Learner centeredness in Mauritian classrooms:

The teachers' and parents' views and the daily practices regarding teaching styles in pre-primary schools in Mauritius

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Abstract

The Mauritius Institute of Education and the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority highly value a child centered approach in pre-primary classrooms in Mauritius. This is in line with literature, stating that a child-centered approach has a substantive effect on the child's development; it is expected to result in better opportunities and higher economic earnings later in life. Therefore this study focuses on child-centeredness of pre-primary schools in Mauritius, taking into account the prevailing views of parents and teachers. Data was collected through observations at schools (n=12), focus groups were held with parents (n=25), interviews with teachers (n=25), and questionnaires were given to parents and teachers (n=41). Results show that mixed methods with regard to teaching style are used in Mauritius. A difference is observed between private and public schools. Some private schools show a child-centered approach, other private schools show a teacher-centered approach. Public schools show both styles of teaching, leaning towards teacher-centered classrooms. However, parents and teachers both showed a preference for child-centered teaching. It can be concluded that the goal of the educational institutes in Mauritius to teach in a child-centered manner has not yet been reached. Since the teachers are aware of the concept of child-centered teaching but generally fail to apply this teaching style, more guidance seems to be needed on how to implement the child-centered teaching style. Also, involving parents in this process is expected to be very beneficial to this goal.

Keywords: Mauritius, pre-primary education, Learner centered teaching, Teacher centered teaching, parents' and teachers' views

Samenvatting

Aansluitend bij huidige literatuur wordt kindgerichte educatie hoog gewaardeerd door instanties in Mauritius als de 'Mauritius Institute of Education' en de 'Early Childhood Care and Education Authority'. Onderzoek toont dat kindgerichte educatie een positief effect heeft op de ontwikkeling van het kind; het zorgt voor een sterker sociaal-cognitief vermogen en hogere economische verdiensten op latere leeftijd. Deze studie kijkt naar de mate waarin deze kindgerichte educatie wordt toegepast in pre-primaire educatie (3- tot 5- jarigen) en erkend door ouders en docenten in Mauritius. Voor het onderzoek zijn in totaal 12 scholen geobserveerd, 15 docenten geïnterviewd en hebben 25 ouders geparticipeerd in focus groepen. Daarbij zijn vragenlijsten ingevuld door zowel ouders als docenten (n=41). Uit de resultaten kwam een verschil in onderwijsstijlen tussen particuliere en publieke scholen naar voren.

Sommige privéscholen laten een kindgerichte aanpak zien, andere privéscholen tonen een docentgerichte aanpak. Openbare scholen laten beide onderwijsstijlen zien, neigend naar docentgerichte klaslokalen. Echter, de interviews en focus groepen tonen bij zowel ouders als leerkrachten een voorkeur voor kindgericht onderwijs. Er kan worden geconcludeerd dat het doel van de onderwijsinstellingen in Mauritius om op kindgerichte wijze onderwijs te bieden nog niet bereikt is. Aangezien de docenten zich bewust zijn van het concept van kindgerichte educatie, maar deze manier van lesgeven in het algemeen nog niet toepassen, lijkt er meer begeleiding nodig te zijn bij de implementatie van kindgerichte educatie. Daarnaast wordt verwacht dat het beter betrekken van ouders bij dit proces ook zal bijdragen aan het behalen van dit doel.

Kernwoorden: Mauritius, pre-primaire educatie, kind gerichte educatie, docent gerichte educatie, visie van ouders en docenten

The teachers' and parents' views and daily practices regarding learner centered teaching in pre-primary schools in Mauritius

The Republic of Mauritius is an island in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar, and belongs to the African continent. In the year 1968 Mauritius has been declared independent after a long time of colonization respectively by the Dutch, French and British. The British colonization brought along important changes to society. One event which was of great importance was the abolishment of slavery in 1835. Moreover, during this period of colonization economic progress was shown, especially due to the cultivation of sugarcane. This economic progress resulted in an improvement of communication between countries and the emergence of a sound infrastructure. The British had promised to capture the French culture which is why nowadays still a lot of French influences can be seen throughout the country (http://www.govmu.org/English/ExploreMauritius/Pages/History.aspx). Due to these waves of colonization and events Mauritius has turned into a country with a mixture of cultures and religions (http://www.lemeilleurdelilemaurice.com/anglais/culture-in-mauritius/mauritius-and-religions/religious-culture-in-mauritius-a.html?lang=fr).

In 1992 Mauritius became a democratic republic. Currently the country has a president, but political power lies with the Prime Minister and the cabinet. Since 24th of January 2017 the Prime Minister of Mauritius is Mr Pravind Kumar Jugnauth (http//www.govmu.org). Elections take place every five years, and several parties (including 'best losers' to represent minorities) make up the government and the Assembly. The constitution is the supreme law, and protects the fundamental rights of its citizen for example freedom of conscience, and freedom of expression (http://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/mauritius/constitution-politics.).

Despite the political changes and growing economy, there are still steps to be made. "There was an estimated 42,100 children in relative poverty out of a total of 285,900 children," measured for 2012 (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 2015). Mauritius wants to counteract its economic challenges and bring economic prosperity to the country. The government envisions Mauritius to be a knowledge-based economy by 2025 ("innovative knowledge hub"). For this reason in 2015 an Action Plan for Tertiary Education was developed, with advices (mainly for tertiary education) to shape education to the goal of the government. One of the key points the plan states is that education is the most important factor of change, and puts emphasis on the pedagogical approaches (recommending constructivist teaching and learning). Especially early childhood education has shown to be effective with regard to later schooling outcomes and the child's social and cognitive

development. More specifically, research indicates early childhood education to be of great impact on disadvantaged youth for their short term as well as long term development (Barnett, 2011). For these reasons, in this research pre-primary education will be studied.

A comparison study of Bennett in 2000, states that 90 percent of children go to pre-primary education in Mauritius. The goal of pre-primary education is to prepare children for school. Reading and writing are viewed as skills to be learned before entering primary school at age 5 (Bennett, 2000). Early childhood education and care (ECEC) has been organized in two separate systems; under 3 year olds are in the child care system by the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child development, and Family Welfare while the 3-5 year olds are in the preschool system under the Ministry of Education. For both systems, the ministry provides government standards which must be met by private and public providers.

This Research

The main authority concerned with pre-primary education in Mauritius is the *Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA)*, which was established in 2008. Since 2012 this authority is concerned with ensuring that all pre-primary schools operate according to established norms and standards of quality. As from January 2012, all pre-primary schools are being registered and regulations and norms have to be met. Therefore, a *National curriculum framework for pre-primary education* was developed as part of the *Education and Human resources Strategy plan (2008-2020)*. This framework is aimed at children from 3-5 years old. In this framework guidelines are provided for educators working in ECEC, aiming at upgrading and standardizing the quality of teaching in both public and private pre-primary schools. One aspect that is valued in the report is a child centered approach. It is stated that education should be age appropriate and based on each child's unique personality and experiences.

In line with this, the consultancy report Action Plan for the Tertiary Education Strategic Plan 2013-2015, emphasizes a constructivist, learner centered education approach, with focusing on process (instead of results) as one of the strategies (Van 't Rood, Bairsto, Danbakli & Haug, 2015). They state that constructivist methodologies are needed to effectuate the enhancement of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Especially changing attitudes is an important component which facilitates achieving empowerment. Moreover, research in secondary schools in Mauritius indicated that it would be beneficial to start implementing constructivist teaching styles at pre-primary schools (Allybokus, 2015).

The question remains however whether and to what extend this child centered

approach is taken upon in practices. The translation from theory to practice is highly dependent on the prevailing views on the subject. The environment of the child must understand and feel confident with this strategy, in order for it to be applied (Flores, 2001; Vincent, 2013). For this reason, in this research the following research question will be answered:

"Are the parents' and teachers' views, the daily practices and the literature regarding learner centered teaching in pre-primary education in Mauritius in line with each other?"

This will be answered through four sub questions:

1. Do the classes provide a learner centred teaching style?
2. What are the teachers' views on learner centered teaching?
3. What are the parents' views on learner centered teaching?
4. Are the parents' views, teachers' views and daily practices regarding learner centred teaching in line with each other?

Theoretical Framework

As mentioned above, Mauritius wants to counteract its economic challenges and bring economic prosperity to the country. Recent research illustrates that ECEC has a substantive effect on the social-emotional development, school progress, cognition and anti-social behavior (Barnett, 2011). Also it is shown that families in poverty benefit the most from high quality ECEC, which helps to decrease the gap between rich and poor (Leseman & Slot, 2014; Magnuson & Duncan, 2016; Currie, 2001). Moreover, research shows that good quality early childhood education is important for human capital development: it is expected to result in better opportunities and higher economic earnings later in life. All in all, early childhood education investments show to be important to increase economic opportunity (Magnuson & Duncan, 2016).

Quality education however has a broad variety of definitions (Broekhuizen, Leseman, Moser & Trijp, 2015). In general three types of quality can be distinguished. Firstly, the quality of the curriculum has to be considered, this in short are the developmental and educational goals set out for children. The curriculum moreover illustrates the child's developmental stages and growth; this enhances the communication between the stakeholders (Oberhuemer, 2005). Secondly structural quality, this illustrates the classroom environment in a practical manner, such as children to teacher ratio, furnishing and design of the classroom and the teacher's competences. And at last process quality, which describes the teacher-child

interaction, the way the teacher approaches a child, and guides them to fit into society in a positive manner. The teacher can here be described as affectionate, responsive and positive towards the child. As previous sentence already illustrates, the teacher-child relationship is an important indicator for process quality (Currie, 2001; Howes et al., 2008). The teacher-child relationship moderates early school outcomes (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant & Clifford 2000; De Haan, Elbers & Leseman 2014). An important, and currently popular, viewpoint aimed at good quality education with a focus on the teacher-child interaction is the concept constructivism.

The term constructivism has a long history influenced by several pedagogues. To start off with, John Dewey (1859-1952) who acknowledged the social dimension within a child. He believed that for a child, in order to develop to its potential, a social setting was needed, in which the school should be a microcosm of its community. Thereby, each learner's experience must come from within the individual. The focus on social interaction was also an important principle in the work of Vygotsky. Vygotsky used the system to encourage the children to cooperate (Henson, 2003). An important Vygotskyan principle is the concept 'Zone of proximal development', this is defined as: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). This might be part of the explanation why it is found that children of low educated parents benefit most of quality ECEC. Piaget, mainly emphasized the learner as an individual; he stated that it is important to take each individual student's needs into account, in order to gain knowledge at their own pace (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Vygotsky, Piaget and Dewey, together shaped the learner centered education into a program called constructivism (Henson, 2003).

An important concept of social constructivism is *Learner Centered Teaching* (LCT), that has come to existence due to a combination of social constructivist principles suggested by Piaget, Rousseau, Vygotsky, Freire and Dewey (Altinyelken, 2011; Tabulawa, 2003). Within LCT educational settings, students gain knowledge through active participation, collaboration and interaction with one another (Altinyelken, 2011; Gray, 1997). The learning process should not be weighed by just using grades, but an evaluation method should be applied additionally to enhance student's learning skills (Schiller, 2009). Another typical component of LCT is the equal relationship between teachers and students, with the aim to build dialogue (Schiller, 2009; Freire, 1970). Moreover, the role of the teacher is to facilitate and structure the learning progress of a student in a motivating manner, instead of forcing it

(Altinyelken, 2011). This way, students are able to learn regardless of their background (Daniels, Kalkman & McCombs, 2001). Lastly, an LCT learning environment is seen as democratic, where the learner's opinion is highly valued (Altinyelken, 2011).

Based on these aspects, within LCT, five main principles can be distinguished. First, the control should be more with the students. Children can choose tasks by themselves and help organize their class time. Secondly the teacher functions as a guide in each learning area. Since each child is different, some children pick up on things less easily. The teacher should show the children how to think, how to solve problems and how to evaluate. Moreover, an important aspect of LCT is reflection. Children should learn to reflect on what they are learning with the goal to make the children aware of their learning. Another important aspect is to motivate children in their learning by giving them control over their learning process. They can be given choice in their assignments, making the child less dependent on the teacher. And at last collaboration should be stimulated. A lot of interaction should be present in the classroom. The children can learn from each other but the same applies for the teacher where the teacher can also learn from the children (Weimer, 2012).

The learner centered teaching style is an approach opposite, and as an alternative to the standard 'banking' concept as seized upon by Freire (1970). The 'banking' concept, stands for a way of teaching where the teacher is the so called narrating subject, where "he talks about reality in a motionless, static and predictable way, and the student is merely the patient, listening object" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). This can also be called teacher centered teaching (TCT). A standard teacher centered classroom shows a classroom where the teacher stands in front of the class and students sit behind their desks (Gray, 1997). It places students in a more receptive passive role (Freire, 1970). More specific characteristics of a TCT are: instructions are often given to the whole group instead of focusing on individuals, the teacher provides learners with factual information, the teacher talks more than students, the teacher determines the class time, and the teacher strongly relies on textbooks instead of other study material (Cuban, 1983). Both types of teaching emphasize the improvement of students' achievement. The way this is reached however significantly differs. With TCT, the teacher mainly has the control in the classroom, where with LCT the learner receives more responsibility, shifting the focus to the learner (Brown, 2003).

Teachers applying a TCT approach mainly see teaching as the transition of knowledge (Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi & Ashwin, 2006). In these classrooms, a result oriented view seems to be present, with a focus on the academic (Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources, 2009). Research shows however that this has a negative influence on

children's intrinsic motivation, making children less interested to learn (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001; Pekrun, 2006). When feeling pressure to achieve it is more likely for children to develop anxiety in the classroom. Besides the intrinsic motivation being negatively affected, it also negatively influences the extrinsic motivation to invest effort in learning with the aim to avoid failure (Pekrun, 2006). Low academic performances due to a loss of motivation can result in less productivity and a decrease in contribution to society (Davis, 2003). Moreover, academic stressors increase a person's reaction to stressors in general (Misra, Crist & Burant, 2003), and negatively influence course grades later in life (Struthers, Perry & Menec, 2000).

As is evident, LCT is greater valued than TCT in literature. How this theory is taken upon in practice however differs. There are several research outcomes reviewing the implementation of an LCT focused educational system, for example in Turkey (Altinyelken, 2011) and South-Africa (Brodie, Lelliott & Davis, 2002). Both countries implemented an educational framework focused on constructivism. However, it turned out that this was a hard task and teachers often turned back to the way of teaching they were familiar with, a more teacher centered way of teaching. Even though the curriculum stated a child centered approach, it was not made sure whether the teachers' views were in line with this principle. These examples show that the teachers' view has to be adjusted before it can be put into practice. However not only the teachers' views should be taken into account, when looking into the pedagogical environment in education, the whole system around the child ought to be included.

This system is well illustrated in the Ecological system theory of Bronfenbrenner (1986). He separates five systems that are in interaction with the child (see figure 1). Close to the individual there is the microsystem, this involves the parents, teachers and the school. The mesosystem stands for the interactions between these stakeholders and the child's peers. Then there is the exosystem which illustrates the broader community, such as the neighborhood or policy makers which have an indirect influence on the child through the mesosystem. At last the macrosystem is described, which stands for the norms and values within a certain community.
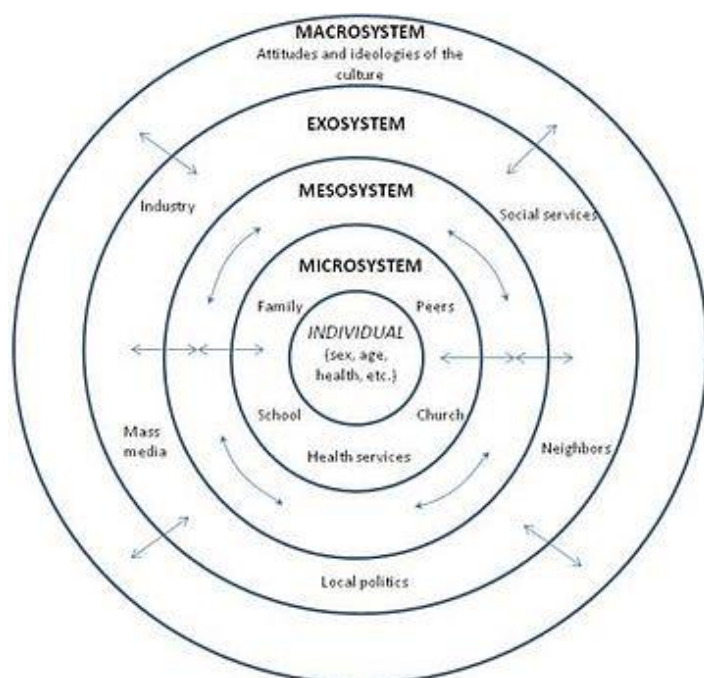
Figure 1. Ecological system

The way the cooperation between these different systems can contribute to the welfare of the child can be enlightened with the concept resilience. Resilience represents the ability of the child to recover from negative influences (O'Dougherty Wright, Masten & Narayan, 2013). Several environmental aspects can form risk factors. The socioeconomic status of the parents for example influences the cognitive development of the child. Also the school can act both as a protective factor and a risk-factor. The school can provide a safe place which encourages positive relationships with both peers and adults, offering (equal) opportunities. However, it can also be a stressful place for children, which constitutes a risk factor for child's development (Osher, Kendziora, Spier & Garibaldi, 2014). To incline the possibility of these risk factors to negatively influence the child, it is important to provide a strong community, enabling resilience (Masten, Cutuli, Herbers & Reed, 2009). In line with this, Epstein (1995) states that a school should see the parents and community as partners, recognizing a shared responsibility for the child.

Research of Fleer and Hedegaard (2010) shows however that there can be differences in opinions between parents and teachers regarding education styles. Especially in certain groups, for example ethnic minority parents, there has shown to be a discrepancy between their cultural framework and that of the school (Vincent, 2013). In order to maximize the child's possibilities it is important to make sure the stakeholders' views are in line with each other. It has shown to be beneficial for the students' school success and earnings later in life.

Also parental involvement helps improve the school climate, family support and connecting parents with each other, building a stronger community (Epstein, 1995). Therefore, the views of both, teachers and parents on LCT in pre-primary education in Mauritius will be looked upon. In a parallel study also the policy makers will be taken into account (see: thesis Irene Timmermans). The results will be compared with daily practices.

Hypotheses

This research will provide descriptive information on teaching practices in pre-primary schools in Mauritius. Specifically the learner centeredness in the classrooms will be investigated and the views of teachers as well as parents on learner centered teaching will be mapped out.

The first hypothesis is on the teaching style in daily practices. In Mauritius a "National curriculum framework pre-primary" is formed specifically for pre-primary schools in Mauritius. The aim is to give all children in Mauritius a solid baseline. One of the main objectives in this curriculum is child centered education (Mauritius Institute of Education & Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, 2009). How this curriculum is taken upon in practice however is still questionable. Attempts to implement a LCT style in other countries turned out to be a disappointment. In these examples as also described above, teachers turned out to apply a TCT style regardless of the change of curriculum (Altinyelken, 2011; Brodie et al., 2002). Besides this, research on learner centeredness has been conducted in primary schools Mauritius. This research shows that even though policies recommend a learner centered education environment, a teacher centered education style is applied in most secondary schools in Mauritius (Allybokus, 2015). Thus regardless of attempts of changes in curricula, in other countries and secondary education in Mauritius still teacher centred teaching is applied. Therefore, the following hypothesis will be tested: *Classrooms in pre-primary schools in Mauritius mostly show teacher centred teaching.*

The second hypothesis is on the teachers' and parents' views on learner centred education. The researches outlined above in which the implementation of a learner centred teaching style failed, show that the main reason was that the teachers involved were not able to get a grip on this type of teaching and were unable to see the relevance in changing their teaching style (Altinyelken, 2011; Brodie et al., 2002). It moreover shows that their view was not changed and taken into account during the implementation. Furthermore, as explained with the 'Ecological system theory' of Bronfenbrenner (1986), it is highly important to take different systems into account in order for a change to be actually implemented. Assuming

above stated hypothesis is correct and thus pre-primary schools in Mauritius are mostly teacher centred, it is expected that different views are not taken into account with the creation of the curriculum. Therefore the second hypothesis is as follows: *Both Mauritian pre-primary school teachers as well as parents have a teacher centred view*.

The last hypothesis concerns the question whether the prevailing views from both teachers and parents and the daily practices are in line with each other. As stated above, following research on LCT in comparable situations in Mauritius and other countries, it is expected that the daily practices as well as the teachers' and parents views' are TCT directed. Thus, logically following from previous hypotheses, the last hypothesis states the following: *The daily practises and the prevailing views regarding LCT in pre-primary schools in Mauritius are in line with each other*.

Method

Procedure and Participants

Twelve pre-primary schools were selected through judgmental sampling (https://explorable.com/judgmental-sampling), in cooperation with the ECCEA. Schools were selected from different areas in Mauritius. All twelve schools were observed of which seven government schools and five private schools. The participants consisted of parents and teachers of these pre-primary schools. First, observations were done in the pre-primary schools to measure the level of LCT versus TCT in the classroom. The observations took one whole day per school. After the observations, the teachers were asked to participate in an interview. In total eleven teachers participated in the interviews. When agreed upon by the teachers, the interviews were recorded. Also the teachers were asked to reach out to parents in order for them to participate in focus groups. If the parents had time, the focus group with parents was planned on the same day. However, the focus groups were mainly scheduled for another day with parents willing to participate. Due to the different parents availabilities each focus group was held with a different amount of parents and sometimes it was decided to hold an interview when only one parent was available. In total 25 parents contributed in the interviews/focus groups, nine interviews/focus groups were held of which three interviews and five focus groups. The interviews/focus groups with the parents were recorded if all parents agreed on this. Before each interview or focus group questionnaires were handed out to both parents and teachers, when in a hurry the participants only filled in the questionnaire. The questionnaire has been filled in by 23 parents and 19 teachers. Each questionnaire contained an informed consent (see appendix B).

Measuring Instruments

A mixed methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative measurement instruments was used. By applying data triangulation the generalisability is strengthened, ensuring the intern validity (Freeman, 2006; Ritchie & Lewis, 2013). The qualitative measuring instruments used were: focus groups with parents (Appendix D) and semi-structured interviews with teachers (Appendix C). Quantitative measuring instruments used were observations in the classroom (Appendix A) and questionnaires for parents and teachers (Appendix B). The observation items, questionnaires and interview questions are in line with each other and based on literature, which can be found in the theoretical framework.

Observation list. The observation list consisted of fourteen indicators; seven on TCT and seven on LCT, measuring a certain level of both teacher centeredness and learner centeredness. An example of an indicator for TCT is: "The teacher determines which playing materials the children play with". An example of an indicator for LCT is: "Children help choose and organize the class time". Each indicator was given a score from zero to two. Zero meaning: not true, one meaning: moderately true and two meaning: true.

Questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of ten statements in line with the indicators on the observation list. Five statements were illustrations of TCT and five statements were illustrations of LCT. An example of a statement of a TCT style is: "The teacher should determine which playing materials the children play with". An example of a LCT style is: "Children should have a say in the determination of the rules of behavior in the classroom". The statements were randomized. Each participant had to check whether he or she agreed, somewhat agreed or not agreed with the statement.

Interview/focus group. The interviews and focus groups were semi-structured (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013), each consisting of the same questions. In total there were seven questions, focussing on the learning environment in the classroom. The participants were asked to think about the questions and in case of a focus group to elaborate on the questions with each other. Each question was an open question, for example: "How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?" Each participant was asked whether they agreed on the interview/ focus group to be recorded. When the interview/focus group was recorded a transcript was made. In case of no recording notes were made and typed out afterwards (Appendix E).

Data Analysis

        All results were measured on their level of LCT. First the learner centeredness in the classroom was measured through observations. Then the level to which teachers have a learner centred view was measured through interviews and questionnaires and at last the parents view on LCT was measured through questionnaires and interviews/focus groups.

        Observation list. The observation list gives an indication of the level of teacher centeredness as well as learner centeredness. A score was given per item. "not true" was given score zero, "moderately true" was given score one and "true" was given score two. Subsequently, a maximum score of 14 on each teaching style could be obtained. Since every indicator on the LCT list is an important aspect of learner-centeredness, a minimum score of 10 points had to be reached in order for it to be called a learner centred teaching style. On the same list a maximum score of 4 had to be reached for TCT. The same applies for TCT: if the observation showed a TCT style for at least ten points on the measuring instrument and four points or less for LCT, than it was labelled as a TCT classroom. With a score between eight and ten on LCT and a score between 5 and 6 on TCT, it was stated that the classroom gears towards a LCT style. The same applies the other way around. Other scores were labelled as mixed methods teaching, indicating an appliance of both learner centred as well as teacher centred working methods.

        Questionnaire. The questionnaire shows whether the participants views were more geared towards LCT or TCT. A score was given per item. "Not agree" was given score zero, "somewhat agree" was given score one and "agree" was given score two. Participants were stated to lean towards a LCT view when having a score of six and above on LCT indicating statements and a score of four or below on TCT indicating statements. Participants were stated to lean towards a TCT view when having a score of six and higher on TCT indicating statements and a score of four or below on LCT indicating statements.

        Interview/focus group: Each conversation was separately analysed. Per answer it was noted whether the answer showed a LCT view, a TCT view or a neutral view. Participants were labelled with a LCT view when at least five out of seven questions were answered with LCT indicating answers. Accordingly, participants were labelled with a TCT view when at least five out of seven questions were answered with TCT indicating answers. The answers were noted to be learner centred when the main part of the participant(s)' answer showed an agreement on learner centred aspects as described in the theoretical framework such as a

focus on the individual, looking at the interests of the student and the importance of students expressing themselves. An example of a LCT answer is: "the main purpose is self-confidence, children should learn through play and love school". Oppositely, the answers were noted to be teacher centred when the main part of the participant(s)' answer showed an agreement on teacher centred aspects as described in the theoretical framework such as a strong focus on the academic, a need for all students to learn the same things and a preference on students sitting still without asking questions. An example of a TCT answer is: "when leaving pre-primary school they must know how to write their name, how to do homework. Here, the teacher is doing well he gives them lots of homework."

The observations, the parents' view and the teachers' view were compared with each other. A distinction was made between public schools and private schools.

Results

Teaching Style in Pre-Primary Schools

To answer the question whether the classes provide a LCT style, observations have been done. Different teaching style profiles can be seen in Mauritian pre-primary schools. On average, all observed pre-primary schools in Mauritius score medium on each teaching style. Namely, 9 out of 14 on teacher centred teaching and 6 out of 14 on learner centred teaching (see figure 1).
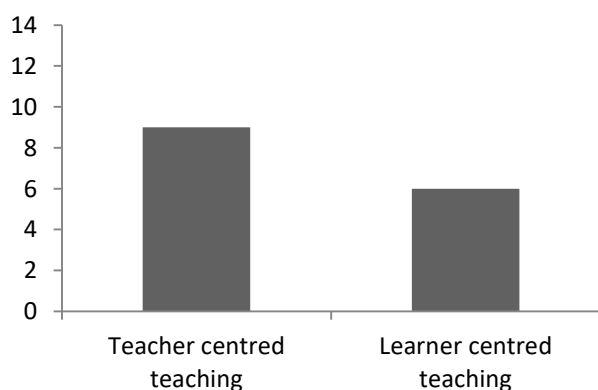

Figure 1. Average score per teaching style in pre-primary schools in Mauritius.

A difference was seen between public schools and private schools. The different public schools throughout Mauritius all apply more or less the same teaching style, using mixed methods: learner centred as well as teacher centred approaches. The public schools on average

score 8,3 out of 14 on TCT and 5,7 out of 14 on LCT (see figure 2). This means that the public schools gear towards a teacher centred classroom.
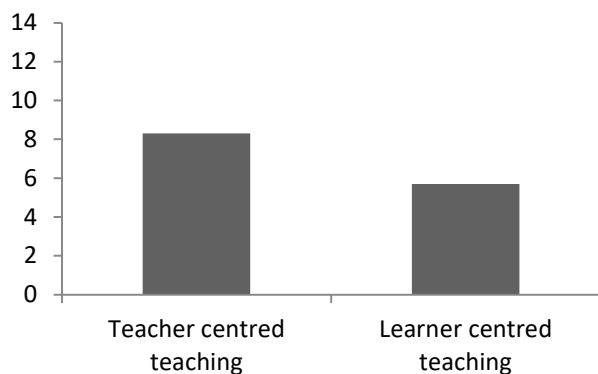

Figure 2. Average score per teaching style in public pre-primary schools in Mauritius

Private schools however do not show the same types of teaching styles. The private schools are either teacher centred or learner centred. Two types of private schools are displayed in figure 3.
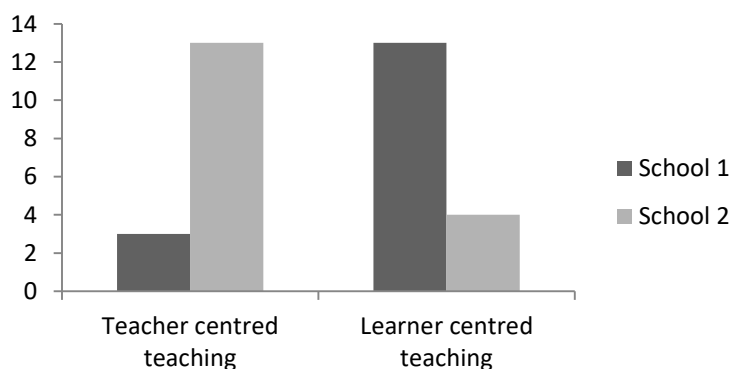

Figure 3. Teaching style on two types of private schools in Mauritius

Teachers' Views on Learner Centred Teaching.

To answer the question 'what are the teachers' views on learner centered teaching?', questionnaires were filled in by the teachers and interviews with teachers have been conducted. Based on the questionnaire, teachers show to agree on both teacher centred as well as learner centred aspects, with a slightly higher emphasis on LCT. On average teachers score 7,3 points out of 10 on TCT indicators and 8,3 points out of 10 on LCT indicators.

Derived from the interviews there seems to be a consensus with regard to teaching style among the teachers. 9 out of 10 teachers interviewed have a learner centred view. The last

teacher seemed not to have a clear view on teaching environment and teaching style which makes it unclear whether she has either a teacher centred or learner centred view. Aside from that, the teachers were able to clearly express several aspects of LCT that they value. There are several requiring aspects of LCT teachers appear to value. In general teachers show to emphasize a child centred environment.

"Interaction between teacher and child should be Friendly approach. Questions and answers, teamwork and child centered, put the child first. Should work in the interests and level of the child." [School 3, teacher 1]

In line with this, a focus on the individual and to really know each child also often appears to be a starting point.

"Each child, their character, personality, know the parent and the problems. If the parent talks to me, I listen. I must know the child very well." [School 10, teacher 1]

Furthermore they see it as their role as a teacher to be a guide for the children, to be like family and to create an environment where the teacher and children are equal to each other.

"We teachers are here to facilitate them." [School 11, teacher 1]

"Like a partner with the teacher. We are a team. With the teacher and the students. I won't have to tell the child, okay we play, now we do that, we do that, we do that. I don't have to give orders. WE do that. Let's do that. We do that. That is the teamwork. Let us do that. So that is important, so I don't have to give orders." [School 5, teacher 1]

With regard to the role of the child the teachers find it important that the children learn through play, explore and feel free to express themselves.

"We don't impose on routine and discipline. They need to be free, this is the way they develop. For example they see something there, they discover." [School 11, teacher 1]

"About for example I brought an egg and let the child talk about it, express themselves. Ask them if they like it, if they eat it, what the mother do with the egg. Just to make the children express themselves." [School 6, teacher 1]

Regardless of the learner centered views, teachers do admit to sometimes adopt an academically focused type of teaching. Two main reasons have come forward as an explanation. First of all the teachers explain to feel the pressure of having to prepare the

children for primary school, and second they feel the pressure from parents wanting their children to achieve.

"Some children go to first or second system so you have to prepare them for both, in primary school they are really academic. So you have to teach them academic so they will not lose their self-esteem." [School 7, teacher 1]

"But in pre-primary it is too much. You know the parents they expect the children to know all the alphabet, in English and French." [School 5, teacher 1]

A last point that should be noted is the teachers' emphasis on respect, discipline and manners, since this was stipulated by six of the ten teachers. The role of the teacher is for example described as giving discipline and a child in the classroom should have good manners.

Parents' Views on Learner Centred Teaching.

To answer the question 'What are the parents' views on learner centered teaching?', questionnaires have been filled in by the parents and focus groups and interviews with parents have been done. Based on the questionnaire parents show to equally agree on both types of teaching. On average parents score 7,4 points out of 10 on TCT indicators and 7,6 points out of 10 on LCT indicators.

The interviews showed that most parents have a learner centred view. However, one focus group and one interview showed parents with a more teacher centred view and one parent with no clear view on the matter. In total this represents 9 parents of the in total 25 parents who participated in the interviews/focus groups. Notably all of the parents with a teacher centred or no clear view were not able to speak English and interviews and focus groups were held with the aid of a translator. With regard to public schools versus private schools, 10 out of 19 parents of the public schools have a learner centred view and 6 out of 6 parents of the private schools have a learner centred view.

In general the parents with a teacher centred view value a classroom where the focus is on the teacher and children listen to the teacher. Moreover these parents find academic achievement an important aspect. When asked about the desired teacher-child interaction for example the parents stated the following:

"Child respects the teacher, child listens to the teacher" [School 1, parents 1]

And explain the role of the child in this manner:

"They listen to the teacher, follow instruction" [School 4, parent 2]

The other 16 parents who have a learner centred view value several LCT aspects. First of all they find it highly important for a child to want to go to school and to love school.

"Learning should be fun ... they have to love to come to school" [School 2, parents 1]

Moreover they appreciate children interacting with their peers as well as their teacher and the child being able to express him- or herself. A good learning environment was for example explained as follow:

"For me it would be where the child is able to express his or her opinion." [School 7, parents 2]

At last the parents find it important to look at each child individually and for a teacher to acknowledge that every child is different. The role of the teacher is for example expressed in the following way:

"Understand body language, how the child is feeling, be able to understand the child. If there is something on the child's mind, helping that child to express themselves. To see if the child is healthy. To really know the child." [School 2, parents 1]

Remarkably, as well as the teachers, the parents also highly value aspects as respect, discipline and manners in the classroom. This is noted in 4 focus groups/interviews, representing 18 out of 25 parents.

Discussion

Mauritius wants to counteract its economic challenges and bring economic prosperity to the country. Recent research illustrates that ECEC has a substantive effect on the social-emotional development, school progress, cognition and anti-social behavior (Barnett, 2011). Also it is shown that families in poverty benefit the most from high quality ECEC, which helps to decrease the gap between rich and poor (Currie, 2001; Leseman & Slot, 2014; Magnuson & Duncan, 2016). As part of the *Education and Human resources Strategy plan (2008-2020)*, a *National curriculum framework for pre-primary education* was developed. In this framework guidelines are provided for educators working in ECEC, aiming at upgrading and standardizing the quality of teaching in both public and private pre-primary schools. One aspect that is valued in the report is a child centered approach. It is stated that education

should be age appropriate and based on each child's unique personality and experiences. Recent research aligns with this, showing a clear emphasis on LCT, with the aim to give students an active role and to bring real life closer in the school buildings (Altinyelken, 2011).

This research looks into the extent to which LCT is adopted in pre-primary schools in Mauritius, and also by taking into account the social system theory of Bronfenbrenner (1986) views of different stakeholders are looked upon, namely those of teachers and parents. With the aim to answer the following research question: "Are the parents' and teachers' views, the daily practices and the literature regarding learner centered teaching in pre-primary education in Mauritius in line with each other?".

Firstly, to answer the question whether pre-primary schools provide a LCT style, schools are observed on their level of LCT versus TCT. Although through the years several improvements in the curriculum have been implemented (Mauritius Institute of Education & Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, 2009), the pre-primary schools in Mauritius have not sufficiently developed with regard to LCT. Here a difference is seen between public schools and private schools. On the one hand the public schools, although also applying LCT, are generally more teacher centred. For example, instead of letting children choose their own toys and activities, the teacher usually puts something on the table and tells the children what to do with it. Private schools on the other hand display all different ranges of teaching styles, showing completely learner centred as well as teacher centred classrooms. This means that changes have to be made in order for all the pre-primary schools in Mauritius to apply a desirable teaching style. These findings are in line with the first hypothesis which states that pre-primary schools in Mauritius are mostly teacher centred.

Secondly, the views of teachers on learner centred teaching have been looked into. It can be concluded that the teachers do have a LCT view, valuing aspects like individual attention and the child being able to explore. *"We don't impose on routine and discipline. They need to be free, this is the way they develop. For example they see something there, they discover."* [School 11, teacher 1]. At the same time they do state to also have an academic focus. Reasons teachers give themselves for applying a more teacher centred or academically focussed approach are firstly that the children need to be prepared for primary school, where they should know the academic basics and how to work independently. Also, the teachers state that they feel pressured by the parents who want their children to be able to write properly. Especially in private schools where a teacher centred teaching style was shown this parental pressure was mentioned (see appendix E).

The views of parents have also been looked upon. Results show that most parents have

a LCT view, emphasizing children interacting with each other and the teacher, valuing individual attention and stating a child loving to go to school as being most important. *"Learning should be fun ... they have to love to come to school"* [School 2, parents 1]. There were however also parents with a TCT view and a parent without a clear opinion. The hypothesis that teachers as well as parents have a TCT view is thus not confirmed with regard to teachers and partly with regard to parents. Noted that most parents' views were LCT directed, the theory that the teachers' and parents' views are oriented towards TCT being the underlying reason of schools to be teacher centred thus appears to be incorrect.

Lastly to answer the question whether the parents' views, teachers' views and daily practices regarding learner centred teaching are in line with each other, it could be stated that this is not the case with regard to the prevailing views and the daily practices. Generally, (most) views of parents as well as teachers are LCT directed. However practices are mainly TCT directed. This does not meet the expectation of the prevailing views and daily practices being in line with each other, which has shown to be insufficient with regard to the child's prospects and development (Epstein, 1995; De Winter, 1012).

There appears to be a gap between to what extend LCT is valued in theory and to what extend it is applied in practice. Results show that parents as well as teachers emphasize a focus on respect and manners in the classroom. Literature indicates a strong correlation between a high emphasis on discipline and TCT (Lueddeke, 2003). It might be the case that teachers do not know how to combine LCT with teaching respect and discipline.

Secondly, parents as well as teachers often noted that in pre-primary school a child should be prepared for primary school, where a certain academic level is expected (see appendix E). Moreover, research in primary schools in Mauritius shows that parents often start to make use of private tuition (additional training) for their children at a young age (Foondun, 2002). These facts indicate that parents feel the pressure for their children to focus on the academic skills starting from a very young age already. Moreover, although emphasizing a child centred learning environment, the National curriculum framework for pre-primary education displays rather ambitious goals (Mauritius Institute of Education & Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, 2009). Children are for example expected to: "fully understand their role as citizens of this country and the world; have a rational and scientific mindset; and display a willingness to engage in change" (Mauritius Institute of Education & Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, 2009, p.3).

There seems to exist a too strong academic focus in Mauritius, starting at pre-primary schools. Even though parents value LCT, in practice they feel the pressure for their children to

grow academically which could be why they demand the teacher to focus on the academic skills of the children. This is very troubling taking into account the negative effects of a result oriented view and academic focus. It can cause children to lose motivation to learn and achieve (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001; Pekrun, 2006), which can have low academic performances and a decrease in contribution to society as a result (Davis, 2003; Struthers, Perry & Menec, 2000).

Lastly, the teachers' true understanding of the concept LCT can be a reason for the gap between to what extend LCT is valued in theory and to what extend it is applied in practice. They state child centred teaching and equal communication between the child and teacher to be important and emphasize play based learning (see appendix E). However when asked what they exactly mean with these concepts, often there seems to be a mismatch between the theoretical concept and how they envision to apply this. For example in literature a play based approach is explained as "young learners constructing knowledge as they explore, experiment, discover and solve problems in playful and unique ways" (Ebbeck, Yim & Lee, 2013, pp. 185-200). Teachers however state that they apply a play based approach by putting clay on the table and telling the children to make the number two, which does not include any of the aspects of play based learning as described in the definition above.

It might thus be the case that teachers assume to apply LCT but in reality are using TCT working methods. These working methods are harmful for the children's and even the country's future prospects, due to the negative influences stated earlier. Currently there is a lot of poverty in Mauritius (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 2015). Also educational dropouts after primary school reach ridiculous numbers of 40 to 50 percent measured in 2008 (Sonck, 2005). Besides, there has been an increase of primary school dropouts of 1,5 percent between 2012 and 2014 (https://knoema.com/HDR2015/human-development-report?tsId=1066420). A change in teaching style is thus seriously needed.

Limitations and Recommendations

There are several aspects of the data collection that may have influenced the findings. First of all, teachers were aware that they were being observed. Literature points out that the presence of an observer has a direct influence on the behaviour of the person, in this case the teacher, being observed (Gittelsohn, Shankar, West, Ram & Gnywali, 1997). Therefore the teacher might have interacted with children in a way he or she thought the observer desired instead of applying their regular teaching style. The same might be the case with regard to the interviews. The teachers as well as parents might have realised what the interviewer wanted to

hear and give answers accordingly instead of giving their true opinion.

Moreover, the parents who joined the focus groups were selected and asked to join the focus groups by the teachers. This means that parents might not have been randomly chosen, which makes it questionable if the group of parents is representable for all parents in Mauritius (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013). Also during focus groups there were usually one or two parents more outspoken which made it difficult for other parents to express their opinion. If all parents were spoken to individually, results might have been different. Another aspect that plays a role is the fact that during some focus groups a translator was used, this made it more difficult to ask further and more specific questions. At last, although schools were selected of different areas, taking into account that Mauritius has 911 pre-primary schools, 12 schools still remains a small sample. Therefore it is recommended to research the learner centeredness in pre-primary schools in Mauritius with a bigger sample in order to get a full understanding of the way this is applied in all areas of Mauritius.

Another recommendation for future research is to specifically look into the private pre-primary schools in Mauritius. Since in this research is found that there is a range of private pre-primary schools applying a TCT style it is important to make sure that these schools are also involved in curriculum changes including a child centred approach. Furthermore, as described above teachers appear to understand the value of LCT but seem to lack knowledge on how to actually apply this way of teaching. They seem not to understand that the teaching style they are actually applying is counterproductive. It would therefore be valuable to look into the way teachers are supported and guided in the appliance of the concept LCT to see where, in the translation from theory to practice, there are complications.

At last, it is recommended to look into the way and extent to which the parents are involved. As described above, the translation from theory to practice is highly dependent on the prevailing views on the subject. The environment of the child must understand and feel confident with this strategy, in order for it to be applied (Flores, 2001; Vincent, 2013). Although most parents' views are LCT directed, it is important to take all parents serious and include them in the process (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; De Winter, 2012). Striking was that the parents with a TCT view or with no clear view were all unable to speak English and only spoke French and/or Creole. Since the English language in Mauritius is the medium of instruction from primary school to tertiary school (Rajah-Carrim, 2007; Sonck, 2005) this can be linked to the parents' educational background, which is related to their socio-economic status (Van der Velden & Wolbers, 2007). Since quality ECEC and LCT as being part of this is especially important for children in poverty (Currie, 2001; Leseman & Slot, 2014;

Magnuson & Duncan, 2016), it is necessary to include these parents and chiefly take their views into account.

Moreover it is showed that the parenting style is strongly related to academic performances (Masud, Thurasamy & Ahmad, 2015; Pinquart, 2015). Especially an authoritative parenting style results in better achievement strategies for children later in life (Aunola, Stattin & Nurmi, 2000), and is related to higher academic achievement (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Pinquart, 2015). With authoritative parenting, there is balance between demandingness and responsiveness. It can be seen as a parenting style falling in between an authoritarian and permissive parenting style. These parents are generally characterized as being warm and coercive while applying few rules and demands at the same time (Baumrind, 2013). Perhaps courses on authoritative parenting could be offered by schools, especially to parents in disadvantaged circumstances in order for the general mind-set to be adjusted.

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Appendix A: observation instrument

Teaching style	Item	Ranking 0-2*			Comment
Teacher centered teaching	Teacher talks far more than children during group activity				
	Most teacher questions are very specific/close ended and call for reciting factual information (instead of looking for different opinions on the topics)				
	Instruction mostly occurs with the whole group rather than in small groups or individuals				
	Use of class time is determined by the teacher				
	Children sit in fixed groups with little ability to shift				
	During the day, each child is supposed to perform the same tasks (individual interests are not being adressed)				
	The teacher determines which playing materials the children play with				

Learner centered teaching	Children ask questions as much as, if not more than, the teacher				
	Most instruction occurs either individually, in small (two to six children) or moderate-sized (seven to twelve) groups, rather than the whole class				
	Children help choose and organize the class time				
	Varied play materials are available in the classroom so that children can use them independently or in small groups				
	Children are given the opportunity to play with these materials and are allowed to make their own choices in what playing activities to engage in				
	The tasks are adjusted to the children's daily experiences				
	Children are getting the possibility to learn from each other (children of different ages work together during the day)				

Ranking: 0 = Not true, 1= Moderately true, 2= True

Appendix B: Questionnair

We are Cerunne Bouts and Irene Timmermans, masters' students from the Netherlands (Utrecht University), doing research at pre-primary schools. We are interested in the opinions of teachers and parents on the child's learning environment.

This questionnaire enables us to get a view on these opinions. The answers given will only be used for our research and will not be used by other researchers. There are no right or wrong answers.

Participation in this study is voluntary. All information will be kept strictly confidential. The results of the survey will be used for our master thesis, the information will be processed anonymously.
The questionnaire will take 5 to 10 minutes.

If you have any questions please contact Cerunne Bouts.

If you agree with the terms you can start the questionnaire (see next page).

The learning environment in pre-primary schools

Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements

Note, it does not have to be in line with daily practices. Answer what in your opinion would be best in the classsroom, there are no wrong answers.

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree
1. During instruction the word should be with the teacher	O	O	O
2. Instructions should mostly be given to the whole group rather than to small groups or individuals	O	O	O
3. Children should have a say in the determination of the rules of behavior in the classroom	O	O	O
4. Children should ask questions as much as, if not more than, the teacher	O	O	O
5. The teacher should determine the use of class time	O	O	O
6. Children should help choose and organize the content to be learned	O	O	O
7. Tests should concentrate on factual information	O	O	O
8. Children moving between desks/tables should be stimulated	O	O	O
9. It is good to let children with different ages work together in the classroom so that they can learn from each other	O	O	O

10. The teacher should determine which playing materials the children play with

    O   O   O

Appendix C: Interview

1. Introduction and questionnaire. Explain who we are and what our research is about. Have an introduction round. "Please fill in the questionnaire" (see appendix B).

2. Questions. I would like to have a conversation about what in your opinion constitutes a good learning environment for children in pre-primary school. Please give your honest opinion; it does not have to be in line with reality. There is no right or wrong answer.

1. How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?
2. What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?
3. How would you describe a perfect teacher?
4. How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)
5. How would you describe a perfect child (in the classroom)
6. What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?
7. What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?

Appendix D: Focus group

1. Introduction and questionnaire. Explain who we are and what our research is about. Have an introduction round. "Please fill in the questionnaire" (see appendix B).

2. Questions. I would like to have a conversation about what in your opinion constitutes a good learning environment for children in pre-primary school. Please say what is on your mind and feel free to respond to each other. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?
2. What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?
3. How would you describe a perfect teacher?
4. How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)
5. How would you describe a perfect child (in the classroom)
6. What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?
7. What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?

Appendix E: Transcript Interviews and focus groups

Interviews Teachers

School 3:   31-03-2017

8. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

   Wel equipped. With a lot of games and materials. Sophistiated materials for children. With aircon. Good furniture. Work in cooperation. Team work. Safe and comfortabke.

9. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**

   Motivator, role model, motivate. Friendly approach. Smile. Discipline, good model.

10. **How would you describe a perfect teacher?**

    Who has all the qualities, adapt with the children. Adapt to the environment. Should have taken the MIE course. Updated. Also on psychology. Moral values, friendly approach. Role model. Maternal. Give the children love and affection. Be like a second mother.

11. **How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)**

    Child should listen to the teacher., when instructions are given. Should be disciplined. Should participate, child centered approach.

12. **How would you describe a perfect child (in the classroom)**

    One who responds to questions. One who participates. A motivated child. One who can socialize among friends. Curiousity. Can explore the environment, participate and socialize. Can do the leadership (collect all the things). Waiting for turn.

13. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

    Good manners. Covered all six areas of learning. Competences on all these six areas of learning. To overecome timidity. To socialize among friends

14. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

    Overal development. Holistic approach. Most important to have covered all six areas. Good citizen, empower, lifelong learning.

    Interaction between teacher and child should be Friendly approach. Questions and answers, teamwork and child centered, put the child first. Should work in the interests and level of the child. Overcome all the difficulties. Should know the background.

When children have difficult backgrounds and parents are fighting children are disturbed at school and cannot learn

"They are already in a bad environment at home. We have to give them love and affection here."

School 4: 31-03-2017

1. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

   Must feel secure. Good environment. The surrounding, the parents must also be secure. Then the children feel secure. Clean, to be healthy, must be clean. Good food. Good food habit. They should take their milk cereal. Good breakfast is needed. Routine, this can make the child motivated.

2. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**

   Not angry with the child. A facilitator. Can guide the child well. Good guidance.

3. **How would you describe a perfect teacher?**

   Always secure the child, be kind and discipline also. Good manners. Then the child will be a good citizen. A perfect teacher can manage this.

4. **How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)**

   Must play, not be in a corner. Must socialize among their friends. Be playful. Talk and do different activities. Participate in all activities. Physically, emotionally. And be toilet trained.

5. **How would you describe a perfect child (in the classroom)**

   A good communication. Good in drawing, writing, drawing, and have a good relationship with peers and teacher. Relationship teacher: Child says good morning, say thanks. When you give something the child says thank you. Say goodbye. Good manners.

6. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

   Write their name and can say a sentence in English. In French and in English also. They can repeat a sentence in English. They can tell a story. They can count 1-10. They can identify size, colours. Before pre-primary to prepare for secondary. Repeat all the letters also. Small sentences. Words they can do.

7. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

   A good family background and be in a good health. Good food for them. From school: Good manners and a good relationship with others, with their friends, in the community, to be a good model. When the child leaves pre-primary school she/he can teach the other child. Be a model in the community, then he will be a good citizen.

School 5:   20-03-2017

I: Okay so I have a few questions. And I just want to hear your opinion and it does not have to be in line with reality. So just say what in your view would be a good learning environment. So the first question is: **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

T: Where the child is taken care for. And the eq of the child is more important than the IQ. The emotional quotient. The emotional quotient of the child is more important than the IQ. When the EQ is taken care of, the child will learn automatically. The child will love to go to school. That is the most important thing. That the child is emotional and security.

I: Okay. So a good learning environment is where you take the emotional development into account

T: Yes

I: Allright, and in this environment what is the role of the teacher?

T: To make the child feel secure. The child to be taken care for and loved. The child should feel loved and cared for. And an understanding between the child and the teacher. The child knows what the teacher likes and what the teacher does not like. That's why we have the classroom rules. Than the child will know what can be done and what should not be done in the classroom. And understanding and much communication between the child and the teacher, where the child does not hesitate to ask the teacher. I want to do this, I want to do this. Good communication.

I: Good communication, yes.

T: And the teacher when she talks to the child, a language that is of the level of the child.

I: Okay, the language of the child

T: As a teacher sometimes we have to put ourselves on the level of the child. When a child has tantrum and starts calling names and shout, I take the child in my arms , talk to him and the child calms down. All that depends on our attitude, of the teachers

I: Yes, so get the emotional vibe.

T: Yes that's why I than Emotionally is more important.

I: This is also your experience that this is important?

T: Yes, you know as I child myself I was a student and I made tantrums. I would go to school and lay down on the ground and scream. That is why I understand what the child is feeling. That he is feeling not loved, not secure, that is the most important thing.

I: Yes, what the child is feeling.

T: What the child is feeling. And than you have the capacity of the child. The holistic development of the child. All child should be given time. When she can't write this, you begin at the first step and give them time. And opportunity. Students should be given time and opportunity.

I: Okay so the role of the teacher is to create a communitive environment and to make them feel safe and secure and give them time to learn.

T: Time and opportunities also.

I: And opportunities, okay. **And how would you describe the role of the child in the classroom?**

T: Like a partner with the teacher. We are a team. With the teacher and the students. I won't have to tell the child, okay we play, now we do that, we do that, we do that. I don't have to give orders. WE do that. Let's do that. We do that. That is the teamwork. Let us do that. So that is important, so I don't have to give orders.
And what is more important also is the politenes, okay that you, okay that's right. Not all the time, sometimes you have to talk time, than he will reply. Than you will have to tell him okay very nice, you are a good boy.

I: Okay, and in this situation what is the role of the child. How should the child behave?

T: If you are being tought and you you soft voices (…). And the child knows the way you look at them.

I: Yes, when you look in a certain way.

T: Yes, the child would know what is wrong. (…)

I: **And how would you describe a perfect child in the classroom.** How would the perfect child behave.

T: If the child is perfect there is something wrong. There is definitely something wrong. Now they learn, it is their time. Now they learn what is wrong, what is bad. No perfect child. And if they are perfect there is something wrong.

I: Okay, can't be too perfect

T: No, and it would be very boring with a perfect child. A perfect child would not give opinions. He will be like, I have to do this I will do that. I like the argument. You want to do that? Why you want to do that? They give their opinions, they give their argument. Children should do that. If a child do that, the child will be confident.

I: Okay, so if you have a good child in the classroom, what does this child look like? Not perfect but a good child, how would this child look like.

T: You know a good child will always tell his friends: You are doing something wrong, they will always point out the mistake they are doing. Miss he is not following the rules. I am

doing everything well. And then what will happen, when he does a mistake he won't accept it.

I: Yes, okay because he is used to it?

T: Yes that is why it is not good to praise the child every time. You have to learn. If you do something good it is for yourself, not for others, not for being praised.

I: **And what do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary. So when he goes to the first grade.**

T: They should know how to behave to others. And he have to learn the pre-reading. It is not I show a mouth, you have to write mouth. The pre-reading, If I show a picture and he can describe the picture. That will help him. The oral activities. They have to understand that the alphabet has a meaning, the sound has a meaning. And then the pre-writing. Normally, on average the child should know how to hold a pencil, how to write properly. The holding the pencil and the correct sitting is important.

I: Yes this is where they learn this.

T: Than when they go to primary they know. What I usually do, before child develop back here it is important that they have a very good background, than they know some things. If they come from Moka the children know the colors and the shapes. When I was working in the small village, they don't know colors, they don't know shapes, they don't know anything. We have to teach them. So with these students they learn how to write in the last year. It is dependent on the children capacity and how to develop

I: Yes, so in some areas they don't learn it at home you mean, because they don't know the colors and the forms in other places.

T: Yes, in other places they don't know the colors and the shapes. In some places they learn, dependent on the background of the child.

I: So you think it is important that in pre-primary, the child should learn the basics.

T: Yes, you know in pre-primary we have the five senses to develop. You see for example this child is colorless

I: Colorblind, yes.

T: Colorblind, how the child develops good tasting, some children don't know. What is salty, they don't know what is bitter.

I: Yes, so learn about the five senses

T: And it is important to do this at pre-primary, if they have problems with the eyes, the ears you have to caught it early.

I: So they are ready for primary school

T: And then we have the pre-reading, the pre-writing, the pre-mathematics. They know the colors, this is good. You know in Mauritius are learned two language, we have the creole and nowadays they learn the English and can communicate (…).

I: So they learn different kind of languages..

T: Yes and when we are learning alphabet, they have to learn the alphabet in French, in English, the small letters the capital letters (..). And then when they go to grade one another language.. *(someone comes in the room and asks something)*

I: Okay, so it is good that they learn all different kind of languages. But in pre-primary?

T: But in pre-primary it is too much. You know the parents they expect the children to know all the alphabet, in English and French. It is a bit too much for them. What we should have is, okay in pre-primary they learn the alphabet a,b,c..i,o, and then when they go to grade one they learn other alphabet. They have more time, because it is the same alphabet in two langage

I: Why do you think it is more important to just learn one, and then it is good?

T: Because it is too much for them. We don't have time to cover all the alphabet.

I: But you still try because the parents want to or because it is in the curriculum?

T: We don't have it. We don't have a curriculum. But the primary they have a curriculum, they expect that they can do it. But here it is no problem, they can do it because the parents take care of them, but the rest, uh they teach them at home. But if you are in poor villages, other places the parents don't care.

I: Okay, you said a lot of things that are important to learn, but **what in your opinion is the most important learning goal in pre-primary,** if you have to pick one.

T: It is about, the most important is to learn to be a good citizen. That they socialize well, (…), the moral values. They should care about the environment and, independent. And doing things by themselves, put on their clothes on, it by themselves (…) by themselves, that is the most important, more important than the alphabet. And be creative. You know what happened, when we are small, small ones. I give a ball, okay everyone have a ball, you play with it. What I do I observe, and then at the end (…) when someone throws it like tis (the other way), I say very well. And then what happens, when they go to the other class, I give to ball. What they do, what they have learned. They repeat it. I am like no, I want something new. What happens they lose the creativity in themselves, and it is very important.

I: And why do you think this is so important?

T: The creativity? Because. It is them, the inner-self, they can express themselves.

I: okay I think I got it. You think I got a good picture on your view? Anything you like to ask maybe.

T: No is good.

School 6: 21-03-2017

I: Okay so I have some more questions, also about the learning environment of the child. And I want to hear your opinion and it does not have to be in line with reality. The first question is: **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

T: Good learning, good learning for a child means that here at our school we prepare the class about a theme. Yes about theme, so in the beginning of the year we work about all about me. When a child comes he or she must know all about himself or herself. We work on this theme, than we work on the independence of Mauritius.

I: Ah yes, with the flag right.

T: Yes, and we are still continuing on it. And on Thursday we are going to have a visit to the … museum. It is a history of Mauritius. About the French and the English. They have kept all the things and put it in the museum. Now we are still working on the history of Mauritius.

I: Jeah, so a good learning environment should involve themes.

T: About themes because when we prepare it, it involves all areas of learning. 6 areas of learning.

I: Okay all areas of learning. And what are the six areas?

T: We have HAPD, help and physical education. PSED, personal, social and emotional development. Met, logical thinking. CAP, creative and … development. BE, is about science.

I: Yes okay so all kinds of aspects, physical, emotional.

T: Yes, we have to work on these six areas of learning the whole day.

I: Okay, and how do you involve the emotional development?

T: In the morning I have done an education about PSED, you were not here. About for example I brought an egg and let the child talk about it, express themselves. Ask them if they like it, if they eat it, what the mother do with the egg. Just to make the children express themselves.

I: And you think this is an important aspect?

T: Yes very important, because each child has their opinion. Different opinion. And others learn from others.

I: And in this environment **what is the role of the teacher?**

T: Should prepare the environment

I: Okay, and in what way prepare it?

T: You should have our materials. So the children can see. Because you can't tell children this is an egg without showing an egg, because they won't understand what it is. We have real materials in hands. Real materials what the children can touch, can see. With using their senses, they develop their senses. Everyday we must prepare our plans. We must plan for wat we have to do the whole day

I: Yes, plan the day

T: Yes, but sometimes maybe we have plan, we have not done anything. When somebody come and brouth something else, we work on this. So the structure can change

I: So that is also a role of the teacher. To be flexible.

T: Yes, to be flexible yes.

I: And anything else you would like to add on what the role of the teacher is?

T: We have also the communication with the parents in the morning. It is very important to have communication with the parents.

I: And why do you think this is important?

T: Because when the child come, we don't know the child. (…) From the parent we have all ideas of the child (…) 6:15

I;   Okay, so when you know the parent, you get to know the child

T: Yes, get a feeling of the family background. Sometimes have not good family. You don't know but when we meet them, is we talk to them, than we know anything about the child. The family. Without letting the child know. Cause if there is problem, we don't let the children know that which child is having problem.

I: Because the children have a lot of different backgrounds?

T: No we don't let the children know because for the child, he won't be active at school. Because when they are here they are all same. For us they are all same

I: No but that is what I mean, so you have to get to know the child and not everyone has the same background

T: Yes we have to know the child's background because when they come here sometimes we have a child who don't want to talk, who don't want to do something. So why.

I: Are there a lot of children with difficult backgrounds?

T: Yes sometimes we have. Sometimes we have.

I: Okay so back to the teachers role. **How would you describe the perfect teacher?**

T: To always smile, yes always smile. Always talk.

I: What do you mean with always talk?

T: Talk, explain, have good communication with others. And must always listen also, we don't only have to say what we have but we have to listen to others also

I: And with others you mean the children, or not only the child?

T: Yes the children, our collegues also.

I: Yes, it is nice to have collegues around I guess.

T: Yes, when you need something you can ask them.

I: And the children, what is the role of the children in the classroom?

T: The children, they listen to what you say because you have to put some rules in the classroom. How to use the toys, the books and to tell them there is a time to this. Because when they come here they don't know this, when they come from home and here it is different.

I: Okay so they have to know the rules

T: Yes to the rules of the school, because they have some time play, some time to read (…) and than the child come to what we tell them. They learn by it.

I: they learn to obey the rules.

T: Obey the rules yes.

I: And do you think this is an important aspect for the child?

T: Yes, you must do this for the child because if the child because (…) when there is independence day we have to show them that the children have to walk in line, to be there, not to talk, and so on, But we not just like this, take time for the children to understand. (…)..

I: Okay, and how would you describe the perfect child in the classroom?

T: The perfect child, for my point of view every child is unique. We must accept every child. I cannot say that this child is better than this one. Because everyone has his own this, has his own thinking but here we have to scaffold on what the children know. The perfect child, the child who thinks, who write, who walk who do everything. The perfect child is not here just sitting but is here and there moving.

I: Okay, moving singing dancing. **And what do you think (…) the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?** 12:08

T: For us when he comes, first of all what we, what I am telling him. In the beginning we learn about ourself. Our body first. Than for us the child must know how to talk, to express himself. To count. To play. Because all we learn, we learn to play. Through songs, through stories. Converation, direct conversation

I: Maybe autonomy? They can talk and play by themselves. How to do it without any help maybe?

T: Yes. No sometimes they need help. We can show them how to do. We leave them we (…) child. But sometimes they can do it on their own, they understand. But sometime they don't understand how to come and help.

I: They need help

T: They need help

I: **And what in your opinion is the most important thing the children learn?** If you have to pick something.

T: From the beginning of the year they have learn about themselves. Their senses. They have learned about the colors of the flag. The four colors. They have learned about this, they learn also how their country has been formed, through volcano. Yes we show them. They learn some songs and they also have to mime the songs.

I: Yes they are very creative

T: Yes very creative, and they also play with the lego's. And all this toys (…). But the parents also they ask what we are doing and they ask the children at home. Yes they continue (…) and than they go home and than they come back with something they have done on their own. The painting of the flag, the dodo. Than she brought it and I put it here.

I: Yes, so you think this is an important aspect for the child.

T: Yes important because. Learning continues at home

I: Okay, and I also see a lot of things about Mauritius, nation, the flag. You think this is an important aspect? That they learn about their own country?

T: Yes very important. They must know why they are here. How our Island is formed. Yes we have also explained about the dutch. When we told them that you are coming you are the duch. They say ohh the dutch have eaten all our dodo.

I: (haha) So they knew?

T: Yes they learn about this. When we say we have 2 students from Holland. They say oh we must ask them if they have eaten our dodo

I: Okay so they learn about the flag and the colors because you want them to give some history

T: History yes.

I: Allright, anything you would like to add, in the learning environment. Something You think oh this is also very important?

T: For me learning is not in the classroom also it is outside. It is not in the school only, it is everywhere you go (…). Learning continues. You are not in school but you are learning outside.

I: Yes so it is impoirtant that learning goes beyond the walls. That is a nice addition. Okay I have asked all my questions so if there is nothing more you would like to say, this is it.

School 7:   28-03-2017

1. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**
   - The atmosphere, educators, colleagues and interaction with the children. Joyful atmosphere. Everyone working together. Interaction with children is about empathy. Put yourself in the skin of the child.
   - Qualification and professionalism. Need an early childhood qualification. Keep improving (trainings/workshops)
   - Physical environment. About the interests of the children, age appropriate, safe and clean.

2. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**
   Know my children. Their development. The milestones, goals per age. Know their needs, strengths, interests. If you know this you can do everything. Accept that each child is unique. Listen to the parents, they know the child best. Develop a trustful relationship. Explain children's needs. We do expect a child to know abcd… but sometimes the parents want them to know so you have to have a good relationship with the parents to be able to explain your goals. Teamwork with colleagues.

3. **How would you describe a perfect teacher?**
   The priority should be the children. Succesfully deal with parents, collegues, athmosphere. And be able to manage these aspects.

4. **How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)**
   To enjoy school and learn through play

5. **How would you describe a perfect child (in the classroom)**
   Each child is perfect. I would accept each child.
   I: If you look at the children in the classroom, what would you like to see?

Interaction, self-confidence. Here, the main purpose is self-confidence, children should learn through play and love school.

6. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

In Mauritius you have two systems. First you have the French system Learning through play, work on self-esteem. Second you have the Mauritian system which has a (more) academic focus.

Some children go to first or second system so you have to prepare them for both, in primary school they are really academic. So you have to teach them academic so they will not lose their self-esteem.

Private schools are better, there they will be fine. They will keep their self-esteem but you need to pay a lot. It is not for everyone.

7. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

The milestones. What the child from 3-5 must have learned. Since this is proven to be best

School 8:   04-04-2017

1. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

Look at the background of the parents and the interests of the child. And the pace of learning. Here the children have a slow pace of learning. To give individual attention. A lot of repetition. Good learning environment also depends on the teacher. The teacher should be patient and know what to teach, knowledgeable.

2. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**

The role of the teacher is to be knowledgeable, know the topics. Upgrade, know the trends. Should be creative, patient, know the environment. Because many people are troublesome, many drug addicts. Teacher should be a mediator between the school and the parents. The teacher should be calm and sometimes authority because pupils are hyperactive.

3. **How would you describe a perfect teacher?**

Should be at the level of the child. Be friendly, innovative. Be attentive what the child says. Be communicative, look at the mood of the child. Sometimes the parents quirrle a lot. A good approach.

4. **How would you describe the role of the child in the classroom**

Child should be at ese with the teacher, interact with peers and adults. Should address kindly with adults. Should not be afraid also. Would like to see the child be attentive, can easily communicate with others. Be a good listener.

5. **How would you describe a perfect child in the classroom**

The child should love the school. Love friends, love teachers, there should be a follow up from pre-primary to primary. And discuss where there are difficulties, so the teacher will know the difficulties of the child.

6. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

Good manners, new morals, alphabets, writing, holding pencils correctly, good posture, discipline. Creative mind, they can draw something. And express themselves.

7. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

The development is from zero to seven. They can express themselves, their feelings their idea

School 10:   06-04-2017

1. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

The classroom, school environment and teachers should be attractive. Attract children to come every day. Good welcoming. Give the opportunity to play with different toys in the class, appropriate to age.

2. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**

Take her responsibility, each child, their character, personality, know the parent and the problems. If the parent talks to me, I listen. I must know the child very well. Familiar interaction, like a mother. I must play role of a mother, teacher, friend. Understand when a child has a problem..

3. **How would you describe a perfect teacher?**

Understands the child, each child is unique. To be safe, to give the child confidence, to trust me. If there is a problem talk to the head or the parents, for the best interest of the child.

4. **How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)**

Must be happy, want to come to school every day, participate in all activities. Love the teacher and his friends. Must be happy to come to school every day.

5. **How would you describe a perfect child (in the classroom)**

Participate in all activities. Try to do best with all teacher asks. Immitate teacher at home. Doing well all the time. Memorize. Able to remember all teached by the teacher. (what do you want to see in the classroom?) All the child in the classroom. Do what the teacher asks them to do.

6. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

   Write his own name. Know about himself/herself, if he is a boy or a girl, age, identity, to know the place where he lives, the village. Know about words, alphabets, colours,English and French understand

7. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

   Know about themselves, words, alphabets, identity. And good approach with the teacher. Show confidence with the teacher and friends also. Familiar with environment. Identity most important.

School 11:

Teacher 1

1. Security is very important. Colourfull and attractive. The classroom should have basic things: alphabets, numbers. This is where they have to start learning because this is the last year before primary school. At the end of the year they should at least be able to write their name and identify things, numbers, concept of space, size. Most important is moral values, good manners. Work about different cultures, respect for each other. Make them socialize with other people, help them overcome timidity. Make them activate their creativity. Create a story, you start with a sentence and them they talk and talk and create their own story. I don't like them to be like robots. Make groups with cups. Learning in real life, not by sign. I use paint to show them how they feel. I will let them choose by themselves, draw anything you want. And then I can see the emotions. For example when they use a black colour, there is a problem in their mind, or something going on at home. There are learning routines which will also help at home. Alphabet, numbers, morals, manners.

2. To help a child develop holistically. Activities, talking, conversation, help the children socialize with peers and teachers. My role is to take care of them, love them, and make them feel at ease with the class. With this approach, children who were crying the first days of school are now ate ease with me. And show parents where they are and what they can. And make sure children want to come to school. And sometimes when I see that they don't want to do that I change the activity. Use all different things to learn something. When they have to learn the letter M for example, they can learn it in all different ways.

3. Make a child smile in the morning. You have made the child adapt to you and the class. And be a role model. You need to be very caring and the child must love you.

4. The child should be attentive, observative, imaginative, develop holistically. We cannot force the child. Not all children are the same. They can learn through play. I like children who talk. When the child or walking it is like this. I like children to be active. Being reactive because when she doesn't understand something she would ask. I want the child to be like this, run, walk , speak. Not sit quietly. They come to me to tell a story. Children of different countries. We teachers are here to facilitate them.

5. A child who learns, who draws, who speaks, sings, cry when needs to cry and feel free. We don't impose on routine and discipline. They need to be free, this is the way they develop. For example they see something there, they discover.

6. Basic things, write their full name. Identification of letters, small and capital. And numbers. Spelling and writing. The days of the week, amount of months in a year. Colours, concepts, manners, shapes, dependent on the theme. Make pairs. Let them talk to each other. They wanted to learn more about space so I did more days on that theme. I am not waiting for them to write big sentences. Just how to express themselves.

7. The full holistic development. In all six areas of learning. We have to concrete and finalize everything here with the children being 4/5 years learn all aspects, independent learning, speech. Parents don't realize pre-primary is the base.

School 12:

Teacher 1

I: **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

T: It has to be in order, tidy. It has to be pleasant. Somewhere where they can move, enough space to move. Enough light, enough air. And above all there must activities that are attractive to them. So that they are active and not bored. And the adult in the environment must also be of quality.

I: About the adult in the environment, how would you describe the role of the teacher?

T: I give you the role of a Montessori teacher.

I: If that is your opinion than that is okay

T: Yes that is my opinion. First of all the teacher must not be the center of the classroom, the teacher is more of a fascilitatior. De link between the activity and the child. We present the activity to the child and then we sit back. We observe what the child does and what are the difficulties and then we acupot it. Observation is very important. So the connection between the environment and the child and also to follow the child's interests. If we find that the child is more interested in building stuff, we look for more activities in that line.

I: And what would a perfect teacher look like. Not like appearance but what would you like to see, **how would you describe a perfect teacher?**

T: Like I said, someone who can make the connection for the cchild with all the acitivities. And also follow the child through, so to be aware what is the next step for the child to process. A perfect teacher would be able to do this for every single child, which is not always easy. Because sometimes children are really cut out for Montessori teaching. For example ** if she is given an activity she focusses on it. Because our aim is also for them to develop their concentration, every time you have to be focused to get the most out of it. But not all children are the same. To be able to get to that point. A perfect teacher would be able to do that for each child.

I: So to help these children engage in these activities.

T: Yes and to develop all their capacity. And the perfect teacher also has a lot of patience

I: And how would you describe the role of the child in the classroom?

T: The role of the child. To choose according to what they like. To choose acitivities. And to grow self-confidence. Be more sociable, they also interact. And something I find very difficult to get children to do at the beginning is initiative you know. Take the initiative to do a thing, they always wait for them to be told. And I think that is something they learn at home. Very commen when they to school like this. So for me the role of the child is to take the initiative and find ways to deal with their problems, not always rely on the adults.

I: **Okay the next question is how you would describe a perfect child.**

T: The perfect child, well in Montessori we call them normalized, which is maybe not a very nice word, the perfect child would be someone with self-confidence and self-reliant. Eager to learn. Focused on what they are doing. And wanting to help the other children.

I: Yes I have seen them do this

T: It is almost like a family thing. Alder brothers and the siblings you know. That is because they are all mixed, the ages. The older children can help.

I: So this is an aspect you like as well, the mixed ages? To create this family environment?

T: Yes yes. They feed each other as well, they love to be like a mommy you know. But also with the activities. We ask the older child to teach some younger child. And it works two ways cause when an older child helps the younger child, that builds their self-confidence a lot. So a prefect child would also show a lot of kindness to the others.

I: **And when they leave pre-primary school, what do you think is necessary they have learned?**

T: It is important for them to have learned to find answers by themselves. That is what we try to do in fact. When a child asks a question we always rephrase the question, we give them the direction to find the answer for themselves. Because Montessori is all about giving keys. It is not about the amount they know. Just giving them a key. The sequence is very logical so sometimes the children learn by themselves just by following the logic. For example the letter board, I have showed himm before, when I showed him the first time he knew all the letters because it makes sense. So I would like them when they leave they are keen to find out by themselves and keen to learn, to love learning. Not to be in school and be like nahhh you know, being forced to learn something that you do not want to learn. So the approach is completely different. It depends what school they go to also.

I: **What do you think is the most important learning goal during these three years?**

T: Well I think it is more like to let the children know that it is exciting you know to learn and to, I mean I would hate for someone to leave here and really dislike learning you know. That would be a failure.

I: And do you also ask questions like these, like what they would like to do or if they like it to learn.

T: I would usually ask the parents, what are their interests. What does the child like. Or do you mean whether I ask the child?

I: Yes, if you ask the children. Because you say it is important that they find it fun to learn. So how do you know, if they like it?

T: Well some activities are made in such way that it is more a game, they learn through that. So I can see that they are having fun doing the activity. But specific things they like I ask the parents so we can follow through on this activity. Like parents say oh they love animals. Make sure the child can make more contact with the animals. You have to follow their interests.

T: So yes the most important learning goals is I think that they enjoy the learning.

Teacher 2

1. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**
    Show them manners. Tidy environment. Everything has to be on their level (their height). I think Montessori I like the best. It is very quiet here, no screaming.
2. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**

To guide them, how to behave, the way to talk to people. Keep the classroom clean. Show them to respect each other. And it is not every day the same thing. No routine work. Don't have to do all week the same thing. To love children

3. **How would you describe a perfect teacher?**

Listen to the children, care for them. Show them good things for the life being. Guide them in the best way we can so parents also feel satisfied. And mostly the parents feel happy. Show them how to behave in society. Tell them to help the small ones. They are very happy to help.

4. **How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)**

Have good manners. I like it when they have good manners. Eager to learn when you show them something, and friendly. I like it when children are lively and know how to express themselves. Not feel too shy.

5. **How would you describe a perfect child (in the classroom)**

Eager to learn what showing them. Good manners. Well behaved and joyful.

6. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

How to write their name first. Some numbers, how to count. It is mostly like that. And how to express themselves when feeling pain or sad. Because in primary school they only need to know these things, write their name and count to ten, that's enough.

7. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

How to handle things with care. How to write letters, know how to count. And feel free to express themselves. Depends on the pre-primary school they go to. At government pre-primary schools there are many children and sometimes different backgrounds. It is not like when you go to private schools, there is a difference. After this schools most children go to private primary schools.

Focus groups/ Interviews parents

School 1:   23-03-2017

- 7 parents
- Most parents only spoke French. One parent translated the questions and they discussed in French.

1. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

   Safe environment, good teacher (understands and cares for the child)

2. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**

   Authority, giving discipline and educate: respect, good manners, pedagogical. Be as a mother. Listen to the child.

3. **How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)**

   Friendship, socialize, open for learning and critics. Listen to the teacher and other staff. With regard to the teacher child interaction: Child respects the teacher, child listens to the teacher, "higher authority" than the family. The teacher is very important.

4. **How would you describe a perfect child (in the classroom)**

   A child who listens, even better than at home. Respects the limits the teacher tells. The good manners we share at home, show them at school.

5. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

   Good manners/habits, understand what is told, interact with and respect others, and learn academics as well: child should be able to write his name, talk about parents and surroundings, read some words, understand little things. Child more independent.

6. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

   A solid base for children to start primary education. Academic, social etc. General develop several areas. Develop all the areas physical, emotional etc. (holistic).

School 2: Aryan Vedic   **16-03-2017**

- Focus group with 6 parents

I: So, I have some questions and I want hear your general opinion how you feel about the classroom, it does not have to be in line with reality and I want you to react on each other so feel free to go into discussion with each other. My first question is: **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child? It is very broad so take a moment to think about it.**

P1: Interaction between teacher and child, also the environment of the classrooms. The equipment.

I: Okay, allright. Very nice.

P2: Not only looking at the intellectual development, but more than that. look at physical ability, the holistic development that considers every aspect of the development of the child should have, Intellectual, physical, Skills.

P3: *Agrees, strongly nodding head.*

I: Okay, so look at different aspects

P1: Exactly. Looking at how the child is reacting to each and everything, the table, the pen, the colours. How to make the child react to the colours, the objects. And also interpersonal skills, with the teacher.

P3: The whole environment

I: The whole environment. So what do you mean by whole environment?

P2: The holistic approach. Look at everything. Singing dancing, running, discipline,

P1: Interacting with others

P2: Eating habits, discipline, playing, etc.).

P1: They should express their opinions themselves. What they want.

I: Okay, consider all kind of aspects

P2: Learning should be fun.

P1: Learning should be fun, then they learn, then they develop love for all the subject

I: Okay, do the others agree on this? (looks at everyone)

All parents agree, nodding their heads.

I: Anything else you would like to say on this? … Okay I think I am getting a good picture already. Okay, so in this room how would you describe the role of the teacher? In this ideal. **So what is the role of the teacher.**

P1: The teacher should be pro-active, ready to understand the child.

I: Okay

P1: All the aspects. Understand body language, how the child is feeling, be able to understand the child. If there is something on the child's mind, helping that child to express themselves. To see if the child is healthy. To really know the child.

I: Really know the child

P1: There are so many parents having problems at home and it affects the children.

P3: Yes

P1: And as a parent at home we do not see that. But when the child goes to school the teacher will be able to see because the child will spend the day

I: It comes out at school.

P1: Yes, it is the role of the teacher to understand the child.

I: So can I say, as a teacher you should really look at the child as an individual and see the whole child?

P1: The whole child. Yes not only the writing but the child's mind.

I: Yes, to recognise this.

P1: For example sometimes the child is being abused. They are all exposed to this environment but the child cannot express himself. You have to recognise this. Either by drawing.

I: Anything else someone wants to say about this subject, or something you missed about the role of the teacher?

P3: The teacher is a role model. Because the children they look at the teacher. Because when you see something at home, they have this from school.

P1: Yes, when the teacher is doing this, the children are doing this.

I: So as a rolemodel, how should the teacher behave? Like what kind of role?

P2: Like If you walk the talk. So if you have to be on time, you have to eat food. So you have to show this as a teacher before they believe. They have to believe it.

P1: If the teacher is walking like this. They would walk the same way at home. I experienced this with my youngest child. She had yonger teachers. The teacher was walking like this (heupen zwaaien), so she was walking like this. How come you walk like this?

P4: Yes yes yes (recognizes this)

P1: They see teenagers walk like that so they do this. Teacher should know how to dress themselves, how to walk, how to talk.

I: Okay, so you think these are important aspects: be on time, wear appropiote clothes.

P3: Yes

P2: Language

P1: Yes language

P2: Because this is their first environment. Important invironment.

P1: Yes, and they spend here a lot of time. Like 8 hours every day and we are not here

P2: yes

I: Okay, thank you. Okay I think I am going to skip one question. And **how would you describe the role of the child? In the classroom**

P1: The role of the child in the classroom. It starts at home.

P2: Yes

P1: Because at home we teach the child how to behave, how to talk to the teacher. And the child takes it from home to school. And then here they will show what they have learned from their parents and from their teachers. The way of eating, the way of speaking, the way of walking. Communicating with friends, with teachers, with parents. So it comes from us.

I: Okay, so I hear all kinds of attitude aspects NOW, AND when the child learns or in that kind of manner. How should the child-teacher role be.

P1: For example, at home I teach to be loudly and bang the doors. What my child will learn? Be loudly, to bang the door. Not to have respect. When you go somewhere here in Mauritius, the first thing is you say hello. But is we do not show this picture, the child will not be like this. The chill will be like screaming, banging the door. They observe what is going on. At home and then teaching.

I: So it is important to see that home and school are not separated

P1: No. The child spends a maximum time here and then at home. This is important for parents and teachers. They should be well mannered. Know what to speak in front of the

child. When you speak to the child, the child will pick it up and speaks like this to everybody and then you will be ashamed.

P3: Yes, yes

P1: (…) And you say oh my god where has the child learned. Of course from home, not at school. You see it comes from parents

I: **So how would you describe a perfect child in the classroom? In your opinion.**

P1: I don't think a perfect child exists.

I: If you see a child in the classroom, what would it look like, what would you want to see.

P2: Respect for the teacher

P1: Yes respect for everybody

P2: A respecting child

P3: A child should be happy

I: A child that is happy

P1: Lively..

P3: Participative (…)

P1: Reacting

I: Okay, those are other kind of aspects. Allright, anything more?

P1: Good Manners

I: Yes..

P1: Respecting for each and everyone. For the friends and when the parents are coming.

I: Okay, so respect you find important, can I say this?

P1: Yes

P2: You have to admit that parenting is the most difficult job. Especially now when both are working it is very challenging. Quality time with the kids to give them manners, to explain to them how the behaviour should be. It is becoming very challenging for the parents.

I: Okay

P1: You need the help of the teacher to make it work

I: Yes, okay. I have one last question. **So what in your opinion is the most important learning goal for the child in pre-primary schools.** So what is the most important thing to learn in the classroom?

P1: Most important thing they learn is to be able to express themselves. Than we will see that the child has at least learned what the teacher has taught. Because if the teacher is repeatingly saying this is blue, this is red and the child is not reacting at all, so..

I: They have too catch it

P1: You have to look if the child is reacting. Proactive, lively, to understand what is going on around the child. (…). And to interact, to grow

I: To react and grow, **do you also think that is the most important learning goal?**

P3: Having the foundation of education. So there are lots of things, the abcds's, the colours you know,

P1: Jeah.

P3: writing names. And so on, so for me I would not expect a properly level, to write sentences, words for example but at least uhh

P1: The names

P3: The big things, to see that the child has you know, entered into learning

P1: (…) because in pre-primary we learn to sing to dance..

P3: Exactly

P1: So may activities. So if the child can sing at least a little song that's a very good thing.

I: Okay, so you were saying the child should have a basic knowledge, that is an important learning goal for your track later in education

P3: Yes, for me it is not the one thing. It is just the initiation. To see the child communicating, that is already important.

P1: And they have to love to come to school

P3: Yes, exactly

P1: Not no, I don't go. Like yes, I go!

P3: That is a really good goal. That is the first step (..)

I: Okay, I think we are finishing up. Thank you al lot I am going to switch this of..

School 3:   17-03-2017

- 4 parents

I: So I have 7 questions in total and it takes about 20 minutes is this okay? And please also go into discussion with each other, how you think about this. It is just a conversation and there are no wrong answers. The first question is: **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

P1: Discipline

I: Discipline, okay

P1: Clean environment

I: Clean environment

P1: A good energy between the teacher and the children, between the parent and the children. About the family

I: Okay, teachers, students and family. Okay and if you look at the learning environment, what do you think it should look like?

P1: So clean, good

I: And how about materials, stuff like that? Books or no books or playing materials.

P1: They should have books, and lego. Not small, the big ones. Small will be dangerous.

I: Small will be dangerous, okay. Okay and in this environment. What would be the role of the teacher? What role has the teacher?

P2: The role? Repeat the question please?

I: The role of the teacher, so in the classroom why is there a teacher, what should the teacher do with the children?

P1: To understand the children. Not only teach, but also private time to play with the children.

I: Okay so understand, and you say not only teach but find time to play. So you find this important too.

P1: yes

P2: Teach manners, inculcate values

I: Okay

P2: And for the overall development of the child to see that

P1: If there is a problem with this or that.

P2: Yes. The teacher should see all the areas of learning

I: Okay and as a parent, how would you want yourself to see.. How would you want your teacher to interact with your child?

P2: There should be a good understanding between the teacher and the children because the children should understand what the teacher is explaining to them. How the..

P1: Instruction should be clear.

P2: Because all the children are not the same

P1: Yes. Each child is unique

P1: And the punishment should not be too hard. Not I tie you to the chair.

I: So not too strict.

P1: Yes when teacher is like I tie you too the chair than, I don't want to go to school.

I: Okay so punishment should not be that they become afraid. So how do you see punishment. So what is a good way to punish, or maybe no punish.

P1: No they have to have. Like if you do that than, you won't go to play outside at noon, you stay in the class.

P2: Yeah

I: Okay not to hard

P3: Yes and if the child does something good you should give reward.

P1: Yes, clap for the child.

I: So a positive manner

P3: yes positive manner

P1: Jeah

I: **And how would you describe a perfect teacher.** In your opinion. Than you bring your child to school and how would you want the teacher to teach.

P2: Not too strict

I: Okay

P2: Warm welcoming, trusting, being very nice to the pupils.

P3: Not too nice also. Be friendly but not familiar.

P1: Cheerfull

I: Cheerfull.. And we are talking about teachers now, **but how would you describe the perfect child in the classroom.**

P3: We do not have a perfect child. I think, the first thing is, the child should have respect for the teacher

P1: yes

P3: Respect the elder people and the child should know how to interact with other persons, the peers, the elders. And how to interact and how to communicate

P1: Children should know the difference between their age and the older..

P3: Know the difference between good and bad

I: Sorry, the age?

P1: They should know like, they are five years and we are older so there is an age difference and they should know how to communicate.

I: Okay, know your age. Because how should you react upon someone who is older? Are you talking about respect or something else?

P3: About respect

P2: Respect

P3: And get the chance to learn about discipline, about everything. And what time they should eat, what time they should play. They should obey by the.

I: Okay

P3: And know the etiquettes.

I: Yes, okay so they should know the time and how to obey the rules.

All parents: Yes

I: Okay, obay rules and have respect.

P3: and the most important for the child is talking and explore. Play, give opportunities, by themselves first. They should explore the environment.

I: Okay, yes yes. So how do you think about this exploring? Is it an important aspect that children explore or more important that they obey the rules?

P2: No they must explore

P1 and 4: Yes

I: So what do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school. So what are important aspects the child has learned?

P3: The first thing I think of, autonomy

I: Autonomy, okay.

P2: It should be know that you are a big boy now

P1: Not depending on the teacher. They should be independent by himself.

I: Yes, autonome and independent.

P3: And they should know (…) for example when they come back from school they should know where to put the bag, where to put the shoes.

P2: Yes, after playing you take the bag to place

I: And if I could ask you specifically (Parent 4). And what do you think is the most important learning goal for the children. So if you could pick one thing, what do you think is important for your child.

P3: You have to specify goal

I: Most important goal. Okay so when they are in pre-primary they learn a lot of things. Iike in their behavior, but also mathematics or about Mauritius and stuff like that and how they react on each other. But what in your opinion is most important. Do you have an idea about this.

P3: She is a bit shy

I: No but it is okay, you can talk to each other, like what do you think.

P3: No she can tell.

I: I am sure you have an idea what you want your child to learn.

P4: Respect, discipline, good manners (vertaald door p3).

I: Okay, I have heard this more often now. So a feeling of respect. This might be the most important thing they learn

P3: When they go to primary school they should have a good conduct

I: What does it mean conduct?

P2: The way the child acts

I: Oh, the behaviour

P3: But also at home

P1: Yes all the family should be concerned about the good behaviour of the children

I: Yes, which we already talked about. The interaction between the teacher and the parents and the child. It has all influence on each other maybe. Right?

Parents: Yes

I: And at home they have to learn these things as well you say?

P1: Yes it has to come from home the good learning

P2: Yes the parents.

I: Oh there is the bell, okay we have to stop. It is alright because that was my last question

School 4: A. Sokkapadu gov. school   **17-03-2017**

- Interview with parent
- Parent only speaks creole. Translated by tolk (assistant coordinator eccea)

parent 1

8. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

   Coöperate with friends. All things on the wall, this helps them to learn

9. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**

   Coöperate with kids, work together. Involve with the children in the activities.

10. **How would you describe a perfect teacher?**

    The way of teaching should progress the child

11. **How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)**

    Progress in the way of doing/behaving/talking

12. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

    Know his name, basic knowledge

13. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

    To gain knowledge

parent 2

14. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

    A good teacher

15. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**

    To give them homework, to draw, to play with children, creative, to interact, to teach them everything.

16. **How would you describe a perfect teacher?**

    Interact in a positive way

17. **How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)**

    They listen to the teacher, follow instruction

18. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

    Must know how to write their name, how to do homework. Teacher is doing well, he gives them lots of homework

19. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

    Want the child to learn further, for his later life.

    How to wash clothes

School 7:   31-03-2017

Parent 1

I: **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

P: I think like here, the kids learn how to play in sandpits. Like a,b,c they write it in the sand. You know they learn while playing. Because at this age it is very hard for them to sit and concentrate I know that at home, when I tell my daughter to sit and write, after 15 minutes she is like, no I can't do that. So it is always learning by playing, that is why I did not send them to the other other school. Because at the other school at 8 sharp she has to be there and she is not yet five. It is like very strict, it is like the child is already a grown up. But at five the child is still a kid.

I: Okay, a child should be a child.

P: Yes exactly, that is why I chose this place also. Because here they can be playing outside, they are with friends. They are interacting with friends. The teacher makes the kids play, one day it is the doctor set, the other day it is shopping, one day it is beautician. Like it is not always like study study study. My son never cries to come to school, both of them. So it must be this place that makes them love school. So for me it is playing while learning.

I: Yes, playing while learning so they can love school and

P: Because for us, I remember always crying, every day I was crying. My parents were traveling, my grand-parents took care of me. So every morning I took so long to put on my socks and then at ten I could say it is too late to go to school. So for them I don't want it to start harsh.

I: You want them to like going to school

P: My daughter she is almost five she is gonna go to the big school. I already prepared her. Talked to her you know it is going to change. You have to focus. You know I talk to her. You know at five she can understand, not when I would let her go there at three.

I: Yes, at five she can understand the rules

P: I can talk to her, I can tell her.

I: Yes, you can prepare her. Okay, **so at pre-primary what do you think is the role of the teacher?**

P: The role of teacher at pre-primary is to try to make the child love them. You know like give them more affection. Then they can love the teacher and learn with the teacher. I saw this with the teacher of ** before they go every day every child goes hug her, it is really like a family. It is really family orientated.

I: Yes, so really show there is love. Feel like a home maybe

P: Yes, and they all fight to hug her. Every day I see that when I come and take … from school.

I: Oh that is really cute. Okay, so you say the role of the teacher is to make the children feel loved and

P: Yes, love and affection. And then of course there is the study part. But it comes after, you should show the kids love, attention, affection and obviously they would listen to you. They feel loved, they feel happy. Because my daughter she is very sensitive. I came to pick her up from school last time, she was very upset and the teachers said she started hitting children and she never does that And in fact that night, it was in februari, her father was going to Italy. So for her she could not express herself. She was very upset. So then at night when her father went she cried a lot. And I took her out and took her to my sister, we stayed there for a weekend and came back here at Monday and her father came back at Wednesday. So she was very insensitive for a week. She is that kind of child like, everyone was like they have never seen her hitting. She did not know how to express herself so when I came to school the teaher told me we don't know what happened to her but she si hitting everyone, maybe it is the fact that her father is flying tonight. And they say it must be that yes. So you talk about the behavior and they know the child. They have never seen her hitting.

I: Ohh exactly, so they recognize when there is something going on.

P: Yes, when out of the blue she is hitting the person next to her, it is weird.

I: Yes, so you think this is also the role of the teacher, to know the child.

P: Yes, exactly

I: Okay, and, this is maybe a more difficult question but **how would you describe a perfect teacher? 6:39**

P: A perfect teacher... It comes back to the same thing like coming to class, talking to all the students, looking one by one individually, say hi how are you. You know, ask about you, ask about your weekend. Don't just come straight to okay lets work. Talk

about your weekend talk about last night, talk about everything. If there is a problem they will know and then they start the class. That is what they do here, that is what they do.

I: Okay not just about the study..

P: Yes, talk about your weekend, talk about your parents. So if there is a problem at home, I know it at school because the teacher will tell me, you have done this this at home and the child is affected. That is very nice.

I: Okay, it is useful as well. You know what is going on. And they spend a lot of hours here so it is good to know. Okay and **how about the role of the child in the classroom?**

P: The role of the child. She or he has to be obedient, like try their best. Because often my youngest does not listen. But the way I punish her, If you don't listen you are not going to school tomorrow. And she changes her attitude . So like listen to the teacher, be attentionate. Because if all the kids listen, the should should be (…) for the teachers. But that is the thing, it should be at home first. Learn manners at home. Hello, how are you, sit when you eat, wash your hands when you eat. It should be done at home. All the kids should do the same and it has to be in the child, because often my child she goes to the toilet and does not wash her hands and then says … does not wash his hands, she relates to someone else. You have to teach your friend to wash his hand.

I: Okay so the role of the child should be, like this. Manners respect. And maybe this is also what you just said, so a good or perfect child would be a child who listens.

P: Yes, but that is very difficult.

I: Yes of course, young children. And **what do you think is necessary a child has learned when leaving pre-primary school? At the end?**

P: At the end, she should know the numbers and act as a grown up. Understand the rules like do not do this. You know at 2 a child does not understand do this and do that but at five the child should be aware of everything. She should understand. If you say don't go there, she would not go there. She has to be obedient. Because now she can name the carplates, a thing she would not so a year ago. She makes few mistakes like six and nine. But everytime in the car she reads the numberplates. All her friends do that. So that is why it is good when they talk in the morning, what did you do this weekend. Oh we did that, we started reading the nuberplates.

I: Oh so that is why they like it as well, because they learn from each other.

P: Yes, and when she is reading the number plates that means that she is making an effort.

I: So they should learn about numbers and letters and some academic skill, and to be obedient and like a grown up.

P: Yes, like for her when she has to go to the big school. You have to sake up early, you have to sleep early. Like my second child will not go to sleep early she will run around because she is to year. My first when it is bed time, when she has to go to school she is going to go to sleep. And the second one is no no, because I can't control the second one. I can't really make them understand. So she cries until she sleeps. But before the first one was also like that, she would not go to sleep and pull tentrums.

I: Yes, it is good to know that they turn out okay. And if you have to pick something, **what do you think is the most important learning goal for the child?**

P: Like academically?

I: No not necessarily, everything they learn in pre-primary what do you think is most important.

P: I think what they learn from the others. When meeting others, what they learn, that is very important. Because that is what they come home with you know. Like someone is playing with mud or whatever. They come and do this at home, what they are learning from others.

I: Yes, and you think it is important that they bring it home as well the learning.

P: Yes, for example .. she was not brushing her teeth, she was always complaining. And they talked about it at school and then she was mama don't forget to brush my teeth. You know they have learned it at school.

I: Yes so you're also talking about this interaction with home and school, they learn here so they bring it home and then you see if something is going on at home and at school. Okay I have asked my questions about learning environment. Is there anything you would like to add, like things you like or not like?

P: I can just say overall about this school. I advice a lot of people to come to this school because I find the learning environment very very good. Like for my second daughter, she is two, today they are going to learn how to have a bath. Last week it was brushing teeth, now a bad. So she brought towel, shower gel. So she was already excited in the morning taking everything.

I: Yes, so they learn about daily practices. And what is the main thing they learn here and not at other schools?

P: I don't really know other schools. They are more multicultural, it is hard to adapt, because it is a new country. My daughters play a lot with those kids and talk about their schools.

I: … Thank you I think I have a good view on your opinion.

Parent 2 & 3

I: The first question is, **how would you describe a good learning environment for the child ?**

P1:   For me it would be where the child is able to express his or her opinion.

P2:   Because pre-primary also you have different age groups. You see, you have kids just starting pre-primary who is 3 years who maybe is not in the same developmental stage of a kid who is five and six. Because than you see the maturity, the development, the self-considence of the kid. Of course when he grows up it is different. So if we are speaking I think my kid and her kid they are the same age group 3 to 4 so maybe we will be speaking about our experience of our own kids.

P1:   Yes I think this is important to highlight. At that age they like to run, not to sit still. Maybe being able to move around, more space is needed and I think it is also important to have a quiet corner. There is a lot of noise in the classroom and at times there are children would like to have some quiet time maybe when they are tired, and maybe a reading corner. And also have enough space to play.

I: Okay so space to play, space to move around.

P1:   Yes and in terms of learning Mauritius is in a lot of schools kids have already to start alphabets and so on. And for me I think it is important to learn through games. Not sitting at the table desk and learning about all these things.

P2:   Also learning through playing. Because my kid was just admitted to school in September, I know her daughter was admitted when he was only three months old and mine was taken care of by my mother his nanny, so it is completely different. A child who is taken care of in pre-primary school since birth or another kid who just joined at the age of three, you can see the difference, in whatever in his sleeping, in his eating in his routines in his way of doing everything you know. Because at home I know the kids are very much pampered, like my kid because he still wants his mommy to give his food. But the other kids in the pre-primary school, they are independent, they can eat by themselves you know. But now since he has been in school for the past few months I can really see him coming out of that cocoon that he was in. Now you can see him developing, get his expensing in his work. He is growing out now, he is becoming more of a normal boy.

I: Out of his cocoon

P2:   Yes out of his cocoon, out of his own world. I think school is helping him a lot. All the things all the activities, all the plays, the role plays they do, the games. Interacting. Mixing up with other friends. It is helping him a lot. And also he started to learn about limits. About respecting others, how to behave towards others. The discipline that comes in. Because usually at home he would like to do whatever he wants. Because at home he is pampered by the grandpa and the grandma. But here the teachers imposes him discipline, she would say hey please don't do this, keep out of this, don't tell this,

then he would come and tell you you know the teacher is not, she is bad she screams to me she says this.

I: Ah he is not really used to is

P2: Not really used to. Yes he was complaining and not only for him but complaining for his friends also.

I: So you were saying when you look at a good learning environment, so these rules and respect.

P2: Yes respect rules, you know your limit and you are starting to get a feel of how is it going to be in future in life. We have someone to give our limits and show what to do and don't. Because at home you do impose disciplines but you pamper more than you impose disciplines. Especially when you have one kid and he is so pampered. It depends on the family as well I know. Some parents are very strict I know and they would get slaps but I would not do anything like that.

P1: I do agree that this is a great thing but also it should not be that the children get scared.

P2: Scared no.

P1: Scared of the authority, yes discipline, there are limits in life yes. But also the children should be able to say what they are thinking about without feeling scared to talk.

P2: Because they do protests, they show you they are sad or happy or unhappy or whatever.

I: **And in this learning environment what would be the role of the teacher?**

P1: To be a facilitator I would say. Instead of just giving instructions also bring about what each child likes to do or doesn't like to do and try to inculcate all those things. In a friendly way.

P2: The teacher is there to, what we can't do at home. She is here to guide the kid.

P1: Guide yes

P2: To give the kid all the developmental support. All the kid need to develop to become a good adult. A good citizen. And a good student whatever bit it starts with the teacher

P1: And also the child spends quite a lot of time at school for example 8 to five including after school care because we have to work and that at home they spend two to three hours and then they fall asleep, so it is a lot of time here and all whatever they should be getting most of it they get during school time.

I: Yes so it is a very important environment.

P2:   The teacher also is here to be like a second mom also. I think my son he knows that she is a very important person in his life and she is playing the role you know, the kid knows.

I: Yes and you like this

P2:   Yes yes

P1:   The teachers they show the children that they do care, they do love the children.

P2:   And also when he is being naughty I would tell him okay I will tell miss **. And then he keeps quiet, he comes down. So he knows that. They are very smart these kids, very manipulative.

I: **And how would you describe a perfect teacher.**

P2:   Haha she is one, she is a lecturer

P1:   It is hard to have, teach adults.

I: Yes so for pre-primary

P1:   I think an ideal teacher would be someone who can keep calm. Because it is not an easy job so may children at a time. Being able to talk to, for example when a child has done something which he should not have been done, not shout at the child and talk quietly and explaining to him what was wrong and how to improve it for example. Not just say you did this wrong.

P2:   Give feedback.

P1:   And not only the negative but talk about the good things the children have done. Because children learn so quickly. … For me pre-primary education is not only about learning how to read etc. but mostly how to behave as a human being and also how to become a creative person.

P2:   The teacher also needs to inspire. It is very good to inspire, because you can be a good a good teacher, you can ... knowledge, you can teach the kid, but if you can't get the kid to accept you, to love you as a person, to respect you. Inspire them, to make them feel empowered, to bond the class to get all the kids to be together. So not only doing that, so they are here they will start learning as from nest year they engage in activities, letters alphabet and all. The teacher should be able to impart that knowledge when that kid moves on to primary or further education. The teacher should be able to impart that knowledge.

I: Yes also academically

P2:   Yes it is important

I: **And what do you think the role of a child is in the classroom?**

P1:   One is to play, to learn how to communicate, drawing, talking, learning how to make friends. Play as a team.

P2:   Socialize, to make friends. To learn also, to self-develop

P1:   Learn how to become independent individuals. And maybe remain creative person

P2:   To become, to learn to develop his creativity? No

P1:   No I think that all kids are born creative and the way that we brought them up, the way we talk to them that they start losing this creativity when they become an adult.

I: Okay so keep their creativity actually.

P2:   And reach their potential also

I: And how would you describe a perfect child in the classroom?

P1:   That is difficult to answer

P2:   One that is able to assimilate everything, to grasp all the whatever he is learning, to respond to his environment, to learn from it, to grow from it and also if he was an older kid I would say to apply the learning, but I think the learning starts from the womb till the tomb.

I: That's pretty early

P2:   Each kid has all developmental stage, all developmental phase. So I think he should grab all opportunities. Ask questions.

P1:   And eager to learn about new things

I: Yes so if you see a child in the classroom, what would you like to see.

P1:   Laughing, talking, singing, moving around

P2:   A happy child. If I was a teacher I would like to see the child developing, what he was initially and now he is completely changed kid. For me this is personal reward for the teacher I would see.

I: Okay, to see him grow.

P2:   See him growing yes. It means that whatever we are teaching the kid. We achieved our goals.

I: And how about when the child leaves pre-primary school, what would you want the child to have learned?

P1:   For me it would be having a child that is independent. Independent as a child, not as an adult. And being able to express himself or herself without feeling shy. Yes each one has its own personality, some do not like to talk, or some talk a lot, but at least not

having the fear of … And I believe that if someone has learned how to be independent, he can do anything much more easily.

I: Yes, because they can do it by themselves.

P2:   And the child should be able to take that transition step from pre-primary to let's say primary. He should be able to adapt also to the situation because now he will be in another environment to move to another one and that transition is very important.

I: Yes, be able to adapt. So you think it is important that the child has learned how to adapt to a new environment or that..

P2:   Yes, he is able to respond, because here already he is trained on how he should adapt as he moves on. He should be able to manage that change.

P1:   How to cope with the situation

P2:   Even as adults we have to adapt, we have to cope and I think even for a child even in his world also, I think it is the same thing. Has to be able to cope, to manage, all transition in life in the future, he should be able to respond to it.

I: Okay so not just primary school

P2:   Yes it is a lifelong thing, but it starts from early. Like for me for my kid it was transition from home environment to pre-primary, now it will be from pre-primary to primary. From primary to secondary

I: Yes, it doesn't stop. **And what in your opinion is the most important learning goal for the children?**

P2:   What he has achieved?

I: Yes it can be academically, or emotionally, or anything.

P2:   I think it is not only one, it is not you have to excel academically, it is not this. For me when a kid has achieved minimum academically, has become a smart kid, plus he has got self-discipline, has been able to discipline him, he has become a social person, that is very important I don't want a kid who is good academically but is withdrawn, doesn't want to make friends, doesn't want to go to other persons, for me he hasn't achieved anything. My kid may be smart but tomorrow when he goes behind me you know shadowing, doesn't go to somebody else, doesn't talk to others, it means there is something lacking.

I: So as you were saying it is not just to learn academic things. So socializing.

P2:   Yes my kid if he knows abcd, he knows how to build sentences but he is not outgoing, he is not, he is lacking something. So I think he should be a complete little person, I would not say complete adult person, small person but he should be socializing, be

discipline, should be smart, can tell you what is going on, can talk to you, can make friends easily.

P1:   You mean as primary or pre-primary?

P2:   Pre-primary

P1:   The child should be a happy child. Know what he or she likes. For example you see some children running around, some prefer reading. And to be able to do all this and what they like and to be able to listen to what kind of person they are

I: Ah yes okay

P2:   Yes you have different types of. Even adults when they come to a child. Because I have seen a lot of kids you know. When you come hi how are you. They go hide behind their mother or. They would not really relate to other people. They won't talk they would keep quiet.

P1:   Also it happens for children at some age groups they need to outgrow that.

I: Yes, sometimes it is a phase

P1:   Yes it's a phase.

I: Okay I have asked all my questions, is there something you would like to add about learning environment.

P1:   I think here in Mauritius at most schools it is more academically. It has started to change, it is starting to change fortunately. And even in primary schools years ago, I don't know how much it has changed though, it was mostly academic. But now they have also included art and physical activities. That is much better; years ago it was mostly academic.

I: And what time frame are you talking about?

P1:   Maybe ten years?

P2:   Less less less. Especially I like the way they do everything around themes.

P1:   Here it is different

P2:   Here the training they give to the teachers are different. They are following the Australian system., which is different for example when we have a diploma or a degree. Because our education system frankly speaking is not the best, it has a lot of shortcomings, the Mauritian education system you know. Now that they are doing reforms, they are trying to change it but before in the 1960's it was all same, same over and over, my grandfather, myself.

P1:   It was still the same

I: There was not a lot of change for a long time.

P2:   Now they are going with modern practice, Europe, and the latest you know. Before that it was not like this

I: Because it was more academic

P2:   Academic and spoon fed you know

P1:   You were not able to ask questions in class

P2:   There were no modern techniques like drama or role play that they do now.

I: Okay, and you think in other schools you see this more than in this system.

P1:   Yes in other schools the system is different.

I: Yes, quite interesting actually. I think it is interesting to see the differences. Okay I am going to stop the recording.

School 10:   06-04-2017

- 3 parents
- With translator (assistant coordinator)

1. **How would you describe a good learning environment for the child?**

   Several factors Hygene, the teaching approach kindness, love towards children. Helps the development of the child.

2. **What is in your opinion the role of a teacher?**

   Patients with the children. Being a role model. Kindly, gently way of speaking to the children

3. **How would you describe a perfect teacher?**

   Be a second mother for the children

4. **How would you describe the role of the child (in the classroom)**

   It begins at home, the role of the parents, What the child learns in the classroom, follow up at home, The role will be perfect everywhere. Good manners, respect. Nowadays we are losing these values.

5. **How would you describe a perfect child (in the classroom)**

   There is no perfect child. A happy child, adapting, socialize, school is a place where the child would feel at ese. Go home happy.

6. **What do you think is necessary the child has learned when leaving pre-primary school?**

   To get the basic level. Ready for primary school. Has to be able to go another step of learning. Writing their names, alphabet, identify pictures, encouragement for greeting. Writing correctly.

7. **What, in your opinion, is the most important learning goal for the children?**

   Learning through play. To be able to have good results later on. It is not only academic, everything around, the way they express themselves, moral values. Accept different cultures.