Preschool Education in Belize, Central America

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Introduction

Despite the convincing argument for the importance of early childhood education world-wide, more than 200 million children under the age of five and living in developing countries do not reach their developmental potential (McGregor, McGregor, Cheung, Cueto, Glewwe, Richter, Strupp, 2007). Early childhood educationalists have explored over a decade and still ask the same questions regarding appropriate health, growth, and development of young children (Cook, 2010). This may be the explanation for the plight for extensive international early learning research to be considered the challenge and focus of current debates today (Abbott & Nutbrown, 2001).

Although curriculum reform of the international sense in early childhood education is not new, much of the research in the field of early learning either investigates or proposes the implementation of current approaches and programs (Cook, 2010). This may be for the limited amount of international early childhood research in developing countries that favor developmentally appropriate strategies and innovative early learning opportunities for healthy growth and development of young children (Isabell, 2001).

Interestingly enough, Walker, Wachs, Gardner, Lozoff, Wasserman, Pollitt, Carter (2007), summarized seven causal studies on the effects of cognitive stimulation interventions from developing countries, and found a significantly higher cognitive functioning in young children, from birth to five years of age. The interventions included teaching mothers several techniques for educational play including: utilizing play materials, verbal stimulation, developing children's motor skills, cognitive skills which may increase responsiveness. Most of the effect sizes ranged from 0.5 SD to 1.0 SD. This study showed that only $10 - 41$ percent of the parents provided cognitively stimulating materials to their children, and only $11 - 33$ percent of parents actively involved their children in cognitively stimulating activities and, concluded inadequate cognitive stimulation as one of the four developmental risk factors (Walker, et. al., 2007).

Currently, early learning strategies and research studies that focus on factors relating to a young child's individual differences (Wardle, 2005), are simply influenced from several mechanisms (Martin & Fabes, 2006), including: transferable skills of communication, collaboration and investigation. These skills strengthen all aspects of early learning through the utilization of traditional or non-traditional theoretical frameworks of early childhood education and early learning (Abbott, et al., 2001).

Moreover, the conquest for early childhood education and curriculum reform in the developing world may have been considered a dilemma in the past, as developmental scientists were mostly focused on areas that grew out of the well-being for the basic concerns and needs of young children (Schwebel, Plumert & Pick, 2000).

As it stands, from these theoretical viewpoints the contents of this article will explore preschool educational viewpoints from the perspectives of Belize, Central America. This information is based upon areas of; Belizean Educational System, Challenges in Belizean Education, Historical Significance of Belizean Education, Belizean Ministry of Education, Abandonment, Institutionalization and the Rights of the Child, Early Learning in Developing Countries, Conclusion and Implications on Public Policy which may be utilized in the developing world of early learning.

Belizean Educational System
Belize, like many developing countries in a post-colonial context, has an educational system that is based upon the characterization of a direct teacher format or structured traditional style of teaching pedagogy (Cook, 2010). Schweinhart (1997) argued that a traditional style of instructional approach is likely to discourage social and emotional development, intellectual dispositions, and the creativity of young children. A structured or teacher directed viewpoint of curricula may also oppose to prior knowledge and hosts an array of concerns with regard to the aspirations of peoples, cultures, and to be culturally indifferent (Smith, 1999). Consequently, curriculum reform may not be well suited to the socio-cultural context of early learning education in a developing country (Cook, 2010). However, Freire (1993) considered, *Pedagogy of the City,* calls for a reformation of curriculum, "A school system that transforms the space where children, rich or poor, are able to learn, to create, to take risks, to question, and to grow." (p. 37)

The public compulsory traditional style of the educational system in Belize consists primarily of the ages of children ranging from 5 to 14 years. The preschool education is considered kindergarten and designated for children ages three and four. Upon the age of five, a child enters into primary school for a total of eight years, which include: Infant I and II, Standards and Forms I – IV. Those students who are financially able to afford college may attend three or four years depending on the type of study. Some students begin college at age 16, which also depends on the success of the lower level achievements (G. Price & S. Cruz, personal communication, April 16, 2007).

Challenges in Belizean Education
A few of the Belizean challenges involve the policy of providing an education for all children of compulsory school-age which has not been idle and offers an access to secondary, higher and

further education has expanded. However, these endeavors have not been without challenges of various kinds (Ministry of Education-Belize, 2010).

Those challenges that have encountered Belize have included: registration of children born in Belize, the designing of an education policy that promotes inclusion of all children with disabilities into the educational system. And, at most, to provide services for screening, treating and rehabilitating of young children dealing with an array of specific disabilities. There is also the need to strengthen the programs with additional trained personnel and up-to-date informative resources (Ministry of Education-Belize, 2010).

It is with extreme importance that Belize will take serious actions in order to reach these goals by the year 2015, as formative evaluations through agencies and organizations will show these goals attainable (E.g. achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, empower women and reduce child mortality) and that status is fast changing to unachievable (Ministry of Education- Belize, 2010).

None-the-less, the educational system of Belize continues to remain a challenge and problematic due to frequent migration patterns and educational policies that include free education to the end of secondary school. For most Belizean families, the opportunity to attend primary school and high school is unaffordable due to the high cost of administration fees, books, uniforms, classroom materials and excursions. Needless to say, due to the lack of school attendance primarily constitutes a country wide low literacy rate of approximately 76 percent (State Report, 2010).

At this point, efforts are essential to address primary age children who engage in commercial activities, domestic work, and agricultural labour during school hours instead of attending public school programs (State Report, 2010). The attendance of preschool age children remains a continual low in the national coverage of 27.5 percent. The highest rate being 60.4 percent in 'Belize City', with the lower rate of 2.7 percent in the southern 'Toledo' District of Belize (UNICEF, 2006). The Child Activity Survey, 2001, revealed 77.3 percent of children from ages 5 to 17 actually working. (p. 28)

From these percentages there is an indication that approximately 18 percent school-age children have not attended school and are essentially child labourers. The seriousness of this problem impacts schools through the consistency of absenteeism, dropout rates which remains in the category of the child labour issues. The International Child Advocacy Organization (ICAO) warns that many Belizean children are forced to work within the region and are exposed to toxic pesticides from working long days (State Report, 2010). Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS) has shown that approximately 8,582 children were child labourers (UNICEF, 2006). In addition, most Belizean children in this case, are at high risks of traffic accidents, abuse, and mistreatment

(UNICEF, 2006; IPS, 2006). Maria Conde, UNICEF addresses the issue, "This situation is extremely dangerous for the region, and due to the rights of dignified development and health towards these children are being violated" (UNICEF, 2006, p. 28).

Several of the Caribbean countries have made numerous strides toward these continued improvements of preschool education as specifically, Belize. The Belizean government considers taking on the best interest of young children through the support of: The National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC). This organization has been developed and established in recognition of the, *International Year of the Family,* which was launched in 1994, as an advisory body to govern family and children's issues (NCFC, 2002). Belize attended the, *United Nations General Assembly, Special Session on Children* in May, 2002, and joined the international community in pledging support for the new Global Plan of Action, *A World Fit for Children* (NCFC, 2002). In addition, UNICEF provided two programs for major interventions in Belize (NCFC, 2002; UNICEF, 2006).

The first program; *The Enhancing Holistic Child Development Programme*, directs an emphasis on children ages zero to six-years of age. This will focus on legislation and policies to place an impact on the development of curricula for early learning childcare centres. This program encompasses parenting education and the promotion of male involvement within childcare. The program also enables an establishment of a community-based nationwide initiative to prevent domestic violence (NCFC, 2002; UNICEF, 2006).

The second program; *The Enabling Environments for Adolescent Development Program,* facilitates the development of individual environments. In 1986, over 2,000 cases of HIV/AIDS were detected in Belize, and have since been confirmed (NCFC, 2002; UNICEF, 2006). Approximately 150 percent of the young children are infected by HIV/AIDS and are less than one year of age, with a percentage of HIV-positive mothers which represent single mothers (NCFC, 2002; UNICEF, 2006). It was also discovered that Belize and Honduras have one of the highest prevalence's of the HIV infection and the largest number of AIDS cases in Central America (Stansbury & Sierra, 2004). The Adolescent Development program supports the adolescent participation of health and has related educational projects including: reproductive health that relates to teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS (NCFC, 2002; UNICEF, 2006). The Ministry of Education and Health has also administered awareness thru parent education workshops and poster and pamphlet distributions along with acceptable regional standards and new infant curriculum (Ministry of Education-Belize, 2010).

Historical Significance of Belizean Education
The goal of providing education for children in Belize was commenced in the first two decades of the nineteenth century through a partnership between the political authority; a very small

British settlement and Christian missionaries. By the end of the century, a legally established partnership between church and state enabled primary and elementary schools to be opened in the districts of the fully constituted British Crown Colony. A very small number of private secondary schools were also opened. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, compulsory schooling became law and the policy to provide basic education for all the children within the compulsory school ages between six years to fourteen years was adopted by the colonial government and carried out throughout the colonial period and into the present era, independent Belize (EFA, 2000).

This level of education began to take off in the 1970s through interventions by the Belizean Government, the Extra Mural Department of the University of the West Indies and UNICEF (UNICEF, 2012). The interventions embraced the physical care of children from the prenatal stage of existence through the preschool years and thereafter during the earliest of primary school. The (MoE) was not expected to carry out such a broad area of responsibility alone as the Ministry of Health (MoH) began to provide prenatal and post-natal clinics for mothers to ensure that unborn and newly born infants have the chance for survival (EFA, 2000).

Interestingly enough, early childhood care was designated to involve more than schooling. The preschool education level (between 3 and 5 years) grew rather slowly and was based largely on an old fashioned view of teaching the 3-year-olds children as a preparation for primary school. It was a wholly private effort and was confined to a very small number of kindergartens (EFA, 2000).

Today the Early Childhood Education Developmental Centre (ECEDC), a significant piece to the Ministry of Education is an agency through which up-to-date ideas and practices are implemented. The overall public policy is to give support to the private and community efforts and to provide early childhood care and development. With regard to preschool education, the goals and objectives remain very similar to what they were at the beginning of the EFA Decade. The goals and objectives at that point were as follows (EFA, 2000).

> Goals:
> to develop appropriate learning abilities and skills and confidence of young children as a foundation for further personal and socio-emotional growth; to contribute to every aspect of their lives, including parental care and their formal education (EFA, 2000, p. 2).
> Objectives:
> to establish, expand and refurbish pre-school centres; to increase the percentage of children 3-5 years attending pre-school centres; to establish an early childhood education resource centre; to improve the preparation of persons involved in pre-school education; to promote early childhood development and care as a community effort (EFA, 2000, p. 2).

It has been designated through the Ministry of Education that ECEDC, will be strengthened through several perspectives. First, to provide technical assistance and trainings to persons engaged in early childhood education programs country-wide, while providing support for parents to stimulate children as early as possible in home environments. Secondly, to develop poverty alleviation programs to assist preschool age children living in these conditions and third to provide a framework for integrated activities in deprived neighborhoods that offer comprehensive services to children and their families (Ministry of Education – Belize, 2010).

The Belizean Ministry of Education

The Belizean Ministry of Education (MoE) continues to be strongly involved with the progress of preschool education, as the Ministry essentially coordinates and develops the policy of addressing all preschools throughout the country. The Ministry supervises the activities of preschool centres countrywide which monitors and ensures preschool centres to comply within the licensing requirements of the, 'Education for All (EFA), 2000' rules (EFA, 2000).

To ensure the quality of early childhood education, Belize continues to improve and support preschool educational attendances and the conditions. The (MoE) of Belize has indicated there has been much progress made toward the improvement of preschool education. These strides include: renaming the Ministry of Education Preschool Unit and upgrading to the, *Early Childhood Education and Development Centre* (ECEDC).

In distinguishing these strides, there have been 7 newly trained early childhood education coordinators employed to manage each of the major districts of Belize (Ministry of Education-Belize, 2010). There are also an increased number of new preschool sites developed in several Belizean districts through-out the country as shown in table III. In addition, there has been an increase of the number of paid preschool teachers of approximately 21 to 314, an increased number of mentoring of preschool activities, additional new increases of additional assistance and intervention for teachers and an extreme increased number of enrolment of preschool children from 3100 to 8, 543 in the past five years as seen in tables I and II (Ministry of Education – Belize, 2010).

Table I

Trend of New Preschools

District	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Corozal	8	7	3	2	0	2
Orange Walk	2	4	3	3	0	2
Belize City	2	3	2	3	2	2
Cayo	5	5	3	3	2	2
Stann Creek	0	4	1	2	0	3
Toledo	7	1	5	2	2	1
Total per year	24	24	17	15	6	12
Total New Centers - 98			Total Number of Preschools - 209			

Source: Ministries of Education, Belize (2010).

Table II

Present Preschool Enrollment

District	Boys	Girls	Total
Corozal	431	415	846
Orange Walk	388	392	780
Belize City	1346	1305	2651
Cayo	575	605	1180
Stann Creek	475	439	914
Toledo	307	315	622

Source: Ministries of Education, Belize (2010).

Table III

Preschool Centre Distribution

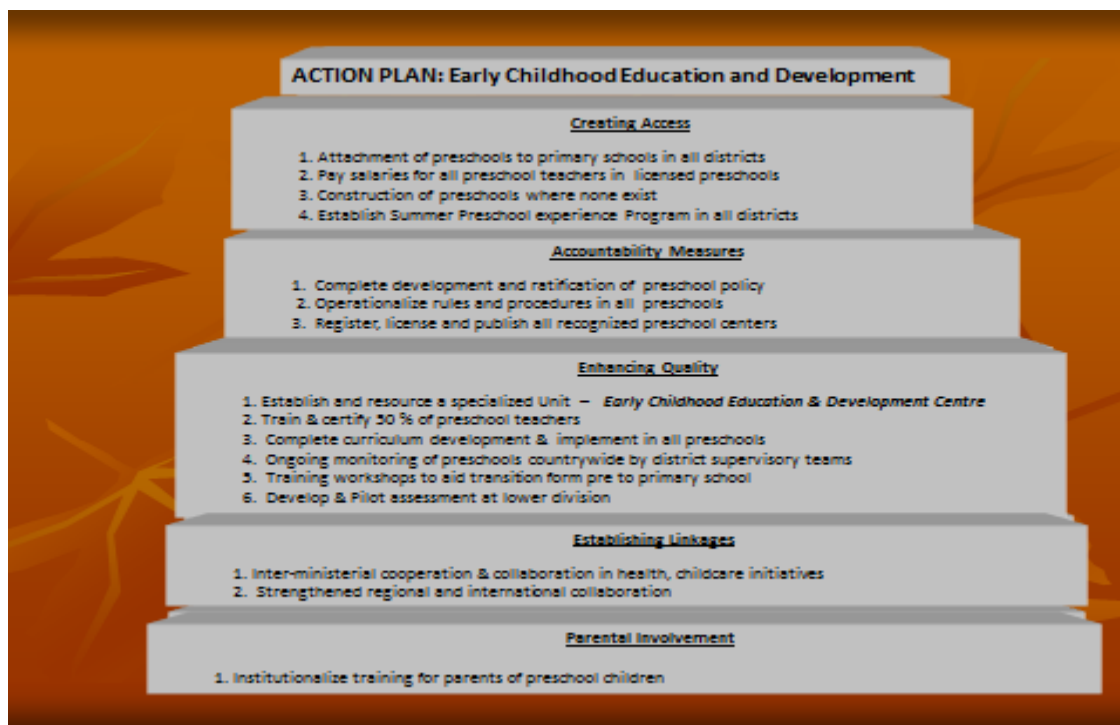| District	Private	Denominational	Government	Organizational
Corozal	3	20	10	0
Orange Walk	3	14	6	0
Belize City	24	16	12	5
Cayo	11	14	11	2
Stann Creek	5	22	4	0
Toledo	3	18	3	0

Source: Ministries of Education, Belize (2010).

The (MoE) continues to be in contact with the University of Belize and other educational institutions and organizations while analyzing research to make educated recommendations that relate to and access the coverage of early childhood education countrywide. The (MoE) strengthens the local, regional, national and international partnerships which address early childhood educational care and development (EFA, 2000).

One of the most recent research studies was conducted by, Dr. Alberto L. August, professor of early childhood education from the, University of Belize. The study was a model that involved, '*Testing Early Literacy & Learning Model'* (ELLM). This particular model in early childhood literacy received a grant for the period of 2010 – 2014 (Ministry of Education-Belize, 2010). The Research grant was intended to assist the Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Education Developmental Programs thrust for improving the status of preschool literacy in Belize. Topics of the grant included: attachments, standardization, individual accommodation, physical environment, health and safety, teacher-child interactions and developmentally appropriate practices (Ministry of Education-Belize, 2010).

A few of the results from the (ELLM) study were indicated as: most of the children in need of preschool education were living in urban areas and Belize City. More preschools were needed on the rural areas of Belizean Districts. There is a greater need for support of those children that have encountered 'special challenges' to access preschool and primary school with materials needed to accommodate and train teachers. There needs to be preschool, infant I to standard II teachers trained on the associate degree level to increase the percentage of trained teachers to 70 percent, as there are only 10 percent teachers currently at the associate degree level. From these results, Table IV indicates a stair-step version of needs to improve early childhood education in Belize (Ministry of Education-Belize, 2010).

Table IV

ACTION PLAN: Early Childhood Education and Development

Creating Access
1. Attachment of preschools to primary schools in all districts
2. Pay salaries for all preschool teachers in licensed preschools
3. Construction of preschools where none exist
4. Establish Summer Preschool experience Program in all districts

Accountability Measures
1. Complete development and ratification of preschool policy
2. Operationalize rules and procedures in all preschools
3. Register, license and publish all recognized preschool centers

Enhancing Quality
1. Establish and resource a specialized Unit – *Early Childhood Education & Development Centre*
2. Train & certify 50 % of preschool teachers
3. Complete curriculum development & implement in all preschools
4. Ongoing monitoring of preschools countrywide by district supervisory teams
5. Training workshops to aid transition form pre to primary school
6. Develop & Pilot assessment at lower division

Establishing Linkages
1. Inter-ministerial cooperation & collaboration in health, childcare initiatives
2. Strengthened regional and international collaboration

Parental Involvement
1. Institutionalize training for parents of preschool children

Source: Ministries of Education, Belize (2010).

As these improvements continue to make progress in the field of early childhood education with regards to preschool education, it is essential for the Belizean community to make every effort to provide and support opportunities for young children and families with respect to the issues of abandonment, institutionalization and the rights of the child.

Abandonment, Institutionalization and the Rights of the Child

Abandonment

A large number of children are abandoned every year due to massive socio-economic pressures around the world and within the developing world that present specific or unique challenges (Taneja, Beri, & Puliyel, 2004). S. Cho (2005) claimed, "Funding and adequate resources lack in developing countries" (Para. 4). Ensalaco and Majka (2005) agreed this issue is problematic worldwide, "The neediest states, even when they act in good faith, lack adequate resources to ensure that institutions, services, facilities, and staff are available to children and families" (p.

16). Increasingly, abandonment occurs, ". . . in a "developed" country, as in countries that are impoverished or war-torn" (Arnold, 2000, p.10).

Executive director of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) noted, "The world is squandering human potential on a massive scale as hundreds of millions of the world's youngest citizens flounder in poverty and neglect in their first years of life" (Bellamy, 2000). According to UNICEF, Belize, Central America is said to have an approximate population size of approximately 330,000 peoples; estimating 48.3 percent are under the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2006; UNICEF, 2012). The alternative Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) of Belize, reported 39 percent Belizean children currently living below the poverty line. Impoverishment continues to be extensive, persistent and widespread throughout Belize and neighbouring Central American countries (Liberty Foundation, 2006; UNICEF, 2006).

Institutionalization

Current research (Johnson, Browne, Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2006) qualifies the risk of institutionalized care in the result of limited opportunities to form selective attachments compared to children placed within family-based care. This may occur where there are large numbers of children and small numbers of staff as well as, a lack of inconsistent care through shift schedules and staff rotation. Johnson (et al., 2006) believed that even, "Good institutionalized care can have detrimental effects on a child's ability to form relationships later in life". (p. 35)

The international community continues to explore alternative strategies including: adoption and foster care as, "Human rights of children in residential care are supported through the development of family-based alternatives" (Johnson et al., 2006, p. 57). Johnson (et al., 2006) supported these efforts, "Rehabilitating children to their families of origin must be adequately supported and monitored". (p. 57)

Belizean records indicate that two out of every five children do not have basic food and non-food item needs met (State Report, 2010). Past research suggests that young children who are hungry will perform poorly in diverse learning situations (Morrison, 2004). Abraham Maslow's (1890-1970), *Hierarchy of Needs* theory and framework designates that basic needs must be satisfied before higher levels can be fulfilled (Maslow, 1970). Consequently, brain research shows that nutritious food and water are essential for proper functioning of healthy brain development (Morrison, 2004). Early childhood educationalists and neurologists have agreed the first eight years are a critical time for healthy brain development of young children (Isabell, 2001).
Studies (Taneja et al., 2004) have shown that children who reside in orphanages are likely to have developmental delays due to poor stimulation and inappropriate learning experiences (p. 21). Rosenblith (1992) suggested the development of deprived children will improve dramatically once the environment becomes more stimulating. Martin and Fabes (2006) concur that environmental factors influences the stimulus that affects the developmental process.

Rogoff and colleagues (1993) supported, "To understand development is in the context of children's everyday activities and culturally *valued* goals of development". (p. 9) Isabell (2001) suggested, "Appropriate and interesting experiences during the early years can have a positive impact on a child's current development, as well as, brain connections that will last a lifetime". (p. 21)

Children's Rights

At the, *Rights of the Child,* March 1990, Belize became the fifth country in the world to ratify at the United Nations Convention. As signatory to the Convention, Belize committed itself to upholding 54 articles including: protection of children; provision for their basic needs; and ensuring their full participation in all decisions and discussions affecting them depending on their age and abilities (NCFC, 2002). This commitment demonstrates numerous strides in solving current problematic issues regarding children's rights. None-the-less, it has been estimated by 2012; the number of children orphaned will likely increase from five to six percent for young children in Belize, Central America (UNICEF, 2012). This issue causes concern as educators, NG0's and researchers of developing countries regarding the healthy growth and development for all young children.

Carol Bellamy, executive Director of UNICEF (2000) supported this concern and speaks on behalf of young children,

> The state of the world's youngest children, citizens with the same rights as all others, is not nearly as good as it should be… it will only get better when we alter current priorities and accept the sound economic, social and political sense it makes to prioritize the world's youngest. (Bellamy, 2000)

Valentine's (2001) viewpoint expressed, "A child who is valued, is a child who has a right" (p. 1). S. Cho (2005) agreed and commented, "Researchers and authors make efforts to discuss how children's rights are not the priority, but where the *value* of children are placed is rarely mentioned" (Para. 1, p. 162). Young children living in Reggio Emilia, Italy, have a fundamental right to realize and expand their potential. Reggio Children's, *The Charter of Rights* declares the rights of a child are:

> Children have the right to be recognised as subjects of individual, legal, civil, and social rights; as both source and constructors of their own experience, and thus active participants in the organisation of their identities, abilities, and autonomy, through relationships and interaction with their peers, with adults, with ideas, with objects and with the real and imaginary events of inter-communicating worlds. (Quoted in Valentine, 2001, Journey in the Rights of Children, 1996, p. 4)

Early Learning in Developing Countries

There are many developing countries that have chosen to promote early learning. Bellamy

(2000), from UNICEF, supported that a child has rights and agreed that an investment in the development and care of young children is the most fundamental form of good leadership. According to The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) informed, "Countries are launching various efforts to meet their global commitment to the development of care and educational services for young children". (UNESCO, 2003, p. 3)

Current research and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) are representing rapid growth toward successful early learning within developing countries. These countries have chosen different ways to address educational learning and health related issues regarding early childhood education. In 1990, at the United Nations, Jomtien Conference and Declaration declared, "*Learning begins at birth*", has essentially embraced Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to improve quality of early learning. Ten years later, the world community renewed the commitment to ECCE in the Dakar Framework for Action, organization to expand, to improve, and to ensure the equity in ECCE (ECCE, 2006). Rogoff (1993) supported, "Each culture has its own system of norms and values in which development and interactions of children evolve". (p. 162)

Interested in early childhood education , those developing countries include: Brazil, China, Egypt, Indonesia and Pakistan have implemented pre-primary national curricula for early education and learning. Bangladesh offers pedagogical guidelines that are meant to emphasize a child's holistic approach to child development (UNESCO, 2012) and early education. Therefore, constant efforts to improve early education and health of young children have become evident from countries such as: Jamaica, Mexico, Ethiopia, Kenya, Belize, Brazil, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Levine, 2005). These countries and many others are all examples of some of the efforts demonstrated toward a greater advocacy on behalf of early childhood education.

Latin America is the developing region that has made the most progress in early childhood education, although improvements have been uneven, says the new global monitoring report on Education for All (EFA) 2007**.** Latin America and the Caribbean is the developing region with the highest rate of preschool enrollment at 62 percent, ahead of East Asia and the Pacific at 35 percent, south and West Asia at 32 percent, the Arab states at 16 percent and sub-Saharan Africa at 12 percent (Estrada, 2007).

Conclusion
As addressed in this chapter of early childhood education and international preschool education of the developing world and predominately Belizean preschool education, it is evident there continues to be a movement forward toward making a difference in early childhood education. Cooper, (2004) suggested, "It is only by raising the awareness and radically altering the contexts from where genuine *care* takes place that will improve the personal, social, moral and academic

development for the future of children" (p. 21). It has been addressed that Belize and several countries demonstrate an effort to showcase great strides toward establishing their own approaches and form of early childhood educational learning and system.

Future early Childhood Education plans in Belize are basically to: revisit the preschool curriculum to create a linkage between the Preschool Education and Infant I. There also plans in place to conduct in-country, early childhood education conferences to assist with training and professional development of preschool teachers. The goals are to construct at least one model of a preschool centre in specific areas of the Belizean Districts. It important to develop packets of informational tool kits for parents pertaining to healthy growth and development of young children. There is also the implementation of public awareness and devise a campaign on behalf of early childhood education and learning (Ministry of Education-Belize, 2010).

Implications for Public Policy

Early learning programs that exchange diverse methodologies of different ways of knowing, in diverse cultures may essentially learn to transform early childhood education and early learning experiences for young children in the developing world (Cook, 2010). Rogoff (1993) has suggested, "Each culture has its own system of norms and values in which development and interactions of children evolve". (p. 162)

It is interesting to note, that Belize, a developing country and supporter of early childhood education continues to take on the epistemological stance and explore new ways to discover appropriate approaches for their educational and environmental settings. It is also encouraging to acknowledge the results of those strides and improvements based primarily on behalf of early learning and preschool education initiatives which has evolved from a wide variety of diverse ideologies (Cook, 2009).

We have much to learn from developing countries in the areas of educational and international early learning. It is also encouraging yet in another part of the world; the country of New Zealand's culture sets a high priority for the entire developing world by their sense of advocacy and strong supporter of international, early education. Let us remember the indigenous cultures as the, 'Maori' children who have said, "The bird that eats only the fruits of the forest – theirs will be the forest. The bird that eats the fruits of education – theirs will be the world". (Codrington, 2004, p. 187)

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