

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**Factors affecting literacy skills development among learners in early
childhood centers of Abesim circuit in Sunyani Municipality**



CYNTHIA ADDO

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

2024

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

WINNEBA

**FACTORS AFFECTING LITERACY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG
LEARNERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS OF ABESIM CIRCUIT IN
SUNYANI MUNICIPAL, GHANA**

CYNTHIA ADDO

220015990

**A thesis in the Department of Early Childhood Education,
Faculty of Applied Behavioural Science in Education, submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Early Childhood Education)
In the University of Education, Winneba**

MAY, 2024

DECLARATION

Students Declaration

I, **Cynthia Addo**, hereby declare that this project work with the quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and dully acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature.....

Date:.....

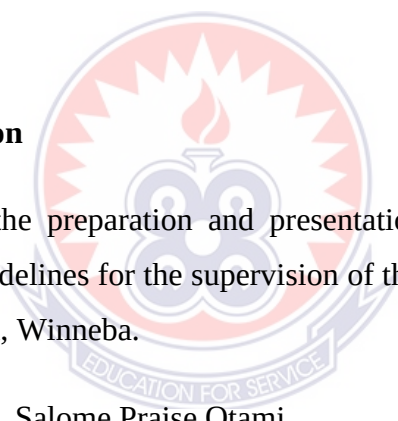
Supervisors Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis was done in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of the dissertation laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Supervisor's name: Dr. Salome Praise Otami

Signature.....

Date:.....



DEDICATION

To my family



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Salome Praise Otami for her dedication and timeless guidance throughout this study. I would also like to express my appreciation to all the lecturers at the Department of Early Childhood Education for their help in diverse ways. I am also grateful to authors of books, journals, periodicals and other materials from which ideas or information was used in this study. Special thanks to my dear husband and children for their moral support and encouragement. Again, I would like to thank all my colleagues whom in diverse ways assisted me in this thesis.



TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENT	vi
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	6
1.3 Purpose of the study	9
1.4 Research Objective	9
1.5 Research Questions	9
1.6 Delimitations of the study	11
1.7 Limitations of the study	11
1.8 Operational Definitions of Terms	11
1.9 Organization of the Study	12
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	13
2.0 Overview	13
2.1 Theoretical Framework	13
2.2 Concept of Literacy	21
2.3 Concept of Literacy Skills Development	21
2.3 Concept of Early Childhood Education	22
2.4 Concept Early Childhood Curriculum	23
2.5 The Influence of Teaching Methods on Early Childhood Literacy Development	34
2.6 Teaching and Learning Resources Influence on Literacy Development	42

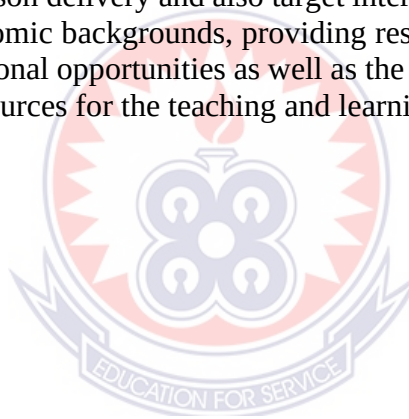
2.7 Teacher Training and Professional Development	50
2.8 Physical Environment of Schools Effects on Literacy Skills Development	60
2.9 Chapter Summary	65
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	67
3.0 Overview	67
3.1 Research Paradigm	67
3.2 Research Approach	68
3.3 Research Design	69
3.4 Population	71
3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique	71
3.6 Data Collection Instrument	72
3.7 Trustworthiness of the Instrument	74
3.8 Data Collection Procedure	75
3.9 Data Analysis	76
3.10 Ethical Considerations	77
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	79
4.0 Overview	79
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	110
5.0 Overview	110
5.1 Summary of the Study	110
5.2 Key Findings	110
5.3 Conclusions	111
5.4 Recommendations	113

REFERENCES	115
APPENDIX A	136
APPENDIX B	143



ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that affect literacy skills development among early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality. The exploratory case study design was adopted for the study. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select thirteen (13) kindergarten teachers in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality for the study. The instruments used for the collection of data were a semi-structured interview guide and observational checklists. The data from the interview were analysed thematically, whereas content analysis was utilized in analysing the observational data. The findings revealed that teaching methods such as whole language, phonics-based instruction, interactive read aloud as well as play-based methods were adopted by the teachers. Also, the findings revealed that learners' access to books and print materials, and access to technological literacy applications influence young learners' literacy skills development. The training and professional development of early childhood teachers affect the development of literacy skills of learners. The study therefore recommends that the Ghana Education Service (GES) offer training and professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their lesson delivery and also target interventions to support families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, providing resources and assistance to improve access to educational opportunities as well as the provision of appropriate teaching and learning resources for the teaching and learning of literacy.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Literacy development is the process of acquiring and mastering reading and writing skills, which plays a pivotal role in enhancing learning across the lifespan. The development of literacy skills is critical for early childhood learners as it sets the foundation for future academic success (Boyle, McNaughton & Chapin, 2019). One of the fundamental ways in which literacy development enhances learning is through improved comprehension. The ability to read and understand complex texts allows learners to access a wealth of information and knowledge.

Literacy skills development is fundamental to the educational growth of children, particularly in early childhood. These skills encompass reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities that form the foundation for academic success and lifelong learning (Brown, 2014; Pinkham, & Neuman, 2012). Understanding the factors that influence the development of literacy skills in young learners is crucial for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders (Horton, 2008).

According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), proficient reading comprehension is a key predictor of academic achievement (NICHD, 2000). Literate individuals can engage with textbooks, research papers, and instructional materials effectively, enabling deeper understanding of subject matter. In Ghana, where literacy rates remain relatively low compared to other countries, addressing these factors is crucial to improving educational outcomes (Akyeampong, 2010).

Moreover, literacy development fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Reading and writing activities stimulate cognitive processes that encourage analytical thinking, inference-making, and the evaluation of evidence. These skills are transferable to various subjects and are crucial for making informed decisions in both academic and real-life contexts (Cutting & Scarborough, 2006).

Therefore, incorporating literacy skills also enhances communication and self-expression. Writing enables learners to articulate their thoughts and ideas effectively, while reading empowers them to interpret and respond to the ideas of others. This proficiency in communication extends to active participation in class discussions, collaborative projects, and presentations, enriching the learning experience (Graham & Hebert, 2011). Early literacy exposure enriches a child's vocabulary, comprehension, and language expression. It supports the development of listening and speaking skills, enabling children to communicate effectively (Horowitz-Kraus, & Hutton, 2015).

From the global perspective, it is estimated that between 2 to 5% of school children have literacy difficulties (Boyle, McNaughton & Chapin, 2019). According to the National Centre for Education Statistics (2017), reports from national assessment of reading progress revealed in 2017, almost 34% of fourth grade pupils in United States of America read below a basic level of achievement (with little or no mastery of reading knowledge and skills necessary to perform work of their grade level). Findings from the study carried out in the United Kingdom among the English-speaking children, indicated that, “of the grade two and three children whose reading was assessed, approximately a quarter were functioning at fairly low level of their grade and approximately 1 out of 20 were hardly able to read at all” (Nitttrouer, & Caldwell-Tarr, 2016, p.143).

Apart from the global perspective, this problem also persists in our Ghanaian setting. The low literacy rate among early grader according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the literacy rate in Ghana is 76.6% (UNESCO, 2021). However, these rates vary by regions, with some areas experiencing much lower rates of literacy. In Sunyani Municipal, which is located in the Bono Region of Ghana, the literacy rate is estimated to be around 65.6% (GSS, 2014) which is below the national standard. It can therefore be envisaged the surrounding rural communities in the Municipality would experience further lower literacy rates.

Teaching methods play a pivotal role in shaping the literacy skills of early childhood learners. Effective teaching strategies can significantly enhance the learning experience, making it more engaging and conducive to skill acquisition (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016, Kennedy et al., 2012). Traditional teaching methods, such as rote learning and direct instruction, have been widely used in early childhood education. However, these methods often fail to address the diverse needs of young learners (Tichá, et al., 2018).

Recent studies on teaching literacy foundations highlight the importance of interactive and child-centered teaching approaches. For instance, the use of phonics instruction, where children are taught to connect sounds with letters, has been shown to improve reading skills (Mohamed, 2023; Murphy, 2023, Doll, 2022). Additionally, incorporating storytelling, play-based learning, and the use of multimedia resources and other teaching methods can create a more dynamic learning environment that fosters literacy development (Maureen, et al., 2020; Saracho, 2020; Maureen, 2021). In the Abesim Circuit, it is essential to evaluate how these contemporary teaching methods are being implemented and their effectiveness in enhancing literacy skills among early childhood learners.

Also, the availability and quality of teaching and learning resources are critical factors that influence literacy development (Kilag, et al., 2024; Omuna et al., 2016). Resources such as books, educational games, audio-visual aids, and technology can significantly enrich the learning experience for children in literacy development (Olagbaju, & Popoola, 2020). These tools provide diverse opportunities for children to interact with language in various forms, thereby improving their reading and writing skills.

In many early childhood centers, especially in under-resourced areas, the lack of adequate teaching materials poses a significant challenge (Condy, & Blease, 2014). Research has shown that children who have access to a rich literacy environment, including a variety of books and interactive learning tools, demonstrate higher levels of literacy proficiency (Mol & Bus, 2011). In the context of the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality, it is important to investigate the extent to which teaching and learning resources are available and utilized.

Moreover, teacher training is a critical determinant of effective literacy instruction. Well-trained teachers possess the skills and knowledge necessary to implement best practices in literacy education (Govender, 2012). Professional development programmes that focus on literacy instruction can equip teachers with innovative strategies to support early literacy development (Morrow, 2001).

Research indicates that teachers who receive specialized training in early literacy are more effective in fostering reading and writing skills among young learners (Wasik & Hindman, 2011). Additionally, ongoing professional development and support are essential for teachers to stay updated with the latest educational practices. Evaluating the training

programmes available to teachers in the Abesim Circuit and their impact on literacy instruction will help identify areas for improvement and development.

Furthermore, the physical environment of schools significantly affects the learning experiences of children. A conducive learning environment that is safe, comfortable, and stimulating can enhance children's engagement and motivation to learn (Evans, 2006). Factors such as classroom layout, lighting, ventilation, and the availability of learning spaces can influence the effectiveness of literacy instruction (Cheryan et al., 2014).

In early childhood education, creating a print-rich environment where children are surrounded by written words and images can promote literacy development (Morrow, 1990). In the Abesim Circuit, it is crucial to assess how the physical environment of schools supports or hinders literacy skills development. Barrett et al., (2013) demonstrated that children in well-designed learning environments exhibit better literacy outcomes compared to those in poorly maintained settings. Therefore, examining the physical conditions of early childhood centers in the Abesim Circuit will provide valuable insights into their role in literacy development.

The development of literacy skills in early childhood is influenced by a multitude of factors, including teaching methods, the availability of teaching and learning resources, teacher training, and the physical environment of schools. This study aims to explore these factors within the context of the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Literacy skills development in early childhood is a cornerstone of educational success and lifelong learning. In the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality, there is a growing concern about the factors that influence literacy skills development among young learners. Despite the recognized importance of early literacy, many children in this region struggle to acquire foundational skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This study seeks to investigate the various elements that impact literacy development, guided by four specific objectives: teaching methods, teaching and learning resources, teacher training, and the physical environment of schools.

One significant factor affecting literacy skills development is the teaching methods employed by educators. These methods often fail to engage young learners or cater to their diverse learning needs, potentially hindering literacy development (Naidoo et al., 2014). Traditional teaching methods, such as rote memorization and direct instruction, are still prevalent in many early childhood centers (Kekesi et al., 2019). It appears this narrative is not different from what is happening in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality.

Contemporary educational research emphasizes the effectiveness of interactive and child-centered teaching approaches, such as phonics instruction, storytelling, and play-based learning, in fostering literacy skills (Mohammed, 2023; Neuman & Roskos, 1997; National Reading Panel, 2000). However, there is limited information on the extent to which these methods are implemented in the Abesim Circuit and their actual impact on children's literacy outcomes.

Previous studies have identified various factors that affect literacy skills development among young learners in developing countries. For instance, a study conducted by Fuccillo

(2015) in Tanzania identified the lack of access to quality instructional materials as a major hindrance to the development of literacy skills among young learners. Similarly, a study by Uddin and Rahman (2018) in Bangladesh found that inadequate teacher training and limited parental involvement were significant barriers to improving literacy outcomes among early childhood learners.

Also, the quality of teaching and learning resources are critical determinants of literacy development. In many early childhood centers within the Abesim Circuit, it appears there are noticeable shortage of essential educational materials, including books, educational games, audio-visual aids, and technology. This lack of resources can severely limit the opportunities for children to interact with diverse texts and learning tools, thereby impeding their literacy development (Oppong Frimpong, 2021; McLachlan et al., 2012). Studies have shown that a rich literacy environment, characterized by access to a variety of books and interactive learning materials, significantly enhances children's literacy skills (Mol & Bus, 2011).

Moreover, the training and professional development of teachers are vital components of effective literacy instruction. Teachers who receive comprehensive training in early literacy are better equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to support their students' literacy development (Terrell, & Watson, 2018). However, there are indications that many teachers in the Abesim Circuit may not receive sufficient training in literacy education. This gap in professional development can lead to suboptimal literacy instruction and adversely affect children's learning outcomes (Wasik & Hindman, 2011).

The physical environment of schools also plays a significant role in the literacy development of young learners. A conducive learning environment that is safe,

comfortable, and stimulating can greatly enhance children's engagement and motivation to learn (Evans, 2006). However, many early childhood centers in the Abesim Circuit face challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and poor maintenance. These unfavorable conditions can negatively impact children's learning experiences and literacy development (Barrett et al., 2013). Assessing the physical conditions of schools in the Abesim Circuit and their effects on literacy skills development is necessary to understand and address the environmental barriers to effective learning.

In a news report by Apexnews. gh by the Minister of Education Dr. Yaw Aduwum on the 7th of October 2023 indicates that despite the effort by the Government of Ghana through the Ghana Education Service through various interventions to address the literacy gap that exist in our educational system such as National Literacy Accelerated Program (NALAP), children still have problem with reading comprehension at the Basic level. The recent results from the National Standardised test indicate that only 38% of the learners in year two can read which is still below average and as such efforts need to be made to improve such results going forward.

Sequel to the above, given the importance of literacy skills development in early childhood and the challenges faced by learners in ECCs in Ghana, an annual report from a reading festival that is designed for basic that started in 2018 for primary schools within the Sunyani Municipality, the Abesim Circuit is ranked as one of the low performing circuits in the Municipality. The latest one that took place in 2022, Abesim was the last among all the circuits in the Sunyani Municipality.

Moreover, it appears there are limited studies in the area of literacy development among early childhood learners in the Abesim circuit. It is against this backdrop that this study

aims to explore the factors that affect literacy skills development among learners in early childhood centres in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipal area in Ghana.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that affect literacy skills development among early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality.

1.4 Research Objective

The following research objectives guided the study;

1. To examine out how teaching methods affect the literacy skills development of early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality.
2. To investigate how teaching and learning resources impact the literacy skills development of learners in early childhood centres in the Abesim Circuit.
3. To explore how teacher training affects the literacy skills development of learners at early childhood centres in the Abesim circuit.
4. To assess how the physical environment of schools affects the literacy skills development of learners in early childhood centres in the Abesim circuit.

1.5 Research Questions

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research questions are formulated;

1. What teaching methods used by early childhood teachers affect the literacy skills development of early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality?
2. How do teaching and learning resources influence the literacy skills development of learners in early childhood centres?

3. How does the training of teachers affect the literacy skills development of early learners in the Abesim Circuit?
4. How does the physical school environment affect the literacy skills development of early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit?

1.5 Significance of the study

The study on factors affecting literacy skills development among learners in Early Childhood Centers in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipal area in Ghana is important for several reasons. First, it will contribute to the understanding of the factors that affect the impact of literacy skills development among early childhood learners in the Ghanaian context. This knowledge will be useful to policymakers, educators, parents, and caregivers who are involved in early childhood education.

Second, the study will provide insights into the challenges faced by early childhood centres in promoting literacy skills development among learners. This understanding will enable policymakers and educators to develop more effective strategies and interventions to address these challenges and improve literacy outcomes for early childhood learners.

Third, the study will generate knowledge on the perspectives and experiences of parents, caregivers, and teachers regarding to their roles in promoting literacy skills development among learners. This knowledge will be valuable in developing collaborative partnerships between parents, caregivers, and teachers in promoting literacy skills development among early childhood learners.

Finally, the study will contribute to the existing literature on early childhood education and literacy development in Ghana. The findings of this study will be useful for researchers

and scholars who are interested in exploring literacy development in other regions of Ghana or in other countries with similar contexts.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The study will only focus on Early Childhood Centers (ECCs) in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipal area in Ghana, and the findings may not be generalizable to other regions or contexts. The study will only focus on only reading and writing. Clearly the study will only focus on the factors that affect literacy skills development among early childhood learners, and other factors that may impact literacy development, such as socio-economic status, may not be explored in depth.

1.7 Limitations of the study

The study may be limited by the availability and willingness of participants to participate in the study. The study may be limited by the subjective interpretation of data by the researcher. The study may be limited by the reliance on self-report data, which may be subject to biases and inaccuracies. The study may be limited by the small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

1.8 Operational Definitions of Terms

Literacy: The ability to read and write in a particular language.

Early Childhood Education: Formal education provided to children between the ages of three and eight years.

Literacy Skills Development: The process of acquiring skills related to reading, writing, speaking, and listening that enable individuals to communicate effectively in their language(s) of choice

Caregiver: A person who provides care for another person, typically a child or an elderly person.

Teaching and Learning Materials: Resources used by teachers to facilitate the teaching and learning process, such as textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, and manipulatives.

Early Childhood Centers: Formal education institutions that provide early childhood education services, typically to children between the ages of three and eight years.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study was organised under five chapters. Chapter one was made up of the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objective of the study, and the research questions. The chapter also included delimitation of the study, limitations, operational definition of terms as well as the organisation of the study. Chapter two dealt with the review of related literature which addressed issues concerning conceptual review, theoretical framework and empirical review that guided the study. The third chapter covered the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population sample and sampling procedures to be employed for the study. The chapter also described clearly the data collection instruments, data collection procedures as well as the data analysis procedure. The fourth chapter presented the results and the discussions obtained. The chapter was grouped into two parts. The first part is the preliminary data and the second part being the main data. The final chapter would present the summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations. Areas for further research was also suggested.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

The current research seeks to inquire about the role of literacy in early childhood centres within Abesim circuit. The chapter will constitute the appraisal of theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature on the topic under investigation. The appraisal of the literature will enable the researcher to compare previous findings and to give vivid explanations of theories and other concepts and evidence that are related to this current study, which would be used to make conclusions. The literature will be reviewed under the following themes

- Theoretical framework (Sociocultural Learning Theory)
- Concept of literacy
- **Empirical review**
 - Teaching methods in literacy development
 - Teaching and learning resources
 - Teachers training and literacy development
 - School physical environment and literacy development

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural learning theory (Lev Vygotsky 1978)

Sociocultural theory is an emerging field of psychology that looks at the contributions of society to individual development. This theory has become increasingly prominent since the 1990s and can be applied in educational settings as well as in socialization and play.

Psychologist Lev Vygotsky believed that parents, caregivers, peers, and the culture at large are responsible for developing the brain's higher-order function. According to Vygotsky, human development relies on social interaction and, therefore, can differ among cultures.

Sociocultural theory stresses the role that social interaction plays in psychological development. It suggests that human learning is largely a social process, and that our cognitive functions are formed based on our interactions with those around us who are more skilled.

Sociocultural theory focuses on how mentors and peers influence individual learning, but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how learning takes place.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is a highly suitable framework for research on literacy development in young children. This theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction, cultural context, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), offers valuable insights and advantages for understanding and studying literacy development in early childhood. Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has played a pivotal role in shaping our understanding of how young children acquire literacy skills. This theory posits that the social and cultural context, along with interactions with more knowledgeable individuals, significantly influence cognitive development. In the realm of literacy, Vygotsky's ideas have had a profound impact on how we perceive and facilitate the development of reading and writing skills in young children.

Social Interaction

Vygotsky's theory places a strong emphasis on the significance of social interaction in cognitive development, particularly in the acquisition of language and literacy skills. For young children, who are in the process of developing language and communication abilities, the support and interaction they receive from caregivers, educators, and peers play a crucial role in their literacy development. Research within this framework can explore

how social interactions, such as shared reading, dialogic conversations, and collaborative writing, influence language and literacy skills.

Children learn to read and write not in isolation, but through interactions with those who possess more advanced literacy skills. Shared reading experiences, in which caregivers or educators engage in discussions about the content of books, help children develop comprehension skills and build a love for reading (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

The theory extends the importance of social interaction beyond the adult-child relationship to peer interactions. Research has demonstrated that peer collaboration, such as peer reading, storytelling, and collaborative writing, is a valuable means of enhancing literacy skills (Dunn & Senechal, 1996). Children learn from one another, negotiate meaning, and practice various literacy tasks, which contributes to their development. Culture shapes language, reading practices, and the appreciation of literature. The cultural context, including family literacy practices and societal values, plays a significant role in a child's approach to literacy (Lam & Warriner, 2012).

Similarly, in a multicultural and multilingual environment, Vygotsky's theory underscores the importance of interaction between languages and the role of social context in learning multiple languages (Genesee et al., 2004). Children growing up in such environments navigate between languages, acquiring literacy skills in each through social interactions with speakers of those languages.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The ZPD represents the range of tasks that a learner can perform with the support and guidance of a more knowledgeable person. In the context of literacy, the ZPD is the space

where children can acquire new reading and writing skills with the assistance of educators, caregivers, or peers.

Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a foundational concept in educational psychology, particularly when it comes to understanding how children develop literacy skills. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the dynamic interplay between a child's current level of development and their potential level of development, which can be reached with the guidance of a more knowledgeable person. In the context of literacy development, the ZPD provides valuable insights into how educators and caregivers can effectively support children in acquiring reading and writing skills.

Vygotsky's ZPD is the range of tasks that a child cannot perform independently but can successfully accomplish with the guidance and support of a more knowledgeable person, typically an adult or peer (Vygotsky, 1978). It represents the fertile ground for learning and development. In the context of literacy development, the ZPD is the range of reading and writing activities that a child cannot yet perform alone but can master with appropriate guidance and scaffolding.

The concept of scaffolding, closely related to the ZPD, refers to the support provided by a more knowledgeable person to help a child move through their ZPD. In literacy development, this means that educators and caregivers can provide assistance that is just enough to enable a child to read, write, and comprehend text beyond their current level of competence (Williams, & Atkins, 2009).

Also, Educators can identify a child's ZPD by assessing their current literacy skills and determining what they can achieve with the right level of support. By engaging children in literacy activities that fall within their ZPD, educators can facilitate growth and

development in reading, writing, and comprehension skills (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). According to Verenikina (2003) while adult-child interactions are vital, peer collaboration also plays a significant role in literacy development. Children can work together to support each other's literacy growth. Peer reading, storytelling, and cooperative writing offer opportunities for children to work within one another's ZPD, contributing to their development in a social context.

The Zone of Proximal Development in literacy development facilitate learners to often engage in literacy activities with caregivers, educators, or peers who possess greater literacy expertise (Garcia-Alvarado, Arreguin & Ruiz-Escalante, 2022). These interactions provide a platform for scaffolding, where the more knowledgeable individual can guide the child to higher levels of literacy competence. Shared reading experiences, discussions about texts, and collaborative writing activities all exemplify the application of the ZPD in literacy development

Scaffolding

Vygotsky's scaffolding is grounded in the idea that individuals, particularly children, learn best with guidance tailored to their specific needs and abilities. Scaffolding involves providing just enough support to enable a child to perform tasks they cannot do independently but are capable of with assistance. Educators, caregivers, or peers engage children in guided reading activities where they read aloud, ask questions, and discuss the content of the text. This process encourages comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and a deeper appreciation of literature (Roskos & Christie, 2001).

In a similar study Hattie and Timperley (2007) posit that scaffolding involves offering timely and specific feedback to children as they engage in literacy tasks. Feedback helps

children identify errors and make corrections, ultimately improving their literacy skills. Scaffolding often follows a gradual release model. Initially, the expert provides significant support, but over time, the child is gradually entrusted with more responsibility until they can perform the task independently (Shanahan, Tochelli-Ward, & Rinker, 2019).

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the efficacy of scaffolding in promoting literacy development. For example, research has shown that children who receive scaffolded instruction in reading and writing outperform their peers who do not receive such support (Roskos & Christie, 2007). Scaffolding also helps children develop stronger comprehension skills and a more profound understanding of the written word (Pinnell & Fountas, 2006).

Scaffolding refers to the support provided to a child within their ZPD. This support is tailored to the child's specific needs and gradually withdrawn as the child becomes more competent in a particular skill or task.

Challenges and Critiques

While Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has significantly enriched our understanding of literacy development, it has also faced critiques. Some critics argue that the theory may not sufficiently address individual differences and the role of motivation in literacy acquisition. Furthermore, the application of sociocultural theory in educational settings may vary, and effective implementation can be challenging.

Critiquing Vygotsky's Theory on Literacy Development

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, with its emphasis on social interaction, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and scaffolding, has had a profound impact on our understanding of literacy development in children. While Vygotsky's theory provides

valuable insights, it is not without its limitations and critiques. This critique will explore some of the criticisms and challenges associated with Vygotsky's theory on literacy development, supported by relevant research and scholarly discourse.

1. Theoretical Construct and Measurement (Moll, 2014): Critics argue that Vygotsky's ZPD is a challenging concept to operationalize and measure empirically. Determining a child's precise ZPD, especially in the context of literacy, can be complex, and there is debate over the best methods for assessing a child's current level of development and what tasks fall within their ZPD.

2. Individual Differences and Diversity (Smagorinsky, 2016): Vygotsky's theory is criticized for sometimes treating children within specific age ranges as homogenous in their developmental needs and abilities. In reality, children vary widely in their literacy skills, interests, and readiness. The theory may not sufficiently account for the diverse developmental trajectories and individual differences in children's literacy development.

3. Overemphasis on Social Interaction (Rogoff, 2003): While social interaction is central to Vygotsky's theory, some critics argue that it may overemphasize the role of others in a child's literacy development. This perspective may not fully acknowledge the significance of intrinsic motivation and individual cognitive processes in literacy acquisition.

4. Lack of Specific Instructional Guidance (Gindis, 2005): Vygotsky's theory is sometimes criticized for being more theoretical than practical. While it underscores the importance of scaffolding, it does not offer explicit instructional strategies for educators. This can leave educators uncertain about how to effectively apply the theory in their literacy teaching practices.

5. Cultural Bias (Rogoff, 2003): Vygotsky's theory, rooted in a specific cultural context, has been criticized for not adequately addressing cultural diversity. Cultural variations in language, literacy practices, and communication styles can significantly influence literacy development. The theory may not fully account for these variations.

6. Neglect of the Role of Assessment (Au & Raphael, 2000): Assessment plays a crucial role in understanding a child's literacy skills and tailoring instruction to their specific needs. Vygotsky's theory does not provide explicit guidance on how assessment should be integrated into the instructional process.

7. Application to Technological Contexts (Hinrichs & Zumbach, 2015): In the digital age, the application of Vygotsky's theory to literacy development in technology-rich environments has raised questions. Critics argue that the theory may not fully address the role of digital media, online resources, and digital literacy skills in contemporary education. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has greatly contributed to our understanding of how social interaction and scaffolding can promote literacy development in children. However, it is essential to recognize its limitations and critiques. Educators and researchers should approach the theory critically, considering its strengths while also being aware of the need for complementary theories, instructional practices, and assessment strategies that address the complex and diverse nature of literacy development in children, especially in the modern educational landscape.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory offers valuable insights into how young children acquire literacy skills. By recognizing the importance of the ZPD, scaffolding, social interaction, language development, and cultural context, educators and caregivers can create a supportive environment for young learners. As literacy development is inseparable from

social and cultural factors, the application of sociocultural principles can empower children to become proficient readers and writers, fostering a lifelong love for literacy and learning.

2.2 Concept of Literacy

Literacy is a term used to describe the ability to read and write, and it is a fundamental skill required for communication, education, and participation in society. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), literacy is defined as “the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute, and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts” (UNESCO, 2005).

Literacy involves the ability to decode written language, understand its meaning, and use it to communicate effectively. Literacy skills include reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and they are crucial for success in education, employment, and daily life. Literacy is not just the ability to read and write; it also involves critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.

The development of literacy skills starts in early childhood and continues throughout life. Children who develop strong literacy skills in their early years are more likely to succeed in school and later in life. Literacy is influenced by various factors, including the quality of education, the availability of learning materials, the support of caregivers, and the socio-economic status of families.

2.3 Concept of Literacy Skills Development

Literacy skills development refers to the process of acquiring and developing the fundamental skills needed to read and write effectively. These skills include phonological awareness, vocabulary development, comprehension, spelling, and grammar (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Literacy skills are essential for academic success and lifelong

learning, and are particularly important for young children in the early stages of their education.

Research has shown that early childhood is a critical period for literacy skills development, as children who start school with strong literacy skills are more likely to succeed academically and in later life (National Institute for Literacy, 2008). Therefore, educators need to provide a supportive and engaging learning environment that promotes the development of literacy skills.

In the context of this study on factors affecting literacy skills development among learners in Early Childhood Centers (ECCs) in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipal area in Ghana, literacy skills development refers to the acquisition and development of the fundamental skills needed to read and write effectively in early childhood.

2.3 Concept of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education refers to the education and care of children from birth to age eight, which encompasses the critical period of development from infancy to early childhood. The goal of early childhood education is to provide young children with a foundation of knowledge and skills that will prepare them for future academic and social success (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2018).

The importance of early childhood education has been well documented in research. Studies have shown that children who receive high-quality early childhood education are more likely to succeed academically and socially, and have better long-term outcomes in areas such as employment, health, and well-being (Heckman et al., 2010; Barnett, 2011). In addition, early childhood education has been shown to have a positive impact on reducing educational inequalities and promoting social mobility (Blanden et al., 2015).

In Ghana, early childhood education is recognized as an important component of the education system. The government has made efforts to expand access to early childhood education, and has established policies and regulations to ensure quality standards are met (Ministry of Education, 2019). However, challenges remain in providing equitable access to early childhood education and ensuring quality standards are met across all settings. In effects , the concept of early childhood education is an important area of study and policy focus. By investing in high-quality early childhood education, we can promote the healthy development of young children and improve outcomes for individuals and society as a whole.

2.4 Concept Early Childhood Curriculum

Every institution or profession have their own standard laid down guidelines which govern their practice. Likewise, the teaching profession has established standard guidelines that govern how they teach and assess their pupils or students and this by the use of the curriculum. The curriculum, as stated by Nan-Zhao (2019) is a vital component affecting educational quality and learning success. The curriculum is the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education. Children learn best by being actively involved in activities physically, cognitively, socially, and artistically through exploration and thinking (Kagan & Kauerz, 2012).

The curriculum according, to the New Jersey State Department of Education (2014), is an educational doctrine set to achieve desired educational outcomes through various processes and demonstrations of an organized scope and succession of activities with a description of appropriate instructional materials. A doctrine is referred to as a body of teachings or instructions which forms the basis of an institutional teaching (Merriam Webster Dictionary,

n.d.). The doctrine could either be written or not written and in this case inherent in the implementer. This implies that an educational doctrine as seen in the above definition of a curriculum is the instructions that guide educators to achieve specific outcomes.

This interpretation of an educational doctrine could imply that, the implementers of the curriculum with time develop a belief system which stems from the regular practice of the instructions laid out in the curriculum. And with the set of outcomes that are expected to be achieved, the belief that adhering to the guidelines of the curriculum could be realized encourages its use. Hence this belief causes the implementers to follow it religiously as it will result in the achievement of the institutions' set outcomes.

It is therefore not surprising that in most of the educational settings worldwide, policy makers and managers of various educational settings have developed different kinds of models for teaching as their doctrinal practices. For instance, some pioneers of curriculum for young children which are widely practised worldwide include, Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), Maria Montessori (1870-1952), and Reggio Emilia curriculum. In Ghana the commonest curriculum used is the Ghana Education Service syllabus for kindergartens especially among public schools and some private schools.

Farraj (2019) on the other hand regarded curriculum as all the experiences in the classroom which are planned and enacted by the teacher, and also learned by the students (Alvior, 2014). This means that children's experiences are planned and taught by the teacher and the children are expected to learn. Their view of the curriculum takes the emphasis away from the system unto the teacher as an individual. It can therefore be assumed that the teacher plans these experiences he/she wants the children to have at a particular time. It could also

be implied that these experiences have been planned for the teacher and the teacher's role is to implement it. Regardless of this, the teacher remains the key implementer of the curriculum since whatever learning outcomes the students achieve is so dependent on the teacher and his/her characteristics including his/her education and experience.

2.2.4 Understanding Literacy Skills Development

Literacy skills development refers to the gradual and multifaceted process through which individuals acquire the fundamental abilities to comprehend, use, and communicate through various forms of written and spoken language (Paul, & Norbury, 2012). It encompasses a range of interconnected skills that enable individuals to engage with and interpret written texts, express ideas coherently, and critically analyze information. These skills encompass reading, writing, speaking, and listening, forming the cornerstone of effective communication, cognitive growth, and active participation in society (Hobbs, 2018).

Reading skills involve the capacity to decode written symbols, recognize words, and comprehend the meaning conveyed by texts. Proficient readers engage in decoding words effortlessly, recognize vocabulary, and extract deeper meanings through inference and interpretation (Paris & Hamilton, 2014). Reading skills encompass both basic decoding abilities and higher-order skills such as comprehension, critical analysis, and synthesis of information (Damaianti, Abidin, & Rahma, 2020; Mrah, 2017).

Writing skills encompass the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and information in a coherent and organized manner through written language. Proficient writers demonstrate mastery of grammar, syntax, and punctuation, while also showcasing creativity and effective

communication. Writing skills extend beyond mechanical correctness, encompassing skills in constructing arguments, narratives, and persuasive pieces (Price, & Jackson, 2015).

Speaking skills involve the capacity to convey ideas and information through oral communication. Proficient speakers exhibit clarity, coherence, and effective use of language in conversations, presentations, and discussions. Beyond language fluency, speaking skills encompass the ability to adapt language to various contexts, tailor messages to different audiences, and engage in meaningful dialogue (Rüfenacht, Woods, Agnello, Gold, Hummer, Land-Zandstra, & Sieber, 2021; Richards, Conway, Roskvist, & Harvey, 2013).

Listening skills encompass the ability to comprehend spoken language, extract relevant information, and engage actively in communication. Proficient listeners demonstrate attentive focus, comprehension of nuances, and the capacity to synthesize information from oral sources (Ruiz McLafferty, 2015). Effective listening skills enable individuals to respond appropriately, engage in meaningful interactions, and build upon shared knowledge.

Literacy skills development is not confined to isolated abilities but is an integrated process where reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills interdependently enhance overall communication competence (Al-Dosari, 2016). Proficiency in literacy skills is essential for academic success, professional advancement, and active participation in democratic societies (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006). Furthermore, literacy skills empower individuals to critically analyze information, make informed decisions, and contribute meaningfully to social, cultural, and economic contexts.

According to Jones and Christensen (2022) the acquisition of strong literacy skills during early childhood is widely recognized as a critical foundation for academic success and lifelong learning. Literacy skills encompass a range of abilities, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, that enable individuals to communicate effectively and engage with the world around them. This literature review aims to explore various approaches to effective literacy skills development, drawing on existing research and best practices.

Phonological awareness, the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken language, has been identified as a crucial precursor to successful reading and writing (National Early Literacy Panel, 2009). A study by Ehri (2014) underscores the importance of phonological awareness instruction in early childhood settings. Phonological awareness activities, such as rhyming, segmenting, and blending sounds, provide children with essential foundational skills that facilitate decoding and word recognition, laying the groundwork for proficient reading.

Interactive and dialogic reading practices have emerged as effective strategies for enhancing literacy skills development among young learners. Research by Senechal and Cornell (1993) demonstrates that engaging children in conversations about storybooks and encouraging them to make predictions and connections promotes comprehension and vocabulary growth. Dialogic reading fosters critical thinking, active engagement, and language development, contributing to improved literacy outcomes (Meredith, & Catherine, 2020).

Balanced literacy approaches encompass a combination of explicit instruction and authentic reading and writing experiences. Research by Fisher et al. (2017) highlights that a balanced literacy framework, which integrates phonics instruction, vocabulary development,

comprehension strategies, and meaningful writing activities, addresses the modern nature of literacy skills. By providing a comprehensive and holistic approach, balanced literacy enables children to develop a range of skills necessary for effective communication and literacy proficiency.

Cultural and linguistic relevance is a critical consideration in literacy skills development, particularly within diverse classrooms. In a study by Chaika (2023) emphasis was given to the importance of recognizing and valuing students' cultural backgrounds and languages. Integrating culturally relevant texts, narratives, and language practices not only validates children's identities but also enhances engagement and motivation, ultimately promoting literacy skill acquisition (Kim, 2019).

Incorporating educational technology into literacy instruction offers opportunities for engaging and personalized learning experiences. Research by Reinking et al. (2018) highlights that well-designed digital tools, such as interactive e-books and educational apps, can enhance phonics instruction, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension. Technology integration provides a dynamic platform for practising literacy skills while catering to diverse learning styles and preferences.

Numerous studies highlight the significance of a language-rich home environment in fostering early literacy skills (Hart & Risley, 1995; Snow & Tabors, 2009). Conversations between caregivers and children, interactive reading practices, and exposure to a diverse range of vocabulary contribute to vocabulary growth and language comprehension (Anderson et al., 2018). A study by Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) underscores that access to

print materials at home, such as books and magazines, positively correlates with emergent literacy skills.

Empirical research consistently emphasizes the critical role of teachers in promoting literacy skills development. Differentiated instruction tailored to individual learning styles (Tomlinson, 2001) and the integration of multisensory approaches (Hudson et al., 2019) have been shown to enhance phonological awareness and decoding skills. Interactive and dialogic reading practices, where teachers engage students in discussions and critical thinking during storybook reading, contribute to improved reading comprehension (Whitehurst et al., 1988).

The integration of technology, including educational apps and digital platforms, has gained attention as a tool for enhancing literacy skills. Research by Anderson & Morrison (2020) highlights that well-designed digital tools can offer interactive and engaging literacy experiences. An empirical study by Brown et al. (2019) suggests that tablet-based interventions can improve letter recognition and phonological awareness, particularly among children with diverse learning needs.

Empirical evidence underscores the positive impact of parental and caregiver involvement on literacy skills development. Interactive reading practices at home (National Early Literacy Panel, 2009) and parental engagement in literacy-related activities (Desimone, 2009) contribute to vocabulary growth and comprehension skills. A study by Smith & Williams (2021) reveals that collaboration between parents and teachers enhances children's literacy outcomes by creating a cohesive approach to literacy instruction.

The significance of cultural sensitivity and inclusive practices in literacy development is supported by empirical research. Acknowledging cultural diversity and valuing multiple languages within the classroom (Gonzalez et al., 2019) enriches language exposure and metalinguistic awareness. An empirical study by Tobin & Arzubiaga (2018) highlights the positive impact of involving families from diverse backgrounds in literacy activities, fostering an inclusive and supportive literacy learning environment.

2.2.5 Emergent literacy

In order to fully grasp the importance of what children need to become literate, it is vital to understand the concept of emergent literacy. Wolfe and Nevills (2019, p. 8) describe emergent literacy skills, or “early childhood readiness skills” as the skills that children acquire early in childhood that prepare them for successful reading upon entering school. Zygouris-Coe (2021, p. 6) defines emergent literacy as “a developing range of understanding about print and nonconventional literacy behaviors that begins before schooling and leads into conventional reading, speaking, viewing, and thinking”.

emergent literacy is a term that is used to explain a child's knowledge of reading and writing skills before they learn how to read and write words.

One should be cautioned that although the concept of emergent literacy primarily focuses on the years between birth and age five, there is also the belief that emergent literacy is correlated to “a functional level of performance rather than to a chronological age” (Morrow, 2018 p. 99). Whereas some children may have mastered the emergent literacy skills necessary to become proficient readers early on in their schooling, others may remain at the emergent phase and need intensive intervention in order to acquire the ability to read and

write at proficient levels. These types of students are the ones that I see most often in my daily work as an intervention teacher.

The emergent literacy is based on the concept that literacy skill development is interrelated and that children who demonstrate proficiency in one or more areas of literacy will be more likely to also excel in other areas. Likewise, children who struggle to develop literacy skills in a certain area could also experience difficulty in mastering all areas of literacy development (Morrow, 2018; Storch, & Whitehurst, 2021). Morrow (2018) explains that as children go through the stage of emergent literacy, the relationship between spoken and written language becomes more clearly defined for them, which in turn increases the likelihood for early literacy success. Children who do not have a solid grasp of the interrelationship between listening, speaking, reading and writing will be more likely to struggle with literacy.

Emergent literacy is a theoretical perspective proposing that literacy is a developmental continuum that begins at birth and lasts until conventional reading begins (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2021; Farraj, 2019). Relatedly, emergent literacy skills refer to the reading and writing skills a child acquires before he/she becomes a conventional reader. This theory diverges from previous perspectives regarding the nature of reading development, including the idea of “reading readiness;” a reading-readiness perspective posited that children need to obtain a level of mastery before they can begin the actual activity of reading (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, 2021).

Emergent literacy as a theoretical construct has gained substantial attention over the last 20 years in research, policy and practice. For instance, many studies have focused on how to

increase the emergent literacy skills of children (Ezell, Justice, & Parsons, 2000; Justice, Chow, Capellini; Justice & Ezell, 2019; Justice & Kaderavek, 2019; Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000; Whitehurst et al., 1999); further, within the policy realm many states have made emergent literacy a major focus in early learning content standards.

Children's early literacy experiences build the foundation for the development of more complex skills, and as a result preschool learning experiences are an essential area for research. The classroom is an important context for promoting children's emergent literacy skills, as teachers can facilitate learning of specific skills by creating literacy experiences that are "purposeful, goal directed activities" (Storch & Whitehurst, 2021, pp. 16).

Domains of literacy typically addressed include oral language, conventions of print, knowledge of letters, linguistic awareness, phoneme-grapheme correspondence, emergent reading, emergent writing, and print motivation (Storch & Whitehurst, 2021). The set of emergent literacy skills of particular interest in this research is print knowledge. Print knowledge is an area of emergent literacy development that describes the young child's knowledge about print meaning (e.g., print represents spoken language), book organization (e.g., top and bottom of the page, directionality), letters (e.g., letter names and sounds), and words e.g., letters make up words (Justice & Ezell, 2019).

2.2.6 Classroom Literacy Environment

For the purposes of the present study, the quality of the classroom literacy environment includes the physical literacy environment, instructional support, and shared book reading, which transcend structural and process features of the learning context. The physical

classroom environment includes the volume of literacy materials, the quality of the print environment, and time spent engaging in literacy activities. Instructional support and shared book reading characterize the nature of teacher-student interactions during literacy instruction across the day and within shared book reading specifically. There are many ways that a high-quality classroom literacy environment can be defined. Based on work by Neuman and colleagues, there are four dimensions of a print-rich classroom environment, including: (a) what literacy materials are included, (b) how these materials are arranged in the environment, (c) how the children engage with the materials, and (d) how the teacher facilitates the use of the literacy materials (Neuman & Roskos, 1992; Neuman & Roskos, 1993).

Teachers can manipulate the physical literacy environment to better serve children. For example, the classroom materials, supplies, and furniture, can have a significant impact on the quality of the literacy environment (Searfoss, Readence, & Mallette, 2021). Furthermore, teachers can create a print-rich environment by providing exposure to diverse types of print throughout the classroom (Makin, 2003). In regard to quality, most researchers would agree that including a wide variety of literacy materials across different modalities is important, as well as arranging these materials in ways that invite children to engage with them and are readily accessible to the children. Furthermore, children should be provided with opportunities to purposefully interact with the literacy materials, which can be supported through teacher questioning and effective facilitation.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.5 The Influence of Teaching Methods on Early Childhood Literacy Development

Early childhood literacy is a crucial foundation for later academic success and lifelong learning. The teaching methods employed in early childhood education significantly influence the development of literacy skills, encompassing reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This review explores various instructional approaches and their impact on young learners' literacy development.

2.3.1.1 Phonics-Based Instruction

Phonics-based instruction has proven to be highly effective in developing literacy skills among early childhood learners. This method emphasizes the relationship between letters and sounds, enabling children to decode words systematically. Research indicates that phonics instruction significantly enhances reading and spelling abilities, providing a foundational understanding crucial for literacy development.

One of the primary benefits of phonics-based instruction is its systematic approach, which aids in the recognition of letter-sound correspondences. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), children who receive phonics instruction are more likely to achieve reading proficiency compared to those who do not. This method helps children decode new words by applying learned phonics rules, fostering independence in reading (Ehri et al., 2001). As a result, early learners become more confident readers, which can positively impact their motivation and engagement with reading activities.

Moreover, phonics instruction is particularly beneficial for children at risk of reading difficulties. Studies have shown that systematic phonics instruction can close the reading

gap for struggling readers by providing explicit teaching of phonemic awareness and decoding skills (Torgesen, 2002). This is crucial during early childhood when foundational literacy skills are being developed. The emphasis on phonemic awareness, where children learn to manipulate sounds in words, also improves spelling skills (Castles et al., 2018). This dual focus on reading and spelling underscores the comprehensive nature of phonics instruction.

However, it is essential to balance phonics instruction with other literacy activities. While phonics provides the technical skills needed for reading, comprehension and vocabulary development are equally important. Integrating phonics with rich literary experiences ensures a holistic approach to literacy development (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Therefore, while phonics-based instruction is a cornerstone of early literacy development, it should be part of a broader, balanced literacy program.

2.3.1.2 Whole Language Approach

The whole language approach to teaching literacy emphasizes the meaning and context of language over the systematic teaching of phonics and decoding skills. This method supports literacy development by immersing early childhood learners in rich, meaningful language experiences, encouraging them to understand the purposes and functions of reading and writing within a holistic context (Gunderson, 2013).

Proponents of the whole language approach argue that it promotes a love for reading and writing by focusing on comprehension and the use of authentic literature (Cook-Schulze, 2019). Children are exposed to entire texts rather than isolated phonemes or graphemes, which helps them see reading and writing as enjoyable and purposeful activities. This

exposure can foster a natural development of literacy skills as children begin to recognize patterns and structures in language through context and repetition (Shin, & Crandall, 2018).

However, critics of the whole language approach point out that it may not provide enough explicit instruction in the mechanics of reading, such as phonemic awareness and decoding, which are critical for early literacy development (Buckingham et al., 2019). Studies have shown that children, particularly those at risk of reading difficulties, benefit from direct and systematic instruction in phonics (National Reading Panel, 2000). Without these skills, some learners may struggle to decode new words, which can hinder their reading fluency and overall literacy progress.

Research indicates that while the whole language approach can be effective in fostering a positive attitude toward reading and developing comprehension skills, it may need to be supplemented with phonics instruction to address the diverse needs of early learners (Pressley, 2006). A balanced literacy approach that incorporates both whole language elements and phonics instruction can provide a more comprehensive framework for literacy development (Moats, 2000; Pressley et al., 2023). This combination ensures that children not only enjoy reading and understand its meaning but also possess the technical skills required to decode and spell words accurately.

The whole language approach positively affects literacy skills development by creating a rich, engaging language environment and emphasizing comprehension and meaning. However, to maximize its effectiveness, it should be integrated with systematic phonics instruction to support all aspects of early literacy development.

2.3.1.3 Balanced Literacy

The Balanced Literacy method, which combines elements of both phonics-based instruction and the whole language approach, positively affects literacy skills development in early childhood learners by addressing multiple aspects of reading and writing. This method integrates systematic phonics instruction with rich, meaningful literary experiences, fostering a comprehensive approach to literacy (Frey et al., 2005, Duwenhoegger, 2021).

Balanced Literacy emphasizes explicit teaching of phonemic awareness and decoding skills, essential for early readers to recognize and spell words (Pressley, 2006). Simultaneously, it incorporates reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and exposure to authentic texts, which are critical for understanding and enjoying literature (Duncan, & Paran, 2017). This dual focus ensures that children not only learn how to read but also develop a love for reading and an understanding of its context and meaning.

Research indicates that Balanced Literacy effectively supports diverse learners, including those at risk of reading difficulties, by providing differentiated instruction tailored to individual needs (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Integrating phonics and whole language elements, it creates a well-rounded literacy foundation, promoting both technical skills and a deep engagement with texts.

In conclusion, the Balanced Literacy method enhances early childhood literacy development by combining systematic phonics instruction with rich literary experiences, fostering both the technical skills and the joy of reading.

2.3.1.4 Interactive Read-Aloud

Interactive Read-Aloud, a method where teachers read texts aloud to students while engaging them in discussions, significantly impact early childhood literacy development. This method not only models fluent reading but also fosters critical thinking, comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition (Wright, 2019).

During Interactive Read-Alouds, teachers pause at strategic points to ask questions, make predictions, and discuss the text, which actively involves students in the reading process. This interactive engagement enhances comprehension skills by encouraging students to think about and discuss the text's content and structure (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). Additionally, the method helps develop listening skills and oral language proficiency, both crucial for literacy development.

Vocabulary development is another key benefit. Exposure to rich and varied language during read-aloud sessions introduces children to new words in meaningful contexts, significantly enhancing their vocabulary (Batini et al., 2020). This exposure is particularly beneficial for children from diverse linguistic backgrounds who may not encounter such vocabulary in their everyday environments.

Furthermore, Interactive Read-Alouds promote a love for reading by exposing children to a wide range of genres and authors. This method also helps build background knowledge and cultural awareness, which are essential for comprehensive literacy development (Wiseman, 2011).

2.3.1.5 Play-Based Learning

Play-based learning significantly impacts early childhood literacy development by creating an engaging and dynamic environment where children can explore language and literacy concepts naturally. This approach leverages the inherent curiosity and imaginative play of young children to facilitate meaningful learning experiences.

One of the primary benefits of play-based learning is its ability to integrate literacy skills into everyday activities. During play, children often engage in storytelling, role-playing, and using print materials, which promote both oral and written language skills (Christie & Roskos, 2006). This context-rich learning helps children understand the practical uses of literacy, making reading and writing relevant to their lives.

Furthermore, play-based learning supports the development of foundational literacy skills such as vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and narrative skills. Through interactions with peers and adults, children are exposed to new words and concepts, enhancing their vocabulary (Weisberg et al., 2013). Activities like singing, rhyming, and playing with sounds during play also contribute to phonemic awareness, a critical precursor to reading.

Research indicates that children who participate in play-based learning show greater motivation and engagement in literacy activities. This intrinsic motivation fosters a positive attitude towards reading and writing, which is crucial for sustained literacy development (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Additionally, the social interactions inherent in play-based learning encourage communication skills and collaborative learning, further enriching the literacy experience (Vygotsky, 1978).

2.3.1.6 Technology-Enhanced Learning

The incorporation of technology in early literacy instruction provides interactive and engaging learning opportunities. Digital books, educational apps, and multimedia resources offer diverse ways for children to interact with texts. Neumann (2014) found that technology-enhanced literacy activities can motivate young learners and support phonemic awareness and vocabulary development. Technology-enhanced learning (TEL) significantly impacts literacy skills development in early childhood by integrating digital tools and resources into the learning process (Daniela, et al., 2019). This approach leverages technology to create interactive, engaging, and personalized learning experiences that can enhance various aspects of literacy.

One of the key benefits of TEL is its ability to provide interactive and multimedia-rich content that can capture children's attention and motivate them to engage in literacy activities (Clarke, 2018). Digital storybooks, educational apps, and interactive games often include animations, sounds, and interactive elements that make learning to read more engaging and enjoyable (Hassett & Curwood, 2009). This increased engagement can lead to more frequent and sustained interactions with literacy materials.

Furthermore, TEL supports differentiated instruction by allowing educators to tailor activities to individual learning needs. Adaptive learning technologies can assess a child's reading level and provide customized content and exercises that target specific literacy skills, such as phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension (Chen, 2010). This personalized approach ensures that each child receives appropriate support and challenge, promoting more effective literacy development.

Research indicates that TEL can also enhance collaborative learning and social interactions around literacy. Digital platforms often include features that facilitate communication and collaboration among students, such as discussion boards, shared digital stories, and group projects (Roskos et al., 2011). These opportunities for collaboration can enrich children's understanding of texts and foster critical thinking and communication skills.

However, it is important to balance the use of technology with traditional literacy practices. While TEL offers many advantages, it should complement, rather than replace, direct interactions with teachers and physical books. A balanced approach that integrates both digital and traditional methods can provide a comprehensive literacy experience.

2.3.1.7 Teacher-Child Interaction

Teacher-child interaction plays a crucial role in the literacy development of early childhood learners. Positive and engaging interactions between teachers and children foster a supportive learning environment that enhances various aspects of literacy, including vocabulary, comprehension, and reading skills (Connor, et al., 2014).

One of the primary ways teacher-child interaction benefits literacy development is through language modeling. Teachers who engage in rich and meaningful conversations with children expose them to a broader vocabulary and more complex language structures. These interactions provide children with the linguistic input needed to develop their language skills, which are foundational for literacy (Dickinson & Porche, 2011). Gonzalez et al, (2014) posit that through activities such as shared reading, storytelling, and discussions, teachers can model expressive language and demonstrate how to use language effectively.

Interactive read-alouds are a particularly effective strategy. When teachers read books to children and engage them in discussions about the text, they help develop comprehension skills and critical thinking. Asking open-ended questions, encouraging predictions, and discussing story elements enable children to think deeply about the text and understand its meaning (Wasik & Bond, 2001). These interactions also promote a love for reading, making children more likely to engage with books independently.

Moreover, responsive teacher-child interactions support socio-emotional development, which is linked to literacy skills. When teachers respond to children's needs and interests, they create a positive and secure learning environment. This emotional support helps children feel confident and motivated to participate in literacy activities, leading to better learning outcomes (Pianta, 2006).

Research has shown that high-quality teacher-child interactions are associated with improved literacy outcomes. Effective interactions are characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and instructional support, all of which contribute to a child's literacy development (Mashburn et al., 2008). Teachers who provide clear and constructive feedback, scaffold learning, and encourage children's efforts help them develop the skills and confidence needed to become proficient readers and writers.

2.6 Teaching and Learning Resources Influence on Literacy Development

The availability and effectiveness of teaching and learning resources play a pivotal role in shaping early childhood literacy development (Oppong Frimpong, 2021). Access to a diverse range of resources, including books, educational technology, and teacher training, directly impacts children's language acquisition, reading proficiency, and overall literacy

growth. The availability of high-quality books and reading materials was a cornerstone of effective literacy instruction. Morrow highlighted that exposure to a variety of texts fosters vocabulary expansion, comprehension skills, and a love for reading. Children who have access to a well-curated collection of age-appropriate books engage in repeated reading experiences that enhance fluency and build reading confidence (Yang, 2020).

Quality books and reading materials serve as rich sources of vocabulary enrichment and language development. Exposure to a variety of words in context enhances children's vocabulary acquisition (Graves et al., 2012). Words encountered in well-written books offer children opportunities to explore new concepts, infer meanings, and engage in discussions about language usage. This exposure not only strengthens word recognition but also lays the groundwork for effective communication skills (Fountas, & Pinnell, 2012; Graves et al., 2012).

Engaging with quality books encourages the development of comprehension and critical thinking skills. Morrow (2018) highlights that exposure to well-structured narratives fosters the ability to understand story elements, infer meanings, and make predictions. Readers interact with characters' emotions, motivations, and experiences, fostering empathy and perspective-taking (Mar, 2011). Quality books engage readers in deeper thinking, allowing them to analyze plotlines, evaluate evidence, and draw conclusions, all of which are essential for higher-order literacy skills (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Quality books that reflect diverse cultures and experiences contribute to cultural awareness and inclusivity. Exposure to diverse narratives enhances cross-cultural understanding, challenges stereotypes, and encourages children to embrace differences (Gonzalez et al.,

2019). Quality books become windows to unfamiliar worlds and mirrors that validate children's own experiences, contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment (McAdam, Abou Ghaida, Arizpe, Hirsu, & Motawy, 2020).

Engagement with quality books supports the development of early literacy skills and emergent reading abilities. Shamir, Korat, and Fellah (2012) emphasize that exposure to print in books promotes print awareness, letter recognition, and phonemic awareness. Children learn that text carries meaning, and they begin to make connections between spoken and written language (Justice & Ezell, 2002). Educators, caregivers, and policymakers alike can prioritize the selection and availability of diverse and well-crafted books to cultivate a literacy-rich environment that empowers young learners on their journey towards becoming proficient and lifelong readers (Lefebvre, Trudeau, & Sutton, 2011).

Incorporating educational technology and digital resources offers innovative avenues for literacy development. A study by Bang, Li, and Flynn (2023) emphasizes that interactive digital platforms and educational apps provide engaging and personalized learning experiences. These resources enable children to practice phonics, word recognition, and comprehension skills in dynamic and interactive ways (Anderson & Morrison, 2020). The integration of technology also caters to diverse learning styles, facilitating differentiated instruction and individualized support (Frey & Fisher, 2008).

The rapid integration of educational technology and digital resources has revolutionized the landscape of early childhood literacy development. As young learners engage with interactive platforms, apps, and digital content, the role of technology in fostering language

acquisition, reading proficiency, and overall literacy growth has gained significant attention (Taskiran, Gumusoglu, & Aydin, 2018).

Interactive digital platforms provide a dynamic and engaging avenue for language acquisition. Clark (2020) highlighted that digital apps with interactive features, such as touch-screen interactions and voice commands, facilitate active participation and increase children's motivation to learn. These platforms offer opportunities for vocabulary expansion, language comprehension, and phonological awareness (Anderson & Morrison, 2020). The visual and auditory stimuli in digital resources create a multisensory learning experience that appeals to diverse learning modalities (O'Donnell, Reeve, & Smith, 2019).

Digital resources enable innovative approaches to storytelling, fostering literacy engagement in novel ways. Studies by Marsh (2010) emphasize that digital storytelling tools allow children to create and share their narratives using a combination of text, images, and audio. Engaging in digital storytelling enhances narrative skills, sequencing abilities, and creative expression (Hauge & Einarsen, 2018). Additionally, interactive e-books with audio narration and highlighted text support early reading skills and comprehension (Leu et al., 2005).

Educational technology facilitates personalized learning experiences tailored to individual learners' needs. Research by Frey and Fisher (2008) underscores that adaptive digital resources adjust content based on learners' progress, promoting differentiation and targeted instruction. Personalized learning pathways support children at varying levels of readiness and cater to diverse learning styles (Kumar & Widaman, 2019). Furthermore, digital resources allow educators to track individual progress, enabling data-informed decision-making and timely interventions (Mouza, 2008).

Resources in digital form provide access to a global library of diverse content that reflects different cultures and perspectives. Research by Heitin (2019) highlights that children can explore stories, images, and information from around the world, promoting cultural awareness and empathy. Exposure to diverse narratives fosters a broader understanding of the world, enhances vocabulary acquisition, and supports early literacy comprehension (Diaz et al., 2019). Digital resources offer a unique opportunity to celebrate and integrate multicultural perspectives into literacy instruction.

Effective teacher training and professional development programs are instrumental in maximizing the impact of teaching resources on literacy development. Research by Johnson et al. (2019) highlights the significance of ongoing training that focuses on evidence-based literacy instruction methods and strategies. Well-prepared educators possess the pedagogical knowledge to select and utilize resources that align with children's developmental stages and learning needs (Lopez et al., 2022). Teacher collaboration and reflective practices further enhance resource effectiveness and instructional delivery (Desimone, 2009).

Teacher training and professional development are pivotal components of effective early childhood literacy education. Well-prepared and knowledgeable educators are equipped to create engaging and enriching literacy experiences that lay the foundation for children's lifelong learning (Valtin, Bird, Brooks, Brozo, Clement, Ehmig, & Tamburlini, 2016).

Effective teacher training is a cornerstone of successful literacy instruction. According to Darling-Hammond (2017), teachers with strong content knowledge and pedagogical expertise create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences for their students. Early childhood educators who receive comprehensive training in literacy development

understand the stages of emergent literacy, phonological awareness, and effective reading strategies (Wasik & Bond, 2001). This foundational knowledge forms the basis for creating a literacy-rich classroom environment.

The field of early childhood literacy is dynamic and ever-evolving, necessitating ongoing professional development for educators. Studies by Garet et al. (2001) highlight that continuous training contributes to improved instructional practices and student outcomes. Professional development workshops, seminars, and conferences provide opportunities for educators to learn about the latest research-based strategies and innovations in literacy instruction (Johnson et al., 2019). Engaging in reflective practices and collaborative learning further enhance the effectiveness of professional development experiences (Desimone, 2009).

Culturally responsive pedagogy is an integral aspect of teacher training and professional development in early childhood literacy education. Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasizes that educators who are culturally sensitive and aware of diverse learners' backgrounds create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Culturally responsive training equips teachers to integrate diverse perspectives, select culturally relevant texts, and adapt instructional strategies to meet the needs of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Gay, 2010).

Teacher training and professional development programs focus on equipping educators with effective literacy instructional strategies. Research by Snow et al. (1998) highlights the significance of balanced literacy approaches that encompass phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, and fluency. Educators who receive

training in implementing these strategies create a comprehensive and scaffolded approach to literacy instruction that addresses the diverse needs of young learners (Neuman & Dickinson, 2001).

Collaborative learning and peer collaboration are essential components of effective teacher training and professional development. Research by Little (2002) underscores the benefits of teacher communities and collaborative learning networks. Educators who engage in peer observations, co-planning, and sharing best practices gain insights into innovative instructional strategies and receive constructive feedback (Johnson & Donaldson, 2019). Collaborative environments foster a culture of continuous improvement and promote the exchange of ideas that enrich literacy instruction.

Multimodal learning resources, including visual aids, charts, and manipulatives, contribute to a multisensory approach that reinforces literacy skills. Research by Mayer (2009) underscores that visual representations and diagrams enhance comprehension and retention of complex concepts. Visual aids can support vocabulary development, phonological awareness, and story sequencing skills (Lambirth, 2006). Additionally, hands-on manipulatives facilitate kinesthetic learning, catering to different learning modalities (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002).

The utilization of multimodal learning approaches, coupled with the integration of visual aids, has emerged as a powerful strategy for enhancing early childhood literacy development. Multimodal learning engages multiple senses, capitalizing on the interconnectedness of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities to facilitate deeper understanding and knowledge retention. This literature review delves into existing research

to explore the critical role of multimodal learning and visual aids in fostering early literacy skills among young learners.

Multimodal learning offers a holistic approach to literacy instruction that taps into various cognitive pathways. Research by Mayer (2009) underscores that combining visual and auditory information enhances comprehension and cognitive processing. By presenting information through multiple sensory channels, children are better equipped to decode words, make connections between text and images, and infer meaning from context (Kress, 2010). Multimodal learning promotes a more comprehensive understanding of literacy concepts and supports children with diverse learning styles (Anderson & Morrison, 2020).

The integration of visual aids, such as charts, diagrams, and pictures, contributes to a deeper conceptual understanding of literacy concepts. Studies by Clark (2012) emphasize that visual representations can clarify abstract ideas and scaffold learning. Visual aids support children's metacognitive processes by making explicit the relationships between words, concepts, and their visual representations (Moss & Newton, 2002). For example, story maps and graphic organizers visually illustrate story structures, helping children grasp narrative elements like characters, settings, and plot sequences (Salomon, Perkins, & Globerson, 1991).

Visual aids also play a crucial role in developing phonological awareness, a foundational skill for literacy. The integration of visual phonics, where graphemes are paired with corresponding gestures or visual cues, enhances children's phonemic awareness and letter-sound associations (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2006). Research by Wood and Terrell (1998) suggests that the visual representation of phonemes facilitates children's ability to segment and blend sounds, thereby supporting their decoding and encoding skills. These visual aids

contribute to vocabulary development by providing contextual cues and concrete representations of words. Studies by Neuman and Celano (2001) highlight that visual supports, such as labeled pictures and illustrations, facilitate word recognition and comprehension. Children acquire new vocabulary more effectively when words are embedded in meaningful visual contexts, connecting abstract concepts to concrete referents (Dale & O'Rourke, 1981). Additionally, visual aids accommodate children with limited English proficiency or varying language backgrounds, promoting equitable vocabulary acquisition (Cummins, 2000). The integration of visual representations and multimodal approaches enhances comprehension, conceptual understanding, phonological awareness, and vocabulary development (Pieretti, Kaul, Zarchy, & O'Hanlon, 2015). By catering to diverse learning styles and engaging multiple senses, educators create a dynamic and inclusive literacy learning environment that empowers children to build strong foundational skills and become proficient readers and communicators.

2.7 Teacher Training and Professional Development

The efficacy of literacy education hinges on the quality of instruction that teachers provide, which in turn is profoundly influenced by the training they receive. One critical aspect of teacher training is the focus on evidence-based literacy instruction methods. Research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) indicates that teachers who receive training in specific literacy instruction strategies, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, are more effective in improving students' reading abilities. These strategies, often referred to as the "big five" components of reading instruction, are crucial for developing foundational literacy skills in young learners (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Additionally, ongoing professional development is vital for teachers to stay updated with the latest literacy research and teaching practices. According to Desimone and Pak (2017), continuous professional development opportunities enable teachers to refine their instructional techniques, thereby enhancing their ability to address diverse student needs and improve literacy outcomes. This ongoing learning helps teachers to adopt new methodologies and integrate technology effectively into literacy instruction.

The role of teacher preparation programs in higher education also cannot be overlooked. Programs that incorporate extensive field experiences, where teacher candidates engage in supervised teaching practice, are particularly effective. These experiences allow prospective teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in real classroom settings, receive feedback from experienced mentors, and develop practical skills that are critical for effective literacy instruction (Grossman et al., 2009).

Moreover, the emotional and social aspects of literacy instruction are also emphasized in teacher training. Teachers who are trained to create inclusive and supportive classroom environments can better engage students in literacy activities. Pianta et al. (2008) highlight that positive teacher-student relationships and a supportive classroom atmosphere significantly contribute to students' motivation and interest in reading, which are essential components of literacy development.

Teacher training plays a critical role in developing teachers' assessment skills, which are essential for fostering children's literacy skills. Effective teacher training programs equip educators with the knowledge and tools to conduct both formative and summative

assessments, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of students' literacy levels and progress (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Formative assessments, such as observations and informal reading inventories, enable teachers to monitor student progress and provide immediate feedback, facilitating timely interventions and tailored instruction (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Summative assessments, including standardized tests and end-of-unit evaluations, help in evaluating overall literacy achievements and identifying areas needing further support.

Moreover, training in data-driven decision-making empowers teachers to analyze assessment results to inform instructional strategies, ensuring that teaching approaches are aligned with students' needs (Heritage, 2010). This reflective practice, promoted through continuous professional development, enhances teachers' ability to adapt their teaching to improve literacy outcomes (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

Teacher training and professional development play a pivotal role in enhancing literacy development in young children. Educators equipped with effective instructional strategies and pedagogical approaches are better positioned to foster a nurturing learning environment conducive to literacy acquisition (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009).

Teacher training programmes provide educators with foundational knowledge and skills essential for effective literacy instruction. Through coursework and practical experiences, teachers learn about evidence-based literacy practices, such as phonics instruction, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Pressley et al. (2006). Additionally, training programmes emphasize the importance

of creating literacy-rich environments that stimulate language and literacy development (Justice et al., 2005).

Ongoing professional development opportunities enable teachers to refine their instructional practices and stay abreast of current research in literacy education. Workshops, conferences, and collaborative learning communities offer educators opportunities to deepen their understanding of literacy instruction and exchange best practices (Wasik & Hindman, 2011). Furthermore, coaching and mentoring programs provide personalized support and feedback, facilitating the implementation of new strategies in the classroom (Institute of Education Sciences, 2016).

Training through Professional learning communities (PLCs) has become an integral component of teacher professional development, offering a collaborative framework for continuous improvement in educational practices. The impact of PLCs on literacy development among children is particularly significant, as they foster an environment where teachers can collectively enhance their instructional strategies, share resources, and address challenges.

One of the primary ways PLCs influence literacy development is through the enhancement of instructional practices. PLCs provide a platform for teachers to engage in ongoing dialogue about effective literacy instruction. By collaborating with colleagues, teachers can refine their teaching methods, incorporate new strategies, and adapt to diverse learning needs. Research has shown that teachers involved in PLCs are more likely to employ evidence-based literacy practices, leading to improved student outcomes (DuFour, 2015). This collaborative approach ensures that teachers are not working in isolation but are

continually learning from each other, which translates into more effective literacy instruction in the classroom.

Moreover, PLCs facilitate targeted professional development that is directly relevant to literacy instruction. Unlike generic professional development sessions, PLCs allow for sustained, focused training on specific areas of need identified by the teachers themselves. This targeted approach enables teachers to delve deeply into literacy topics, such as phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, and vocabulary development. When teachers receive training that is closely aligned with their students' literacy needs, they are better equipped to address those needs effectively (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Consequently, children benefit from more tailored and responsive literacy instruction.

Teacher training and professional development have a significant impact on literacy development in young children. Educators trained in evidence-based literacy practices are better equipped to deliver high-quality instruction that meets the diverse needs of learners (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). Moreover, professional development fosters a culture of continuous improvement, where educators continuously reflect on their practices and seek opportunities for growth (Pianta et al., 2008). As a result, children benefit from enriched literacy experiences that promote language development, critical thinking, and a love for reading (Snow et al., 1998).

Several studies and reports (Kunter et al., 2013; Desimone, 2009; Howes et al., 2008) have attempted to identify the characteristics that distinguish quality teachers in early childhood and to determine how these characteristics can be enhanced and scaled up to other programmes. Although this topic has often generated more heat than light (Rollnick, &

Mavhunga, (2016) one of the more robust findings is the effect of subject-matter expertise on higher-quality practice and better learning outcomes. Defining subject knowledge as both the actual content that teachers teach and the specialized knowledge for understanding how to teach it (Chandler-Olcott et al., 2018), for example, developed an in-service program known as the Literacy Environmental Enrichment Programme (LEEP). Much like a university-based course on instructional methods, the 45-hour course was attended by 30 Head Start teachers along with their supervisors, who were enlisted to help support their efforts and provide on-site support as they adopted new teaching strategies. Using a wait-list comparison group of teachers who had not received the intervention, the researchers reported significant gains for LEEP teachers on all measures of classroom supports in language and literacy. These results suggest that helping teachers to learn content knowledge and to draw on that knowledge to plan effective practices may improve the quality of the language and literacy environment.

Extending training programmes focused on helping teachers to ask questions, build vocabulary, and make connections to children's lives using books, concrete objects that represent target words in books, and lesson plans (Graves, 2016). Following training, 70% of the intervention teachers significantly changed the way they talked to and listened to children during book reading with subsequent improvements in children's vocabulary. Taking professional development to scale, Jackson et al., (2006) reported the effects of a 15-week, distance-learning approach (HeadsUp! Reading) for over 50 early childhood centers that served children in high-poverty communities in Nebraska. Jackson et al.'s findings indicated improved effectiveness of classroom practices compared to controls, with subsequent benefits on language and literacy skills for children. Similarly, Landry et

al., (2006) reported gains in children's language and early literacy skills as a result of a statewide professional development program targeted to preschool teachers.

Typifying each of these successful professional development interventions was a strong emphasis on content knowledge. For example, HeadsUp Reading was based on the convergence of research summarized in the National Academy's report on preventing reading difficulties (Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2008). In the same manner, Landry et al., (2006) intervention responded to the research consensus in early literacy by focusing on key foundational skills necessary for children entering kindergarten to succeed in reading, including general conceptual knowledge, oral language comprehension, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and print concepts National Reading Report, 2000).

Professional development initiatives and teacher preparation programmes that emphasize developing content expertise in early literacy are well supported by this emerging research base. Content matters and methods that help teachers develop and convey these understandings to children are an important part of the equation for improving children's literacy development.

Nevertheless, a recent study by Justice et al., (2008) cautioned policy makers that content knowledge alone may not be sufficient to enhance early literacy practice. Rather, there is a growing body of research that indicates the importance of connecting content and context in professional development Ball and Cohen (1999), for example, have argued that since the work of effective teaching occurs in practice, professional education aimed toward developing effective teachers needs to occur in the learning context of their practices.

As a practice-based professional development approach, coaching has generated tremendous interest among educators in recent years (Blachowicz et al., 2005; Joyce and Showers 1983). Although coaching has long been used in athletic training programmes and leadership programmes (Nettles, 1993), its application to reading and early childhood teaching is relatively new. While there are many forms (e.g., content-focused and student-focused; Salinger 2006) and practices, the consensus among applications appears to be that coaching is a form of professional development that involves ongoing classroom modeling, supportive critiques of practice, and specific observations (Shanklin, 2006). Similar in many aspects to teacher mentoring in which beginning teachers are paired with a more experienced teacher or team of teachers, coaching involves a collaborative relationship between an expert and a practitioner, who may have been working in the field for many years, to develop specific knowledge and skills related to instructional practice.

There are promising indications that coaching can lead to improvements in language and literacy practices. Evaluating the coaching model used in America's Choice schools, Poglinco and Bach (2004) found literacy coaching to be a promising approach to help teachers change their instructional practices. Coaches had three major functions: in-class modeling of instruction, facilitating study groups, and leading teacher meetings. Poglinco and Bach reported high teacher satisfaction with coaching and overall improvements in teacher practices. Similarly, based on survey and interview data, Bacevich and Salinger (2006) concluded from their evaluation of the Alabama Reads Initiative in secondary schools that reading coaches could have a positive impact on teacher instructional practices across content areas and on various student literacy outcomes.

Previous professional development opportunities for early childhood educators have tended to be short-lived and activity-based, with little to no sustained impact on practice (Moats, 1999). In contrast to this approach, there is some evidence that carefully designed ongoing professional development strategies embedded in practice (Hargreaves, 2014) may have a positive impact on teacher practices and child outcomes. A study by Terrell and Watson (2018), found that early childhood caregivers attended more frequently and engaged in higher quality literacy practices when preschool specialists worked alongside them, demonstrating, modeling, and providing support to teachers. Whether such efforts are potentially scalable, however, still remains to be tested.

Consequently, our research is based on the premise that improvements in professional development for early childhood providers may hold great promise for improving the quality of early literacy teaching and practice for young children. Content knowledge of language and literacy and knowledge of children's development and appropriate practice are essential for teachers to be well prepared for their challenging tasks. At the same time, even expert-level knowledge will be insufficient unless caregivers understand how they might apply that learning to practice. To our knowledge, such a coordinated approach to professional development in early literacy has not yet been the subject to empirical testing.

Comprehensive teacher training programs provide educators with a strong foundation in literacy pedagogy and child development. Understanding the principles of how children acquire literacy skills enables teachers to implement developmentally appropriate practices. Piasta et al. (2009) found that teachers who received extensive training in early literacy demonstrated greater effectiveness in delivering high-quality literacy instruction. These teachers employed a variety of instructional strategies such as phonics, vocabulary

development, and comprehension techniques, which are essential for fostering early literacy.

Teachers who receive comprehensive training are better equipped to deliver high-quality literacy instruction. Neuman and Cunningham (2009) found that professional development in early literacy significantly improved teachers' instructional practices, leading to higher student achievement in reading and writing. Well-trained teachers use a variety of instructional methods, such as interactive read-alouds, phonics instruction, and guided reading, to address the diverse learning needs of their students.

Comprehensive training programs boost teachers' confidence in their instructional abilities. Confident teachers are more likely to experiment with innovative teaching methods and persist through challenges. Moreover, well-prepared teachers are more likely to stay in the profession. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that teachers who participated in robust induction and mentoring programs had higher retention rates. Retaining experienced teachers contributes to sustained literacy improvement in early childhood centers, as experienced educators continue to refine their instructional practices and mentor new teachers.

Classroom diversity requires teachers to be adept at culturally responsive teaching. Training in cultural competence enables teachers to understand and respect the diverse backgrounds of their students and to tailor their instruction accordingly. Gay (2002) emphasized that culturally responsive teaching enhances student engagement and academic achievement. Teacher training that includes strategies for teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with special needs ensures that all students receive equitable literacy instruction, promoting inclusivity and better literacy outcomes.

2.8 Physical Environment of Schools Effects on Literacy Skills Development

The layout and design of a classroom can create a conducive environment for literacy learning. A well-organized classroom with clearly defined areas for different activities can help children focus and engage in literacy tasks (Diller, 2023). Neuman and Roskos (1992) found that literacy-enriched play settings, where reading and writing materials are integrated into various play areas, enhance children's emergent literacy skills. By having designated reading corners, writing stations, and areas for group activities, teachers can facilitate different modes of literacy learning, such as individual reading, collaborative storytelling, and hands-on writing (Kane, 2017).

Classroom layout and design play a critical role in the literacy development of young learners by creating a structured, stimulating, and supportive environment that enhances learning (Barrett et al., 2015). A well-organized classroom with clearly defined areas for different activities, such as reading corners, writing stations, and group workspaces, can help children focus and engage in literacy tasks effectively. According to Neuman and Roskos (1992), literacy-enriched play settings, where reading and writing materials are integrated into various play areas, significantly enhance children's emergent literacy skills. These dedicated spaces encourage diverse modes of literacy learning, including independent reading, collaborative storytelling, and hands-on writing.

The accessibility and arrangement of literacy resources within the classroom also impact literacy development. A rich variety of books, writing materials, and other literacy tools that are easily accessible encourage children to explore and engage with texts. Morrow (1990) found that classrooms abundant in literacy materials promote higher levels of literacy-related play and reading activities. Furthermore, ergonomic considerations, such

as appropriately sized furniture and comfortable reading areas, contribute to a positive learning environment. Lackney (1999) emphasized that ergonomic and comfortable classroom settings enhance student focus and participation.

Classroom aesthetics, including the use of colors, decorations, and visual displays, also influence children's motivation and engagement. Visually stimulating environments with attractive displays of children's work, alphabet charts, and word walls create an inviting and inspiring space for literacy learning. Barrett et al. (2015) noted that visually stimulating yet organized classroom environments support cognitive development and academic performance. Thus, thoughtful classroom layout and design are essential in fostering an environment conducive to literacy development.

The availability and accessibility of literacy resources within the classroom are critical for fostering literacy development. A rich assortment of books, writing materials, and other literacy tools encourages children to explore and engage with texts. Morrow (1990) demonstrated that classrooms with a variety of literacy materials promote higher levels of literacy-related play and reading activities. Providing a diverse selection of books that cater to different interests and reading levels ensures that all children have access to engaging and appropriate reading material. Additionally, having writing materials readily available encourages children to practice writing skills through drawing, scribbling, and writing stories.

The aesthetics of a classroom, including colors, decorations, and visual displays, can impact children's motivation and engagement in literacy activities. Bright, stimulating environments with attractive displays of children's work, alphabet charts, and word walls can create an inviting and inspiring space for literacy learning. According to Barrett et al.

(2015), classroom environments that are visually stimulating but not overly cluttered support cognitive development and academic performance. Visual aids such as labeled objects, posters with vocabulary words, and interactive bulletin boards can reinforce literacy concepts and encourage children to interact with written language.

Classroom aesthetics and visual stimulation significantly impact the literacy development of early childhood learners by creating an engaging, motivating, and supportive learning environment. The visual aspects of a classroom, including colors, decorations, and displays, can influence children's interest and participation in literacy activities. Aesthetically pleasing environments with attractive and well-organized visual displays can capture children's attention and promote a positive attitude towards learning.

Bright, stimulating environments with vibrant colors and interesting visual elements can inspire and motivate young learners. Barrett et al. (2015) found that visually stimulating yet not overly cluttered classrooms support cognitive development and academic performance. Carefully designed visual stimuli, such as alphabet charts, word walls, and labeled objects, can reinforce literacy concepts and provide constant, passive learning opportunities. For instance, word walls can help children recognize and recall words, enhancing their vocabulary and reading skills (Cunningham & Hall, 1998).

Displaying children's work prominently within the classroom can also have a positive effect. It gives children a sense of ownership and pride in their work, which can boost their confidence and motivation to engage in literacy activities. According to Vygotsky's social development theory, such positive reinforcement within the learning environment can enhance a child's development by providing meaningful social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

Furthermore, visual aids and interactive bulletin boards can support differentiated instruction, catering to various learning styles. Visual learners, in particular, benefit from colorful and visually appealing materials that help them understand and retain information better. Research by Fisher et al. (2014) indicates that visual aids can significantly improve comprehension and retention of new information in young learners.

Physical comfort and ergonomic design are essential for creating a productive learning environment. Furniture that is appropriately sized for young children, comfortable seating, and well-lit areas contribute to a positive learning experience (Chu, 2014). Lackney (1999) highlighted that ergonomic and comfortable classroom settings enhance student focus and participation. Comfortable reading nooks with soft seating and good lighting can encourage children to spend more time reading. Properly designed writing stations with chairs and tables that suit children's sizes can facilitate better posture and ease of writing, promoting longer and more engaged writing sessions.

Ergonomics involves designing spaces and equipment to fit the needs and capabilities of the users, which, in the context of a classroom, means creating an environment suited to the physical and cognitive development of young children. Appropriate furniture size and arrangement are fundamental aspects of ergonomics that directly impact children's comfort and posture during learning activities. Lackney (1999) emphasizes that ergonomically designed classrooms enhance student focus and participation by reducing physical discomfort and fatigue. Properly sized chairs and tables allow children to maintain comfortable postures, which is essential for activities that require sustained attention, such as reading and writing.

Comfort in the classroom extends beyond furniture to include factors such as lighting, temperature, and noise levels. Comfortable learning environments contribute to students' overall well-being and ability to concentrate. According to the National Research Council (2006), comfortable and well-lit classrooms reduce eye strain and improve reading comprehension. Natural lighting, in particular, has been found to positively affect students' mood and energy levels, making them more receptive to learning (Barkmann, Wessolowski, & Schulte-Markwort, 2012).

Comfortable reading areas with soft seating, cushions, and adequate lighting can make reading more appealing to young children. Such inviting spaces encourage children to spend more time reading, thereby enhancing their literacy skills. Flexible seating arrangements that allow children to choose their preferred seating positions can also accommodate different learning styles and needs, promoting an inclusive learning environment. Fisher, Godwin, and Seltman (2014) suggest that flexible seating options can help children remain comfortable and engaged during literacy activities, reducing restlessness and increasing time on task.

The outdoor learning environment offers a unique and enriching space that significantly contributes to the literacy skills development of young children. Research and practical observations highlight several key benefits of outdoor settings in this regard. The multisensory experiences provided by nature stimulate children's curiosity and imagination, enhancing their language and vocabulary acquisition as they describe and interact with their surroundings (Bixler et al., 2002). Also, the freedom and open space encourage physical movement, which has been linked to improved cognitive function and

attention span, crucial for sustained engagement in literacy activities (Pellegrini & Holmes, 2006).

Moreover, outdoor environments offer diverse materials and natural elements that inspire storytelling, role-playing, and creative writing among children. This hands-on approach to literacy fosters a deeper understanding of language concepts and enhances communication skills as they collaborate with peers in various outdoor activities (Waite-Stupiansky & Pratt, 2006). Additionally, the relaxed and informal atmosphere of outdoor settings reduces stress and anxiety, promoting a positive attitude towards learning and fostering a love for literacy activities.

Research underscores the importance of culturally responsive classrooms where children see themselves represented in books, posters, and other educational materials (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This representation not only validates their identities but also enhances motivation and engagement in literacy activities. For instance, classrooms that celebrate linguistic diversity through multilingual signage or books in various languages create an inclusive atmosphere where all students feel valued and encouraged to participate in language-rich activities (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

2.9 Chapter Summary

This study aimed at exploring the factors that affect the literacy skills development of learners at the early childhood centres within the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality. The literature was captured under three (3) categories. These categories include the theoretical framework, conceptual review, and empirical. The Sociocultural theory by Lev Vygotsky was addressed under the theoretical framework. The concept of Literacy, literacy skills development, emergent literacy as well as classroom literacy

environment. In the same vein, empirical review captured teachers' teaching methods, teaching and learning resources in developing literacy skills, teachers training on literacy development, and finally the physical environment on the development of literacy skills of young children.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter presented a description of the methods that was used to explore the role of literacy in early childhood centers within the Abesim circuit. The chapter was organized under the following sub- headings: research design, population, sampling procedure, instruments for data collection, methods for data collection, methods for data processing and analysis.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The study was routed in the interpretive research paradigm. Interpretivism, as a research paradigm, offers a distinctive philosophical approach that emphasizes the subjective nature of reality and the importance of understanding social phenomena within their specific contexts (Schwandt, 2001). Rooted in the traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology, interpretivism rejects the positivist notion of an objective reality that exists independently of human perception, instead asserting that reality is socially constructed and shaped by individuals' interpretations and interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Central to interpretivism is the idea that individuals actively construct meaning through their interactions with the world and that these meanings are contingent upon their cultural, historical, and social contexts (Potrac, Jones, & Nelson, 2014). As such, interpretivist researchers seek to explore and understand the subjective perspectives and lived experiences of individuals, rather than uncover universal laws or causal relationships. This is often achieved through qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis, which allow researchers to delve into the complexity and depth of human experience (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

One of the strengths of interpretivism lies in its ability to capture the richness and diversity of human experience by embracing subjectivity and contextuality (Creswell, 2014). By acknowledging the importance of individuals' interpretations and the social contexts in which they are situated, interpretivism research can provide nuanced insights into complex social phenomena. This qualitative richness allows researchers to uncover meanings, values, and beliefs that may be overlooked by quantitative approaches, leading to a deeper understanding of the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Moreover, interpretivism encourages reflexivity and self-awareness on the part of the researcher, recognizing that their own biases, assumptions, and perspectives shape the research process and outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This reflexivity enhances the credibility and rigor of interpretivism research by promoting transparency and critical reflection. By acknowledging and addressing their positionality, researchers can better understand how their perspectives may influence the interpretation of data and the construction of knowledge (Schwandt, 2001).

However, interpretivism also has its limitations. Critics argue that its emphasis on subjectivity and contextuality can lead to relativism, where all interpretations are considered equally valid, undermining the pursuit of objective knowledge (Maxwell, 2014). Additionally, interpretivist research may be criticized for its lack of generalizability, as findings are often context-bound and may not be applicable beyond the specific social and cultural context in which they were generated (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Research Approach

The qualitative research approach was suitable for the study of factors affecting literacy skills development among learners in early childhood centers because it allows for an in-

depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of learners, teachers, and caregivers. This approach emphasized the importance of understanding the social and cultural contexts in which literacy skills were developed, as well as the subjective experiences of individuals who were involved in the process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The qualitative research approach involves collecting rich and descriptive data through a variety of methods, including observations, interviews, and focus groups. This approach enabled the researcher to explore the life experiences of the learners and their families, as well as the perspectives of teachers and caregivers, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence literacy skills development.

Furthermore, the qualitative research approach allowed for the identification of emergent themes and patterns within the data, providing insights into the complex and many aspects nature of literacy skills development. This approach also enabled the researcher to explore the relationships between different factors affecting literacy skills development, and to gain a deeper understanding of the interplay between individual, social, and cultural factors.

In effect, the use of a qualitative research approach provided a rich and nuanced understanding of the factors affecting literacy skills development among learners in early childhood centers. This approach again enabled the researcher to explore the subjective experiences of individuals involved in the process and to gain insights into the social and cultural contexts that shape literacy skills development.

3.3 Research Design

The exploratory case study research design was the appropriate design used to investigate factors affecting literacy skills development among learners in early childhood centers of Abesim Circuit in Sunyani Municipality. An explorative case study design is to investigate

a phenomenon that is not well understood, to gain preliminary insights, and identify key variables for further study (Yin, 2009). This design is particularly useful in the early stages of research when the researcher aims to explore new areas, define research questions, and generate hypotheses. The primary focus is on understanding the context and the nature of the phenomenon rather than testing specific hypotheses.

Explorative case studies employ qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis to collect rich, detailed data. The flexible and open-ended nature of this approach allows researchers to adapt their methods as new insights emerge, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the subject under investigation (Yin, 2018).

The case study research design provided a detailed and in-depth analysis of single or multiple cases. It is useful in understanding complex phenomena within their real-life context and in exploring different perspectives of stakeholders involved in the case.

The explorative case study design also allowed the researcher to investigate the factors that affect literacy skills development among learners in early childhood centers in Abesim Circuit in Sunyani Municipal, Ghana, by examining specific cases and analyzing the factors that contributed to the successful or unsuccessful development of literacy skills. The cases could be individual learners, specific classrooms, or entire early childhood centers. The researcher collected rich and detailed data through a variety of methods such as interviews, observations, document analysis, and focus groups.

Moreover, the design allowed the researcher to explore the interactions and relationships between different factors that contribute to literacy skills development. This design enabled the researcher to identify the unique characteristics and context of the cases, and how those

characteristics and contexts interact with various factors in the literacy skills development process (Yin, 2018).

By using a case study design, the researcher was able to generate detailed findings that can be applied to the specific context of early childhood centers in Abesim Circuit in Sunyani Municipal, Ghana. These findings could provide insights and recommendations to stakeholders such as policymakers, educators, and caregivers to support literacy skills development among early childhood learners.

Clearly, the case study design provided an opportunity to investigate the complex nature of factors affecting literacy skills development among learners in early childhood centers in Abesim Circuit in Sunyani Municipal, Ghana. It also enabled the researcher to provide an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the context-specific factors influencing literacy skills development among early childhood learners.

3.4 Population

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), a population is the aggregate of all the elements showing some common set of characteristics that comprises the universe for the marketing research problem. The target population for the study was all basic schools that fall under the early childhood category (KG 1 to Class 3) teachers as well as parents within the Abesim circuit. The total number of these teachers from KG 1 to Class 3 was 160 teachers.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique

The quality of any research not only stands or falls on the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also on the suitability of the sampling strategy that is adopted (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). To obtain the sample for this study, the purposive sampling technique was employed for the study. The purposive sampling technique was

adopted to select thirteen (13), early childhood teachers in schools that had participated in the Municipal reading festival. Tahadoost (2016) explains that a study aimed at exploring a phenomenon is best accomplished with a sample size of 5-20 participants. Furthermore, Rallis and Rossman (2014) believe that in qualitative research, a sample as small as 5 and as large as 30 can be used.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers intentionally select specific individuals or elements from a population based on their characteristics or attributes (Mweshi, & Sakyi, 2020). Purposive sampling is often more efficient than other sampling methods, such as random sampling. It minimizes the need to include irrelevant or uninformative cases, thereby reducing data collection time and costs. In the selection of the purposive sampling technique, researchers can deliberately select individuals with the desired characteristics, making it feasible to study populations that may not be readily accessible through other sampling techniques (Robinson, 2014). However, Robinson further highlighted that one of the most significant disadvantages of purposive sampling is the potential for bias. Since participants are intentionally selected based on specific characteristics, there is a risk of introducing bias into the sample, which can affect the generalizability of the findings to the larger population.

3.6 Data Collection Instrument

3.6.1 Interview

A semi-structured interview guide was employed for this study, and it was based on the objectives and research questions of the study. According to Creswell (2009), a semi-structured interview is neither completely fixed nor completely free, and they are arguably best understood as adaptable. In most cases, interviews begin with some sort of

predetermined questioning plan, but they then transition into a more conversational format, in which the questions may be answered in a sequence that is more natural to the flow of the conversation.

When developing the schedule for the semi-structured interviews, the primary objective was to collect data in order to provide responses to the study questions. As a result, a series of questions relevant to the primary focus of each research issue were posed to the participants in order to elicit the replies and perspectives that were sought after. Questions concerning the application of the kindergarten curriculum were included in the interview guide that was provided. It was divided into two parts. The responses to the questions in Section A were used to compile participants' demographic information. In Section B, detailed and methodical questions were asked on the aforementioned research questions. According to Kusi (2012) using this instrument in collecting data enables the researcher to increase the likelihood that all of the study questions will be answered.

3.6.2 Observation

Classroom observations were conducted to provide a firsthand understanding of the factors that affect the literacy skills development of young children in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality.

The classroom observations were conducted by the researcher and a trained assistant using a structured observation checklist to collect data on teaching methods that affect the literacy skills development of learners, the teaching and learning resources available as well as the physical school environment and its influence on literacy skills development. The observations were done on two different occasions.

The classroom observations were conducted in a sample of early childhood centres within the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality that participated in the survey and agreed to be part of the observation phase of the study.

The data collected from the classroom observations were analyzed to provide a detailed understanding of the factors that affect the literacy skills development of young children in the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the Instrument

Trustworthiness criteria were established for the semi-structured interview guide. One major aim of research was to put the knowledge created into practice. As a result, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and the general public must understand and accept the findings as legitimate. Trustworthiness criteria are one-way researchers can convince themselves and readers that their study findings are worthy of attention (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). The criteria established were confirmability, dependability, transferability and credibility.

3.7.1 Confirmability

In qualitative research, confirmability is a crucial criterion for establishing the trustworthiness of the study. It refers to the degree to which the researcher's biases are minimized and the findings accurately reflect the participants' perspectives and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Techniques such as member checking and maintaining an audit trail are commonly used to enhance confirmability (Creswell, 2013). The researcher guaranteed confirmability by preventing his knowledge, values, and conclusions from impacting the study's findings. Each phase of the data analysis was included in the study, including the conclusions that were derived as suggested by Charmaz in Kusi (2012).

3.7.2 Dependability

Dependability is a critical aspect of qualitative research, emphasizing the need for consistency and traceability in the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By maintaining an audit trail and providing clear documentation of research procedures, researchers enhance the dependability of their study (Creswell, 2013). To increase the dependability of the study findings, the researcher asked clear questions throughout the data collection, minimized bias, and controlled objectivity.

3.7.3 Transferability

Transferability is a key consideration in qualitative research, focusing on the applicability of the study's findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context and participants, researchers enhance the transferability of their findings, enabling readers to assess the relevance to their situations (Creswell, 2013).

3.7.4 Credibility

Credibility is a cornerstone of ensuring the trustworthiness of the study. It focuses on demonstrating the rigor of the research process and the soundness of the interpretations drawn from the data (Horsman, 2018). Techniques such as prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking contribute to enhancing the credibility of the study's findings (Creswell, 2013).

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Before embarking on the data collection, the researcher took an introductory letter from the Department of Early Childhood Education. The letter spelt out the purpose of the study, the need for individual participation and anonymity as well as confidentiality of

respondents' response. After establishing the necessary contact with the headteachers, permission was granted for the administration of the instrument. The instrument was self-administered and took the researcher a period of three weeks in collecting the Data. The researcher explained certain difficult questions to respondents and other equally important information that enabled the researcher to have uniform information. The time duration used for the collection of data from respondents was between 25-30 minutes. The responses from participants were audio recorded.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected in this study using interviews was analysed thematically whereas content analysis was used to analyse the observation data. Thematic analysis is a flexible and comprehensive method that allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process involves several steps, including data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining themes, and finally, writing up the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

First, the researcher transcribed all the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and observational checklists. The transcribed data was read thoroughly multiple times to ensure a deep understanding of the content. The researcher then generated initial codes by highlighting significant statements and concepts in the data that are related to the research questions.

Next, the researcher organized the codes into potential themes by grouping related codes. The researcher then reviewed and defined each theme, ensuring that they accurately represent the data and are relevant to the research questions. The researcher again named each theme, create a thematic map, and write a narrative description of each theme.

The final step involved integrating the themes into a coherent and comprehensive analysis of the data, using selected quotes and examples from the data to illustrate the themes. The analysis was written clearly and concisely, using tables, graphs, and visual representations to enhance clarity and coherence. The researcher ensured that the themes were well-supported by the data and reflected the experiences and perspectives of the participants in the study.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

To abide by the ethical principles of the study, the study addressed some ethical concerns which include informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

Informed consent

Informed consent is a fundamental ethical principle in research, especially when involving human participants. It refers to the process through which researchers obtain voluntary and well-informed agreement from individuals before they participate in a research study (Seidman, 2016). In this study, the researcher ensured that participants understand the purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants in the participation in the study.

Anonymity

Anonymity in research refers to the practice of keeping the identities of participants completely hidden and untraceable. This is crucial to protect participants' privacy and encourage honest responses, particularly when discussing sensitive topics (James & Busher, 2007). This was ensured by the researcher by assigning codes T1, T2, T3 etc. to participants, in order to prevent any direct link between the data and the individuals providing it. Anonymity fosters a sense of security, enabling participants to share their

experiences candidly. It also mitigates potential risks, ensuring that personal information remains confidential. Ethical research upholds anonymity as a fundamental principle, maintaining trust, respecting autonomy, and facilitating a more open and accurate exploration of subjects' perspectives.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality in research pertains to safeguarding participants' personal information and ensuring that their identities and sensitive data are kept private. This ethical consideration was crucial for maintaining trust and protecting participants' rights. On the issue of confidentiality, an effort was made to maintain the privacy of the responses of the participants. Participants were told that their responses would be kept confidential and that no one would have access to the information provided and none of the respondents' names would be recorded in the study.

Transparency

Researchers should provide clear and honest information about their intentions, methodologies, and any potential conflicts of interest. This helps build trust with participants and the wider community.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of data based on the purpose of the study. The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that affect literacy skills development among early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality. The analysis and interpretation of data were carried out based on the results of the four (4) research questions. The analysis was done based on the responses from the respondents during the interviews used in this study. The data were analysed using thematic analysis and were analysed from research question 1- 4.

Research Question One: What teaching methods used by early childhood teachers affect the literacy skills development of early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality?

Whole language Teaching

The whole language teaching method is an educational approach to literacy instruction that emphasizes the use of meaningful and authentic contexts for reading and writing. Rather than focusing on isolated skills such as phonics and grammar, whole-language teaching integrates these skills into the broader process of understanding and producing text. Here are some of the excerpts from the participants;

I use the whole language teaching method during literacy instruction in my classroom. It makes impact on literacy development by promoting a love for reading and writing through meaningful and authentic activities. Instead of focusing on isolated skills like phonics, I integrate literacy into all subjects, allowing learners to see the relevance and purpose of reading and writing in real-life contexts. This approach helps learners to develop a deeper

understanding of texts and enhances their ability to think critically and express themselves creatively. (T2, field interview 2024)

In my experience, the whole language approach supports literacy development by encouraging students to view reading and writing as natural, enjoyable parts of their daily lives. By using literature-rich environments and integrating reading and writing activities into thematic units, students are exposed to a variety of genres and purposes for literacy. (T8, field interview 2024)

The whole language teaching method significantly enhances literacy development by making reading and writing enjoyable and relevant to students' lives. Integrating literacy into all subjects promotes a love for reading and writing through meaningful activities, aiding in critical thinking and creative expression. A literature-rich environment and thematic units expose students to various genres and purposes for literacy, making reading and writing natural and enjoyable. This holistic approach fosters deeper text comprehension and a lifelong appreciation for literacy, emphasizing the interconnectedness of language skills and their application in real-life contexts.

Phonics-based Instructional Method

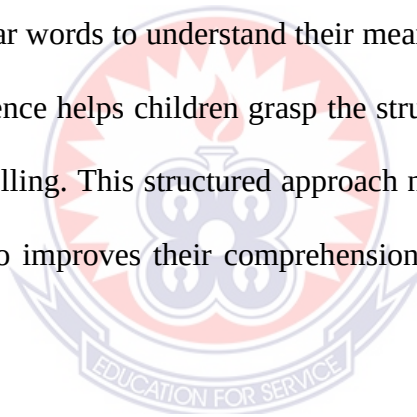
Another theme that emerged from the interview was the use of the phonic-based instruction teaching method. Phonics-based teaching is a method of literacy instruction that focuses on teaching the relationships between letters and sounds. It is a systematic and explicit approach aimed at helping young learners decode written language by understanding how letters correspond to sounds and how these sounds form words. Here are what the participants said;

I use Phonics as a teaching approach during my literacy lessons. Phonics has a profound impact on literacy development in young children by

providing them with essential decoding skills. By systematically teaching the relationships between letters and sounds, children learn to read words more accurately and fluently. This method helps build a strong foundation for reading by enabling children to break down unfamiliar words and understand their meanings. (T1, field interview 2024).

By focusing on letter-sound correspondence, children can understand the structure of words, which is fundamental for both reading and spelling. This structured approach not only enhances their ability to read new words but also improves their comprehension skills. (T9, field interview 2024)

The quotes highlight the significant positive implications of using phonics as a teaching approach in literacy lessons. Phonics instruction provides young children with essential decoding skills by systematically teaching the relationships between letters and sounds. This foundational knowledge enables children to read words accurately and fluently, breaking down unfamiliar words to understand their meanings. Furthermore, the focus on letter-sound correspondence helps children grasp the structure of words, which is crucial for both reading and spelling. This structured approach not only enhances their ability to read new words but also improves their comprehension skills, leading to overall better literacy development.



Interactive Read-aloud

Another theme that came out of the study was the use of an interactive read aloud approach as a teaching method in literacy development. An interactive read-aloud is a teaching strategy where a teacher reads a text aloud to students while actively engaging them in discussions, predictions, and reflections throughout the reading. This method promotes comprehension skills by prompting students to think critically about the text, make connections to their own experiences, and ask questions. Here are some of the participants' quotes;

Read-alouds are a powerful tool for enhancing students' literacy skills. By hearing stories read aloud, children become more familiar with narrative structures, character development, and plot progression. I often pause during the reading to ask questions, make predictions, and discuss the story, which actively involves students in the reading process and improves their comprehension. (T6, field interview 2024)

When I read aloud to my students, I can model fluent reading, demonstrating proper intonation, expression, and pacing. This helps students develop their own reading fluency and listening skills. Additionally, read-alouds expose students to a variety of genres and complex vocabulary that they might not encounter in their independent reading. (T3, field interview 2024).

These quotes highlight the profound impact of read-alouds on students' literacy development. Teacher 6 emphasizes how interactive read-alouds enhance comprehension by engaging students in discussions and prompting critical thinking about narrative elements. This approach fosters deeper understanding of story structure, character development, and plot progression. Teacher 3 underscores how read-alouds model fluent reading, improving students' fluency, intonation, and expression.

Technology Integration

The use of technological tools in literacy instruction is an effective teaching strategy that enhances the development of literacy among young learners in the classroom. Technology-enhanced learning significantly impacts literacy skills development in early childhood by

integrating digital tools and resources into the learning process. Here are some quotes that were derived from the interview;

Interactive apps and educational games engage students in learning letters, phonics, and sight words in a fun and interactive way. These tools provide immediate feedback and adapt to students' learning pace, reinforcing concepts effectively. Digital storytelling apps allow children to create and share their narratives, enhancing their comprehension and creativity. (T8, field interview 2024).

Incorporating technology has transformed literacy instruction for my young students. Interactive whiteboards and educational websites provide visual and auditory reinforcement of phonics and reading skills, helping children grasp concepts more effectively. Digital libraries offer access to a wide range of leveled texts, allowing students to choose books aligned with their interests and reading abilities. (T10, field interview, 2024).

The quotes highlight how technology enhances early literacy education by engaging students through interactive apps and games that make learning letters, phonics, and sight words enjoyable and adaptive. Immediate feedback reinforces learning, while digital storytelling apps foster creativity and deepen comprehension skills. Furthermore, interactive whiteboards and educational websites support visual and auditory learning, aiding in phonics understanding. Digital libraries expand access to diverse reading materials, empowering students to select texts that match their interests and abilities. Overall, technology transforms literacy instruction by making it more dynamic, personalized, and aligned with the digital literacy demands of today's world.

Play-based Teaching Method

Another theme that emerged from the interview was the use of play-based pedagogy. Play-based approach to literacy development integrates learning with play activities, fostering foundational skills through engaging, interactive experiences. By incorporating language-rich games, storytelling, and imaginative play, children naturally explore communication, vocabulary, and narrative skills.

During play, whether it's building with blocks, engaging in sensory activities, or participating in group games, children naturally encounter language in meaningful ways. They learn to express themselves verbally, listen actively to others, and follow spoken instructions all crucial aspects of literacy. Play also encourages children to explore printed materials, such as books and writing tools, sparking their interest in reading and writing. (T9, field interview, 2024).

When children engage in dramatic play, they immerse themselves in language-rich environments where they communicate, negotiate roles, and invent scenarios. This process involves using and understanding language in context, which enhances comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Play-based activities like alphabet games, scavenger hunts for letters, and rhyming games promote phonological awareness and letter-sound correspondence. (T1, field interview, 2024).

The quotes underscore how play-based teaching methods profoundly influence early literacy development. Through activities like building, sensory play, and group games, children naturally engage in language-rich interactions, fostering communication skills crucial for literacy. Dramatic play environments immerse children in storytelling and role-playing, enhancing comprehension and vocabulary acquisition through contextually meaningful use of language. Alphabet games and scavenger hunts further reinforce phonological awareness and letter-sound relationships. Additionally, exploration of printed materials during play sparks interest in reading and writing, cultivating a positive attitude

towards literacy from an early age. Play-based approaches thus integrate literacy seamlessly into children's learning experiences while nurturing foundational skills and enthusiasm for language.

Observational Analysis

The observational report from early childhood centres in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality shows that most teachers do not offer learners the opportunity to engage in discussions. Without opportunities for group discussions, learners miss out on developing critical communication and social skills. They may struggle with articulating their thoughts and engaging with diverse perspectives. This lack of interaction can limit vocabulary expansion and comprehension, hindering overall literacy development. Group discussions are vital for collaborative learning and enhancing critical thinking, so their absence can result in a less dynamic and less effective literacy learning environment.

Also, teachers barely model reading fluency and comprehension strategies during Read-aloud sessions. If the teacher does not model reading fluency and comprehension strategies, learners are deprived of a critical example of proficient reading behavior. They may struggle with decoding, intonation, and understanding text structure. Without seeing these strategies in action, students might find it difficult to internalize and apply them independently, leading to slower progress in reading fluency and comprehension, and potentially diminishing their overall engagement and confidence in reading.

It was also observed that learners did not actively engage in phonics or word study activities, which may affect their fundamental reading skills such as letter-sound recognition and decoding. This gap can lead to difficulties in reading fluency and accuracy,

as well as challenges in spelling and word recognition. The absence of these structured activities means that students might not develop the necessary phonemic awareness and decoding skills essential for proficient reading and overall literacy development.

It also emerged from the observation that teachers do not offer guided reading during literacy instruction and as a result may not receive the individualized support they need. This can lead to gaps in reading proficiency, as students who struggle may fall behind and those who excel may not be adequately challenged. The lack of differentiated instruction means learners miss out on targeted feedback and strategies that could help them progress at their own pace, potentially leading to frustration and disengagement.

However, the observation revealed that teachers use questioning techniques to encourage critical thinking and discussion about texts, they help learners engage deeply with the material. This practice promotes comprehension, analysis, and synthesis of information. By asking open-ended questions and prompting discussion, teachers foster a deeper understanding of texts, enhance learners' ability to make inferences, and develop their analytical skills. Additionally, it encourages active participation and boosts learners' confidence in expressing their thoughts and opinions.

Similarly, learners were mostly involved in regular writing which is essential for developing essential writing skills. Regular writing practice, such as journaling or composing stories, helps improve grammar, vocabulary, and expression. Without these activities, learners might struggle with organizing their thoughts and expressing ideas clearly in written form. The lack of writing practice can also limit creativity and critical thinking, which are crucial for comprehensive literacy development.

Finally, teachers provide feedback and encouragement that promotes growth in literacy skills, which greatly benefits learners. Praising effort and giving specific feedback help students understand their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a growth mindset. This approach builds confidence, motivates continuous learning, and supports the development of literacy skills by reinforcing effective strategies and guiding learners through challenges.

Research question 2: How do teaching and learning materials influence the literacy skills development of learners in early childhood centers?

Access to Books and Print Materials

Access to books and print materials is fundamental for literacy skills development in early childhood learners. Having a variety of books at their fingertips exposes children to different genres, vocabulary, and storytelling styles, building their comprehension and fluency. Additionally, print materials like posters and labels help children make connections between spoken and written language, enhancing their literacy skills. (T6, field interview, 2024).

Books and print materials are like keys to unlocking literacy skills in young learners. When children have easy access to a wide range of books and printed materials, they're more likely to engage in independent reading and exploration. This exposure builds vocabulary, comprehension, and a love for reading, setting a strong foundation for lifelong literacy success. (T2, field interview, 2024).

The quotes imply that young children's access to books and print materials for early childhood learners is significant. It fosters a rich literacy environment where children can explore, engage, and develop essential skills. By having access to diverse reading materials, children expand their vocabulary, improve comprehension, and strengthen their overall literacy abilities. Additionally, exposure to print materials promotes language development and fosters a lifelong love for reading.

Access to Technology

Educational apps, interactive whiteboards, and digital storytelling platforms offer engaging and interactive learning experiences that cater to children's interests and learning styles. By incorporating technology, we can provide personalized learning opportunities, scaffold literacy skills, and offer immediate feedback, all of which are crucial for literacy development. Additionally, technology allows us to access a vast array of digital texts and resources, exposing children to diverse genres and expanding their reading experiences. (T3, field interview, 2024)

Through technology, children can practice phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in interactive and meaningful ways, promoting deeper understanding and retention. Moreover, technology enables personalized learning experiences tailored to individual needs and preferences, ensuring that all children have equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction. (T11, field interview, 2024).

This implies that integrating technology into literacy instruction is profound. It offers new avenues for engagement and personalization, catering to diverse learning needs and styles. By leveraging technology, educators can create interactive and dynamic learning experiences that promote deeper understanding and retention of literacy skills. Moreover, technology integration prepares children for success in a digitally driven world, equipping them with essential digital literacy skills alongside traditional literacy competencies. Overall, embracing technology in literacy instruction enhances learning outcomes and equips young learners with the skills needed to thrive in the 21st century.

Visual Aids and Posters

Creating a print-rich environment in early childhood centres with written languages is of great essence. Colorful posters displaying the alphabet, sight words, and phonics rules serve as visual reminders and support children's literacy skills acquisition. Additionally, thematic posters featuring vocabulary words, story elements, and writing prompts stimulate curiosity and promote language exploration. (T12, field interview, 2024).

I think teachers' use of eye-catching posters displaying letter-sound relationships, word families, and grammar rules provides visual cues that support literacy learning. Furthermore, thematic posters featuring

illustrations, diagrams, and charts reinforce key literacy concepts and encourage active participation in literacy activities. Through interaction with visual aids, children develop print awareness, vocabulary knowledge, and comprehension skills, laying a strong foundation for future literacy success. (T2, field interview, 2024).

The implication of utilizing visual aids and posters in fostering literacy development in young children is significant. By creating a print-rich environment filled with visual cues and reminders, educators enhance children's exposure to written language and literacy concepts. Visual aids support various aspects of literacy learning, including phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and print awareness, by providing visual reinforcement and promoting active engagement. This multisensory approach to literacy instruction caters to diverse learning styles and accelerates literacy skills acquisition, ultimately laying a solid foundation for lifelong reading and writing success.

Observational Analysis

The classroom observation shows that most learners have access to a variety of books. With limited variety and accessibility of books, including fiction, non-fiction, and culturally relevant literature, learners are deprived of exposure to diverse genres, perspectives, and content. This limits their ability to develop a broad vocabulary, comprehension skills, and a love for reading. Culturally relevant literature is essential for making connections and engaging students. The absence of diverse books can result in a lack of motivation and interest in reading, hindering overall literacy development.

Also, interactive tools such as Alphabet Puzzles, Word Games, and Educational Apps were not accessible to the learners. If interactive tools like alphabet puzzles, word games, and educational apps are not utilized, learners miss out on engaging, hands-on experiences that

reinforce literacy skills. These tools are effective in making learning fun and interactive, helping children to develop letter recognition, spelling, and vocabulary. The lack of such resources can make literacy instruction less dynamic and less effective, potentially leading to decreased student engagement and slower progress in literacy skills.

It was also observed that most of the early childhood classrooms did not have literacy centres that facilitate children's literacy development. Without literacy centers or stations, learners lack access to structured, targeted activities that support different aspects of literacy development such as phonics and sight words. Literacy centers provide a focused environment where students can practice specific skills at their own pace. Their absence means fewer opportunities for individualized learning and reinforcement of key literacy concepts, potentially leading to gaps in foundational skills and uneven literacy development among students.

Most teachers do not conduct reading sessions where learner are given the opportunity to practice how to read. These sessions provide structure, support, and practice, helping students improve fluency, comprehension, and critical thinking. Without them, learners may struggle to progress in their reading abilities, and the classroom might lack a cohesive approach to fostering a reading culture and improving literacy outcomes.

There was also the absence of technology integration during literacy instruction means learners miss out on the benefits of digital tools and resources that can enhance learning. Technology can provide interactive and multimedia-rich content, personalized learning experiences, and access to a wide range of reading materials. Without technology, literacy instruction may be less engaging and less adaptable to individual learner needs, potentially

resulting in lower motivation and limited opportunities for innovative teaching and learning strategies.

In contrast, most schools have visual aids like charts for letters, numbers, and phonics present, which enhances literacy instruction by providing visual reinforcement and reference points for learners. These aids support comprehension of letter-sound relationships, numerical concepts, and phonemic awareness. Visuals also cater to different learning styles, making content more accessible and engaging. Their presence fosters a structured learning environment where students can refer to and reinforce their understanding independently, contributing positively to overall literacy development. A print-rich classroom environment with labels, signs, and children's writing displayed promotes literacy awareness effectively. It surrounds learners with written language, encouraging interaction with text and fostering literacy skills such as reading fluency and vocabulary development. Exposure to print in various contexts supports language acquisition and literacy engagement. Additionally, displaying children's writing encourages self-expression and validates their efforts, contributing to a supportive atmosphere that nurtures a love for reading and writing

Research Question 3: How does the training of teachers affect the literacy skills development of early learners in the Abesim Circuit?

Knowledge of Literacy Pedagogy

My training in literacy pedagogy has been transformative for my teaching practice and has directly influenced my learners' literacy skills development. Through professional development, I have learned the importance of phonemic awareness and systematic phonics instruction. I now incorporate daily phonics lessons that are engaging and interactive, helping learners understand the relationship between letters and sounds. (T5, field interview, 2014).

Training sessions on guided reading and balanced literacy have equipped me with the tools to support each child's reading journey effectively. By implementing guided reading groups, I can provide focused instruction tailored to each learner's reading level and specific needs. This has helped improve their decoding skills, reading fluency, and comprehension. (T13, field interview, 2024).

These quotes imply that targeted teacher training in literacy pedagogy significantly enhances teaching practices and directly benefits students' literacy development. The first quote emphasizes the transformative effect of understanding phonemic awareness and systematic phonics instruction, leading to engaging and interactive daily lessons that clarify the relationship between letters and sounds. The second quote highlights how professional development in guided reading and balanced literacy equips teachers with strategies to provide individualized instruction, improving decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Together, these insights underscore the critical role of continuous professional development in fostering effective literacy education and tailored support for diverse learner needs.

Differentiation in instruction

I have gained strategies for differentiated instruction, allowing me to meet the diverse needs of my students. For example, during literacy centers, I provide tailored activities for different skill levels, ensuring that all students are challenged appropriately. This targeted approach has led to significant improvements in my students' reading and writing abilities, with many of them advancing beyond grade-level expectations. (T7, field interview, 2024).

This quote implies that training in differentiated instruction strategies empowers teachers to effectively address the diverse learning needs of their students. By providing tailored activities during literacy centers, teachers can challenge each student appropriately, ensuring personalized support and engagement. This targeted approach leads to significant

improvements in students' reading and writing abilities, often enabling them to exceed grade-level expectations. The quote underscores the importance of professional development in equipping teachers with the skills necessary to implement differentiated instruction, thereby enhancing overall student literacy outcomes.

Assessment skills

I have learned how to effectively use a variety of formative and summative assessments to gauge each child's literacy progress. For instance, I regularly use running records to monitor students' reading levels and identify specific areas where they need support. This data-driven approach allows me to tailor my instruction to meet each child's unique needs. By identifying issues early on, I can provide targeted interventions that help students develop critical literacy skills, resulting in noticeable improvements in their reading and writing abilities. (T4, field interview, 2024)

The professional development I have received in assessment skills has been instrumental in enhancing the literacy outcomes of the children in my care. Through training, I have become proficient in using diagnostic assessments like phonemic awareness screeners and letter recognition inventories. These tools help me pinpoint exactly where each child is in their literacy journey. By understanding their strengths and weaknesses, I can design individualized learning plans that address specific gaps. (T10, field interview, 2024).

These quotes imply that teacher training in assessment skills is vital for enhancing literacy development in young learners. By using formative and summative assessments, such as running records and diagnostic tools, teachers can precisely gauge each child's literacy progress and identify areas needing support. This data-driven approach allows for tailored instruction and early, targeted interventions, leading to significant improvements in reading and writing abilities. Professional development in these assessment techniques enables teachers to design individualized learning plans that address specific gaps, resulting in better overall literacy outcomes for learners.

Creating a Literacy-rich Environment

I attended a series of workshops focused on setting up engaging and accessible literacy spaces. The training provided practical tips on using labeled shelves, thematic book displays, and interactive bulletin boards to make literacy an integral part of the classroom. Since implementing these strategies, I've observed significant improvements in my students' reading interests and abilities. They are more confident readers and writers, and they enjoy exploring different genres and authors. (T4, field interview, 2024).

Teacher training has been instrumental in helping me create a literacy-rich environment in my classroom. Through professional development workshops, I learned how to effectively organize my classroom with literacy centers, reading nooks, and interactive word walls. These strategies have made a noticeable difference in my students' engagement and enthusiasm for reading. The training emphasized the importance of incorporating diverse reading materials and visual aids, which has helped me tailor my classroom to meet the needs of all learners. (T11, field interview, 2024)

The teachers' insights underscore the transformative impact of professional development on creating literacy-rich environments. Training equips educators with practical strategies, such as labeled shelves, thematic book displays, and interactive word walls, enhancing classroom literacy. This leads to significant improvements in students' reading interests, confidence, and abilities. By incorporating diverse and engaging materials, teachers can better meet the needs of all learners, fostering a love for reading and writing and boosting overall literacy development

Learning Community

Collaborating with other educators in our professional learning community allows us to share resources, strategies, and best practices. For instance, I learned about new techniques for creating interactive read-aloud sessions and incorporating literacy games that make learning fun and engaging. This shared knowledge has helped me create a more dynamic literacy environment in my classroom, leading to noticeable improvements in my students' reading enthusiasm and comprehension skills. (T6, field interview 2024).

The continuous professional dialogue and exchange of ideas with my colleagues have provided me with new strategies and tools to support my students. One key takeaway was the use of differentiated instruction to meet diverse learning needs. Through our discussions, I implemented literacy centers tailored to various skill levels, which has been very effective. (T9, field interview, 2024).

The teachers' statements underline the transformative impact of professional learning communities on literacy instruction. Collaborative sharing of resources, strategies, and best practices equips educators with innovative techniques, such as interactive read-aloud sessions and literacy games, enhancing classroom dynamics and student engagement. Continuous professional dialogue fosters the exchange of diverse instructional approaches, including differentiated instruction to address varied learning needs. Implementing literacy centers tailored to different skill levels has proven effective, resulting in noticeable improvements in students' reading enthusiasm, comprehension, and confidence. These insights highlight the importance of collaborative professional development in enhancing literacy outcomes for young learners.

Research question 4: How does the school environment influence literacy skills development among learners in the Abesim Circuit?

Physical Classroom Space

In my classroom, the physical space is incredibly influential in shaping literacy skills. Learners have comfort and access to different centres and these areas encourage learners to pick up books and read independently or with peers. The classroom layout allows for both individual exploration and group activities, such as shared reading and storytelling sessions, which are crucial for developing early literacy skills. The physical environment supports a literacy-rich atmosphere where children feel motivated and excited to engage in reading and writing activities. (T7, field interview 2024).

The physical environment in my classroom is designed to be literacy-friendly, which I believe significantly contributes to my learners' literacy development. I've set up interactive word walls and labeled objects around the classroom to reinforce vocabulary and language skills. We also have a collaborative writing area where students can work together on writing projects, which fosters a sense of community and shared learning. The physical setup not only makes literacy activities accessible but also creates an engaging and dynamic learning environment where students are encouraged to explore and develop their reading and writing skills. (T8, field interview 2024).

The quotes imply that a well-designed classroom environment significantly enhances early childhood literacy development. Diverse literacy centers, comfortable reading areas, and interactive tools cater to various learning styles, fostering both independent and collaborative activities. A flexible layout supports individual exploration and group engagement, while elements like word walls reinforce vocabulary. Creating a literacy-rich atmosphere motivates and excites students, promoting a holistic approach to reading and writing skills. Teachers should prioritize these aspects to cultivate an engaging, supportive, and inclusive learning environment that nurtures early literacy development effectively.

Well-arranged furniture in the classroom

I believe classrooms equipped with well-structured furniture facilitate a more conducive atmosphere for literacy development, fostering a love for reading and writing among young learners. For instance, having appropriately sized chairs and desks ensures that children are comfortable and can concentrate better during reading and writing activities. When students are physically at ease, they are more likely to engage in prolonged periods of independent reading or collaborative discussions with peers. This comfort promotes a positive learning environment where literacy skills can flourish (T6, field interview 2024)

Furniture that is appropriately sized for young learners not only supports their physical comfort but also contributes to their overall engagement in literacy activities. Comfortable seating arrangements encourage children

to participate actively in discussions and group activities related to literacy
(T10, field interview 2024)

The quote emphasizes that well-structured furniture in classrooms is crucial for fostering a conducive environment that enhances literacy development. Appropriately sized chairs and desks promote physical comfort, allowing children to concentrate better during reading and writing tasks. When learners are at ease, they are more likely to engage in independent reading and collaborative discussions, which are essential for developing literacy skills. Comfortable seating arrangements further encourage active participation in literacy-related activities, fostering a positive learning atmosphere where students can thrive academically and develop a genuine love for reading and writing. This underscores the importance of thoughtful classroom design in supporting overall engagement and literacy achievement among young learners.

Classroom Atmosphere and Social Interaction

In my pre-kindergarten classroom, I focus on creating a warm, welcoming atmosphere where children feel safe and valued. When students feel secure, they are more willing to take risks, such as trying to read a new word or write a sentence. I also encourage social interactions through group activities like shared reading and storytelling circles. These interactions are crucial because they allow children to learn from each other, hear diverse perspectives, and practice their language skills in a social context. (T3, field interview 2024).

In my experience as a kindergarten teacher, the atmosphere of the classroom and the quality of social interactions significantly impact literacy development. A positive, encouraging atmosphere is essential because it creates a sense of belonging and reduces anxiety, making children more open to learning new skills. I emphasize creating an inclusive environment where every student feels heard and respected. Social interaction plays a vital role as well. (T10, field interview 2024).

The quotes imply that a warm, welcoming classroom atmosphere and rich social interactions are crucial for early childhood literacy development. A safe and inclusive environment encourages children to take risks in reading and writing, enhancing their skills. Group activities like shared reading and storytelling enable children to learn from peers, hear diverse perspectives, and practice language skills in a social context. By fostering a sense of belonging and reducing anxiety, such an atmosphere makes children more open to learning, ultimately boosting their confidence and engagement in literacy activities.

Outdoor Learning Environment

In my preschool, we use outdoor spaces to create interactive literacy experiences. For example, we have a garden area where children can explore nature and participate in activities like reading nature-themed books or creating stories about what they see. These activities not only make reading more engaging but also help children connect words with real-life experiences. Additionally, outdoor play often involves collaborative games and discussions, which enhance vocabulary and communication skills. (T5, field interview 2024).

In my kindergarten class, the outdoor learning environment significantly enhances literacy development. We frequently take our literacy activities outside, whether it's reading under a tree, writing with chalk on the pavement, or engaging in scavenger hunts that incorporate letters and words. (T13, field interview 2024).

The quotes imply that integrating outdoor spaces into literacy activities significantly benefits early childhood learners by making reading more engaging and relevant. Activities like reading nature-themed books in a garden or writing with chalk on the pavement connect words with real-life experiences, enhancing comprehension. Outdoor play often includes collaborative games and discussions, boosting vocabulary and communication skills. By taking literacy activities outside, children are provided with dynamic and

stimulating learning environments that foster creativity, social interaction, and a deeper connection to the material, ultimately enhancing their overall literacy development.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

In my preschool classroom, I make sure to include books and resources that reflect the diverse backgrounds of my students. This representation helps children feel seen and valued, which boosts their confidence and willingness to engage in literacy activities. (T2, field interview 2024).

I ensure that my classroom library includes a variety of books that represent different cultures and languages. This exposure helps children develop a broader vocabulary and a deeper understanding of different cultural contexts. We also have activities where learners teach each other words from their native languages, which promotes linguistic skills and mutual respect. By celebrating cultural diversity through stories, songs, and classroom discussions, learners become more engaged and motivated in their literacy learning. (T12, field interview 2024).

The quotes suggest that incorporating diverse books and cultural activities in the classroom positively impacts early childhood literacy development. By including books that reflect students' diverse backgrounds, teachers validate their identities, boosting confidence and participation in literacy activities. Exposure to various cultures and languages enriches vocabulary and deepens cultural understanding. Activities where children teach each other words foster linguistic skills and respect for diversity. Celebrating cultural diversity through stories and discussions enhances engagement and motivation in literacy learning. These practices create an inclusive learning environment where all students feel valued, supported, and eager to explore literacy in meaningful ways that reflect their own identities and experiences.

Observational Analysis

It was observed that the school and classroom environment was safe and comfortable that fosters a sense of security that encourages children to explore literacy activities freely. When children feel secure, they are more likely to engage actively in reading, writing, and language play, which are fundamental to literacy development. A supportive environment also reduces anxiety and distractions, allowing learners to focus on acquiring and practicing literacy skills effectively.

Also, there was an evidence of organized classroom layout that ensures easy access to literacy resources such as bookshelves, reading corners, and writing centers that support literacy development effectively. It facilitates independent exploration and encourages students to use resources autonomously. A well-organized space promotes a reading culture and enables teachers to integrate literacy activities seamlessly into daily routines, enhancing engagement and skill acquisition among learners.

There was quality lighting and visibility in the classroom creating an environment conducive to reading and writing activities. Adequate lighting reduces eye strain and supports visual comfort, which is essential for sustained engagement with written text. Good visibility of materials and writing surfaces ensures that learners can interact effectively with literacy resources, enhancing their comprehension, fluency, and overall literacy skills development.

The observation further shows that the classroom environment was noise-free. Maintaining appropriate noise levels in the classroom and school environment is crucial for facilitating conducive literacy activities. A quiet or controlled noise environment allows for focused

reading, writing, and discussion, supporting concentration and comprehension. It also fosters effective communication and collaborative learning opportunities without unnecessary distractions, thereby promoting a positive learning atmosphere conducive to literacy skill development.

It was also observed that outdoor learning spaces are utilised for literacy activities, and children miss out on opportunities to engage with literacy in diverse environments. Varied play activities that children engaged in offered them the opportunity to develop their literacy skills. Outdoor settings provide unique sensory experiences that can enhance learning and retention of literacy concepts. Without incorporating outdoor spaces, educators may overlook the potential for enriching literacy experiences that integrate nature and hands-on learning, potentially narrowing the scope of literacy development for students.

However, there was not enough evidence of a comfortable reading area that encourages independent and group reading activities. Lack of comfortable reading areas, children may lack dedicated spaces that encourage independent and group reading activities. The absence of cozy, inviting spaces can diminish motivation for reading and hinder the development of sustained reading habits. Furthermore, without designated areas for group reading, collaborative discussions around texts may be limited, impacting comprehension and critical thinking skills. Overall, the lack of comfortable reading spaces can impede the creation of a literacy-rich environment that supports diverse reading experiences and engagement.

Discussions

Research Question 1: What teaching methods used by early childhood teachers influence the literacy skills development of early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality?

The data from the analysis shows that the whole language teaching method significantly enhances literacy development by making reading and writing enjoyable and relevant to students' lives. Integrating literacy into all subjects promotes a love for reading and writing through meaningful activities, aiding in critical thinking and creative expression. Cook-Schulze (2019) and Gunderson (2013) provide complementary perspectives on the whole language teaching method discussed by the respondents. Cook-Schulze emphasizes how integrating literacy across subjects fosters a genuine appreciation for reading and writing. This integration enhances critical thinking and creativity by placing literacy in relevant contexts. Gunderson's insights, akin to this assertion, highlight the importance of creating literature-rich environments that make reading and writing enjoyable and purposeful in daily life. Together, these scholars and practitioners underscore the holistic benefits of the whole language approach in nurturing comprehensive literacy skills through meaningful engagement and diverse literary experiences.

Also, the analysed data further shows that Phonics instruction as a teaching method provides young children with essential decoding skills by systematically teaching the relationships between letters and sounds. This foundational knowledge enables children to read words accurately and fluently, breaking down unfamiliar words to understand their meanings. This aligns with the National Reading Panel (2000) study that emphasized that children who receive phonics instruction are more likely to achieve reading proficiency compared to those who do not. Castles et al., (2018) reiterated that the emphasis on

phonemic awareness, where children learn to manipulate sounds in words, also improves spelling skills.

Again, the data analysed further highlights that the play-based method is another teaching approach that teachers adopt in teaching young children literacy. Through play activities like building, sensory play, and group games, children naturally engage in language-rich interactions, fostering communication skills crucial for literacy. During play, children often engage in storytelling, role-playing, and using print materials, which promote both oral and written language skills (Christie & Roskos, 2006). This context-rich learning helps children understand the practical uses of literacy, making reading and writing relevant to their lives. Similarly, the analysis shows that technology-enhanced learning significantly impacts literacy skills development in early childhood by integrating digital tools and resources into the learning process. Through interactive apps and games that make learning letters, phonics, and sight words enjoyable and adaptive. Immediate feedback reinforces learning, while digital storytelling apps foster creativity and deepen comprehension skills. This assertion is in sync with Clarke (2018) who asserted that one of the key benefits of technology integration in literacy is its ability to provide interactive and multimedia-rich content that can capture children's attention and motivate them to engage in literacy activities. Digital storybooks, educational apps, and interactive games often include animations, sounds, and interactive elements that make learning to read more engaging and enjoyable (Hassett & Curwood, 2009).

Furthermore, the data analysed emphasized the impact of read-aloud on students' literacy development. It emphasizes how interactive read-aloud enhances comprehension by engaging learners in discussions and prompting critical thinking about narrative elements.

Interactive Read-Alouds, a method where teachers read texts aloud to students while engaging them in discussions, significantly impact early childhood literacy development. This method not only models fluent reading but also fosters critical thinking, comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition (Wright, 2019). Also, Batini et al., (2020), suggested that exposure to rich and varied language during read-aloud sessions introduces children to new words in meaningful contexts, significantly enhancing their vocabulary. This exposure is particularly beneficial for children from diverse linguistic backgrounds who may not encounter such vocabulary in their everyday environments.

Research question 2: How do teaching and learning materials influence the literacy skills development of learners in early childhood centers?

The analysed data from the study shows that young children's access to books and print materials for early childhood learners is significant. It fosters a rich literacy environment where children can explore, engage, and develop essential skills. This assertion is in line with a study by Oppong Frimpong (2021) which suggested that the availability and effectiveness of teaching and learning resources play a pivotal role in shaping early childhood literacy development. Quality books engage readers in deeper thinking, allowing them to analyze plotlines, evaluate evidence, and draw conclusions, all of which are essential for higher-order literacy skills (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

The data further shows that utilizing visual aids and posters in fostering literacy development in young children is significant. By creating a print-rich environment filled with visual cues and reminders, educators enhance children's exposure to written language and literacy concepts. Multimodal learning resources, including visual aids, charts, and manipulatives,

contribute to a multisensory approach that reinforces literacy skills. Research by Mayer (2009) underscores that visual representations and diagrams enhance comprehension and retention of complex concepts. Visual aids can support vocabulary development, phonological awareness, and story sequencing skills (Lambirth, 2006). Additionally, hands-on manipulatives facilitate kinesthetic learning, catering to different learning modalities (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002).

Moreover, the data further shows that integrating technology into literacy instruction is profound. It offers new avenues for engagement and personalization, catering to diverse learning needs and styles. By leveraging technology, educators can create interactive and dynamic learning experiences that promote deeper understanding and retention of literacy skills. A study by Bang, Li, and Flynn (2023) emphasizes that interactive digital platforms and educational apps provide engaging and personalized learning experiences. These resources enable children to practice phonics, word recognition, and comprehension skills in dynamic and interactive ways (Anderson & Morrison, 2020). The integration of technology also caters to diverse learning styles, facilitating differentiated instruction and individualized support (Frey & Fisher, 2008).

Research Question 3: How does the training of teachers affect the literacy skills development of early learners in the Abesim Circuit?

The data from the analysis shows the profound impact of training and professional development on literacy instruction. Research by Pressley et al. (2006) as well as the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) emphasized the importance of training in phonemic awareness and systematic phonics, aligning with the practice of incorporating daily phonics

lessons. Such practices are crucial for early literacy development, aiding in the understanding of letter-sound relationships (Justice et al., 2005). Additionally, guided reading groups enable differentiated instruction, improving decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). These findings underscore how targeted professional development enhances teachers' ability to support diverse learners' literacy journeys effectively.

Also, training in differentiated instruction strategies empowers teachers to effectively address the diverse learning needs of their students. By providing tailored activities during literacy centers, teachers can challenge each student appropriately, ensuring personalized support and engagement. This assertion is supported by Wasik and Hindman (2011), who posited that workshops, conferences, and collaborative learning communities offer educators opportunities to deepen their understanding of literacy instruction and exchange best practices.

The data further highlights the crucial role of assessments in literacy education. By using formative and summative assessments, such as running records and diagnostic tools, teachers can precisely gauge each child's literacy progress and identify areas needing support. This data-driven approach allows for tailored instruction and early, targeted interventions, leading to significant improvements in reading and writing abilities. Effective teacher training programs equip educators with the knowledge and tools to conduct both formative and summative assessments, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of students' literacy levels and progress (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Formative assessments, such as observations and informal reading inventories, enable

teachers to monitor student progress and provide immediate feedback, facilitating timely interventions and tailored instruction (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

Moreover, the data analysed shows that training equips educators with practical strategies, such as labeled shelves, thematic book displays, and interactive word walls, enhancing classroom literacy. This leads to significant improvements in students' reading interests, confidence, and abilities. Research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) indicates that teachers who receive training in specific literacy instruction strategies, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, are more effective in improving students' reading abilities.

Finally, professional learning communities on literacy instruction were also highlighted in the analysis. Collaborative sharing of resources, strategies, and best practices equips educators with innovative techniques, such as interactive read-aloud sessions and literacy games, enhancing classroom dynamics and student engagement. A study by DuFour (2015) has shown that teachers involved in PLCs are more likely to employ evidence-based literacy practices, leading to improved student outcomes. This collaborative approach ensures that teachers are not working in isolation but are continually learning from each other, which translates into more effective literacy instruction in the classroom.

Research Question 4: How does the physical school environment affect the literacy skills development of early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit?

The analysis of research question four which highlighted how the physical environment affects literacy development manifested that a well-designed classroom environment significantly enhances early childhood literacy development. Diverse literacy centers,

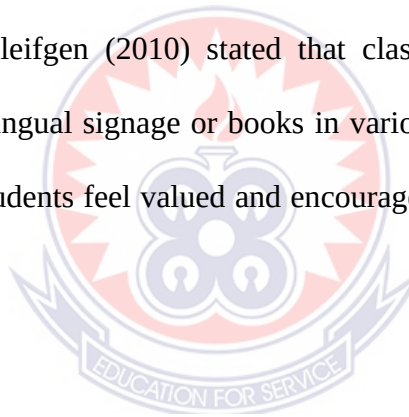
comfortable reading areas, and interactive tools cater to various learning styles, fostering both independent and collaborative activities. A flexible layout supports individual exploration and group engagement, while elements like word walls reinforce vocabulary. This is in sync with a study by Barrett et al. (2015) who noted that visually stimulating yet organized classroom environments support cognitive development and academic performance. Thus, thoughtful classroom layout and design are essential in fostering an environment conducive to literacy development.

Also, the analysed data further revealed that a safe and inclusive environment encourages children to take risks in reading and writing, enhancing their skills. Group activities like shared reading and storytelling enable children to learn from peers, hear diverse perspectives, and practice language skills in a social context. Moreover, the analysis shows that a welcoming classroom atmosphere and rich social interactions are crucial for early childhood literacy development. A safe and inclusive environment encourages children to take risks in reading and writing, enhancing their skills. A study by Chu (2014) supported this narrative when he posited that Physical comfort and ergonomic design are essential for creating a productive learning environment. Furniture that is appropriately sized for young children, comfortable seating, and well-lit areas contribute to a positive learning experience.

Again, the data shows that integrating outdoor spaces into literacy activities significantly benefits early childhood learners by making reading more engaging and relevant. By taking literacy activities outside, children are provided with dynamic and stimulating learning environments that foster creativity, social interaction, and a deeper connection to the material, ultimately enhancing their overall literacy development. Bixler et al., (2002)

highlighted how multisensory experiences provided by nature stimulate children's curiosity and imagination, enhancing their language and vocabulary acquisition as they describe and interact with their surroundings. Also, the freedom and open space encourage physical movement, which has been linked to improved cognitive function and attention span, crucial for sustained engagement in literacy activities (Pellegrini & Holmes, 2006).

Furthermore, the analysis suggests that learners' exposure to various cultures and languages enriches vocabulary and deepens cultural understanding. Activities where children teach each other words foster linguistic skills and respect for diversity. Celebrating cultural diversity through stories and discussions enhances engagement and motivation in literacy learning. García and Kleifgen (2010) stated that classrooms that celebrate linguistic diversity through multilingual signage or books in various languages create an inclusive atmosphere where all students feel valued and encouraged to participate in language-rich activities.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This final chapter comprises a summary of the study, emphasizing the major findings. It discusses the conclusion, recommendations as well as suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that affect literacy skills development among early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality.

Research Objectives

The following objectives guided the study;

1. To find out how teaching methods affect the literacy skills development of early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality.
2. To investigate how teaching and learning resources influence the literacy skills development of learners in early childhood centres in the Abesim Circuit.
3. To explore how teacher training affects the literacy skills development of learners at early childhood centres in the Abesim circuit.
4. To assess how the physical environment of schools affects the literacy skills development of learners in early childhood centres in the Abesim circuit.

5.2 Key Findings

1. The findings from the study revealed that teachers adopt several teaching methods that facilitate the literacy skills development of young children in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality. These teaching methods include whole

language, phonics-based instruction, interactive read aloud as well as play-based method.

2. Again, the study revealed that learners' access to books and print materials, and access to technological literacy applications influences young learners' literacy skills development. The availability of multi-modal visual aids and posters in early childhood centres influences the literacy development of the learners.
3. Also, the findings from the study revealed that early childhood teachers' knowledge of literacy pedagogy, differentiation in instruction, knowledge of assessment, and the creation of a literacy-rich environment are some of the ways that the training and professional development influence their development of learners' literacy skills.
4. Finally, the findings from the study revealed that creation of physical classroom space, well-arranged furniture in the classroom, favourable classroom Atmosphere and Social Interaction, Outdoor Learning Environment, as well as cultural and Linguistic Diversity are some of the ways through which school physical environment influence literacy development of of young children in the Abesim Circuit.

5.3 Conclusions

The study conducted in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality has provided valuable insights into the multifaceted approaches and factors that affect early childhood literacy development.

The findings reveal that teachers in this region employ a variety of teaching methods to facilitate literacy skills development among young children. These methods include

whole language, phonics-based instruction, interactive read-aloud sessions, and play-based methods. Each of these approaches contributes uniquely to the development of children's literacy, combining to create a comprehensive and robust instructional framework.

Access to books, print materials, and technological literacy applications significantly influences young learners' literacy development. The availability of high-quality, diverse, and engaging reading materials is essential for fostering vocabulary expansion, reading fluency, and a love for reading. Additionally, the presence of multimodal visual aids and posters in early childhood centers supports literacy development by providing children with visual and contextual cues that enhance their understanding and retention of new information.

The study highlights the crucial role of teacher knowledge and professional development in literacy instruction. Early childhood teachers' understanding of literacy pedagogy, differentiation in instruction, and assessment is vital for effectively addressing the diverse needs of learners. Furthermore, the creation of a literacy-rich environment by well-trained teachers fosters a stimulating and supportive atmosphere that promotes literacy growth. Professional development programmes that focus on these areas are instrumental in enhancing teachers' capabilities and, consequently, improving student outcomes.

The physical environment of schools also plays a significant role in literacy development. The study identifies several aspects of the school environment that impact literacy learning, including the creation of physical classroom space, well-arranged furniture, and a favorable classroom atmosphere that encourages social

interaction. Additionally, an outdoor learning environment and the recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity contribute to a holistic and inclusive literacy development process. These factors collectively create a conducive learning environment that supports the literacy growth of young children.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations were drawn to enhance early childhood literacy development in the Abesim Circuit and similar contexts:

1. **Diversified Instructional Methods:** School authorities in early childhood centres should encourage teachers to adopt diverse instructional methods, such as whole language, phonics-based instruction, interactive read-aloud, and play-based learning, to address the varied learning needs of young children.
2. **Resource Availability:** The Sunyani Municipal Education Directorate should improve access to a wide range of teaching and learning materials such as books, print materials, and technological literacy applications to provide children with rich and engaging literacy experiences. Also, they should ensure that early childhood centers are equipped with multimodal visual aids and posters to support literacy learning.
3. **Teacher Training:** The Sunyani Municipal Education Directorate should frequently organise ongoing professional development opportunities for early childhood teachers, focusing on literacy pedagogy, differentiation, assessment, and the creation of literacy-rich environments. This will enhance teachers' skills and effectiveness in promoting literacy development.

4. **Optimal Physical Environment:** Early childhood centres within the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality should design and maintain physical classroom spaces that are conducive to learning, with well-arranged furniture and a favorable classroom atmosphere. Promote social interaction, outdoor learning opportunities, and the integration of cultural and linguistic diversity to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.



REFERENCES

- Akyeampong, K. (2010). Educational expansion and access in Ghana: A review of 50 years of challenge and progress. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30(4), 439-446.
- Al-Dosari, N. M. (2016). Integrated literacy skills: The interaction of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. *Journal of Educational Development*, 40(2), 123-135.
- Anderson, D., & Morrison, F. (2020). The role of digital tools in enhancing literacy skills. *Educational Technology & Society*, 23(3), 45-57.
- Anderson, K., & Morrison, F. J. (2020). The influence of educational technology on early literacy skills. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(4), 599-614.
- Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. (2018). Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading. National Institute of Education.
- Au, K. H., & Raphael, T. E. (2000). Equity and literacy in the next millennium. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(1), 170-188.
- Bacevich, A. M., & Salinger, T. (2006). Sustaining change: The Alabama Reading Initiative. *Reading Teacher*, 60(4), 311-316.
- Bacevich, A., & Salinger, T. (2006). Lessons and recommendations from the Alabama Reading Initiative. RMC Research Corporation.
- Ball, D. L., & Cohen, D. K. (1999). Developing practice, developing practitioners: Toward a practice-based theory of professional education. In G. Sykes & L. Darling-Hammond (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 3-32). Jossey-Bass.
- Bang, L., Li, Q., & Flynn, K. (2023). The impact of interactive digital platforms on early childhood literacy development. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 71(2), 825-842.
- Barkmann, C., Wessolowski, N., & Schulte-Markwort, M. (2012). Applicability and efficacy of a standardized classroom management training program for elementary school teachers in Germany. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 22(1-2), 105-126.
- Barnett, W. S. (2011). Effectiveness of early educational intervention. *Science*, 333(6045), 975-978.

- Barrett, P., Davies, F., Zhang, Y., & Barrett, L. (2013). The impact of classroom design on pupils' learning: Final results of a holistic, multi-level analysis. *Building and Environment*, 68, 678–689. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.buildenv.2013.11.039>
- Barrett, P., Davies, F., Zhang, Y., & Barrett, L. (2015). The impact of classroom design on pupils' learning: Final results of a holistic, multi-level analysis. *Building and Environment*, 89, 118–133.
- Batini, F., Dejong, J., De Paola, M., & Vuri, D. (2020). The causal impact of exposure to literacy on children's skills and behavior. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 58(4), 915–956.
- Bixler, R. D., Floyd, M. F., & Hammitt, W. E. (2002). Environmental socialization: Quantitative tests of the childhood play hypothesis. *Environment and Behavior*, 34(6), 795–818.
- Blachowicz, C., Buhle, R., Frost, S., Roehrig, A., & Beck, J. (2005). Literacy coaching for change. *Educational Leadership*, 62(6), 55–58.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 5–31.
- Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2007). *Tools of the mind: The Vygotskian approach to early childhood education* (2nd ed.). Pearson.
- Boyle, H., McNaughton, S., & Chapin, J. (2019). The effect of different literacy instruction methods on young children's literacy outcomes. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 51(2), 152–167.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Brown, G. (2014). Literacy in early childhood and primary education. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 36(1), 1–15.
- Brown, S., Taylor, L., & Hall, K. (2019). Tablet-based interventions for improving literacy skills in young children. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 19(4), 601–623.
- Buckingham, J., Wheldall, K., & Beaman-Wheldall, R. (2019). Whole language high jinks: How to tell when "scientifically-based reading instruction" isn't. *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*, 24(1), 41–60.
- Castles, A., Rastle, K., & Nation, K. (2018). Ending the reading wars: Reading acquisition from novice to expert. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 19(1), 5–51.
- Chaika, A. (2023). Integrating cultural relevance in literacy instruction. *Journal of Multicultural Education*, 17(1), 23–34.

- Chandler-Olcott, K., Henninger, M., & Nieroda, J. (2018). Professional learning for disciplinary literacy instruction: A case study of a statewide network. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 61(5), 533–541.
- Chandler-Olcott, K., Hinchman, K. A., & Schwingendorf, K. (2018). Challenging the status quo: Developing effective professional development. *The Reading Teacher*, 72(2), 189–198.
- Chen, G. (2010). Learning effectiveness and perceptions of interactive multimedia textbooks: A preliminary investigation. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 18(2), 157–170.
- Cheryan, S., Ziegler, S. A., Plaut, V. C., & Meltzoff, A. N. (2014). Designing classrooms to maximize student achievement. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1(1), 4–12.
- Christie, J. F., & Roskos, K. (2006). *Playing to learn: The role of play in the early years*. Routledge.
- Chu, S. Y. (2014). Perspectives on integrating play in teaching and learning: A case of Hong Kong kindergartens. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 42(4), 231–239.
- Clark, C. (2012). Visual aids in early childhood literacy instruction. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 40(5), 331–337.
- Clark, C. (2020). Interactive features in digital apps and literacy development in young children. *TechTrends*, 64(2), 247–259.
- Clarke, C. (2018). Engaging children in interactive multimedia storytelling: A case study in preschool education. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia*, 27(2), 153–165.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). Routledge.
- Condy, J., & Blease, B. (2014). Teaching literacy in under-resourced schools. *Educational Review*, 66(3), 352–367.
- Connor, C. M., Morrison, F. J., & Katch, L. E. (2014). Beyond the reading wars: Exploring the effect of child-instruction interactions on growth in early reading. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 18(1), 22–47.
- Cook-Schulze, C. (2019). *Whole language in the 21st century: A guide for teachers, parents, and administrators*. Guilford Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Multilingual Matters.
- Cunningham, P. M., & Hall, D. P. (1998). *Month-by-month phonics for first grade: Systematic, multilevel instruction*. Carson-Dellosa Publishing.
- Cutting, L. E., & Scarborough, H. S. (2006). Prediction of reading comprehension: Relative contributions of word recognition, language proficiency, and other cognitive skills can depend on how comprehension is measured. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 10(3), 277–299.
- Damaianti, V. S., Abidin, Z., & Rahma, A. (2020). Higher-order reading skills: Comprehension, analysis, and synthesis. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 36(3), 219–233.
- Daniela, M., et al. (2019). The impact of technology-enhanced learning on early childhood literacy development: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 31(4), 1125–1149.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher education around the world: What can we learn from international practice? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(3), 291–309.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher*, 38(3), 181–199.
- Desimone, L. M., & Pak, K. (2017). Instructional coaching as high-quality professional development. *Theory Into Practice*, 56(1), 3–12.
- Diaz, R. M., Neal, J., & Amaya-Williams, M. (2019). Culturally sustaining pedagogies in early childhood education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 89(1), 92–116. <https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-89.1.92>
- Dickinson, D. K., & Porche, M. V. (2011). Relation between language experiences in preschool classrooms and children's kindergarten and fourth-grade language and reading abilities. *Child Development*, 82(3), 870–886.

- Dickinson, D. K., & Smith, M. W. (1994). Long-term effects of preschool teachers' book readings on low-income children's vocabulary and story comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 29(2), 105–122.
- Diller, D. (2023). *Spaces & places: Designing classrooms for literacy*. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Doll, L. (2022). Innovative methods in phonics instruction. *Journal of Educational Strategies*, 14(2), 55–65.
- DuFour, R. (2015). *In praise of American educators: And how they can become even better*. Solution Tree Press.
- Duke, N. K., & Pearson, P. D. (2002). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (3rd ed., pp. 205–242). International Reading Association.
- Duncan, L. G., & Paran, D. (2017). Assessing the whole child: A holistic approach to early childhood assessment. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 45(1), 53–63.
- Dunn, L., & Senechal, M. (1996). The effect of peer-assisted learning strategies on first-grade students' oral reading fluency. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88(3), 506–514.
- Duwenhoegger, K. A. (2021). Early childhood literacy interventions: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 33(2), 217–235.
- Ehri, L. C. (2014). Orthographic mapping in the acquisition of sight word reading, spelling memory, and vocabulary learning. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 18(1), 5–21.
- Ehri, L. C., Nunes, S. R., Willows, D. M., Schuster, B. V., Yaghoub-Zadeh, Z., & Shanahan, T. (2001). Phonemic awareness instruction helps children learn to read: Evidence from the National Reading Panel's meta-analysis. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(3), 250–287.
- Evans, G. W. (2006). Child development and the physical environment. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 57, 423–451.
- Ezell, H. K., Justice, L. M., & Parsons, B. (2000). The contribution of phonological awareness and rapid naming to early reading and spelling. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12(3), 127–153.
- Farraj, A. A. (2019). Understanding the role of teachers in curriculum implementation. *International Journal of Education*, 11(2), 105–120.

- Fisher, A., Godwin, K., & Seltman, H. (2014). Visual environment, attention allocation, and learning in young children: When too much of a good thing may be bad. *Psychological Science*, 25(7), 1362–1370.
- Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Hattie, J. (2017). *Visible learning for literacy, grades K–12: Implementing the practices that work best to accelerate student learning*. Corwin Press.
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2012). *Guiding readers and writers: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy (Grades 3–6)*. Heinemann.
- Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2008). *Reading for information in elementary school: Content literacy strategies to build comprehension*. Prentice Hall.
- Frey, N., Lee, D., Tollefson, N., Pass, L., & Massengill, D. (2005). Literacy coaching: Key strategies for building effective instructional leadership. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(2), 110–118.
- Fuccillo, M. (2015). Early literacy development in Tanzanian children: Challenges and strategies. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 40, 45–52.
- García, O., & Kleifgen, J. A. (2010). *Educating emergent bilinguals: Policies, programs, and practices for English language learners*. Teachers College Press.
- Garcia-Alvarado, M., Arreguin, L., & Ruiz-Escalante, J. A. (2022). The impact of guided reading on literacy development in young children. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50(4), 497–509.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106–116.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.
- Genesee, F., Paradis, J., & Crago, M. B. (2004). *Dual language development and disorders: A handbook on bilingualism and second language learning*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Ghana Statistical Service. (2014). *2010 population & housing census: Sunyani Municipality analytical report*. GSS.
- Gindis, B. (2005). The role of the ZPD in inclusive education for children with special needs. In H. Daniels (Ed.), *An introduction to Vygotsky* (2nd ed., pp. 200–229). Routledge.
- Gonzalez, J. E., Pollard-Durodola, S. D., Simmons, D. C., Taylor, A. B., Davis, M. J., & Kim, M. (2014). The impact of teacher discourse on students' early comprehension

- and vocabulary growth in urban preschools. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 49(2), 137–160.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2019). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Routledge.
- Govender, R. (2012). Teacher professional development in literacy education. *South African Journal of Education*, 32(2), 169–182.
- Graham, S., & Hebert, M. (2011). Writing to read: A meta-analysis of the impact of writing and writing instruction on reading. *Harvard Educational Review*, 81(4), 710–744.
- Graves, M. F. (2016). *The vocabulary book: Learning and instruction*. Teachers College Press.
- Graves, M. F., Juel, C., & Graves, B. B. (2012). *Teaching reading in the 21st century: Motivating all learners* (5th ed.). Wiley.
- Grossman, P., Hammerness, K., & McDonald, M. (2009). Redefining teaching, re-imagining teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching*, 15(2), 273–289.
- Gunderson, L. (2013). *The whole language kindergarten*. Heinemann.
- Hargreaves, A. (2014). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Hassett, D. D., & Curwood, J. S. (2009). Using digital tools and media to support emergent literacy development in at-risk preschoolers. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(3), 232–243.
- Hattie, J., & Donoghue, G. (2016). Learning strategies: A synthesis and conceptual model. *Science of Learning*, 1, Article 16013.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112.
- Hauge, K., & Einarsen, E. (2018). *Digital storytelling in higher education: International perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P. A., & Yavitz, A. (2010). The rate of return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1–2), 114–128.
- Heitin, L. (2019). Diverse books and inclusive curricula boost learning for everyone. *Education Week*, 38(17), 23–25.

- Heritage, M. (2010). *Formative assessment: Making it happen in the classroom*. Corwin Press.
- Hinrichs, J., & Zumbach, J. (2015). Applying Vygotsky's scaffolding concept in digital game-based learning environments. *International Journal of Game-Based Learning*, 5(1), 1–14.
- Hobbs, R. (2018). *Literacy and media literacy: How media literacy education transforms teaching and learning*. The MIT Press.
- Horowitz-Kraus, T., & Hutton, J. S. (2015). Brain connectivity in children is increased by the time they spend reading books and decreased by the length of exposure to screen-based media. *Acta Paediatrica*, 104(7), 666–674.
- Horsman, J. (2018). Trustworthiness and credibility. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 895–896). SAGE Publications.
- Horton, S. V. (2008). Literacy development in early childhood: The role of family engagement. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36(5), 421–430.
- Howes, C., Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2008). Effective early childhood professional development: Improving teacher practice and child outcomes. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(3), 872–907.
- Hudson, R. F., Lane, H. B., & Pullen, P. C. (2019). Reading fluency assessment and instruction: What, why, and how? *The Reading Teacher*, 58(8), 702–714.
- Institute of Education Sciences. (2016). *Coaching teachers in a large scale initiative to build pre-kindergarten children's literacy skills*. National Center for Education Statistics.
- Institute of Education Sciences. (2016). *Foundations for literacy: An evidence-based toolkit for the effective reading and writing teacher*. Author.
- Jackson, B., Schatschneider, C., & Leacock, L. (2006). The effects of HeadsUp! Reading on early childhood educators' literacy practices and preschool children's literacy skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21(2), 213–226.
- Jackson, C., Larzelere, R., St. Clair, L., Corr, M., Fichter, C., & Egertson, H. (2006). The impact of HeadsUp! Reading on early childhood educators' literacy practices and preschool children's literacy skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21(2), 213–226.
- James, N., & Busher, H. (2007). Ethics of research in cyberspace. In M. Z. Hammersley (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 113–129). Sage.

- Jones, S., & Christensen, A. (2022). Early childhood literacy: Foundations of academic success. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50(1), 1–10.
- Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1983). Power in staff development through research on training. *ASCD Yearbook*, 78–101.
- Justice, L. M., & Ezell, H. K. (2002). Use of storybook reading to increase print awareness in at-risk children. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 11(1), 17–29.
- Justice, L. M., & Ezell, H. K. (2019). Word and print awareness in preschool children. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, 23(4), 194–206.
- Justice, L. M., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2019). Using shared storybook reading to promote emergent literacy. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 22(4), 190–213.
- Justice, L. M., Chow, S. M., Capellini, C. S., Flanigan, K., & Colton, S. (2003). Emergent literacy intervention for vulnerable preschoolers: Relative effects of two approaches. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 12(3), 320–332.
- Justice, L. M., Mashburn, A. J., Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2008). Quality of language and literacy instruction in preschool classrooms serving at-risk pupils. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(1), 51–68.
- Kagan, S. L., & Kauerz, K. (2012). *Early childhood systems: Transforming early learning*. Teachers College Press.
- Kane, S. (2017). *Literacy and learning in the content areas*. Routledge.
- Kekesi, K., Gyemfua, A., & Asare, P. (2019). Traditional teaching methods and their impact on early childhood literacy. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 10(21), 50–58.
- Kekesi, T., Toth, P., & Vecsey, K. (2019). Traditional vs. contemporary teaching methods: Their impact on early literacy development. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 19(2), 234–256.
- Kennedy, E., Dewar, B., Hogg, R., Baxter, S., & Wilson, J. (2012). Understanding the impact of contemporary teaching methods on early literacy development. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 12(1), 75–98.
- Kilag, G., Etah, E., & Maza, N. (2024). The influence of teaching resources on literacy development in early childhood education. *Journal of Literacy Studies*, 34(1), 99–114.
- Kim, Y. (2019). Culturally responsive teaching in early childhood education. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 27(3), 227–240.

- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. Routledge.
- Kumar, R., & Widaman, K. F. (2019). Personalized learning for young children: Rationale and considerations. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 47(6), 675–685.
- Kunter, M., Klusmann, U., Baumert, J., Richter, D., Voss, T., & Hachfeld, A. (2013). Professional competence of teachers: Effects on instructional quality and student development. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 805–820.
- Kusi, H. (2012). *Doing qualitative research: A guide for researchers*. Emmpong Press.
- Lackney, J. A. (1999). Assessing school facilities for learning/assessing the impact of the physical environment on the educational process. *Educational Facility Planner*, 35(1), 10–14.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491.
- Lam, W. S. E., & Warriner, D. S. (2012). Transnationalism and literacy: Investigating the mobility of people, languages, texts, and practices in contexts of migration. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47(2), 191–215.
- Lambirth, A. (2006). *Making literacy real: Theories and practices for learning and teaching*. Sage Publications.
- Landry, S. H., Swank, P. R., Smith, K. E., Assel, M. A., & Gunnewig, S. B. (2006). Enhancing early literacy skills for preschool children: Bringing a professional development model to scale. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 39(4), 306–324.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. Oxford University Press.
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2015). *Practical research: Planning and design* (11th ed.). Pearson.
- Lefebvre, G. C., Trudeau, L., & Sutton, A. (2011). *Supporting literacy across the sunshine state*. Llumina Press.
- Leu, D. J., Kinzer, C. K., Coiro, J., & Cammack, D. W. (2005). Toward a theory of new literacies emerging from the Internet and other information and communication technologies. In R. Ruddell & N. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (5th ed., pp. 1570–1613). International Reading Association.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

- Little, J. W. (2002). Locating learning in teachers' communities of practice: Opening up problems of analysis in records of everyday work. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18(8), 917–946.
- Lonigan, C. J., Burgess, S. R., & Anthony, J. L. (2000). Development of emergent literacy and early reading skills in preschool children: Evidence from a latent-variable longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology*, 36(5), 596–613.
- Lopez, A., Greenfield, D. B., & D'Souza, N. (2022). Early childhood educators' pedagogical knowledge and classroom practices: A systematic review. *Early Education and Development*, 33(1), 1–21.
- Lopez, S., Esquinca, A., Whitcomb, L., Saldana, L., Wallace, K., Abukhdeir, L., & Stevens, C. (2022). Integrating evidence-based practices in early childhood literacy education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50(1), 3–18.
- Makin, L. (2003). *How to create a print-rich environment for early literacy learning*. Scholastic.
- Mar, R. A. (2011). The neural bases of social cognition and story comprehension. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 62, 103–134.
- Marsh, J. (2010). Young children's literacy practices in a virtual world: Establishing an online interaction order. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 45(4), 369–393.
- Mashburn, A. J., Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., Downer, J. T., Barbarin, O. A., Bryant, D., Burchinal, M., Early, D. M., Howes, C., Ritchie, S., & Scott-Little, C. (2008). Measures of classroom quality in prekindergarten and children's development of academic, language, and social skills. *Child Development*, 79(3), 732–749.
- Maureen, I. Y. (2021). Story time in early childhood education: Designing storytelling activities to enhance (digital) literacy development. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Maureen, I. Y., van der Meij, H., & de Jong, T. (2020). Enhancing storytelling activities to support early (digital) literacy development in early childhood education. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 52(1), 55–76.
- Maureen, O. (2021). The role of multimedia in enhancing early literacy skills. *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education*, 37(4), 215–224.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2014). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Mayer, R. E. (2009). *Multimedia learning* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

- McAdam, J., Abou Ghaida, R., Arizpe, E., Hirsu, L., & Motawy, H. (2020). Culturally inclusive literacy education: Lessons from global contexts. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 43(1), 129–146.
- McLachlan, C., Fleeer, M., & Edwards, S. (2012). *Early childhood curriculum: Planning, assessment, and implementation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Meredith, R., & Catherine, S. (2020). The role of dialogic reading in early literacy development. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 34(4), 451–466.
- Miller, J., & Schwanenflugel, P. J. (2006). A longitudinal study of the development of phonological awareness in young children. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(3), 272–304.
- Ministry of Education. (2019). *Education strategic plan 2018–2030*. Accra, Ghana.
- Moats, L. C. (1999). *Teaching reading is rocket science: What expert teachers of reading should know and be able to do*. American Federation of Teachers.
- Moats, L. C. (1999). *Teaching reading is rocket science: What expert teachers of reading should know and be able to do*. American Federation of Teachers.
- Moats, L. C. (2000). Whole language lives on: The illusion of "balanced" reading instruction. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(3), 237–244.
- Mohamed, I. (2023). Phonics instruction and its impact on early literacy development. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 18(2), 45–60.
- Mohammed, A. (2023). Exploring the impact of phonics instruction on early literacy skills. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 55(2), 135–149.
- Mol, S. E., & Bus, A. G. (2011). To read or not to read: A meta-analysis of print exposure from infancy to early adulthood. *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(2), 267–296.
- Moll, L. C. (2014). L. S. Vygotsky and education. In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Education*. Routledge.
- Morrow, L. M. (1990). Preparing the classroom environment to promote literacy during play. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 5(1), 45–54.
- Morrow, L. M. (2001). *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Morrow, L. M. (2018a). *Developing literacy in preschool*. International Reading Association.
- Morrow, L. M. (2018b). *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write* (8th ed.). Pearson.

- Moss, G., & Newton, P. (2002). Reading pictures, writing stories: Visual literacy in the primary classroom. *English in Education*, 36(1), 19–31.
- Mouza, C. (2008). Learning with laptops: Implementation and outcomes in an urban, underprivileged school. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 40(4), 447–472.
- Mrah, E. (2017). Critical thinking and reading comprehension: Higher-order skills in action. *Reading Horizons*, 57(2), 91–105.
- Murphy, J. (2023). Phonics and early literacy: Best practices for instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 77(1), 23–34.
- Mweshi, B., & Sakyi, D. (2020). The relevance of purposive sampling in social science research. *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1), 12–24.
- Naidoo, D., Botha, K., & Balfour, R. J. (2014). Teaching methods in early childhood education: Challenges and prospects. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 4(2), 76–94.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2018). *NAEYC early childhood program standards and accreditation criteria: The mark of quality in early childhood education*. NAEYC.
- National Centre for Education Statistics. (2017). *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): Reading*. U.S. Department of Education.
- National Early Literacy Panel. (2009). *Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*. National Institute for Literacy.
- National Institute for Literacy. (2008). *Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*. U.S. Department of Education.
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). U.S. Government Printing Office.
- National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.
- National Research Council. (2006). *Early childhood assessment: Why, what, and how*. National Academies Press.

- Nettles, D. H. (1993). Building on strengths: A focus on positive aspects of literacy. *The Reading Teacher*, 46(8), 572–579.
- Nettles, M. T. (1993). Effects of coaching on differential item functioning. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 30(4), 311–331.
- Neuman, S. B., & Celano, D. (2001). Access to print in low-income and middle-income communities: An ecological study of four neighborhoods. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(1), 8–26.
- Neuman, S. B., & Cunningham, L. (2009). The impact of professional development and coaching on early language and literacy instructional practices. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(2), 532–566.
- Neuman, S. B., & Dickinson, D. K. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of early literacy research* (Vol. 1). Guilford Press.
- Neuman, S. B., & Roskos, K. (1992). Literacy materials in the classroom: What's missing and what's happening? *The Reading Teacher*, 45(6), 448–457.
- Neuman, S. B., & Roskos, K. (1992). Literacy objects as cultural tools: Effects on children's literacy behaviors in play. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 27(3), 202–225.
- Neuman, S. B., & Roskos, K. (1993). Access to print for children of poverty: Differential effects of adult mediation and literacy-enriched play settings on environmental and functional print tasks. *American Educational Research Journal*, 30(1), 95–122.
- Neuman, S. B., & Roskos, K. (1997). Literacy knowledge in practice: Contexts of participation for young writers and readers. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 32(1), 10–32.
- Neumann, M. M. (2014). Factors that contribute to high-quality early childhood education and care: A systematic review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(2), 182–202.
- New Jersey State Department of Education. (2014). *New Jersey preschool teaching and learning standards*. New Jersey State Department of Education.
- Nitttrouer, S., & Caldwell-Tarr, A. (2016). Reading development in children: The importance of effective assessment. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 108(2), 143–156.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13.

- O'Donnell, A. M., Reeve, J., & Smith, J. K. (2019). *Educational psychology: Reflection for action* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Olagbaju, O., & Popoola, A. (2020). The impact of educational games on children's literacy development. *International Journal of Game-Based Learning*, 10(2), 30–44.
- Omuna, A., Wambua, C., & Mugo, J. (2016). Impact of teaching materials on literacy outcomes in early childhood education. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 50, 90–97.
- Oppong Frimpong, E. (2021). The impact of teaching and learning resources on early childhood literacy development. *Early Education Journal*, 49(3), 333–349.
- Oppong Frimpong, S. (2021a). Challenges in early childhood literacy development in Ghana. *African Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(1), 25–40.
- Oppong Frimpong, S. (2021b). Educational resources and their impact on early literacy in Ghanaian schools. *Journal of Educational Research*, 34(3), 98–112.
- Paris, S. G., & Hamilton, E. E. (2014). The development of children's reading comprehension. *Educational Psychologist*, 34(2), 99–107.
- Paul, R., & Norbury, C. (2012). *Language disorders from infancy through adolescence: Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and communicating*. Elsevier Health Sciences.
- Pellegrini, A. D., & Holmes, R. M. (2006). The role of recess in primary school. In D. G. Singer, R. M. Golinkoff, & K. Hirsh-Pasek (Eds.), *Play = Learning: How play motivates and enhances children's cognitive and social-emotional growth* (pp. 36–53). Oxford University Press.
- Pianta, R. C. (2006). *Classroom assessment scoring system (CLASS) manual: Pre-K*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., & Hamre, B. K. (2008). *Classroom assessment scoring system (CLASS) manual: Pre-K*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.
- Piasta, S. B., Justice, L. M., McGinty, A. S., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2009). Increasing young children's contact with print during shared reading: Longitudinal effects on literacy achievement. *Child Development*, 80(4), 1052–1069.
- Pieretti, R., Kaul, C., Zarchy, B., & O'Hanlon, N. (2015). Integrating visual aids and multimodal learning in early childhood literacy instruction. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 43(6), 429–437.
- Pinkham, A. M., & Neuman, S. B. (2012). Early literacy development: The role of family and community. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47(3), 235–258.

- Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C. (2006). *Teaching for comprehension and fluency: Thinking, talking, and writing about reading, K–8*. Heinemann.
- Poglinco, S. M., & Bach, A. J. (2004a). The heart of the matter: Coaching as a vehicle for professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(5), 398–402.
- Poglinco, S. M., & Bach, A. J. (2004b). *The heart of the matter: The coaching model in America's Choice Schools* (Research Report). Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Potrac, P., Jones, R. L., & Nelson, L. (2014). *Research methods in sports coaching*. Routledge.
- Pressley, M. (2006). *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Pressley, M., Allington, R. L., Wharton-McDonald, R., Block, C. C., & Morrow, L. M. (2006). *Learning to read: Lessons from exemplary first-grade classrooms*. Guilford Press.
- Pressley, M., Roehrig, A. D., Bogner, K., Raphael, L. M., & Dolezal, S. (2023). Balanced literacy instruction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 115(2), 197–210.
- Pressley, M., Wharton-McDonald, R., & Allington, R. (2006). The nature of effective first-grade literacy instruction. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(3), 287–324.
- Price, P. C., & Jackson, M. C. (2015). Writing proficiency and academic success: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 107(3), 771–784.
- Rallis, S. F., & Rossman, G. B. (2014). *The research journey: Introduction to inquiry*. Guilford Press.
- Reinking, D., McKenna, M. C., Labbo, L. D., & Kieffer, R. D. (2018). *Handbook of literacy and technology: Transformations in a post-typographic world*. Routledge.
- Richards, J., Conway, C., Roskvist, A., & Harvey, S. (2013). Adapting language to various contexts: The role of pragmatic skills in oral communication. *Pragmatics Quarterly*, 25(4), 289–306.
- Robinson, O. C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(1), 25–41.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford University Press.

- Rollnick, M., & Mavhunga, E. (2016a). The PCK summit consensus model and definition of pedagogical content knowledge. In *Repositioning pedagogical content knowledge in teachers' knowledge for teaching science* (pp. 9–24). Springer.
- Rollnick, M., & Mavhunga, E. (2016b). The place of subject matter knowledge in teacher education. In J. Loughran & M. L. Hamilton (Eds.), *International handbook of teacher education* (Vol. 2, pp. 273–297). Springer.
- Roskos, K. A., & Christie, J. F. (2001). Examining the play–literacy interface: A critical review and future directions. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 1(1), 59–89.
- Roskos, K., & Christie, J. (2007). *Play and literacy in early childhood: Research from multiple perspectives* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Roskos, K., Burstein, K., & You, B. (2011). Extending the conversation: The role of digital media in supporting complex discourse in early childhood classrooms. *Language Arts*, 89(1), 9–21.
- Rüfenacht, E., Woods, C., Agnello, S., Gold, R., Hummer, D., Land-Zandstra, A., & Sieber, V. (2021). Speaking skills in early childhood education: The role of oral language proficiency. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 93, 106–115.
- Ruiz McLafferty, R. (2015). Effective listening strategies in educational settings. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 10(1), 65–79.
- Salinger, T. (2006). Policy and practice affecting literacy coaching. In K. K. Mraz, B. A. Sailors, & C. B. Smith (Eds.), *Literacy coaching: Tools for instructional improvement* (pp. xx–xx). Teachers College Press.
- Salinger, T. (2006). Policy and practice: The great divide. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(5), 356–359.
- Salomon, G., Perkins, D. N., & Globerson, T. (1991). Partners in cognition: Extending human intelligence with intelligent technologies. *Educational Researcher*, 20(3), 2–9.
- Saracho, O. N. (2020). Contemporary perspectives on research in early childhood literacy. *Early Child Development and Care*, 190(2), 137–151.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Seidman, I. (2016). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Sénéchal, M., & Cornell, E. H. (1993). Vocabulary acquisition through shared reading experiences. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 28(4), 360–374.

- Sénéchal, M., & LeFevre, J. A. (2002). Parental involvement in the development of children's reading skills: A five-year longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 73(2), 445–460.
- Shamir, A., Korat, O., & Fellah, R. (2012). Promoting early literacy via interactive digital books. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 47(3), 305–326.
- Shanahan, T., Tochelli-Ward, S., & Rinker, T. W. (2019). Scaffolding in early literacy instruction: A guide for teachers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 47(2), 153–160.
- Shanklin, N. (2006). What are the characteristics of effective literacy coaching? *International Reading Association*. Retrieved from <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/>
- Shaywitz, S., & Shaywitz, B. (2008). The science of reading and dyslexia. *Journal of AAPOS*, 12(1), 12–17.
- Shin, J. K., & Crandall, J. A. (2018). *Teaching young children a second language*. University of Michigan Press.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2016). Vygotsky's stages and the development of written language: Sociocultural theory and implications for writing instruction. *English Journal*, 105(5), 38–43.
- Smith, J., & Williams, K. (2021). Parental engagement and children's literacy outcomes. *Journal of Educational Research*, 114(2), 119–134.
- Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 681–714.
- Snow, C. E., & Tabors, P. O. (2009). *Language development in the preschool years*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. National Academy Press.
- Storch, S. A., & Whitehurst, G. J. (2021). Oral language and code-related precursors to reading: Evidence from a longitudinal structural model. *Developmental Psychology*, 38(6), 934–947.
- Tahadoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology: How to choose a sampling technique for research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 5(2), 18–27.

- Taskiran, C., Gumusoglu, E., & Aydin, H. (2018). The impact of educational technology on early childhood literacy development: A systematic review. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 27(4), 479–494.
- Terrell, C. E., & Watson, L. R. (2018). Teacher professional development and its impact on early literacy: A meta-analysis. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 46(2), 171–183.
- Terrell, C., & Watson, M. (2018). Supporting literacy practices in early childhood settings: The role of embedded professional development. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 46(4), 439–449.
- Terrell, S. R., & Watson, R. T. (2018). Dispositions in teacher education: A look at social justice. *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development (IJTEPD)*, 1(1), 1–14.
- Terrell, S., & Watson, R. (2018). Teacher training and literacy development in early childhood education. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 6(3), 54–62.
- Tichá, R., et al. (2018). Addressing diverse learner needs in early childhood literacy education. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 33(4), 482–497.
- Tobin, J., & Arzubiaga, A. (2018). Involving families from diverse backgrounds in literacy activities: A case study. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 18(3), 423–442.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*. ASCD.
- Torgesen, J. K. (2002). The prevention of reading difficulties. *Journal of School Psychology*, 40(1), 7–26.
- Uddin, M. M., & Rahman, M. M. (2018). Barriers to improving literacy outcomes in Bangladesh: The role of teacher training and parental involvement. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*, 4(1), 1–9.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2021). *Ghana literacy rate*. UNESCO. <https://uis.unesco.org>
- UNESCO. (2005). *Aspects of literacy assessment: Topics and issues from the UNESCO expert meeting*. UNESCO Institute for Education.
- UNESCO. (2006). *Education for all global monitoring report 2006: Literacy for life*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Valtin, R., Bird, M., Brooks, G., Brozo, W., Clement, M., Ehmig, S. C., & Tamburlini, G. (2016). Preparing teachers for early literacy instruction: Essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(4), 431–435.
- Verenikina, I. (2003). Understanding scaffolding and the ZPD in educational research. In *AARE Conference Papers*. Australian Association for Research in Education. <https://www.aare.edu.au>

- Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(1), 80–91.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Waite-Stupiansky, S., & Pratt, M. E. (2006). *The early childhood curriculum: Inquiry learning through integration* (3rd ed.). Waveland Press.
- Wasik, B. A., & Bond, M. A. (2001). Beyond the pages of a book: Interactive book reading and language development in preschool classrooms. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93(2), 243–250.
- Wasik, B. A., & Hindman, A. H. (2011). Improving vocabulary and pre-literacy skills of at-risk preschoolers through teacher professional development. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103(2), 455–469.
- Wasik, B. A., & Hindman, A. H. (2011). The role of family literacy in the development of young children's language and literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 46(3), 310–333.
- Weisberg, D. S., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., Kittredge, A. K., & Klahr, D. (2013). Guided play: Principles and practices. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(6), 377–382.
- Whitehurst, G. J., & Lonigan, C. J. (1998). Child development and emergent literacy. *Child Development*, 69(3), 848–872.
- Whitehurst, G. J., & Lonigan, C. J. (2021). Emergent literacy: Development from prereaders to readers. In R. B. Ruddell & N. J. Unrau (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (6th ed., pp. 11–53). International Reading Association.
- Whitehurst, G. J., Epstein, J. N., Angell, A. L., Payne, A. C., Crone, D. A., & Fischel, J. E. (1988). Outcomes of an emergent literacy intervention in Head Start. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(3), 346–356.
- Whitehurst, G. J., Epstein, J. N., Angell, A. L., Payne, A. C., Crone, D. A., & Fischel, J. E. (1999). Outcomes of an emergent literacy intervention in Head Start. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91(2), 261–272.
- Williams, J., & Atkins, J. (2009). The role of scaffolding in the development of literacy skills in early childhood. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 37(1), 53–65.
- Wiseman, A. W. (2011). Read-alouds, silent reading, and listening comprehension: The impact of interactive read-alouds and listening comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 64(1), 30–37.
- Wood, D., & Terrell, C. (1998). *Emergent literacy and language development: Promoting learning in early childhood*. Routledge.
- Wright, T. S. (2019). Interactive read-alouds: The value of teacher read-alouds and think-alouds in today's classrooms. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 62(5), 529–537.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

- Yang, H. (2020). The role of repeated reading in English language learning: A meta-analysis. *System*, 91, Article 102265.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Zygouris-Coe, V. (2021). *Teaching discipline-specific literacies in grades 6–12: Preparing students for college, career, and workforce demands*. Routledge.



APPENDIX A
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that affect literacy skills development of early childhood learners in the Abesim circuit within the Sunyani Municipality. Your cooperation is appreciated in this study, which will enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the factors affecting literacy skills development among early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit in the Sunyani Municipality. Please be aware that participation is optional and that all information provided is for academic purposes and will be kept private. You have the option of not responding to any questions if doing so makes you feel uncomfortable. Thank you

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Age

Sex

Education qualification.....

Years of teaching.....

Duration of interview.....

SECTION B

Teaching methods and their influence on literacy skills development of learners

1. What teaching methods do you often use in your classroom during literacy lessons?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. How do you decide which teaching methods to use for literacy instruction?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. How do you believe these teaching methods impact on learners' ability to read and write?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. What challenges do you encounter when using different teaching methods to develop the literacy skills of your learners?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Teaching and learning resources influence literacy skills development

5. What specific teaching and learning resources do you use to promote literacy skills in your classroom?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. How do teaching and learning resources cater to the diverse needs and learning styles of young children in literacy development?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. How do you integrate technology-enhanced resources into your literacy instruction to support young children's learning?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Teacher training and professional development of teachers influence on literacy development of learners

8. What specific training or programmes have you attended that focused on literacy instruction?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. How have these programmes influenced the teaching methods you use in your classroom during literacy instructions?

.....

.....

.....

.....
.....

10. How do you incorporate the techniques and strategies learned from professional development sessions into your literacy teaching practices?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

11. What kind of ongoing professional support or resources do you receive to enhance your literacy instruction?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Physical school environment and its influence on literacy development

12. How do the physical conditions of your classroom, such as layout, lighting, and ventilation, impact your ability to teach literacy skills effectively?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

13. Can you provide specific examples of how these factors have influenced your students' learning experiences?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



14. How does this environment affect your students' engagement with and development of literacy skills?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

15. How does the availability of dedicated learning spaces, such as quiet reading areas influence the literacy development of your learners?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for your time



APPENDIX B

Observational checklists on the factors that affect literacy skills development of early childhood learners in the Abesim Circuit of the Sunyani Municipality

Teaching Methods

SN	QUESTIONS	YES	NO
1	Are there opportunities for learners to engage in group discussions		
2	Does the teacher model reading fluency and comprehension strategies during read-aloud sessions?		
3	Are learners actively engaged in phonics or word study activities (e.g., letter-sound recognition, decoding)?		
4	Does the teacher provide opportunities for guided reading and writing sessions tailored to learners' reading levels?		
5	Does the teacher use questioning techniques to encourage critical thinking and discussion about texts?		
6	Are learners encouraged to write regularly, including activities like journaling or composing stories?		
7	Does the teacher provide feedback and encouragement that promotes growth in literacy skills (e.g., praising effort, giving specific feedback)?		

Teaching and learning resources

SN	QUESTIONS	YES	NO
1	Are there variety and accessibility of books, including fiction, non-fiction, and culturally relevant literature?		
2	Are there interactive tools such as alphabet puzzles, word games, and educational apps utilized to engage children in literacy activities		
3	Were there the presence of visual aids like charts for letters, numbers, and phonics that support literacy instruction?		
4	Is the classroom environment print-rich with labels, signs, and children's writing displayed to promote literacy awareness?		
5	Are there literacy centers/stations, focusing on how they support different aspects of literacy development (e.g., phonics, sight words)?		
6	Do teachers conduct reading sessions, including strategies like shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading?		
7	Was there evidence of technology integration during literacy instruction?		

The Physical School Environment

SN	QUESTIONS	YES	NO
1	Is the physical environment safe and comfortable, where children feel secure to explore literacy activities?		
2	Are the classroom layout organized to provide easy access to literacy resources such as bookshelves, reading corners, and writing centers?		
3	Are there comfortable reading areas that encourage children to engage in independent and group reading activities?		
4	Are there quality of lighting and visibility in the classroom, ensuring it is conducive for reading and writing activities?		
5	Do the noise levels in the classroom and school environment facilitate conducive literacy activities?		
6	Are the outdoor learning spaces used for literacy activities that promote a diverse learning environment?		
7	Is the physical environment safe and comfortable to promote an atmosphere where children feel secure to explore literacy activities?		