Introduction

Many Ontario Certified Teachers and Registered Early Childhood Educators teaching the Full Day Kindergarten program and grade one say that students are not ready for grade one (Younas, 2016, pg. 16). In addition, kindergarten class sizes have reached up to 32 students, which contributes to a lack of adult scaffolding within the classroom and leaves educators wondering if children “are actually learning anything new” (Younas, 2016, pg. 16). Furthermore, educators face challenges closing the gap between Full Day Kindergarten’s play-based curriculum and the grade one expectations, stating “literacy and numeracy is decreasing dramatically because there is only so much we can do with play-based contexts” (Lynch, M. 2016, pg. 33).

This study explored the barriers and benefits of the Full Day Kindergarten program through the perspectives of Ontario Certified Teachers and Early Childhood Educators.

Literature Review

In grade one children are expected to possess skills of early literacy and numeracy, and have a good grasp on self-regulation. One of the purposes for the implementation of the Full Day Kindergarten program was an “overall plan to help children get a strong start on school” (Younas, 2016, pg. 11). In addition, kindergarten class sizes have reached up to 32 students, which contributes to a lack of adult scaffolding within the classroom and leaves educators wondering if children “are actually learning anything new” (Younas, 2016, pg. 16). Furthermore, educators face challenges closing the gap between Full Day Kindergarten’s play-based curriculum and the grade one expectations, stating “literacy and numeracy is decreasing dramatically because there is only so much we can do with play-based contexts” (Lynch, M. 2016, pg. 33).

This study explored the barriers and benefits of the Full Day Kindergarten program through the perspectives of Ontario Certified Teachers and Early Childhood Educators.

Research Design

A quantitative method using a questionnaire was the chosen method for this research. The quantitative method served as useful as this research sought to study a large sample size of Ontario Certified Teachers and Registered Early Childhood Educators. Researchers used an online survey tool (Survey Monkey) to collect the data.

Procedure

The method employed for this data collection was an online component. Researchers used Survey Monkey to create the online questionnaire and collect data. Participants were sent a link to the online questionnaire that took approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. It contained 20 multiple choice questions and 4 open-ended questions.

Participants

The target population for this study included Ontario Certified Teachers and Registered Early Childhood Educators with experience in the Full Day Kindergarten program and/or grade one. Participants were recruited from elementary school boards and social media discussion groups such as Facebook. 64% (n=315) of participants reported having 4 or more years of experience in the FDK program. 38% (n=250) of respondents reported that students may not be academically prepared to move on to grade one. 53% (n=308) of participants reported that an average kindergarten classroom should have between 15-25 students. When the researchers asked how many children the participants had in their classroom, 53% (n=303) indicated that they have 25-30 children.

Results and Discussion

Current literature shows one of the barriers in the complete success of the Full Day Kindergarten program is the long-term effects of the Full Day Kindergarten program, this may be due to the programs fairly recent emergence. For the success of the research study, the data collection procedure was conducted in the following steps:

1. Researchers submitted an application to the Research Ethics Board for permission to conduct the study.
2. Researchers sought participants who were Registered Early Childhood Educators and Ontario Certified Teachers. Simple random sampling and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants.
3. Researchers aimed to have a minimum of 80 participants, utilizing simple random and snowball sampling.
4. Researchers shared a link to complete the questionnaire on Survey Monkey through email and social media platforms (Facebook).
5. Researchers were able to recruit 347 participants.

The purpose of this research is to (1) inform practice, (2) fill a gap in current research and (3) influence policy change. This research can help to inform practice by providing information on the current outcomes and shortcomings of the current practice in the Full Day Kindergarten program. Educators who are more informed may be more inclined to change their practices and impact positive change for students. We also noticed that currently there is not much research done on the long-term effects of the Full Day Kindergarten program, this may be due to the programs fairly recent emergence. Therefore, this research can help to identify the need for such a study. Lastly, and arguably most importantly, this research can help to inform policy changes in the Full Day Kindergarten program. Policy makers can use this research as a point of reference to help create a more comprehensible version of the Full Day Kindergarten document. This may help to eliminate the current misunderstandings that aids in some of the shortcomings of the Full Day Kindergarten program.

More than half of the participants strongly agree that they have a full understanding of the Full Day Kindergarten Program (ontario’s Full Day Kindergarten Program and School Readiness - Candice Borges, Crystal Loxley and Sarah Melo)