UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

EXAMING THE ASSESSMENT PRACTICE AT THE KINDERGARTEN LEVEL IN THE MAMPONG MUNICIPALITY

SANDRA GYAMFUAH
200051886

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of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education (Early Childhood Education) in the University of Education, Winneba

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Sandra Gyamfuah, declares that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: …….

DATE:……..

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidance for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

SUPERVISOR'S NAME: S.O. Frimpong Ph.D

SIGNATURE: … ……

DATE: ……..

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents (Bin Adams and Grace Adams), children (Miguel and Dennis) and grandmother (Georgina Gyamfuah A. K. A. Tagor).

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the assessment practices used at kindergarten level in the Mampong municipality. The study employed a mixed method approach. Specifically, the explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used for the study. A total population of fifty (50) was used for the study. This consisted of 40 teachers and 10 head teachers. Simple random and census techniques were used to select the teacher respondents and head teachers respectively for the study. The kindergarten teachers solely employ the use of teacher made paper and pencil test in their assessment drive in the classroom. The teachers in this study were not using developmentally assessment practices in assessing children learning outcome. Teachers, therefore, did not have the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively assess the children learning outcomes appropriately. They seemed to be working within their comfort zone by relying on a traditional mode of assessment. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the inspectors in charge of the curriculum implementation and plans should be informed about the difficulties teachers are having in evaluation. Inspectors or circuit supervisors should take this issue into consideration when checking the plans, reports and related curriculum documents. The GES should give teachers in-service training to enable them to use different modes of assessment and evaluation techniques in order to assess children learning outcomes developmentally.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

Until the year 2000, pre-school education and for that matter early childhood care and development was seen as a less important aspect of educational systems in many developing countries including Ghana. The efforts of great philosophers and reformers including John Locke, Jean Piaget and Jack Jean Rousseau, has changed society's poor perception about children till today. In Ghana, early childhood care and development has been integrated into the formal educational system through new educational reforms. It has, therefore, become compulsory before proceeding to primary school. It has been noted that early childhood education is an important foundation in the life of children, particularly in today's dynamic society and in a world where more and more children in both the urban and rural areas are left unattended to (Said, Wallhager, Cungua, & Ngie, 2003).

Most communities in Ghana ensure that each child born is brought up according to its socially valued knowledge, skills, dispositions, attitudes and cultural beliefs. Today, this traditional set-up, its beliefs, customs, traditions and values have virtually broken down due to the prevailing dynamic social changes. Thus, many parents do not have sufficient, requisite knowledge, skills and proper attitudes for bringing up children. The importance of early childhood care and development, therefore, cannot be over emphasised. Successful early childhood care and stimulation programme, be it at home or public institution, may lay the foundation for creativity, independence, imagination, self-reliance and survival, as these are the cardinal ingredients for future lifelong learning (MOWAC, 2001). In view of this, in Ghana,

greater emphasis is placed on the philosophy that early childhood training is essentially a preparation for life. Since the introduction of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) in 2001, Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) has taken a new approach as the Ministry has formulated comprehensive policies and programmes for children at birth to age eight (8), as well as policies that cover parents and caregivers.

The early childhood professional is responsible for establishing and promoting standards of high-quality, and professional practice in early childhood programmes. Although the quality of early childhood programme may be affected by many factors, a majority determinant of programme quality is the extent to which knowledge of child development is applied in programme practices – the degree to which the programme is developmentally appropriate.

Questions about the nature of implementation and evaluation in early childhood education persist in the field today. Should the implementation and evaluation focus on children – on outcomes such as academic achievement, gains in intelligence, or attainment of specific goals and objectives (Seefeldt & Galper, 2002) One does not need to look very far to see how important testing and assessment have become crucial in education when implementing any curriculum and that of early childhood programmes. Assessment of children should be carried out for the primary purpose of providing adults with the information they need to plan more appropriately for children's ongoing development and should involve strategies that support rather than threaten children's feelings of self-esteem (Amponsah, 2004). Assessment of curriculum effectiveness is an integral aspect of early childhood programmes. Developmental goals and learning outcomes are set for children and these must be monitored to see how well they are being achieved (GES, 2016).

Today, however, there is an intensity surrounding the issues of assessment of young children. The perceived need to account for children's learning has led to 'high stakes testing'', and the most blatant misuse of assessment. Despite the negative effects associated with tracking practices, a single test score continues to be the basis on which young children are grouped, retained in grade, or assigned to special education classes (McGill–Franzen & Allenton, 2010). Children's score on standardised tests have been blatantly misused in the economic marketplace as well. Test scores are published by school and grade in local newspapers and reported in the media; real estate firms then include such test scores of children in specific school districts to promote the sale of homes (Seefeldt & Galper, 2002).

With such practices in assessment like these, the assessment of young children has gone well beyond the desire to know and understand the nature of children's growth, learning, and development. Thus, a few statistics, standard deviations, graphs and percentages can affect children for the rest of their lives, as well as the lives of others to ensure lifelong learning (Seefeldt & Galper, 2002). This system whereby educational programme quality now is being judged by children's test score is with us here in Ghana as there is a national league results being published in the national dailies at the Senior High School level to create an unnecessary and unhealthy competition among schools without taking into account other prevailing conditions in the various schools in Ghana. The big question to ask, therefore: ''Is education meant for life or for high stakes or test scores?''

Modern Ghanaian society and other societies the world over have placed great expectations on the early years of life. Whether a child comes from a wealthy or poorer family, the collective belief is that children's future academic achievements would ensure later success in life, irrespective of their physical, social and emotional

health. These have their roots in the early years of life, which prevails and serves to guide and direct assessment of young children. However, how many times do we, teachers, as the implementers of the curriculum, reflect on the mode of assessment carried out on our children's performance? How very sure could it be that we make a very well informed decision that caters for every child in our classrooms irrespective of the varying special needs? How best would one assess the performance of an armless child who cannot write owing to such a physical challenge in our Ghanaian early childhood or kindergarten context or setting? The above questions are necessary. The study therefore carried out to find answers to these aforementioned questions

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Assessment of young children must be very different from that of older students. Young children are learning how to communicate and are able to show what they know by doing, rather than by taking a pencil-and-paper test. They have not yet mastered the skills of reading and writing. Assessment of young children needs to include developmentally appropriate activities. It should not include a multiple-choice test, or other formal assessments. It should include assessing the child in natural settings doing the day-to-day activities they normally do (Kulieke, et al, 1990).

At this early childhood stage, assessment must be as informal as possible. Teachers must avoid the temptation of subjecting children's work to formal assessment. Informal techniques such as observation, conversation, and gallery work enable children to go around appreciating others' work (Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, 2004). Public outcry against poor-quality pre-schools and the subjecting of young children to inappropriate assessment practices has led to calls from diverse quarters, such as the media, child development professionals, and members of civil

society for redress in Ghana (Amponsah, 2004; Boakye, Adamu-Issah & Etse, 2001). There seems to be limited studies on the entire assessment practices on the Ghanaian early childhood or kindergarten curriculum and assessment.

Forgoing, one particular importance is the limited number of studies in the Ghanaian context and available local studies focused on the entire evaluation of Ghanaian Early Childhood Policy with a little attention given to the assessment practices in the early childhood or kindergarten curriculum implementation

Anane and Anhwere (2013) study on assessment in preschools in Ghana: issues and challenges and said the uses of teacher-made tests as a mode of assessing young children seem to be the norm in Ghana and sometimes some early childhood centres go to the extent of buying commercially prepared questions to be administered to young children between the ages of 3 and 8. This situation poses problems in achieving curriculum goals and likely to limit the appropriate developmental processes of the children in early years in school. All assessments that provide summaries of young learners' progress and achievements for those within and beyond the school require high credibility and therefore, need to have both high validity and high reliability. As part of planning, staff should build in opportunities to discuss and share assessment approaches (such as observations and checklists, anecdotal records, portfolios and inventories) and expectations with colleagues to ensure their appropriateness and soundness of the intended outcomes.

Asare, (2015), research on classroom assessment practices of kindergarten teacher in Ghana and the results of the study indicated that paper- and- pencil test mode of assessment used frequently by the teachers and teachers also appeared to be using a

particular mode of assessment just to meet the expectations of the parents and educational leaders without meeting the curriculum assessment prescription.

Besides, these studies adopted the use of philosophical approaches and methodologies other than the qualitative philosophical framework being employed in this study and a deep perusal of related literature for this study did not yield any known study on research on kindergarten teachers perspectives on assessment practices in the Mampong Municipality. From the foregoing the literature on kindergarten teachers on the assessment practices has been skewed towards three segments senior high schools, Basic school and places outside Mampong Municipality.

Accordingly, answers to questions such as what are the assessment practices used by the Kindergarten teachers' and how teachers perceive assessment practices in the kindergarten classroom in the Mampong Municipality are all elusive to the research. This study therefore was carried out to find answers to these aforementioned questions.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the assessment practices used at kindergarten levels in the Manpong municipality.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to find out:

1. Kindergarten teachers' level of knowledge about the appropriate assessment practices at the Kindergarten level in the Mampong Municipality.
2. The types of assessment they were engaged in at the Kindergarten level in the Mampong Municipality.

3. How the Kindergarten teachers were applying the assessment strategies in the Mampong Municipality

1.5 Research Questions

The central question in the current study is: What views do kindergarten teachers have about the various assessment practices regarding their capability to implement the kindergarten curriculum in Ghana?

The specific questions are:

1. What is the Kindergarten teachers' level of knowledge about the appropriate assessment practices at the Kindergarten level in Mampong Municipality?
2. What type of assessment are engaged in at the Kindergarten level in the Mampong Municipality?
3. How are the Kindergarten teachers applying the assessment strategies in the Mampong Municipality?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will help inform policy makers, educational leaders, curriculum planners (CRDD), private childcare providers and other stakeholders in early childhood education in making developmentally appropriate practices and pragmatic decisions to enhance kindergarten teachers' assessment practices.

The result of the study will also sensitise government, private childcare providers and other stakeholders in developing appropriate and sustainable continuous professional development on assessment practices for kindergarten teachers.

The findings of the study are a contribution to the literature on curriculum implementation and assessment practices on early childhood education and provide the basis for further research in the field especially in the Ghanaian context.

1.7. Delimitations of the Study

Early childhood education is too broad an area and multifaceted in nature. However, the study was limited to kindergarten teachers' views regarding the implementation of the kindergarten curriculum in line with their assessment practices in Ghana. The study was also confined to teachers working in some selected public and private kindergarten schools in the six selected regions of Ghana.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study was organised into five chapters. Chapter one dealt with the general introduction which includes the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations or scope of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter two reviewed related literature. The third chapter explored the method that was used to carry out the study. This includes the research design, research methods, population sample and sampling technique, the data collection instrument used for the study and data analysis technique. The fourth chapter analyzed and summarized the results of data collected for the study, interpreted and discussed findings using statistical packages and content analyses. Finally, the fifth chapter summarized and concluded the overall study and made recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

This chapter deals with the various key theoretical constructs which form the conceptual framework of this study. It begins with the various learning theories which support this study, the early childhood curriculum issues both international and Ghanaian, educational change, curriculum implementation and finally the emerging theories in early childhood assessment and ends with the empirical works that have been done on the study.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Vygotsky's theory of Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky's theory of learning has been highly influential in helping to explain the processes of learning in early childhood. In particular, his notion of the zone of proximal development has provided the foundation and potential for some of the most important recent initiatives in the assessment of individual children's learning (Lunt, 2000).

Vygotsky originally introduced the ZPD in the context of arguing against intelligence testing which he felt was seeking to assess something static and did not reflect the dynamic and ever-changing. This is equally supported by early learning and development through formative assessment. Adult-child collaboration within the ZPD is critical for effective teaching and learning interactions because it is within such interactions that the practitioner identifies how the child may be assisted in learning and what the child is capable of doing with appropriate support. The practitioner also

has the opportunity to assess the impact of such support on the child's progress. This approach to assessment effectively merges the teaching and assessment processes. It is commonly referred to as dynamic assessment.

Dynamic assessment is considered by Berk and Winsler (2000) as especially useful for making visible the learning potential of those children whose early experiences do not include experiences that prepare them for learning in group or institutional settings. The concept of scaffolding is often associated with ZPD. Practitioner's interactions with children often incorporate both teaching and assessment. It is critical that the practitioner is capable of engaging certain interactive skills in such situations. The co-construction of knowledge is supported and to be discussed next in this section.

The term, 'co-construction', has appeared prominently in influential early childhood publications, although it was implicit in the last century in the work of Dewey who placed premium on the ways in which children construct their learning by actively engaging in, and shaping, their experiences and environments. For instance, Jordan (2004) explains the term *scaffolding* and links it with *co-construction*. He explains that the specific pattern of interaction that characterised early accounts of scaffolding. Co-construction refers to adults and children making meaning and knowledge together (MacNaughton & Williams, 2004). Co-construction recognises the child's expertise and in order to understand this, the practitioner needs to interact with the child and become aware of the child's thoughts and thereby to establish inter-subjectivity.

Contemporary research (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002) also enlightened the process of co-construction and found it to be a key factor in terms of promoting children's learning. Importantly, a co-construction perspective emphasises

understanding and meaning on the part of the child and adult, rather than the acquisition of facts by the child. Jordan (2004) claims that the two concepts, scaffolding and co-construction, have different applicability depending on whether the goal of the educator is the exploration of thinking or the achievement of pre-specified learning goals. Co-construction of meaning and knowledge is central to teaching, learning and assessment and it occurs when both the child and the educator engage together in achieving mutual understanding.

Activity theory, as developmental aspects of Vygotsky's work, is also being highlighted as a theoretical construct that could be helpful in explaining the complexity of learning–related issues in early childhood. Fleer et al (2004) also pointed out activity theory, in common with Rogoff's discussion of socio-cultural theory, which focuses on the study of the complexity of human behaviour in social groups and in specific contexts. The theory is pivoted on the understanding that ''*the contextual features of a task contribute to ... performance on that task'' (p.178)*. In addition, children employ tools such as language, a particular resource to mediate knowledge in interactions with others. However, the cultural features of the context in which they use these tools affect and influence the way activities are performed and understood.

With the Waldorf curriculum, standardized tests that are used to assess children's educational progress are problematic because they generally present an incomplete picture of student's abilities. On the other hand, children's products or three dimensional paradigms help adults to recognize emotional, physical, cognitive development of young children. Owing to this reason, Waldorf teachers assess the development of young children in many ways to understand their balanced whole development. Consequently, the portfolio method (teachers observe, describe and

characterize a child's school performance) is found to be more appropriate for Waldorf curriculum's assessment (Petrash, 2002).

Project approach happened to be at the centre of progressive education in the 1960s and 1980s. In today's early childhood education system, it is being used by many schools as a form of curriculum. Projects can be defined as an in depth investigation of a topic which is undertaken with a small group of learners or as a whole class. A main focus of the project work is finding answers for the questions which are proposed by the teacher, children or both the teacher and the children (Helm & Katz, 2001).

With this project approach, a topic, learning process and results are parts of a whole and therefore indispensable. Moreover, children focus on many skills of themselves in the form of selecting a topic, investigating questions, characterizing findings and contributing to others (Schuler, 2000). In view of this reason, active learning of children should be fostered through helping them to use their own questions and directions used as steps for learning. Therefore, in order to be able to understand the functions of the objects, an individual should have hands on experiences with various objects (Feng, 1989).

Assessment in project approach is done through informal assessment techniques. In detail, individual portfolios and observations are done by the teachers through the use of developmental checklists and anecdotal notes. Children's self-reflections based on understandings of their own and narratives of learning experiences of whole class, individual or small groups are the major forms of assessment methods used in project approach classes (Helm & Katz, 2001).

The Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) is one of the 12 Divisions of the Ghana Education Service (GES). It was established on 1st

September, 1967 at Saltpond and later moved to the premises of the Ministry of Education in Accra. Currently, there are 12 professional members of staff and six support staff (MOEYS, 2007).

Its vision is to be an efficient Division equipped with resources for the development of Curriculum and Instructional materials to make education delivery relevant to the human resource needs of the nation. It has the mission to manage and implement the Curriculum Policy of the Ministry of Education (MOEYS) towards the attainment of the educational objectives and development goals of the nation.

FCUBE - Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education is to make sure that all children of school going age have Basic Education.

The public kindergartens in Ghana which are under the authority of the State do not rely on any of the well-known kindergarten curriculum models on the international stage discussed earlier. Ghana's kindergarten curriculum can therefore be seen as eclectic in nature, since it tries to combine the good aspects of almost all the known models with much emphasis on play based, child-centred and or activity based oriented. However, there are a lot of privately owned kindergartens in Ghana which claim to be operating under the Montessori approach, meanwhile they only adopt the name Montessori, but in reality there is nothing ''Montessori'' about those schools in practice. This is because they lack those known Montessori materials, facilities and even the required technical and human resource to implement the Montessori model.

Here in Ghana, teachers have a very nominal representation in the development of the curriculum. The government declared the implementation of the new curriculum in 2007 without anticipating the complexities in the process of textbooks development and production (Ghanaian Times, June 20, 2008). One of the major challenges is the

production of textbooks. Due to unavailability of textbooks, implementation of the curriculum remains unattainable.

Curriculum is different from, but closely linked to, learning theories and pedagogies (Kagan & Kauerz, 2012). Behaviourist theories of child development led to highly didactic models of direct instruction in which teachers typically present discrete facts to the entire class of children in whole groups. Maturationist theories of child development advanced pedagogy wherein children are expected to develop at their own pacing and advanced pedagogy and curricula that enable children to direct their own learning outcomes. Constructivist theories of child development advanced pedagogy wherein children are active partners with their socio-cultural environment, including teachers and peers.

2.1.2 Children as Co-Constructors of Knowledge

It appears that, in recent times, the term, 'co-construction', has appeared prominently in influential early childhood publications, although it was implicit in the last century in the work of Dewey who placed premium on the ways in which children construct their learning by actively engaging in, and shaping, their experiences and environments. For instance, Jordan (2004) explains the term *scaffolding* and links it with *co-construction*. He explains that the specific pattern of interaction that characterised early accounts of scaffolding, generally maintained the power and control with the adult. They argue that the term, co-construction, emphasises the child as a powerful player in his/her own learning. An example of how this process of co-construction works in practice is illustrated in the discussion of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. Co-construction refers to adults and children making meaning and knowledge together (MacNaughton & Williams, 2004). Co-

construction recognises the child's expertise and in order to understand this, the practitioner needs to interact with the child and become aware of the child's thoughts and thereby to establish inter-subjectivity.

Contemporary research (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002) also enlightened the process of co-construction and found it to be a key factor in terms of promoting children's learning. Importantly, a co-construction perspective emphasises understanding and meaning on the part of the child and adult, rather than the acquisition of facts by the child. Jordan (2004) claims that the two concepts, scaffolding and co-construction, have different applicability depending on whether the goal of the educator is the exploration of thinking or the achievement of pre-specified learning goals. Co-construction of meaning and knowledge is central to teaching, learning and assessment and it occurs when both the child and the educator engage together in achieving mutual understanding.

2.1.3 Activity Theory

Activity theory, as developmental aspects of Vygotsky's work (Engerstrom *et al*., 1999), is also being highlighted as a theoretical construct that could be helpful in explaining the complexity of learning–related issues in early childhood. Fleer et al (2004) also pointed out activity theory, in common with Rogoff's discussion of socio-cultural theory, which focuses on the study of the complexity of human behaviour in social groups and in specific contexts. The theory is pivoted on the understanding that ''*the contextual features of a task contribute to … performance on that task'' (p.178)*. In addition, children employ tools such as language, a particular resource to mediate knowledge in interactions with others. However, the cultural features of the context in

which they use these tools affect and influence the way activities are performed and understood.

The curriculum is the teacher's choice of what knowledge and skills are important and also developmentally appropriate for a particular group of children (Bredekamp, 2009). Curriculum may be viewed as an outline of knowledge and skills to be learned rather than as a recipe for how they must be taught (Mayesky, 2012). Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1995) provide an all-inclusive definition: curriculum is a framework that delineates the content that children are to learn, the process through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occurs. Curriculum therefore must be relevant to the child at all times.

The researcher also sees early childhood curriculum as encompassing all the learning experiences both planned and unplanned that form part of the daily schedules and routines a child goes through under the auspices of an early childhood programme with both the early childhood educator and the child being an integral part of a stimulating, facilitating, enabling and inviting learning environment with the appropriate use of all the child's senses. Kelly (1992) identifies the interrelating of curriculum and assessment as ''… *a highly complex and sophisticated matter'' (p.16)*. However, this researcher opines that curriculum, instruction, assessment and supervision are mutually interactive and as such a teacher cannot underestimate the relevance of each one of them.

Glatthorn et al. (2006) opined that these seven types of curricula need the attention of the principal: the recommended curriculum; the taught curriculum; the supported curriculum; the assessed curriculum; the learned curriculum and the hidden curriculum.

The recommended curriculum is that which is recommended by scholars and professional organizations. The best source for the recommendations of professional organizations is the written curriculum (Kendall & Marzano, 1997). The written curriculum, as the term is used here, is the curriculum that appears in state and locally produced documents, such as state standards, district scope and sequence charts, district curriculum guides, teachers' planning documents, and curriculum units.

This is the unintended curriculum. It defines what students learn from the physical environment, the policies, and the procedures of the school. Here is an example. Each week, teachers in an elementary school devote minutes to reading and minutes to art. Numerous researches suggest there are varying patterns of influence among the several types of curriculum. The recommended curriculum seems to have little influence on the written, although districts seem to be increasingly concerned with state standards, especially if they are accompanied by state tests. Teachers are likely much more influenced by the assessed curriculum, especially if they are held accountable for students' results. Students are similarly sensitive to the assessed curriculum as evidenced in the standard student question, "is this going to be on the test?'' (Glatthorn et al., 2006).

Teachers are perhaps most sensitive to the learned curriculum, making their decisions on the basis of students' needs, as they perceive them, and students' responses to the taught curriculum. Whereas conventional wisdom holds that teachers are textbook driven, the research suggests that the textbook is only one of several sources that the teacher consults in planning for instruction (Brown, 1988).

To be able to understand the foundations of early childhood curriculum, looking at the historical process gives the opportunity to see how young children and

their way of learning is perceived by the past generations based on religious, ethnic, political and economic pressures of the times (Jackman, 2013). For example, Rousseau, who is famous with his book "Emile", believed in the idea of unfolding. For him "unfolding" can occur as a result of development according to children's innate timetables (Morrison, 2008; p.58). In fact, such an approach is used now as teachers choose their activities according to children's developmental levels.

Much the same way, Pestalozzi believed that children learn through their senses and through this they can achieve their natural potential. "Whole person" observation and sympathetic approach of teachers were among the significant principles that he contributed to early childhood education (Clough et al., 2008, p.28).

Froebel, known as the father of kindergarten, is another influential figure in early childhood curriculum (Gordon & Browne, 2004, 2011). Froebel used planned curriculum which included gifts and occupations to educate children. Today, it is the same with the toys we use when we educate children. The concepts of unfolding and learning through play are among the biggest contributions of Froebel to early childhood curriculum models (Morrison, 2000, 2001; Morrison, 2007, 2008).

For the above mentioned reasons, curriculum in early childhood education is structurally and conceptually different from all other levels of education. This is partly so since children are developing at such a rapid rate during the early years, and because what children are capable of learning and doing is so dependent on their development, curriculum decisions regarding young children's education must take into account each individual's developmental level (Spodek & Saracco, 1994). In view of these, there is a variety in early childhood curriculum models which includes Thematic or webbing curriculum, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Head Start, Emergent Curriculum approaches and High Scope (Highscope, 2009).

2.1.4. Montessori Curriculum Model and Assessment

Montessori programmes are based on Dr. Maria Montessori's original ideas, materials, and methods, which were designed to meet the needs of impoverished children in Italy at the time. The Montessori Method is the second curriculum model created expressly for early education (Goffin, 2001). (The first model was created by Friedrich Froebel in Germany, who began the kindergarten, or 'garden for children", in the mid – 1800s).

According to Dr. Montessori's philosophy, children learn best in a child-sized environment that is stimulating and inviting for their *absorbent minds* – an environment that offers beauty and order. The arrangement of the room offers low open shelves holding many carefully arranged materials (Jackman, 2012). The child, therefore, chooses and decides an activity to carry-out which offers meaning and understanding to him or her. Montessori, therefore, viewed her schools as laboratories to study how children learn best (Lillard, 2005). In addition, there are times when carefully sequenced and structured materials (sensory materials) are introduced by the teacher to the child (Wortham, 2006). The Montessori curriculum is divided into motor education, sensory education, and language and intellectual education (Wortham, 2006, 2007, 2008).

Schute (2002) noted that: ''Many of {Montessori's} once radical ideas – including the notions that children learn through hands- on activity, that the preschool years are time of critical brain development, and that parents should be partners in their children's education- are now accepted wisdom".

Montessori curriculum model, which emerged in the early 20th Century, divides education into three main parts: motor, sensory, and language or intellectual education. The classroom is a prepared environment with materials that are carefully

sequenced and structured. Materials are introduced by the teacher and also children can select materials freely during their independent work projects. One of the major principles of the curriculum model aims to promote self- discipline in children. Montessori education's other key aspect is its use of hands. Throughout the day, children use their hands and this supports their sensory development (Blount, 2007; Wortham, 2006).

In Montessori schools, assessment is done through teacher observations, anecdotal records, and parent-teacher conference forms. The results of Roemer's study (as cited in Dunn, 2000) indicated that besides those methods, 90% of Montessori schools of her sample used some form of standardized tests. In the Montessori early childhood education settings, anecdotal records, informal conferences with students, observation of students, one-to-one interviews with students, checklists of lessons, demonstration of skill, mastery and standardized achievement tests are used to assess each child's development areas independently (Dunn, 2000).

Unfortunately, here in Ghana, this Montessori Method is seriously being misapplied as there is nothing 'Montessori'' about the numerous kindergartens which claim to offer Montessori education. This statement is premised on the fact that majority of these Montessori schools in Ghana, if even not all, are logistically constrained, when it comes to the use of those prescribed Montessori learning materials. The teachers and even the educational leaders providing that type of education themselves are suspect without any formal training in the Montessori approach.

2.1.5. Waldorf Curriculum Model and Assessment

The first Waldorf schools were founded in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919 (Ashley, 2008). The major goal of Waldorf schools was to assist young children to adjust to both physical and spiritual facts of their existence and use them in the best way possible. In the Waldorf curriculum, a teacher is seen as a gardener of the child's soul and cultivator of environment (Ogletree, 1996). To Rudolf Steiner, who is the founder of Waldorf education, a human being is composed of three being which are spirit, soul and body. The capacities of these three mechanisms are unfolded in early childhood, middle childhood and adulthood. In the early childhood years, which are considered as from birth to the age of seven, the educational focus of Waldorf model is on play, bodily intelligence and oral language (Schimitt-Stegmann, 1997). In this sense, imitation is the useful aspect of life which will assist in the identification of oneself with the environment with the help of active will. Consequently, the environment of the child ought to provide an opportunity to imitate in a meaningful way. With the Waldorf curriculum, standardized tests that are used to assess children's educational progress are problematic because they generally present an incomplete picture of student's abilities. On the other hand, children's products or three dimensional paradigms help adults to recognize emotional, physical, cognitive development of young children. Owing to this reason, Waldorf teachers assess the development of young children in many ways to understand their balanced whole development. Consequently, the portfolio method (teachers observe, describe and characterize a child's school performance) is found to be more appropriate for Waldorf curriculum's assessment (Petrash, 2002).

2.1.6. Project Approach Curriculum Model and Assessment

Project approach happened to be at the centre of progressive education in the 1960s and 1980s. In today's early childhood education system, it is being used by many schools as a form of curriculum. Projects can be defined as an in depth investigation of a topic which is undertaken with a small group of learners or as a whole class. A main focus of the project work is finding answers for the questions which are proposed by the teacher, children or both the teacher and the children (Helm & Katz, 2001).

With this project approach, a topic, learning process and results are parts of a whole and therefore indispensable. Moreover, children focus on many skills of themselves in the form of selecting a topic, investigating questions, characterizing findings and contributing to others (Schuler, 2000). In view of this reason, active learning of children should be fostered through helping them to use their own questions and directions used as steps for learning. Therefore, in order to be able to understand the functions of the objects, an individual should have hands on experiences with various objects (Feng, 1989).

Assessment in project approach is done through informal assessment techniques. In detail, individual portfolios and observations are done by the teachers through the use of developmental checklists and anecdotal notes. Children's self-reflections based on understandings of their own and narratives of learning experiences of whole class, individual or small groups are the major forms of assessment methods used in project approach classes (Helm & Katz, 2001).

2.2. Curriculum Development Issues in Ghana

The Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) is one of the 12 Divisions of the Ghana Education Service (GES). It was established on 1st September, 1967 at Saltpond and later moved to the premises of the Ministry of Education in Accra. Currently, there are 12 professional members of staff and six support staff (MOEYS, 2007).

Its vision is to be an efficient Division equipped with resources for the development of Curriculum and Instructional materials to make education delivery relevant to the human resource needs of the nation. It has the mission to manage and implement the Curriculum Policy of the Ministry of Education (MOEYS) towards the attainment of the educational objectives and development goals of the nation.

FCUBE - Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education is to make sure that all children of school going age have Basic Education.

- Formalizing Kindergarten – All primary schools should have K. Gs attached to them. This is to make sure all children of school going age have access to education.
- Policy on the use of Ghanaian Language from K.G to Lower Primary. The child learns in his/her mother tongue to facilitate learning.
- Linkages – Curriculum has been reviewed to ensure linkages from K.G to Senior High School to ensure smooth transition from one level to the other. Knowledge, Skills, Competencies have been scoped and sequenced to ensure life- long learning (MOEYS, 2007).

The public kindergartens in Ghana which are under the authority of the State do not rely on any of the well-known kindergarten curriculum models on the international stage discussed earlier. Ghana's kindergarten curriculum can therefore

be seen as eclectic in nature, since it tries to combine the good aspects of almost all the known models with much emphasis on play based, child-centred and or activity based oriented. However, there are a lot of privately owned kindergartens in Ghana which claim to be operating under the Montessori approach, meanwhile they only adopt the name Montessori, but in reality there is nothing ‘‘Montessori’’ about those schools in practice. This is because they lack those known Montessori materials, facilities and even the required technical and human resource to implement the Montessori model.

Here in Ghana, teachers have a very nominal representation in the development of the curriculum. The government declared the implementation of the new curriculum in 2007 without anticipating the complexities in the process of textbooks development and production (Ghanaian Times, June 20, 2008). One of the major challenges is the production of textbooks. Due to unavailability of textbooks, implementation of the curriculum remains a far cry. One of the reasons why educational policies could not be effectively implemented was a failure to understand the objectives by the curriculum planners. Teachers and curriculum planners, therefore, need to work together to share practical experience to address challenges of curriculum development (Memon, 1999).

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Defining a Ghanaian Pedagogy for Kindergarten

Ghanaian children at play often demonstrate enormous energy, a sense of joy and well-being and an enviable set of skills and attitudes (GOG, 1998, 2004). They are curious, creative and resourceful explorers inventing games by collaborating with their friends and making toys from anything they find (GES, 2012). They concentrate

for lengthy periods of time when interested and actively engaged. It is such qualities as these that should be nurtured and developed in an effective kindergarten education which includes but goes far beyond the teaching of colours, shapes, numbers and letters (MOE, 1999, 2002, 2012).

Despite the great strides Ghana has made in recognizing the value and importance of early years' education, the delivery of kindergarten education remains entrenched in a rote learning style which is neither child-centered nor activity-based (GES, 2012). Teacher pedagogical practice typically shows a lack of understanding as to how children should learn and how teachers should teach (MOE, 2012). The pioneering work of Vygotsky, Piaget, Montessori, Froebel and many others have challenged us to think beyond teaching to learning and beyond learning to the learner. In order to define and deliver a new Ghanaian pedagogy for kindergarten, GES management and teachers should look to learning and learner centered approach (MOE, 2012).

Every Ghanaian child is a unique individual who develops and learns in diverse ways and at various rates in different competencies. Effective teachers have a sound understanding of child development and know that children's progress through different developmental stages and milestones are affected by many factors including health, the home environment, early attachment, parental engagement and so on. It is essential to reconsider the pedagogical approach regarding the delivery of the KG curriculum, if child-centredness is to be embraced (GES, 2012). In addition to defining 'what' is to be taught, the questions 'why' 'when' and 'how' that teaching happens must also be answered. This should help establish a clear rationale for the move from the prevalent, passive, rote learning model of delivery to an active, experiential style (GES, 2012).

Siraj-Blatchfird et al. (2002) posit that research into effective pedagogy in early years suggests that children learn best through a balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated learning experiences.

> *''The new pedagogy also has implications for instruction at the primary school level. Children experiencing active teaching and learning techniques in KG may not perform well in primary school if they simply face rote learning methods. In order to maintain and even enhance the communication, creative thinking, reasoning and problem solving skills that they acquired in KG, the whole Ghanaian education system needs to work towards fostering and building upon these initial skills in order to foster a future generation of Ghanaian citizens who can actively participate in transforming the world in which we live'' (GES, 2012).*

Any curriculum may call for a change in teacher behaviour and understanding. For instance, teachers were required to undergo a role change and become facilitators of learning during the 2007 Ghana Educational Reform. The notion of a teacher as "the" authority is challenged now (MOE, 2012). Teachers the world-over are now encouraged to develop learner-centred practices based on constructivist view of education in which learners take responsibility for their own learning by construction meaning and understanding of concepts under study.

The complexity of change is mentioned by various authors (Fullan, 2003). The nature of change is multidimensional and takes place in a particular context that includes political, social, economic and moral aspects. The organisations, individuals involved and particular contexts are just a few of the mitigating factors in any change effort. Fullan (2001: p.39) identifies these as ''new or revised materials, new teaching approaches, and alteration of beliefs.''

The multidimensional nature of change should be considered. Apart from the subjective and objective aspects of change, change also consists of a number of activities. Berman (1981: p.261) contends that ''the educational change process

consists of a trio of processes that are loosely connected rather than being linked in a consecutive manner.'' He identifies mobilization, implementation, and institutionalisation as the three processes of educational change. Carl (2002) emphasises the process of design, dissemination, implementation and evaluation. Taylor (2000: p.4) explains the implementation process as including ''macro implementation and micro-implementation.''

Fullan, (2001) explains implementation consists of the process of putting into practice an idea, programme, or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change. In his view, ''the change may be externally imposed or voluntarily sought; explicitly defined in detail in advance or developed and adapted incrementally through use; designed to be used uniformly or deliberately planned so that users can make modifications according to their perceptions of the needs of the situation''.

Human beings are social animals who make up a school and by so doing change is inevitable. Curriculum implementation is the process of putting a change into practice (Fullan, 2001). Fullan therefore distinguishes curriculum implementation from adoption by stating that the latter is the decision to use a new curriculum, but the former focuses on the extent to which actual change in practice occurs and those factors which influence the extent of change. It is to be assumed, therefore, that the link between the other two stages, the amount and quality of change which occurs or fails to occur at the implementation stage greatly affects what outcomes are achieved in any given change effort. Rogers (1993) sees implementation in three stages: the re-invention, clarification and routinization. With this possible pitfall in mind, the school would make sure that effective processes of implementation are carried out to the latter effectively.

It is not uncommon to find policies, programmes and projects developed by their makers being put into practice. For a successful delivery of every developed curriculum, there is the need to implement it thoroughly in all the target areas for its coverage. Curriculum implementation is often seen as the process of putting a change into practice. The process ranges from the use of formative evaluation devices such as try-out and field trial to the actual large scale and final open use of the programme (Lewy, 1977). Thus, implementation can be on piecemeal basis so that in a situation where the programme is failing, it can quickly be revised and reinforced or discarded to avoid the commitment of huge amount of resources into a wasteful venture.

There could be several dissemination strategies used to smoothen the implementation process. They comprise translocation, communication, animation and re-education. Three main approaches to curriculum implementation would also be employed in this section, thus: fidelity, mutual adaptation and enactment. As noted by Snyder, et.al. (1992), depending on the system of education, an approach is adopted to implement educational programmes.

Much as some scholars in curriculum posit that no consensus exists on what exactly constitutes fidelity of implementation, Cobbold (1999) sees fidelity as how "faithfully" teachers put the new or innovated curriculum into practical use in accordance with the programme mandates or dictates. Fidelity is the extent to which curriculum is delivered in accordance with its tested design. Implementing a programme with fidelity implies delivering the programme as it was implemented in the research that provided evidence of effectiveness.

To Snyder et al. (1992) "the desired outcome of curricular change is fidelity to the original plan" (p. 404) confirms the assertion. In fidelity approach, planning is often separate and distinct from implementation. Curriculum knowledge is primarily

created outside the classroom by experts who design and develop the curriculum innovation (Snyder et al., 1992). Teachers are always expected to implement the curriculum as planned with minimum degree of deviation. It is important to note that fidelity is not absolute but a matter of degree. It is quite right to say that fidelity of implementation is often used to deliver programmes in centralised educational systems such as that of Ghana.

If a programme is not delivered as designed, its outcome (i.e. impact on students) is likely to be changed, diminished, or eliminated outright (Snyder et al., 1992). This is the reason why fidelity aims at identifying the conditions under which the programme works best or approximates, at least, what was intended. On the other hand, fidelity fails to recognize that there are some unplanned learning outcomes that are desirable. Such learning outcomes may lack any prior pre-specification but result in the learning process. As Taba (1962) puts it "A limited concept of school learning limits the idea of what is expected of it" (p. 158). This often leads to parochial view of education. Bondi and Wiles (198, p. 114) noted that "… [*Fidelity*] is not yet sophisticated enough to serve as an absolute guide to practice" (emphasise mine). Fidelity is a matter of degree rather than an absolute phenomenon. Achieving the exact outcomes of the programme is therefore not possible. The fact that sympathizers of the approach tolerated some margin of deviation of the outcomes (Fullan, 1991) of a programme does not mean that it should not be criticized for its failure to attain one hundred percent (100%) fidelity.

Teachers, according to this perspective, are considered as the implementers of the change (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The curriculum cannot achieve its aims or be fairly evaluated unless the teacher implements it in a manner in which it was intended. Teachers' role in the process is that of a consumer who makes use of the wisdom of

programme developers. The result of standardisation in implementation is the ease with which evaluation can be done to see how different sites of programme implementation compare. Lewy (1977) opines that "where uniformity of conditions does not exist, interpretation of result is very difficult" (p.11) and it therefore becomes pointless to compare results from different sites of programme implementation as this has often been the constant troubles in the Ghanaian educational system where conditions are not the same in all schools.

According to Barnes (2005) "Teachers acknowledge the existence of programmes, policy, directives, school regulations, and recommendations but in practice they often feign what needs to be done to comply with requirements". A centrally developed curriculum may lend itself to manipulation by implementers. Its implementation may be flexible to the extent that teachers can alter its elements to suit their peculiar school or classroom situation. Teachers have the liberty to adapt the change to obtain the highest possible result. This approach of curriculum implementation is referred to as adaptation. Adaptation is operational in the flexible school system.

Due to the lack of uniformity in conditions across schools, Paris (1989) explains "…to teachers, the skills, talents and knowledge necessary to enact a curriculum were context specific …" (p.13). Curriculum adaptation is not exclusive to only a geographical area but it can be done to meet individual students with intellectual disability needs (Lee et al., 2006). Teachers achieve maximum curriculum returns by manipulating the conventional curriculum to meet their local needs. What the curriculum students actually receive is influenced by what teachers believe, by what peers believe and do, and by other more elusive cultural issues (Sergiovanni, 1996; Wallace, 1998 cited in Barnes, 2005). In order to meet the diversity in culture,

there is need for "adaptations" of the regular curriculum. The effects of this exercise may involve organisational modifications in the goals and contents, in the methodologies, in the didactical organisation, in the temporality, and in the evaluation philosophy and strategies. The aim is to make it possible to meet everyone's educational needs in the creation of knowledge.

According to Marsh and Willis (2003) "Curriculum alignment is an attempt to ensure maximum congruence between planned curriculum and the enacted curriculum through extensive testing of what is taught". Basically, it is students who are tested, yet teachers' performance is measured indirectly in terms of how well students perform in standardised tests. Although teachers are not the sole determinants of students' success or failure, they play a key role in ensuring that the right learnable bits are imparted. Such experiences must necessarily stem from the planned curriculum. Myers and Myers (1995) have discussed that incentives for teachers are tied to school-wide student performance. Teachers are rewarded according to how they perform in aiding students pass examinations. Thus, teachers' salaries are adjusted as they put up a remarkable performance especially in some private schools here in Ghana. Continuous monitoring of teachers to ensure that they instruct students based on the plan will help increase the degree of fidelity of implementation.

Curriculum alignment also means ensuring that the material taught in the school matches the standards and assessments set by the region or district for specific grade levels. It is a way of "mapping" the curriculum onto the standards to be sure that the school is teaching the content that is expected. In some states or regions that often employ the use of tests to assess students' mastery, schools may also align their curriculum with the content of the tests to ensure that students have studied the required content before taking the tests.

Emerging approaches to assessment take account of developments in theories about learning and about human development. Performance assessment is currently seen as an approach that is particularly appropriate for assessing many aspects of early learning and development (Bowman *et al.*, 2001). Meisels (1999) describes performance assessment as assessments that are founded on the notion that learning and development can only be assessed over time and in interactions with materials, objects and other people. In this approach to assessment, the expectation is that tasks must be practical, realistic and challenging for children (Torrance, 2001). Performance assessment implies observation of children as they undertake a number of routine tasks in early learning settings. According to Meisels (1999) these should meet a number of criteria:

- tasks should bring together various skills that children display and demonstrate during the course of interactions
- children should be assisted to perform to the very best of their ability
- tasks should be guided by developmental standards
- tasks should engage children in reflection about their work and in articulating their ideas about their learning (p.58).

Authentic assessment is a type of performance assessment. It is described as ‘‘*compatible with the prevailing philosophy that emphasises whole child development’’* (Puckett & Black, 2000, p.7). This philosophy explains development across a range of domains (for example social, moral, emotional, language and cognitive). It also recognises the diversity of early learning and the role of environmental factors in shaping that learning. From an authentic assessment perspective, curriculum and assessment are interwoven and emphasise relevant and meaningful experiences.

Assessment focuses on what children do, and on how they do it in the context of meaningful tasks. Authentic assessment has a number of identifiable features (Puckett & Black, 2000), including the following:

- an emphasis on emerging development
- a focus on the young child's individual strengths and weaknesses
- it is based on principles of child growth and development
- emanates from logical, meaningful, relevant and applicable curricula
- it is performance based
- recognises different intelligence and learning styles
- it is reflective and analytic
- it is on-going and occurs in many contexts
- it is collaborative with learners, parents and others involved in children's learning
- it is interwoven with teaching (p.7).

Authentic assessment is compatible with a whole child perspective on learning.

Gardner (1999) describes how children are surveyed in a variety of intellectual domains (movement, language, Mathematics, Science, social, Visual Art and Music) and in each case the approach used is one where children are exposed to experiences in the particular domain of interest and then an observation is made of how the child becomes involved in that domain. Specific tasks and measures that are engaging to children, for example, mathematical games in the case of Mathematics, are introduced in the course of natural classroom activity and children are assessed using these.

It claims to embed assessment in meaningful real world activities; to blur the lines between curriculum and assessment; to attend to the stylistic dimensions of

performance; to use measures that are intelligence-fair; and to avoid using language or logic as assessment vehicles (Krechevsky, 1998). Assessing children's emotional well-being is also part of a holistic approach to assessment.

Laevers (2000) argues that well-being and involvement of children are keys to enabling them to enter into what he terms ''*a flow state. This he defines as a manifest feeling of satisfaction and a stream of energy felt throughout the body… Young children usually find it in play'' (p.24-5)*. This in turn is important, from Laevers perspective, because it enables learning that affects deep structures on which competencies and dispositions are based. Laevers' approach to pre-school education is known as *Experiential Education* (Laevers, 1994), the essence of which is a focus on the child's experiences in the educational setting. Practitioners using this model carry out systematic observation of children using well-being and involvement scales at least three times a year. As with emotional competence, assessing self-concept and children's sociability is also important and yet challenging (Mould & Hall, 1998). .

Rogoff (1990, 1998) building on the work of Vygotsky, emphasised the social nature of cognitive development. From a socio-cultural perspective then, the ways in which children operate in social contexts is clearly important for their learning and development and also has implications for assessment of learning and development. Broadhead's (2004) work explicates the links between intellectual development, the growth of language and the emotional well-being of children. Her Social Play Continuum offers the practitioner an observation tool; a tool for assessing children's social development; and a means of developing children's sociability. The continuum focuses on children's play activity and their language across the age range three to six years and it illustrates the increasingly complex ways in which children are able to operate socially and co-operatively.

Drummond (2000) describes how Issacs put her rich observational data to excellent use in drawing it together to construct *a coherent account of the development of children's intellectual and emotional powers.''*

Practitioners who have close personal relationships with babies, toddlers and young children are the people best placed to make observations of their learning. Goldschmied and Jackson (2004) describe how such relationships provide the context within which children are most likely to seek appropriate support from adults and so progress their learning and development. It is also within the context of close relationships that children are most likely to make their feelings known and thus make it easier to assess their well-being. By knowing individual children very well, practitioners are then well placed to read and understand the messages that babies, toddlers and young children express through their body language and non-verbal and verbal behaviour. Knowledge of core developmental lines (for example mobility, manipulative skills, feeding and bodily care, and the acquisition of the ability to communicate in words) is seen by Goldschmied and Jackson as essential for practitioners in early education settings. Such knowledge equips them to play their part in ensuring that learning and development progress smoothly.

Observation is central in assessing the learning and development of children. Its validity is likely to be enhanced if a practitioner who knows the child well, and with whom the child has established a close relationship, carries out the observations. Children's interactions and conversations with the key people in their lives can tell us a lot about their learning and development. This study looks at these next.

Day-to-day conversations provide rich contexts for assessment of children's early learning and development. To maximise the potential of these conversations for assessment, it is essential that practitioners listen carefully in order to understand what

the child is seeking to communicate, either through gesture, behaviour or language (MacNaughton & Williams, 2004). Conversations with babies, toddlers or young children engage the practitioner in reflection and interpretation in their efforts to understand the child's intent. Skilful use of questioning during these conversations can elicit children's theories and understandings, enabling them to share feelings and engaging them in speculation and imaginative thinking (Fisher, 1990; Siraj-Blatchford & Clark, 2003; Wood, 1992).

Children's drawings can be understood as their personal narratives "*which they use to order and explain the complexity and their experiences of the world''* (Anning & Ring, 2004, p.5). Discussions with children about their drawings, or listening to children explain their drawing to others, can give the practitioner rich insights into children's understandings, preoccupations, sense of identity, and interests.

Puckett and Black (2000) opined that two-way flow of information between practitioner and parents is important. Parents are an important source of information about children's learning and development and their observations and insights are essential in putting together a comprehensive picture of individual children's strengths and needs. Information from practitioners can help parents support, extend and promote children's learning at home.

The next section of the study looks at professional development for early childhood educators to support them in developing their assessment practice going forward.

This section of the study discusses the characteristics of early learning and identifies some key theoretical constructs that guide the teaching, learning and assessment processes during early childhood. Theoretical considerations have been influential in shaping new and emerging approaches to assessment and the most

salient of these are discussed in relation to their implications for the assessment of early learning and development.

Children's learning is complex and assessment approaches need to take cognisance of this. In early childhood, this complexity is abundantly evident as children engage in play. The importance of play to young children's learning and development is a key principle for early childhood practitioners (Wood, 2004).

Assessing children's understandings and progress as they play, either alone or with others, is a crucial activity in early year's settings. In assessing the child's learning through play, the adult can use a range of approaches and methods. Practitioners make assessments by focusing on children's play interests, their levels of engagement and participation (Kernan, 2007). Kerman says that teachers make assessments while skilfully engaging with children in play. Skilful engagement includes intervention in play as and when appropriate. Such interventions may serve to initiate or sustain interactions, thereby leading to shared talking and thinking. Kerman further says that teachers may also involve scaffolding children in order to enable them to reach their potential. Children's learning is a complex matter and assessment approaches need to take cognisance of this. The literature review now looks at emerging approaches to assessment, all of which take account of play as a vehicle for learning and development. Assessing children's understandings and progress as they play, either alone or with others, is a crucial activity in early year's settings.

This section identifies and discusses the demands which assessment makes of practitioners in carrying out assessment of early learning and development in ways that enhance children's leaning and development; are sensitive and respectful to children; do justice to children; protect children's rights, and ultimately support

children's further learning and development. This discussion may be helpful in mapping the way forward in supporting the early childhood sector in developing assessment practice.

The importance of looking at assessment from the basis of sound professional knowledge of all aspects of early learning and development is articulated as follows:

> *Perhaps it is now time to shift the emphasis in the early years; time to move from a position whereby starting with the child has prevailed into one where we begin from an informed understanding of learning. As we move into an era where observations in early year's settings become the norm rather than the exception, let's not think about watching the children; rather let us talk and think about understanding their learning* (Broadhead, 2006, p.202).

Assessment is a matter of informed judgement. It involves the practitioner judging the nature and extent of a child's learning and development; the significance of the learning under scrutiny; the role of the context in that learning; and how best to support further learning and development. The ability to make informed judgements then is critical to the process assessment.

Assessment engages the practitioner in theorising (Bowman *et al.,* 2001). Indeed, Carr (2001), in writing of the learning stories approach, highlights the issue that while the approach provides evidence of learning, translating the learning stories into assessments can be very challenging. Putting observational data to good use was found to be an area of professional activity that practitioners in New Zealand needed support (Carr-May & Podmore, 2000). Considerable professional understanding is required to carry out assessment of early learning and development.

Practitioners draw on a range of skills in carrying out assessments and in using information from those assessments to support children's learning and development. Interactive skills have been shown to be of particular significance. These include

scaffolding and co-construction. Different skills are appropriate for different purposes. Skills such as questioning, talking and listening play a key part in using assessment to impact positively on learning and development. Observing, documenting and reflecting likewise are necessary especially in supporting practitioners to come together to analyse and interpret information about early learning and development.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The methodology describes the research design, population, sample and sampling technique. It also deals with the instruments for data collection and administration of the instruments. It further spells out the techniques used to gather and analyse the data, the research trustworthiness and ethical considerations are each discussed.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The researcher's ontological and epistemological stance aligned with the Pragmatist Paradigm. The pragmatist believes that, instead of concentrating on research procedures, the researcher focuses on the research problem and uses all available approaches to understand the problem. It concentrates on the research problem and uses varied procedures to obtain knowledge about the problem. Based on the paradigm, the researcher adopted mixed method as the approach for this study. Creswell and Plano-Clark, (2007) State that research on mixed methods is more than just gathering qualitative and quantitative data together; it means that at some certain point of the research process data is combined, linked, or mixed. Again the authors show that the chief reason to mixing is that both qualitative and quantitative methods are not satisfactory enough to capture the drifts and details of the situation but the two methods are combined they produce a more comprehensive analysis, and they complement one another. Adu, (2019) comments that “the mixing of both qualitative and quantitative methods makes it possible to merge the two approaches in a single study because, both share the idea of understanding the world we live in.” According

to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) when the two approaches are merged together it provides a diversity of views within which a specific phenomenon can be studied. They added that, the two approaches provide for cross-validation or triangulation by merging more than one theory or bases of data to study one phenomena to obtain a complete understanding of that phenomenon under study. They also provide complementary results by using the strengths of one approach to strengthen the other. It is based upon this argument that, the Mixed Method was used so that the researcher will be able to cross validate the data that emerged from research and to gain a better picture of the reality of the issue on the research questions and their objectives

3.2 Research Design

The current research used mixed methods, specifically the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. In the Social Sciences, mixed methods have become increasingly popular and may be considered a legitimate, stand-alone research design (Creswell 2003). It may be defined as "the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research" (Gutmann& Hanson, 2003).

The mixed methods research design whereby both quantitative and qualitative data are used was preferred in the current study, because it might enrich the results in ways that one form of data does not allow (Tashakkori &Teddlie, 1998). Using both forms of data, for example, allows researchers to simultaneously generalize results from a sample to a population and to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest. It also allows researchers to test theoretical models and to modify them based on participant feedback. Results of precise, instrument-based measurements

may, likewise, be augmented by contextual, field-based information (Greene & Caracelli, 1997).

There can be three types of sequential designs: sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory and sequential transformative (Creswell et al., 2003). Sequential explanatory designs do not use an explicit advocacy lens. In these designs, quantitative data are collected and analyzed, followed by qualitative data. Priority is usually unequal and given to the quantitative data. Qualitative data are used primarily to augment quantitative data. Creswell et al. (2003) explained that data analysis is usually connected, and integration usually occurs at the data interpretation stage and in the discussion. These designs are particularly useful for explaining relationships and or study findings, especially when they are unexpected.

In line with the above, the current study employed mixed methods research design (Creswell, 2003) to study kindergarten teachers' views on assessment practices regarding the implementation of the kindergarten curriculum in Ghana. Like Russek and Weinberg (1993), the researcher believes that by using both qualitative and quantitative data, studies related to teacher assessment practices will give insights that neither type of analysis could provide alone.

3.3 Population

Population for the study comprised the entire group of individuals having a common observable characteristic (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009). (Babbie, 2010) defines population as the totality of whatever objects or measurements that the researcher is investigating. The determination of the population and sample schools was based on the 2019 Annual Statistics Report. According to this report, there were17 public basic schools in the Manpong Municipality. However, the researcher selected ten public

basic schools which have early childhood centers from the 17 schools which was the target population in the municipality. Therefore, the population for the study was the entire teachers and heads of the ten selected schools in the Municipality of Manpong. A total population of fifty (50) was included in the study. This consisted of 40 teachers and 10 head teachers

3.4 Sample Size and sampling technique

Simple random and census techniques were used to select the teacher respondents and head teachers respectivey for the study. The researcher selected ten public basic schools in Manpong Municipality. The total population of teachers for the 10 schools was 169. The simple random sampling gave each teacher an opportuninty to be a part of the sample. 'Respondent' and 'Non-Respondent' were written on pieces of paper for each teacher to choose. Those that picked "Respondent" responded to the questionnaire. Only four (4) teachers who picked 'Respondents' in each school were considered for the study. The head teachers were selected through census technique for the interview. This is because all members of the population had the same opportunity to participate in the study, and is also more capable of yielding representative results (Willis, 2013). The total sample size was One hundred and fifty (150) respondents. These were made of hundred (140) teachers (four from each school) and ten (10) head teachers, one from each school.

Simple random is the most commonly used method of seclecting a probalility sample, where by each element in the population is given an equal and independent chance of selection (Ranjit, 2011).

Census technique is suitable when the population of study is not vast and the area of study is not large. One of the greatest advantages of using the census technique is that

all members of the population have the same opportunity to participate in the study, and is also more capable of yielding representative results (Willis 2013). The ten schools were with K.G and since the study is about K.G, they automatically fell in that bracket.

Table 3.1: The Summary of the Sample Population for the Study

Name of Schools	**Respondents**	
	Teachers Sampled	Head
(A) Basic School	4	1
(B) Basic School	4	1
(C) Basic School	4	1
(D) Basic School	4	1
(E) Basic School	4	1
(F) Basic School.	4	1
(G) Basic School	4	1
(H) Basic School	4	1
(I) Basic School	4	1
(J) Basic School	4	1
Total	**40**	**10**

Source: Field data, 2021

3.5 Instruments for Data Collection

Instrumentation in research refers to the means through which data or information is collected (Nwana 1996). To acquire the necessary information from participants, two types of data collection instruments were used. These were questionnaires, with a Likert type response scale (*Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree and Strongly Disagree)* and an interview guide.

3.5.1 Questionnaire

A closed-ended questionnaire was employed to collect quantitative data from the sampled teachers. This was because the questionnaire was convenient to conduct surveys and to acquire necessary information from a large number of study subjects within a short time. Furthermore, it makes possible an economy of time and expense and also provides a high proportion of usable response (Best & Kahn, 1993). The questionnaire was prepared in the English language because all of the sample teachers could read and understand the concepts that were incorporated.

The questionnaire had two parts: The first part of the questionnaire in that language elicited information of the respondents' background that includes: sex, academic qualification and number of years in the school. The second part sought to establish Kindergarten teacher's views on their assessment practices in the public basic schools in Manpong Municipality. The closed-ended items were prepared using Likert scales. The values of the scale ranged between one and five.

3.5.2 Interview guide

Interview is an approach in which specific questions to be asked and the order of the questions are predetermined and set by the researcher and posed to the interviewees in the same way but there is room for probing and elaboration (Cohen and Manion, 1994).

Semi-structured interview guide used to gather in-depth qualitative data from the ten (10) heads of the selected schools. This is because interviews have the greatest potential to release more in-depth information, provide opportunity to observe non-verbal behavior of respondents; gives opportunities for clearing up misunderstandings, as well as it could be adjusted to meet many diverse situations

(Kvale, 2009). The data collected through interview were based on the objectives of the study.

3.6 Validity of the Instruments

The instruments (questionnaire and interview guide) used for the collection of data were validated to determine their accuracy. The validity of the instrument refers to whether it measured what it was supposed to measure and not something else (Schumacher & Mcmillan, 199)3. Therefore, validity refers to the results of the test, not the test itself (Nwana, 1996)

Attempts were made to achieve face validity and content validity. For face validity, the instruments were given to experts in research to read through to offer constructive criticisms, since validation is based on experts' advice (Best & Khan, 1993). Appropriate modifications were made by the experts and the supervisor to ensure clarity and ambiguity free statements/items in the questionnaire and interview guide.

3.7 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability is the measure of the degree to which a research instrument consistently measures whatever it is measuring in repeated trials (Newman, 1996). Reliability of the research instrument is the consistency of the instrument producing similar results given the same conditions on different occasions. In other words, reliability is the degree of a research instrument (for example questionnaire or interview schedule) to measure a subject or variable on different occasions and all occasions consistently give the same or similar result (Amonoo, 2010). The reliability of the instrument for this study was established through pre-testing. A reliability analysis test was run on the SPSS v.24 to determine Cronbach's alpha co-efficient of which 0.85 was

obtained, which implied that the instrument was good for research purpose. According to Moshen and Reg (2011) a Cronbach alpha of 0.8 and above means the instrument is reliable to be used for the study

3.8 Pre -testing of Instrument

The questionnaire and interview guide were first pre-tested among heads and teachers in public basic schools in Ejisu Municipality who were not part of the actual study. This enabled the researcher to gather the relevant data to answer the research questions and to achieve the objectives of the study**.** The responses helped to improve upon certain items, to remove some ambiguous ones. Borg and Gall, (1989) state that a new test instrument should be field-tested with a population similar to that from which the sample of the study would be taken. This helped to ascertain their reliability and validity and to cross-check the effectiveness of the content and structure of the instrument.

3.9 Procedure of Data Collection

An introductory letter was obtained from the University of Education, Winneba to seek permission to conduct the study in public basic schools with Kindergarten centers in the Manpong Municipal Education Office. Upon acceptance of the researcher's request to conduct the study in the selected schools, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Manpong Municipal Education which indicated public basic schools with Kindergarten and permitted the researcher to collect data. A meeting was arranged between the researcher and headteachers and teachers to brief them on the objectives of the study. This is to ensure maximum collaboration and cooperation of all respondents. Respondents were also assured of the confidentiality of any information they were to give out. The closed-ended

questionnaire and interview guides were employed concurrently in the various schools. The researcher used one week to dispatch the questionnaire simultaneously to the sampled teachers in their common rooms in each school. Respondents were given one day in each school to complete the questionnaire and returned them to the researcher.

In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the Heads by the researcher in their respective offices. Different times were arranged for them individually according to their availability for the exercise which took about sixty minutes. The researcher had initial contact with the interviewees to explain the objective of the study. While conducting the interview, the researcher used notes and recordings with their permission and later downloaded the data onto the computer and transcribed it verbatim. The researcher was not a co-worker in any of the selected schools and this ensured objectivity in the data collection.

3.10 Data analysis techniques

Data analysis is the process of organizing, reviewing and coding a list of major ideas or information gathered in the research. (Cooper & Schindler, 2000). In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. It is argued that the merging of the two methods offer excellent opportunities and possibility for developing a deeper and better understanding of educational and social processes. (Creswell, 2008).

The researcher used the software for quantitative data analysis that; is Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). This programme has been recognized by researchers as a powerful tool for generating statistical procedures for factor analysis. (Mereku et al., 2002). The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using simple

descriptive frequency count and percentages. Results were presented in tables for understanding.

The interview data-were analyzed using thematic analysis. Data were systematically built through recording proceedings during the interviews using the semi-structured interview guide. The qualitative data were coded systematically according to specific themes from the responses that were recorded and transcribed. The responses were spread on a table and the various answers given to the same questions by the interviewees were grouped according to the themes that emerged, and then analyzed to address the research questions. The data were reported using description and verbatim quotations. The responses from the interview data were then used to support the questionnaire data during the discussion.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are paramount because it ensures that, there is no infringement on respondents' rights and privacy (Creswell, 2014). There is no doubt that data collection forms an important part of a research process and different procedures and tools are used. These include the use of questionnaires and interview guides. Ethical issues during research investigations aimed at ensuring that there is cordiality between the researcher and the researched for smooth completion of the investigation to the issue. To ensure that there is no infringement on respondents' rights and privacy, the following was observed;

The researcher obtained consent from the teachers and head teachers by giving a verbal assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. The participants were made aware that their participation should be voluntary and that they were free to decline at any time during the study. The researcher gave verbal assurance of confidentiality and

anonymity to all the respondents. The researcher assured the respondents that the exercise was for academic purposes only. The researcher wrote a letter of appreciation to each school used for the study.

3.12 Summary

In this chapter, the research design for the development and writing of the entire research work is discussed. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative approaches for the study, the population, sample and sampling technique, data collection and instrument, validation and reliability of instrument data collection procedure, data analysis and ethical consideration. In the next chapter, how data collected were presented, analyzed and discussed is presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS/FINDINGS

4.0. Introduction

The results of the study are presented in this section. This section deals with demographic data of respondents, the results on the views of kindergarten teachers regarding the use of various modes of assessments, teachers' reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment and teachers' views on the impact of the performance assessment on their professional development.

4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents

Respondents were asked to provide their age, gender, highest educational qualification attained, area of specialization, the type of institution they teach (private or public), and years of teaching experience. The respondents were 150 kindergarten student teachers in Mampong Municipal. This is represented in Tables 4.1 – 4.6.

Table 4.1: Age of Respondents

Age group	Private	Public	Total
20yrs & below	16 (10.7%)	0 (0%)	16 (10.7%)
21-30	0(0%)	67 (44.6%)	67(44.6%)
31-40	42 (28%)	0(0%)	42(28%)
41-50	19 (12.6%)	5 (3.3%)	24 (16%)
51-60	1(0.7 %)	0 (0%)	1 (0.7%)
Total	**78 (52%)**	**72 (48%)**	**150 (100%)**

Source: field data 2022

Table 4.1 shows the age group of respondents. From Table 4.1, out of 150 respondents, 67 of them representing 44.6% were between the ages of 21-30, 42 of the respondents representing 28% were between the ages of 31-40. 24 of the respondents representing 16% were between the ages of 41-50 whilst 16 representing 10.7% of the respondents were between 20 years and below. Only one respondent representing 1.0% was between 51-60 years.

Table 4.2: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Private	Public	Total
Male	30 (20%)	30 (20%)	60 (33.3%)
Female	48 (32%)	42 (28%)	90(66.7%)
Total	**78 (52%)**	**72 (48%)**	**150 (100%)**

Table 4.2 shows the gender of the respondents. It shows that a higher percentage of females (80.2%) than males (19.8%) are engaged in working with both public and private kindergarten schools sampled for this study.

Table 4.3: Highest Educational Qualification Respondents

Educational Qualification	Private	Public	Total
Middle Sch. Leaving Cert	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
SSSCE/ WASSCE	53 (35.3%)	0(0%)	53 (35.3%)
Teachers' Cert A	0(0%)	10 (6.7%)	10 (6.7%)
Diploma in Basic Education	0 (0%)	30 (20%)	30 (20%)
BEd ECCD	0 (0%)	10(6.6%)	10 (6.6%)
Masters	0(0%)	2(1.4%)	2(1.4%)
Pre-School Cert	20(13.3%)	10 (6.6%)	30(20%)
Diploma in ECCD	5(3.4%)	10(6.6%)	15(10%)
Total	**78 (52%)**	**72 (48%)**	**150 (100%)**

Table 4.3 shows the highest educational qualification attained by respondents. It reveals that among the kindergarten teachers who participated in the study, 30 of them constituting 20% had certificate in pre-school education. 53 of the respondents representing 35.3% were holders of SSSCE / WASSEC. 30 of the respondents constituting 20% each were also holders of Diplomas in Basic Education and 15 respondents, representing10% had qualifications Early Childhood. None of the respondents had Middle School Leaving Certificate.10 of the respondents representing 6.6% were holders of B.Ed. in ECCD and Teachers' Certificate 'A' respectively. Among the respondents sampled for the current study, only 2 persons representing 1.4% had a Master's degree.

Table 4.4: Area of Specialization of the Respondents

Area of specialization	**Private**	**Public**	**Total**
Early Childhood Education	50 (33.2%)	47(31.3%)	97(64.5%)
Mathematics	10 (6.6%)	5(3.4%)	15(10%)
English	0(0%)	10 (6.6%)	10 (6.6%)
Science	8 (5.3%)	0(0%)	8(5.3%)
Physical Education	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
Social Studies	0(0%)	5(3.33%)	5(3.3%)
Basic Education	10(6.6%)	5(3.4%)	15(10%)
Total	**78 (52%)**	**72 (48%)**	**150 (100%)**

Table 4.4 shows the area of specialization of the respondents. It indicates that among the kindergarten teachers who participated in the study, as many as 90 of them constituting 46.8% had specialised in Early Childhood Education. Twenty-four of the respondents representing 12.0% were holders of certificate in Mathematics. Twenty-

three of the respondents constituting 11.9% were specialists in Social Studies. Twenty-two of them constituting 11.5% read Science. Sixteen of the respondents representing 8.3% were products of Basic Education. Among the respondents sampled for the study, 12 persons representing 6.2% read English at school whilst only 5 respondents with 2.6% read Physical Education.

Table 4.5: Institutional Placement of Respondents

Institutional placement	**No. of respondents**	**Percentage**
Private	78	52.0%
Public	72	48.0%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Table 4.5 shows that 78 of the respondents representing 52.0% teach in private kindergarten schools whereas the remaining 72 constituting 48.0% were working in public kindergarten schools in Mampong Municipal.

Table 4.6: Teaching Experience of Respondents

Teaching experience	**Private**	**Public**	**Total**
0-5	60 (40%)	0 (0%)	60(40%)
6-10	0 (0%)	48(32%)	48(32%)
11-15	0 (0%)	24 (16%)	24(16%)
16-20	12 (8%)	0(0%)	12(8%)
21 yrs and above	6 (4%)	0(0%)	6(4%)
Total	**78 (52%)**	**72 (48%)**	**150 (100%)**

Table 4.6 shows the teaching experience of respondents. It reveals that the teaching experience of the kindergarten teachers varied from less than a year to 21 years and above. 60% of respondents had 0-5 years of teaching experience, 48% had 6-10 years teaching experience, 16% of had 11-15 years of teaching experience, 8% of them have 16-20 years of experience, and 4% of them had more than 21 years of experience.

4.2 Kindergarten Teachers' Views Regarding their Use of Various Modes of Assessment Practices, the Reasons for Selecting a Particular Mode of Assessment and the Impact of Performance Assessment on their Professional Development

Kindergarten education in the Ghanaian education system has formally been integrated into the mainstream as part of the Universal Primary Education since the introduction of the 2007 New Educational Reform. It is often seen as the foundational level on which the future learning of every child is pivoted on. The quality or otherwise of our kindergarten education is often determined based on the children's learning outcomes (MOWAC, 2004). This development has brought teachers under this area into much scrutiny as they are seen as the drivers behind the success of the kindergarten programme. Teachers' assessment practices are therefore a critical issue to be researched into. The first research question sought to find out kindergarten teachers' views regarding their use of various modes of assessment, the reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment and their views on the impact of the performance assessment on their professional development with reference to the implementation of the Kindergarten Curriculum in Ghana.

4.2.1 Respondents' Views on the Use of Various Modes of Assessment

An attempt was made to find out kindergarten teachers' views with regard to their use of the various modes of assessment which happens to be the Research Question 1. Six items on a 4-point Likert scale were used to measure kindergarten teachers' views on the use of various modes of assessment in their instructional practices during their curriculum implementation obligation. Each response category on the scale was assigned a value ranging from 1 to 4 for the positive statements with 1 representing 'strongly disagree', 2= 'disagree', 3= 'Agree', and 4= 'strongly agree'. The respondents were asked to rate their responses. The results are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Mode of Assessment Used by Kindergarten Teachers

Various modes of assessment	SD	D	A	SA	Total	Mean	STD
Building portfolio on the learning outcomes.	44(29.2%)	39(26.0)%	50(33.3)	17(11.5%)	150(100%)	2.27	1.008
Using standardised test.	43(28.6%)	43(28.6%)	34(22.9%)	30(19.8%)	150 (100%)	2.34	1.095
Interviewing to assess learning outcomes.	43(28.6%)	3(22.9)%	43(29.2%)	29(19.3%)	150 (100%)	2.39	1.097
Assessing learning outcomes through children's' performance of task.	38(25.5%)	36(24.0)%	47(31.2%)	29(19.3%)	150 (100%)	2.44	1.072
Observation of learning outcomes.	23(15.4%)	49(32.6)%	58(38.7%)	20(13.3%)	150 (100%)	2.47	.886
Testing (pencil and paper test).	30(20%)	30(20)%	68(45.4%)	22(14.6)%	150 (100%)	2.54	.975
Total						**2.40**	**1.022**

Table 4.7 shows a summary of respondents' views on the use of the various mode of assessment. It reveals that among all the modes of assessments, respondents appear to agree to the use of only testing (paper- pencil- and teacher made test) which recorded a higher mean value of 2.54 (SD= .975) in an answer to the question; 'What is your level of agreement to the use of testing (paper- pencil- and teacher made test)?' 'What is your level of agreement to the use of building portfolio on children learning outcomes?' recorded a mean score of 2.27 (SD = 1.008). This implies that the respondents appear to disagree to the use of building portfolios on children's' learning outcomes. 'What is your level of agreement to the use of standardised test?' also recorded a mean score of 2.34 (SD= 1.095). The implication is that the respondents seem to disagree to the use of standardised test in assessing the children's learning outcomes.

The respondents further appear to disagree to the use of interviewing to assess the learning outcomes of the children in response to the question 'what is your level of agreement to the use of interviewing to assess children's learning outcomes, a mean value of 2.29 (SD =1.097) was recorded. 'What is your level of agreement to the use of performance assessment and observation of children's learning both recorded a mean score 2.44 (SD= 1.072) and 2.47 (SD = .886) respectively. This clearly shows teachers' disagreement to the use of those two modes and all other modes of assessments with the exception of the paper pencil and teacher made test) which is their preferred choice in their implementation of the kindergarten curriculum with regards to their assessment practices.

4.2.2 Reasons for Selecting a Particular Mode of Assessment by Kindergarten Teachers

The ability of a teacher to select the best form of assessment practices in a classroom is a critical factor in any educational setting. This is a very difficult task for every teacher and most especially for children who are in their very formative years as kindergarteners. This task of developmentally appropriate assessment practices is very challenging, whether for well- trained or not, let alone the numerous untrained kindergarten teachers in Ghana.

It is also difficult for teachers to decide on behaviours, skills or activities to assess in the form of either observation or documentation or other methods of assessment (Gober, 2002).

In view of this, I attempted to elicit the views of kindergarten teachers in order to ascertain the exact reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment. This was the focus of Research Question 2; 'What are your views on the reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment of kindergarten teachers?' Participants of the study were asked to rate their relative agreement or disagreement on 13 items on a four (4) - point Likert-type agreement scale. Each response category on the scale was assigned a value range of positive statements from 1 to 4 with 1 representing 'strongly disagree' 2= 'disagree', 3= 'Agree', and 4= 'strongly agree'.

However, the following coding were given to the negative statements; from 4 to 1 with 4 representing 'strongly disagree', 3= 'disagree', 2= 'Agree', and 1= 'strongly agree'. The respondents were asked to rate their responses. Four-point Likert scale was chosen for two reasons; (1) to reduce the deviation to be the least or reduce the risks which might be happening from the deviation of personal decision making and (2) to get a higher discrimination and reliability values which are higher than the Likert's scale 5 points (Gwinner, 2006; Chomeya, 2010). The results are presented in Table 4.8

Table 4.8: Respondents' Reasons for Selecting a Particular Mode of Assessment

Reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment	SD	D	A	SA	Total	Mean	STD
I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet parents' expectations.	63(42.2)	60(40.1)	21(14.1)	6(4.0)	150(100%)	1.79	.818
I use a particular mode of assessment that meets the DAP in assessment.	51(33.9)	41(27.3)	34(22.9)	24(16.0)	150(100%)	2.20	1.076
I use a particular mode of assessment to reduce test anxiety.	45(30.2)	51(33.9)	30(20.3)	24(16.0)	150(100%)	2.21	1.044
I use a particular mode of assessment to make children respect and like me as a teacher.	41(27.1)	48(31.8)	34(22.6)	27(17.7)	150(100%)	2.32	1.058
I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet the expectations of educational leaders.	44(29.2)	60(31.2)	31(16.1)	45(23.4)	150(100%)	2.34	1.133
I use a particular mode of assessment that reflects my teaching philosophy.	41(27.1)	47(31.2)	31(20.8)	31(20.8)	150(100%)	2.35	1.092
To really understand each child, I use more than one mode of assessment.	41(27.1)	48(32.3)	27(18.2)	34(22.4)	150(100%)	2.36	1.107
I use a particular mode of assessment to	36(24.0)	52(34.9)	34(22.4)	28(18.8)	150(100%)	2.36	1.044

Reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment	SD	D	A	SA	Total	Mean	STD
force children to learn.							
I use a particular mode of assessment to improve my instructional practices.	32(21.4)	48(31.8)	51(34.4)	19(12.5)	150(100%)	2.38	.958
I use a particular mode of assessment to make children scared and afraid of teachers.	34(22.4)	52(34.9)	37(24.5)	27(18.2)	150(100%)	2.39	1.027
I use a particular mode of assessment to punish children.	34(22.9)	56(37.5)	39(25.5)	21(14.1)	150(100%)	2.46	2.421
I use a particular mode of assessment that religiously conforms to the curriculum guidelines.	30(14.6)	35(23.4)	36(24.0)	57(38.0)	150(100%)	2.85	1.088
I use a particular mode of assessment to be able to compare children easily.	13(8.9)	34(22.4)	55(36.5)	48(32.3)	150(100%)	2.92	.948
Total						**2.38**	**1.139**

**N=number of respondents; SD= standard deviation*

1=strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3= Agree; and 4= strongly Agree for positive statements.

4 = strongly Disagree', 3= Disagree', 2= Agree, and 1= strongly Agree for negative statements.

Table 4.8 displays a summary of respondents' reasons for selecting the various mode of assessment. Table 4.8 reveals that among all the negative statements in this category, the respondents appear to agree to all of them with the exception of this statement; 'I use a particular mode of assessment to punish children' which recorded a mean value of 2.46 (SD= 2.421). This mean value is approximately (3.0) which tilts more to their disagreement to this particular item. The remaining negative statement all recorded a mean value of less than three (3) indicating their agreement to the following negative statements; 'I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet parents' expectations with a mean value of 1.79 (SD = .818), 'I use a particular mode of assessment to force children to learn, recording a mean value of 2.36 (SD = 1.044); 'I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet the expectations of educational leaders' similarly recorded a mean value of 2.34 (SD = 1.133); 'I use a particular mode of assessment to make children scared and afraid of teachers' also did not depart from the pattern by recording a mean value of 2.39 (SD= 1.027) and 'I use a particular mode of assessment to make children respect and like me as a teacher' in the same fashion recorded a mean value of 2.32 (SD=1.058), all indicating the respondents level of disagreement to all those negative statements.

Of all the positive statements in this category on the other hand, respondents appear to have agreed to only two statements and rather disagree with all the remaining statements. Respondents agreed to these; 'I use a particular mode of assessment that religiously conforms to the curriculum guidelines' which recorded a mean value of 2.85 (SD = 1.088) and 'I use a particular mode of assessment to be able to compare children easily' recorded a mean value of 2.92 (SD = .948). The respondents, therefore, disagreed to the following statements; 'I use a particular mode of

assessment that reflects my teaching philosophy' recorded a mean value of 2.35 (SD = 1.076), 'I use a particular mode of assessment to improve upon my instructional practices' further scored a mean value of 2.38 (SD = .958), 'I use a particular mode of assessment to reduce test anxiety' likewise recorded a mean value 2.21 (SD = 1.044), 'I use a particular mode of assessment that meets the developmentally appropriate practices in assessment' followed a similar pattern recording a mean value of 2.20 (SD = 1.076) and 'To really understand each child, I use more than one mode of assessment' scored a mean value of 2.36 (SD = .958). All these indicate their level of disagreements to those negative statements.

Table 4.9: Respondents Views on Impact of Performance Assessment on their Professional Development

Impact of performance assessment on their professional development	SD	D	A	SA	Total	Mean	STD
PA measures learning outcomes as a product.	52(34.9%)	74(49.5%)	22(14.6%)	2(1.0%)	150 (100%)	1.82	.711
PA does not challenge children to learn hard.	62(41.1%)	48(31.8%)	33(22.7%)	7(4.7%)	150 (100%)	1.91	.905
PA does not measure the exact learning outcomes.	51(33.9%)	55(36.5%)	30(20.3%)	14(9.4%)	150 (100%)	2.05	.959
PA encourages teachers to be lazy.	45(29.7%)	53(35.4%)	36(24.0%)	16(10.9%)	150 (100%)	2.16	.976
PA measures learning as a process.	38(25.5%)	55(36.5%)	42(28.1%)	15(9.9%)	150 (100%)	2.22	.942
PA produces same results for same groups of children.	40(26.6%)	50(33.3%)	41(27.1%)	20(13.0%)	150 (100%)	2.27	.996
PA does not produce same results for same groups of children.	36(25.0%)	47(31.2%)	44(29.2%)	22(14.6%)	150 (100%)	2.33	1.010
PA measures the exact learning outcomes.	34(22.9%)	48(32.3%)	48(32.3%)	20(13.3%)	150 (100%)	2.34	.969
PA provides experience for teachers on how to use portfolios in education.	37(24.5%)	38(25.6%)	55(36.6%)	20(13.3%)	150 (100%)	2.39	1.002
PA assessment helps teachers to realize their own strengths and weaknesses in their instructional practices.	38(25.5%)	40(26.6%)	46(30.7%)	26(17.2%)	150 (100%)	2.40	1.048
PA provides opportunities for teachers to teach assess children learning outcomes at the same time.	37(24.5%)	39(26.0%)	42(28.1%)	32(21.4%)	150 (100%)	2.46	1.082
Total						**2.213**	**.963**

Table 4.9 displays a summary of respondents' views on the impact of the performance assessment on their professional development. The table reveals that among all the negative statements in this category, the respondents appeared to have agreed to all the statements; 'Performance assessment does not challenge children to learn hard' recorded a mean value of 1.91 (SD= .905). This mean value is approximately (2.0) which is tilted more to their agreement to this particular item. The remaining negative statements all recorded a mean value of less than (3) indicating their agreement to the following negative statements; 'Performance assessment encourages teachers to be lazy' with a mean value of 2.16 (SD = .976), 'Performance assessment does not measure the exact learning outcomes' recorded a mean value of 2.05 (SD = .959); 'Performance assessment does not produce same results for same groups of children' similarly recorded a mean value of 2.33 (SD = 1.010)

Of all the positive statements in this category, the respondents appeared to have disagreed with all the statements. The respondents disagreed with these; 'Performance assessment measures learning outcomes as a product' which recorded a mean value of 1.82 (SD = .711) and 'Performance assessment measures learning as a process' recorded a mean value of 2.22 (SD = .942). The respondents further disagreed to the following statements: 'Performance assessment produces same results for same groups of children' recorded a mean value of 2.27 (SD = .996), 'Performance assessment measures the exact learning outcomes' also scored a mean value of 2.34 (SD = .969), 'Performance assessment provides experience for teachers on how to use portfolios in education' likewise recorded a mean value 2.39 (SD = 1.002), 'Performance assessment helps teachers to realize their own strengths and weaknesses in their instructional practices' followed a similar pattern recording a mean value of 2.40 (SD = 1.048) and 'Performance assessment provides opportunities for teachers to

teach and assess children's learning outcomes' scored a mean value of 2.46 (SD = 1.082). Of all the seven positive statements in this category, the respondents appear to have disagreed with all those statements as described earlier.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5.0. Introduction

This chapter of the study provides a summary of the results, conclusions and recommendations as well as implications for further research.

5.1. Summary of Findings

The analysis revealed that kindergarten teachers who took part in the study overall disagreed to all the three main objectives; teachers' views on modes of assessment often used, reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment and the impact of the performance assessment on their professional development. However, majority of the kindergarten teachers recorded the highest mean score value of 3.1 out of 4 agreed to the use of teacher made paper-and-pencil classroom test. Further analysis revealed that the kindergarten teachers, however, differed slightly on these four reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment;

i. to force student to learn,
ii. to scare children and make them afraid of teachers,
iii. just to meet parents expectations and
iv. to respect and like teachers.

Similarly, the Kindergarten teachers slightly differed on the use of performance assessment on these three items;

i. Performance assessment measures learning outcomes as a product,
ii. PA does not measure the exact learning outcomes and
iii. Performance assessment encourages teachers to be lazy.

In addition, there were no statistically significant differences in the kindergarten teachers' institutional placement with respect to all others items on the three sub-scales using the Independent Sample t-test. The summaries of key findings are that:

1. Kindergarten teachers in this current study disagreed strongly to the use of all other known modes of assessment with the exception of the teacher made paper and pencil classroom test.
2. This current study also revealed that the kindergarten teachers select a particular mode of assessment just to meet the expectations of parents and educational leaders in order to keep their jobs without recourse to the current knowledge and theories on children learning, instruction and assessment practices in early childhood.
3. No significant differences were found in the kindergarten teachers assessment practices in all the three objectives namely the mode of assessment used, the reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment and performance assessment usage on their professional development among their institutional placement (public and private kindergartens) with the exception of the four reasons for selecting a particular modes of assessment and three other teachers views on the impact of performance assessment on their professional development as discussed above.

5.2. Conclusion

From the study, the following conclusions were made:

1. The kindergarten teachers solely employ the use of teacher made paper and pencil test in their assessment drive in the classroom. The teachers in this study are not using developmentally assessment practices in assessing children

learning outcome. Teachers, therefore, do not have the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively assess the children learning outcomes appropriately. They seem to be working within their comfort zone by relying on a traditional mode of assessment.

2. The teachers' reasons for assessing children are not supported by any known learning and assessment theories among children.
3. The teachers lack the requisite knowledge on the use and practices involved on the impact of performance assessment on their own professional development.
4. The teachers' current assessment practices cannot help them to effectively implement the curriculum developmentally as the developers of the curriculum prescribed.

5.3. Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that:

1. The inspectors in charge of the curriculum implementation and plans should be informed about the difficulties of the teachers that they are having in evaluation. Inspectors or circuit supervisors should take this issue into consideration when checking the plans, reports and related curriculum documents.
2. The GES should give teachers in-service training to enable them to use different modes of assessment and evaluation techniques in order to assess children learning outcomes developmentally.
3. It is recommended that the school administrations should monitor the problems related to assessment and evaluation and work in cooperation with preschool teachers. Equally, school heads and other educational leaders should

be taken through comprehensive and elaborate workshops, seminars and symposiums on other modes of contemporary assessment to be facilitated by experts in early childhood instruction and assessment in order to sensitize the educational leaders to also embrace the various developmentally appropriate modes of assessment.

4. It is further recommended that the school inspectors or circuit supervisors should also be taken through comprehensive and elaborate workshops, seminars and symposiums on other modes of contemporary assessment to be facilitated by experts in early childhood instruction and assessment in early childhood.
5. The Ghana Education Service should formulate a comprehensive policy on assessment in the kindergartens; however, its implementation should take a bit radical approach in a form of fidelity owing to the numerous untrained early childhood teachers who are teaching in the various schools as they cannot use an adaptation approach successfully.
6. Also, the findings from this current research showed that the kindergarten teachers appear to just assess the children in a way that will satisfy parents and educational leaders without taking curriculum specifications on assessment, theories in children learning and emerging trends in assessment into consideration. Accordingly, it is recommended that comprehensive and elaborate workshops, seminars and symposiums should be organized for parents and all other stakeholders on other modes of contemporary assessment to be facilitated by experts in early childhood instruction and assessment in early childhood.

7. Some kindergarten teachers appeared to be using assessment as a tool to force the children to learn and also as a means of instilling discipline among the children in the classroom. In view of this, it is recommended that further comprehensive and elaborate training, workshops, seminars and symposiums should be organized for the teachers to rather see assessment as a process and an integral part of instruction and not a disciplinary measure.

5.4. Areas of Further Research

Future investigations and efforts can be concentrated on:

1. Investigating into the possible differences between kindergarten teachers areas of specialization with respect to their assessment practices using an appropriate statistical tool.
2. Investigating into the possible differences between kindergarten teachers gender (male or female) with respect to their assessment practices using an appropriate statistical tool.

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APPENDICES

TEACHER'S QUESTION

QUESTIONNAIRE ON KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' VIEWS ON ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN KINDERGARTENS IN GHANA

My name is Sandra Gyamfuah and I am a student of the University of Education Winneba, pursuing a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. This is a questionnaire that has been designed to elicit responses from Early Childhood Teachers in Some Selected Schools to find Classroom Assessment Practices of Kindergarten Teachers in Ghana.

I would be grateful if you could take some time to answer these questions for me. All responses given in this questionnaire will be treated as highly confidential and will be used strictly for research purposes only. Your full name will not be required but your initials will be required to authenticate the responses.

Please contact Sandra Gyamfuah on **0556669282** for Any Queries and Clarification.

Please respond to all the questions as truly as possible. Tick [√] the appropriate box for your answer.

SECTION A- Personal information

1. Age
    1. 20 and below { }
    2. 21 – 30 { }
    3. 31 – 40 { }
    4. 41 – 50 { }
    5. 51 – 60 { }
    6. 61 and above { }

2. Gender

    1. Male { }
    2. Female { }

3. Highest educational qualification attained

    1. Middle School Leaving Cert. { }
    2. S.S. S. C.E / WASSCE { }
    3. Certificate in Pre-school Education { }
    4. Teacher's Cert. 'A' { }
    5. Diploma in Basic Education { }
    6. Diploma in Early Childhood Care &Development { }
    7. B.Ed in Early Childhood Care & Development { }
    8. Other First Degrees (e.g. B.Ed, B.Sc) { }
    9. Master's Degree (e.g. MA, M.Sc, M.Ed, M.Phil) { }

4. What is your area of specialization?

    I. Guidance and Counselling

    II. Human Resource

    III. Maths and Science

    IV. ICT

    V. Vocational

    VI. others

5. In which type of institution are you teaching?

    1. Private { }
    2. Public { }

6. How many years have you been teaching at the kindergarten level?

   1. 0 – 5 years { }
   2. 6 – 10 years { }
   3. 11 – 15 years { }
   4. 16 – 20 years { }
   5. 21 years and above { }

Please, place a tick (√) in the appropriate box to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements using the following scale:
SD= Strongly Disagree, D =Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree**.**

SECTION B

No.	**Teachers' views on the use of various modes of assessment: (What is your level of agreement to the use of the following modes of assessment in the early childhood classroom?)**	SA	A	D	SD
7	Testing (pencil- and -paper test)				
8	Observation of learning outcomes				
9	Using standardised test				
10	Building portfolios on the learning outcomes				
11	Interviewing to assess learning outcomes				
12	Assessing learning outcomes through children's performance of task				
	SECTION C **Teachers' views on the reasons for selecting a particular mode of assessment:**				
13	I use a particular mode of assessment that reflects my teaching philosophy				
14	I use a particular mode of assessment that religiously conform to the curriculum guidelines				
15	I use a particular mode of assessment, just to meet parents				

	expectations.				
16	I use a particular mode of assessment to improve upon my instructional practices				
17	I use a particular mode of assessment to punish children				
18	I use a particular mode of assessment to force children to learn				
19	I use a particular mode of assessment just to meet the expectations of educational leaders				
20	I use a particular mode of assessment to reduce test anxiety				
21	I use a particular mode of assessment to make children scared and afraid of teachers				
22	I use a particular mode of assessment to be able to compare children easily				
23	I use a particular mode of assessment to make children respect and like me as a teacher				
24	I use a particular mode of assessment that meets the developmentally appropriate practices in assessment				
25	To really understand each child, I use more than one mode of assessment				
	SECTION D **Teachers' views on the impact of the performance assessment on their professional development**				
26	Performance assessment provides opportunities for teachers to teach and assess children learning outcomes at the same time				
27	Performance assessment does not challenge children to learn hard				
28	Performance assessment encourages teachers to be lazy				
29	Performance assessment helps teachers to realize their own strengths and weaknesses in their instructional practices				
30	Performance assessment does not measure the exact				

	learning outcomes				
31	Performance assessment measures the exact learning outcomes				
32	Performance assessment does not produce same results for same groups of children				
33	Performance assessment produces same results for same groups of children				
34	Performance assessment provides experience for teachers on how to use portfolios in education				
35	Performance assessment measures learning outcomes as a product				
36	Performance assessment measures learning as a process				

THANK YOU