There is a considerable variance of parents and teachers ranking for *introducing an English medium preschool curriculum* and also for the *nature-based curriculum*. Parents have given high value for implementing a nature- based curriculum but teachers have given a lower value for this category. Thus, these less values and high values lead the way to the theorical discussion of this study.

Statements	Parents' Ranking						Teachers' Ranking					
	p1	p2	p3	p4	p5	p6	t1	t2	t3	t4	t5	t6
1.proper government guidance should be enhanced	7	5	7	5	7	2	2	7	1	7	7	7
2.Introduce best teaching methodology to teach the curriculum	4	1	4	3	5	6	5	5	6	5	5	5
3.Introduce an English medium national preschool curriculum	1	3	1	1	2	1	3	4	4	3	4	3
4.Practice letter writing in the preschool	3	4	3	2	1	4	6	2	5	6	3	4
5.Children needs more activity-based curriculum	2	6	5	6	4	5	4	6	7	4	6	6
6.Curriculum should be nature-based	6	2	6	1	6	7	2	1	2	2	2	2
7.Preschool curriculum should change according to the modern children	2	7	2	4	3	5	7	3	3	1	1	1

Table 5.5. : Ranking Table

There are many pitfalls and arguments when Considering early childhood education in Sri Lanka. Early childhood care and development are considered as one the major area of human development. However, this concept has received less attention and scrutiny in the formation of policies and implementations. Many types of research provide evidence regarding the challenge of preschool education in Sri Lanka. According to the World Bank Group (2014), they mentioned, "The legal framework for ECCE provision in Sri Lanka does not provide adequate clarity on the implementation structure of ECE or one who should take the lead role in implementing ECE" (World Bank Group,2014).

5.5.1 The Social construction of education in Sri Lanka

When considering this research analysis, it is very visible that society plays a major role in children's education. Hammersley (2017) emphasized childhood as socially constructed and it varied according to its culture. It is no doubt that different childhood categories exist throughout the world. Those childhoods are different according to their social backgrounds. Sri Lankan society also consists of different class structures. These class structures are varied according to its, economic, educational and cultural aspects. People in these class structures try to showcase their class levels. Education has become one of the competitive tools to compete with the class structures of society. Thus, Sri Lankan society has given its significance to children's education. Most adults think about how to succeed in the children's future through the best education.

In the analysis, it is visible that many parents aim to improve their child's knowledge and skills by selecting the best preschools for their children. This can be proven for example through significance given to the letter-writing practice in the pre- schools. Though it is not a requirement to practice letter writing in the preschools mostly these ideas were constructed by the people of the society. Thus, this has become the needful requirement to achieve for the younger children in the society. When understanding participants' views on this topic some teachers commented on parents' expectations of letter-writing practices in the preschools. Teachers emphasize that participants of this research study location expected the preschools to practice letter writing in the preschools. They further mentioned people think of this as a very essential requirement to work easily in primary school. Pressurizing children towards education is one of the other important factors which was emphasized by both parents and teachers of this study. However, this shows that society has a major influence on educating the children for their future enhancement.

On the other hand, the government also plays a major role in education. Many participants have given the most significant level for this category. How teachers and parents perceive the current government decisions is very much important for enhancing the current pre-school curriculum. Pathirana emphasizes that "the government of Sri Lanka has not been enthusiastic or fervent about shouldering the total responsibility of ECCD" (Pathirana, 2017, p.108). However, almost every participant of this study shows that there are issues in the government's support towards education.

 As Giddens (1984) explains time and space as an important notion for constructing a society. Most of the teachers and parents have given the highest-ranking to enhance the proper government guidance. Some teachers commented that conventional teaching practices in the

school as well as updating the curriculum according to the current children as a significant notion. Here this shows that society has changed according to the current time and space. In the analysis, it is visible that many parents and teachers emphasize the essentiality of enhancing new teaching methodologies. When this is not happening through the government curriculum authorities, pre-schools have initiated to create their curriculum in order to provide quality educations for the children. Most of the parents' thoughts and expectations relate to the success of their children's future by enhancing the holistic development of their children. Thus, they require a more activity-based curriculum. This shows that people try to give their children hands-on experience through learning by doing.

As the Sri Lankan education system is structured towards examinations, children's pressurization for education is continuously passing for all generations. However, it is very visible in these ideas that structure is not a physical form, but it is evolving among the society itself. This might also change according to the varied societal structures. Each society consists of a certain set of values and norms and these norms and values are framed according to its society. The problem persists with how and in what ways we can change these perspectives as people of that society plays the major role?

5.5.2 Making sense of curriculums

It is significant to understand how the different curriculums have applied to the Sri Lankan current preschool curriculum. When understanding the ratings which were given in the activity-based curriculum and nature-based curriculum, it is explicit that parents and teachers wanted to enable children to explore the world by making a sense of the world they live in and also to develop their skills and abilities. Sri Lanka has a national preschool curriculum named an integrated curriculum. Though there is a specific curriculum, teachers commented that they mix different methods to add a more active and practical environment within the pre-school for their children. Thus, these perspectives show that the less practicality of the current curriculum and the need for an updated curriculum that matches the current society. It is significant to understand why these activity-based curriculums are not much integrated into countries like Sri Lanka. As people can see the competitive nature of future education, they might not feel to implement these types of activity-based and nature-based curriculums. By considering the cultural and social context these curriculums people had to follow the same curriculum which matches the Sri Lankan context.

 In the world bank report, the emphasis that,

"Regardless of whether an open curriculum framework or a common curriculum is adopted, the framework needs to focus on the holistic development of children rather than on academic learning" (Worldbank,2014, p.28).

Here they emphasize that most teaching is based on the books rather it focus on a child's overall development. Many participants of this study commented on the significance of activity-based learning and nature-based learning. Most of the parents and teachers of this study's idea were to enhance the children's social, emotional cognitive well beingness through the activity and nature-based curriculum. Frobel is one who believed that play is the greatest contribution to childhood. He has mentioned the importance of a child's holistic development.

He mentioned that outdoor play and engagement in nature as a significant factors in his theoretical perspective (Smedley et.,al.2020). One of the preschools of this study emphasizes, their activity-based teachings in the preschools. They believed that children should enjoy their childhood and also, emphasize that child's overall development via these activities.

AMI curriculum is a famous curriculum method practiced in both schools of this study. Participants of this study emphasize the easiness of that method as well as the significance of the practical life. They also commented that curriculum instructions are specific in order to practice in the preschools.

"Exercises of Practical Life. The children set and clear the table for lunch. They learn to put a room in order. They are now taught the most minute care of their persons in the making of the toilet. (How to brush their teeth, to clean their nails, etc.)" (Montessori,2012, pg. 344).

As most of the teachers commented, that AMI methods benefit it is explicit that they required proper guided curriculum which matches the Sri Lankan context.

However, even though parents and teachers have given much attention to activity-based learning in the ranking method, within the Sri Lankan context these ideas are not highly practiced due to various reasons. One of the major drawbacks is the lack of teacher professional knowledge of these interactive activities. They only see the teacher-learning environment based on the charts and graphs on the wall. The other issue the lack of learning materials to implement more activity-based curriculum in the pre- schools. As there is no training to help teachers to practice these methods and also high expenses of materials teachers lack the confidence to implement these activities in the classrooms. Hence, it is important to formulate a curriculum that is relevant to Sri Lankan society by considering the accessible resources in the pre-schools of Sri Lanka. (Sri Lanka worldbank.org. 2014) .

It is significant to understand how parents' and teachers' thoughts affect the letter-writing practices in preschools. Many participants considered the significance of adding letter writing to the preschool curriculum. If the child is required, it for their future to cope with the competitiveness and for their future schooling requirement a question arises why not adding it to the curriculum by understanding the appropriate age category of the pre-school children.

5.5.3 Future risks in today's childhood

Risk tends to create many uncertainties in day-to-day life and also the people's future. Today's society is compiled with many dangers and hazards. We frequently defend these hazards without knowing and thinking to avoid the risks we face in day-to-day life. Thus, education has become one of the keys to succeeding the life. One of the important roles in education is to prepare the students for their future by giving them proper education. However, most of the parents commented that the examination-based method creates many challenges at the young age of their children. This also affects towards children mentality as well as their physical health. It is visible that society is experiencing risk in everyday life. People in Sri Lankan society struggle to get a job after their education. To overcome these risks people, try to educate well. Apart from this, English has become one of the essential requirements for children's future. Thus, many parents and early childhood educators suggest the

essentiality of implementing an English medium pre-school curriculum. Most of the participants of this study believe that English is one of the most significant languages to get more opportunities in children's future. As Sri Lanka also developing with many new industries to reach the global context English is considered an essential factor for children's future. However, in countries like Sri Lanka, there are plenty of graduates who are suffering from unemployability and some do not get a relevant job that matches their education. However, with these uncertainties, people struggle to live a better life, and adults wanted to minimize the children's future uncertainties by giving them a quality education.

Ulrich Beck (1992) in his theory also mentioned that how modernization has impacted people's life and the rapid development of science and technology. Problem is that whether the authorities have identified modernity within the curriculum. As teachers try to implement new methodologies and different curriculums government support towards these implementations is not efficient and effective. Therefore, people's confidence in the government is not strong. Parents and teachers have emphasized the competition towards the grade 5 scholarship examination. Most of the parents try to get a popular school if their children get a high score from this examination. Hence, most parents try to prepare their children from their younger age to overcome these challenges. All these thoughts show, in the analysis that teachers and parents are very uncertain about the Sri Lanka education system and procedures. A question arises whether we can change these attitudes of the people or can the authorities initiate to minimize the future uncertainties?

In this study, it is visible that different perspectives were identified through different participants. However, these varied ideas represent the present society. As Beck explained even though there are many scientific projects, its findings are irrelevant in many contexts (Wimmer et al.,2006). That is because every context has its way of dealing with the questions. Hence, it is significant to know the specific requirement for every country's success. When considering the Sri Lankan context most of the participants of this study emphasized the importance of having letter-writing practices and also including other curriculum methods. In this case, it is important to understand how and why people think it is important to have different curriculum methods. People's risks are invisible in society. They get to know the risk through science and theory (Lyså,2021). Hence, the risk is a part of "scientized consciousness" (Beck, 1992, p. 28 as cited in Lyså, 2021). When people get this expert knowledge, they tend to think about new ways of minimizing the risk. Thus, in this study people have to think about mixing many other curriculums and also adding the English language, letter-writing practices to the curriculum to minimize the children's educational uncertainties in the future.

It is important to identify how different individual reflections have framed their perspective towards their children's education. Considering the past Sri Lankan society, people haven't given much attention when selecting a preschool for their children. When considering each individual of this study, it is visible that different people's expectations have been framed according to the future requirement. But according to the current society participants' perspectives towards education have changed. As Sørensen & Christiansen (2013) emphasize Beck's notion of "individualism push", which shows how individuals try to free themselves from the community to live their own life. This is visible through the ranking method as many

participants have prioritized their requirements. Thus, the Sri Lankan society's effort is to minimize the uncertainty of the future which they can experience in the present society.

It is explicit that parents and teachers have some different ideas as well as many same thoughts towards the current preschool education in Sri Lanka. However, it is explicit that there are many pitfalls and many positive aspects within the national preschool curriculums. However, the perspectives of parents and educators have been influenced by society, and also people in that society create new thoughts and patterns continuously. Thus, it is evident that society handles risk every day in their life.

5.6 Summary

This chapter gives an overview of the parent's and teacher's perspectives towards the preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka, as expressed using methods such as interview and ranking exercise. Most of the teachers and parents have given much significant value to enhance the proper government guidance towards preschool education and also to develop activity-based curriculum, and for a nature-based curriculum. In the interviews, participants had a similar perspective and in the ranking method, it is visible different ratings of both categories. This is due to the different priorities and perspectives of both parents and teachers of this study. However, it is explicit that society plays a major role in constructing the child. Most parents' and teachers' perspectives are to give the best education for the children to face future challenges. However, it is explicit that society plays a major role when constructing the perspectives of the people. Many participants emphasized the challenges and issues they experience in the Sri Lankan education system and also the uncertainties of children's future.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

This research explores the perceptions of the early childhood education curriculum in Sri Lanka. Early childhood education is considered one of the vital parts of human development. Many countries use various curriculum-based methods which match their country's context. Within the Sri Lankan context, early childhood education centers are very popular and there is a fast-growing of many private preschools in all the places of Sri Lanka. Hence, in this study, I explore the teacher' and parents' perspectives towards the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka.

As I have worked as a preschool teacher, I have seen preschools mix various other curriculum methods with the national preschool curriculum of Sri Lanka. Thus, I had a question of why these preschools practice other curriculum methods apart from the national curriculum in Sri Lanka. However, my interest in studying early childhood education led me to study the master's program of childhood studies at NTNU to get a wider understanding of the global perspectives of children and their societies. Hence, this two-year master's program led me to think in many ways about early childhood education.

This study was conducted as a qualitative research study. The main objective of this study was to understand the early childhood educators' and preschool educators' perspectives towards the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. Thus, this research is based on 3 research questions such as,

- How do early childhood educators and parents perceive the national preschool curriculum?

- What are the barriers and challenges of the national preschool curriculum?

- What needs to be changed for the future advancement of the curriculum?

Based on these research questions fieldwork was conducted by using the interview method and the ranking method. These methods helped me to understand the different perspectives towards the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka. It is significant to mention that participants have many similar ideas as well as different priorities when rating the statements of the ranking exercise. Mostly they have rated government guidance as the most significant factor to develop the early childhood curriculum in Sri Lanka. Both teachers and parents commented on the significance of the activity-based curriculum to develop a child's social, psychological, and physical well beingness. When considering the 2nd highest ranking, most teachers commented to have best teaching methodologies, but the parents have rated 2nd highest as the nature-based curriculum. These variances show, even though the participants have similar perspectives they have ranked the priorities according to their prospects.

The Sri Lankan education system has been designed with many examinations. Thus, the competitiveness of the education system creates many negative impacts on young children's lifestyles. In order to compete with the future challenges, many parents and teachers commented on the essentiality of an updated curriculum that matches the current Sri Lankan context. Thus, their idea is to include letter-writing practices in the current national preschool curriculum. They have also mentioned the importance of including English as a subject in the

preschool curriculum. These ideas emphasize that society has changed in accordance with the current social needs to face future challenges.

This research study focuses on three main theories such as social constructionism, risk society and different preschool curriculums. As people coming from different social backgrounds society is constructed according to its societal values and norms. Thus, the thought patterns, as well as their requirements, change according to its society. In this study, social constructionism perspective has been used to explore both participants' views. Hence, the research identified that society has a major impact on constructing childhood in Sri Lanka.

It is no doubt that people in societies consist of many challenges and uncertainties. When considering Sri Lankan society, many people struggle to have employment after completing the education. Thus, younger children's lifestyles also build to cope the competitiveness in the future. This can be exemplified through the letter-writing practice in preschools. As this has not been introduced in the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka teachers and parents practice these methods by considering the future requirements. Hence, people try to find the best curriculum for their children to educate. When considering the Sri Lankan preschool education, this is transparent within the mixed curriculum that teachers practice in the preschools. The most popular curriculum which they practice in the school is the Montessori method. They mentioned that they use this curriculum by considering the easiness and practicality of the curriculum.

However, my suggestion is that authorities should give more consideration to the preschool curriculum by understanding the relevance of today's children. It is significant to develop a curriculum that matches to today's child as well. As many parents and teachers expected to have changes in the curriculum it is important to consider their expectations in order to develop a curriculum that enhances the child's knowledge and skills. Hence, this will help to overcome the present conflicts to succeed in the children's future.

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Appendix

Research Introduction for the participants

I am Pamuditha Samarasinghe, and I am currently pursuing MPHIL (Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies) in Norway. The institution name is NTNU (Norwegian University of Science and Technology). My research is based on the national preschool curriculum in Sri Lanka, and I am going to explore Teachers and parents' perspectives regarding the curriculum. You are free to resign from the research by giving a verbal consent throughout the research process. The information will be highly secured, and all the audio recordings collected throughout the interviews will be deleted at the end of the project (June 2021). As I am the person who access the recordings, please consider that I will not disclose any information, names of persons or institutions at any cost.

Teacher's questions

Educational Background

1. How many years of experiences do you have as a preschool teacher ?

2. What is your educational background as a preschool teacher? Which program?

Educational perspective

3. What are your comments about the current education system?

4. What do you think about the current preschool curriculum?

5. How do you feel about translating national preschool curriculum to English ?

6. Do you practice a mix curriculum in the preschool? Why ?

7. Do you practice letter writing in the pre- school? What do You think about it ?

8. How do parents comment on child's education in the pre-school?

Issues and challenges

9. Do you face any issues/ Challenges when teaching preschool curriculum? What are the issues? What are the preventive measures ?

10. Do you feel it is essential to implement an updated curriculum for children? Why?

11. How do you see current pre-school curriculum helps for child's holistic development?

12. What type of suggestions would you give for the enhancement of the pre-school curriculum?

Parent's questions

1. What is your age group?

20-30	30- 40	40-50	50-60	60 above

About the curriculum

2. Have you read or heard about the current pre-school curriculum? What do you think about the current preschool curriculum?

3. What   is important for you when selecting a preschool?

4. How do you feel about teaching preschool curriculum in english?

5. How do you feel about practicing a mix curriculum in the school?

Educational perspectives

6. What do you think about international based methods than the national based methods?

7. How do you feel about practicing letter writing in the preschool?

8. Do you practice activity books/ Newspapers for your child's pre-writing skills at home? Why?

Issues and challenges

9. Do you feel any challenges in the current education system?

10. What type of suggestions would you give for the enhancement of the pre-school curriculum?

Ranking method

Please indicate most important and least importance from the list by rating 1-7

- Preschool curriculum should change according to the modern children.

- Introduce best teaching methodology to teach the curriculum.

- Introduce an english medium national preschool curriculum.

- Practice letter writing in the preschool.

- Children needs more activity-based curriculum.

- Curriculum should be nature- based.

- Proper government guidance should be enhanced.