EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS AND CHILDREN’S CURRICULA AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This paper advances two inter-related sets of principles to guide development of curricula used for children’s learning in early childhood and for preparation of early childhood teachers in the prevention and management of violence. These principles were identified from a review of the main elements for effective programming in published research. They are summarised as follows: (1) Support children to learn social-emotional skills and to practice them regularly with adult guidance; and (2) Engage children’s parents and carers to reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences on children’s learning and development. The principles were used as a lens through which to identify the extent to which prevention and management of violence were integrated in curricula in countries of the Caribbean Community. The principles informed the content of the curricula reviewed for children and teachers, but the learning and practice of skills was not explicitly addressed. A literature search for comprehensive evidence-based approaches that included both content and skills development identified two programmes developed in a high-income country which were subsequently used in high- and middle-income countries, in which skills are explicitly taught to teachers and children. The implications are that lessons can be learned from effective skills-based approaches for the development of curricula in low and middle-income countries and the principles can be used to review curricula to identify existing strengths and target key areas for development.

Keywords: early learning, teacher preparation, early childhood education, curricula, violence prevention, Caribbean, parenting
Introduction

Learning Group 1 includes an investigation of the curricula offered to children and the curricula in use for the professional preparation of teachers in early childhood settings\(^1\). The intention is to assemble credible evidence of a focus on the prevention of violence in childhood. The expected outcome is to inform the thinking on how to leverage the use of curricula to raise awareness and build skills in violence prevention.

Rationale

Skills of teachers in supporting the learning of young children in early childhood settings have been identified as key to the prevention of the use of violence and of corporal punishment (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2011). The consciousness of teachers of their role in the defence of children has been cited as important for children’s learning (ibid). The attitudes of teachers towards the abuse of children appear to have shifted positively over time (ibid). The content of curricula used in training early childhood teachers is therefore an interesting area of investigation: do the curricula provide a focus on the prevention of violence, and if so, how? Are teachers purposefully prepared to prevent violence as part of their training?

The curricula offered to children in early childhood settings provide them with opportunities to acquire skills and understandings to equip them for learning and development in their early years. However, it is not known whether there is a focus within the curricula to instill values, attitudes and understandings that prevent violence and to develop the competencies to prevent violence occurring in their lives.

Research Questions

The questions that will be addressed in the proposed research task are as follows:

**Curricula for the Training of Early Childhood Teachers:**

1. Do the curricula used to prepare early childhood teachers include a focus on the prevention of violence?
2. If yes to question 1, what is included in the focus: is it awareness raising or skills building or both?

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\(^1\) Early childhood settings are places providing care and learning activities for children from birth to school entry, under the supervision of early childhood teachers, typically acting in loco parentis.
3. What examples of awareness raising and skills building in violence prevention would be useful for dissemination?
4. What examples could be usefully tested in the future for effectiveness and how could this be done?

**Curricula for Children’s Learning in Early Childhood:**

1. Do the curricula used for children’s learning in early childhood include a focus on the prevention of violence?
2. If yes to question 1, what is included in the focus: is it to instill values, attitudes and understandings that prevent violence? Is it to develop the competencies to prevent violence occurring in their lives? Or is it both?
3. What examples of values, attitudes and understandings, and skills building in violence prevention would be useful for dissemination?
4. What examples could be usefully tested in the future for effectiveness and how could this be done?

**Methodology**

The research task has utilised the following methods:

1. An overview of the main elements for effective curricula in the training of teachers and for the programmes that support children’s learning in early childhood settings was prepared. An examination of how the curricula address the prevention and management of violence was undertaken first by defining what was being looked for, and second, by identifying the elements that addressed prevention and management of violence as defined. The overview drew on published research and reports of effective programming.

2. Reviews of curricula in use for children’s learning and teacher training were undertaken to identify the extent to which there was integration of the essential elements identified for prevention and management of violence. Initial reviews were undertaken in countries of the Caribbean Community: the children’s curriculum was reviewed in a low-income country and two middle-income countries and the curriculum for teacher-training was reviewed in two middle-income countries.

3. A literature search was undertaken to identify evidence of comprehensive, effective violence prevention and management approaches in integrated early childhood teacher training and children’s curricula. Two programmes were identified, both of which had been developed in a high-income country, and subsequently used internationally in high- and middle-income countries, adapted to different country contexts. One of the two had been evaluated in a middle-income country with promising results. The key elements of these programmes are identified.
4. A search for evidence of comprehensive and effective violence prevention and management approaches in integrated early childhood teacher training and children’s curricula in a low-income country yielded one result in primary school settings. The programme is currently being evaluated and initial findings are promising. Although the programme does not directly address the needs of children in early childhood, the main elements are relevant for low-cost whole school approaches to violence prevention and management. The key features of the programme are identified.

5. An annex provides a selection of programme responses identified in the education and early childhood sectors to the incidence of violence in the Caribbean.

Curricula for Children’s Learning and Development in Early Childhood

What is Meant by “Curriculum” in the Context of an Early Childhood Setting?

Definitions of curriculum in primary, secondary, and tertiary level education are associated with content - the skills and knowledge to be acquired; in early childhood, definitions of curricula comprise both content and the means of learning. For example, The National Association for Young Children of the USA (1990) describes the early childhood curriculum as “an organised framework that delineates the content children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur.”

The dual emphasis in the early childhood curriculum on content and means is based on the evidence that young children learn and develop through interaction with their immediate environment. In the last 30 years, new understandings of the role of interaction between the child and the environment (persons and things) as critical for child development and learning were highly influenced by the work of the psychologist Vygotsky (1978) and given further impetus by the scientific evidence of early childhood as the period in a child’s life of the most rapid brain development (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Evidence informs the curricula being developed today: children learn many different things at the same time; they learn at their own pace; they learn better when their learning is self-directed; they learn through activity in tangible interactions with things and with people. The frameworks for early childhood curricula set out the “how”, of young children learning together with the content, and in so doing, also establish both a values base for working with children and their families and standards required for programming (UNESCO, 2004).

What are the Elements of Effective Curricula in Early Childhood Settings?

There is strong evidence that learning and development can be promoted through curricula in early childhood programmes, with immediate, short- and long-run effects. This seems to be most pronounced for language and cognitive development but also involves effects on social development
and behaviour. Although all children may benefit, there is evidence that disadvantaged children may profit the most (Myers, 2006; Heckman and Masterov, 2007; Schweinhart et al., 2005; Samms-Vaughan, 2004). Children can be enabled to “succeed against the odds” if exposed to supportive, nurturing environments that provide a high degree of cognitive stimulation and emotional care, both at home and in school (Neuman et al., 2015; Siraj and Mayo, 2014).

Research suggests that the quality of the structure, organisation and processes found in programmes is important and has an effect on outcomes. In addition, there is evidence that negative effects can occur if quality is low (Myers, 2006). Elements of quality that are consistently identified and seem to make a difference on outcomes include: the education and training of the staff; available learning materials; the learning process; the organisational arrangements; the relationships with families; health, hygiene and safety (Myers, 2006; Denboba et al., 2014). In the Caribbean Community, strategies that are gender-differentiated work best with boys and with girls, are particularly effective for keeping boys out of risk and have consequential benefits for girls.

Long-established curriculum frameworks that are known internationally for their effectiveness (such as The HighScope Curriculum; the Te Whāriki Curriculum; The Reggio Emilia Curriculum; and The Swedish Curriculum, amongst others) have been very influential for curriculum development in low- and middle-income countries (OECD, 2004; Evans et al., 2000; CCDC, 2010). For example, experience in countries of the Caribbean Community has included adoption of proven international approaches in combination with promotion of regional values and adjustment to social norms that are prioritised in national contexts (Manitou Inc., 2015; Williams, 2009; CARICOM, 2008).

**How can Curriculum Elements that are Effective for Violence Prevention and Management be Identified?**

**Definitions**

Management is defined as “the process of dealing with or controlling things or people”, and prevention is defined as “the action of stopping something from happening or arising (Oxford English Dictionary). The scope of this enquiry into the inclusion of violence prevention in early childhood curricula addresses the four levels identified by the World Health Organisation (2002; 2006):

- Preventing violence before it starts
- Preventing recurrence of violence
- Preventing adverse effects of violence (trauma, consequences of trauma)
- Preventing the spread of violence to the next generation or social level

Violence is defined as “the intentional use of physical force, or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” (WHO, 1996).
Prevention of violence against children requires that the underlying causes and risk factors contributing to violence be addressed (Pinheiro, 2006).

**What does the Curriculum Need to Include to Address Violence Prevention and Management?**

Children have been described as “wired for violence” as part of the human instinct for survival (Pinker, 2011). They are not born with the skills to control themselves, to reason on the best course of action when they are upset or to get along with each other in a non-violent manner. These skills have to be learned from an early age, and the curriculum needs to prioritise them.

Early childhood is the period of most rapid brain development. Experiences determine which channels of the brain are formed. Repeated experiences make these channels stronger and stronger, and channels that are not used fade away. Experiences of love and affection wire channels for emotions, but so do experiences of anger and aggression. It is critical that the curriculum provides loving and nurturing interactions and minimises the experiences that cause aggression and violence.

To survive and to get along with others, children have to develop executive function and self-regulation (the ability to monitor and manage feelings, thoughts and behaviour), the mental processes that enable humans to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, juggle multiple tasks successfully and to control impulses (Harvard Centre on the Developing Child, 2016; McClelland et al., 2010; Barkley, 2004). Skills in self-control enable children to develop positive behaviour. Skills beget skills (Heckman and Masterov, 2007), and as children grow older, self-control strengthens and enables children to be willing to choose late rewards over smaller earlier ones, skills that become more critical as they go through adolescence.

Social-Emotional Learning, or SEL, has come to be recognised as a “core set of social and emotional skills that help children more effectively handle life challenges and thrive in both their learning and their social environments” (Durlak et al., 2011). A recent meta-analysis has found that children participating in SEL programmes showed significant gains in SEL skills, attitudes and behaviours, as well as academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011). SEL has been identified as “the third condition for learning” (following the first, safety, and the second, the experience of being cared about, well-treated and accepted) and children with strong SEL skills “are likely to be safer than those where those skills are absent” (Osher et al., 2003; McCabe and Frede, 2007; Powell and Dunlap, 2009). Including SEL in the curriculum has a wider effect on the school environment and in the creation of a safe and supportive place for learning. Whilst schools may initially see SEL as (yet) another initiative to implement, on a closer look it becomes clear that the elements of SEL are not new ‘content’ so much as new ‘means’ for engaging children socially and emotionally in their learning and development.
The development of moral systems of belief sensitise children to the impact of their actions on others and “doing the right thing” for the common good, but moral systems are not on their own able to prevent violence. The concurrent development of skills in reasoning – understanding why some behaviours are acceptable and others unacceptable, how behaviours lead to outcomes that are desirable and undesirable – enhance the ability of children to act in their own interests, communicate with others and at the same time understand and respect the interests of ever increasing numbers of others (Pinker, 2011). If children do not get what they need from their relationships with adults and the conditions in their environments, these skills and their moral development can be seriously delayed or impaired.

Adverse environments resulting from neglect, abuse, and/or violence may expose children to a “toxic stress response”, occurring when the child experiences strong, frequent and/or prolonged adversity without adequate adult support. The response acts like a toxin, disrupting brain architecture and potentially impairing the development of executive function (Shonkoff et al., 2012). In high-income countries, adverse experiences in early childhood are associated with greater inequality and lower rates of employment in later life (Allen, 2011). Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)² is a significant predictor not only of social emotional adjustment but of school readiness skills, with boys being especially vulnerable to a range of behavioural and development challenges (CDC, 2013; Blodgett, 2014). Parents need to understand the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on children, and potentially on their health in later life; how ACEs can be averted through appreciation of what they are doing to their children and the connection to what was done to them as children themselves. In a study in the USA, sharing information with parents about ACES resulted in a 35 percent drop in doctor visits (Felitti et al., 1998). Addressing ACEs requires a “two-generation” strategy.

**Summary of the Elements of a Curriculum for Children that Address Violence Prevention and Management Effectively**

To help children learn how to prevent violence, the early childhood curriculum needs to provide experiences in being nurtured in the interests of strengthening positive social-emotional development, and laying the foundation for trust and the development of moral behaviour; experiences that develop executive function and self-regulation; experiences in reasoning and communication to manage behaviours, explain their actions to themselves as well as others and to resolve conflicts. How?

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² ACEs include: abuse (emotional, physical, sexual); neglect (emotional, physical); household dysfunction (mother treated violently; household substance abuse; household mental illness; parental separation or divorce; and, incarcerated household member.
• Children learn social-emotional skills and dispositions and practice them regularly with adult guidance
• Children learn to exercise their developing skills by doing activities that foster creative play and social connection; learn how to cope with stress; learn to resolve conflicts with adult help and over time, direct their own actions with ever-decreasing adult supervision
• Children learn to manage the impacts on them of the experience of ACEs; opportunities are provided for parents to understand and engage in a process of reducing the impact of ACEs on their children’s learning and development.

**Are the Elements for Effective Prevention and Management of Violence Integrated into Curricula for Children?**

A review of curricula in use for children’s learning and development was undertaken to identify the extent to which there was integration of the essential elements identified for prevention and management of violence. This took the form of three reviews in countries of the Caribbean Community, one in a low-income country and two in middle-income countries.

**Low-income country:** The curriculum is a national curriculum, implemented in all government-owned nursery schools in the country for children 3 to 5 years of age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements for effective prevention and management of violence</th>
<th>Presence/absence in the curriculum reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children <em>learn social-emotional skills and dispositions and practice them regularly</em> with adult guidance</td>
<td>Social-emotional learning (SEL) is not explicitly featured in the formal curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stated aim is to “develop in children self-confidence and a healthy self-concept through the promotion of their mental and physical health”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching of specific SEL skills not identified</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children <em>learn to exercise their developing skills by doing activities that foster creative play and social connection; learn how to cope with stress; learn to resolve conflicts with adult help and over time, direct their</em></th>
<th>Stated aim to provide a “Learning environment which will challenge and support exploration and problem-solving and promote creativity”</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressive arts encouraged, particularly drama and dance; curriculum emphasis on developing self-confidence in expression through diverse experiences</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3 Please see the Annex for a selection of responses in the education and early childhood sectors to the incidence of violence in the Caribbean.
| Own actions with ever-decreasing adult supervision | (story-telling, field trips, discussions) Children’s behaviour is guided by a government document *Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools*. Specific curriculum elements for developing skills not identified. |
| Children learn to manage the impacts on them of the experience of ACEs; opportunities are provided for parents to understand and engage in a process of reducing the impact of ACEs on their children’s learning and development | Involvement of parents is considered effective, has been directly linked to observed benefits for children in improved behaviour and classroom practices. Specific attention to reducing impacts of ACEs not addressed in the curriculum |

**Middle-income country:** The curriculum is a national curriculum adapted from the HighScope Curriculum, and developed in the Caribbean Learning Outcomes Framework⁴, implemented in government-owned pre-schools in the country for children 3 to 5 years old:

| Elements for effective prevention and management of violence | Presence/absence in the curriculum reviewed |
| Children learn social-emotional skills and dispositions and practice them regularly with adult guidance | Teaching of specific SEL skills, in particular self-regulation. Curriculum facilitates children to develop social skills; to make their own decisions about activities they engage in; and to be guided by adults in their learning. |
| Children learn to exercise their developing skills by doing activities that foster creative play and social connection; learn how to cope with | Specific curriculum elements in the *Plan, Do, Review* approach explicitly develop skills in collaboration with each other; learning safely; building trust; and cooperating. |

⁴ Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood Development in the Caribbean for children birth to eight years of age were identified and developed by specialists and representatives of 18 CARICOM countries, addressing six key areas of learning: wellness, resilience, valuing culture, effective communication, intellectual empowerment, and respect for self, others and the environment. The Learning Outcomes influenced the reform of curricula in the region, including the infusion of the HighScope curriculum approach in four Eastern Caribbean countries during 2007-9, and provided the framework for the construction of the Early Childhood Development Minimum Service Standard developed with all 20 CARICOM countries and subsequently adopted by CARICOM’s Council on Human and Social Development in 2008.
Children learn to manage the impacts on them of the experience of ACEs; opportunities are provided for parents to understand and engage in a process of reducing the impact of ACEs on their children’s learning and development

Specific attention to reducing impacts of ACEs not addressed in the curriculum.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Elements for effective prevention and management of violence</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children learn social-emotional skills and dispositions and practice them regularly with adult guidance</td>
<td>Development of pro-social behaviours in children is one of the developmental objectives in the component Respect for Self, Others and the Environment. The curriculum manual sets out the strategies for teachers to provide guidance in “Interacting with, and Supporting Children”. The curriculum guides teachers are guided in the use of strategies, including team strategies, to build self-esteem and self-confidence; show children how to live harmoniously (cooperate; take turns; be tolerant); how to be respectful, kind, courteous, helpful and caring toward each other especially persons who are different in some way.</td>
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</table>

Middle-income country: The curriculum is nationally developed in the Caribbean Learning Outcomes Framework, implemented in community-owned pre-schools in the country for children 3 to 5 years old and in day care centres for children under three years of age:

5 This curriculum also provides for children from birth to three years of age

6 These particular skills are also set out in the curriculum for children under three, implemented by practitioners in day care centres.
**Children learn to exercise their developing skills** by doing activities that foster creative play and social connection; learn how to cope with stress; learn to resolve conflicts with adult help and over time, direct their own actions with ever-decreasing adult supervision.

A curriculum objective is to develop skills in non-violent resolving of group conflicts: the curriculum provides guidance for teachers in working with children to control physical aggression and to directly address bullying. Mechanisms such as peer “buddy” support are encouraged. The focus is on engaging children to learn positive behaviours; express anger, fear etc. in socially acceptable ways.

A focus in the curriculum is on teacher demonstration of the skills.

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**Children learn to manage the impacts on them of the experience of ACEs**; opportunities are provided for parents to understand and engage in a process of reducing the impact of ACEs on their children’s learning and development.

Specific attention to reducing impacts of ACEs not addressed in the curriculum.

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**Curricula for Training Early Childhood Teachers**

*What are the Elements of Effective Curricula for Training Early Childhood Teachers?*

Well-educated, well-trained teachers are the key factors in providing high-quality early childhood education and care with the most favourable cognitive and social outcomes for children. Harmonising expectations for teachers in both education and in care settings in early childhood encourages a continuity of support by teachers working with both younger and older children (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Effective training addresses the development of the knowledge and skills of teachers in both pedagogy (method and practice of teaching) and curriculum content (the elements of effective curricula for children), including:

- Good understanding of child development and how children learn;
- Ability to develop children’s perspectives;
- Ability to praise, comfort, question and be responsive to children;
- Leadership skills, problem solving and development of targeted lesson/activity plans; and
- Good vocabulary and ability to elicit children’s ideas (OECD, 2012).

While it is not necessary that all staff in a particular early childhood setting have high general levels of education, the presence of some highly qualified staff can have a positive influence on those who work with them and who do not have the same high qualifications (Sammons, 2010). The Education
for All Global Monitoring Report 2007 identified the quality of interaction between teacher and child as the single most important determinant of programme success in early childhood (UNESCO, 2007). The development of a child’s non-cognitive “soft” skills is as important as the cognitive skills for character, confidence and success in school and beyond (Heckman et al., 2013). Recent research has identified the critical importance of developing a child’s executive function (Harvard Centre on the Developing Child, 2016) (the mental processes that enable humans to plan, focus attention, remember instructions and juggle multiple tasks successfully) and self-regulation (the ability to monitor and manage feelings, thoughts and behaviour), including the control of impulses and the development of positive behaviour. Therefore, it is essential that training programmes equip staff to support the development of these skills in children.

How can Curriculum Elements that are Effective for Violence Prevention and Management Be Identified?

Definitions

Management is defined as “the process of dealing with or controlling things or people”, and prevention is defined is “the action of stopping something from happening or arising” (Oxford English Dictionary). The scope of this enquiry into the inclusion of violence prevention in training of early childhood teachers addresses the four levels identified by the World Health Organisation (2002; 2006):

- Preventing violence before it starts
- Preventing recurrence of violence
- Preventing adverse effects of violence (trauma, consequences of trauma)
- Preventing the spread of violence to the next generation or social level

Violence is defined as “the intentional use of physical force, or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” (WHO, 1996)

Prevention of violence against children requires that the underlying causes and risk factors contributing to violence be addressed (Pinheiro, 2006)

What does the Curriculum Need to Include to Address Violence Prevention and Management?

Teacher awareness of the impact of violence on children’s learning and development is critical for their ability to intervene effectively. Teachers need to be equipped in their training with a clear understanding of their role in violence prevention; the skills and the confidence to prevent violence and to intervene to stop violence when it occurs; the strategies for engaging children in learning and
practicing violence prevention; and the strategies for helping children to keep themselves and other children safe.

Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is a significant predictor not only of social emotional adjustment but of school readiness skills, with boys being especially vulnerable in early childhood to a range of behavioural and development challenges (Blodgett, 2014). This is a critical area for teacher training as it is important for teachers to understand the impact of ACES on children and furthermore, to develop skills in working with parents to reduce the impact of ACEs on children and the effects on them as they grow up. Parents need to understand the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on children, and potentially on their health in later life; how ACEs can be averted through appreciation of what they are doing to their children and the connection to what was done to them as children themselves. In a study in the USA, sharing information with parents about ACES resulted in a 35 percent drop in doctor visits (Felitti et al., 1998). Addressing ACEs requires a “two-generation” strategy, one in which teachers play a role in working closely with both children and parents.

The curricula followed in early childhood teacher training needs to develop the skills and dispositions of teachers to promote socio-emotional competence and communication skills in children’s learning and development alongside cognitive skills (WDR, 2015). The task for teacher trainers does not require “more” training and “new” curricula so much as providing sufficient weight to the teachers’ own non-cognitive skill development next to the cognitive to build their understanding and confidence in providing support to skills development in children in social-emotional learning (SEL) and communication.

Increased skills and confidence in, and enthusiasm for, participatory learning have assisted teachers to adopt positive discipline ideas and methods of implementation. Based on earlier research findings that participatory engagement of children in learning is much more likely than instruction to lead to skill development and behaviour change (Mangrulkar et al., 2001), a four-country evaluation of teacher use of the Health and Family Life Curriculum in the early years of primary school in the Eastern Caribbean found that teachers who were trained in participatory methods were much more likely to use them and experience greater connection with children (Whitman, 2009).

Learning to manage the negative behaviours and conduct disorders of children requires that teachers learn the skills and dispositions necessary. In data from longitudinal studies in four countries in the world, physical punishment of children is associated with poorer cognitive development outcomes and effects on psychosocial outcomes; it undermines children’s capacity to learn with lasting implications for life changes (Jones and Pells, 2015). Recent survey findings in the Caribbean indicate that physical punishment is still widely considered an accepted form of discipline and not seen as child maltreatment (UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area, 2014; OCR, 2013). Amongst adult respondents in representative samples in eight Caribbean countries, approximately a half believed that corporal punishment was not important to them for raising their own children but
approximately a third did not include the following in their definition of corporal punishment: slapping, hitting or spanking; shaking or throwing a child or kicking, punching or burning a child. Between a third and a half of respondents did not believe corporal punishment should be banned in schools. Whilst overall use of corporal punishment may be decreasing, the implications are that there is much work to be done with teachers and parents before prohibition of corporal punishment – in its comprehensive definition\(^7\) – is an achievable policy with support of parents and teachers in the Caribbean region’s schools. The task for teacher trainers is to ensure that early childhood teachers are aware of the impact of all forms of corporal punishment on children; are of the belief that corporal punishment is both harmful and unnecessary; and, are provided with opportunities during their training to develop confidence and effectiveness in the use of positive discipline and behaviour management strategies.

**Summary of the Elements in Effective Curricula that Address Violence Prevention and Management**

Teachers need not only to have opportunities to understand effective approaches to violence prevention, but to build and practice the skills they will need to apply them confidently with children. Knowledge, dispositions, skills, practice/confidence-building need to be included in early childhood teacher training in the following areas:

**Knowledge:**
- awareness of the impact of violence on children’s learning and development, and in particular of exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- how to work effectively with children affected by ACEs, engaging the children’s parents and carers, to cope with stress and to reduce the impact of ACEs on children’s learning and development

**Dispositions:**
- modelling strategies for violence prevention, including resolving conflicts fairly, to develop children’s increasing independence in managing their behaviours and feelings and to keep children safe
- modelling moral and pro-social behaviours with children

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\(^7\) Corporal punishment is a form of violence, defined as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light, to a child (for detailed definition, see Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13, 2011, paragraph 24) accessed at [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13_en.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13_en.pdf) on 16th January 2016
Skills:
- establishing routines and providing reliable relationships with children to build trust
- supporting social-emotional learning (SEL) and communication skills development with children

Practice:
- using strategies for participatory learning methodologies with children
- using positive discipline techniques for effective behaviour management and development of children’s learning

Are The Elements for Effective Prevention and Management of Violence Integrated into Curricula for Training of Teachers?

Reviews of curricula in use for early childhood teacher training were undertaken to identify the extent to which there was integration of the essential elements identified for prevention and management of violence. Reviews were undertaken in two middle-income countries of the Caribbean Community.

Middle-income country: *The curriculum for teacher training is implemented by the government as in-service training for those teachers in the government sector working in pre-schools for children 3 to 4 years of age:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements for effective prevention and management of violence</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- awareness of the impact of violence on children’s learning and development, and in particular of exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)</td>
<td>Specific attention to reducing impacts of ACEs not addressed in the teacher training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- how to work effectively with children affected by ACEs, engaging the children’s parents and carers, to cope with stress and to reduce the impact of ACEs on children’s learning and development.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispositions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- modelling strategies for violence prevention, including resolving conflicts fairly, to develop children’s increasing independence in managing their behaviours and feelings and to keep children safe</td>
<td>The training curriculum addresses this area partially through training in conflict resolution, intrinsic motivation and positive adult child interaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Not addressed specifically
- modelling moral and pro-social behaviours with children

**Skills:**
- establishing routines and providing reliable relationships with children to build trust
- supporting social-emotional learning (SEL) and communication skills development with children

Both skills specifically addressed in the training curriculum as skills components
Both areas are addressed in the training curriculum as skills components

**Practice:**
- using strategies for participatory learning methodologies with children
- using positive discipline techniques for effective behaviour management and development of children’s learning

The training curriculum provides for input and practice in participatory learning methodologies, and specifically in the use of the Plan Do Review methodology of the HighScope approach
The training curriculum partially addresses this by including use of techniques e.g., stories for assisting children to cope with challenges in the learning environment, and for conflict resolution, but does not provide a broader training in behaviour management\(^8\)

### Middle-income country: The curriculum for teacher training is implemented by the teacher training colleges as qualification training\(^9\) for early childhood teachers working with children 3 to 5 years of age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements for effective prevention and management of violence</th>
<th>Presence/absence in the curriculum reviewed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge:</td>
<td>Specific attention is given to supporting children</td>
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</table>

\(^8\) High/Scope® teachers avoid using punishment and reward as tools for managing children’s behaviour. When behaviour problems arise, they avoid isolating the child, instead encouraging the child to discuss the problem with the adult or with others involved. This problem-solving approach helps children develop social skills and become more aware of the impact of their actions on others (OECD, 2004)

\(^9\) Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education. Most early childhood teachers in the low-and middle-income countries in the region do not have undergraduate qualifications, specifically bachelors’ degrees; however, most countries in the region are in the process of establishing programmes leading to the Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education
- awareness of the impact of violence on children’s learning and development, and in particular of exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- how to work effectively with children affected by ACEs, engaging the children’s parents and carers, to cope with stress and to reduce the impact of ACEs on children’s learning and development.

**Dispositions:**
- modelling strategies for violence prevention, including resolving conflicts fairly, to develop children’s increasing independence in managing their behaviours and feelings and to keep children safe
- modelling moral and pro-social behaviours with children

**Skills:**
- establishing routines and providing reliable relationships with children to build trust
- supporting social-emotional learning (SEL) and communication skills development with children

**Practice:**
- using strategies for participatory learning methodologies with children

**Awareness:**
- awareness of the impact of violence on children’s learning and development, and in particular of exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- how to work effectively with children affected by ACEs, engaging the children’s parents and carers, to cope with stress and to reduce the impact of ACEs on children’s learning and development.

**Dispositions:**
- Fully covered in the training curriculum. Training in techniques for conflict resolution and social problem solving; the importance of modeling to guide children’s learning and growing autonomy. Specifically addressed as a learning area and outcome

**Skills:**
- Both skills specifically addressed in the training curriculum as skills components
- Both areas are addressed in the training curriculum as skills components. Skills learned through study, observation and group presentation.

**Practice:**
- The training curriculum links the practice of participatory learning with positive development and behaviours of children in a unit focused on *practical strategies to support positive guidance and classroom management*
using positive discipline techniques for effective behaviour management and development of children’s learning

Practice in the use of strategies for participatory learning is guided in placements for the general period of teaching practice, guided by a specialised unit in planning for positive guidance. Comprehensive course in guiding young children comprising theoretical perspectives and principles. The training curriculum provides for comprehensive coverage of the principles guiding behaviour management, with the skills and competencies required for positive discipline. Practice of the skills is not addressed explicitly but implied as a part of the general teaching practice requirements of the training.

Effective Curricula for Programme Approaches Combining Children’s Learning and Development with Teacher Training

Three examples of comprehensive and effective approaches that combine curricula for children with teacher training in violence prevention and management have been identified. The Second Step Suite and the Incredible Years Programme, both programmes developed and used in the USA, have had international influence and adaptation experience in other countries. The Incredible Years Programme has been adapted in a middle-income country, Jamaica, and has now evolved into the Irie School Kit. The third example is the Good School Kit, a programme developed for a low-income country, Uganda, by Raising Voices, a non-governmental organisation that works to prevent violence against women and children. In all three examples, the elements of effective curricula for violence prevention and management for children’s learning and development and teacher training are present and have been evaluated.

**The Second Step Programme**

The first edition of the Second Step Programme came out in 1986 developed and was supported by the Committee for Children, “a global nonprofit dedicated to fostering the safety and well-being of children through social-emotional learning and development”\(^\text{10}\). The Programme was subtitled a violence prevention programme. The programme has been evolving into a broader education and

\(^{10}\) [www.cfchildren.org/about-us](http://www.cfchildren.org/about-us)
skills programme combining social emotional learning (SEL), bullying prevention and child protection – the Second Step Suite. The programme teaches self-regulation and social-emotional skills that are developmental and sequential, and increase in complexity as children are ready to progress. In its most recent evolution, it includes a whole school approach in the use of restorative practices to repair harm, restore relationships, resolve wrong-doing and conflicts, and restore a sense of community to the school in a process that involves children, teachers and family members (where appropriate)\textsuperscript{11}.

An evaluation of the Early Learning component of the programme (for children three years of age and up to Kindergarten age) in a 64-classroom randomised control trial (RCT) is looking, currently, at effects of the curriculum on young children’s end-of-preschool social skills, emotion regulation, executive functioning and academic readiness skills, and how these affect kindergarten-readiness screening and kindergarten performance. Whilst there have not been any RCTs conducted on the Early Learning Programme prior to this, an RCT of kindergarten to second grade components (children 5-8 years of age) conducted over a one year period in 61 schools found that “significant improvements in social-emotional competence and behaviour were made by children who started the school year with skill deficits in these areas. Additionally, the number of lessons completed and child engagement were predictive of improved child outcomes” (Low et al., 2015). “Specifically, positive effects were found for conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, pro-social skills, SEL skills, skills for learning, emotion management and problem solving—as reported by teachers,” and “children who were most responsive to the program were those who struggle to consistently deploy positive social–emotional skills and positive behaviours (under demands of a classroom environment). That is, children who began with a higher than average number of problematic behaviours or skill deficits showed greater improvement, driving program effects” (Low et al., 2015).

International adaptations of Second Step have been undertaken in over 20 countries including Chile, Brazil, Iraq and Turkey.

\textit{What does the Curriculum for Children Comprise?}

In both the Early Learning (for children three years and up) and Kindergarten (children 5-6 years in age) stages, the Second Step programme comprises 4 units:

- \textit{Skills for Learning}: learning to listen; focussing attention; following directions; self-talk for staying on task; and being assertive.
- \textit{Empathy}: feelings; more feelings; identifying anger; same or different?; accidents; and caring and helping.

• **Emotion Management**: we feel feelings in our bodies; managing frustration; calming down strong feelings; handling waiting; managing anger; managing disappointment; and, handling being knocked down.

• **Friendship Skills and Problem Solving**: solving problems; inviting to play; fair ways to play; having fun with our friends; handling having things taken away; handling name-calling; and reviewing Second Step skills.

The process to be used with children includes activities in which the teacher demonstrates or models the skills or emotions directly, in scenarios inviting children to respond in words or actions; introduces skills and experiences in the context of a game; helps children to verbalise feelings and emotions in response to ad hoc day-to-day situations; and, helps children anticipate situations in which they will need to manage their behaviours and safety and that of others. The programme components include games, charts, story books and CDs of materials and songs, combined with posters, together with teaching notes on ways to do activities and the purposes behind the activities to enhance the teachers’ understanding and motivation. The programme is designed for a single school year, integrated into the wider curriculum.

**What Does The Curriculum for Teacher Training Comprise?**

Training of teachers is critical for implementation of the programme; teachers have to be well prepared and to understand how to keep children safe and how to build skills whilst responding effectively to children’s needs.

Second Step provides a Staff-Training Toolkit, is designed for use by professional teachers as an orientation to the Second Step Early Learning programme. The guidance on the website states “All you need is a training facilitator; we provide the rest”. The Toolkit is comprehensive, providing the materials required for the following:

• “Kick-Off Meeting (approx. 3 hrs): PowerPoint slides with facilitator notes, agenda, and staff handouts
• Support and Monitoring: Checklists, observation form, reflection log, implementation survey, and additional tools
• Check-In Meetings (approx. 30 min. each): Four meeting agendas, one for the end of each unit
• Wrap-Up Meeting (approx. 1 hr): PowerPoint slides with facilitator notes, agenda, and handout”

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12 [http://www.cfchildren.org/PURCHASE/Funding-Information/Federal-Funding-Options/Title-I/Teacher-Training](http://www.cfchildren.org/PURCHASE/Funding-Information/Federal-Funding-Options/Title-I/Teacher-Training)

13 The Toolkit once purchased is sourced on line at www.secondstep.org
Feedback from schools in the USA to the programme developers on the use of the programme in schools that have been purchased on-line and not sought any guidance directly from Second Step, is that the programme is user-friendly, straightforward to implement, and produces the effects expected. This is surprising and rewarding to the developers as it indicates that the consistent application of piloting/feedback/development process is working well and that the programme appears to maintain fidelity. The International Partnerships Manager provides a significant input into guiding the translation of the programme into the languages, norms and expectations of the countries that are using the programme, and maintains support to the partnership to ensure programme fidelity. Specific follow up with two middle-income countries utilising the programme is a task that has not yet been completed for this paper.

The Incredible Years Programme and The Irie School Kit, Jamaica

The Incredible Years Programme published in 1984 and offered to Head Start parents in the United States reduced conduct problems and fostered executive function skills in disadvantaged and high-risk children (WDR, 2015:107-8; Webster-Stratton et al., 2001 and 2004). Adapted for use with children 3-5 years of age in basic schools in Jamaica (Baker-Henningham et al., 2009), the programme was piloted initially in 27 classrooms in urban communities with high levels of community violence, in structures characterised by moderate to high levels of noise and crowding. It targets both teacher and child with a combination of the Incredible Years Teacher Training programme and a curriculum unit on social and emotional skills based on concepts and activities drawn from the Incredible Years Dina Dinosaur Classroom Curriculum. The programme’s main focus is on the specific strategies teachers can use to promote learning, social-emotional competence and good behaviour, aiming to improve the effectiveness teaching and the warmth and productiveness of teacher-child interactions. Findings from the pilot demonstrated that the programme increased teacher warmth and the extent to which teachers promoted social and emotional development skills; increased children’s appropriate behaviour, interest and enthusiasm; and increased the number of opportunities for children to share and help each other. The programme was expanded to 73 classrooms in an efficacy trial, a cluster RCT. Results of a follow up of teachers and children one year after conclusion of the trial found that training early childhood teachers in behaviour management skills not only leads to reductions in corporal punishment but also benefits children’s mental health, executive function, school achievement and school attendance.

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14 Email conversations with the Committee for Children Program Development Manager and the International Partnerships Manager, April 2016
These results are important for this paper, not only because of the finding that teacher training in specific skills and dispositions leads to widespread benefits in child behaviour and achievement, but also because, until this evaluation of the efficacy trial, information had been very limited on appropriate, effective and acceptable programmes to prevent and remediate child conduct problems in developing countries (Baker-Henningham, 2010). In fact, researchers state that they are not aware of any previous evaluation from a developing country of implementation of a school-based intervention to prevent conduct problems in early childhood (Baker-Henningham and Walker, 2009a).

Results from interview and focus group discussions with teachers showed that the programme was largely compatible with the values and beliefs of teachers and parents of pre-school children, and they were familiar with the majority of strategies introduced through the programme” (Baker-Henningham, 2010). In addition, as teacher confidence grew with the use of positive strategies such as praise, incentives and building positive relationships with children, they perceived these strategies to be more acceptable, more effective and easier to use than negative strategies, such as ignoring children, or implementing time-out for negative behaviours (Baker-Henningham and Walker, 2009a). However, despite the reduction in the use of corporal punishment, teachers perceived that it still had its place, although, generally, it was not considered desirable or effective.

Of further importance to low and middle income countries, is the evidence for a low-cost training intervention that can be integrated into existing services, accommodated within existing pre-service and in-service training programmes, and supported on-site in schools through monthly visits from early childhood officers in visits lasting one hour to assist teachers in the application of the skills. A limitation to its use would be in very overcrowded and noisy structures in which very little of the programme would be possible to implement (as indeed it would be to implement any curriculum). Whilst targeting of officer time and training scheduling would be required, the Jamaica study has demonstrated that an effective intervention both to prevent and to manage violence in an early childhood setting is adaptable to the country context and systems, and is cost effective and well-used. The programme has expanded to 228 classrooms in an effectiveness trial (to report in 2018) which includes an economic evaluation and implementation strand. The local management team of the programme has named it The Irie School Kit.¹⁶

What does the Curriculum for Teacher Training Comprise?

The Irie School Kit Teacher Training programme includes four modules on: creating an emotionally supportive classroom environment; managing child behaviour; promoting social and emotional

¹⁶ Irie means good, pleasing. It is used as a general term of approval in Jamaica, created by the Rastafarian community.
competence; and behaviour planning. The module on social emotional competence includes training of teachers in specific techniques and activities to teach and reinforce child social skills. The programme uses videotape modelling, role-plays and discussions and follows a collaborative model of training that emphasises how participants applying skills and concepts to their own situations. Teachers are set assignments, such as developing individual behaviour plans, using specific labelled praise (i.e. teaching a child what is expected by praising a behaviour and saying exactly what it is about the behaviour that works well) to promote a targeted behaviour and setting clear classroom rules and routines. During the course of a single school year, initial training is undertaken one day a month spread over five months (reduced from seven months in the pilot phase). In-classroom support sessions to the teacher are provided on a monthly basis for eight months lasting approximately 1 hour in which teachers are encouraged to discuss any challenges they encounter using the new strategies and to come up with potential solutions. Teachers have an activity book of songs, games and lesson plans, a ‘toolbox’ of guidance on how (and why) to use each strategy, picture cards and story books (locally developed, written and illustrated) to illustrate common classroom scenarios and strategies that children can use to overcome common problems (e.g., waiting for a turn, sharing a book etc.).

At the conclusion of the pilot an in-depth interview was conducted with each intervention teacher. The training was highly valued. “Teachers’ accounts suggested that improvements to their practice in three main areas were pivotal to the effectiveness of the intervention. These were: (i) a deeper understanding of children’s needs and abilities; (ii) use of more positive and proactive strategies; and (iii) explicitly teaching social and emotional skills” (Baker-Henningham and Walker, 2009a). Results from focus group discussions with teachers during programme implementation found “many appropriate and useful strategies for managing child behaviour were used including showing children affection, spending time with children, using praise, incentives and rewards and withdrawing privileges and using time-out as consequences for misbehaviour” (Baker-Henningham, 2010).

What does the Curriculum for Children Comprise?

The Incredible Years Classroom Curriculum consists of seven units to be delivered over a whole school year: (i) learning school rules; (ii) learning how to do your best in school; (iii) understanding and detecting feelings; (iv) problem-solving skills; (v) anger management; (vi) learning how to be friendly; and (vii) learning how to talk with friends. In the Irie School Kit child lessons are conducted during one school term only and concepts drawn from four of the following units are covered: (1) learning the school rules; (2) understanding and detecting feelings; (3) anger management; (4) learning how to be friendly. Each lesson lasts approximately 30-40 minutes and consists of a circle time discussion followed by a group activity. The lessons involve stories, songs, discussions and role-plays of situations faced by young children in their daily lives. Children are active participants in identifying and solving problems and helping each other learn new skills. Activities include cooperative art projects, group games and structured play sessions to practice friendship skills. Each school is provided with a set of materials to conduct the child lessons including a hand puppet and
visual aids (e.g. pictures to represent the concepts) in addition to a small amount of additional teaching resources including modelling clay, manipulatives, building blocks and puzzles.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{The Good School Kit\textsuperscript{18}, Uganda}

The \textit{Good School Kit} was developed for use in primary schools in Uganda by the \textit{Raising Voices organisation}, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that works to prevent violence against women and children. It is the only programme combining curricula for children and teacher training in violence prevention and management that was identified in a low-income country. Although its focus is at the primary school level, it is included here for two reasons:

- The primary focus of the Kit is to prevent violence against children through a whole school approach. As such, it goes beyond the curricula for teacher training and for children’s learning, to include interventions at the school level, including strategies for developing participation of children in school life and for encouraging pride in their school, and strategies for administrative staff in violence prevention and management.

- The Kit is designed for use in a primary school\textsuperscript{19}, and has been used with teachers of children who are in middle childhood/early adolescence. However, several approaches are relevant to early childhood settings, particularly those that are resource-constrained. These include the focus on developing the dispositions and skills of teachers in managing children and the learning process, making children feel safe and enabled to focus on learning, and shifting the reality of school life away from violence and towards positive discipline.

The \textit{Good School Kit} comprises booklets, posters and facilitation guides for 60 different activities related to improving the learning environment, to respecting each other, to understanding power relationships, to using non-violent discipline, and to improving teaching techniques. As a whole school approach, rather than a solely a curriculum approach, the use of the Kit includes teachers, parents, children and administrators. The implementation of the Kit is taking place in 100 schools in Uganda, supported by a peer network that is coordinated by the Raising Voices NGO. The principle that drives the Good School Kit is that “everything is connected”: everyone and everything has a role to play in violence prevention.

The randomised control trial (RCT) of the use of the Good School Kit is one of the first trials of a violence prevention programme in schools in a low-income setting (Devries et al., 2013). The RCT

\textsuperscript{17} The Irie Tool Kit and will be made freely available on-line in 2016
\textsuperscript{18} The tool kit can be downloaded free of cost at http://raisingvoices.org/download-good-school-toolkit
\textsuperscript{19} Students in Ugandan primary schools are slightly older than those in higher income countries, a factor to consider when generalising the results to primary school populations with different age profiles. The results should, however, be generalisable to most African settings.
was conducted over an 18 month period in 42 schools (21 in intervention, 21 in control) in one district of Uganda. The findings included a reduction in the use of physical violence by staff by 42 percent, and children reported feelings of improved well-being and safety at school, suggesting that the Toolkit succeeded in changing the school environment, and is an effective intervention to reduce violence against children from school staff in Ugandan primary schools (Devries et al., 2015). The shift in use of violence was notable, particularly as levels of physical violence in the intervention schools remained high, with 30 percent and 60 percent of students reporting violence in the past week and past term respectively.

What does the Programme Approach Comprise?

The overview for the Kit sets out the overall purposes for its use which include: making education relevant for children; changing the content of what is being taught and emphasising instead the learning of skills; improving the state of the school buildings and physical plant; tackling the absence of good role models for children and the absence of persons who take an interest in children’s development; and tackling ineffective and unfair school management and governance.

Six steps are outlined for making the school good:
Step 1: Your team and network
Step 2: Preparing for change
Step 3: Good teachers and teaching
Step 4: Positive discipline
Step 5: Good learning environment
Step 6: Good Administration and the Future

Steps three and four are particularly pertinent for approaches that could be adapted to early childhood teacher training for children’s curricula in early childhood settings.

Step 321: Good teachers and teaching

Teachers are encouraged to expand their role beyond academic instruction to “interact positively and creatively with children”. A Good Teacher cartoon book succinctly identifies the characteristics of a teacher who is prepared, teaches effectively and likes children.

The objective of the step is to “to equip teachers for increasing student confidence and success”, the outcomes of which will contribute to creating a “learning environment that is safe and respectful”, and to supporting the administration “in becoming more transparent and accountable”.

Commencing with the statement that “Good teaching is about more than positive discipline; it is about creating students who love to learn,” this step sets out a series of activities for teachers to undertake to reflect critically on their dispositions and approaches and to change them. Activities include self-examination and collective processes for exploring the role of teachers; how relationships with children are created and why they are important; creative teaching techniques and what these comprise; the importance of recognition and feedback, being appreciated and also learning from evaluation; meeting with other teacher to share experiences, especially with respect to behaviour management and positive discipline. Within a section on strengthening capacity, practical activities include how to do basic lesson plans, how to conduct and pace yourself in giving a lesson, understanding what drives children’s misbehaviour, and how to use one’s own understanding of role models to develop oneself as a role model for the children being taught.

**Step 4**22: Positive discipline

On the principle that “the strongest type of discipline comes from within”, practical steps are detailed for establishing “the school culture and disciplinary methods that support positive discipline instead of corporal punishment”.

Positive discipline is described as “two things:

- An Approach — Positive discipline is the disciplinary approach that provides a violence-free alternative to corporal punishment.
- A Quality — Positive discipline is the quality we build in students when we stop using corporal punishment. Having positive discipline means to be motivated from within to be ones best, due to feelings of self-worth rather than fear or shame”.

The strategies of self-examination and collective work of teachers in a group are followed in this step. Most of the activities involve reading and reflection, prior to participation in a workshop-style meeting lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes to intensively practice skills. Workshop topics include how to foster good behaviour; how to develop expectations and rules in collaboration with children; how to hold regular (weekly) meetings with the children to deal with issues that have arisen that week and to agree together how to make things better; to understand what comprises corporal punishment and the values and thinking from which the use of corporal punishment has come; and, what positive

discipline comprises and how it works. There is a great deal of use of role play to enable teachers to explore in safety what the changes mean for their coping strategies in the classroom over time. One of the activities is “putting Mr Corporal Punishment on trial”. The process engages teachers in being able to see how they will manage without corporal punishment in their tool box, and to see the connection with building better relationships with students, guaranteeing respect for them and improving the learning process for all.

Step 5\(^23\): Good learning environment

In a similar process to the previous steps, the activities involve teachers in both self-reflection and collective engagement in improving the learning environment. The focus of this step is on improving the psychological environment at school, which “is influenced by how everyone relates to everyone else”. This step is focused on the activities in which children learn through being “invited to act and interact in ways they haven’t before”. To do so, the teacher learns to “integrate life skills activities into the school day”: team-building and cooperation; respect and responsibility; self-esteem and values; friendship and relationships; and gender and self-image.

Part of the process of integration of the life-skills is to “make connections for students between the life-skills they have explored and other events happening at school” on a week-by-week basis. Teachers learn how to draw out the children’s “voice”, to enable their experiences to be recognised and heard; to make children feel safe; to encourage activities in caring for the school compound; and to help them get to know one another in activities that are short and fun to do.

Activities that directly address violence prevention include experience in how to prevent misunderstandings and resolve conflicts; how to manage feelings of hurt and anger in situations such as rumour, gossip, and bullying; “throwing away” bad feelings; looking after each other; and knowing what to do in situations of unwanted attention. On this last point, there are a number of activities related to making the whole school environment free of sexual violence, including policies, teacher behaviour, and children’s awareness of what to do when they experience sexual violence in any form from another child or adult.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study addressed the following questions with respect to the curriculum for children’s development and learning and for the training of early childhood teachers:

**Curricula for Children’s Learning in Early Childhood:**

1. Do the curricula used for children’s learning in early childhood include a focus on the prevention of violence?
2. If yes to question 1, what is included in the focus: is it to instill values, attitudes and understandings that prevent violence? Is it to develop the competencies to prevent violence occurring in their lives? Or is it both?
3. What examples of values, attitudes and understandings, and skills building in violence prevention would be useful for dissemination?
4. What examples could be usefully tested in the future for effectiveness and how could this be done?

**Curricula for The Training of Early Childhood Teachers:**

1. Do the curricula used to prepare early childhood teachers include a focus on the prevention of violence?
2. If yes to question 1, what is included in the focus: is it awareness raising or skills building or both?
3. What examples of awareness raising and skills building in violence prevention would be useful for dissemination?
4. What examples could be usefully tested in the future for effectiveness and how could this be done?

An examination of how the curricula for children and teacher training address the prevention and management of violence was undertaken first by defining what was being looked for, and secondly by identifying the elements that addressed prevention and management of violence as defined, including those that addressed the underlying causes and risk factors for violence. An overview of the main elements for effective curricula in the training of teachers and for the programmes that support children’s learning in early childhood settings was prepared. The overview drew on published research and reports of effective programming, with a particular focus on those curricula that have been used or adapted for low- and middle-income countries.

This process revealed the following elements that effectively address violence prevention and management:
**In the Curriculum for Children’s Learning and Development:**

- Children learn social-emotional skills and dispositions and practice them regularly with adult guidance.
- Children learn to exercise their developing skills by doing activities that foster creative play and social connection; learn how to cope with stress; learn to resolve conflicts with adult help and over time, direct their own actions with ever-decreasing adult supervision.
- Children learn to manage the impacts on them of the experience of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); opportunities are provided for parents to understand and engage in a process of reducing the impact of ACEs on their children’s learning and development.

**In the Curriculum for Early Childhood Teacher Training:**

**Knowledge:**

- Awareness of the impact of violence on children’s learning and development, and in particular of exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- How to work effectively with children affected by ACEs, engaging the children’s parents and carers, to cope with stress and to reduce the impact of ACEs on children’s learning and development.

**Dispositions:**

- Modelling strategies for violence prevention, including resolving conflicts fairly, to develop children’s increasing independence in managing their behaviours and feelings and to keep children safe.
- Modelling moral and pro-social behaviours with children.

**Skills:**

- Establishing routines and providing reliable relationships with children to build trust.
- Supporting social-emotional learning (SEL) and communication skills development with children.

**Practice:**

- Using strategies for participatory learning methodologies with children.
- Using positive discipline techniques for effective behaviour management and development of children’s learning.

Utilising these elements as a protocol, curricula in use in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) of the Caribbean Community were reviewed. The findings can be summarised as follows:

1. The stated intentions of the curricula reviewed addressed all aspects of the effective elements of violence prevention and management with the exception of one: learning about the impact of ACEs and having parents involved in the reduction of ACEs.
2. The content of the curricula addressed social emotional learning (SEL) of the children; however the learning of social emotional skills is not explicitly addressed. It is not possible therefore to determine whether skills are being learned, and learned effectively, without observation of the curriculum in the early childhood settings. It is also not known whether the curriculum for children provides sufficient opportunity to practice skills in SEL. The content of the curricula for teacher training addressed understanding of and techniques for SEL; however how to help children learn skills in SEL is not explicitly addressed. It is not known whether the teaching practice undertaken during teacher training provides sufficient opportunity to develop competent skills in SEL and positive discipline and the confidence to apply them in the classroom. However, one example reviewed of teacher training demonstrated a clear philosophical basis for providing guidance to teachers in the practice of positive discipline, principally through learning from direct observation of classroom practice and teaching practice.

Turning to the review of programmes that combined curricula for children’s learning and development with curricula for teacher training, and that had been subject to robust evaluation, in each case the curricula are skills-based. The skills in SEL are addressed as competencies that are taught and practiced under supervision, with continuing guidance over a defined period of time. With respect specifically to early childhood settings, the Irie School Kit demonstrates not only effectiveness for children’s learning and development, teacher confidence and competence, but also cost effectiveness. The means by which effectiveness has been achieved – through skills training workshops over five months, and one-hour coaching sessions on a monthly basis over eight months – provides a robust mechanism for orientation, maintenance and sustainability of the approach in resource-poor (but not chaotic) settings in early childhood.

**Recommendations**

1. It may be useful to use the approach taken in this study as a ‘lens’ for reviewing the curricula for children and teacher training in other LMICs and regions of the world. Evaluation of curricula in practice in early childhood settings and in teacher training institutions is essential to identify the extent to which there is learning, and guidance in learning, of social-emotional skills and effective use of positive discipline strategies. It is therefore recommended in countries in which curricula explicitly address aspects of violence prevention and management through SEL and positive discipline that evaluations should be undertaken.

2. The Jamaica experience in the development and implementation of the Irie School Kit is an example from which much can be learned for policy and practice as it is low cost, effective, user-friendly and accessible. It is recommended that this approach be widely disseminated, indicating its roots in the Incredible Years programme together with its iterations and adaptations over time in the context of poor communities affected by violence in a middle-income country.
References


Know Violence in Childhood


Annex

A selection of education and early childhood sector responses to the incidence of violence in the Caribbean.


The framework for Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood Development in the Caribbean for children birth to eight years of age were identified and developed by specialists and representatives of 18 Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries, addressing six key areas of learning: wellness, resilience, valuing culture, effective communication, intellectual empowerment, and respect for self, others and the environment. The guide that was subsequently published in 2004, and updated and revised in 2010 (CCDC, 2010), provides specific guidance in violence prevention and management. The focus for the guidance on violence management and prevention is focused upon within the Learning Outcome: Resilience as follows:

- For children from birth to three years of age: The framework provides guidance in two specific areas: first, for involving parents and the community members in parenting education, particularly those who live in difficult circumstances on “how to help children to cope with violence in their communities” (our emphasis). Secondly, drawing on resilience research to demonstrate that children can overcome adversity and “make good of themselves”, the Framework provides the following guidance to caregivers and practitioners on how to pay special attention to children in adversity and to support them as follows:
  - Reaffirming the worth of each child;
  - Encouraging the development of a warm, secure relationship with a caring adult;
  - Providing opportunities for the child to make their own decisions and choices without compromising safety;
  - Giving a child help, support and reassurance when this is needed; and
  - Reinforcing the positive characteristics of each child”24.

Guidance is provided also on managing the trauma caused by loss and the experience of grief for children:
  - “Being a good listener. Allow the child to tell his/her story;
  - Making no assumptions about how the child ‘should’ react. Each person understands and feels death in their own, unique way;

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○ Staying supportive. Grieving is a process, not an event, so adequate time must be allowed to grieve in the manner that works for that child. Some children need to deal with their emotional pain before resuming normal activities.<sup>25</sup>

- *For children from three to five years of age:* Guidance is provided to practitioners in two areas in particular: first, on the emergence of aggressive behaviour patterns in children affected by emotional stress and violence. The guidance is provided within the context of supporting a child’s special needs for behaviour management support and intervention, and includes the development of individualised behavioural plans to include strategies for intensifying support to self-control. Secondly, the guidance addresses the value of practitioners engaging in the life of the wider community where community peace is not being maintained, in order to help reduce children’s risk. Strategies include forging partnerships with community organisations to reduce risks to children, drawing on source material from Gartrell (2004), Glenn et al., (2004) and Levin (2003).

2. The Pilot of The INSIGHTS into Children’s Temperament Programme, Jamaica

INSIGHTS is a comprehensive educational intervention developed in the United States, that has been found to enhance social-emotional development and academic learning of young children in early primary school grades and the behaviour management skills of their parents and teachers. Efficacy has been tested in three clinical trials demonstrating effects for enhanced student engagement; reduced off-task and disruptive behaviours among children; greater sustained attention; improved student/teacher relationships; and higher reading and math scores among children (O’Connor et al., 2014).

The programme provides training for parents and teachers in child behaviour management strategies suited to children’s different temperaments. The programme enhances children’s self-regulation by strengthening their empathy and problem-solving skills. They also learn various strategies to resolve dilemmas with parents, teachers and peers. With regard to the programme interventions for the training of teachers and for children’s learning and development:

- Teachers attend 10 weekly 2-hour sessions that include instruction, classroom related videotaped vignettes, role-playing, discussion, and assignments.
- Children participate in 10 weekly 30-minute sessions in their own classrooms. Puppets are used to depict each of four temperaments: Fredrico the Friendly, Gregory the Grumpy, Hilary

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the Hard Worker, and Coretta the Cautious. Together, puppets and children solve daily dilemmas in non-aggressive way.

The programme was developed for Jamaica by Professor Sandee McLowry of New York University. In the pilot in Jamaica, in 2012, attention was given to the cultural resonance of the approach in discussion with the main stakeholders in government and training institutions, and the consensus was that it resonated well with expectations for early childhood education in Jamaica. The programme has been implemented in 13 schools in urban and rural areas, and will be evaluated by a team at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica.

3. The Pals Programme, Jamaica

The PALS Programme commenced in 1994 as Peace and Love in Schools, and has evolved subsequently into Peace and Love in Society (2004). It was set up in response to the incidence of violence in schools to teach alternative dispute resolution techniques in three ways: delivery of conflict-resolution programmes; customisation of conflict-resolution curricula to meet the needs of stakeholders and constituents; and, building of strategic alliances and partnerships.

With regard to schools, PALS programmes have been used in each phase of education from primary to tertiary. Whilst it has not been used in early childhood settings, it has been used in 200 primary schools, and has been used so comprehensively in some schools that these have become known as PALS Schools. In recent years, lack of funding has meant that there has been a reduction in the use of the programmes offered.

The programmes offered in schools include:

- **Managing Conflict and Violence in Schools**: This is a 49 hour programme of workshops, focussing on teaching conflict and anger management skills; communication, assertiveness and negotiation skills; problem-solving and the importance of creating a community characterised by respect, tolerance, cooperation, empathy, non-discrimination, equality and justice.

- **Creating and Maintaining a Safe School**: This programme of workshops lasts 7 hours, focussing on the five ‘Ps’ of School safety: physical safety, psychological safety, policies, programmes and partnerships. It provides assistance to a school to design, implement and customise the five ‘Ps’ to make their campus safe.

Programme details can be seen at: [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/insights/](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/insights/)
• **Critical Incident Management for Schools**: This programme of workshops lasts 26 hours focussing on planning how to deal with critical incidents. It assists a school to establish a critical response team and to implement a critical incident management intervention.

• **Transforming School Culture**: This programme of workshops lasts 14 hours focussing on how to preserve desirable elements in the school culture and how to transform toxic elements.

• **Creating a Nurturing School Climate**: This programme of workshops lasts 7 hours focussing on understanding conflict in the classroom. It explores challenges facing students; successful behaviours for the successful child; positive teacher attitudes; and how to create a friendly classroom.

• **Responding to Inappropriate Student Behaviour**: This programme of workshops lasts 14 hours, focussing on how to deal effectively with students whose behaviour impacts negatively on the goal of working together effectively. The content includes: understanding students needs; analysing factors that may influence student behaviour; understanding conflict in the classroom; providing techniques for minimising student misbehaviour; handling disruptive behaviours; using problem solving to resolve behaviour problems; behaviour management procedures; and discipline and punishment. Workshop participants are invited to share real life challenges they have faced.

• **Classroom Management**: This programme of workshops lasts 14 hours focussing on behaviour management skills to ensure that students are consistently and actively engaged in instructional activities and on-task behaviours. The role of classroom rules is also explored.

• **Conflict Resolution Education for Teachers Colleges**: this programme of workshops lasts 60 hours, including a training of trainers component, and delivery a peace education curriculum geared to meet the needs of student teachers. It includes elements on conflict resolution, school culture and climate, classroom management.