FINAL REPORT
FOR THE FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE HIGHSCOPE® CURRICULUM REFORM PROGRAMME
(FEBRUARY TO DECEMBER, 2014)
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Submitted by:
http://manitouinc.com/
Formative Evaluation of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and St. Kitts and Nevis completed between February and December 2014.

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<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Antigua Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPM</td>
<td>Barbuda People’s Movement</td>
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<td>CARICOM</td>
<td>Caribbean Community</td>
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<td>CCM</td>
<td>Concerned Citizens Movement</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CXC</td>
<td>Caribbean Examinations Council</td>
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<td>DI</td>
<td>Direct Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFP</td>
<td>Dominica Freedom Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLP</td>
<td>Dominica Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC$</td>
<td>Eastern Caribbean Dollars</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Eastern Caribbean Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECCE</td>
<td>Early Child Care and Education</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECERS</td>
<td>Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale</td>
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<td>FGDs</td>
<td>focus group discussions</td>
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<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrollment Ratio</td>
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<td>GEROS</td>
<td>Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System</td>
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<td>HRBAP</td>
<td>Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming</td>
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<td>KDIs</td>
<td>Key Developmental Indicators</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>NER</td>
<td>Net Enrollment Rate</td>
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<td>NRP</td>
<td>Nevis Reformation Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Nursery School</td>
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<td>OECD-DAC</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<td>OECS</td>
<td>Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States</td>
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<td>PAM</td>
<td>People’s Action Movement</td>
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<td>PTAs</td>
<td>Parent-Teacher Associations</td>
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<td>Programme Quality Assessments (HighScope monitoring instrument)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ToC</td>
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<td>ToT</td>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
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<td>SIDS</td>
<td>Small island Developing State</td>
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<tr>
<td>SKNLP</td>
<td>St. Kitts and Nevis Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNEG</td>
<td>United Nations Evaluation Group</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPP</td>
<td>United Progressive Party [Antigua and Barbuda]</td>
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<td>UWP</td>
<td>Dominica United Workers Party</td>
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Executive Summary
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background Information

Given the challenges that the Caribbean nations face to provide children of all ages full access to quality developmental and education services, one potential solution identified, particularly to tackle low enrolment, is quality early childhood development (ECD) programmes. The advocacy for the use of a child-initiated ECD curriculum formed part of UNICEF’s 2012-2016 framework to address young children’s needs in the Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA). With US$ 613,986.83 from the Government of Italy, UNICEF contributed to the implementation of the HighScope Preschool Curriculum Model Programme1 from 2006-2008 in four participating countries: (1) Antigua and Barbuda; (2) Dominica; (3) Grenada; and (4) St. Kitts and Nevis. The goal of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme in the pilot territories was threefold:

1. To improve the learning environments and quality of developmental and educational programmes in a total of 13 preschool settings in the participating countries;
2. To subsequently showcase the participating centres as “models” in the use of a child-directed curriculum; and
3. Using these models to inform wider curriculum implementation plans and serve as teacher training demonstration sites for both the participating countries and for the greater Eastern Caribbean sub-region.

The evidence indicates that the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme is currently at various stages of model implementation and adaptation, owing to the multiple contexts in which the programme has been implemented. Given these developments, this formative evaluation is timely.

The HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme

The HighScope Curriculum is designed to promote high-quality early education for children and youth worldwide. Theoretically, the curriculum is “a new approach to teaching and learning….research-based and child focused….the HighScope Curriculum uses a carefully designed process — called “active participatory learning” — to achieve powerful, positive outcomes.” (from http://highscope.org) The effective implementation of the HighScope Curriculum includes a daily routine of: (1) Small and large group activities; (2) Plan-Do- Review; and (3) Outside time.

In essence, the total number of participants reached by the programme is:

- 2,017 children enrolled since 2009-2014 and their parents;
- At least 42 HighScope teachers;

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1 Note that there are many different types of HighScope curricula, and this evaluation only focuses on the Preschool Curriculum.
Six Ministry of Education (MoE) training of trainer (ToT) professionals;
Fourteen MoE ECD professionals; and
A number of representatives from institutional partners the HighScope Educational Foundation and UNICEF.

Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

The formative evaluation concentrates on how and how well the programme is being implemented; it describes how the programme operates, the services it delivers, and the current benefits of these services. Based on Terms of Reference, the objectives of this evaluation are to:

1. Assess the [programme] results achieved to date and identify the intended and any unintended results;
2. Identify the opportunities and constraints the programme has faced and draw lessons and good and bad practices from them;
3. Review the operational effectiveness of the pilot, including cost of implementation; and
4. Identify requirements and implications for possibly mainstreaming and implementing an interactive, child-centered curriculum on a national scale in the model countries and other Caribbean countries.

Evaluation Design and Methodologies

The evaluation approach was participatory, consultative, and concentrated on understanding what is valued by all key stakeholders. Learning was the focus which included:

1. involving a range of participants to share their views;
2. understanding the overlapping realities of those implementing ECD initiatives in the Caribbean; and
3. encouraging stakeholders to proactively engage in identifying sustainable solutions and recommendations.

The design is mixed methods, sourcing qualitative data (through interviews, focus groups, and observations) from all relevant stakeholders, such as children, parents, teachers, MoE officials, HighScope, and UNICEF. The quantitative data sources included M&E data from the ECD Units, data from the learning centre disaggregated records from 2008 through 2013, centre expenditures and income, survey data from teachers, and previously undertaken studies.

Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected from interviews with key stakeholders, classroom observations and focus group discussions. The quantitative methods included an array of different surveys for:

1. teachers;
2. the learning centre enrolment, staffing, income, and expenses; and
3. six Training of Trainers (ToTs).

At the beginning and end of the evaluation process, three meetings were held, one in each participating country with the education sector stakeholders (from teachers to principals to senior officials from the Ministry of Education).

Limitations

The main limitations were:

1. limited institutional memory;
2. Chickungunya (in Dominica) which prevented access to the children and teachers;
3. an unrepresentative evaluation database with parents who are active in their children’s lives and responsive to their children’s educational needs.

The parent focus group discussions (FGDs) were voluntary, and the parents who attended and contributed data were self-selected. Those who were comparatively less active and responsive
were least likely to participate in parent FGDs, and so their input and voices are absent from the database.

Findings

Strong progress in the adaptation and implementation of the HighScope Curriculum has been achieved. This finding applied to the policy level, in terms of strengthening ECD services access, as well as to the school level, regarding delivering quality services to children. Evidence confirms that macro-level priorities support the full and equitable access to early childhood education, and the delivery of the HighScope model is consistent with the vision(s) that were outlined in strategic and country-level policy instruments. The implication of this favorable policy environment is impressive results accomplished in increasing access to preschool education in all three countries. The HighScope design is child-directed, child-centred, uses play to strengthen learning outcomes, including being well-adjusted, effective communication, critical thinking, independent learning, respecting themselves and the environment. Evidence from multiple stakeholders confirms that the benefits of the curriculum were valued. There was no evidence of stakeholders objecting to the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme. Key policy-level stakeholders from the MoE, parents and teachers in all three participating countries expressed positive views about the HighScope Curriculum.

For promoting Gender Equality, HighScope model appears to help reduce gender inequalities. Classroom observation data indicates that the materials allow both boys and girls to engage actively and in non-traditional, non-stereotypical roles. The majority of the model learning centres also tend to service the most vulnerable children, which demonstrates clear alignment with RBPA and equity concerns. Most of the children are engaged and exercising their rights to play. As rights holders, the children are active in constructing worlds that supported their own development through their interactions with the adults and other children. This observation also applies to children with disabilities, although it should not be generalized to all children in the programme.

An unknown proportion of parent (and family caregivers) duty bearers may not fulfill their responsibilities of: (1) engaging in an active adult-child relationship; (2) helping with work at home; (3) managing their children’s education; and (4) paying school fees. The major assumption that the child is a priority within family setting may be unmet. The ultimate result of this identified gap in the theory of change is two-fold: When some duty bearer parents do not: (1) support their children at home; and/or (2) pay (or delay in paying) school fees, this behavior creates an external constraint directly influencing the effective and efficient delivery of the HighScope Curriculum. To continue with the logic, the early childhood development learning centres experience difficulties collecting funds, and the teachers, as rights holders (because they have the right to get paid for their services) become frustrated. Some learning centres even considered

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2 These include the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Education Sector Strategy and the CARICOM Regional Guidelines for Developing Policy, Regulation and Standards in Early Childhood Development Services, and Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood development in the Caribbean Curriculum Resource Guide.
closing their doors during the time of the evaluation. **Currently, there are only limited strategies in place to address or reduce the impact of identified risk (i.e., fundraising events).**

Two models exist through which to deliver the HighScope Curriculum: (1) Private sector-run; and (2) Government-run. The *school fees are the main distinction between the two models. While the ECD services delivered are of quality, teachers are not getting sufficiently compensated for their services. A review of the operating costs and the average amount spent on staff salaries confirms that the staff salaries in the private sector-run institutions are being seriously compromised. The implication of this situation, if it continues to be unaddressed, then the main rights holders are likely to suffer.* Equity and efficiency are not mutually exclusive and ought to be balanced. The challenge is to find the equilibrium that fulfills both conditions.

In conclusion, it is necessary to: (1) continue to serve children using research-based practices; (2) engage in community partnerships to secure resources for materials; (3) undertake assessment procedures which are not burdensome; and (4) pay teachers for their services; and (5) support the on-going costs to implement the curriculum (i.e., classroom materials, school yard upkeep, equipment, and recurrent costs).

**Prioritised Recommendations**

The MoE in all countries should:

- Develop alternate fee strategies which support both efficiency and equity, facilitating access to the most vulnerable families. This change would effectively ensure that the teachers in the private sector receive payment for services delivered.

- Invest resources into teacher training in the areas of dealing with children with disabilities (i.e., learning, behavioral and emotional, social, physical disabilities, and visual and hearing impairments), thereby strengthening the equity focus of curriculum delivery. More practical training in adult–child interactions is also recommended;

- Institute a robust monitoring and evaluation system and a culture of results-based management and practical skills in Monitoring & Evaluation, which are key to identifying children’s accomplishments and future development needs; and

- Prioritize the drafting of legislation (Antigua and Barbuda) and guidelines (the Commonwealth of Dominica) to continue facilitating an enabling policy environment.

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3 The private sector-run learning centres include institutions that are private but also receive a “subvention”. In Dominica, some private sector-run learning centres are administered a non-government organisation (NGO) in the case of the two Social Centres.
Main Report
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OBJECT OF EVALUATION

From February to December, 2014, Manitou, Inc., an evaluation firm based in New York, was contracted by UNICEF to undertake an independent formative evaluation of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme. This part of the report provides an introduction, an overview of the evaluand (the object of the evaluation), the multiple stakeholders involved, and simplified frameworks through which programme achievements and progress toward objectives will be reported.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 WHAT ARE THE EDUCATION CHALLENGES OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES?

The economic, social, and environmental vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been documented at length. “High levels of vulnerability of the natural, economic and social systems of SIDS arise from: (1) their small population size; (2) their remoteness from major markets geographically, giving rise to higher freight and communication costs; (3) their vulnerability to external micro- and macro-economic fluctuations; (4) their narrow resource base, where the reliance on a limited number of natural resources to fuel sustainable development, is prevalent; and (5) their exposure to global environmental challenges such as threats from global climate change (sea level rise, destruction of coral reefs critical to food security, decline in tourism), biodiversity loss, waste pollution, and the acidification of the oceans.4

Not least among the varied challenges these nations face is the struggle to provide children of all ages full access to quality developmental and education services. First, “the uptake of early childhood development (ECD) services varies across countries [within the Caribbean Region]. For the 0-2 age cohort, enrolment is five percent in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as compared to 53% in St. Kitts and Nevis. Enrolment for the 3-5 age cohort is reported at 55 % in Dominica and 100% in Montserrat. Preschool enrollment varies between 67% St. Lucia and 98% Grenada. However quite often, ECD services are not reaching disadvantaged boys and girls and the quality of the services in some cases is lower than expected.

Second, universal free primary school education is provided throughout the region. However, gaps exist in the enrolment and attendance within primary schools (92.7% and 89% respectively). Drop out levels at the primary level are low, and the repetition rate is also low at 0.6%. Third, as with the primary level, there are differences between enrolment (91.8%) and attendance (86.7%) within the secondary school system. Drop outs are also

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low at about 1.7%, and the repetition rate is 5.6%. However, in 2008 only 25% of students attained passes in at least five Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) subjects. About 28% of students left school without any formal certification.\(^5\)

Finally, within “the Eastern Caribbean region, poverty, crime, drug use and risky sexual behavior, are becoming increasingly problematic.”\(^6\) “Violence and abuse against girls and boys has gradually increased. It is connected with the prevalence of gangs, drug and alcohol use, risky sexual behavior, teenage pregnancy, corporal punishment, bullying, poor educational attainment and youth unemployment.”\(^7\)

One potential solution identified to tackle low enrolment, and the challenges that may follow-including achievement, is quality ECD programmes. Pursuant to the Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), all children have the right to an education that prepares them to be responsible adults (see text box). The General Comment Number seven, among other internationally agreed conventions and instruments, “call on States parties to ensure that all young children receive education in the broadest sense, which acknowledges a key role for parents, wider family and community, as well as the contribution of organized programmes of early childhood education provided by the State, the community or civil society institutions.\(^8\) In support of international conventions, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) established mandates (and measurable outcomes) to address the need for ECD services through sector-wide initiatives, namely Strategic Imperative Number V which is “to Increase (and expand) access to quality Early Childhood Development Services (ECDS)”.\(^9\)

Extensive research has demonstrated that “high quality early childhood education and care can have lasting, positive outcomes both for children from disadvantaged

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backgrounds and children from non-disadvantaged backgrounds."\(^{10}\) In a study of three curricula for preschools, including HighScope®, it was found that “young people born in poverty have greater educational and economic success and reduced crime rates if they attend a high-quality preschool programme than if they do not do so.”\(^{11}\)

From a cost-effective perspective, quality preschool programmes can significantly decrease these negative behaviors and increase the realisation of children’s mental, social and physical potential, leading to the creation of an educated, skilled, healthy and responsible citizenry and workforce. In the United States, it was found that “preschool programmes return seven to ten dollars to taxpayers for every dollar invested.”\(^{12}\)

Evidence from longitudinal studies has also demonstrated that child-initiated curricula are exceptionally beneficial for the future holistic well-being of all children, and principally those at-risk. In the original HighScope Preschool Curriculum Comparison Study (1997), children raised in poverty were randomly assigned to different preschool programmes and were monitored until the age of 23 to compare the long-term social, emotional, behavioural and academic effects. In every single category, the child-initiated curriculum was revealed as being significantly more advantageous than the adult-directed curriculum.\(^{13}\)

Another disparate study, which compared the HighScope, Nursery School (NS) and Direct Instruction (DI) methods, found that “with about half of the participants in the DI group having received treatment for emotional disturbance and with three times as many felony arrests, the DI group, especially males, was not as successful in the long run as the other two curriculum groups. Curriculum comparisons point out that unlike the HighScope’s and Nursery School curricula, DI focused on academic objectives, not on

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\(^{12}\) Ibid., 7.

planning or social objectives. This strategy, while successful short-term, did not lead to long-term improved outcomes for children served.”

1.2 **THE HIGHSCOPE CURRICULUM REFORM PROGRAMME**

Rooted in the above research and theories, the child-initiated HighScope Preschool Curriculum Reform Programme forms part of UNICEF’s 2012-2016 framework to address young children’s needs in the Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA):

“The programme will build on alternative models assisted during the 2008-2011 programme to reach children from birth through age five in poor communities with early stimulation as well as detection of developmental or cognitive delays. The emphasis will be on ensuring national policy development, standard-setting through the evaluation of national policies and programmes, the development and use of an interactive curriculum for this age group, and data, monitoring and budgeting for sustainability and national coverage.”

The goal of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme in the pilot territories was three-fold:

1. To improve the learning environments and quality of developmental and educational programmes in a total of 13 preschool settings in Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, and St. Kitts and Nevis (see map);
2. To subsequently showcase the participating centres as “models” in the use of a child-directed curriculum; and
3. To inform wider curriculum implementation throughout the Caribbean and to serve as teacher training demonstration sites for both the participating countries and for the greater Eastern Caribbean sub-region.

The total number of participants reached by the programme is:

- 2,017 children enrolled since 2009-2014 and their parents;

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• At least 42 HighScope teachers;
• Six Ministry of Education (MoE) ToT professionals;
• Fourteen (MoE) ECD professionals; and
• A number of representatives from institutional partners the HighScope Educational Foundation and UNICEF).

1.3 UNICEF’S CONTRIBUTIONS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION HISTORY

With funds from the Government of Italy, UNICEF contributed to the implementation of the HighScope Preschool Curriculum Model Programme\(^\text{17}\) from 2006-2008 in four participating countries: (1) Antigua and Barbuda; (2) Dominica; (3) Grenada; and (4) St. Kitts and Nevis. The funds concluded at the end of the 2008 calendar year. The programme was then continued with additional funds provided by UNICEF ECA.\(^\text{18}\)

Broadly, the UNICEF-supported programme included the following inputs: (1) the “upgrading” of the learning environments of the 13 preschool settings with the supply of learning materials to enhance the children’s developmental process; (2) the facilitation of the training of the teachers in the use of a child-directed curriculum; (3) important assessments and studies; and (4) mentorship and monitoring from the UNICEF Education Section. Programme documents indicate that \textbf{US$ 613,986.83} was utilized from January 2006 to December 2008.

The HighScope Educational Research Foundation was contracted to conduct an early childhood education project with Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada and St. Kitts and Nevis. According to the Final Evaluative Report, the project began with a Needs Assessment on current early childhood education systems available in each country including curricula used by various early childhood programmes.\(^\text{19}\) The assessment indicated that programmes across the countries were not using a research-based curriculum with proven practices and outcomes for young children \textit{with the exception of St. Kitts and Nevis} (see text box).

\(^{17}\) Note that there are many different types of HighScope curricula, and this evaluation only focuses on the Preschool Curriculum.

\(^{18}\) Prior to 2006, stakeholder interviews from St. Kitts and Nevis highlight that the application of the HighScope Curriculum started in 1988. Hence, this history is markedly different compared to Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

UNICEF’s contribution to a “Materials Study” had the aim of “develop[ing] a list of programme materials and provide technical assistance on how to field-test the materials and solicit teacher feedback on their use.” One of the final products from this study was a list of materials that the model learning centres in participating countries could use.

Hence, in response to the need for a research-validated curriculum, each participating country began implementing the HighScope Curriculum. Each country identified three model learning centres (with the exception of Dominica where four model learning centres were identified) to implement the curriculum with the teachers, children and families in those communities.

In 2010, the HighScope Educational Foundation was asked to submit a proposal designed to train 10 practitioners to become Certified Trainers to properly implement the HighScope Curriculum in their model centres. The goals of providing this training were to: (1) aid and support teachers as they integrated the research-validated HighScope Curriculum into their early childhood programmes; and (2) establish and maintain a local support system that would allow key staff to train and mentor other teachers in the continued practice of the curriculum. These training services are typically offered in a course called the Combined Preschool Curriculum and Training of Trainers (ToT) Course. The

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training occurred within seven weeks over a nine-month period (July 2010 – March 2011) with 10 participants, including a representative from UNICEF. 21

As an update on programme implementation status, all of the certified trainers within the participating countries indeed provided training to teachers in support of implementing a child-directed curriculum. In subsequent sections of this report, it is evidenced how the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum has expanded far beyond the ten model learning centres. However, documents, field interviews, and classroom observations generally indicate that the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme is at various stages of model implementation and adaptation, due to the multiple contexts in which the programme has been implemented. A few contextual differences include: (1) supportive and facilitating policies in place; (2) the role of the private and public sectors; and (2) the physical environment. 22

Given these developments, this formative evaluation is timely. A summary of key results from planned activities is provided. In assessing the spectrum of adaptation strategies across countries, this formative evaluation also elaborates on how each island country, community, and model learning centre has made the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme its own. Most importantly, the current challenges linked to equity, efficiency, and scaling up are explored. Understanding this critical information will facilitate the decision-making about mainstreaming the HighScope Curriculum, should policy makers decide to pursue that direction.

2.0. WHAT CONSTITUTES THE HIGHSCOPE PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM?

Descriptive information about required inputs and expected outputs is an important prerequisite to understanding how the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme was implemented. Hence, prior to reviewing evaluation results, a clear description of the design of the HighScope Preschool Curriculum is provided, highlighting the specific elements where the curriculum was adapted to suit the Caribbean context. Basic programme elements are presented in the first section, including the daily routine, the learning environment. All identified programme stakeholders, and their contributions linked to programme implementation, are included in this section.


2.1 THE DAILY ROUTINE

The HighScope Curriculum is designed to "promote high-quality early education for children and youth worldwide" Theoretically, the curriculum is “a new approach to teaching and learning....research-based and child focused....the HighScope Curriculum uses a carefully designed process — called "active participatory learning"-to achieve powerful, positive outcomes.”

The effective implementation of the HighScope Curriculum includes a daily routine of:

1. Small and large group activities, including the use of gross and/or fine motor skills development exercises (through sensory materials and outdoor equipment);
2. Plan-Do- Review; and
3. Outside time.

Other elements include: Routine transitions within and across settings; Teacher’s use of anecdotes used to create lesson plans; Child assessment; Encouragement rather than praise; conflict resolution; and use of key developmental indicators (KDs). It is assumed that the classroom materials are reflective of families and culture. In brief, the table 1 illustrates the main elements of the daily routine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: The Daily Routine</th>
<th>The Key Parts of the Daily Routine of the HighScope Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Arrivals (includes the</td>
<td>3. Planning Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Message Board’) and</td>
<td>4. Work Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>departures</td>
<td>5. Recall Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Devotion</td>
<td>6. Small Group Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Large Group Time</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Snack Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Outside Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Team planning time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The recommended class size is 16 children with two full-time teachers in the classroom for a ratio of one adult per 8 children.

2.1.1 Key Adaptations

The Devotion Time is an added segment, which is a culturally adapted element unique to the Caribbean context. Further, transitions between each segment (i.e., Clean Up Time after Work Time) also take place, typically with singing. Finally, the class size and adult-child ratio has been augmented to one adult per 12-15 children.

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23 All of the information about the HighScope design is sourced from http://highscope.org.
2.2 **THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Each classroom is intended to be safe, flexible, and child oriented. All learning centres should have:

- Child-sized tables and chairs;
- Classroom space divided into interest areas;
- Shelves low enough for children to reach; and
- Child initiated work on display.

Table 2 presents the Interest Areas from observations.

### TABLE 2: INTEREST AREAS IN CLASSROOMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Interest Areas Established In Each Classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sand &amp; water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Movement and Music Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reading and Writing Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Art Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Block Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. House Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Toy Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Outdoor play Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sleeping and napping Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Eating &amp; food preparation (optional)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classroom materials are to be culturally-appropriate, appealing to children’s senses, and have varied properties and varied sensory stimulations (including wood, metal, textured and natural materials; and sensory stimulating). 24

The materials are also supposed to be accessible and labelled, so that the children can reach or and recognise the lettering for the materials that they see and want to explore. Annex 9 has a sample list of materials for each interest area as a reference.

#### 2.2.1 Support For Parents

Many of the activities that HighScope teachers do in the classroom can also be done at home. HighScope teachers help parents learn to listen to, talk to, and play with their children in ways that nurture their development. As parents visit their child's preschool and teachers visit the child's home, parents and teachers learn from one another and become partners in promoting children's growth and development.

#### 2.2.2 Assessment

HighScope teachers also record notes on children's behaviors, experiences, and interests. Based on these careful and objective observations, adults can plan experiences that will

24 All programme – related information in this section is sourced from: [http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=264](http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=264)
facilitate children’s growth and development. The observation notes are also intended to feed into a formal assessment system detailing each child’s development, and the system is called HighScope Preschool Child Observation Record (COR).

Other areas constitute the educational philosophy of the HighScope Curriculum. However, the aforementioned areas constitute the basic elements of the interactive curriculum.25

2.3 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

There are two levels of stakeholders: (1) the local stakeholders, including the children enrolled in the ten model learning centres, their parents, their teachers, and school administrators; and (2) the institutional partners engaged in coordinating training and school-level activities, including the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Units within the Ministries of Education, UNICEF, and the HighScope Educational Research Foundation. This section discusses the most important contributions of each stakeholder group to the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme.

The ten model learning centres, comprised of teachers, support staff, school administrators, and facilities, deliver the HighScope Curriculum to the children and provide support to parents. The level of their specific participation, responsibilities, and assumed contributions are clearly described in the next section discussing the Theory of Change.

In each country, the ECD Units function within a larger institution, the MoE, which supports the delivery and management of child and youth education at the early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. At the early childhood level, the ECD Units are in charge of monitoring day cares, crèches, and nurseries in addition the HighScope model learning centres.

Within the ECD Units were those individuals who received training (to train), or ToTs, from experts from the HighScope Educational Research Foundation. In all cases the ToTs within the ECD unit were in charge of the development and implementation of: (1) training sessions given and their timely delivery; (2) identifying the number of teachers trained based on articulated training needs; and (3) subsequent follow-up/mentoring and monitoring support to school-level staff working the model learning centres.

Interviews with the MoE personnel also revealed that the ECD Units were actively involved in: (1) outlining financial support for all learning centres, including the model learning centres, which varied by country; (2) monitoring all early childhood development services delivered; (3) collecting education statistics; (4) identifying and supporting

25 For more information, please access http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=240.
children with special needs; and (5) drafting early childhood education policy. Policy-level contributions are discussed in the relevance section of this report.

In addition to serving the role of programme oversight of the financial and in-kind contributions mentioned earlier, **UNICEF’s Education Section staff have the aim of strengthening the Early Childhood Education sector** by supporting the professionals within each participating country’s ECD Unit. The main contributions include: (1) technical assistance, (2) mentorship, (3) training, and (4) the leadership in engaging stakeholders in dialogue to create a culture of learning.

The **UNICEF’s Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) professional’s primary contribution is providing technical assistance focused on ensuring that all evaluations, including this formative evaluation, meets the required information needs for relevant stakeholders in the Caribbean region.** These staff extensively advocate and lobby for the consistent use of evidence by policy makers to make strategic decisions. In support of this intent, the M&E staff maintain the organisation’s Results Based Management (RBM) framework and make sure that the evidence produced (through the support of evaluations) is relevant for policy analysis and executive decisions made by all Governments in Eastern Caribbean countries.

Finally, the **HighScope Educational Research Foundation staff had multiple provisions to this programme.** The HighScope experts were actively involved in providing the ToT training to each ECD Unit. Additional assistance was provided, however, through the provision of statistical results which describe the extent to which the quality of HighScope Curriculum delivery has increased since programme inception.

### 2.4 Theory of Change for the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme

Understanding programme achievement and specific progress toward the desired objectives is one of the aims of this formative evaluation. Before reviewing accomplishments and inefficiencies, however, it is vital to understand what the programme was meant to achieve. A Theory of Change (ToC) explains the inputs, outputs, and key relationships that contribute to programme outcomes.²⁶²⁷ The simplified framework, presented in this section, uses the fulfillment of the rights-based approach, and the rights-based language, to describe how programme outcomes are supposed to evolve with the inputs/outputs provided through UNICEF, among other duty-bearers (i.e.,

²⁶ In keeping with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards (adapted by UNICEF) and the UNICEF manual on how to Design and Manage Equity-focused Evaluations, a Theory of Change (ToC) for the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme was constructed retrospectively for the formative evaluation.

²⁷ Definition of simplified framework is sourced from UN Development Programmes accessed at: [http://web.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/ch7-2.html](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/ch7-2.html)
parents, teachers, Head Teachers/Supervisors, the Ministry of Education stakeholders, and the HighScope Educational Research Foundation). Finally, this section includes the major assumptions and factors, or risks, inherent in the design that may influence whether HighScope succeeds or fails.

The ToC specifies that if all assumptions are met, then the ultimate desired outcome of children having a strengthened cognitive, developmental, and socio-emotional foundation for primary school will be achieved. **Two key assumptions are:** (1) quality ECD services will be delivered; and (2) access for the most disadvantaged children will be expanded.

The children should have the opportunity to actively construct worlds that support their own development. This process takes place through an environment of “growth-promoting relationships [which] are based on the child’s continuous give-and-take with a human partner who provides what nothing else in the world can offer - experiences that are individualized to the child’s unique personality style; that build on his or her own interests, capabilities, and initiative; that shape the child’s self-awareness; and that stimulate the growth of his or her heart and mind.”

In support of this overarching outcome and within the system of delivering the HighScope Curriculum, there are several main players and contexts, specifically the: (1) ages 3-5 children; (2) parents and family caregivers; (3) teachers; (4) classroom settings; (5) ministries of education; and (6) external environments. Each will be discussed in detail. Figure 2 presents the different components and the main responsibilities for each duty bearer directly connected to the children.

All children, as rights-holders who are active agents in their own development, not only have the right to an education, but they have the right to play. Their play ought to be “directed to the same purposes as education.” It is therefore assumed that while exercising their rights to play, the children actively construct worlds that support their own development through their own interaction with (a) their caregivers; and (b) their peers.

Within the ten model learning centres, there is a range of classroom materials, designed to stimulate the children, which characterised these centres as “demonstration sites” for the participating countries. The preschool administrators, as duty bearers, have the

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29 Beginning with the child as the focus of the assessment is also consistent with a child-centered analysis.  
responsibilities of: (1) regularly informing families of child progress and school events; (2) collecting school fees from parents (or family caregivers); (3) providing child assessments for the next level (e.g., kindergarten); and (4) organizing interventions to support parenting practices.

To address the need to support child development, parents (and family caregivers) as duty bearers, are expected to engage in an active adult-child relationship, help with work (academic, physical, emotional, social) at home as needed, manage children’s education, maintain high expectations, and pay school fees. *It is assumed that the child is a priority within family setting.* Moreover, if the child is a priority within family setting, it is assumed that the parents understand their child’s different developmental levels, and that their level of expectations for child’s progress is consistent with what the child can really do developmentally. It is also assumed that school administrators and parents have an active, equitable, and respectful relationship which enables the delivery of the HighScope Curriculum to be efficient.

When UNICEF invested funds in participating countries “to improve the learning environments and quality of developmental programmes in preschool settings,” the benefit was that teachers, as duty bearers, could demonstrate attitudes, knowledge, and practices which, in turn, would create a positive and supportive learning environment for the children.32

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**Figure 2: The Theory of Implementation for the HighScope Curriculum**

**Knowledge:** Educational background includes working with children.

**Attitudes:** Respectful; Dedicated; Engaging; and Open to change.

**Practices:** Engages in two-way communication.

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**Teachers**
- Develops equitable relationships with parents.
- Develops parents’ confidence and fosters parental interest and involvement in their children’s progress and in school matters.
- Supplies information to parents.

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**Parents**
- Active Parent-Child Relationship
- Help with homework
- Pay school fees
- Manage children’s education and maintain high expectations

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**Ministry of Education**
- Entrusted with creating and maintaining a framework of regulations designed to protect children from any harmful practices
- Child Assessment System

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**Learning Environment**
- Sensitive caregiving toward child
- Positive classroom environment with materials that are reflective of families and culture
- Effective instructional practices that support gross and fine motor skills development exercises (through sensory and outdoor equipment)
- “Plan-Do-Review” Cycle
- Use of open-ended questions and other Encourage rather than Praise
- Conflict Resolution
- Transitions within and across settings
- Anecdotes and Child Assessment

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**Learning Centres**
- Regularly informs families of child progress and school events
- Collects school fees
Teachers are expected to: (a) be respectful; dedicated; engaging; and open to change; (b) have educational backgrounds that include working with children; (c) engage in two-way communication, so as to effectively “scaffold” the children’s development.\(^{33}\)

Also, teachers should: (d) develop equitable relationships with parents; (e) strengthen parents’ confidence as needed; and (f) foster parental interest and involvement in their children’s progress and in school matters. It is assumed that the teacher has sufficient skills and time to support children’s development through play and engage with children in meaningful exchanges.

Finally, the policy level provides an added layer of influence over model learning centres and their communities. The Ministry of Education, as duty bearers, is entrusted with creating and maintaining a framework of policies and regulations designed to protect children from any harmful practices. Generally, it is assumed that the policies and regulations are effectively implemented with sufficient resources.

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\(^{33}\) The definition of “scaffolding”: A Vygotskian concept referring to the structured assistance children receive from their peers and adults (e.g., parents and teachers) in reaching new skills and developmental goals. Scaffolding is progressively withdrawn as children’s competence increases (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976). It describes processes underpinning the zone of proximal development. It is also linked to the concept of guided participation, but the latter places greater emphasis on the ‘learner’s’ as well as the ‘teacher’s’ contribution toward engaging in tools and signs to transmit knowledge and practical routines.” Source: Vogler, P., Crivello, G. and Woodhead, M. (2008) Early childhood transitions research: A review of concepts, theory, and practice. Working Paper No. 48. The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.
2.5 Supply, Demand, and Contextual Factors

The multiple contexts within which the HighScope Curriculum has been implemented in the participating countries include: (1) the Policy context, (2) the Economic context, (3) the Physical context, and (4) the School-level operating context. These major contexts directly influence the effectiveness of programme implementation. Figure 3 illustrates the contextual factors as well as the specific components of delivering the HighScope Curriculum in each participating country.

Figure 3: Framework Outlining the Implementation Context

The extent to which the policy context influences the access to ECD services is thoroughly described in the relevance section of this report. The economic circumstances influencing the demand for ECD services are located in the efficiency section of this report. In terms of the school-level operating context, the main influencing factors are detailed in this report’s effectiveness section. For general contextual factors for participating countries, please refer to the Country Summaries for more details in annex 1.

Note that 2008 is the initial time period of the formative evaluation, although it is recognised that the HighScope Curriculum was introduced in St. Kitts & Nevis earlier (1980s).

++ Outcome-related data is derived from anecdotal information only.
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

This section may be accessed in Annex 3. The methodology part presents the overall methodology used for the formative evaluation. In compliance with the UNEG Evaluation Standards and the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) framework, this part of the report presents the following:34

1. The purpose and objectives of the formative evaluation. The section elaborates on how this evaluation fits into the UNICEF ECA Country 2012-2016 programme cycle;
2. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria used;
3. Site (and subsequently stakeholder) sampling;
4. Information sources, including the use of monitoring data;
5. Data collection methods;
6. Evaluation phases and schedule;
7. The extent of stakeholder participation and role(s);
8. Assessing Data Quality;
9. The incorporation of the United Nations (UN)/UNICEF’s frameworks into the formative evaluation design and analysis (i.e., human rights-based approach to programming (HRBAP), human rights frameworks, CRC, United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRCD), and equity-focused evaluation);35
10. Ethical safeguards used; and
11. A transparent discussion of the formative evaluation limitations.

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34 Please see: http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_60830.html
35 Please note that the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action does not apply to this formative evaluation.
CHAPTER 3: FORMATIVE EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.0 THE UNICEF-ADAPTED EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each section in Chapter 3 defines the evaluation criteria which follow both the OECD-DAC and UNICEF-adapted criteria, and then presents the relevant key evaluation questions from the Terms of Reference. UNICEF’s How to Design and Manage Equity-focused evaluation manual has also informed the structure of this report.36

3.1 RELEVANCE37

This section discusses the extent to which the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme implemented in the Caribbean reflects the implementation of regional and country-level policies, all of which are designed to promote universal access to early childhood education services. Table 3 includes the key evaluation questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OECD EVALUATION CRITERIA</th>
<th>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELEVANCE</td>
<td>1. HOW RELEVANT IS THE HIGHSCOPE CURRICULUM REFORM PROGRAMME, AS PART OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS, TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO ECD FOR ALL, TO THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES IN THE MODEL COUNTRIES?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. HOW APPROPRIATE HAVE BEEN THE RESOURCES ALLOCATION AND THE MONITORING SYSTEM ESTABLISHED IN SUPPORT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HIGHSCOPE CURRICULUM REFORM PROGRAMME?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36 Ibid.

37 Relevance – Defined as the extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor. In evaluating the relevance of a programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions: (1) To what extent are the objectives of the programme still valid? (2) Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives? (3) Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the intended impacts and effects? UNICEF-adapted definition is: The extent to which the expected results of the intervention address the rights and needs of worst-off groups, reduce inequities, and are consistent with equity-focused development priorities at global, national or local level.
OECD Evaluation Criteria | Key Evaluation Questions
--- | ---
3. **What current and possible additional prospects does the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme offer to promote the development of the child’s personality, (talents and mental and physical abilities) to their fullest potential as specified in the CRC?**
4. **What objections have arisen on the relevance of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme?**
5. **How were these objections dealt with? Are there any anecdotal or observable changes in the opinion or views of the stakeholders e.g. MOE/ECD staff, Parents etc.**

### 3.1.1 **Relevance at Strategic Level**

**Finding A:** The HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme design falls in line with earlier regional and country-level policy instruments. The regional priorities are dispelled in the OECS Education Sector Strategy and the CARICOM Regional Guidelines for Developing Policy, Regulation and Standards in Early Childhood Development Services as well as the Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood development in the Caribbean Curriculum Resource Guide. The HighScope design also has clear conceptual links to each participating country’s education policies.

Evidence confirms that macro-level priorities support the full and equitable access to early childhood education, and the delivery of the HighScope model is consistent with the vision(s) that were outlined in strategic and country-level policy instruments. Pursuant to the 2012-2021OECS Education Sector Strategy, the key early childhood education priorities which were developed to ensure that Every Learner Succeeds include: (1) improving participation, especially among disadvantaged groups, in early childhood, (2) establishing standards of practice and performance in teaching and learning which are aligned with international best practices, (3) instituting cost effective solutions [for] the delivery of the education services, and (4) creating opportunities for the greater involvement of the private sector in the delivery of quality education. [Emphasis added] The issue of strengthening access equitably is clearly emphasised.
The institutional and financial frameworks, ensuring that education services are efficiently offered in a safe and secure learning environment, are noted as important. Maintaining strategic partnerships between governments and the private sector is also critical to sustaining the delivery of early educational services. It appears that meeting all of these priorities would ensure that access to early childhood education is comprehensively addressed in a Caribbean country. In support of these regional priorities, the CARICOM also “provides practical guidance to early childhood officers who are charged with the responsibility of delivering a high quality early childhood development experience for the children in their countries.”

In addition, evidence is reflected in the current education policies in place to support the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum in each country. St. Kitts and Nevis not only has St. Christopher and Nevis Education Acts Numbers 9 and 17 (Amendment) of 2005, among a long list of other regulations, but also there is a White Paper on Education Development and Policy 2009 to 2019 which includes a regulatory system for the delivery of educational services. It is noted that “the curriculum of early childhood programmes will continue to be based on the HighScope Curriculum process for infants, toddlers and preschool children and the upgrading will be done in collaboration with other countries in the region, with support and guidance from UNICEF.”

In Dominica, the Education Act II of 1997 made provisions for pre-primary education. In 2002, there was an amendment to the Education Act, No. 6 of 2002, changing it from pre-primary to early childhood education. Regulation No. 39 of 2003 strengthened monitoring and supervision as well as made provisions for licensing early childhood facilities. There was also Regulation No. 14 of 2005 that created the Council on Early Childhood Education to serve as an advisory board. In 2012, the government of Dominica also began the implementation of Access to Universal Early Childhood Development.

Finally, Antigua and Barbuda has the Education Act No. 21 of 2008 and

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41 Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development and UNICEF ECA. (2013) Bottleneck Analysis of Early Childhood Development, Primary and Secondary Education. Page 3; The Minister presented this proclamation in his speech in 2012. This information was confirmed by the speech made by the Permeant Secretary at the final stakeholder meeting held in Roseau, Dominica on 23 October, 2014.
the Standards for the Regulation of Early Childhood Services in Antigua and Barbuda under the Education Act.\textsuperscript{42}

All of the education policies not only call attention to the need to increase the number of early education learning centres, but also there is special mention to: (1) deliver education services to the “disadvantaged,” (St Kitts and Nevis) (2) “prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, place or origin, political opinions, color, creed, sex” (Antigua and Barbuda), and (3) “increase access to quality early childhood education, focusing on the poor.” (Dominica).\textsuperscript{43}

The implication of this favorable policy environment is impressive results achieved to increase access to preschool education in all three countries. These efforts exemplify the commitment to Universal Access to provide early childhood education services. For example, as of 2012, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in Dominica was 95.7%;\textsuperscript{44} in Antigua and Barbuda, 89%;\textsuperscript{45} and in St. Kitts and Nevis 96% (this statistic is from 2011).

This policy language not only confirms the extent to which each country has made a commitment to addressing inequity, but also it reflects how an enabling in-country policy environment ought to appear when attempting to adapt the HighScope model.

3.1.1.1 Relevance of the HighScope Curriculum Design

The HighScope design, which is child-directed, child-centred, uses play to strengthen learning outcomes. These same outcomes are outlined in the Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood development in the Caribbean Curriculum Resource Guide. For example, the outcomes relate to: being well-adjusted, effective communication, critical thinking, independent learning, respecting themselves and the environment.\textsuperscript{46} Note that while the HighScope Curriculum may promote the development of the child’s personality in a holistic manner, there are many other curricula with such a similar design.

The level of resources allocated to facilitate the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum is discussed in the effectiveness section. With respect to the level of resources dedicated to a monitoring system to support the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum programme, thereby ensuring that the programme remains relevant and


\textsuperscript{43} Information on Dominica was accessed at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2013/09/19/education-young-poor-children-Dominican-Republic.

\textsuperscript{44} Source: Education Planning Unit, 2012.

\textsuperscript{45} The World Bank. (2012) Education Indicators. See website in the bibliography.

\textsuperscript{46} The document was accessed at: http://www.open.uwi.edu/sites/default/files/Learning_Outcomes_Handbook.pdf
consistent with equity-focused development practices, it was noted that there was limited evidence available in this regard. More discussion about this evidence gap is addressed in the effectiveness and impact sections of this report.

3.1.2 Relevance at Stakeholder Level

There was no evidence of stakeholders objecting to the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme. All stakeholders interviewed highlighted that there were clear benefits of the HighScope Curriculum. Quotes from stakeholders, presented in this section, are intended to be illustrative and not representative. Key policy-level stakeholders from the MoE in all three participating countries expressed positive views about the HighScope Curriculum. One official highlighted that the HighScope Curriculum was especially relevant, as it “promoted communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution.”

Similarly, parent and teacher feedback about how the HighScope Curriculum supported the social, emotional, and academic development of the children was encouraging. For example, when parents described how their child has changed since going to preschool, the following was mentioned: “more independent”, “[my child] is more expressive”, “[child] loves going to school,” “knows her/his colors and the alphabet.” Satisfaction levels were equally as high for the teachers. For example, one parent noted that he “trusted the teachers.” A grandfather-caregiver noted, “[HighScope Curriculum ] gives kids a more open mind to do and to learn at the same time….I think it’s the best stepping stone for kids who will be leaving this school to go to the primary school….I really have to give credit to the [teachers] of this school.”

Furthermore, teachers noted behavioral changes in certain children who participated in the HighScope Curriculum, citing that it has enabled “the children to relate to each other” and “[the children] come out of their shyness.” In addition, a teacher gave two examples of student change that she observed, “There was a girl who talked at home but not at school, and now she talks here and smiles…She only started in [a short period of time]….There was another little boy who wouldn’t sit still and now he follows the routine.” Given the evidence from multiple stakeholders, it is logical to conclude that the benefits of the curriculum were valued and that there were no objections.

“My child recognizes colors in the house, “do you want the yellow clothes pin?” (the child asks her mom) “And she creates letters with materials like string….I like this better than [her] being tied to a pencil and paper.”

Mother of child enrolled in the HighScope Reform Programme implemented in Antigua
3.1.3 Relevance and Gender Equality

Classroom observations show how the HighScope model differs in relevance for girls and boys and actively works to reduce gender inequalities. The local available materials allowed both boys and girls: (1) to connect with their environments (since the classrooms included objects that were familiar to them); and (2) to engage actively in non-traditional, non-stereotypical roles. More specifically, first, observation results indicate that 100% of the classrooms used culturally-appropriate local materials, which include bibles (for going to church), traditional dolls, food products (rice, sugar, flour, chocolate syrup, black beans, plastic bottles), materials from the environment (shells, dried leaves, sand, and charcoal stove), musical instruments (triangles, drums, and tambourine), and everyday household items (old magazines, peanut shells, cotton balls, wooden pegs, and sewing needles). This is not a comprehensive list and is only meant to be illustrative.

Second, observation data reveals that in a majority of the cases observed of Work Time specifically included instances of children exploring non-traditional roles. For example, boys engaged in household work, such as cooking, baby-related responsibilities, dressing up themselves, working with crafts, and cleaning the household area. Similarly, girls used manipulative toys in the Block Area, participated in sports, and were involved in playing different musical instruments, including drums.

In summary, it is evident that strong progress in the adaptation and implementation of the HighScope Curriculum has been achieved at the policy level and in terms of strengthening access. Stakeholders interviewed (duty bearers mainly) valued the benefits of the HighScope Curriculum. With respect to the children (rights holders), observation data indicates that both boys and girls were: (1) well-adapted to their HighScope classroom environment; (2) able to engage in “active play,” including exploring non-traditional roles; and (3) experienced an “easy” transition to their respective Kindergarten classes.

3.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness – Defined as a measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives. In evaluating the effectiveness of a programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions: (1) To what extent were the objectives achieved / are likely to be achieved? (2) What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives? UNICEF’s definition: Effectiveness: The extent to which the intervention’s equity-focused results were achieved, or are expected to be achieved.
Ministry of Education, and (2) the school-level. The extent to which ToC assumptions, introduced in Chapter 1 of this report, have been met are also discussed in this section.48

Please find the key evaluation questions for this section illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4: Key Evaluation Questions for Effectiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OECD Evaluation Criteria</th>
<th>Key Evaluation Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>1. What is the progress made so far, towards achieving the initial planned outputs and outcomes? Has the programme been effective in influencing: (I) access to quality ECD; (II) demand for ECD and (III) change, development, holistic child growth and development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. What are the stakeholders’ (both duty bearers and rights-holders) own perception and appreciation of the results of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme? What do they like or dislike? What do they want to change? What are the teachers and parents saying about the programme?49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. How are the children who have passed through the programme since 2009 performing in primary school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Were the activities, planned under the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme, sufficient (in quantity and quality) to achieve the outputs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. What have been the major constraints in the implementation of the curriculum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. What partnerships were or have been established to support the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme implementation, and how adequate and effective have these been in facilitating the realization of its objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Has the external environment in any way affected the internal management of HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme? If yes, how?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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48 Note that the OECD definition of “assumptions” is “hypotheses about factors or risks which could affect the progress or success of a development intervention.” Source: DCD/DAC/EV (2001)3. (2001) Working Party on Aid Evaluation Glossary of Evaluation and Results Based Management Terms.

49 This question has been explored in the relevance section of this report.
3.2.1 Progress Trends and Effectiveness Regarding Promoting ECD Access

While the HighScope Curriculum was modeled in a total of ten learning centres in all participating countries, currently, the curriculum has expanded considerably. The implication is that the HighScope Curriculum is relevant to each country’s context. Further, the progress of accomplishing planned activities and outputs is strong. In Dominica, the HighScope curriculum started with four learning centres, and the model has now been expanded to a total 24 (out of 73) centers/institutions (2013).\(^5\)\(^0\) It should be noted that the HighScope Curriculum is being implemented as the national curriculum as well. In Antigua and Barbuda, the HighScope Curriculum has been replicated in 14 (out of 27\(^5\)\(^1\)) preschools (2013).\(^5\)\(^2\) In St. Kitts, the model is being implemented in a total of 12 (out of 36) preschools.\(^5\)\(^3\) In Nevis, there are now a total of four (out of ten) learning centres, implementing the curriculum.\(^5\)\(^4\) In sum, curriculum implementation in participating countries has notably expanded to multiple early childhood education settings.

Due to a lack of evidence, it is not possible to ascertain if or how the programme has: (1) had any influence on country-level demand for ECD services; or (2) influenced the change, development, and holistic child growth and development in the participating countries.

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\(^{50}\) Source: Dominica Education Planning Unit, 2012.
\(^{52}\) Note that this figure only counts the “standalone preschools” and does not count the institutions which provide daycare and preschool services.
\(^{53}\) Source: St. Kitts and Nevis ECD Unit database.
\(^{54}\) N.B.: All preschools in St. Kitts and Nevis with the exception of the two 2 Montessori preschools (one in each island) are implementing the HighScope Curriculum. However, whereas it is fully implemented in public preschools (12 on St. Kitts and 4 on Nevis) implementation may be at varying degrees in private centres.
3.2.2.1 Effectiveness at the Institutional Level with the Ministry of Education

**Finding B:** The Ministry of Education ECD Unit in Antigua and Barbuda, as a duty bearer, has the obligation to effectively enforce regulations designed to strengthen access to early education services. However, additional efforts are required in order for this duty bearer to fulfill its legal responsibilities.

In spite of the multiple successes in: (1) instituting the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum; and (2) replicating the HighScope model in government and private sector-run preschools, challenges persist which obstruct the effectiveness of policy implementation. Notably, for Antigua and Barbuda, “The Standards,” or the proposed system of laws and regulations that are intended to govern the operations for early childhood development services (formulated in 2008), are not yet drafted into law or “gazetted”. It should be recognized that Section 2 of “The Standards” includes equity-focused provisions for child care practices for: (1) equal opportunities and treatment for children; (2) children with special needs; (3) disciplinary approaches; (4) child protection; (5) confidentiality; and (6) partnerships with parents to involve them in child development.

Without specific standards and regulations, the effective enforcement of a regulatory framework designed specifically for the provision of early childhood and primary school education services is compromised. While data from ECD Officers confirms that legislation is essential for compliance, it appears to be a challenge to engage legal drafters who can transform the regulations into clear legislation. **Indeed, interview data indicates that there is currently a shortage of legislation drafters, and this limitation in legislation constrains the ECD Unit’s ability to monitor, in particular the private sector-run preschools/institutions.** One important caveat is that private sector-run early childhood development centers represent the majority in comparison to government-run learning centres. Out of a total of 72 institutions servicing children from age 0-6, only 3 learning centres are government-run. Hence, this legislation is very critical.

**Recommendation #1a:** The Government of Antigua and Barbuda and Barbuda should prioritize the drafting of legislation to render the Standards for the Regulation of Early Childhood Services in Antigua and Barbuda (under the Education Act) into law within 12 months. Rendering “The Standards” into law would ensure that all services for children are consistent and would also effectively support the expansion of the HighScope Preschool Curriculum. [Evidence from finding B]

**Finding C:** The Ministry of Education in Dominica, as a duty bearer, has the obligation of providing clear information about what is available to effectively
Evidence indicates that there is a fragmented system of support provided to the learning centres implementing HighScope, and this confusion is not a conducive context for its effective delivery.

The investments were stimulated as a result of the Universal Access Pronouncement (2012). Within the four model learning centres (S.W.O.R.D., Social Centre Model Preschool in Roseau, Grand Fond Social Centre Model Preschool, and Mahaut Preschool), the system of a government “subventions”, provided per term to model learning centres, was consistent. However, for the newly opened learning centres that served as “training learning centres” (i.e., Bagatelle and Canefield), it was observed that there was a divergent support system, including a combination of government subventions supplied per term and irregular payment of teacher salaries. Additional forms of support included investments in building renovations, electricity, and other costs. However, it was recently announced that the various forms of government support would soon be eliminated, thereby prompting the need for clear guidance about school-level support through community-based governance systems. Currently, there are efforts on-going to produce such information, but the finalised version of the guidance document has not yet been completed.

Recommendation #1b: The Commonwealth of Dominica should continue with current plans and efforts to finalise a guidance document and shift into policy language, effective immediately. [Evidence from finding C]

3.2.2.2 Resources Allocation

Finding D: At the level of the Ministry of Education in all participating countries, the financial and human resources made available to support early childhood development, including the adaptation of the HighScope Curriculum, are indeed remarkable. Evidence shows, however, that planning and additional support is needed in order for these duty bearers to maintain and continue expanding future efforts.

Government investment in early childhood education in all participating countries is notable, and the centres implementing the HighScope model have also benefitted. Table 5 illustrates the extent of 2013 total costs for each participating country.55

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55 Charles, L. Investment and Financing Strategies for Early Childhood Development in the CARICOM Region. Table 3.7
The financial investments translate into support for: (1) a supervisory unit with staff of varying size within the Ministry of Education, (2) the cost of the centres owned and operated by the Government, (3) small “subventions” to a limited number of centres,57 and (4) teacher training activities. These units manage all early childhood settings or institutions, both public and private. Results from documents and a survey of all ECD unit staff members, including the Coordinators, show that they have high levels of education (Master's Level) and training. Moreover, in Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis, investments concentrate in the cost of land and building renovations, where it is estimated that these two investment costs - account for an average of 92.8% of the investment cost in the two countries studied.58 Interviews reveal that all the Unit staff members fulfil their duties in providing professional development training to Teachers, Head Teachers/Supervisors, and, to some extent, Primary School principals. Further, the government-run centres and private sector institutions that implement the HighScope Curriculum *in particular* have regularly received training and coaching support. Additional information about the scope and benefits of training in the HighScope Curriculum is presented in the effectiveness section at the school level. Finally, financial data indicates that of the six out of the ten schools observed are government-run, and all of them reported receiving a subvention.59

In the ToC, it is assumed that the MoE duty bearers can provide monitoring and training support to ensure that: (1) those children receiving early childhood care and education services are treated equitably and also have access to safe and inviting environments; and (2) the service providers have regular access to the training that they need in order to deliver quality services. In St. Kitts, it was noted that four out of six senior staff persons within the ECD Unit are approaching retirement age. Moreover, the leadership within the

56 The number for all of these staff persons includes an Administrative Assistant/Secretary.
57 Note that for St. Kitts/Nevis, there are five centres; Antigua and Barbuda, there are nine centres. Source: Charles, L. Investment and Financing Strategies for Early Childhood Development in the CARICOM Region, Footnote 21. For Dominica, there are 15 centres. Source: Interview data.
59 This observation includes a school in Dominica which is not government-run but receives a subsidy through government and other resources.
ECD Unit in Antigua and Barbuda is also planning to retire. Survey data confirms that the mean age and gender for these individuals is 58 years of age, and they are all female.60 Without a clear succession plan in place, there is a risk that the impressive strides made thus far may likely lose momentum. Planning for and recruitment of replacement staff are needed; otherwise the efforts to continue and expand the HighScope Curriculum in Antigua and Barbuda and in St. Kitts may diminish.

**Recommendation #2:** The Government of Antigua and St. Kitts to should establish a succession plan to fill upcoming vacancies that replace those created from retiring ECD Unit staff by 2015. Establishing a succession plan would ensure that sufficient and adequate human resources are available to effectively support the continuation and expansion of the HighScope Curriculum. [Evidence from finding D]

While the circumstances in Dominica are different, there is still a risk that the successes achieved to implement the HighScope Curriculum may also lose momentum without additional human resources support. Further, efforts to expand the HighScope Curriculum may dissipate should the shortage of staff persist. For instance, the ECD Unit is presently staffed with two persons, which is insufficient to fulfill key duties, including effectively addressing the current needs for quality monitoring and responsive training support for the staff working in 73 early childhood development centres/institutions. From stakeholder interview data, it is recognised that senior MoE Officials, duty bearers, are acutely aware of staff shortages. The expansion of the HighScope Curriculum would therefore take place in phases in support of the Universal Access Pronouncement. It appears that duty bearers are currently finalizing a unified policy which includes children in two age groups: (1) those aged 0-3; and (2) those under 5 years of age. The result of formulating the unified policy is the establishment of an “ECD Unit” which will include three additional staff members, totaling to five persons. The level of outreach would, however, increase from 73 to 91 centres/institutions.61

**Recommendation #3:** The Commonwealth of Dominica should continue with current plans and efforts to reinforce the current Early Childhood Unit with additional officers who are entrusted with supporting the implementation and expansion of the HighScope Curriculum, among other obligations, including monitoring. [Evidence from finding D]

In summary, 2013 investments dedicated to expanding access to early childhood care and education seem to be well-documented; this evidences the extent of the political and financial commitments. It should be noted that the adaptation of the HighScope

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60 Please note that voluntary retirement age in the Caribbean is 60 years of age.
61 Data sourced from the database from the ECD Unit in Dominica.
model has likely been facilitated in this enabling environment. Therefore, policy and finances are important external factors when considering the adaptation of the HighScope model.

3.2.4 Monitoring System to Support Programme Implementation

The newness of "Routine Monitoring Checklist" prevented the evaluation team from assessing the effectiveness of the monitoring tool. Currently, all participating countries reported using “monitoring instruments” or checklists, to determine the extent to which minimum standards for all early childhood educators and learning centres are being met. This is irrespective of whether the learning centres implement the HighScope Curriculum. At the time of data collection, it was noted that all countries were using the same newly developed, OECS regional tool (called the “Routine Monitoring Checklist”) developed in collaboration with the OECS to monitor services delivered to daycares and preschools. ECD Unit personnel from all three countries were in the process of pretesting the instrument. Nonetheless, this evidence is an encouraging positive step to support routine data collection and performance assessment that will be uniform across the OECS.

Finding E: The ECD Unit staff engage in monitoring the learning centres implementing the HighScope Curriculum specifically with the use of the Programme Quality Assessment (PQA) HighScope instrument; the frequency of its use, however, could be increased.

All ECD Units reported using the HighScope PQAs to identify service provider training needs and measure the changes or improvements in the quality of: (1) the learning environment; (2) the daily routine; (3) the adult-child interactions; and (4) curriculum planning and assessments. The instrument generates scores, and when used at different time intervals, the differences in the scores for specific outcomes enable one to determine if improvements have occurred in the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum. As the first PQA were undertaken in 2008 and the second PQAs took place in 2013, there is a significant gap in between the two time intervals. The benefit of this gap is that the PQA results demonstrate remarkable improvements. However, the instrument can also be used to identify areas for further improvement. The opportunity to gather this valuable input regularly is not, however, being effectively exploited, since this information could not only support the ECD Unit’s planning efforts but also serve as strong data for future impact assessments. As expansion efforts continue for the HighScope model, it is important to consider the multiple benefits of regularly collected PQA data.

Recommendation #4: The Ministry of Education’s Early Childhood Units in all countries should use the HighScope Programme Quality Assessment (PQA) at least once annually, starting in 2015. The use of PQA would
effectively highlight areas for improvement and document progress, supporting the research-based, quality monitoring as well as expansion efforts. [Evidence from finding E]

3.2.3 EFFECTIVENESS AT THE SCHOOL-LEVEL

Finding F: Multiple sources reveal that there has been strong progress in the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum at the school level.

Primary data collected through the evaluation process and research-based evidence indicate mostly positive results. However, space limitations appear to be a significant challenge. Preschool survey results reveal that of the classrooms observed:

- 100% have classrooms with child-sized tables and chairs, divided space for interest areas, and child-initiated work on display;
- In terms of materials, the majority of the classrooms include:
  - Manipulative materials that are open-ended and appeal to multiple senses;
  - Materials that are labeled in a manner understood by children (pictures, photos, simple words); and
  - Reflect the home and community cultures of programme children.

The size of indoor and outdoor space is, however, a challenge. In particular, space for Large Group Time, is not sufficient as only 2 out of 10 facilities had sufficient indoor space for that purpose. The observed space dimensions are also too small to accommodate class sizes. Preschool survey results indicate that there were two rooms dedicated for child learning; the average size of the first classroom is approximately 483 square feet, while the second room, usually smaller, is an estimated 321 square feet.

Some of the learning centre toilet facilities do not appear to fully accommodate the needs of the classroom size. The survey shows that only 4 out of 10 learning centres have child-sized toilets and sinks, owing to procurement and space challenges. Only one learning centre has separate, labelled toilets for females and for males; none of the facilities are equipped to service children with physical handicaps/disabilities.

The outside, physical environment lacks sufficient space for play and equipment designed to exercise gross motor skills. The preschool survey shows that average approximate size of the outdoor play area was 2,295 square feet.\textsuperscript{62} Only half of the ten schools had structures for children to climb and exercise arm muscles. Nonetheless,

\textsuperscript{62} This figure should be interpreted with caution, however, as one facility had access to a football field (located off premises), thereby increasing the overall average.
outside time still appeared to be fun, as roughly all observed facilities use portable equipment to support the outside activities (i.e., balls, jump rope, pins, and hula hoops).

All had flush toilets in working order, electricity, running water, and a first aid kit. Nine out of ten facilities have a telephone in working order, while eight out of ten have a kitchen. Only 60% of the facilities had a fire extinguisher in sight. Finally, more information about interventions designed to support parents is elaborated under the next evaluation finding.

3.2.3.1 EVIDENCE OF EQUITY-FOCUS

The majority of the model learning centres appear to service the most vulnerable children, which demonstrates clearly the alignment with RBPA and equity concerns. Preschool survey results reveal that all of the model learning centres give priority enrolment to low income families and high risk children. Table 6 shows the results for the various enrolment criteria/categories. Note that the majority of the enrolled children come from low-income and unemployed families, single-parent families, and young parent families. Comparably fewer children come from high income families and households where parents are working.

**Table 6: Families and Children Who Are Given Priority for Enrolment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories Of Families Or Children Who Are Targeted</th>
<th>Percent of Model Learning Centres Having Students in this Category</th>
<th>Percent of the Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-Income/Unemployed Parents</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Parent Families</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Parents</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Risk Children</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicapped Children</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A Few” High Income Parents</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Parents</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n=10 schools

Supplemental evidence further substantiates that “government and private sector-run centres generally service low income communities.”

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3.2.3.2 Research Evidence and Observation Results

Research-based evidence shows that the learning centres/institutions, delivering the HighScope Curriculum, are doing so with quality services and exceed basic-standards. The overall results from a “gains analysis” from the HighScope Educational Research Foundation are very encouraging. The HighScope Educational Foundation (2014) report overall scores from “the original (Programme Quality Assessments) PQAs collected in 2007 in various settings across the four Caribbean countries. [This analysis is] then compared...with current PQA data collected in 2013 from settings who received the most concentrated curriculum training.” 64,65

The scores for Dominica have “improved drastically since the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum training and mentoring has taken place.” Similarly, in St. Kitts and Nevis, changes in the original PQA scores were noted, and there was “some improvement in quality even though the curriculum training concentrated more on topics such as Active Learning, Daily Routine, and Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs) rather than on the Learning Environment, and yet there were still positive changes occurring in the classroom.” The final analysis was that “there were considerable increases in the levels of higher quality across the three countries as a direct result of more concentrated curriculum training and mentoring in the implementation of the HighScope Preschool Curriculum. 66,67

The 32 observations from this evaluation also support the finding that there has been strong progress in the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum at the school level in all three countries. The observation data reveals that 100% of the learning centres have:

- A consistent daily routine that incorporates plan-do-review as well as Small and Large Group Time; and
- Well-adjusted children aware of the daily routine and able to name the next segment of the routine. For example, the HighScope teacher would say: “What are we doing next?”, and children would respond: “SMALL GROUP TIME!”

As a result of exposure to the HighScope Curriculum, it appears that the observed children exhibit the behavior of the intended outcomes and benefits. Unless otherwise noted, the data reveals that 100% of the children:

64 The PQA results present four basic areas: (1) the learning environment; (2) the daily routine; (3) adult-child interactions; and (4) curriculum planning and assessment.
66 Ibid., pages 11 - 13.
67 Please note that this overall assessment excludes Antigua and Barbuda.
1. **Use fine and gross motor skills**;
2. Express emotions;
3. Display **self-sufficiency**;
4. Participate in social activities;
5. Are involved in **caring for their physical and bodily needs** (e.g., hand washing and teeth brushing after lunch);\(^{68}\) and
6. **Using fine and gross motor skills.**\(^{69}\)

Moreover, it seems that the HighScope Curriculum is enabling children to use and display a variety of pre-academic writing, reading and math skills. Namely, 47% of observations indicate children using pre-reading skills; 44% using pre-writing skills; and 66% employing pre-math skills, respectively.\(^{70}\)

This section presented data results regarding: (1) external circumstances, such as the physical conditions of the facilities in which the HighScope Curriculum operates; (2) the categories of families or children who are given priority for enrolment; and (3) various outputs, including compliance with the daily routine, the frequency of different child behavior exhibited that connects to intended outcomes. The evidence from the HighScope Educational Foundation discusses overall progress from an independent “gains analysis,” which confirms that services delivered are of quality.

### 3.2.3.3 Assessment of ToC Assumptions

**Finding G:** Though available evidence indicates that the ToC assumptions (referenced in the figure 3) for the children were met, the assumptions for the parents, as duty bearers, are **not met**. The implication is that the morale of teachers/administrators is low. This has become a major impediment to the effective delivery of HighScope, and there are only limited strategies currently in place to address this risk.

**Children’s Rights Assumption Met**

Most of the children are engaged and exercising their rights to play. As rights holders, the children are active in constructing worlds that supported their own development

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\(^{68}\) N.B.: This behavior was only observed in 63% of total observations.

\(^{69}\) N.B.: The use of fine and gross motor skills was only observed in 94% and 69% of total observations, respectively.

\(^{70}\) It should be noted that observations were not the focus of the time spent observing classrooms and that depending on the time of day observed, the use of these skills may not have been expected.
through their interactions with the adults and other children. All children appeared to be well-adapted, active participants, and teachers accommodated their needs. This ToC assumption has been fully met.

Though specific child outcome data is unavailable, it is still possible to present examples of the children, as rights holders, actively interacting with: (a) their caregivers; and (b) peers. Holistic child development takes place, particularly during Work Time and Small Group Time. Three examples, meant to be illustrative and not representative, are provided:

Example #1: One four year old boy talks to his teacher about his “fire robot” which is made of large sized coloured, plastic blocks. After the teacher asks what colours he sees, he names the colors of the blocks which form the robot’s body and legs, including purple, yellow, and red. He manipulates the blocks, so that his robot has a happy face, and then he turns the block so that he has a sad face. When the teacher recognises that his fire robot’s face has a frown, she asks him “What made him to have a sad face?” The child is silent and has no answer, and then he turns the block upside down from a frown into a smile to make him happy again. He inserts another block under the fire robot’s smile and then says “my robot has a throat.” The teacher confirms, that his robot has a throat, and he says yes. She then gives him praise for “fixing his robot.” [Observation is from Antigua and Barbuda.]

The above example illustrates that through active play, the child was able to express his understanding to his teacher about colours, body parts, emotions, and show his ability to physically manipulate the blocks.

Example #2: The music area had four girls ages four and five playing very cooperatively – singing, drumming, shaking the tambourines, and the calabash instrument that has dried beans inside. This complementary play was formed naturally. Occasionally, there was a little boy, also aged four, who would come into the group and add a few shakes of his triangle. He was welcomed to join the music making. The teacher comes and initiates an activity by encouraging the girls to sing a song which they all knew. Then, the teacher asked the girls “what do you all want to sing?”, and they reply (a religious song). [Observation is from Dominica]

This example shows a scenario, where an activity is both teacher-directed and the child-initiated, and all seem engaged and having fun in both ways. The children’s interactions with their teacher and peers not only support skills development in movement and song, but the reinforcement of devotion, a culturally-sensitive activity, is also evident.

Example #3: During Small Group Time, the teacher sat in a specially-designed, bean-shaped table which enables her to sit in the middle of all of the children. The children worked with their baskets which included a small ball of play dough, a ruler, small plastic straws, and sticks. One little boy made a “sausage” and then a “mic”. The teacher built on this with “Can anyone tell me what you do with a mic?” Three children replied “for speaking and for singing.” A different little boy at the other end of the table says, “Look, I made a letter ‘S’” (with the play dough), holding up the letter. A little girl across from him says, “I have an ‘a’”. The teacher asks her, “Is this a capital ‘A’ or a lowercase ‘a’?” The little girl says “a capital ‘A’.” Another boy says, “I made a number ‘8’!” [Observation is from Nevis]
The example shows how, with the use of play dough and imagination, the children were actively involved in navigating their own understanding of the use of props and letters and numbers with support from the teacher. There are numerous examples of children engaged in active play, and presenting this information would go beyond the scope of this formative evaluation. The above examples simply illustrate that the key assumption within the ToC regarding the role of the children has been met.

**In the case of children with disabilities, the ToC assumption also appears to be met.** Observation data was limited to a total of five children with disabilities; Three children (2 males and 1 female) were observed the Commonwealth of Dominica, and two males in St. Kitts. While their specific diagnosis is not certain, the range of behavioural profiles may be connected to attention deficit, autism, speech delay, and vision impairment. In Antigua, the teachers at a learning centre also mentioned that they offered services to a female child aged five with Down’s syndrome, and when she transitioned to THE VICTORY CENTRE, A SCHOOL FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN. While the observation data confirms that the child rights assumption has been met, this cannot be generalized for all those with disabilities in each country. It only suggests that the HighScope model is sufficiently flexible and not exclusionary in nature. This is an important consideration for those who may be considering the adaptation / implementation of the HighScope model.

Finally, according to anecdotal evidence, the HighScope model appears to provide a solid foundation to children and adequately prepares them for pre-primary and primary school. Evidence from teachers, parents, kindergarten teachers and children who have passed through the programme since 2009 all confirmed the HighScope Curriculum enabled children to meet the expectations. It was noted that there is an initial period of transition, ranging from one to two months, but then they become “well-adjusted.”

**Duty Bearer Teacher Assumptions Met**

The majority of the teachers in model learning centres engaged in the Teacher-Child interactions (scaffolding) to the best of their ability, and their duty bearer assumptions are met.

It should be noted that the level of implementation is variable across all participating countries, and so it was observed that specific training areas still have yet to be delivered, including: (1) Encouragement rather than praise; (2) Conflict resolution; and (3) Child assessment. Nonetheless, in all learning centres, it was observed that the teachers collect information through anecdotes and child observations. This activity should reveal what interests the children, and in turn the information is used to inform “lesson planning” which is intended to further the interests of the children. All teachers reported meeting regularly to discuss and plan activities for group times.
Duty Bearer Parents Assumptions Unmet

An unknown proportion of parent (and family caregivers) duty bearers do not fulfill their responsibilities of: (1) engaging in an active adult-child relationship; (2) helping with work at home; (3) managing their children’s education; and (4) paying school fees. The major assumption that the child is a priority within family setting has not been met.

The ultimate result of this gap in the logic chain is two-fold: When some duty bearer parents do not: (1) support their children at home; and/or (2) pay school fees, this behavior creates an external constraint directly influencing the effective delivery of the HighScope Curriculum.

(1) When some parents do not work with their children at home, the teachers, as duty bearers, subsequently question the effectiveness of their work (St. Kitts and Nevis and Dominica)

(2) When some parents do not pay school fees, the early childhood development learning centres experience difficulties collecting funds. The teachers, as rights holders (they have the right to get paid for their services) are not sufficiently compensated for their work. This situation, in turn, lowers the morale of teachers (in Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica), and even forces some institutions to consider closing their doors (see figure 4 for this reference).

Before continuing, it is necessary to present transparently, a limitation in the data. From parent focus group discussions (FGDs), there are two sets of parents: (1) those who take an active role in their child’s learning; and (2) those who do not actively enrich their child’s learning, including engaging in a responsive parent-child relationship. It should be noted that since the FGDs were voluntary, the parents who attended and contributed data were self-selected. As a consequence, there is only data from parents who are active in their children’s lives and education. Those who were comparably less active were least likely to participate in FGDs, and therefore their voices are absent in this report. As a result of this data gap, it is uncertain of the proportion of unresponsive parents.

The Child As a Priority Within the Family Setting

Interventions, designed to support parenting skills, were made available at all learning centres. To support parents, school administrators regularly: (1) organized interventions
to support parenting practices; and (2) informed families of child progress and school events; and (3) engaged parents in fundraisers for school activities.

In Dominica during 2011, documented evidence shows that “parenting sessions” formed part of the teaching practice, and the topics covered were: (1) Active Learning; (2) Active Learning-Brain Development; and (3) Active Learning-Materials. Teacher interviews in Antigua indicate that “parent workshops” took place to teach parents: (1) “how to be more effective parents;” (2) about the importance of nutrition; and (3) about corporal punishment. ECD Unit personnel and school administrator interviews reveal that in St Kitts and Nevis, there is a parent workshop in the beginning of the every school year which includes “role playing”, where parents pretend to be their own children. All preschool surveys show that learning centres engaged in multiple fundraising events throughout the year.

Similarly, parent FGDs and interview data confirm that at every learning centre, the various inputs were provided to help them manage their children’s education and to foster their interest and involvement in their children’s progress. For instance,

(1) Parents attended “parent workshops”;
(2) The teachers provide overview of child’s progress, and this feedback was noted as “frank and truthful information”;
(3) The teachers support parents to work with their children at home.

In spite of these inputs, however, the partnerships established with parents in support of implementing the Highscope Curriculum Reform Programme do not appear effective. This unmet assumption in the ToC may be linked to an insufficient number interventions designed to motivate parents. Nonetheless, some duty bearer parents may be non-responsive and do not fulfill their responsibilities of (1) working with their children at home; and/or (2) paying school fees, thereby contributing to inefficiencies within the programme. A teacher in St. Kitts describes how she “encourages some parents to work with their kids at home”. She explained that the parents would say, “yes..yes...this is a good idea, I will do this at home with my child”. Parents would not do their part, and this

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71 Other themes mentioned were: “The teacher gives me a ‘briefing’ in the mornings about my child’s behavior, eating habits, and socializing.”; “The teacher uses social media (Facebook™, WhatsApp™, text messages, and email) to communicate with me.”; “We have a Meeting at the end of the term to discuss progress.”; and “The teacher shows me a folder that has my child’s work from the whole year so I can see his progress.”

72 Several examples mentioned from parents concentrate on “tips” provided or suggested activities to work on, including: (1) working with numbers: “They give us things to do at home….like draw 10 leaves….we focus on a number or a letter all week...”; (2) use of materials which are not already in the child’s home: “The teacher gave me ideas for cost-saving mechanisms—using natural toys.”; and (3) advice about the need to reinforce what has already been learned: “It [Teacher support] is more like reinforcement.”
teacher clarified that “we (teachers) know that nothing happens, because the child does not change...” Evidence from the teacher survey also confirms the lack of parent involvement. Over 30% of the teachers “almost never” or seldom share information [about children’s progress] with the parents. Teacher interviews highlighted how “frustrating” and “difficult” it was to work with parents who were not fully involved in their children’s education.

Moreover, the theme of some parents failing to make payments or making delayed payments was consistent in all participating countries. For the parents who fulfil their duty and pay regularly, it was clear that they also understand that the school fee is subsidised rate. This was particularly the case for the government-run centres. Parent responses to a question eliciting perspectives about the school fees include:

- “It is definitely worth the money!”
- “It is a bargain!”
- “We are getting value for money.”
- “We expect the fees to go up.”
- “I think the price is too low, for me. Others struggle.”
- “The lunch program is nutritious, fresh, and for EC$2 a day, it’s worth it!”

However, the proof that there are parents who do not pay, or who delay in paying school fees, is evidenced in the efficiency section of this report. The limited amount allocated for teacher salaries, particularly for private sector run learning centres in Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda, reveals the extent to which teachers are not getting compensated for services delivered. Interview data with teachers and school administrators at every model learning centre reveal that this issue as a major constraint to the effective delivery of the curriculum. Currently, there are only limited strategies in place to address or reduce the impact of this identified risk. The implication of this situation, if it continues to be unaddressed, is that there will be diminished access to ECD services, or at least, the quality will be notably compromised. The ensuing recommendation for this finding is elaborated in the efficiency section.

In essence, with this originally identified ToC assumption not being fully met and with no alternative strategies in place to reduce the impact of this risk, the main rights holders, the children, are likely to suffer. In order to continue to make progress in the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum, some of these key ToC assumptions ought to be seriously considered. When considering adopting the HighScope model, it is therefore, critical to have interventions: (a) strengthen parents’ abilities to become even

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73 It is recognised that all parents, including those who cannot pay school fees, are required to donate paper towels, toilet paper, and soap for hand washing.

74 This also includes government-assisted private sector-run learning centres.
more effective partners in their children’s education; and (b) motivate parents to pay school fees.

**Teacher and Administrator Rights Holder Assumptions Unmet**

**FINDING G:** The ECD Unit staff have made significant progress in the provision of teacher training and coaching efforts. The available evidence suggests, however, that teachers, as duty bearers, have limited formal educational background in early child development, and additional capacity strengthening efforts are (still) needed in order for them to create a positive and supportive classroom environment.

While strong efforts have been made to strengthen teacher skills to work with the children, teachers require additional training. A key assumption, that duty bearer teachers should have educational backgrounds which include working with children, is unmet.

In all participating countries, a training strategy, developed by the ToT in each participating country, has delivered an array of “on-site” training. Annex 10 has the list of training efforts for all participating countries. However, in spite of the efforts, survey results indicate that there was moderate coverage of teachers participating, however, as only 62% attended “5-12 training sessions over the past two years.” The majority of teachers also lack basic formal training. Eighty-four percent falls into having: (1) “Some College but Less than a Bachelors;” and (2) “Senior High.” Another major constraint to the effective implementation of the curriculum is that the caregiver turnover rate is considerable, resulting in low teacher retention.

To counteract the effects of this risk, the ECD Units have made significant efforts to provide “on-site” training to teachers and administrators on the HighScope Curriculum. However, only about half (53%) of the teachers reported receiving “coaching assistance” (through observations) periodically “or between 5-12 times over the past two years”. Table 7 presents the reported frequency with which coaching support was received.
Moreover, additional training and coaching efforts appear to be needed, as the Child-Teacher interactions are not yet optimal. Observation results show that: (1) participating as partners in children’s play; and (2) sharing control of conversations with children were two areas in need of improvement. In only 28% of the observation cases were adults fully sharing control of conversations with children. The most prominent constraint in sharing control of conversations was teachers falling back on closed-ended questions instead of using open-ended questions. Further, conversations with HighScope Educational Foundation staff reveal that this appears to be an adjustment experience which should be expected. Some HighScope teachers in St. Kitts and Nevis were exposed to ECD formal education provided by SERVOL, which includes theories about teacher-directed approaches. There has also been limited time that the Curriculum has been in use in the Caribbean (with the exception of St. Kitts and Nevis). Given these circumstances (limited coverage of training and mentorship opportunities and previous exposure to a fundamentally different ECD curriculum), there appears to be great need for more frequent training, particularly in topics geared to strengthen the practical application of HighScope Curriculum.

Another area for continued training and coaching is conflict resolution. In only one out of five observations did adults in the classroom involve children in resolving conflicts, as per HighScope Curriculum guidelines. This is reflective of the fact that Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica have not yet covered conflict resolution as a training area. Nonetheless, the HighScope Educational Research Foundation Final Evaluative Report (2014) also calls for conflict resolution as an area for “further training” in St. Kitts and Nevis.

### 3.2.3.4 Training to Support the Equity Focus

There is limited formal training opportunities available to teachers in the area of dealing with children with disabilities and or special needs (i.e., learning, behavioral and emotional, social, physical disabilities, and visual and hearing impairments). From stakeholder interviews, it appears that in all the participating countries, the Ministry of

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**Table 7: Frequency of Coaching Support Received**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent of Teachers Who Received Coaching Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited (1-4 Times)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodically (5-12 Times)</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent (13+ Times)</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Education works jointly with the Ministry of Health to identify and refer children with special needs. Though there was a limited number of children with such special needs observed during the evaluation, teachers in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and St. Kitts and Nevis expressed strong interest in learning to work with such vulnerable children. In support of providing an equitable early childhood educational experience, it would be beneficial if attention were given to teaching practices specifically addressing children with special needs.

**Recommendation #5:** The Ministry of Education in all countries should deliver more practical training in adult–child interactions in particular within the next 12 months (in 2015). Training would strengthen the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum. [Evidence from finding G]

**Recommendation #6:** The Ministry of Education in Antigua and Barbuda and the Commonwealth of Dominica should continue with planned efforts to provide training in the area of conflict resolution. The Ministry of Education in St. Kitts and Nevis should provide “further training” in conflict resolution in 2015. [Evidence from finding G]

**Recommendation #7:** The Ministry of Education in all countries should invest resources into teacher training in the areas of dealing with children with disabilities (i.e., learning, behavioral and emotional, social, physical disabilities, and visual and hearing impairments). This input would strengthen the equity focus in the delivery of the HighScope Curriculum. [Evidence from finding G]

### 3.3 Efficiency

This section presents the extent to which the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum is efficient. Cost-savings activities undertaken are also presented as well as the themes from parent FGDs about fundraising activities in which they participate. Table 8 lists the key evaluation questions.

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75 Efficiency—Measures the outputs-qualitative and quantitative-in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which signifies that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted. When evaluating the efficiency of a programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions: (1) Were activities efficient? (2) Were objectives achieved on time? (3) Was the programme or project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?
### Table 8: Key Evaluation Questions for Efficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OECD Evaluation Criteria</th>
<th>Key Evaluation Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>1. Are there any inefficiency issues with regards to how the programme is implemented or coordinated? 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. How can one categorize the relationship between project costs and the results achieved? Giving a good service, irrespective of lack of payment and they are going without being adequately compensated. 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Have the synergies created among various providers’ services contributed to the overall efficiency of the programme? 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. How have the duty bearers and rights holders been interacting? Is there any potential efficiency gain to make? 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. How does the programme compare to other comparable initiatives? 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Have any measures been taken during the implementation of the project, to address cost/effectiveness issues? (Any budget constraints?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Finding H:** Cost per child ratios reveal that there are two different models of implementing the HighScope model: private sector-run and government-run. However, when the private sector-run centres facilitate access to early childhood development services to poor and vulnerable families, operational costs tend to exceed income and compromise an efficient implementation of the HighScope Curriculum.

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76 This question is fully explored in the effectiveness section of this report.

77 This question is a cost benefit question that requires adequate data on outcomes. As outcome data is absent (more about this is discussed in the impact section), this question needs to be deferred until an outcomes evaluation is conducted, or and stronger systems for monitoring progress towards outputs and outcomes are in place.

78 There was no evidence available to address this question in depth.

79 This question is fully explored in the Effectiveness section of this report.

80 This question fell outside of the scope of this formative evaluation.
3.3.1 Two Models

There are two models through which to deliver the HighScope Curriculum: (1) Private sector–run; and (2) Government–run.\(^81\) As mentioned in the effectiveness section (under the School Level), the services are of quality, however, teachers are not getting sufficiently compensated for their services, thereby reducing their morale. The school fees are the main distinction between the two models.

The learning centre average expenditure costs and cost per child ratio was calculated by sector and by country, and figures 5 and 6 show these figures, respectively. Note that these figures are not generalizable and are based on a sample size of ten model learning centres. The public sector-run early childhood learning centres are comparably much higher than the private sector-run learning centres.

**Figure 5: Average Expenditures by Sector**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Sector</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The level of expenditures by country also illustrates precisely how much investment is being targeted to ECD services in St. Kitts and Nevis.

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\(^81\) The private sector-run learning centres include institutions that are private but also receive a “subvention”. In Dominica, some private sector-run learning centres are administered a non-government organisation (NGO) in the case of the two Social Centres.
The average monthly school fees per child for government-run and private sector-run institutions are EC$65 (less than US$ 25) and EC$145 (US$ 54), respectively. While there appears to be no difference in the amount of funds raised for supplemental income, the expenditure levels are significantly different.

### 3.3.1.1 Cost per Child Ratios

The cost ratios presented in the table below (amounts in EC$ and US$) are actually higher than currently shown, because the data is analyzed including school fee income from all enrolled students, i.e. based on the assumption that all parents pay school fees. Since it is evidenced in the effectiveness section that this is not the reality, the data, therefore, ought to be interpreted with caution.

#### Table 9: Cost per Child Ratios in EC$ and US$ for 2013-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Average Cost per Child for 2013-2014 in EC$</th>
<th>Average Cost per Child for 2013-2014 in US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>EC$ 976.64</td>
<td>US$ 364.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kitts &amp; Nevis</td>
<td>EC$ 2,761.14</td>
<td>US$ 1,030.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua &amp; Barbuda</td>
<td>EC$ 3,741.73</td>
<td>US$ 1,396.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=10.

The cost estimations above were calculated from the data collected with the Fee Structure and Management survey tool (annex 8). For St. Kitts and Nevis and Antigua

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82 Using the exchange rate of EC$ 2.67 = US$ 1.
and Barbuda, there are also formal costing studies conducted by Mr. Leon Charles completed in November 2012 to which the data from this evaluation was compared and found to be quite similar. The Costing Study for St. Kitts and Nevis found annual average operating costs per child (actual expenditure) to be EC$2,765.42, compared to the data presented from the evaluation of EC$2,761.14. The Costing Study for Antigua and Barbuda found annual average operating costs per child (actual expenditure) to be EC$3,001.15, compared to the data presented in this report of EC$3,741.73 (the roughly EC$700 difference here may be a result of the fact that the model learning centre sample sized is comprised of two. One run by the private sector and the other one run by the government). A similar study is not available for the Commonwealth of Dominica, but the alignment of the data for two countries, where comparison is possible, allows for confidence in the accuracy of the data from Dominica in this formative evaluation.

It is clear that the costs to deliver the HighScope model in Dominica are comparably smaller than those in Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis. This observation may be explained by the fact that the government-run centres in both countries are heavily subsidised (particularly in the area of staff salaries). While figure 7 shows the average amount spent on staff salaries, it should be noted that the centres in St. Kitts and Nevis are much bigger compared to those in Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

Further, the cost of living in Antigua and Barbuda is higher than in Dominica, thereby enabling the private sector-run institutions to charge significantly more for school fees (assuming that parents pay).

After further review of operating costs, it became evident that the staff salaries in the private sector-run institutions are being seriously compromised. These teachers, in particular, voiced that they are not sufficiently paid for services delivered. **As rights holders, teachers are entitled to receive payment for the services that they provide.** It appears that this observation is not unfounded, as findings from the Costing Study also drew attention to the same challenge.83 This notion is further substantiated with stakeholder interviews, reporting that

school fees were not paid or not paid on time. The added pressure of late (no) payments could reduce efficiency.

Equity and efficiency are not mutually exclusive and ought to be balanced. The challenge is to find the equilibrium that fulfills both conditions. In essence, it is necessary to: (1) continue to serve children using research-based practices; (2) engage in community partnerships to secure resources for materials; (3) undertake assessment procedures which are not burdensome; (4) pay teachers for their services; and (5) support the on-going costs to implement the curriculum (i.e., classroom materials, school yard upkeep, equipment, and recurrent costs). In view of these key priorities, the ECD Unit staff in St. Kitts during the time of data collection disclosed that they were currently considering a “sliding scale.” That is, the families who can afford to pay, would pay a higher school fee, while those who cannot afford to pay, would pay a subsidised fee.

**Recommendation #8:** The Ministry of Education in all countries should consider alternate fee strategies which support both efficiency and equity, facilitating access to the most vulnerable families. This change would effectively ensure that the teachers in the private sector receive payment for services delivered. [Evidence from finding H]

The different rates should take effect before the 2015-2016 academic year.

Therefore, when considering implementing or expanding the HighScope model, the lesson learned is that it is very important to ensure that the equity outreach is balanced with income, so that teacher salaries are not compromised.

### 3.3.2 Cost-Saving Measures

While efficiency issues are evident (linked to teacher salaries), there are some fundraising and cost-saving activities undertaken at the school level in both private sector-run and government-run settings. The funds from these events in both models are used to offset some operating costs. These events include barbeques, nature walks, sponsorships for races, career day, sports day, royalty dinner, movie day, and pre-carnival activities.
Other examples of cost-saving measures include:

- Many of the classroom materials are local.
- Teachers working in St. Kitts reported borrowing HighScope resource materials from a Resource Room. In addition, in Dominica, Head Teachers / Supervisors stated that they “save up” to purchase materials.
- Data indicates that HighScope model preschools in each participating country share information with each other about challenges, lessons learned, and experiences using different approaches. It is recognized that this established network among teachers and head teachers / supervisors is a source of strong support. However, it is unknown if the teachers’ access to this network enhanced the fidelity of the HighScope Curricular implementation.
- Teachers in seven model centres in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and St. Kitts and Nevis confirmed that they “go on internet to look for more information.”
- In four model centres in Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis, the teachers communicate with parents electronically (i.e., What’s App™; email, and text messaging) about events and child progress, thereby reducing the dependence on paper.

While the list of cost-saving measures is not exhaustive and is not enough to sustain some of these programmes, it does provide insight into areas where duty bearer parents and teachers have been interacting in such a way that contributes to the efficiency of the programme. The list also offers important insights for others considering the adaptation/implementation of the HighScope Curriculum. In sum, it is logical to conclude that the model learning centres make strong attempts to achieve (and exceed) the expected programme results in the cheapest or most efficient way possible.

3.4 IMPACT

This section discusses, to the extent possible, the impact of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme. The key evaluation questions for this section are presented in table 10.

84 Impact – Defined as the positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. This involves the main impacts and effects resulting from the activity on the local social, economic, environmental and other development indicators. When evaluating the impact of a programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions: (1) What has happened as a result of the programme or project? (2) What real difference has the activities made to the beneficiaries or rights-holders?; and (3) How many people have been affected?
TABLE 10: KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS FOR IMPACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OECD EVALUATION CRITERIA</th>
<th>KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT</td>
<td>1. <strong>WERE THE SELECTED INDICATORS USED TO MONITOR THE PROGRAMME SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ACHIEVABLE AND RELEVANT ENOUGH TO DETERMINE THE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES? DO THEY NEED TO BE REVISED?</strong> 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>HAS IT BEEN FEASIBLE TO COLLECT DATA ON SELECTED INDICATORS?</strong> 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. <strong>ARE THERE ANY OBSERVED UNINTENDED DIRECT OR INDIRECT RESULTS AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL? AT THE HOUSEHOLD LEVEL (CHILDREN, PARENTS CAREGIVERS)?</strong> 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. <strong>IS THERE ANY OBSERVABLE EVIDENCE OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE HIGHSCOPE CURRICULUM REFORM PROGRAMME TO SHORT, MEDIUM OR LONG TERM EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT/IMPROVEMENTS IN THE SELECTED CHILDREN, COMMUNITIES ETC.?</strong> 88 <strong>WHAT ARE THE STUDENT GRADES SAYING?</strong> 89 <strong>ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO PROGRAMME STAFF?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. <strong>IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE IN THE WAY THE PROGRAMME AFFECTS GIRLS COMPARED TO BOYS? BASED ON SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, WHO IS BENEFITING MORE? THE POOREST? THE RICHEST?</strong> 90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.1 MONITORING AND CHILD ASSESSMENT DATA

**FINDING J:** The lack of monitoring and evaluation evidence (trend data, collected regularly as part of the implementation) prevents a comprehensive assessment of how the programme affects the children and communities and whether, or not, the curriculum affects female and male children differently. While the ECD Units in participating countries may have strategically omitted systematised child assessment activities from the training areas, the conditions are suitable currently to begin instituting an assessment system.

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85 Due to a lack of evidence, this question could not be addressed.
86 Due to a lack of evidence, this question could not be addressed.
87 This question is addressed using anecdotal data in this section.
88 Due to a lack of data on student learning outcomes and community-level changes, this part of the question could not be addressed.
89 Given the absence of student grades systematically collected, it is not possible to address this question.
90 This question is addressed using anecdotal data in this section.
The scope of the assessment system is an important step to consider when implementing the HighScope Curriculum, and the current gap in child assessment systems signals the need to assess data needs before its institution. As highlighted in the effectiveness section (under the School Level), there is a gap in the training area of Child Assessment. With the exception of St. Kitts and Nevis, the training in the other countries has been minimal. The cause of this gap is logical. Efforts in this area were minimized, because the ministries of education in the participating countries most likely wanted to establish strong and consistent implementation before undertaking Child Assessment activities.

Nonetheless, with the absence of systematically collected data on trends, it is not possible to document the effects of the HighScope Curriculum or speculate on the contributions that the curriculum may have had on short, medium or long term outcomes concerning: (1) educational achievements for targeted children; and (2) improvements in communities. Moreover, due to the lack of data, it is uncertain how the programme may affect female compared to male children, or whether socioeconomic status has a potential moderating influence on children’s their learning processes. Finally, in the absence of a programme monitoring and evaluation framework, there are also no indicators measuring outputs or outcomes to review.

Child assessment is critical to building high-quality ECD programmes. The absence of an assessment system obstructs the ability of the Ministry of Education’s ECD to determine: (1) what is working and what is not; and (2) how the Caribbean children, families, and communities are affected by the HighScope Curriculum. Most importantly, without a system in place, an essential function, evidence-based learning, does not take place or serve those considering the implementation of the HighScope model.

Since “assessment is the process of collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting information,” the key components that an assessment system ought to include are “information gathered about students, instruction, and classroom climate.”

The ideal assessment system ought to be feasible and reasonably priced, without being burdensome. As evidenced, the teachers in participating countries are already taking steps to engage in qualitative child assessment with anecdotes and child observations. This information connects to the KDIs, which in turn informs future lesson planning. According to HighScope Assessment activities, subsequent steps would include connecting the child’s progress to the Child Observation Record (COR). Recall that the EDC Unit in St. Kitts was already providing training and building on “an observation-based instrument [that] provides systematic assessment of young children’s knowledge and

abilities in all areas of development.” Staff interviews also reveal that progress in this area has been limited due to a lengthy procuring process of HighScope’s COR resources. Ultimately, the COR data contributes to a “family report” which is intended to be shared with parents at least two times per year (minimum). There is even an available website for parents who wish to engage online interactively and submit input, including their own observations.

While the six ToTs, who received training in 2011, are certified trainers and know how to use the COR, they are likely in need of additional or refresher training. Further, there will likely be a need to update ToT skills in child assessment processes. Though there are multiple on-line courses designed to instruct on using and instituting the COR system, it may be more efficient to work with the HighScope Foundation staff to deliver the training to multiple stakeholders in the region. It was also observed in the three model centres in St. Kitts and Nevis, where COR training has been delivered, that the teachers could benefit from more hands-on experience in using the COR. Potential training areas include: (1) observing, recording, documenting children’s growth using the Preschool COR; (2) recording and scoring anecdotes; (3) compiling scores; and (4) working with parents and sharing the Preschool COR results.

**Recommendation #9:** The Ministry of Education in all the participating countries should continue as planned the implementation of training area of Child Assessment. A robust monitoring and evaluation system, a culture of results-based management and practical skills in M&E, are key to identifying children’s accomplishments and future development needs.

**Recommendation #10:** The ministries of education should institutionalise a formal, systematic assessment process, such as the use of the COR, without delay. [Evidence from finding J]

The ToTs are likely in need of supplemental training. Their certifications have already lapsed therefore need to be updated. This period could be an ideal time for skills reinforcement in child assessment. Though there are multiple on-line courses available in using and instituting the COR system, it may be more efficient to work with the HighScope Foundation staff to deliver the training to multiple stakeholders at the same time. Should the Ministries of Education in participating countries wish to explore the use of the COR as their robust assessment

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93 [www.onlinecor.com](http://www.onlinecor.com)
94 Online courses include: (1) Child Assessment and More: An Introduction to the Preschool Child Observation Record (Preschool COR); (2) Using COR Data to Inform Instruction; (3) How to Use OnlineCOR®; and (4) Assessment “Boot Camp.”
system, UNICEF should provide support through the technical assistance. [Evidence from finding J]

3.4.2 Benefits of the Programme

Before presenting the anecdotal evidence in this section, it is informative to present the general population of children touched by the HighScope Curriculum in the model centres.

Enrollment records from the past five years, or the 2009-2010 to 2013-2014 academic years, indicates that a total of 2,018 (female: 928 and male: 1,090) children in the ten model centres have experienced the HighScope Curriculum since 2009. Table 11 indicates the total number of children, disaggregated by gender. While data is incomplete, it is easy to speculate that an even larger number of children have experienced the HighScope Curriculum beyond the ten model learning centres. Overall, the proportion of males is slightly higher than female children at 54%.

Table 11: Total Outreach of Children and Teachers Affected by HighScope

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEN MODEL CENTRES</th>
<th>TOTAL OF NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED SINCE 2009-2014</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kitts and Nevis</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finding K: Anecdotal evidence from parents and teachers suggests that the HighScope Curriculum contributes to the behavioral improvements (at home and at preschool).

Programme Effects on Children from Parents and Teachers

Parent FGD data indicates that their children have become creative, inquisitive, and organized thinkers. As noted in the relevance section, the data from parents explaining their satisfaction with the curriculum was presented. Similarly, teacher interview data reveals positive perceptions about the results of the HighScope Curriculum. The most mentioned example is the scenario where a child was really quiet, and “after being in HighScope, that child ‘came out of his/her shell’”. Many teachers also highlighted that for the children, having to make their own choices and decisions and cooperate with other children, helps to “build leadership”. Finally, as noted earlier, the curriculum enables boys and girls to explore non-traditional roles. It is recognised that these results are anecdotal and non-representative, but this small sample of evidence conveys an
idea of how parents and teachers perceive the HighScope model has changed their children.

**Programme Effects on the Programme Staff**

The most important benefit from the HighScope Preschool Programme is the professional development opportunities afforded to teachers. While it is unknown of the total number of HighScope teachers who have been affected, the teacher sample size in this formative evaluation is 41. Only 35 (out of 41) reported receiving training and coaching support. The qualitative data reveals that this support is valued. Almost all (close to 90%) of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- “The information I have learned has helped me to be a more effective teacher.”
- “In my view, the coaching support has helped me to be a better teacher.”
- “The tools that have been provided to me support my ability to teach the children.”

Further, 90% of the teachers responded to “How often do you apply the information you learned in your classroom?” with “Daily,” which confirms how useful the training topics are. Sixty-three percent reported that they “daily” use the coaching support supplied, indicating how helpful the teachers consider this input.

**Programme Effects Girls Compared to Boys**

As the design of the HighScope Curriculum, child-directed and interactive, the effects on girls and boys are consistent with the general learning outcomes stipulated in the Caribbean Curriculum Resource Guide. Classroom observations indicate that there is no difference in treatment between girls and boys. When presenting this question to the teachers, most agreed that the treatment of male and female children is identical. However, stakeholder interview data suggests that the programme may affect girls and boys differently. For instance, if a male child was quiet in the beginning, it was noted that he “is now more outspoken” and “he is doing for himself”. A female child became “more social” and assertive. The following sentiments were consistent throughout all observed centres: “My daughter is ‘the teacher’ at home.” and “My daughter will tell me don’t put that [junk food] in my lunch box!” Note that the centres teach children about the importance of fruits and vegetables, and so often times the children would tell their parents that there was no tolerance at preschool for processed foods for snack, or “no junk [food]”. The themes mentioned relate to several learning outcomes, including being well-adjusted, effective communication, critical thinking, and independent learning and action.
When considering the HighScope model, it is important to seriously consider when a child assessment system will be put into place and that: (1) the scope of the assessment system should not be too complex or burdensome; (2) stakeholder training will be most likely be required; and (3) strong and consistent implementation takes time.

3.5 **Sustainability**

This final set of findings describes the extent to which the positive [perceived] changes and benefits generated through the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme are likely to continue. Table 12 includes the key evaluation questions.

**Table 12: Key Evaluation Questions for Sustainability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OECD Evaluation Criteria</th>
<th>Key Evaluation Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sustainability           | 1. **What are the current strengths and weaknesses (design, coordination, management and monitoring) of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme and their capacity to contribute to or hinder the overall sustainability of the pilot programme or other curriculum reform programmes with a similar design?**
|                          | 2. **What has been the buy-in from the duty-bearers and rights-holders and what leadership or supportive roles have they played?**
|                          | 3. **What are the institutional capacity development efforts needed to ensure effective and efficient management, monitoring and evaluation of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme—in keeping with the established system?**
|                          | 4. **What type of monitoring and evaluation system should be established to support the rollout of the HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme on a national basis in the model or other countries e.g. required tools, training of staff, processes and procedures?**

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95 Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable. When evaluating the sustainability of a programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions: (1) To what extent did the benefits of a programme or project continue after donor funding ceased? (2) What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the programme or project?

96 This evaluation question has been addressed under the impact section.
3.5.1 Programme Strengths and Sustainability

**Finding L:** The parent-teacher partnership is a strength of the HighScope Curriculum design, and school-level interventions have been undertaken to facilitate and strengthen parent involvement. While most of the school-level duty bearers (e.g., teachers, administrators, parents) fulfill their obligations, the lack of buy-in from some duty-bearer parents potentially threatens the future sustainability of past efforts.

Some parent duty bearers do not carry out their obligations. This reality directly constrains the potential sustainability of the HighScope Curriculum. The HighScope Curriculum Reform Programme is designed, so that teachers work with parents together in support of the children’s early education. This is the strongest asset of the programme design. In spite of these inputs, it has been evidenced that the fact that there are two sets of parents, (1) those who take an active role in their child’s learning; and (2) those who do not, subsequently creates an operating context, where there is insufficient income to compensate teachers (among other school-related costs).

The overarching equity focus strategy, which strengthens access for disadvantaged children, is important. Therefore, there must be a balance between equity and efficiency. This argument and ensuing recommendation has been presented in the efficiency section, and the core issue is that the teachers in the private sector-run early learning centres are as rights holders, who are entitled to receive payment for the services that they provide.

**Hands-on solutions, raised during the final stakeholder meetings in November 2014, are positive steps to support programme sustainability and ought to be pursued.** Potential solutions offered included the modification of the current fee strategies with a “sliding scale”. Another possibility mentioned was the use of cash-transfers. Given the missing link in the parent-teacher partnership, the main issue of motivating parents to pay was discussed at length. Public service announcements and other media could be used to raise awareness in this area. It was also noted in all parent FGDs that the majority were
not aware that their children were even enrolled in the HighScope Curriculum. Thus, there is also a need to further sensitise parents about the importance of early childhood education.

3.5.2 Tracking Information System for Programme Roll-Out

**Finding M:** A systematic assessment process, which includes tracking information, is not available but would be helpful to support future programme expansion.

The benefits of a child-directed curriculum include support to the whole educational system, which would enable the MoE to evaluate the ECD context, how children's progress is changing, and what needs are most influential. This evaluation report has discussed how the use of the PQA HighScope instrument is not yet regularized. Moreover, a formal assessment system detailing each child's individual progress is not yet instituted. If each country's MoE ECD Unit chooses to pursue the regular use of this instrument, then there is potential to review outcomes and determine that improvements have taken place. A formal system which stores progress, will in turn generate tracking information which can dispel children's progression to higher education levels. With such type of data, the ECD Units would be able to effectively link the effects of the HighScope participation to short, medium or long term educational achievements, among other important evidence-based results.

**Recommendation #11:** The Ministry of Education in all the participating countries should develop a tracking system, starting from the level of ECD. Carrying out this recommendation would create a system that would enable parents and teachers to identify, work on, and document and track learning and development. This system would be an effective and efficient management system that could also be used for programme “roll out” and “scaling up”.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation has evidenced how the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum in the ten learning centres in the Caribbean is not simply about delivering effective ECD services. The content and pedagogy of this curriculum also contributes to a different type of society.

The populations in the Caribbean SIDS face pervasive challenges, and the future generations will require specialized skills (e.g., problem solving, negotiation, and communication skills) in order to effectively deal with problems unique to islands. The challenges to be addressed are well-documented (please see http://www.sidsnet.org/ and resources from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ SIDS Unit).

With this reality, the HighScope Curriculum offers fundamental ECD services which appear to prove effective in managing such impending issues. As noted throughout this report, the HighScope model has a holistic design which supports children’s cognitive, social, emotional, and developmental abilities. The themes raised linked to HighScope were children being well-adjusted, effective communicators, critical thinkers, independent learners, and proactive.

The future challenges will require preventive approaches for responding to natural disasters, managing the tourism industry, and negotiating the future financial crises. For instance, to maintain freshwater levels, it will be necessary to manage the fragility and interdependence of coastal zones. The tourism industry, the backbone of many SIDS economies, will require analytical thinkers to ensure that there is a balance between ecological needs and tourism revenue. Moreover, island nations are vulnerable to economic shocks. The ill effects of the global financial and economic crisis are still being felt, and the future fiscal outlook will need strong oversight. It will be imperative, therefore, that the children have capacity to manage and communicate effectively.

This report has described how three Caribbean SIDS identified a need to institute a research-based, child-directed curriculum for early childhood education. It is clear that there was an intent to follow what research indicates. For example, the results from investments in well-implemented ECD interventions can improve children’s well-being.

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97 Examples include: (1) Criminality; (2) Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases; (3) Climate Change, Sensitive Ecological Systems, and Fresh Water Resources; (4) The need to institute tourism that takes into account the fragility of the island environment; (6) Debt and other economic vulnerabilities; and (7) Changing household demographics.

and produce positive outcomes, particularly for vulnerable children. **Though several levels of short and medium benefits have been noted in this report, the research evidence shows that HighScope Curriculum model has lasting benefits.** For the short-term, for example, all those who were exposed to the HighScope Curriculum have transitioned to the primary school without difficulties. Research also promises that **grade retention** and high school completion rates are considerably higher.  

Studies have shown that high quality early education access and participation produces better educated and skilled future workers. It has also been proven that the children exposed to the HighScope Curriculum are more likely to enter the labor force, are less likely to be unemployed, are more likely to have higher earnings, and are more likely to display greater creativity and take more responsibility. All such research ensures a more productive workforce. In keeping with this logic, a highly educated workforce would allow for an economy to become more adaptable—re-engineering work processes, selecting sophisticated technologies, and implementing changes to meet competitive challenges or changes in demand.  

### 4.2 Lessons Learned

The following lessons would be of interest to other island nations considering adopting the HighScope model. These lessons may overlap with some of the findings presented.

**Lesson 1:** The student-teacher ratio (ranging between 8 and 15 children assigned to 1 teacher) is fundamental to the HighScope Curriculum’s design. Failing to adhere could potentially compromise the effectiveness of the intervention.

**Lesson 2:** It is very important to ensure that the outreach with an equity focus is balanced with income. The lack of sufficient financial compensation for the tireless efforts of teachers could result in their dissatisfaction, and ultimately, poor performance. Such a reality could also undermine the effectiveness of the delivery of the ECD services.

**Lesson 3:** Child assessment is critical to building high-quality ECD programmes. The scope of the assessment system is an important step to consider at the early stages of HighScope Curriculum implementation. Without a system in place, it is difficult for evidence-based learning to take place.  

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101 Karoly and Bigelow, The Economics of Investing in Universal Preschool in California, p. xxix.
CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents all of the recommendations organized according to priority.

TOP PRIORITY

- The Ministry of Education in all countries should consider alternate fee strategies which support both efficiency and equity, facilitating access to the most vulnerable families. This change would effectively ensure that the teachers in the private sector receive payment for services delivered. [Evidence from finding H. Recommendation #8 in the report] The different rates should take effect before the 2015-2016 academic year.

- The Ministry of Education in all countries should invest resources into teacher training in the areas of dealing with children with disabilities (i.e., learning, behavioral and emotional, social, physical disabilities, and visual and hearing impairments). This input would strengthen the equity focus in the delivery of the HighScope Curriculum. [Recommendation #7 in the report]

- The Ministry of Education in all countries should deliver more practical training in adult–child interactions in particular within the next 12 months (in 2015). Training would strengthen the implementation of the HighScope Curriculum. [Recommendation #5 in the report]

- The Ministry of Education in Antigua and Barbuda and the Commonwealth of Dominica should continue with planned efforts to provide training in the area of conflict resolution. The Ministry of Education in St. Kitts and Nevis should provide “further training” in conflict resolution in 2015. [Recommendation #6 in the report]

- The Government of Antigua and Barbuda should prioritize the drafting of legislation to render the Standards for the Regulation of Early Childhood Services in Antigua and Barbuda (under the Education Act) into law within 12 months. Rendering “The Standards” into law would ensure that all services for children are consistent and would also effectively support the expansion of the HighScope Preschool Curriculum. [Recommendation #1 in the report]
* The Commonwealth of Dominica should continue with current plans and efforts to finalise a document to outline and standardize the government’s contribution to early childhood learning centres and shift that a guidance document into policy language effective immediately. [Recommendation #1b in the report]

* The Ministry of Education’s Early Childhood Units in all countries should use the HighScope Programme Quality Assessment (PQA) at least once annually, starting in 2015. The use of PQA would effectively highlight areas for improvement and document progress, supporting the research-based, quality monitoring as well as expansion efforts. [Recommendation #4 in the report]

* The ministries of education should institutionalise a formal, systematic assessment process, such as the use of the COR, without delay. [Recommendation #10 in the report]

* The Ministry of Education in all the participating countries should continue as planned with the implementation of the training area of Child Assessment. A robust monitoring and evaluation system, a culture of results-based management and practical skills in Monitoring & Evaluation, are key to identifying children’s accomplishments and future development needs.

In the absence of assessment practices, the Training of Trainers are likely to need supplemental training. Though there are multiple online courses available in using and instituting the Child Observation Record (COR) system, it may be more cost-efficient to work with the HighScope Foundation staff to deliver the training directly to multiple stakeholders at the same time.

Should the Ministries of Education in participating countries wish to explore the use of the COR as their robust assessment system, UNICEF should provide support through the technical assistance. [Recommendation #9 in the report]

* Putting into practice a formal and comprehensive child assessment system, which enables parents and teachers to identify, work on, and document children’s learning and development would be an effective and efficient management system for tracking student achievement and progress. The Ministry of Education in all the participating countries should develop a tracking system starting from the
level of ECD. The system would be used for HighScope Curriculum “roll out” and “scaling up”. [Recommendation #11 in the report]

- The Commonwealth of Dominica should continue with current plans and efforts to reinforce the current Early Childhood Unit with additional officers who are entrusted with supporting the implementation and expansion of the HighScope Curriculum, among other obligations, including monitoring. [Recommendation #3 in the report]

- The Government of Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis should establish a succession plan to fill upcoming vacancies created from retiring Early Childhood Unit staff by 2015. Establishing a succession plan would ensure that sufficient and adequate human resources are available to effectively support the continuation and expansion of the HighScope Curriculum. [Recommendation #2 in the report]

**CHAPTER 6: ANNEXES**

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