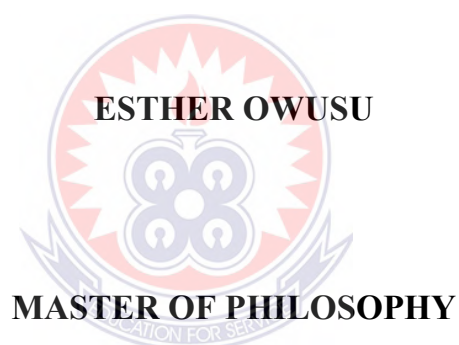


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**THE USE OF PLAY-BASED ACTIVITIES IN TEACHING AND
LEARNING BY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS IN
HEMANG LOWER DENKYIRA DISTRICT**



2023

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BY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS IN HEMANG LOWER
DENKYIRA DISTRICT**



**ESTHER OWUSU
(200014544)**

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

JUNE, 2023

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Esther Owusu, declare that this thesis 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 thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines and supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Supervisor's Name: Opong Frimpong (PhD)

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

To my late mother Comfort Coffie, father Anthony Kweku Owusu, Uncle Thomas
K.K Abakah and Brother Philip Owusu.



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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to explore for a first-hand information, how early childhood education teachers use play-based activities in teaching and learning in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District of the Central Region of Ghana. The study adopted the qualitative research approach. The illustrative case study design was employed for this study. Semi-structured interview guide and observation checklist were the instruments utilized to collect data from ten participants, nine professional Early Childhood Education Teachers and one District Early Childhood Coordinator for this study. The homogeneous type of purposive sampling techniques was used in selecting the participants for the study. The data were analyzed thematically with the help of Taguette, an online qualitative analysis software. The findings of the study revealed that, early childhood teachers are unfamiliar with the kind of play-based activities they have to integrate into their lessons for effective learning. The study also established that, most school authorities and other stakeholders within the education do not give enough attention and necessary support to play-based pedagogy at the early childhood level. Also, the study discovered that, early childhood teachers fail to use play-based activities in their lessons because play demands a lot of time which the allocated play time on the timetable was minimal. The study hence recommends that; Early Childhood teachers be equipped with the requisite knowledge on the various kinds of play-based activities to engage children during instructions. The Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, and other agencies in Education should strategically and periodically organize sensitization and advocacy programs for all stakeholders in education including education supervisors, head teachers, teachers, and parents to help them acquire basic knowledge which will help curb their misconceptions about play. Finally, the Ghana Education Service and National Council for Curriculum and Assessment should, by policy, allocate more time for play activities on the timetable for ECE centres to give the learners the chance to engage in play activities.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

The study explored the use of play-based activities in teaching and learning by early childhood education (ECE) teachers. This chapter looks at the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, the delimitations, limitations and the organisation of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Historically, play has had an important and unquestioned place in children's development and continues to be relevant in contemporary early childhood educational practices. It can be said that, the exact definition of play continues to be an area of debate in research, including what activities can be counted as play (Wallersted & Pramling, 2012). Oxford dictionary defined play as any activity that one engages in for pleasure and enjoyment rather than a serious or practical purpose. Play-based activities are activities that facilitate learning while at play and Play-based learning is, essentially, to learn while at play

Froebel (1894) felt that play was a way in which children gain insight into their world and as a means of creative self-expression. White (2004) views play as a way in which children learn about the world around them, learn to talk and share and learn about themselves. Play then is considered as a way to foster cognitive as well as social development (Lindon, 2002). Within studies that have examined the benefits of play-based learning, two different types of play have been the primary focus; free play,

which is directed by the children themselves (Fleer, 2011), and guided play, which has some level of teacher guidance or involvement (Fisher et al., 2013).

Play is an essential part of children's development since children learn about their world through play. If children have any job, then it would be playing. An early childhood education setting should be a place where children discover a love for learning through a variety of play experiences. Current research shows how play has changed and even been eliminated in many early childhood settings (Abdulai, 2014; Singer, Golinko & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006).

Children are social beings and thus desire interaction and communication through play, they can learn about themselves as well as others (Rauf & Baker, 2019). Through play, children learn to regulate their emotions, interact with peers, teachers, and their environment (Whiteman, 2018). Moreover, play offers the best learning experience for children (Moyles, 2005).

Education experts, organizations, and curriculum documents worldwide indicate the importance of integrating play into the education of young children. An association in the United States comprising various early childhood professionals - the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) emphasized the need to incorporate play in teaching and learning. Play is vital in helping the holistic development of children (NAEYC, 2009). Philosophers such as Froebel, Montessori, Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey, and Gardner have all advocated and used play in their early childhood practices (Abdulai, 2014).

There is strong evidence that Early Childhood Education (ECE) is one of the best investments a country can make to prepare children for learning in school and for prospering later in life (Mekonnen, 2016). Quality early childhood education

promotes children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development and helps them develop their full potential (Mekonnen, 2016). Children who benefit from quality early childhood education programs are better prepared for primary schools and will reach better education outcomes.

Quality ECE also helps to reduce repetition and dropout rates. It Improves school readiness and increases school achievement (Rauf & Baker, 2019). Concerning this, World Declaration on Education for All stresses that learning begins at birth (Rauf & Baker, 2019). Learning through play provides the most natural and meaningful process by which children can construct knowledge and understandings, practice skills, immerse themselves naturally in a broad range of literacy and numeracy and engage in productive, intrinsically motivating learning environments (Harley, 1999).

In addition, play-based learning has many benefits for children as it facilitates the development of skills, dispositions, and knowledge (UNICEF, 2018). Effective play-based learning can assist children to develop lifelong learning skills that will stay with them beyond the early learning environment and eventually become the bedrock of their further education (Rauf & Baker, 2019). Therefore, engaging in play-based learning enables children to use and develop thinking skills such as problem-solving, reasoning, and lateral thinking.

Play-based learning offers children the opportunity to interact with others, develop communication strategies and work in collaboration with peers and adults. As children are empowered to make decisions and initiate play, they become confident and self-motivated learners. This enhances their responsibility and self-regulation skills. Play-based learning also provides children with many opportunities to resolve conflict, challenge unfair play and embrace diversity (Mekonnen, 2016). Moreover,

play-based learning provides for early childhood children to express their feelings, appreciate beauty and learn numbers (MoE, 2002).

Vygotsky (1978) stresses the importance of play through social interaction and language expression. As children explore the world, they learn to communicate and express themselves naturally. Besides, play creates a zone of proximal development in children. That is, during play, children tend to behave above their average age and above their daily behaviours. Vygotsky supports the idea that adults and peers naturally scaffold young children's play while nurturing situations that allow creativity and imagination throughout the preschool years into adulthood (Berk, 1994).

In contrast, Piaget (1951) asserts that children construct knowledge through interaction with others and by acting on their environment. Piaget (1951) highlights the relationship between play and cognitive development; whereby children could reach a higher level of cognitive development through the process of assimilation of experience through play.

Play is so important to the optimal development of children that, it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child (UNICEF, 2013). Thus, it has become a necessity for National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) to adopt it as the heart of the new standard-based curriculum, which is currently being implemented by the Ghana Education Service (GES).

In the same vein, Malaysia's National Standard Preschool Curriculum (KSPK) by the Ministry of Education (Malaysia, 2017) highlights play as one of the approaches that are highly recommended to be used throughout the classrooms (Whiteman, 2018). As

highlighted by NAEYC (2009), play is an important factor in helping the holistic development of children. Play contributes to the aspects of cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development of children (Rosli & Lin, 2018; Ali & Mahamod, 2015).

These notwithstanding, there are growing concerns on how play is used by teachers in the classrooms (Genishi, Ryan, Ochsner & Yarnall, 2001). Interestingly, in Ghana, little is known about how play is used in Ghanaian early childhood educational settings (Abdulai, 2014; Rauf & Baker, 2019). Generally, when it comes to Ghana, there are some perceptions that play hovers around chaos and harmony (Abdulai, 2014, Whiteman, 2018).

Parents are wary of play being incorporated into their children's learning and believe that a school is a place for learning and not for playing. Parents view play as separated from learning and perceive no benefits of play in the school setting (Rauf & Baker, 2019; Samuelsson & Johansson, 2006). Teachers who believe this are often planning their activities with a heavy reliance on teacher-directed learning with difficulties in interpreting children's learning (McInnes et al., 2011; Walsh et al., 2010). Additionally, parents' high academic expectations have caused them to put pressure on schools and teachers to prepare their children with academic knowledge and skills necessary for the present as well as future life (Whiteman, 2018). Hence, teachers are expected to employ direct instruction rather than engage their pupils in play-based activities.

In spite of the role of play-based activities in the growth and development of young children, some proponents of more academically rigorous programs for young children view play and learning as mutually exclusive, clearly favoring 'serious' learning and wanting teachers to spend more time on specific academic content

(Bodrova & Leong, 2003). The process of teaching and learning using play-based activities is a structured approach that provides learners with the opportunity to learn in a meaningful and positive way (Loy, 2017). Children develop cooperative skills and display appropriate social behavior when they are engaged in meaningful play (Rauf & Baker, 2019).

Play is often perceived as beneficial for young children though there exists a mismatch between teachers' beliefs and their practices (Whiteman, 2018) but the question is; do play and learning have to compete? Research on early learning and development affirms that when children are properly supported in their play, the play does not take away from learning but contributes to it (Bergen, 2002). This highlights the need to examine the use of play-based activities in teaching and learning by early childhood education teachers in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In recent years, play-based learning has attracted attention, debate, and controversy across different national contexts (Bubikova, 2019). Play-based activities are important for children's growth and development. Children who play are better able to develop holistically (Rauf & Baker, 2019).

The process of building many aspects of children's development will be more effective if the curriculum of the children's education is based on play activities (Rauf & Baker, 2019; Dewi et al., 2017; Setyaningsih & Wahyuni, 2018). In addition to this, many educators expressed value for the idea that young children should learn through play and believed that learning is an active, engaged, and exploratory process for young children.

Play deprivation during the first ten (10) years of life appears to be linked to poor early child development, later leading to depression, difficulty in adapting to change, poorer self-control, and a greater tendency to addiction as well as fragile and shallower interpersonal relationships (Brown & Vaughan, 2010).

Despite the depth of evidence of the contribution of play to childhood learning and development from Jean Piaget's *Play, Dreams, and Imitation* (1932), Singer, Golinko, and Hirsh-Pasek's *Play-based learning* (2006); play-based learning has recently been shunted aside in early childhood education programs in favor of more teacher-directed instruction to address early learning standards. A study by Nicolopoulou (2010), revealed that, in several countries, a growing concern has simultaneously been voiced regarding the alarming disappearance of play' from ECE practice. Furthermore, it has been said that children are missing out on opportunities to play due to the pressure that is on them to focus on their academic pursuits (Daubert et al., 2018; Irvin, 2017).

Various studies were conducted on play in pre-schools. Of a concern are findings highlighting a large number of “obstacles to incorporating play in school settings” (Rauf & Baker, 2019). Most schools or teachers are not giving enough attention to the emphasis on the play-based pedagogy because they are too eager for their learners to read as soon as possible and apply formal education rather than fun learning (Ismail, 2015). Most stakeholders increasingly regard play-based learning as a waste of instructional time with no clear benefits for academic outcomes. In addition, many early childhood schools have reduced or even eliminated play-based learning from their schedules. As a result, socio-dramatic play and domestic play areas have been disappearing from early childhood classrooms (Lester & Russell, 2008).

A study in Ghana revealed that, play use in teaching and learning has not been regular, and play materials are not readily available (Abdulai, 2014). Putch and Ali (2012) also asserted that implementing play-based pedagogy is a difficult task if one does not possess the knowledge and skills relating to this approach. As a result, many programs in schools and child centers employ strategies such as the use of drills and practice while neglecting play-based activities in the teaching and learning process (Miller & Almon, 2009).

The problem is not different in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District (which was the focus of this study). It appears that many ECE teachers in the district have either reduced or eliminated play-based activities in their instructional practices, despite the emphasis of the Ghanaian early childhood curriculum to be provided through play (NaCCA, 2019). Possible factors resulting in teachers' limited use of play for teaching and learning could be due to inadequate in-service training on how best to incorporate play into instructional practices to the merits of the learners, limited time allocations, as well as space and insufficient resources for play activities (Putch, 2013).

A report by the then early childhood coordinator in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District revealed that play is rarely used by most public schools, both in and outside classroom teaching and learning activities (2019/2020). In February, 2020, a workshop organized by the District Education Directorate for public ECE teachers dubbed “Classroom Creative Pedagogies and Play” revealed that, very little significance is given to play-based learning within the district.

Researchers in the field of early childhood have explored play-based activities, both locally and internationally (Abdulai, 2014, Damanhuri, 2017, Putch, 2013, Rauf & Baker, 2019). In similar study, such as those undertaken by Njoki (2007) and Zins

(2004), indicate a close relationship between play activities and children's cognitive and physical development. Again, a study by (Issah, 2022) focused on play activities and social development in the Nanton district. These researchers centered their key findings on the effect of play on social, cognitive and psychomotor development of the child but failed to address how play-based pedagogy was used by ECE teachers in their classrooms. Hence there is the need to address the gap in scope which would examine the use of play-based activities in teaching and learning by ECE teachers in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore for a first-hand information, how early childhood education teachers use play-based activities in teaching and learning in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District of the Central Region of Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. examine ECE teachers' views on play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District.
2. establish how ECE teachers use play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District.
3. assess Teaching Learning Resources (TLRs) that ECE teachers use to facilitate play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District.
4. establish challenges that confront ECE teachers with the use of play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What are ECE teachers' views on play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District?
2. How do ECE teachers use play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District?
3. How do ECE teachers use TLRs to facilitate play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District?
4. What are the challenges confronting ECE teachers with the use of play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will be a significant endeavor in promoting play-based activities in the early childhood learning environments. It will also be beneficial to curriculum developers and ECE teachers in strategic management when they employ effective play-based learning activities in their classroom settings particularly, in different concepts that will facilitate the growth and development of the learners.

Moreover, this study will provide recommendations on how ECE teachers will effectively and efficiently use the play-based activities in accordance to the holistic development of early childhood learners. Furthermore, this research will educate stakeholders (parents, guardians, and teachers) on the need to embrace and support the use of play-based learning activities in the ECE centers. For other researchers, the study can be a source of valuable up-to-date information which can be very useful for their similar studies on the subject matter.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to only Hemang Lower Denkyira District in the Central Region of Ghana. Contextually, the study focused on how early childhood education teachers use play-based activities in their teaching and learning. Interview was used to collect data from nine (9) professional ECE teachers and the district ECE coordinator on the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching and learning by ECE teachers in public schools. Observational guide was also used to collect data from the nine (9) ECE teachers to support or substantiate the data from the interview. The reason for the choice of the district is the cultural diversity of the people. It also has a blend of both rural and peri-urban schools with both professional and non-professional teachers. Again, the study focused on ECE teachers from public schools in only one circuit out of the six circuits in the district.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

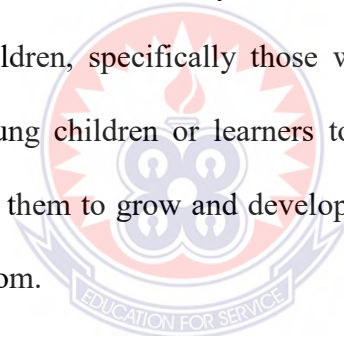
The study depended on the views, opinions, beliefs and attitudes of participants from the Hemang Lower Denkyira District; hence, the generalization of the findings is not recommended to other Districts. Another limitation of the study was the unwillingness of some of the participants to avail themselves for the interview sessions. As a result of this, four (4) of the teachers denied themselves to be interviewed for the study. This however, did not affect the study since the data reached the saturated point on the 9th participant. Again, the study needed a lot of resources such as human resources, financial resources and time resources for its completion in a valid and reliable manner. Therefore, inadequate resources may limit its validity and reliability. Also, there is the possibility of bias that the participants may give answers they consider to be acceptable (socially or academically) without necessarily being truthful about the use of play-based activities in teaching and learning by ECE teachers.

1.9 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Play-based learning activities: they are the activities that facilitate children's learning while at play. It is the principal source for holistic development and healthy growth in early childhood. It enables children to test and develop ideas, to learn to communicate with others, to develop motor skills, and to feel and control their own emotions.

Play-based Pedagogy: is a way of integrating children's play experiences with curricular learning, giving pupils the flexibility to find their own solutions to both new and existing problems.

Early childhood education teachers: they are individuals who have specialization in working with young children, specifically those who are 4 to 8 years old. These educators work with young children or learners to create a positive and nurturing learning environment for them to grow and develop holistically and feel comfortable in and around the classroom.



1.10 Organisation of the Study

The chapter one of this study focused on the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, the delimitations and limitations. Chapter two reviewed related literature under the following themes on the use of play-based activities in teaching and learning by ECE teachers: Theoretical framework, Conceptual review, and empirical review. Chapter three covered the research methodology: it included the research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection, and data presentation procedures among others. In chapter four, the results

and analysis of data were presented. Chapter five presented the summary of the findings, recommendations, conclusions, and suggestions for further studies.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

Literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers (Kombo & Tromp, 2006), therefore, this chapter reviews the literature relevant to the use of play-based activities. The chapter discusses ECE teachers understanding of play-based activities, How ECE teachers use play-based activities, TLR's that ECE teachers use to facilitate play-based activities and the challenges that confront ECE teachers with the use of the play-based activities.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study employed Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory. The theory was chosen by the researcher because of its relations to the study and child development in the field of education. The sociocultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process where culture is a primary determinant of knowledge acquisition (Kurt, 2020). Nagel (2012) argues that sociocultural theory "reflects the view that learning and development is not just a process of increased mental sophistication but is also mediated through social and cultural interactions. Bates (2019) on the other hand opined that, through socio-cultural theory, "knowledge and interactions are constructed through social interactions with family, friends, teachers, and peers. According to Leonard (2002, p. 178), "sociocultural theory focuses on the causal relationship between social interaction and individual cognitive development."

From the above definitions, one could attest to the fact that Socio-cultural theorists believe that learning happens as a result of social interactions and takes place within a specific cultural context (Bates, 2019; Leonard, 2002; Nagel, 2012).

In another deduction, the social-cultural theory focuses not only on how adults and peers influence individual learning but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how learning occurs. This implies that the logical extension of this belief is that children learn differently depending on their social environments. The sociocultural theory also explains that children develop their ways of thinking by internalizing the thought patterns of others.

According to Powell and Kalina (2009), Vygotsky believed that social interactions are important during the stages of individual development and that interactions are the pathway for the development of a child's thinking. Vygotsky stressed that children in the right setting, with the right set of directions, can experience success through play (Bartlett, 2011). Additionally, Vygotsky maintained that the social world is not only the interactions between peers and their teacher but also consisted of outside influences within the community (Kurt, 2020). Therefore, prior knowledge, such as learned behaviors at home, impacts learning in the classroom environment.

In socio-cultural theory, learners and teachers form relationships in the classroom to help the learner learn. The relationships help facilitate social interaction and active participation in the learning tasks. Learners learn through observation, listening, and talking through their tasks. Social interaction is the ability of the child to interact with peers, adults, and or the environment. Play is a social activity that is relevant to children's lives, engage their natural curiosity, and serves as a means that helps children to reach their possible level.

The socio-cultural theory suggests that human learning is largely a social process. One activity that takes place in school where there is much social interaction is play. The play has been the work of every child since time memorial and it is beneficial for

children to be allowed to play since it helps them to engage their natural curiosity. Every play activity is based on the beliefs and attitudes of a given group of people within a particular cultural context. This attests that children learn their beliefs and culture through play-based activities. Study proves that social interaction is key to play activities (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, whenever there is a play activity, there is some kind of interaction that goes on between peers, or adults and the environment in which the play is taking place.

In the context of the teaching and learning process, when play-based activities are used, learners can establish relationships between themselves and their teachers which in turn foster interaction and active participation in the learning. Learners learn how to observe, imitate, listen, share, take turns and talk through their learning tasks. The play-based activities in every learning environment are based on the culture of the individual learners where learning becomes a social process. That is, whenever play-based activities are used in the classroom, the cultural background of the learners is being taken into considerations for effective learning to occur. It is believed that, when early childhood learners are taught in their cultural settings, they can conceptualize the concept for effective understanding.

Socio-cultural theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky, emphasizes the importance of social interactions, cultural context, and the role of language in cognitive development. Play-based activities, on the other hand, involve learning through playful, exploratory, and engaging activities that are relevant to the child's interests and needs. In the classroom, socio-cultural theory and play-based activities can be linked in several ways to enhance learning;

Collaboration: Socio-cultural theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions in learning. Play-based activities can provide opportunities for children to collaborate with their peers, share ideas, and develop social skills.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): Socio-cultural theory also highlights the concept of the ZPD, which is the range of tasks that a child can perform with assistance. Play-based activities can be designed to scaffold learning and provide support for children to engage in tasks that are just beyond their current level of ability.

Cultural relevance: Socio-cultural theory emphasizes the importance of cultural context in learning. Play-based activities can be designed to incorporate the child's cultural background and interests, making learning more meaningful and relevant.

Language development: Socio-cultural theory emphasizes the role of language in cognitive development. Play-based activities can provide opportunities for children to use and develop language skills in a natural and engaging way.

In summary, socio-cultural theory and play-based activities can be linked in the classroom to create a learning environment that is collaborative, scaffolded, culturally relevant, and language-rich. This can enhance children's motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes.

2.1.1 Implications of the theory on the study

Fundamentally, Vygotsky recognized that social settings and learning were closely intertwined. Therefore, teachers must identify and use strategies that are effective in a social context. It is also important to note that the culture of each individual is created by their unique strengths, language and prior experiences. One of the ways that

children gain knowledge is when they collaborate with their peers or teachers on activities that involve problem-solving skills and real-life tasks. Bodrova and Leong (2007) argued that a child without play experiences is likely to show deficits in his or her cognitive and social-emotional development. They believed that play-based activities have a unique role for children's development which cannot be replaced by other activities, though children benefit from a variety of other experiences.

The education system influences the thoughts and beliefs of the children within. This is because teachers and peers directly affect cognitive development by the language they use and the interpretations they offer of cultural events. Teachers are therefore expected to be co-constructors of the curriculum where learning through play will be developmentally and culturally appropriate. Also, they are to extend children's play and scaffold when and where it deemed appropriate.

Vygotsky suggested that adults and peers within a child's social circle influence their perspectives, values, and attitudes. Individuals are actively engaging within their learning environments, continuously analyzing the reactions of others and modifying their responses as they adopt or reject accepted standards as their own. Both learning and culture are inter-dependent. That is, individuals are constantly determining what is acceptable in society, and the environment is continuously confirming what would be considered appropriate behavior. The implication is that, learners will be able to modify and adjust to cultural behaviours if play-based learning is effectively used by early childhood educators.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

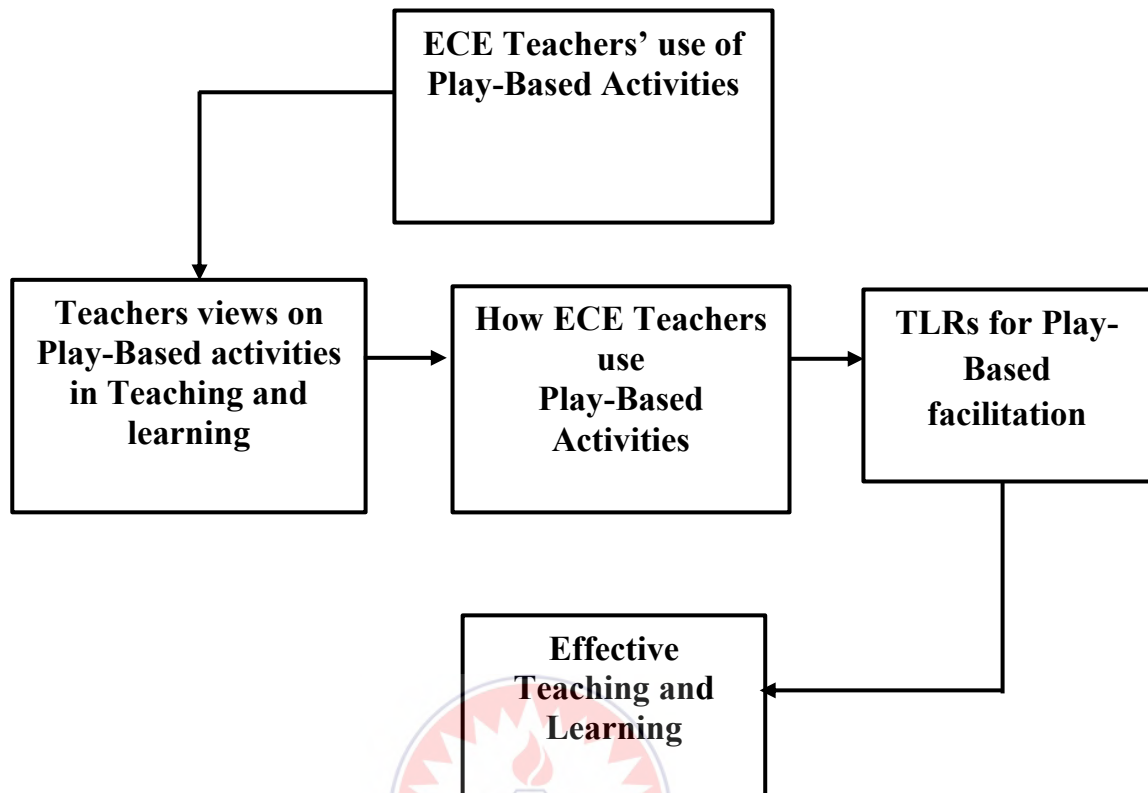


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on ECE Teachers' use of Play-based activities

Source: Construct developed by the Researcher, (2023).

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the variables in this current study. From the framework, the ECE Teachers' use of play-based activities involves teachers' understanding of play-based pedagogy in teaching and learning, how ECE teachers use play-based activities and TLRs for play-based facilitation. Teachers' understanding of play-based activities in teaching relates to how ECE teachers use play-based activities and TLRs for play-based facilitation at ECE centres. This means when ECE teachers have good understanding of play-based activities in teaching, it would influence how they use play-based activities in teaching and the use of TLRs to facilitate play-based activities at the ECE centres which further leads to effective teaching and learning.

2.3 Empirical Review

This session of the study reported methods and findings of other studies that are similar to the topic under study. The review included the following;

A quantitative approach was used by Putch and Ali (2013) to conduct a study in Malaysia on the topic “preschool teachers’ perceptions towards the use of play- based approach in language and literacy development for preschool”. A structured questionnaire survey was the main instrument used for data collection. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 60 respondents for a survey. Out of the 60 participants, 51 completed the survey. For the researchers to gain additional insights into teachers’ perceptions, 12 respondents were purposely selected from this group to be interviewed. One-way ANOVA was used to analyze data from the survey.

The findings of the study revealed that teachers have a positive response towards a play-based approach in preschoolers’ language and literacy development. They believed children like to play and are actively involved in play. However, they were unsure about the use of play-based approach. Issues and constraints such as time allocation for play activities, limited and unsuitable space for play, and lack of knowledge and skills required to use developmentally appropriate teaching including play, made them resort to a didactic teacher-directed approach in their classrooms. To agree with the suggestions of the study, in order for teachers to be able to effectively use play as a teaching technique, the Ministry of Education is to take actions of providing information, continuous supervision, support and training to enable teachers to change their perceptions and beliefs towards the use of play-based approach.

Another study was conducted by Kekesi et al., 2019 on the topic “Early Childhood Education Teachers' Perceptions on the Use of Play as a Teaching Technique in

Afadjato South District of the Volta Region, Ghana”. The study employed the mixed method approach. A sample of 120 participants was used comprising 100 kindergarten teachers, 10 basic school heads and 10 school supervisors. Purposive, simple random and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the participants. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data while thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data.

The study concluded that early childhood teachers in Afadjato South District had good intentions on the use of play as a teaching technique. Also, kindergarten teachers could use play as a teaching technique depending on their perception towards play. Moreover, factors that contributed to kindergarten teachers’ use of play as a teaching technique was; availability of play materials, the kind of motivation teachers receive and their teaching experiences.

To resonate with the recommendations of the study, head teachers should encourage early childhood teachers in Afadjato South District to continuously have positive perception towards play as a teaching technique through in-service training. Also, personnel in charge of supervision at the Afadjato South District Education Directorate should educate kindergarten teachers to use play as a teaching technique. This could help them use it more often in their lesson delivery; hence, could help children have a better understanding of lessons taught.

Tarimo (2013), also conducted a study to establish the determinants of pre-primary school teachers’ use of play as a teaching strategy in Mwanga District, in the northern part of Tanzania. A descriptive survey design was employed and Maher’s Personal Investment Theory was used to establish the relationship between factors and the use

of play as a teaching strategy. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 pre-primary schools with all the teachers in the sampled schools forming the study sample. The data collected was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data.

The study concluded that, about half of the respondents did not use play as a teaching strategy. Again, both public and private school teachers' status of training and teachers' experience showed a relationship with the use of play. However, most of the teachers in public schools were untrained. Play materials and play facilities were missing in most schools with public schools having far much less play materials than their counterpart in private schools. In several instances, there were discrepancies between observed and reported use of play materials. Teachers appeared to over report on their use of play as a teaching strategy as most of the observed play materials seemed dilapidated

The implication is that, the discrepancy in the use of play as a teaching strategy between public and private schools may persist especially if deliberate measures to reverse or mitigate the gap between the two types of schools are ignored. It also suggests that the teaching mode in public schools is not as child centered as it is supposed to be.

In a study of Abdulai (2014), to determine the "place of play in Ghana's early childhood education" in the Tamale metropolis of northern Ghana, indicated that; play use in teaching has not been regular, and play materials are not readily available. Additionally, the study revealed that lack of space for play is also a challenge that early childhood educators are confronted with when it comes to using play to teach.

Furthermore, parental preference for other activities aside play was an identified challenge.

The study adopted the qualitative research approach of the survey type. Questionnaire was used to seek for participants responses on a number of open-ended questions grouped into six categories. The study participants were 108 early childhood educators drawn from public and private early childhood centers in the Tamale metropolis. From the findings of the study, it could be argued that, teachers, though have positive perception towards the play-based activities, have resorted to using the deductive approach to teaching because they are confronted with some challenges which impede on their abilities to integrate play in their teaching and learning.

Similarly, another study was conducted in 2018, by Pyle et al on the topic; “The Challenges of Promoting Literacy Integration within a Play-based Learning Kindergarten Program: Teacher Perspectives and Implementation”. A qualitative approach was employed for the study and semi structured teacher interviews and video data were collected in 12 participating classrooms. Results revealed three common challenges with integrating play and literacy learning: direct instruction plays a key instructional role, play is less structured and difficult to plan, and teachers feeling uncertain about how to implement guided play.

The findings of the study suggest that, kindergarten teacher’s inability to structure, plan and integrate play-based activities in literacy lessons have caused them to groom themselves to the use of the direct instruction in their classrooms. These findings point to the need for teachers to be trained with respect to implementing play-based activities for literacy learning, as well as strategies for balancing direct instruction with play-based approaches.

Additionally, Ameyaw, (2019) employed descriptive design to examine the use of TLRs of teaching mathematics and influence on pupil's performance in the Cape Coast metropolis. The results of the study conform to the study made by Ampiah, (2008) who stated in his work that, teacher's usage of "chalk and talk" method does not enhance the understanding of pupils. But using structured method and available teaching and learning materials effectively enhances the understanding of pupils. This shows that teachers should make good use of TLRs available at their disposal.

The study led to a recommendation that teachers and head teachers should solicit for teaching and learning resources from NGOs, stakeholders of education, GES and other educational units that can provide help in delivery of TLRs to the school.

Similarly, Oppong Frimpong (2021) Used a case study design to collect data in the form of interview and observation on the role of teaching and learning materials and interaction as a tool to quality early childhood education in Agona East District of the Central Region of Ghana. The findings suggested that participants perceived TLRs as very important factor in ensuring QECE provision. Again, TLRs were not readily available and so the children could not interact with them. The study further revealed that the unavailable nature of the TLRs hindered children's accessibility and active interaction with them. The findings further revealed that interaction could not feature prominently in the provision of the ECE due to unavailability and inaccessibility of TLRs.

Based on the findings, it was suggested that teachers and providers of ECE should ensure that TLRs are made available and accessible to learners to interact with. Teachers should also devise innovative ways of creating and developing TLRs from

their locality. Moreover, they should encourage and promote children's active interaction with the TLRs, as this is a sure way of achieving learning.

Furthermore, a study by Ntumi, (2016), examined the challenges that pre-school teachers encounter in the implementation of the early childhood curriculum; exploring teaching methods employed by pre-schools teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The study employed descriptive survey as the research design. A convenient sampling technique was used to select participants for the study. The instruments used to elicit information from the respondents were a structured questionnaire.

The key findings of the study revealed that pre-school teachers are faced with a lot of challenges in implementing the early childhood curriculum. A notable one among them are that, most pre-school teachers do not understand the early childhood curriculum, pre-school teachers do not have enough teaching and learning materials to help them implement the Early childhood curriculum, parents do not involve themselves in their wards education therefore it makes it difficult for pre-school teachers to do the work alone. It was also revealed that teaching and learning materials are the main factors that influence the implementation of the early childhood curriculum.

The study recommended that private proprietors and government authorities overseeing the pre-school program should organize frequent in-service training for both teachers and parents with respect to early childhood education curriculum. To resonate with the findings and the recommendation of the study, it is imperative to organise frequent and consistent in-service training for both teachers and parents in order to broaden their knowledge on play-based approach. This will in turn help them

know and accept their responsibilities so that, they can contribute their quota effectively without doubts towards the use of the play-based approach.

The study of Aras and Merdin, (2020) revealed that, there are differences among teachers' play-based teaching strategies and most of the teachers observed as using play-based teaching practices. The participants believed in the importance of play-based teaching; however, shortcomings were observed in some of the teachers' practices. The study aimed to investigate early childhood teachers' perceptions and experiences of play-based teaching. The study employed qualitative approach and data for the study were gathered from six teachers through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The study was analysed thematically.

It could be argued from the findings of the study that, though most of the teachers believed in the importance of play-based approach towards the holistic development of early childhood learners, however, some of the teachers were seen to have challenges towards the implementation. These challenges may impede teachers' abilities of effective implementation of play-based approach which will affect the holistic development of the learners.

2.4 Concept of Play-Based Activities

Since the early 2000s, there has been a shift towards recommending the use of play-based activities in early childhood curricula across several different countries of which Ghana is not exempted (Pyle et al, 2018). Play-based activities are activities that facilitate learning while at play and Play-based learning is, essentially, to learn while at play. Although the exact definition of play continues to be an area of debate in research, including what activities can be counted as play (Wallersted & Pramling,

2012), Piaget viewed play as a way for children to unify experiences, knowledge and understanding.

Learning is not necessary for an activity to be perceived as play but remains fundamental to the definition of play-based learning (Pyle et al, 2017). Within studies that have examined the benefits of play-based learning, two different types of play have been the primary focus; free play, which is directed by the children themselves (Fleer, 2011), and guided play, which is play that has some level of teacher guidance or involvement (Fisher et al., 2013).

In a child-centered early childhood environment, teachers incorporate play into the daily curriculum. Learners have the opportunity to explore their learning environment employing free-play as well as through teacher-initiated play (Graue, 2009). Free-play is a play that is initiated by the child (Graue, 2009). It is child-directed, voluntary, internally motivated and pleasurable (Ashiabi, 2007; Miller & Almon, 2009). Thus, free-play allows learners to develop social relationships among themselves, the opportunity to choose their own level of challenge, and the overall ability to make their own decisions (Ashiabi, 2007).

Teacher-initiated play (guided play) is where the teacher is involved in the interactions between learners. The teacher's role is to provide feedback, extend conversations, and bring in appropriate resources (Graue, 2009). With the focus on play-based learning, learners continue to grow and develop appropriately as well as meet the expectations expected of them (Miller & Almon, 2009). From these perspectives, ECE learners are not to be left alone to engage in free play as it is considered not to be sufficient to promote academic learning, instead, active teacher

involvement in play-based activities is very critical (Presser, Clements, Ginsburg, Ertle, 2015).

There is a growing body of evidence in favour of the use of play-based activities to support multiple areas of development and learning. However, there is also a lack of agreement among both researchers and educators regarding the role and value of different types of play in the classrooms (Lillard et al., 2013). Proponents of play-based learning activities for academic growth have argued that play-based strategies can be used to teach prescribed academic goals in an engaging and developmentally appropriate manner (Balfanz, Ginsburg, Greenes, 2003; Sarama & Clement, 2006).

2.5 The Essence of the Play-Based Activities in Early Childhood Education

Play over the few years has gained recognition as a tool for teaching and learning in early childhood settings. Studies have confirmed that there is no single definition for play. Froebel (1894) felt that play was a way in which children gain insight into their world and as a means of creative self-expression. White (2004) viewed play as a way in which children learn about the world around them, learn to talk and share and learn about themselves. Play then is considered as a way to foster cognitive as well as social development (Lindon, 2002).

Research findings (Froebel, 1894; White, 2004) purport that, as early childhood learners immerse themselves in play-based activities, they make sense of the world around them. Play-based activities allow the learners to learn and experience things themselves, which is vital for their holistic growth, maturation, and development emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually.

From their earliest days, children develop individual skills, competencies, and interests that form the foundation for all that follows (Berk, 2005). Children at this stage take play seriously as they engage in new activities and develop new skills. Play supports the ability to separate thoughts from actions and objects as well as the capacity to renounce impulsive actions in favor of deliberate self-regulatory activity (Berk, 1994). Play-based activities do not only serve as a means of self-expression but also as an indicator of emotional and social adjustment. The implication is that, when children are engaged in play-based activities, they can build their self-confidence and self-esteem (Berk, 2005; Cordes & Ibrahim, 1999).

Play-based learning activities also help learners to understand and appreciate the need to attend, stay in school, and perform better socially and academically (NaCCA, 2019). Play is, therefore, a very essential and important part of a child's life. Play-based activities help learners to develop emotionally, mentally, physically and also create bonding between themselves and their teachers. It is through play that a child's aptitude and personality can be fully explored. Through play, social skills are also developed in children which helps them to be aware of other people who are around their lives and learn how to respect others (Cheong, 2011).

Vygotsky argued that children learn from the beliefs and attitudes modeled by their culture. Since play-based pedagogy is used based on the cultural beliefs of the individual learners within a particular cultural setting, it is believed that, children will learn to accept, appreciate and adapt to the beliefs and culture of their society. Therefore, with the appropriate use of play-based activities, social values and cultural beliefs shall be inculcated in the learners and this will eventually help promote and sustain the authentic culture of the various societies in Ghana.

2.6 ECE Teachers' views on the use of Play-Based Activities

Early childhood education in Ghana has continued to receive increasing attention because of the government's commitment to quality education at all levels. The 2006 ECE curriculum, which focused on six learning areas (language and literacy, environmental studies, numeracy, creative activities, music, dance and drama, and physical development, recommends the facilitation of children's learning through play-based pedagogy (Dzamesi & Heerden, 2020). In the same view, the 2019 standard-based curriculum, which is currently being used by the Ghana Education Services (GES) focuses on the acquisition of skills in the 4Rs of Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic, and cReativity by all learners within the early childhood category.

The curriculum is to be provided through play-based activities for effective teaching and learning to occur. It is believed that learners learn better in a positive learning environment, where they feel emotionally and physically safe to enjoy learning, play-based learning this curriculum has at its heart. The recommendation is viewed as an effort to reform early childhood (KG-B3) education in Ghana.

However, to successfully use this play-based curriculum in the classroom, it is essential to have teachers or facilitators who possess the requisite content knowledge and pedagogical skills and are confident of their ability to guide and facilitate meaningful learning through play-based activities in a familiar context (Dzamesi & Heerden, 2020).

It has been observed that most ECE teachers lack the in-depth understanding towards the use of play-based pedagogy. The use of a Play-based activities aligned approach is both questioned and challenged by a recognized lack of appropriate professional development provided to teachers (Aiono, McLaughlin & Riley, 2019; Blucher,

Aspden, & Jackson 2018). This assumption is supported by research findings (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2011; Buabeng-Andoh, 2012) and commissioned reports (Associates for Change, 2016; Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, 2012) which indicated that early childhood education teachers are ill-prepared to use the recommended play-based pedagogy successfully. Some of the reasons suggested for this unreadiness are the inadequate content coverage of play-based pedagogy at the pre-service level (Sofu, Thompson & Kanton, 2015; Tamanja, 2016) and the absence of continuing in-service professional development programs to address some of the knowledge and skills-related challenges (Vorkapic & Katic, 2015; Hedge et al, 2009; Hedge et al. 2014).

It has been reported that, the kind of perceptions/views school supervisors and teachers have towards play could influence its use as a teaching technique (Kekesi et al., 2019). The findings connote that, if early childhood teachers have positive perceptions towards play, they will use it as a technique of teaching. However, if they have negative perceptions, it could adversely influence its use as a teaching technique.

Again, the study concluded that most ECE teachers have positive views about play-based activities but inadequate understanding made them unsure on how and when to incorporate it into their lessons to the benefit of the learners. This led to a recommendation that, head teachers and supervisors should consider regular in-service training and also intensify supervision for teachers to be abreast with the requisite knowledge and skills towards the use of play-based pedagogy.

A research by Aras (2016) and Lemay et al. (2016) which focused on early childhood educators' perspectives on the significance of play and its use, proved that teachers perceived/viewed play-based activities as an important element for children's learning

and development but did not demonstrate intervention to further support a play-based pedagogy due to lack of understanding of the play-based pedagogy.

Putch and Ali (2013), in their study, revealed that many teachers do not adopt play-based activities into their language teaching instructions because they lack in-depth understanding on how to integrate play activities into classroom instruction. Also. They reported that, though preschool teachers endorsed the importance of the play-based pedagogy, they never prioritized its use. They expressed that, time allocation, materials management, large class size, inappropriate space, teachers' skill, and poor support from administrators and parents are the main reasons why play has been sidelined.

Lynch (2015); Pyle et al. (2017); Van Oers (2014), also purported that, teachers' views/understanding of play-based pedagogy are influenced by the curriculum requirements, as well as teachers pre-service training, and ongoing professional development. These inadequate knowledge and skills have caused many teachers to continue to use formal teacher-directed instruction in their lesson delivery. It could also be argued that these teachers perceive play and learning as two separate entities.

Other studies suggested that teachers should understand the importance of play as an important mode of learning and a means of supporting wellbeing in children (Pyle et al., 2017; Tsai, 2015). Similarly, literature reports that teachers remain positive in their perspectives/views of the value of play-based pedagogy but yet its use in early stages of children's education has been fraught by the complexities of a curriculum-based education system that limits teaching important skills, such as emotional and social skills, and as a trade-off revert to traditional methods of learning (Fung & Cheng, 2012; Lemay et al., 2016; Martlew et al., 2011).

In the findings above, the researcher can conclude that teachers in our various early childhood centers have positive views about play-based pedagogy. They also appreciate the fact that learners learn better when they are engaged in developmentally appropriate play-based activities in a responsive learning environment where teachers serve as facilitators; providing warmth and care, feedback, guidance, support, and designing the learning environment to suit individual differences that may exist among learners.

Teachers believe that play-based learning is an important way to develop active learning where learners use their brains in lots of ways to explore their world and build on their natural and social environments around them. Nonetheless, some early childhood teachers also believe that they don't see the need to incorporate play-based activities into their lessons since young children are most often allowed to go out for a free play with little or no guidance or supervision (Kekesi et al., 2019).

There is a debate in the literature (Graue, 2009; Ashiabi, 2007) that one factor that accounts for the limited use of play in kindergarten was the kind of perception/views teachers hold regarding play as a teaching technique. That is, some preschool educators believe that play as a teaching technique is not effective while others think otherwise (Eberle, 2011).

It has been observed that ECE teachers' inability to integrate play-based activities into their lessons is not deliberate but their inadequate knowledge and skills to enhance their understanding have made them handicap and that has caused the utilization of play activities to be irregular in our early childhood centers (Putch and Ali, 2013; Sofu, Thompson and Kanton, 2015; Tamanja, 2016), despite the emphasis on its use in the current standard-based curriculum. Izumi Taylor, Samuelsson and Rogers

(2010), argued that teachers' views or understanding of play-based activities impacted children's learning experiences. Thus, ECE teachers need to understand the appropriate teaching approach, such as learning through play and its role in early childhood development. Teachers who fail to use appropriate teaching approaches, according to the development stage, may struggle to help children reach their potentials (Putch & Ali, 2013).

2.7 How ECE Teachers use Play-Based Activities

Play enhances many aspects of children's holistic development. The process of building a child's holistic development will be more effective if the curriculum of the children's education is based on fun learning and play-based activities. Children will learn skills, concepts, gain knowledge and understand issues around them in a fun and meaningful way. Putch and Ali (2012) asserted that incorporating play-based activities into lessons is a difficult task if one does not possess the knowledge and skills relating to this approach. According to Abdulai (2014); Kekesi et al. (2019) and Dzamssi and Heerden (2020) stated that early childhood education teachers have positive views about play-based pedagogy but they are unsure of how best to incorporate it to the benefit of the learners. In relation to this, early childhood teachers' understanding and views in relation to play and learning have great impact on their pedagogical decisions and practices such as classroom arrangement, the level of their involvement in children's play, and the provision of support to children (Einarsdottir, 2014; Fleer, 2013).

The factors which have caused most early childhood teachers to overlook the essence of use of play-based activities may include one of these six categories; policy mandates and curricular concerns, parental attitudes and beliefs, teacher education and

qualifications, collegiate peer pressure, structural challenges, and children's characteristics (Bubikova-Moan, Hjetland & Wollscheid, 2019). Mastura (2008) reiterated that play focuses on children's natural characteristics and that learning through play is the most appropriate approach in the early childhood curriculum. Nonetheless, the Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction revealed that managing play-based activities is one of the most challenging tasks that teachers in Malaysia have to face. Other studies have shown that many ECE teachers never prioritize the use of the play-based approach in their teaching instruction because they do not possess skills in planning and organizing activities and in using materials and resources effectively during play-based learning (Saayah, 2004; Fauziah, 2009; Sharifah et al., 2009).

A study into play-based activities in Ghana indicated that the play-based activities seem to be on a lower side as far as teaching and learning are concerned (Kekesi et al, 2019; Abdulai, 2014). Another school of thought indicated that there are several ways by which educators/teachers can facilitate children's learning through play-based activities at the early childhood centers (Fisher et al., 2010; Burton, 2011). Now, the bone of contention is; how do teachers incorporate or use play-based activities in and outside their classroom when they are less knowledgeable and skillful about the approach? In contrast with the findings of Kashin, Burton, and Fisher et al., „there could be several ways to integrate play into learning activities by early childhood educators but the question is; how should they go about it? Does the curriculum policies give clear guidance or procedures as to how teachers should use the play-based pedagogy? To agree with the report by Sabre Charitable Trust, 2017; it was categorically stated that, almost half of all early childhood teachers in Ghana have never received any formal training. This report is inconsonant with the findings of a

study by Tarimo, 2013 in Tanzania; which indicates that the majority of the teachers in public early childhood schools in the country are simply adopted from higher primary school classes revealing that their competence towards teaching early childhood classes is questionable. Per the findings above, one can easily observe that such teachers may have difficulties to integrate play-based activities into lessons for effective learning to take place and also to meet the demand of the pedagogy.

In spite of the numerous benefits of play-based activities towards the holistic development of the early childhood learner, it appears that, the how early childhood educators use play-based pedagogy in the Ghanaian early childhood centers has been very seldom. Studies have shown that most teachers lack the requisite skills to organize and use materials in a playful learning situation for the benefit of the learners. For effective use of play-based activities in the Ghanaian early childhood education, teachers must be trained to enhance their attitudes and raise their activity levels to be able to direct the quality services delivered (Kinuthia, 2009).

2.8 TLR's That Facilitate Play-Based Activities

The use of TLRs is indispensable in the provision of play-based pedagogy in ECE centres. The professional manner in which the teacher uses TLRs and the opportunities children get to have contact with the TLRs, likewise, plays an important role in ensuring quality learning in ECE settings (Papadakis et al., 2020; Yavuz and Güzel, 2020). Teaching and learning resources have been described in many ways by different authors, educators, and curriculum planners. Teaching and learning resources (TLRs) are alternatively known as instructional media, instructional resources, teaching aids or learning aids in various contexts in several educational materials or documents (Akuamoah et al., 2004).

Teaching learning resources (TLRs) are objects in the learning environment that complements or facilitates understanding of a concept (Zyl, 2012). Ibeneme (2000) opined that TLRs are those materials used in the classrooms or workshops for instruction or demonstration purposes by learners and teachers. These may include traditional materials such as chalkboards, text books, handouts, charts, slides, overheads, real objects, flash cards and videotape or film, as well as newer materials and methods such as computers, DVDs, CD-ROMs, the Internet, and interactive video conferencing.

Research shows that, every person learns by receiving information through the sense organs such as the ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin (Nkuuhe, 1995). TLRs are needed to create an appropriate environment for effective learning. While much teaching has traditionally relied on the pupils' hearing and seeing, the modern trend emphasizes the use of all the senses – hearing, seeing, and smelling, tasting and touching, (Nkuuhe, 1995). Anini (2011) indicates, any TLRs used in the classroom should provide the pupils with the opportunity to learn through all or most of the five senses.

However, Tamakloe et al. (2005) posit that it is important for teachers to be conversant with the materials, equipment or resources which are taken to the classroom or those that have been procured. This knowledge will ensure that the teacher knows what resource(s) are needed for specific lessons or activities, and that they are readily available. When using play-based pedagogy, the teacher must also make sure to select a variety of TLRs which appeal to other senses than that of hearing. Again, in selecting TLRs, the teacher must make sure that they fulfil a function which is relevant and when used, those resources must emphasize particular points raised in the lesson more effectively than can be emphasized without those

resources. Similarly, Oppong Frimpong (2021) supported that, teachers' ability to meaningfully use TLRs in their lessons and to create the necessary environment and opportunities for their children to have access to the TLRs and to manipulate them is key to effective lesson delivery and quality learning outcomes.

According to Kisitu (2008), TLRs afford children the opportunity to have hands-on experiences, which increases and develops their knowledge. Evans et al. (2000) argued that children below the age of eight, in particular, learn best when they have materials/resources they can manipulate. Dewey (1966) posits that sincere knowledge and productive understanding are achieved through manipulating appropriate TLRs. This means that better knowledge and skill acquisition by early childhood learners can be developed through hands-on activity or learning by doing (Yavuz & Güzel, 2020).

The implication of this is that, the success in the teaching and learning process through PBA could be influenced by the resources/materials made available to support it and the direct ways in which these resources/materials are used. Therefore, inadequate TLRs could compromise the quality of play-based pedagogy in an ECE centre. This goes to emphasise that in Ghana, a teacher could be specifically trained in the use of play-based pedagogy and is ready to practice what is learnt through the training, yet, could be constrained by the resources made available to facilitate interactive teaching and learning process (Oppong Frimpong, 2021).

This notwithstanding however, Oppong Frimpong (2017) argues that teachers' ability to meaningfully use TLRs in their lessons and to create the necessary environment and opportunities for their children to have access to the TLRs and to manipulate them is central to the successful use of play-based pedagogy. If, for instance, TLRs are available but only the teacher is allowed to handle them during the teaching and

learning process, it can be said that TLRs have been used but without necessarily being accessible to children to bring about quality learning outcomes. Hence, availability and accessibility of TLRs are important towards the use of play-based pedagogy. Thus, learners' ability to engage and interact with the TLRs is pivotal to the use of play-based pedagogy at the ECE centres (Papadakis et al., 2018, 2016; Papadakis et al., 2020).

Arguably, the kind of perception some stakeholders have about the role of TLRs in relation with PBA in ensuring holistic development of learners can influence its use (Oppong Frimpong, 2021; Kekesi et al., 2019). It can be argued that stakeholders view about a concept, for example, will influence the effort they put into using, defending or presenting it (whatever the case may be). Thus, if stakeholders are of the opinion that TLRs with active learner involvement is paramount to ECE provision, then they will endeavor themselves to providing the needed TLRs and allowing learners to manipulate them for effective use of play-based pedagogy (Yavuz & Güzel, 2020).

However, when these teaching and learning materials are not available, the teacher can improvise with alternatives that can aid effective teaching and learning through PBA (Nantwi, 2016). According to Ghana Education Service Handbook on TLRs, improvisation is the use of material, which are readily available in the environment in place of the original materials, which are not available or are expensive, delicate or sophisticated to bring about the same learning effect.

Improvisation means using whatever is available because one does not have what is really needed (Oxford, 2000). Improvisation is one option for ensuring effective teaching and learning. Improvisation therefore refers to a substitute for the readymade or imported materials (Ibeneme, 2009; Eze, 1995). Aina (2012) believes that teachers

must utilize the discarded resources/materials around them to improvise teaching aids for effective teaching and learning through the use of play-based pedagogy.

As Opoku-Asare (2004) asserted, the local environment abounds with a variety of raw materials and discarded resources that teachers can improvise for effective teaching and learning. Non-availability of TLRs should therefore not hinder effective teaching and learning through play-based pedagogy in ECE centres. This makes it imperative for teachers to use locally available materials to make their own teaching and learning for effective teaching and learning.

That notwithstanding, there are inadequate teaching and learning materials/resources at ECE centers and that has affected the use of play-based pedagogy (Okongo et al., 2015). This was followed by a recommendation that adequate teaching and learning resources should be provided to ensure effective use of play-based pedagogy and more funds to be allocated for procuring teaching and learning materials in order to cater learners' individualities.

Another study suggested that TLRs are not readily available at ECE centers and so the children could not interact with them which hindered the learner's accessibility and active interaction with them (Oppong Frimpong, 2021). The findings further revealed that interaction could not feature prominently in the provision of the ECE due to the unavailability and inaccessibility of TLRs. Again, the study revealed that most schools lack the needed TLRs and play items to make learning and the free play period more meaningful. Although, some materials were available in some ECE centres in that study, they were in very few quantities and were fixed and so the teachers just made reference to them without the learners having the opportunity of touching or manipulating them. Based on the findings of Oppong Frimpong (2021),

the implication is that, unavailability or inadequate TLRs can hamper learners' opportunity to have practical experience of what is being taught. The findings led to a suggestion that teachers and providers of ECE should ensure that TLRs are made available and accessible to learners to interact with. Teachers should also devise innovative ways of creating and developing TLRs from their locality. Moreover, they should encourage and promote children's active interaction with the TLRs, as this is a sure way of achieving learning.

2.9 Challenges with the use of Play-Based Activities

A growing body of research has provided both theoretical and empirical evidence for the use of play-based learning strategies to support areas of development and learning, including social competence (Binder, 2014) and self-regulation abilities (De La Riva & Ryan, 2015). Play-based learning is identified as a vital and important aspect in early childhood settings. Studies show that a majority of curriculum documents address play-based activities and have recognized their significance in the various development in children. The teachers' role is to know about play-based activities and how they can be used as a pedagogical tool in early childhood centers.

That notwithstanding, despite the evidence on the merits of play-based pedagogy, many early childhood educators' resort to using highly prescriptive curricula geared towards new standards and linked to standardized tests (Almon, 2004; McNamee, 2010). Some of the reasons that have resulted in the fewer use of play-based activities in most of the Ghanaian early childhood schools may include but not limited to the following;

There has been an increasing trend in education policy to incorporate more formal learning approaches in early years' curricula (Almon, 2004). Studies in the United

States (Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, & Gryfe, 2008; Kane, 2016), Australia (Theobald et al. 2015), and China, (Wang & Lam, 2017) found out that, early childhood education settings are under increasing pressure to meet formalized learning-centered goals, through more didactic, teacher-directed approaches. The implication for early childhood educators is reflected in the research suggesting that play opportunities may therefore be minimized to meet curriculum requirements and targeted outcomes (Abdulai, 2014).

Gibbons (2013) explains that within such an approach, children do not only spend less time engaged in play-based activities but that the nature of play activities becomes increasingly prescribed by adult interventions. Studies by (Almon, 2004; McNamee, 2010), revealed that constant pressure put on early childhood pupils and teachers to exceed and tackle milestones has caused play-based activities to be pushed out of early childhood settings. The authors further presented that in many early childhood centers, there is no playtime at all and there is no time for teachers to incorporate play activities into the instructions.

Likely, the diminishing time afforded for the use of the play-based pedagogy in early childhood classrooms resulted from the emphasis on preparing children to do well on standardized tests and to meet all standards (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Hyun 2003; Jeynes 2006). Other studies reiterated that young children are being rushed toward the acquisition of skills or knowledge without consideration for how the process of learning itself can lead to more important outcomes, in addition to the targeted skills or knowledge. Furthermore, many school administrators do not value play and believe that play is a waste of time in schools (Miller & Almon, 2009; Brodova & Leong, 2010; Chervenak, 2011).

While educators in several countries endorsed children's ability to learn through play, they continued to primarily utilize methods of direct instruction to address academic learning (Kim, 2004; Pui-Wah & Stimpson, 2004). In relation to this, despite the Government of Ghana's strong policy commitment to the early childhood sector, the government has failed to provide play-based materials and other resources which are significant towards the use of the play-based pedagogy (Abdulai, 2014; Kekesi et al., 2019). Some potential reasons for this discrepancy put forth by researchers included teachers' underlying beliefs regarding the importance of direct instruction, pressure to meet accountability requirements, past teacher training experiences, following routine practices, or social desirability bias towards endorsing play as pedagogy (Foote et al., 2004; Hedge et al., 2009).

Miller and Almon (2009) are of the view that young teachers fear to accept the play-based curriculum in their classrooms not because they do not see its impact on the learners positively but because they lack the confidence and knowledge due to limited exposure and experiences in early childhood pedagogic principles. Bennet and Rogers (1997) highlighted similar pedagogical challenges that early year's teachers encounter when they use play-based activities in their classroom environment.

Similarly, Fung and Cheng (2012) explain that key stakeholders' doubts about the benefits of learning through play-based pedagogy and how it can be facilitated in the early childhood curriculum, prevent its effective use. Howard (2010); Leggett and Ford (2013) also reported on teachers' practical challenges in using play-based pedagogy, and revealed that, lack of professional development or training in play and pressure from parents and/or administration to achieve prescribed academic outcomes have caused ECE teachers to result to the use of teacher directed instruction rather

than to engage their learners in play-based activities. In addition, constant pressure for academic achievement, lack of support from school administrators and other stakeholders have resulted in a play-based approach being abandoned by many ECE teachers (Aliza, 2011; Sharifah et al., 2009; Mariani, 2003). These practical challenges were reported by teachers as influencing the pedagogical decision to use more direct instruction and resulted in fewer opportunities for play-based learning.

In a study by Lynch (2015) on the perspective of kindergarten teachers on play in the classroom, it was proven that ECE teachers' inability to use play-based pedagogy was categorized into three, based on the social-ecological theory of (McLeroy et al., 1988). These include; intrapersonal factors, organizational factors, and policy factors. According to the study, the author explained that the intrapersonal factors are the personal beliefs and attitudes that can influence the behavior of an individual. The findings of the study revealed that, despite the teacher's efforts to include play-based activities in their classrooms, they are being held back with their beliefs in a need to emphasize academic material in early childhood to aid learners to achieve their academic goals to meet the demand of the primary education.

They also had a belief that the play-based pedagogy comes with its challenges of which they were not prepared to withstand. This finding aligned with results from traditional methods of American teachers' attitudes and beliefs about early childhood education (Goldstein 2007; Jeynes & William, 2006; Parker & Neuharth-Pritchett 2006; Winter et al, 2008). Teachers in the study expressed a need to achieve academic goals that conflicted with play-based pedagogy.

Many teachers reported having been pressurized to adopt a more academic curriculum in early childhood classrooms, resulting in a loss of play-based activities in their

classrooms. This finding holds even when teachers possess positive beliefs about play-based learning (Goldstein 2007; Parker & Neuharth-Pritchett 2006). For instance, the assumption that early childhood learners are to be prepared for later formal education, many teachers perceive that, worksheets are essential in their classrooms, although worksheets clash with their beliefs about how children learn best (Hedge et al., 2009).

While Lynch (2015) was compounding the intrapersonal factors, teachers recounted organizational factors, such as tense relations with school administrators and principals that influenced their views and practice of play-based activities in the classrooms. Given these relations, it is not surprising that many teachers described themselves as "battling" their administrations. Early childhood teachers have reported pressure from administrators, school and state curricula, and standardized tests as influencing their teaching (Parker & Neuharth-Pritchett 2006; Stipek & Byler, 1997).

The findings again revealed that early childhood teachers claimed being looked down upon by other colleague teachers in their schools. Such findings are noteworthy in the light of research that suggests a lack of respect for the early childhood education field that hinders the use of the play-based pedagogy (Hedge et al, 2009). In order to avoid being objects of mockery to other colleagues, most early childhood teachers have refused to use the play-based pedagogy. Most often, many teachers perceive that, preschool teachers who use the play-based pedagogy lack mastery over subject matter and that they are not well versed to teach content to the understanding of learners. Hence, they only use play-based activities as a means to compensate for their weaknesses.

Teachers' relations with their principals constituted another organizational factor identified in the study. Teachers reported that principals' influence came up frequently, and most often in a negative light, in which principals were usually described as ordering them what to teach and insisting that they remove all play-based materials from early childhood classrooms. Teachers in the study again expressed that the principals can be out of touch with how early childhood learners learn best, and these teachers explained that their principals promote standards that are too challenging for young children. For example, many principals want early childhood teachers to apply primary curriculum practices into their classrooms and eliminate more appropriate play-based teaching and learning.

In contrast to these negative perceptions of some principals and other administrators, some teachers also described instances of the positive influence of some principals and administrators on play-based teaching. However, even in this view, there was a recurrent belief that play-based activities are rare in early childhood classrooms, as teachers frequently cite stories about the adoption of policies and standards that result in play-based activities disappearing from early childhood classrooms. Finally, teachers also discussed policy factors, including No Child is Left Behind (NCLB) standards, as well as state and district curriculum standards, that influenced their inability to include play-based activities in their classrooms.

Many teachers explained that they do not include any play-based activities or have no play-based centers in their classrooms because time would be taken away from mandated activities. These findings should come as no surprise because many public preschool teachers have reported spending less and less time with children in play activities since NCLB was mandated (Goldstein 2007; Jeynes & William, 2006).

These teachers reported feeling overwhelmed in meeting all the teaching requirements, leaving little or no room in the day for play-based activities. Goldstein found that some district and state curriculum standards resulted in more required content for teachers to cover daily and a sped-up instructional pace.

Being accountable for learners' progress is of paramount importance in No Child Left Behind (NCLB), (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Goldstein, 2007; Hyun, 2003), and this accountability is measured in terms of learners' results on standardized tests (Hyun, 2003; Jeynes & William, 2006). This may explain why many teachers have reported that they can only allow playing activities in the class after the "real" learning has been completed (Goldstein 2007; Ranz-Smith 2007). In this finding, early childhood teachers have been made to believe that, play-based activities in the classrooms do not affect effective teaching and learning.

Before the 1960s, educators viewed early childhood as distinct from the academically focused primary grades (Goldstein, 2007; Graue, 2006; Jeynes, 2006). Currently, however, and particularly since NCLB, public early childhood education is viewed by many as the first step into an academic setting (Goldstein 2007; Graue 2006; Parker & Neuharth-Pritchett 2006), and that has caused many stakeholders and policymakers to put pressure on teachers to eliminate the play-based pedagogy and replaced them with the traditional method of teaching (teacher-directed).

Another school of thought argues that, in education, infrastructure provides a basis for the rest. Once the deficiencies related to infrastructure occur, it may lead to other problems as well (Azzi-Lessing, 2009). The implication is that, even if teachers view play-based activities as essential to the specific and holistic development in children, it will lack effective implementation since inadequate infrastructure may exist to

provide adequate support. Aktan and Comert (2007), added that one of the sources of problems relating to the use of early childhood curriculum is facilities available in the schools. Thus, the good or bad state of the early childhood facilities go a long way to affect the use of the play-based pedagogy.

Another study conducted by Gundogan (2002) revealed that in-service pieces of training that school administrators organized are not enough to equip early childhood teachers with the current trend of the early childhood curriculum. According to the study, it was revealed that the type of in-service training pre-school teachers receive is not from the field of early childhood education. Thus, the in-service training that teachers participated in might not be supportive for them in finding answers for their questions on how to effectively use the play-based curriculum.

Cisneros-Chernour, and Moreno (2000) in their study, presented that, early childhood teachers“ have problems in using the play-based early childhood curriculum since parents superficial believes in early childhood education centers as a playing ground for the children and not as a learning setting. This attitude of parents has resulted in obstacles between the school and home collaboration. Reid, Stoolmiller and Webster-Stratton (2008), argued that the teaching experience of early childhood teachers can also be problematic in using the play-based early childhood curriculum practically.

Tarimo's study on the use of play as a teaching strategy (2013) revealed that most of the teachers in public schools are untrained, play materials and play facilities are also missing in most public pre-schools. Another study presented that, lack of play materials, lack of space for play activities, and parental preference to strict academic activities over play activities have resulted in the fewer or absence utilization of play-based activities in most early childhood centers in Ghana (Abdulai, 2014).

Similarly, in a study by Ntumi (2016) on the challenges early childhood teachers face in the implementation of early childhood curriculum, it was concluded that inadequate teaching and learning materials, lack of adequate in-service training for early childhood teachers, lack of parental involvement, inadequate early childhood teachers' knowledge in the early childhood curriculum serves as an impediment for successful implementation of the play-based early childhood curriculum.

Other studies have also shown that many teachers never prioritize the use of the play-based approach in their teaching instructions (Saayah, 2004; Fauziah, 2009; Sharifah et al., 2009). That is, they lack the skills in planning and organizing activities and in using materials and resources effectively during play activities. In addition, constant pressure for academic achievement, lack of support from school administrators and other stakeholders have resulted in a play-based approach being abandoned by many ECE teachers (Ali et al., 2011; Sharifah et al., 2009; Mariani, 2003).

Incorporating play-based activities in the classroom has many benefits for children's learning, but there are also several challenges that teachers may face. These challenges include time constraints, resource availability, assessment difficulties, differentiation for diverse learners, and classroom management. Teachers must be aware of these challenges and work to address them to ensure that play-based activities are effective in enhancing children's learning outcomes.

2.10 Summary of the Review

The literature reviewed in this chapter shows the understanding of ECE teachers' use of play-based activities, how ECE teachers use play-based activities, and TLRs that facilitate play-based activities as well as the challenges with the use of play-based activities. The literature review shows that the concept of play-based pedagogy, is

under constant review, informed by both new theoretical insights (e.g., from socio-cultural theory), from empirical research, and practitioners' experiences as they seek to use this approach on a larger scale.

The above findings revealed that early childhood teachers remain positive in their views about play-based pedagogy. Studies show that early childhood teachers attest to the fact that, play-based activities facilitate or support specific and holistic development in preschool learners. Nevertheless, despite the evidence of the role of play-based activities in the holistic development of early childhood learners, studies proved that its use is very rare in the various preschools worldwide.

It is observed that, though early childhood teachers affirmed that, the play-based pedagogy is the best method to educating young children, yet they have resorted to using the traditional method of teaching. In summary, teachers' inability to implement the play-based curriculum is as a result of numerous challenges which are not limited to their beliefs and views alone. Some challenges presented are as a result of policies and stakeholders demands.

Additionally, the above review relates to the current study because, the findings presented did not aim at generalization but only added up to knowledge which helps to improve practice. Similarly, the current study is not aimed at generalization but will only contribute to practice.

That notwithstanding, the review above differs from the current study because, the researchers in the review centered their studies on a component of early childhood learners and teachers (KG learners and teachers) neglecting the other component, (B1 – B3). In Ghana, early childhood education caters for pre-school learners through to

basic three (3). Thus, the current study seeks to include all ECE teachers from KG to B 3, which is the entire stream of the ECE provision.

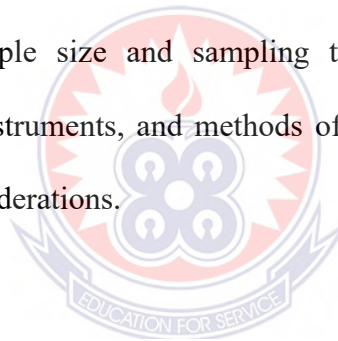


CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology for the study. According to Silverman (2005), methodology involves the choices we make about cases to study, approaches of data gathering, and the forms of data analysis in planning and executing a research study. These methods can be in the form of quantitative techniques or qualitative techniques depending on the research problem or issue. This chapter therefore describes and justifies the methods and processes that were used to collect data in answering the research questions. It explains the research approach, research design, population, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments, trustworthiness of the instruments, and methods of data collection, methods of data analysis and ethical considerations.



3.1 Philosophical Stance

The study's underlying philosophical framework is rooted in the interpretivism paradigm. A philosophical standpoint or research paradigm represents the collective worldview and perspective shared by a group of researchers, grounded in a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values, and methodologies. In simpler terms, it serves as a way of thinking about and conducting research (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that a paradigm constitutes a system of ideas governing fundamental principles, reflecting a worldview that defines the nature of the 'world,' an individual's place within it, and the various potential connections to that world and its components, much like cosmologies and theories. According to the interpretivism paradigm, objective knowledge isn't something to be uncovered;

instead, human beings collectively construct reality and knowledge (Walsham, 1993). In social and humanities research, it's a common assumption that researchers will interpret their findings.

In this study, the researcher elucidated the phenomenon by interpreting the responses (findings) provided by the participants. The researcher subscribes to the belief that knowledge is socially generated by individuals and, in many cases, hinges on their interpretations. In this particular instance, the researcher's focus was on systematically unveiling the meaning behind the results and illustrating how these findings coalesced to yield observable outcomes. To address the research problem, the researcher utilized qualitative data and designed two research instruments to gather information about the issue, with the aim of deriving effective solutions. ECE Coordinator and ECE Teachers were interviewed to collect data pertaining to the phenomenon, and simultaneously, classrooms activities were observed as well. Additionally, play materials and participants' involvement and the use of TLRs to facilitate play-based activities were observed to gather data related to the situation being investigated. These activities were conducted with the specific purpose of providing more comprehensive answers to the research questions posed. The amalgamation of data from these research instruments offered a thorough understanding of the research problem. The researcher then interpreted the findings through a process of inductive reasoning.

3.2 Research Approach

A research approach outlines the steps to be used in solving a research problem, such as the manner in which the problem is formulated, the definition of terms, the choice of subject for investigation, the validation of data gathering tool, the collection,

analysis and interpretation of data and the processes of inference and generalization (Lokesh, 2009). Creswell (2014) posits that there are three approaches, namely; qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.

The study adopted the qualitative research approach. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is framed in terms of using words rather than numbers (quantitative), or using open-ended questions rather than close-ended questions (qualitative interview questions). One of the justifications for the choice of the approach was the researcher's knowledge in collecting and analyzing qualitative data.

Besides, the research questions sought to find "*what*" and "*which*" which according to Kusi (2012) are best analysed qualitatively. The choice of the qualitative research approach was also influenced by the argument of Tsadidey (2018) that qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves-which was same with this study.

According to Tsadidey (2018), with qualitative methods, the relationship between the researcher and the participant (respondent) is often less formal than in quantitative research. Participants have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with quantitative method. More importantly, qualitative research method has the ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Since the essence of qualitative research is to provide in-depth exploration phenomenon under investigation, it is typical for such studies to have small sample sizes which make data collection and analysis more manageable (Silverman, 2005).

3.3 Research Design

The research design is about the plan for the research investigation that is employed to provide the most accurate answers to research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The Illustrative case study design was adopted for this study. Creswell (2014) explains a case study as a qualitative design that study event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) is/are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time” (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2012, cited in Creswell, 2014, p.14).

In relation to study design, illustrative case study is a descriptive study that depicts one or more circumstances of an event to explain the situation (Epler, 2019). According to Hayes, Kyer, and Weber (2015), this type of case study is used to “describe a situation or a phenomenon, what is happening with it, and why it is happening” (p. 8). This is because the study describes every element involved in a case (the location, people involved, their goals, what they do, etc.) in a way that remains entirely accurate while still focusing on language that will be understandable by the target group (Hayes, Kyer & Weber 2015). The illustrative case study explains phenomena in-depth and rich in context, and provide every aspect of the case in a language that is conducive to comprehension. The goal of an illustrative case study is to paint a picture about the study (Hayes et al., 2015). Because these case studies are written using the exact details of the case (or cases), if they are not written in a manner that the reader can understand, they will not maintain audience interest (Hayes et al., 2015). It may be difficult to hold the audience’s attention if too many cases of this type are presented at once that contain an immense amount of in-depth information.

The researcher used illustrative case study to provide descriptive details about how early childhood education teachers use play-based activities in teaching and learning in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District of the Central Region of Ghana. The researcher through observation explained how the participants involved used TLRs to facilitate play-based activities and also expressed in common language about challenges confronting ECE teachers with the use of play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District. In the illustrative case study used, the researcher used clear language and avoided oversimplifying the verbiage because the rich description could be lost (Epler, 2019). For this reason, only a small number of cases, one or two at a time was used (Davey, 1991).

Yin (2003) argues that case study research is particularly useful when the phenomenon of interest is of a broad and complex nature and, hence, is best studied within the context in which it occurs. Moreover, it would provide the opportunity to interact with the participants in their socio-cultural context to understand the phenomenon under study. However, illustrative case study is not made to span over a vast number of cases or to generalize any results because the data is based on only one or two cases which the results may not be sufficiently accurate for generalization (Hayes, Kyer, & Weber 2015). Amidst this pitfall for this study design, the illustrative case study was chosen to enable the purpose of the study to be achieved.

3.4 Description of the Study Area

The Hemang Lower Denkyira District is one of the twenty-two administrative districts in the Central Region. The district is located on the North-Western part of the Central Region with its capital at Twifo Hemang. It shares common boundaries on the north with the Twifo Atti-Mokwa District, the south with Cape Coast Metropolis,

the west with Wassa East Districts, and on the east with the Assin South District. There is a total of 65 public schools in the district comprising of 58 Kindergarten and Primary Schools, 5 Junior High Schools and 2 Senior High Schools (SHS). The district also has both trained and untrained teachers in the public schools (Ghana Education Service/Hemang-Lower-Denkyira-District-Education-Directorate, 2020).

The study was conducted in the Hemang East circuit of the Hemang Lower Denkyira District of Central Region of Ghana. The circuit is located on the Cape Coast to Twifo Praso highway. The circuit can boast of 11 junior high schools and 10 primary schools. The circuit is noted for the excellence in games. However, its academic performance has been poor for the past 5 consecutive years (Hemang Lower Denkyira District Education Directorate (GES/HLDDDED), 2021).

Apart from Twifu Hemang township, all the other communities forming the circuit are villages. The major economic activities of the people in the circuit are farming, commercial motor Business (Okada) and trading activities. Most of the parents in the circuit have basic or no formal education. All the communities in the circuit have good access to signals from all telecommunication networks in Ghana.

The study site was chosen for the study because most ECE teachers complain of learners' absenteeism from school, constant distraction of attention during instructional period and inadequate play materials for both indoor and outdoor activities. These have poorly affected the academic performance of learners within the district which is of concern to the researcher. Again, the ECE Coordinator for the district confirmed that most of the educational stakeholders in the district view play as separated from learning and perceive no benefits of play in the school settings. These can be attributed to poor instructional approaches in teaching which play-based

activities are not exemptions. This incited the researcher to undertake this study in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District in order to investigate into the problem.

3.5 Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) postulate that, population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects or events that conform to specific criteria in research. Population can also be defined as a group of individuals with the same characteristics and in whom the researcher is interested (Kusi, 2012). The target population was all the 282 public early childhood education teachers and the district early childhood coordinator in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District. The total number was 283 (Hemang Lower Denkyira District Education Directorate, 2021).

The accessible population was all the 51 early childhood education teachers in the Hemang East circuit and the district early childhood coordinator. The total number was 52 (Hemang Lower Denkyira District Education Directorate, 2021).

3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The importance or quality of the study is not essentially influenced by the sample size and that there are no definite rules for determining sample size in research (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Crouch and McKenzie (2006) posit that qualitative research is very labour intensive; analyzing a large sample can be time consuming and often simply impractical. In this regard, nine (9) professional Early Childhood Education Teachers from the Hemang East Circuit and one (1) District Early Childhood Coordinator in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District were selected for the study. These make a total of ten (10) participants. The choice of the sample size was rooted in the recommendation that 6-8 data sources or sampling units often will be sufficient when homogeneous samples are selected in qualitative research (Malterud, Siersma,

& Guassora, 2016). Also, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended between 10 and 20 participants for interview schedules.

Considering the topic under study, homogenous sampling techniques was used to select participants for the study. The homogenous sampling involves individuals, groups, or settings that all possess similar characteristics or attributes (Omona, 2013). A report from the Education Directorate of Hemang Lower Denkyira District shows that, the district has 14 professionally trained ECE teachers posted to the Hemang East Circuit (Education Directors Report, 2021). Therefore, the participants were chosen because they have received professional training in early childhood education, they have taught early childhood learners for about three (3) to seven (7) years, and have received in-service training on the use of play-based activities in teaching and learning. This means the participants selected for the study had specific characteristics (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2004).

First of all, the researcher identified the ECE Coordinator as a principal participant for the study. A list of professional ECE teachers in the circuit were obtained from the ECE coordinator and the researcher sent text messages inviting them to serve as participants for the study. Nine (9) ECE teachers responded and expressed their willingness to serve as respondents for the study. The researcher contacted them on phone to get their consent to participate in the study. Hence, total number of ten (10) participants including one (1) ECE coordinator who possess same characteristics as the teachers and for the fact that, she work closely with them.

3.7 Data Collection Instrument

A data collection instrument can refer to any tool or method used to gather data from research participants, such as surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations, or

standardized tests. The instrument is designed to measure one or more variables of interest, such as attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, or cognitive abilities (Gliner, Morgan, & Harmon, 2017). For this study, semi-structured interview schedule/guide and observational checklist were used.

3.7.1 Semi-structured interview schedule

According to Kusi (2012), semi-structured interviews are flexible to a greater extent, offer interviewees the opportunities to express their views, feelings and experiences freely, and interviewers the freedom to divert from the items/questions in the schedule to seek clarifications (using probes) during the interview process.

The interview guide was self-designed. The questions were put under five broad categories guided by the research objectives; Section „A“ sought to elicit information on personal data of the respondents such as class, educational qualification, and length of teaching experience. Section „B“ sought information on ECE teachers views on the use of play-based activities. Section „C“ elicited information on how ECE teachers use play-based activities. Section „D“ sought to assess TLRs that ECE teachers use to facilitate play-based activities. And Section „E“ sought information on challenges with the use of play-based activities. (See Appendix „A“). The use of the semi-structured interview schedule allowed respondents to construct their own words and express themselves at length, and offered enough shape to prevent aimless rambling (Kusi, 2012). Besides, the instrument helped the researcher to seek clarification through probing and expanding the responses of interviewees to ascertain their feelings and experiences (Kusi, 2012).

3.7.2 Observational checklist

Marshall and Rossman, 1989 as cited in Kawulich, (2015) postulate that observation is a systematic description of the events, behaviours and artifacts of a social setting. It involves looking and listening very carefully.

An observational checklist was used in the study to enable the researcher to observe the way ECE teachers used in the use the available play materials during teaching and learning in and outside the classrooms. Each code on the checklist has a tick box that helped to collect the observed data. The presence or absence of a code is either ticked YES or NO. The instrument was self-designed. It was chosen since it helped to overcome some of unavoidable disadvantages of interviews where respondents may give biased information (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999 as cited in Tarimo, 2013). Sometimes the respondents failed to accurately recall events and aspects in which the researcher was interested. The information collected through observation was used to supplement the information collected through the semi-structured interview. The researcher also observed the available play materials and play facilities in both indoor and outdoor settings of the schools.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Data

In any systematic enquiry into human settings, it is vital to establish the true value of the study. Thus, the study must be judged against certain criteria to ensure that the findings and interpretations are a true reflection of the participants or reality and are reliable (De Vos, 2002). Guba and Lincoln (2000) explained that trustworthiness in qualitative study is determined by four indicators closely related to validity and reliability in quantitative study. Qualitative research is trustworthy when it accurately represents the experiences of the study participants (Speziale & Carpenter, 2011). The

four criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln (2000) in measuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data are credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability and these were ensured through the following procedures.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which the research represents the actual meanings of the research participants, or the “truth value” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mills & Wiebe, 2010). To achieve credibility in this study, the researcher was involved in prolonged engagement with participants by spending six weeks on the field collecting data. Also, the researcher engaged the participants in an interview and at the same time observed both the verbal and non-verbal responses. This assisted the researcher with clues for further probes and questioning. Again, the researcher used an observational checklist to further collect data on both indoor and outdoor TLRs that ECE teachers used to facilitate play-based pedagogy to supplement the information collected through the semi-structure interview. After the data was transcribed, the information was transferred from the recording device onto a laptop and a password was created on the laptop such that it was only the researcher who had access to the data. Data was analysed using verbatim quotations of the participants.

3.8.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process (Sandelowski, 1986; Polit et al., 2006; Streubert, 2007).

In this study, dependability was established through the establishment of appropriate enquiry decision. This included review of researcher bias to resist early closure and at

the same time prevent the provision of unreliable data due to boredom on the part of the respondents because of prolonged sessions of the discussions. In addition, information from literature assisted the researcher to develop questions that elicited appropriate responses to answer the research questions that were formulated to guide the study. Moreover, the interview guide and the checklist aided the researcher to develop categories and themes that were used in the findings where both positive and negative responses were identified. There was systematic data collection procedure, analysis and interpretations which were mainly from the data generated. There was proper documentation of the data (transcriptions of narratives), methods and decisions in the memos. The thesis supervisors assessed the work to find out whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions were supported by the data.

3.8.3 Transferability

Transferability, a type of external validity, refers to the degree to which the phenomenon or findings described in one study are applicable or useful to theory, practice, and future research (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

The researcher achieved this in this study by extensively and thoroughly describing the processes that were adopted for others to follow and replicate the data. The researcher kept an audit trail of audiotapes of the interview, permission letters and all other relevant information and documents regarding the study.

Also, the researcher provided a clear description of the study setting, participants involved and the demographic information about the research participants. These could enable other researchers to replicate the findings of this study to similar settings of their choices thereby regarding the findings in this study as answers in their chosen

contexts. Raw data (interview transcripts) as well as details of the data analysis were kept as evidence.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability has to do with the level of confidence that the research study's findings are based on the participants' narratives and words rather than potential researcher biases (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

To establish confirmability in this study, the researcher, first of all, played the recorded interviews to the hearing of the respondents, right after each interview session. Again, the researcher after coding and transcribing the data from the interview, it was given back to the participants to confirm the responses. The researcher after effecting all the changes gave the transcribed data back to the participants again for them to authenticate the inferences derived by the researcher. The researcher then took the final transcribed data from the respondents as a true record of what the respondents factually provided. Other means of ensuring confirmability were audiotape recordings, paying attention to non-verbal communications of the participants such as pauses, field notes, sighs and facial expressions. However, since transcriptions and reflections were done immediately after each interview and observation, the general mood and attitudes of the participants were captured in the transcriptions of the narratives and used in the data interpretations.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

An introductory letter (refer to appendix A) was obtained from the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Education, Winneba. This was meant to officially introduce the researcher to the heads of schools where the participants of the

study teach. The purpose of the study and the plans to collect data from participants were discussed with the head teachers individually.

After this, the participants were met individually and the purpose of the study was explained to them again. There was an agreement between the researcher and the participants in each of the schools on when and where to meet for data collection. The researcher scheduled and met each participant on the agreed date and time in quiet but open places on the school premises after approval had been duly given by the authorities of the schools. At any time before the interview commenced, the researcher always reminded the participants of the purpose of the study and what was expected of them. Permission was sought from each respondent and approval was given before audiotaping the interview sessions for the purposes of transcribing.

Each participant was interviewed within one interview session which lasted for about 20 to 30 minutes. Probing and follow-up questions were asked about the use of play-based activities in the teaching and learning process in their classrooms. Questions were also asked about the challenges teachers faced with the use of the play-based approach in their classrooms. A Samsung Tablet 2.0 was used for the recording. The data was then played and transcribed for analysis soon after the sessions. The transcription was done by professional transcribers at the Ghana Institute of Languages in Accra. The researcher then took time to listen to the tapes and matched them with the transcribed text to ensure that the transcription was properly done and the data was not compromised in any way.

Using the participant-observer strategy, the researcher also observed the teaching and learning materials found in the school environments and how teachers used these materials to facilitate play-based learning. An arrangement was made for the

researcher to observe teaching and learning sessions led by the teachers. The researcher acted as a participant in the teaching and learning process by interacting with both the teacher and the pupils during the class sessions. This was meant to reduce any anxieties that may be occasioned if the researcher were a non-participant observer. This approach allowed both the teachers and the pupils to engage in their natural environment just as any other day. The presence of the researcher did not in any way affect the conducts of either the teachers or the pupils.

The observation checklist guided the researcher to record the information obtained before, during and after the class sessions led by each participant. The information obtained through the observation corroborated the data gathered from the interview.

3.10 Method of Data Analysis

In this study, data was analysed thematically with the help of Taguette, an online qualitative analysis software. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis and is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher first of all read through the data several times until the researcher was abreast with all of its content (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Since qualitative data generated a voluminous amount of information, the researcher devoted enough time to read through the text several times in order to have a good understanding of its content. After reading the text several times and observing the emerging patterns, codes were assigned to segments of the text that yielded the essential information pertaining to the study's research questions. This process is referred to as meaning coding (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The next stage of the data analysis entailed reducing the emerging codes to categories that could be effectively handled. Examples of codes derived were Teacher

Participant (TP) and Coordinator Participant (CP). Creswell (2007) affirms that the process of re-categorising codes is necessary since the researcher tends to commence with a large number of codes. It is significant to reiterate that the process of analysis is spiral and as a result, there was a continuing process of reading, coding and recording all the process of analysis. After the development of categories, further analysis of the data was carried out by assigning themes. These themes represented primary frameworks from which several aspects of the data could be incorporated.

Furthermore, these themes were also generated from condensing previous codes into thematic areas that specifically addressed the research questions formulated at the beginning of the study. In ascribing quotations to the participants of the interviews, the participants were represented by codes: TP for “Teacher Participant” and CP for “Coordinator Participant”.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

A researcher has a moral obligation to strictly consider the rights of the participants, who are expected to provide this knowledge (Speziale & Carpenter, 2011). In this study, the researcher sought a formal introductory letter from the Department of Early Childhood, University of Education, Winneba to collect the data needed to conduct the study. Verbal permission was sought from the coordinator and head teachers of schools for participants to participate in the collecting of the data for the study.

Polit and Hungler (2004) state that, confidentiality means that no information that the participant divulges is made public or available to others. The anonymity of a person or an institution is protected by making it impossible to link aspects of data to a specific person or institution. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed by ensuring that data obtained was used in such a way that no one other than the

researcher knows the source (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006). In this study, no actual participants' names were attached to the information obtained rather, codes were used.

De Vos (2002) asserted that privacy is the agreements between persons that limit the access of others to private information. In this study, the researcher ensured that when participants described their experiences, the information given was not divulged. The consent of participants was sought before the interviews were tape recorded. This right was explained to them prior to engaging them in the study (Hallow, 2005).

The researcher also ensured that the head teachers and parents of the learners of selected schools were informed and their consent acknowledged on the observational pictures taken on some of them. This only included learners whose parents agreed to the request.

3.11.1 Positionality

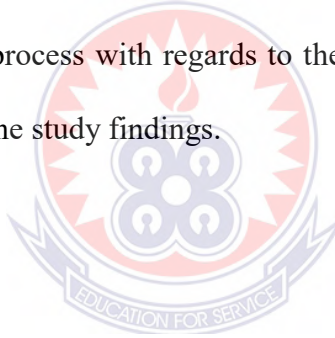
As a professional ECE teacher in the district, I understand and I am familiar with the use of play-based activities in teaching and learning, but I lack any understanding on how other colleague ECE teachers use play-based activities in teaching and learning. I wanted to inquire and understand more about the use of play-based activities by other ECE teachers; their views about the approach, how they use it in and outside the classroom, TLRs that they use to facilitate the approach and the challenges that confront them with the use of the approach.

Consequently, access to the participants were a bit easier since they are known to the researcher in a professional context (Chew-Graham et al, 2002). Also, during the data

collection, participants were less cautious or guarded than they would be with an outsider researcher, resulting in more genuine data.

To ensure neutrality as an insider researcher, the researcher after using semi-structured interview schedule to collect data, further observed participants and reported their responses as they expressed them. The findings and the analysis of the study represent the views, opinions, beliefs and attitudes of the participants. Besides, this is purely an academic work.

More so, the researcher reflexively was aware that the phenomenon under study affected her directly. In order not to allow her biases influence the study, the researcher kept a reflexive diary. The researcher recorded and reflected on all the happenings in the study process with regards to the researcher's values and interests in order not to influence the study findings.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Overview

This chapter focuses on presentation of results and discussions. The data from the interviews and observations were presented and discussed. The results aligned to the study findings to respond to the research questions formulated. The chapter also discussed the analytical method used in analysing the data.

4.1 Demographic Data

The researcher collected data from nine (9) professional Early Childhood Education Teachers and one (1) District Early Childhood Coordinator from the Hemang Lower Denkyira Education Directorate for the study making a total of ten (10) participants. The participants selected were trained Early Childhood Education teachers and have taught for about 3 to 7 years, according to Hemang Lower Denkyira District Education Directorate report (2021). All the professional ECE teachers in the Hemang East circuit are female, according to data on the teaching staff from the District Educational Directorate of Hemang Lower Denkira. Therefore, participants interviewed for the study were all female and professional early childhood teachers contributing to the homogeneity of the data.

4.2 Analytical Method Used

Data was analysed thematically. After the interview process, the researcher transcribed the audio-recorded interviews verbatim, then read and re-read them in their entirety, reflecting on the interviews as a whole. The researcher then described the interviews, taking cognizance that many themes may occur in a set of interviews. Patterns were identified from emerging data. With the help of online qualitative

analysis software called Taguette, the researcher then assigned codes to parts of the text that were essential to the study, grouped the data into themes and then analysed the organised data in order to reach a conclusion. These themes were generated from previous codes into thematic areas that specifically addressed the research questions formulated at the beginning of the study. In ascribing quotations to the participants of the interviews, the participants were represented by codes: TP “for Teacher Participant” and CP for “Coordinator Participant”. The findings from the observation were used to triangulate the interview data. To confirm the data, the researcher after coding and transcribing the data from the interview, it was given back to the participants to cross-check their responses. The researcher after effecting all the changes gave the transcribed data back to the participants again for them to authenticate the inferences derived by the researcher. The analysis of the responses from the interview and observation are presented in the 4.3 below:

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes for the study

| Research Questions | Main Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|--|---|
| What are ECE teachers’ views on play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District? | ECE teachers views of play-based activities | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ECE Teachers' Views about Play-Based Activities 2. PBA as integral component of ECE 3. Purposes of PBA in ECE 4. Prioritization of PBA in teaching and learning 5. Importance of PBA 6. Relation between play and learning 7. Kind of play ECE teachers’ use in lessons 8. ECE Teachers in-service training on play |
| How do ECE teachers use play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District? | How ECE teachers use play-based activities | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incorporation of PBA into lessons 2. Frequent use of PBA in lesson delivery 3. Impact of PBA on lesson delivery 4. School Support towards PBA implementation 5. ECE teachers’ involvement in children’s play 6. Materials and resources for PBA 7. Policy and curriculum effect on the use of PBA |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| How do ECE teachers use TLRs to facilitate play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District? | TLRs that ECE teachers use to facilitate play-based activities. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ECE teachers' use of audio-tape in lesson delivery 2. ECE teachers' use of other materials aside audio materials 3. Children's accessibility to appropriate materials 4. The various learning centres in the classroom 5. Kind of environment conducive for PBA 6. ECE teachers' use of PBA in the absence of original learning materials |
| What are the challenges confronting ECE teachers with the use of play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District? | Challenges that confront ECE teachers with the use of PBA | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ECE teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes on the use of PBA 2. Lack of confidence and inadequate knowledge of ECE teachers on the use of PBA 3. Effects of educational policy "No Child Is to Be Left Behind" on PBA 4. ECE teachers inadequate time to incorporate PBA 5. Stakeholders value for play 6. Lack of professional development in PBA 7. Pressure from stakeholders to achieve prescribed academic outcomes 8. Inadequate facilities and play equipment 9. The perceptions of other teachers and circuit supervisors about PBA |

Source: Researcher's construct, (2023).

4.3 What are ECE teachers' views on play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District?

The first research question sought to find out ECE teachers views on play-based activities within Hemang Lower Denkyira District. To achieve this, information was sought from some Early Childhood Education teachers and the Early Childhood Education coordinator within the district for the study. The participants were made to share their views on the following sub-themes: ECE Teachers' Views about PBA; PBA as an integral component of ECE; Purposes of PBA in ECE; Prioritization of PBA in teaching and learning; Importance of PBA; Relation between play and learning; Kind of play ECE teachers' use in lessons; and ECE Teachers' in-service training on play. The most pertinent issues that were collected from the participants

through an in-depth interview have been described and interpreted in the following sub-themes.

4.3.1 ECE teachers' views about PBA

The excerpt on the views of the participants shows that, almost all participants had fair knowledge about Play Based Activities. These are what some participants had to say:

In my view play-based activities means teaching the children in the form of play while they are learning. Though they see it like they are just playing for fun but in a nutshell, they are actually learning and it helps them to grab what we are teaching without any problem. (TP1)

This participant also explained that:

My views on play-based activity are that using play method as teaching strategy in early childhood classrooms. In everything that you teach or you facilitate you use play, the teaching should be in a form of play to enhance learners understanding. (TP4)

The coordinator participant also commented this way:

“Okay, so far as I know, when we talk about play-based activities, teaching and learning, using play. So, at the early childhood level, all that they do is supposed to be in the form of playing and as they are doing that, they are learning, so far as I know, that what play-based activities are.” (CP)

4.3.2 PBA as integral component of ECE

Play enhances many aspects of children's holistic development and forms part of the curriculum of the children's learning. Participants shared how play-based activities make learning fun and effective in lesson delivery. The following are the quotations of some participants on their views of how Play-Based Activities forms an integral component of Early Childhood Education. This is what a participant said:

“Yes, it is. Because, children in nature like to play so as they play, they learn. Unconsciously, they learn but they think it is just a play, but to you the facilitator, whatever they do, you have your goal in mind, is just that you have to guide them, as to how they should go about the

play so that you can achieve your objectives by the end of the lesson.” (TP5).

Another participant remarked:

“Yes, please. It forms an integral part of it, since they are children, you cannot teach using one method like discussion. Though, you can use other teaching methods but using the play-based helps the children to acquire more skills while they are learning.” (TP1).

Again, another participant responded that:

“It is, because children learn best through play. When you give them the materials to explore, they are able to experience things in real life situations and that enrich their understanding of whatever is being taught in the classroom. And this has made play activity strategy an integral component of ECE programs.” (TP4).

The coordinator participant also responded that:

“Like I said, all the child knows how to do best is to play, and if we are giving knowledge through playing then I believe they can get it better, so it forms an integral part in the ECE curriculum.” (CP)

4.3.3 Purposes of PBA in ECE

On the purpose of play-based activities, play allows learners to learn and experience things for themselves. It is vital for learners’ holistic growth, maturation, emotional, social, physical, and intellectual development. Most participants highlighted how play helps the children get a better understanding of lessons and which help involve learners in class to become active participant of lesson. Some participants noted that:

With purposes, I can say that it helps the children get a better understanding of what we teach them without facing much difficulties. Though some children don’t like learning but immediately you start using play-based as a form of teaching they find it easy to learn since they don’t find much difficulty in what they are learning. (TP1)

Similarly, another participant remarked this way:

It helps children who don’t involve themselves in class to become active/participative learners. Again, some of the ECE teachers often present their lessons in abstract manner, like, they have resorted to the use of memorization and recitation which makes learners unhappy

about learning, but through play-based activities, learners learn with joy and happiness without even realizing it. (TP2)

Similarly, a participant commented this:

“The main purpose is to enhance learners understanding. It also helps them to remember concept taught because play makes learners active participants in the learning process.” (TP4)

This was further corroborated by coordinator participant who added that:

“The purpose I believe is for learners to grab concepts and then like I said they are able to understand issues and concept better if it is within their domain of play.” (CP)

4.3.4 Prioritization of PBA in teaching and learning

The play-based learning aimed at helping learners continue to grow and develop appropriately as well as meet their potentials. Based on this play becomes the priority in Early childhood education. Some participants suggested that, play-based activities should be used across all early childhood levels. Other participants were in support that, given the importance of play, it should be a priority in the education of learners. Some participants had this to say on the prioritization of Play-based activities in teaching and learning:

You allow them to do what they want to do. They will do majority of the work by themselves and doing that, they are learning and it helps them to become ownership of whatever they do. That is, if he/she did it by his/herself, whenever, he/she is asked, the child will be able to respond appropriately. (TP3)

This participant advocated that:

“Play-based should be used across all early childhood levels. I will appeal with all ECE teachers to use this method, because that is what will help their pupils to understand concepts better.” (TP4)

Similarly, this is what another participant shared that:

“Yes, through PBA, children are able to cling to teachers without fear and anxiety. Because, lessons are presented in real life situations, learning becomes enjoyable and learners see their teachers as their peers.” (TP3)

The coordinator participant further substantiated that:

“I really deem it highly important; it should be a priority. Like I said, it is because if we are able to use it and utilize it well, they will have better result in terms of teaching and learning for the early childhood learners.” (CP)

4.3.5 Importance of PBA

Play is very essential and important part of a child's life. Participants noted that play-based learning is an important way to develop active learning where learners use their brains in lots of ways to explore their world and build on their natural and social environments around them. Through the interview, some participants shared their views on the importance of play-based activities to early childhood education. The following are what the participants had to say:

The following are the importance of PBA; it helps the children to understand what they are learning, it helps the children to have real life activities of what they learn, they have hands on activities too, because they use their hands to manipulate all the objects in the classroom. (TP1)

This participant remarked:

It helps them to be independent. It also motivates them to do more of whatever we are doing in class. It also helps them to reason and work on tasks individually without much help from teachers and peers. So, they become self-reliance. (TP2)

Another participant noted:

I appreciate it because it helps learners to understand what teachers are teaching because children like play, they enjoy playing so if we use the play in the form of teaching, it helps them a lot and it helps them to practice on their own too. As I said earlier on, the importance, it helps the children to remember what we have taught and it also help them to

understand it, it also helps them to do things on their own, it gives them the real-life experience of what you are teaching, so that even in life time they are able to use what you taught them. (TP4)

Finally, the coordinator participant stated:

“It makes teaching and learning easier for them, because they are doing and the kids are all doing it, so it makes teaching and learning easier for the teachers.” (CP)

4.3.6 Relation between play and learning

Relating play to learning, all study participants exhibited positive relationship between play and learning and how play can greatly impact on the pedagogical practices in early childhood education. The quotations of some participants are as follow:

“As children are playing, they are learning. There are so many things they learn through play, there are games that when they are playing; they are learning numeracy, learning literacy all those things.” (CP)

This participant also shared:

“I will say that, learning is associated with play. So whenever, teachers use play as a way of teaching, learning occurs naturally.” (TP3)

Again, another participant related it this way:

So, when we talk of play, most people think playing is just having fun, and then learning is so much of seriousness. You have to focus much on a particular task or a particular goal, but when we look at play itself, it is a form of learning, because a child playing links it to something. When you are very young and then you try to clap your hands, yes you think you are just clapping, but you are learning something automatically. For example, when you are trying to play oware or ludo, you will see learners shouting, okay let count one, two, three... All these, there is a form of mathematics going on there, so I think playing has a relation with learning. (TP5)

Contrary to the above, this participant connected that:

“When it comes to learning, I will base it in the classroom because normally when we are learning, we learn in the classroom and the play too that one we come outside for the children to express themselves.” (TP6)

4.3.7 Kind of play ECE teachers' use in lessons

Play at the early childhood stages comes in many forms. There are several ways by which teachers facilitate children's learning through play-based activities at the early childhood centers. From the responses of the participants, the choice of kind of play employed in lesson at the early childhood level depended on the objective and the goal of the lesson. Some participants had these to say:

I will look more into the class I am, the children in the class, and how well they will accept whatever play I want them to engage in, and then also with the kind of lesson I want to have for the day, the objective or the goal for the day, that informs me of how to go about the type of play I choose in the class. (TP5)

Another participant connoted that:

Let say counting, we normally go outside for counting activities. I usually write the numbers on cards, may be 2, 4, 5, 6 and I spread them on the floor for the children, so we will sing a song relating to counting. So, when we sing, I will mention the number name out, like; we are searching, searching, searching, we are searching for real number 8, so the children will be going round searching for the number, so anyone who see the number 8 will go and stand near it and jump 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 up to 8, so the children really enjoy. (TP6)

The coordinator participant shared this way:

What should inform, I think they should look at the level of the learners that you are going to engage in teaching, they should also look at the specific objectives that they want to achieve. That should help them model or look for appropriate play for their lessons. (CP)

4.3.8 ECE Teachers in-service training on play

Effective use of play-based activities in the early childhood education demands teachers to be trained to enhance their teaching and learning. Results from the interview shows that, teacher participants barely receive in-service training from the education directorates within the district. However, some participants remarked that, they help address their challenges during Professional Learning Community. Some participants shared that:

“For that one, I and my colleagues sometimes we meet, but as for in-service training from outside, we don’t receive it.” (TP4)

Another participant also responded this way:

“No. though, formally, when the new curriculum came to existence, the coordinator was coming here from time to time for supervision, but she doesn’t come here anymore.” (TP4)

Another participant who has similar view on the in-service training noted that:

“We the early childhood teachers, we normally meet every Wednesdays that’s during PLC.” (TP6)

The coordinator participant also supported that:

Barely. You know, in-service training comes with cost. Cost sometimes is a problem, teachers are not so willing to pay for workshops for in-service training and the district is also not well resourced to organize in-service training, so sometimes the best we do is to go round the schools and monitor, we sit in lessons and we give recommendations but for workshops, not that often. (CP)

Results on the main theme: ECE teachers views of play-based activities indicate that, almost all participants have fair knowledge about what Play Based Activities is about. Participants integrate the play-based in their lessons to help learners to acquire more skills while they are learning. Similarly, it was revealed that, with play-based activities, learners learn with joy and happiness without even realizing it. More so, the study identified that, play-based learning is an important way to develop active learning where learners use their brains in lots of ways to explore their world and build on their natural and social environments around them. Relating play to learning, the study revealed a positive relationship between play and learning which greatly impact on the pedagogical practices in early childhood education. Furthermore, the study findings revealed that, the choice of kind of play employed by teachers in lessons at the early childhood level are depended on the objectives and goals set for the lesson. Classroom observation on the use of play, it was revealed that, some of the

participants are simply unfamiliar about the kind of play-based activities they have to integrate into their lessons for effective learning to occur. Finally, the result of the study showed that, participants barely receive in-service training from the education directorates within the district except of cases where some participants occasionally meet to address their personal challenges during Professional Learning Community (PLC).

4.4 How do ECE teachers use play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District?

The second research question sought to establish how ECE teachers use play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District. In achieving this, information was sought from both ECE teachers and ECE coordinator sampled for the study. A number of issues were brought to light from the interviews in the following areas: Incorporation of PBA into lessons; Frequent use of PBA in lesson delivery; Impact of PBA on lesson delivery; School Support towards the use of PBA; ECE teachers' involvement in children's play; Materials and resources for PBA; and Policy and curriculum effect on the use of PBA. Firstly, almost all the participants interviewed share that, they incorporate play-based activities into their lessons. Secondly, it was revealed that, participants involve themselves in play-based activities with their learners. Thirdly, from the study, it emerged that some educational policies and curriculum affect the successful use of Play-Based Activities. Finally, it was revealed through the responses that school support towards the use of Play-based activities was very minimal. The most pertinent issues that were collected from the participants through in-depth interview have been interpreted in the following sub-themes.

4.4.1 Incorporation of PBA into lessons

To build many aspects of children's development require a more effective curriculum of the children's education which is based on play activities. Participants expressed that young children should learn through play and so lessons for young children must be incorporated with play. The following are what some participants shared:

“As an early childhood teacher, most of the time, my teachings are in the form of play-based, since we have our table tops, our outside activities, going to learning centres is all in the form of play.” (TP1)



Figure 2: Teacher’s incorporation of out-door play-based activity

Source: Picture captured by researcher during field study, (2023).

Similarly, this participant also shared her view this way:

As for me, I always use play-based in all my lessons. As an early childhood teacher, if you tend to lecture or you do any form of teaching, the children will be sitting there, they will not know what to do. So as for me, in most of my lessons, I use play-based approach. (TP4)



Figure 3: Teacher’s incorporation of in-door play-based activity into lesson

Source: Picture captured by researcher during field study, (2023).

Lastly the coordinator participant explained this way:

When learners are in the course of the lessons, sometimes when they are doing phonics for instance, they take the children out, they cut the sounds for them, I mean in a playful way, sometimes they put them on the floor, they will be dancing around the song of the sounds, they will pick the sound they will be singing with it. So, in the course of the lesson, they do incorporate play-based activities. (CP)

4.4.2 Frequent use of PBA in lesson delivery

Presenting the results on the frequent use of Play-based activities in the early childhood education, some participants have these to say:

“It can be used anytime at all. it could be early morning, it could be big circle time, it could be table top activity, it could be anytime.” (TP3)

Also, this participant commented that:

“Since I came here, about 8years now, I have been using play activities in my lessons.” (TP6)

4.4.3 Impact of PBA on lesson delivery

Play is an essential part of children's development since children learn about their world through play. An early childhood education setting should be a place where children discover a love for learning through a variety of play experiences. The study participants reacted to the impact of integrating play into the education of young children. Some participants have these to say on the impacts of play-based activities on lesson delivery:

Yes, because when teaching something like counting and writing of numerals; (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) in abstract, learners often get lost. But when there are materials (counters) before them, they play and use it for the counting so in the end, the teacher achieves her objectives successfully while the learners also feel happy at the same time. It helps the children to understand concept effortlessly, because children see and touch materials, so any time they are called to task, they are happy to do it. (TP2)

Also, this participant contributed that:

It has been positive, because some of the pupils, even though, sometimes, they refuse to respond to me when they are asked to perform specific task. But when the parents come around, they testify that, their wards came home to practice most of the things they learned, and is a positive remark. (TP4).

Lastly, the coordinator participant shared that:

"It has made teachers lesson's delivery easier; they are able to deliver it efficiently and effectively." (CP)

4.4.4 School Support towards the use of PBA

Responses from participants showed that most school authorities within the district are not giving enough attention and support to play-based pedagogy at the early childhood levels. In connection to the school support towards the use of Play-based activities, quotations of some participants indicated that:

"When it comes to that, is the manila cards that we use in our teaching, markers and most of our TLR's my headmaster do provide for us." (TP1)

However, this participant shared this:

For me, I used my own money to buy some of the materials when I was teaching at KG before I was brought to class one. I wanted to design some TLRs in my classroom, yet I didn't receive any support from the headmaster. I sometimes feel reluctant, though I have interest in TLRs preparation. (TP3)

Another participant supported the earlier submission by TP3 that:

"I don't get any support from anybody. Sometimes I use my own money because I understand what teaching is." (TP6)

Lastly, the coordinator participant confirmed this way:

No, as for support there isn't any much support, so all I know is, if there are few things that they will need, I mean things which are not so much cost-effective items, that maybe they have to bring from the house, we talk to the parent that, we can use, sometimes your used items so when your kids want to bring them to school, give it to them apart from that, there isn't much support. The teachers provide some of the materials, in fact, they provide most of the materials if the kids cannot get them, they have to. (CP)

4.4.5 ECE teachers' involvement in children's play

For effective instructions at the early childhood level, teachers must involve play into the daily lessons. Learners have the opportunity to explore their learning environment employing free-play as well as through teacher-initiated play. Teacher-initiated or guided play is where the teacher is involved in the interactions between learners. From the responses of participants concerning ECE teachers' involvement in children's play, participants shared that they always involve themselves in every play activity in the class. These are what some participants have to say:

When it comes to their learning I become part of them, so I see myself as a child, so we all play, we sing, and learn, at the end of the day, they acquire what they are supposed to acquire before they go home. (TP1)

Another participant was of the view that:

I involve myself so much in their play and then sometimes, the parents in the community themselves think that like I am just like the children and I like to play almost all the time with them, because I see that when you go to their level, and you do whatever you want them to do, they will also willingly do it, and how you will do it will motivate and attract them to also do the same thing. (TP5)



Figure 4: Teachers' involvement in play activities

Source: Picture captured by researcher during field study, (2023).

Similarly, this participant elaborated that:

“I go down, down for the children, even sometimes some of the teachers passing by will be making comment that; madam as for you, how you teach the children I really like it, yes, they wish they could, because how I put myself in the shoes of the children, I see myself to be a child, and I behave as how the children also behave.” (TP6)

4.4.6 Materials and resources for PBA

Play activities for children always involve the use of play materials and resources.

Participants interviewed mentioned that, the materials for play are arranged based on what the lesson specifies. Some participants also recommended that; the materials

would always be at the reach of children to use them since it will be of their benefit.

This is what this participant commented:

“For instance, since I have empty tins or other stuffs that learners can use for play activities to enhance their various developmental skills, I always make materials at their reach when the need be.” (TP2)

Again, this participant added that:

I arrange materials base on what we are doing. for instance, if we are using poster colours for painting activities, I place the colours in the middle of each table for learners to have easy access. If the space in the class is not enough, I will then have to pack the seats outside, then after the activity, I will send them back to the classroom. (TP3)

Also, another participant corroborated this way:

As you observed, my classroom is very spacious, so some of the materials we arrange them on the floor, we also have a corner that has a carpet that we arrange some of the materials on. We have also pasted some at their level, they can read by themselves with easy access. (TP4)

The coordinator participant advised that:

“Those things we always tell them, they are for the learners, so they should be reachable to the learners; on tables where they can reach and all that.” (CP)

4.4.7 Policy and curriculum effect on the use of PBA.

Play at the early childhood education has been supported by Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), a policy practice which recommends that children should be provided one hour daily to partake in play and projects. In view of this, interviews with the participants revealed information on the effect of policies and curriculum on the use of play-based activities in the early childhood education. Some participants said that, some educational policies overlaps whiles other participants identified some policies conflicting with the demands of play pedagogy. Some participants quoted that:

Yes, because, for me per say, at first, I was using a Sabre programme, though the curriculum goes along with the Sabre programme but Sabre programme was very detailed so when I was trying to change it, it was having a problem for the children, because from morning I will be teaching to the end of the closing time, so switching from Sabre to the demands of the curriculum, it was very difficult for me. So, I decided to take my time and guide the children through, but it was not easy for them, it wasn't easy at all, though it was almost the same but switching was the problem. (TP1)

This participant also shared that:

It draws us back; it doesn't make us achieve whatever we want to achieve. For instance, in case we are to teach some topics within this week, and it happens that, I am on sick leave. Now, what happen is that, instead of me to continue from where I got to before my leave, no, I would have to continue from where the entire nation is expected to be. When learners find themselves in such situation, they lag behind which affect them negatively. (TP2)

Similarly, another participant commented this way:

Right now, it is having negative effects on both learners and teachers. This school for instance, we have been forced to use the GALOP approach to teach and they are insisting we conduct series of exams for the learners. Meanwhile, this approach contradicts with the goals of the play approach which says; we should not force series of written exams on learners. Rather we should use informal assessment technique to assess learners. Hence, teachers are being disrupted with their work which in turn affects learners' growth and development. Example; sometimes you have to reduce the time you use for play activities and conduct exercises and it's affecting us all. (TP4)

These quotations by the teacher participants were confirmed by the coordinator participants that:

It affects both teachers and learners, because, now, ECE teachers are to teach learners through the play-based pedagogy, so the new policies that are being forced on teachers to implement make teaching and learning difficult. Our learners are in most cases confused when we apply these policies. (CP)

Results emerging from the study on the incorporation of PBA into lessons revealed that, almost all participants incorporate play-based activities into their lessons. The study further discovered the impact of integrating play into the education of young

children which confirmed that, using play has made teachers' lessons delivery easier. Also, the study found that, most school authorities and other stakeholders within the district are not giving enough attention and necessary support to play-based pedagogy at the early childhood centres. The study brought to light that, participants through their own means provide most of the materials for the use of play approach. Again, the findings of this current study showed that, the level of participants' involvement in children's play activity was enormous that, some parents in the community mistake the teachers for children. Similarly, it was revealed from the observation that, participants mostly involved themselves in learners' play. More so, the study found that, average number of participants used play materials based on what the lesson specifies. Again, almost all participants make materials and other resources accessible for all learners during lessons. Finally, most policies and curriculum affect the use of play-based activities in the Early Childhood Education. Some educational policies overlaps while others seem to conflict with the demands of play pedagogies and other early childhood pedagogies.

4.5 How do ECE teachers use TLRs to Facilitate Play-Based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District?

The third research question sought to assess Teaching and Learning Resources that ECE teachers use to facilitate play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District. Teaching and learning resources (TLRs) are those materials used in the classrooms for instruction. The use of TLRs is indispensable in the delivery of play-based pedagogy in ECE centres. Teachers' use of TLRs in play activities and the opportunities children get to have contact with the TLRs play an important role in ensuring quality teaching and learning in ECE settings. During the interview, participants were made to share their views on ECE teachers' use of audio-tape in

lesson delivery; ECE teachers' use of other materials aside audio materials; Children's accessibility to appropriate materials; The various learning centres in the classroom; Kind of environment conducive for PBA; and ECE teachers' use of PBA in the absence of original learning materials. From the interview, a number of issues were brought to light from the responses of the participants and have been interpreted in the sub-themes below.

4.5.1 ECE teachers' use of audio-tape in lesson delivery

In order to use play-based pedagogy at the early childhood education, the teacher must involve variety of TLRs which appeal to the senses of the learners especially their hearing. Participants responded to the ways ECE teachers' use audio-tape in lesson delivery. Their knowledge ensured that participants use variety audio-tapes as resource(s) are readily available and accessible for specific lessons or activities. Some participants remarked that:

During the literacy time, mostly, I use it. Because of the rhymes, when we are doing our sounds, we use our audios, so that we can play the sounds to them whiles they learn out of it. When am having numeracy lessons too, I play the rhymes to them, rhymes about counting, about shapes, about colours, so when they are used to those kinds of songs, immediately you raise the song they sing along and whiles they are singing, they are learning as well. (TP1)

Similarly, this participant commented this way:

"For instance, when am teaching dancing, I can't use my mouth to sing for learners to dance along, I also use audio-tape machine like the Bluetooth." (TP2)

Again, this participant explained her point this way:

"As you observed, I don't have the bluetooth machine so I always use my phone, when am teaching phonics, I use my phone to play the music and sounds for children to listen and sing along." (TP4)

In relation to the audio tape use, the coordinator established that:

Hardly, because they usually use materials that are manipulating. Those that the kids can hold and feel. But audio tapes came in some time ago with radio learning apart from that when it comes to usual early childhood development and education, audio tape isn't found in our classrooms. No! (CP)



Figure 5: Use of bluetooth audio-tape in lessons

Source: Picture captured by researcher during field study, (2023).

4.5.2 ECE teachers' use of other materials aside audio materials

Teaching and Learning Resources/Materials are needed to create an appropriate environment for effective learning. While much teaching has traditionally relied on the pupils' hearing and seeing, the modern trend emphasizes the use of all the senses – hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching. The TLRs used in the classroom should provide the pupils with the opportunity to learn through all or most of the five senses. In response to ECE teachers' use of other materials aside audio materials, some participants commented this way:

Mostly, I use real objects. and if I don't get the real objects like fruits, vegetables, etc., at times, we bring in unreal one's and sometimes too we have charts that we use. They enjoy it, if you take them out. They also get attracted by real objects, charts and pictures in the classroom. (TP4)



Figure 6: Use of visual materials in lessons

Source: Picture captured by researcher during field study, (2023).

Again, this participant elaborated that:

“Yes, just that, the materials are not enough as you observed but we manage them to make sure they depict what we want to portray.”
(TP3)

To corroborate this, coordinator participant explained that:

We don't have the televisions, computers, even some of the schools have no access to electricity, and those that have access to electricity, they don't have it in the classrooms. Even, for the normal counters and those things they don't even get places to keep them, so we have a challenge. As for those things like television and computers non have it. If they don't get the materials that they are supposed to get for play, they don't do it. (CP)

4.5.3 Children's' accessibility to appropriate resources/materials

In selecting TLRs for lesson, teachers must make sure that they fulfil a function which is relevant and when used, those resources must emphasize particular points raised in the lesson more effectively than can be emphasized without them. Availability and accessibility of TLRs are important towards the use of play-based pedagogy. In this regard, participants supported that, learners' ability to engage and interact with the TLRs is pivotal in using play-based pedagogy at the ECE centres. Here are what some participants shared:

“Yes, they have access to all the large posters in the class like; vegetable, fruits chart and then parts of the body. There are pictures of the various currency, just that, they can’t take them out.” (TP5)

Simply, this participant remarked:

“Yes, they do. The materials are always at their disposal.” (TP2)

Again, this participant emphasized that:

“The materials are all age appropriate as you observed, and they are always at the reach of my learners. So, they get access to them anytime they wish.” TP4

Also, the participant substantiated this way:

I give them free range, when you come to school early in the morning, you pick any library book you want, and then you read it yourself until I am also done with whatever I think I have to do or the preparation I have to make before lesson. So, it either you just take a story book and then you read it but when it is time for my activities, I just give every child the opportunity to handle any material I want them to use during the lesson. (TP5).

4.5.4 The various learning centres in the classroom

Teachers should also devise innovative ways of creating and developing TLRs from their locality. They should encourage and promote children’s independent learning using the learning centres as a sure way of achieving learning. Some participants said that, they have shopping centres, book centre, market centres created in their classrooms to help the learners to manipulate the materials there. Also, most of the participants interviewed shared that, children have free access to the learning centres, because when they go there, it helps them work together as team. These are what participants had to say:

As I said, it depends on the lesson that am teaching, so, if it is about “home” I just direct them, they should go and play there, they should mention the names, everything, even they can even count it as long as they are playing with it, so it depends. I put them into groups, I divide them into three, one will go to the book centre, the other too will go to the shop centre, and if our focus for day is on the home centre, that’s

where I will concentrate, so after am done with the first group, they will just rotate within 10 to 15 minutes. (TP6)



Figure 7: Teacher and pupils at book centre

Source: Picture captured by researcher during field study, (2023).

Another participant remarked that:

Let take for instance, when we are treating money, children are allowed to visit the shopping centre, where they are engaged in selling and buying activities. Here, learners are guided on how to trade with real money. So, it helps them to grasp concept easily for effective understanding. (TP2)



Figure 8: Teacher and pupils at hair dress centre

Source: Picture captured by researcher during field study, (2023).

Similarly, this participant commented that:

In the first place I have three centers as you observed, because of the size of the classroom, I don't want the place to be so congested, that is why I have three in my class. I give the children free access to the learning centres, because when they go there, I think it helps them to just come together in a team and have a team work, and then whatever they do there, I think it will help them have a fair knowledge of what they are supposed to get out of the lesson or my aim or goal for the day. (TP5)

Also, the coordinator participants related that:

Learning centres are very good because they help the kids to manipulate with materials there and all those things. They get to know what those materials are used for, they learn to use them on their own at their level, so I think it really helps them, and in the end enhancing play-based activities. (CP)

4.5.5 Kind of environment conducive for PBA

Creating a conducive learning environment encourages free play and safety of learners. Some participants shared their ideas that, incorporating play-based activities into lessons in a conducive learning atmosphere allowed young children to go out for a free play with little or no guidance. Some participants were of the view that, conducive environment must be one which is spacious for learners to move about. Some participant also stated that, a conducive learning environment must be attractive and free of dangerous objects. In relation to the kind of environment conducive for PBA, this participant responded this way:

The room should be spacious, so that the children will feel free to roam in the classroom. And there shouldn't be obstacles that will be hurting them or something like that. Ventilation is a problem. We also have light in the school but we don't have it in the classrooms for the children. (TP1)

Similarly, to the quotation of TP1, this participant clarified that:

The environment should be free of dangerous objects like blade and other things and it should be spacious for them to move around. Then, the environment too should be attractive. Yes, so that my learners will always feel welcome and safe. (TP4).

To corroborate, the coordinator participant remarked this way:

Safe environment, spacious and with all the materials that teacher would need for particular topics should be available. Of course, the teachers should be emotionally stable before coming to the classroom, because if the teacher gets offended, it will affect the children too. (CP)

4.5.6 ECE teachers' use of PBA in the absence of original learning resources/materials

The Teaching and Learning Resources afford children the opportunity to have hands-on experiences, which increases and develops their knowledge. The success in the teaching and learning process through PBA could be influenced by the resources/materials made available to support it and the direct ways in which these resources/materials are used. Almost all participants improvised for play based activities in the absence of original learning materials. Some participants shared that:

I make sure I give out the TLRs for them to self-select their own, the one that they feel like using to play, it is available for them, though we don't have enough but the little that I have improvised, I give them out for them to use, and I make sure am there to support them as a guide, immediately they ask for something and some is there, I make sure I give it to them, so that they don't hurt themselves while they are playing. (TP1)



Figure 9: Teacher's improvisation of visual materials for lessons

Source: Picture captured by researcher during field study, (2023).

Also, another participant commented that:

“I improvise, sometimes I ask the children to bring some of the things, and other ones too, I either provide or draw them if we are not getting the real objects.” (TP4)

Correspondingly, the coordinator participant further explained that:

Well, they do, with improvisation, sometimes you go out you pick some materials, sometimes you are able to draw with your own hands and other things. But if you are supposed to use something like TV, and it's not available, it means, that particular lesson will not come on. (CP)

Results from the researcher's observation in relation to ECE teachers' use of TLRs to facilitate play-based activities revealed that, most of the participants used PBA to captivate learners' attention during lessons. Some of the participants too are simply unfamiliar about the kind of play-based activities they have to integrate into their lessons for effective learning. It was revealed from the observation that, majority of the participants do not use reading books for read aloud and decodable reading activities. Also, during observation, the researcher found that, participants organized and used materials in playful learning situations for the benefit of learners. Aside this, few participants used relevant conversational posters for prediction activities during introduction stages of lessons. Again, it was revealed that, almost all participants made materials and other resources accessible for all learners during lessons and were involved in children's play. From the participants' classrooms environment, it was observed that, most of the classroom environments were spacious and well arranged to allow free movement during play-based activities. Again, findings from the observation in relation to audio-tape use in lessons showed that, few numbers of participants used Bluetooth speakers for oral and listening activities during lessons. However, few participants used story books to aid story telling activities. In addition to this, the observation indicated that, only one school had a television set in the classroom to enhance learners' audio-visual and literacy activities during lessons.

Also, it was observed that, during literacy and arts lessons, some participants used drawing books, crayons for tracing and colouring activities including words and sentence cards for "find me game" during literacy lessons. In furtherance, the researcher observed that, there were empty cans, boxes and countable like Bottle tops, sticks, and straws that were used by the participants for numeracy lessons. Contrary to the above, it was observed that, most participants used improvised materials instead of realia to enhance first hand experiences of learners. Again, almost all participant did not have sand tray for learners to practice writing activities. From the observation again, most ECE centres in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District had learning centres created in their classrooms for miniature and pretense play activities. Lastly, the researcher observed that, some ECE centres had age-appropriate play equipment and manipulative for fine motor activities. Nevertheless, all ECE centres observed had no play equipment within their playground for gross motor activities. The study observation reflected in the responses given by the participants during the interview sessions.

Results of this study show that, the use of TLRs is indispensable in the delivery of play-based pedagogy in ECE centres. It was emerged that, participants used audio-tape in lesson delivery. The resources/materials used in play were not enough. Again, participants used real objects and where the real objects like fruits, vegetables, etc. are scares, they substitute with unreal one's and sometimes, charts. Also, majority of the participants supported learners' ability to engage and interact with the TLRs as pivotal in using play-based pedagogy at the ECE centres. In furtherance, the researcher observed that, there were concrete resources/materials and manipulative such as empty cans, boxes and countable like Bottle tops, sticks, and straws that were used by the participants for numeracy lessons. Again, some ECE centres have shopping

centres, book centres, market centres created in their classrooms to help the learners to manipulate the materials there. Also, most of the participants were of the view that, those learning centres are always accessible to all learners in order to help promote teamwork and to enhance play-based activities. Lastly, almost all the participants improvised for play-based activities in the absence of original learning materials.

4.6 What are the Challenges confronting ECE Teachers with the Use of Play-Based Activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District?

The fourth research question established the challenges that confront ECE teachers with the use of play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District. Play-based learning have been identified as a vital and important aspect in early childhood settings. Participants' role is to know how they can use play as a pedagogical tool in early childhood centers. Participants on practical challenges in using play-based pedagogy revealed that, lack of professional development or training in play and pressure from parents and/or administration to achieve prescribed academic outcomes. In addressing the challenges that confront ECE teachers in the use of PBA, some participants also identified a discrepancy between participants' underlying beliefs regarding the use of play-based activities. Some participants commented on the hell and pressure they faced in meeting accountability requirements for work output which create bias towards endorsing play as pedagogy. Whiles some participants shared their ordeal on the work output pressure, some participant commented that, lack of confidence and knowledge due to limited exposure and experiences in early childhood pedagogic principles challenges their effective teaching through play. The most relevant issues collected from the participants were based on the views from an in-depth interview have been described and interpreted in the following sub-themes outlined.

4.6.1 ECE teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes on the use of PBA

The perspective of ECE teachers' ability to use play-based pedagogy in the classroom were proven to have been influenced by their own beliefs. The interview of participants on their personal beliefs and attitudes on the use of PBA indicated that, they had a belief that the play-based pedagogy comes with its challenges of which they were not prepared to withstand. Some participants attributed their beliefs to their religion, health life, and own philosophy. During the interview, these were what some participants commented:

As for me. I believe in the play-based strategy, just that, the policy demands pose pressure on me right now, because am alone in the class and looking at this approach and how intensive it is, and how you suppose to facilitate, and guide the children, I always feel tired and sick. Meanwhile, the SISOs will also follow up with the demands of the GALOP for output of work and so if you don't take care, you will stop the play approach. (TP4)

Again, this participant said:

Sometimes it can be your religion, health life, your own philosophy, and so forth. It doesn't affect it, because so far as am teaching the children, I have to put my personal beliefs aside and put myself in the children's shoe and do it. (TP6)

However, this participant opposed that:

"Is of use. I don't have any belief or anything against it, I do appreciate it a lot." (TP3)

The coordinator participant also remarked that:

If I have beliefs, then it will be a positive one because I believe that children should be made to play, and as they play, they learn, so the only thing that I can do that will affect it, is to encourage teachers to use it more and it should affect it positively not negatively. (CP)

4.6.2 Lack of confidence and inadequate knowledge of ECE teachers use of PBA

The pedagogical challenges in early childhood education that teachers encounter is the ability to use play-based activities in their classroom. Some participants interviewed commented that, teachers' inability to effectively use play-based curriculum in their classrooms was as a result of the confidence and knowledge about the play approach. Also, some participants were of the view that, limited exposure and experiences in early childhood pedagogic principles influences the use of play-based pedagogy. These were what some participants had to say:

“Now, since I don't receive any form of in-service training to enrich my knowledge, then it means, the old knowledge that I have acquired is what am still using, so that one it could be a problem to me.” (TP1)

Equally, this participant also shared that:

Yes, sometimes it affects us because we easily forget how to go about so many things since we were rushed through with the workshop. But if we have been receiving regular training from workshops, like every term we attend about two workshops, and then we can say, we will be equipped so much that our confidence level will be boosted. (TP3)

Again, this participant added that:

Yes, because when you are looking for something, and you don't get it, you will feel bad and disturbed and you don't know what to do but if the materials are there, coupled with constant training, then you can do it and do it well. (TP2)

These quotations were supported and explained by coordinator participant who stated that:

That one it does, because if you don't know it, you can't do it. So, normally they do consultations here and there. However, a teacher that refuses to consult and doesn't have the knowledge when you are monitoring, or when you sit in that teacher's lesson, you will know that the teacher is lacking. (CP)

4.6.3 Effects of educational policy “No Child Is to Be Left Behind” on PBA

Being responsible for each learners’ progress and leaning is on the premise that no child will be left behind in everything done in the class. During the interview, teachers shared their views on how educational policy factors like “No Child is Left Behind (NCLB)” standards, affect the use of play-based activities in their classrooms. Some participants shared their views this way:

“Some of the children are slow learners, so if you want to drag them along, they will be dragging you back...” (TP4)

Also, the coordinator participant said that:

As for that policy, we know that the children have their own developmental stages, when we are playing, a child might be able to play today or might decide not to play. However, that doesn’t mean that child isn’t learning, the child can even go home or during break time, you will see the child doing that thing you said he should do that he didn’t do. So that policy, personally, don’t see it is affecting children at the early childhood level, because at that level, I don’t think we should deny them of anything that will help them grow, so it doesn’t affect play-based in anyway. (CP)

4.6.4 ECE teachers inadequate time to incorporate PBA

Most participants explained that, they sometimes fail to use play-based activities in their classrooms because play demands a lot of time. Some participants also remarked that, they spent less time with children in play activities because it would be taken away from mandated activities. As a result of these, participants were not able to cover daily lessons to speed up the instructional pace. Some participants narrated this way:

I will say that, it really affects its implementation because, we don’t always have control on the time table and so we have no option than to abide by what we have been asked to do. Sometimes, before you realized, its either break time or closing meanwhile, the children will be on activity. (TP3)

Another participant was of the view that:

Play-based activities need a lot of time, so the allocated time on the timetable, sometimes you have to leave some of the activities behind and continue with one thing, so that the following time you do another one, if you don't do it like that, you will be doing it and the time is up, you have to stop and do another thing, so the time too is very important. (TP4)

Again, on the teachers' inadequate time to incorporate PBA, the coordinator participant remarked that:

As for that one, it does, because certain play-based activities take time and then looking at the timetable for early childhood, we have time for everything, so if you are supposed to do this within maybe one hour and the time allocated is 30mins, definitely you wouldn't be able to finish it, so it will definitely affect your activity. (CP)

4.6.5 Stakeholders value for play

Effective early childhood program demands the involvement and support of stakeholders. Stakeholders' value for play activities at the early childhood is paramount to ECE provision. Some participants noted that, stakeholders' doubts about the benefits of learning through play-based pedagogy and how it can be facilitated in the early childhood curriculum. In quest to seek views of the participants on the stakeholders' value for play, some participants shared their views this way:

Most of them don't value it at all. I remember after the new curriculum training, we started with the approach, we were asked to use starters to captivate children's attention before the actual lesson. We went for P.T.A meeting and parents said every time they are passing, they only hear the children singing, singing, why, is singing the only thing their wards come to school to do?... but they don't know that the singing helps them to learn. (TP3)

Again, this participant said that:

They don't value it; they just value the outcome. Sometimes, they will come here, and when they see you with learners at play activity, they begin to question; are you playing or you are teaching, even some colleague teachers also think that, ECE teachers only come to school

to sing and play with learners and we do that to cover our laziness, but when they see the outcome, they then begin to appreciate us and the approach. (TP4)

In same tangent, the coordinator participant commented and explained that:

Well, some do some don't. On the side of parents, they mostly say their wards just go to school to play, they don't do anything, especially when they don't see any writing or anything, they will definitely think that. But when you come to people who have the knowledge that they are learning through play they value it. But when it comes to especially the parents, and then the community, sometimes we have such of challenge over there, that; these kids have been under the tree for a very long time, just playing, they are not doing anything, that challenge comes up, unless we explain things to them. (CP)

4.6.6 Lack of professional development in PBA

The challenge of lack of teachers' professional development affects the use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood education. Some participants revealed that, lack of professional development or training on play influences the pedagogical decision to use play activities which result in fewer opportunities for play-based learning. Below highlights what some participants shared:

"Why not, it affects because every now and then they change one or two things so you wouldn't know whether what we are doing is right or what we are doing is wrong." (TP6)

The coordinator participant confirmed in her submission on the effects of lack of teachers' professional development which added that:

Oh, yes, it will, because if we introduce a policy and we don't do follow ups, it dies up naturally. If we say we are doing this, we do it for a while and nobody is checking, nobody is doing reinforcement, nobody is upgrading knowledge, as time goes on, the policy will die off, so lack of training like this surely affects the play approach. For now, we are into talks with the director as to how best we can organize workshops. Also, when we go round, we try to do our best, sometimes we cluster the teachers we put them into clusters to give something small, small in-service training within 30 to 45 minutes, so we are trying our best to see, especially with the play-based activities workshop we are trying to see how best we can organize that one for teachers in the circuit. (CP)

4.6.7 Pressure from stakeholders to achieve prescribed academic outcomes

ECE teachers feel pressurized to adopting a purely academic curriculum in early childhood classrooms with limited play-based activities in their lessons. Most participants reported on the pressure they received from school administrators, supervisors and parents to achieve the prescribed academic outcomes rather than play. Some participants again shared that, most school authorities and parents do not value the essence of play and therefore constantly put pressure on them for academic achievement resulting in a play-based approach being abandoned. Some participants shared their views this way:

It really does. Sometimes, some parents even make reports to our head teachers that, their wards don't return home with homework. Some parents also view ECE teachers as not being academically good and all of these discourage us. (TP3)

Also, another participant remarked that:

Yes! Most of them see it as waste of time and even the parent also thinks when you come to class you only sing, sing, and you go home, but we the teachers we know at the end of the day, we know our goals and our everything in it, so as for them they see it has waste of time. (TP6)

Again, this participant added that:

Yes, a parent once a time, we were having outside activity and he confronted me about why we are always outside playing. At first, he doesn't value it, because he seems like every afternoon the children are outside playing, what are they there to do, but we called the parent and we explained the importance of the approach to them. Yes. Because after calling them for P.T.A meeting, explaining the approach we are using right now, the curriculum, they understood it and they said; wow, okay, it means their children are learning, they are not just playing in the school. (TP1)

Lastly, the coordinator participant pronounced that:

Yes, it does! When they come to school, even though they are learning but since they don't put them into writing, so the child goes home and, today what did you learn? we sung, we danced, what did you do again, we didn't do anything. So, the teacher would be forced even though

that will not form part of the activity, you let the learners write down something as proof, that he/she was taught. Sometimes, officers who are not ECE inclined, will come to the schools and then they will demand for output of work, for B1, B2, B3, KG, so you are forced to put down something even though that might not be part of what you planned to do. (CP)

4.6.8 Inadequate facilities and play equipment

Adequate teaching and learning resources and play equipment help ensure effective use of play-based pedagogy at the early childhood education. Most were of the advocate that, there must be funds allocated for procuring teaching and learning resources/materials in order to cater for learners' individualities. Again, some participants commented that, there are inadequate teaching and learning materials/resources at ECE centers due to lack of funds to procure them. The following are the quotations of some participants concerning inadequate facilities and play equipment at the ECE centres. This participant said that:

"Yes please, as you observed, my classroom is very small, so our centres, we don't even have a place to keep them, so sometimes I use carpet at small part of the classroom and we arrange our items on it."
(TP1)

Another participant also revealed that:

Yes, just that, the materials are not enough as you observed but we manage them to make sure they depict what we want to portray. Yes, like the real objects we are talking about, since our classrooms lack most of real materials, we only have to resort to improvisation to teach the children. Since we don't have them, some expected development at certain stages of the learners is delayed. It has caused us, teachers also to be skipping most of the activities. (TP2)

Again, another participant was of the view that:

Yes, because some of these materials we are even talking about is the district who is supposed to provide them, their inability to provide these materials have compelled us to resort to improvisation. Again, we don't get opportunity to address some of the challenges we face with regards to the implementation, so we are left with no choice than to facilitate lessons based on the little knowledge we have which also

intends to affect effective teaching and learning with the play approach. because we don't have any fixed equipment and we just show them pictures and it does not help learners with their various skills development. As you observed in the classroom, we don't even have enough tables and chairs which the office is supposed to provide, so all these lapses affect it effective implementation. (TP4)

In relation to the earlier quotation concerning inadequate facilities and play equipment at the ECE centres, the coordinator participant confirmed that:

As for class space, we have a little challenge because, you know most of our schools, the enrollment is very high so our classrooms are congested. A very large extent, it affects them, like have said, there are some schools, classrooms do not even have doors, how do you put up centres, how do you display materials on the walls, is not possible. Whatever you use, you have to take them after the activity. In fact, you will go to these classrooms and there is virtually nothing, it blank, no centres, there is nothing, so it affects them. In this stage, the teachers only talk, talk, then, they write and they go, so they are not even using play activities and it really affect learners. (CP)

4.6.9 The perceptions of other teachers and circuit supervisors about PBA

The views of participants on the perceptions of other teachers and circuit supervisors about play-based activities revealed that, some colleague teachers looked down upon them in their schools. Some participants shared that; they have been an object of mockery to other colleague teachers which discourages them from using the play-based pedagogy. Again, some participants shared their sentiment that, the attitude of other teachers towards ECE teachers shows a lack of respect for the early childhood education field which hinders the use of the play-based pedagogy. Here are what some participants said:

As for me, I haven't experienced any colleague teacher saying that we ECE teachers don't do anything maybe behind my back that one fine. But when it happens like that, then it means they are forcing us to go contrary to the demands of the approach which in the end will affect its goals. (TP2).

This participant also remarked that:

Oh no, for me I told one of the SISOs that, I am very simple but I am not so simple to go by in terms of teaching and learning. Because, most of them just visit to find faults and other stuffs, but for me I have already made it clear, that when you come or you don't come, I am doing my work, so when you think what am doing is not right, you just correct me that is all, and I don't check what other colleagues say about the approach. (TP5)

The coordinator participant finally connected that:

Yes, that one too is there. I mean, when they don't know what you are doing, they will definitely think you are doing nothing, especially when you take B3 learners out and they are learning through play activity, a colleague teacher who doesn't understand the approach, will think that you are not doing anything. (CP)

Results relating to the fourth research question discovered that; participants had a belief that the play-based pedagogy comes with its challenges of which they were not prepared to withstand. In relation to this, some participants attributed their beliefs to their religion, health life, and own philosophy. Again, the results of this study indicated that, teachers' inability to effectively use play-based curriculum in their classrooms were as a result of the confidence and knowledge about the play approach. Also, it was found that, inadequate in-service training for participants to enrich their knowledge base could be problematic if they continue to use their old knowledge. Additionally, participants fail to use play-based activities in their classrooms because play demands a lot of time but the allocated time on the timetable for play is minimal. It was again revealed that, participants spent less time with children in play activities because it would be taken away from mandated activities. Most of the stakeholders do not value play-based activities to the extent that, even some colleague teachers also think that, ECE teachers only come to school to sing and play with learners in order to cover up their laziness. More so, it was found that, most school authorities and parents do not value the essence of play so, they constantly put pressure on teachers for

academic achievement resulting in a play-based approach being abandoned. In furtherance, the study discovered that, there are inadequate teaching and learning materials/resources used facilitate play at ECE centers. Again, limited classroom space was a challenge to some schools which the enrolment is very high. Lastly, the results revealed that; teachers are being an object of mockery by other colleague teachers which discourages them from using the play-based pedagogy.

4.7 Results Discussion

4.7.1 What are ECE teachers' views on play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District?

Play is a way in which children gain insight into their world and as a means of creative self-expression (Froebel, 1894). Results of the study revealed that, almost all participants have fair knowledge about what Play Based Activities is about. In contrary to this study findings, this study seems to oppose the study by Aiono, McLaughlin and Riley, (2019) and Blucher, Aspden and Jackson (2018) which indicated that, the use of a Play-based activities aligned approach is both questioned and challenged by a recognized lack of appropriate professional development provided to teachers rendering them with lack of in-depth understanding to use the recommended play-based pedagogy successfully. The study Participants explained play-based activity as a means of teaching children in the form of play whiles they are learning. Using play-based activities at the ECE centres, other participants further presented that, in everything that they teach or facilitate, they use play. This means that every aspect of the teaching should be in the form of play to enhance learners' understanding. This is in consonant with that study by White (2004) who viewed play as a way in which children learn about the world around them, learn to talk and share and learn about themselves. For effective teaching and learning, it is expected that,

instructions be in the form of play and as the children play, they would learn. This can be related to the finding of Wallersted and Pramling (2012), who explained play-based activities as activities that facilitate learning while at play and play-based learning is, essentially, to learn while at play.

Also, the study indicated that, employing play-based activities in lessons make learning fun and lesson delivery effective. Almost all participants said they integrate play-based activities in their lessons. This study found that, participants integrate the play-based in their lessons to help learners to acquire more skills while they are learning. Subsequently, other participants revealed that, though there are other teaching methods, they integrate play-based activities because it makes children unconsciously learn while they play. To other participants, through playing, children can learn better, so it forms an integral part in the ECE curriculum. In congruence with this study findings, proponents of play-based learning activities for academic growth have confirmed that play-based strategies can be used to teach prescribed academic goals in an engaging and developmentally appropriate manner (Balfanz, Ginsburg, Greenes, 2003; Sarama & Clement, 2006).

Again, on the purpose of play-based activities, play allows learners to learn and experience things for themselves. Study revealed that, play helps the children to get a better understanding of lesson. In addition, the study revealed that, play has quality of making learners involved and active participant in class. This statement is in agreement with the finding of Miller and Almon (2009) which states that, with the focus on play-based learning, learners continue to grow and develop appropriately as well as meet the expectations expected of them. Similarly, it was revealed that, with play-based activities, learners learn with joy and happiness without even realizing it.

This statement seems to agree with Bodrova and Leong (2007) which confirmed that, a child without play experiences is likely to show deficits in his or her cognitive and social-emotional development.

Results of the study emerged that, play-based activities were used across all early childhood education centres. It was established from the study that, play-based activities are seen as priority in the education of learners based on its importance. The study finding is in disagreement with studies by Saayah (2004); Fauziah (2009); Sharifah et al., (2009) which showed that many kindergarten teachers never prioritize the use of the play-based approach in their teaching instruction. On the importance of play, study found that, ECE teachers do use the play methods, because it helps learners understand concepts better. It can be related that, play offers the best learning experience for children (Moyles, 2005). This statement can also be linked to study by Bodrova and Leong (2007) which said that, play-based activities have unique role for children's development which cannot be replaced by other activities because of its benefit in variety of experiences for children. The findings of the study revealed that, learning becomes enjoyable and learners see their teachers as their peers. Based on this finding, it can therefore be said that, if play is well utilized, learners will have better result in terms of teaching and learning of which play should be a priority. In congruence to this study, Whiteman (2018) stated that, through play, children learn to regulate their emotions, interact with peers, teachers, and their environment.

More so, the study identified that, play-based learning is an important way to develop active learning where learners use their brains in lots of ways to explore their world and build on their natural and social environments around them. Also, play activities help children to have real life and hands on activities of what they learn as they manipulate all the objects in the classroom. The study results again showed that, play

makes learners to be independent as they work on tasks individually without much help from teachers and peers. In connection to this current study, a growing body of research has provided both theoretical and empirical evidence for the use of play-based learning strategies which support areas of development and learning, including social competence (Binder, 2014) and self-regulation abilities (De La Riva & Ryan, 2015).

Relating play to learning, the study revealed a positive relationship between play and learning which greatly impact on the pedagogical practices in early childhood education. This statement is in disagreement with earlier studies which stated that, teachers perceive play and learning as two separate entities (Lynch, 2015; Pyle et al, 2017; Van Oers, 2014). At this point, the study found the use of play as a way of teaching, makes learning occur naturally which could be agreed with the view of Piaget (1951) who posited that, the relationship between play and cognitive learning cause children to reach a higher level of cognitive development through the process of assimilation of experience through play.

Furthermore, the study findings revealed that, the choice of kind of play employed by teachers in lessons at the early childhood level are dependent on the objectives and goals set for the lesson. The study supported that, participants' choice for the kind of play-based activities to be employed in their lessons are informed by the level of the learners that are going to be engaged in it and the specific objectives that they want to achieve. Classroom observation on the use of Play-Based Activities revealed that, some of the participants are simply unfamiliar about the kind of play-based activities they have to integrate into their lessons for effective learning. This study finding can be supported by Abdulai (2014) which in his study found that, despite the huge

impact of play-based activities in the development of early childhood learners, its utilization in the early childhood centers is very rare.

Finally, the result of the study showed that, participants barely receive in-service training from the education directorates within the district except of cases where some participants occasionally meet to address their personal challenges during Professional Learning Community (PLC). The study further revealed that, the cost involved in organizing in-service training for teachers is the problem which teachers are unwilling to pay for workshops and the district is also not well resourced to organize in-service training for their staffs. To corroborate and confirm this statement, study conducted by Gundogan (2002) revealed that, in-service training that school administrators organized are not enough to abreast early childhood teachers with the current trend of the early childhood curriculum.

4.7.2 How ECE teachers use play-based activities

Results emerged from the study on the incorporation of PBA into lessons revealed that, almost all participants revealed; they incorporate play-based activities into their lessons. This study findings contradicts with earlier study by Kekesi et al. (2019), which concluded that, most ECE teachers have positive views about play-based activities but inadequate understanding made them unsure on how and when to incorporate it into their lessons to the benefit of the learners. Again, Graue (2009) affirmed that, employing free-play give learners the opportunity to explore their learning environment.

The study again revealed that, participants adopted play approaches for their lessons. The study further revealed that, play was used anytime; it could be early morning, big circle time, or table top activity. Abdulai (2014) and Whiteman (2018) remarked that, when it comes to Ghana generally, there are some perceptions that play hovers around chaos and harmony.

The study further discovered the impact of integrating play into the education of young children. The study confirmed that, using play has made teachers lesson's delivery easier; they are able to deliver it efficiently and effectively. It was again found that, through play, the children understand concept effortlessly because as children see and touch materials, any time they are called to task, they are happy to do it. In congruence of this current study to previous study by Izumi Taylor, Samuelsson & Rogers (2010), this confirmed that, teachers' views or understanding of play-based activities impacted children's learning experiences.

Also, the study found that, most school authorities and other stakeholders within the district are not giving enough attention and necessary support to play-based pedagogy at the early childhood levels. According to Abdulai (2014) and Kekesi et al., (2019), despite the government of Ghana's strong policy commitment to the early childhood sector, the government has failed to provide play materials and other resources which are significant towards the use of the play-based pedagogy. The study brought to light that, most of the resources/materials for the use of play in the ECE classrooms were personally provided by the ECE teachers. This shows that, there are very limited supports for teachers in the successful utilization of play pedagogy in the ECE levels. Studies confirmed that, the kind of perception some stakeholders have about the role of TLRs in relation with PBA in ensuring holistic development of learners can

influence its use (Oppong Frimpong, 2021; Kekesi et al., 2019). In support to the study by Oppong Frimpong (2021) and Kekesi et al., (2019), Yavuz and Güzel (2020) challenged that, if stakeholders are of the opinion that TLRs with active learner involvement is paramount to ECE provision, then they will endeavor themselves to providing the needed TLRs which will allow learners to manipulate them for effective utilization of the play-based pedagogy.

Again, the findings of this current study showed that, there were active involvements of participants in children's play. It was found from the study that, the level of participants' involvement in children's play activity was enormous that, the parents in the community mistake the teachers for children. Similarly, it was revealed from the observation that, participants mostly involved themselves in learners' play. The finding of this study can be linked to earlier study by Presser, Clements, Ginsburg, Ertle (2015) that confirms this current study that, learners are not to be left alone to engage in free play as it is considered not to be sufficient to promote academic learning, instead, active teacher involvement in play-based activities is very critical.

More so, the study found that, average number of participants used play materials based on what the lesson specifies. The study again found that, the schools visited had spacious classrooms where materials were well arranged. Again, it was revealed from the observation that, almost all participants make materials and other resources accessible for all learners during lessons. In consonance with this study, Oppong Frimpong (2017) argues that teachers' ability to meaningfully use TLRs in their lessons and to create the necessary environment and opportunities for their children to have access to the TLRs and to manipulate them is central to the successful utilization of the play-based pedagogy.

Finally, the study revealed that, most policies and curriculum affect the use of play-based activities in the early childhood education. This study identified that, some educational pedagogies and interventions such as Jolly phonics approach, Gallop programme and UNICEF Learning programme overlaps while others seem to conflict with the demands of play pedagogies and other early childhood pedagogies. Because of its challenges, teachers get confused of how to use play-based pedagogy making teaching and learning very difficult. Study by Almon (2004) confirmed that, there has been an increasing trend in educational policy to incorporate more formal learning approaches in early years' curricula. This finding of this study corroborates with some studies in the United States (Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, & Gryfe, 2008; Kane, 2016), Australia (Theobald et al. 2015), and China, (Wang & Lam, 2017) which found that, early childhood education settings are under increasing pressure to meet formalized learning centered goals, through more didactic, teacher-directed approaches.

4.7.3 TLRs that ECE teachers use to facilitate play-based activities

Results of this study show that, the use of TLRs is indispensable in the delivery of play-based pedagogy in ECE centres. The results of the study emerged that, participants used audio-tape in lesson delivery. The study however discovered that; some participants don't have the bluetooth speaker machine so they always resort to the use of mobile phones especially during phonic lessons. Findings from the observation in relation to audio-tape use in lessons confirms that, few numbers of participants used Bluetooth speakers for oral and listening activities. Tamakloe et al., (2005) confirmed in his study that, when using play-based pedagogy, teachers must select a variety of TLRs which appeal to other senses than that of hearing. The study again revealed that, the materials used in play were not enough. Also, most schools do

not have access to electricity; not to talk of televisions and computers to use in children's classrooms. In confirmation to this, the observation indicated that, only a class had a television set in a school to enhance learners' audio-visual and literacy activities during lessons. This study is in consonance with Tamakloe et al., (2005) which confirms that, in selecting TLRs, teachers must make sure that, they fulfill a function which is relevant and when used, those resources must emphasize aspects in the lesson more effectively. Also, Opong Frimpong (2021) indicated that, teachers' ability to meaningfully use TLRs in their lessons and to create the necessary environment and opportunities for their children to have access to the TLRs and to manipulate them is key to effective lesson delivery and quality learning outcomes.

Again, the study found that, participants used of real objects like fruits, vegetables, etc. are scarce, they substitute with unreal ones and sometimes, charts. In connection to this study, study confirmed that, while much teaching has traditionally relied on the pupils' hearing and seeing, the modern trend provides opportunity for children to learn through all or most of the five senses—hearing, seeing, and smelling, tasting and touching (Nkuuhe, 1995).

Also, this study confirmed that, majority of participants supported learners' ability to engage and interact with the TLRs as pivotal in implementing play-based pedagogy at the ECE centres. Study findings revealed that, learners have access to all the large posters in the class like; vegetable, fruits chart and body parts chart. In furtherance, the researcher observed that, there were concrete materials and manipulative such as empty cans, boxes and countable like Bottle tops, sticks, and straws that were used by the participants for numeracy lessons. The findings of the current study can be related to the study by Opong Frimpong (2021) which pointed that, although some materials

were available in some ECE centres but only in very few quantities and were fixed and so the teachers just made reference to them without the learners having the opportunity of touching or manipulating them.

Again, this study emerged that, some ECE centres have shopping centres, book centres, market centres created in their classrooms to help the learners manipulate the materials there. Also, most of the participants were of the view that, those learning centres are always accessible to all learners in order to help promote teamwork and to enhance play-based activities. The findings of this study disconfirmed the findings of Lester & Russell (2008) which stated that, as a result, socio-dramatic play and domestic play, learning centres have been disappearing from early childhood classrooms.

In furtherance, this study emphasized that, conducive environment must be one which is spacious for learners to move about. The study found that, a conducive learning environment must be attractive and free of dangerous objects. Again, the study revealed that, a conducive environment must be safe, spacious and with all the available materials that teachers would need for particular lesson. Similarly, from the participants' classrooms environment, it was observed that, some of the classroom environments were spacious and well arranged to allow free movement during play-based activities. To confirm this study, according to NaCCA (2019), it is believed that learners learn better in a positive learning environment, where they feel emotionally and physically safe to enjoy learning.

Finally, this study's findings suggest that, almost all participants improvised for play based activities in the absence of original learning materials. Also, the observation confirmed that, most participants used improvised materials instead of realia to

enhance first hand experiences of learners. This statement from the current study can be corroborated with a study by Nantwi (2019) which confirmed that, when these teaching and learning materials are not available, the teacher can improvise with alternatives that can aid effective teaching and learning through PBA. Also, the study observed that, there were empty cans, boxes and countable like Bottle tops, sticks, and straws that were used by the participants for numeracy lessons. This statement from the current study corroborates the study by Aina (2012) which emphasized that, teachers must utilize the use of discarded resources or materials around them to improvise teaching aids for effective teaching and learning. Similarly, Opoku-Asare (2004) also asserted, the local environment abounds with a variety of raw materials and discarded resources that teachers can use to improvise TLRs for effective teaching and learning.

4.7.4 Challenges that confront ECE teachers with the use of PBA

This study supported the perspective of early childhood teachers' ability to use play-based pedagogy in the classroom was proven to have been influenced by their own beliefs. Findings of the study discovered that; participants had a belief that the play-based pedagogy comes with its challenges of which they were not prepared to withstand. In relation to this, findings of this study showed that, some participants attributed their beliefs to their religion, health life, and own philosophy. However, the study revealed that, some participants had no belief against PBA and if there were, it will be a positive one and not the contrary. In agreement to this study, studies suggested that, some potential reasons for the discrepancy in teachers' underlying beliefs were the pressure to meet accountability requirements, past teacher training experiences, following routine practices, or social desirability bias towards endorsing play as pedagogy (Foote et al., 2004; Hedge et al, 2009). It can further be confirmed

that, despite the teacher's efforts to include play-based activities in their classrooms, they are being held back with their beliefs in a need to emphasize academic material in early childhood to aid learners to achieve their academic goals to meet the demand of the primary education. (Lynch, 2015).

Again, the results of this study indicated that, teachers' inability to effectively use play-based curriculum in their classrooms were as a result of the confidence and knowledge about the play approach. Also, it was found that, inadequate in-service training for participants to enrich their knowledge could be problematic if they continue to use their old knowledge. Results of this study have established that, receiving regular training will help equip the participants so much that, their confidence level will be boosted. These findings can be corroborated to research conducted by Miller and Almon (2009) who shared their views that, young teachers fear to accept the play-based curriculum in their classrooms not because they do not see its impact on the learners positively but because they lack the confidence and knowledge due to limited exposure and experiences in early childhood pedagogic principles. Again, another study confirmed that, teacher's inability to integrate play-based activities into their lessons is not deliberate but their inadequate knowledge and skills to enhance their understanding have made them handicapped towards the utilization of play activities in our early childhood centers (Putch & Ali, 2013; Sofu, Thompson & Kanton, 2015; Tamanja, 2016).

In this same study, results showed that, participants views on how educational policy factors like "No Child is Left Behind (NCLB)" standards affect the use of play-based activities in their classrooms. The participant through the study findings supported the policy, "No Child is Left Behind (NCLB)" because they know the developmental

stages of learners and so they consider in the use of play-based activities. The findings of the study can be correlated to previous research which revealed that, being accountable for every learner's progress is of paramount importance in NCLB (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Goldstein, 2007; Hyun, 2003).

Additionally, the study discovered that, participants fail to use play-based activities in their classrooms because play demands a lot of time but the allocated time on the timetable for play is minimal. It was again revealed that, participants spent less time with children in play activities because it would be taken away from mandated activities. As a result of these, participants were not able to cover daily lessons to speed up the instructional pace. To corroborate the findings of this study, the diminishing time afforded for the use of the play-based pedagogy in early childhood classrooms resulted from the emphasis on preparing children to do well on standardized tests and to meet all standards (Copple & Bredekamp 2009; Hyun 2003; Jaynes & William, 2006). Again, this study further confirmed that, in many early childhood centers, there is no playtime at all and there is no time for teachers to incorporate play activities into the instructions. (Almon, 2004; McNamee, 2010) as cited in Putch and Ali, (2013).

The study again established that, some stakeholders' doubts the benefits of play-based pedagogy. Most stakeholders do not value play-based activities to the extent that, even some colleague teachers also think that, ECE teachers only come to school to sing and play with learners in order to cover up their laziness. However, those who have knowledge about PBA, value it. This was confirmed in a study that, many school administrators do not value play and believe that play is a waste of time in schools (Miller & Almon, 2009; Brodova & Leong, 2010; Chervenak, 2011). In the same tangent, Fung and Cheng (2012) explain that, key stakeholders' doubts about the

benefits of learning through play-based pedagogy and how it can be facilitated in the early childhood curriculum.

This study discovered that, lack of professional development for participants on play influence pedagogical decision to use play activities which result in fewer opportunities for play-based learning. The results of the study revealed that, when policies are introduced and there is no follow up to monitor its implementation, it dies up naturally, so lack of training like this surely affects the play approach. In congruence with this study, Howard (2010); Leggett et al. (2013) also confirmed that, lack of professional development or training in play influence the pedagogical decision to use more direct instruction and resulted in fewer opportunities for play-based learning

More so, it was found that, participants were overstretched by school administrators, supervisors and parents to achieve the prescribed academic outcomes rather than play. The study again identified that, most school authorities and parents do not value the essence of play so, they constantly put pressure on teachers for academic achievement resulting in a play-based approach being abandoned. The study again revealed that, ECE teachers were viewed as not being academically good and so when they come to school. They only sing, play to waste of time. Studies by Aliza et al. (2011); Sharifah et al. (2009); Mariani (2003) confirmed in their studies that, constant pressure for academic achievement, lack of support from school administrators and other stakeholders have resulted in a play-based approach being abandoned by many ECE teachers.

In furtherance, the study discovered that, there are inadequate teaching and learning materials/resources used to facilitate play-based pedagogy at ECE centers. The implications as study confirmed is that, unavailability or inadequate TLRs can hamper learner's opportunity to have practical experience of what is being taught (Papadakis, et al., 2020). Again, the study found that, limited classroom space was challenge to some schools which the enrolment is very high. To some extent, some classrooms do not even have doors and windows to make the place secure to put up centres and also to display materials on the walls. One school of thought confirmed that, in education, infrastructure provides bases for the rest and so once the deficiencies related to infrastructure occur, it may lead to other problems as well (Azzi-Lessing, 2009). Aktan and Comert (2007) added that one of the sources of problems relating to early childhood curriculum implementation is facilities available in the schools. Thus, the good or bad state of the early childhood facilities go a long way to affect the use of the play-based pedagogy.

Lastly, the results of this study revealed that; ECE teachers are being an object of mockery by other colleague teachers which discourages them from using the play-based pedagogy. The study subsequently revealed that, most non-early childhood education teachers are ignorant about the early childhood play-base pedagogical practices. To corroborate this, findings of studies by Parker and Neuharth-Pritchett (2006); Stipek and Byler, (1997), established that, early childhood teachers claimed of being looked down upon by other colleague teachers in their schools. Hedge et al. (2006) reiterated that, the attitude of other teachers towards ECE teachers shows a lack of respect for the early childhood education provision which hinders the use of the play-based pedagogy.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter presents the summary of the study, the conclusion drawn from the findings and recommendations. It further provides suggested areas for further studies.

5.1 Summary

The main purpose of this study was to explore for a first-hand information, how early childhood education teachers use play-based activities in teaching and learning in the Hemang Lower Denkyira District of the Central Region of Ghana. The study was undertaken to:

1. examine ECE teachers' views on play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District.
2. establish how ECE teachers use play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District.
3. assess TLRs that ECE teachers use to facilitate play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District.
4. establish challenges that confront ECE teachers with the use of play-based activities in Hemang Lower Denkyira District.

The literature provided the background to objectives and research questions posed by this study. Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory underpinned this study. The theory was chosen by the researcher because of its relations to play and child development in the field of education. The study adopted the qualitative research approach. In-depth interview and observational checklist were the instruments utilized

to collect data from ten (10) participants in the Hemang Lower Denkyira district to achieve the objectives of this study.

5.2 Key Findings

The following were the key findings of the study:

1. It was found that the early childhood teachers are simply unfamiliar about the kind of play-based activities they have to integrate into their lessons for effective learning to occur. The study again found that early childhood teacher barely receive in-service training on play-based pedagogies to be abreast with the changing trends in the education fabrics.
2. From the study, it was established that, most school authorities and other stakeholders within the education do not give enough attention and necessary supports to play-based pedagogy at the early childhood level. The study again found that some educational policies overlaps while others seem to conflict with the demands of play-based pedagogy.
3. It was emerged in the study that most early childhood centres do not have audio materials like Bluetooth speakers for oral and listening activities. Again, the study found that, most schools have no access to electricity and so lack television set and computers to aid in audio-visual lessons. It was again revealed from the study that, most early childhood teachers used improvised materials instead of realia to enhance first hand experiences of learners.
4. Lastly, the study established that, receiving regular training on play would help prepare teachers with the right skills and confidence to use play-based activities in teaching. The study again discovered that; early childhood teachers fail to use play-based activities in their lessons because play demands a lot of time which the allocated play time on the timetable is minimal. Also, it

was found that, many school administrators and other stakeholders in education do not value the essence of play; believing that, play is a waste of time. Based on this, the study confirmed that, most early childhood education teachers are overstretched by school administrators and supervisors to achieve the prescribed academic outcomes rather than play. Finally, the study discovered that, there are inadequate teaching and learning materials/resources used to facilitate play approach at ECE centers.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings above, the following conclusions were arrived at:

To successfully utilize play-based curriculum in the classroom, it is essential to have teachers or facilitators who possess the requisite content knowledge and pedagogical skills and are confident of their ability to guide and facilitate meaningful learning through play-based activities in a familiar context. Creating an avenue through workshops and training on play equips teachers with knowledge and skills on various kinds of play-based activities they can integrate in their lessons for effective teaching and learning at the Early Childhood Education centres.

The study also concluded that, creating a favorable educational policies at the Early Childhood Education centre help boost play-based pedagogy at the Early Childhood Education centres.

The researcher again concluded that; teachers' ability to meaningfully use TLRs in their lessons and to create the necessary environment and opportunities for their children to have access to the TLRs and to manipulate them is central to the successful utilization of play-based pedagogy. Therefore, relevant resources/materials

such as Audio, audio-visual and concrete materials are to be provided to promote play-based pedagogies at the early childhood centres.

The study finally concluded that; teachers must be given regular trainings in order to boost their confidence. Also, proper sensitization and advocacy programs should be given to all stakeholders in education including teachers, supervisors, and parents to avoid the stereotype mindset they have with play activities. Through that, play-based activities will be given the needed priority in the field of early childhood education.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are provided:

1. The GES in collaboration with NaCCA should charge other agencies in educational development in Ghana such as Sabre Education Trust and Right To Play (NGO's) and the training department of the various district education directorates to adequately prepare ECE teachers and head teachers of ECE centres through training with the requisite knowledge and skills on the various kinds of play-based activities to engage children through during instructions for effective teaching and learning.
2. The Ministry of Education (MoE), Ghana Education Service (GES), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and other stakeholders of education must give much attention to play-based activities and ensure that necessary supports including favorable educational policies are introduced to boost play-based pedagogy at the early childhood levels.
3. Stakeholders of education such as; Parent Association (PA), School Management Council (SMC), Head teachers, Teachers and the Mission units should provide early childhood centres with enough, varieties, and

developmentally appropriate play resources/materials and equipment to facilitate play-based pedagogies at the early childhood centres.

4. The ECE Coordinators in collaboration with the Educational Directorates, and other Agencies in Education should strategically and periodically organize sensitization and advocacy programs for all stakeholders in education including education supervisors, head teachers, teachers, and parents to help them acquire basic knowledge which will help curb their misconceptions about play. Also, they should in their own small ways organise series of +workshops or in-service trainings to equip and abreast ECE teachers with the changing trends in the implementation of the play-Based pedagogy in teaching and learning.
5. Finally, the Ghana Education Service (GES) and National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) should by policy allocate more time for play activities on the timetable for ECE centres to give the learners the chance to engage in play activities. Through that, play will be given the needed priority in the field of early childhood education.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Further studies can be conducted on the following:

1. Since the study did not focus on implementation of play-based activities for teaching children with disability in Hemang Lower Denkyira District, it is recommended that future research should consider this area.
2. Also, the study employed the qualitative type of research which is limited to generalizability because of small sample size. Further studies should consider a mixed method approach where the results can be generalized.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Introductory Letter



UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
P.O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana
☎ + 233 (020) 2041072
✉ ecce@uew.edu.gh

FES/DECE/L1

4th July, 2022

The Director
District Educational Directorate
Box 7
Twifo Hemang

Dear Sir/Madam

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

We write to introduce to you **Ms. Esther Owusu** with index number **200014544** who is an M. Phil student in the above department. She was admitted in 2019/2020 academic year and has successfully completed her course work and is to embark on her thesis on the topic: *“Implementation of play-based activities in teaching and learning by early childhood teachers”*.

Ms. Owusu is to collect data for her thesis, and we would be most grateful if she could be given the needed assistance.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Samuel Oppong Frimpong, Ph. D
Ag. Head of Department



www.uew.edu.gh

APPENDIX B

Permission Letter

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE



Republic of Ghana

District Education Office
P. O. BOX 7
Twifo Hemang

*In case of reply the
Number and date of this
Letter should be quoted*

Email: twifohemanglowerdenkyira@ges.gov.gh
DIGITAL ADDRESS: CH-000-6290
My Ref. NO: GES/CR/HLD/38/VOL.3
Your Ref. NO:

Date: 26th September, 2022.

✓ MISS ESTHER OWUSU
HEMANG R/C BASIC SCH.
TWIFO HEMANG.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

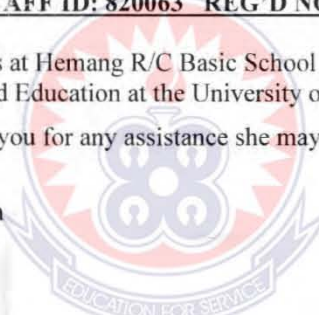
STAFF ID: 820063 REG'D NO.: 5987/13

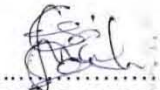
The above named staff teaches at Hemang R/C Basic School in the District. She is pursuing M. Phil programme in Early Childhood Education at the University of Education, Winneba.

We therefore introduce her to you for any assistance she may need from your school to collect data for her thesis.

Counting on your co-operation

Thank you.




.....
DINAH ANDERSON (MS)
DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF EDUC.
TWIFO HEMANG

CC:
The SISO, Hemang East.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR
GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE
TWIFO / HEMANG / LOWER
DENKYIRA DISTRICT

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

SECTION A

Personal data:

Name (pseudonym):.....

Interview date:...../...../.....

Time:.....

Duration:.....

Class:.....

Educational qualification:.....

Length of teaching experience as ECE teacher:.....

SECTION B: ECE teachers understanding of play-based activities

Prompts:

1. What are your views on play-based activities?
 - a. Does PBA form an integral component of ECE program?
 - b. What are the purposes of PBA in ECE program?
 - c. How well do you appreciate or prioritize PBA in teaching and learning?
 - d. What is the importance of PBA?
 - e. What is the relation between play and learning?
 - f. What inform the kind of play to employ in a lesson?
 - g. How often do you receive continuing in-service professional development programs?

SECTION C: The how ECE teachers implement play-based activities

2. What are the skills in planning and organizing activities and in using materials and resources effectively during play-based lessons?

Prompts

- a. How and when do you incorporate play-based activities into lessons?
- b. How long have you put the play-based activities into practice in your lesson delivery?
- c. What impact has play-based activities caused on your lesson delivery?

- d. What support does the school administrators and other stakeholders provide towards the implementation of play-based pedagogy?
- e. What is your level of involvement and support in children's play?
- f. How do you arrange materials and other resources for PBA?
- g. How does policy mandates and curriculum concerns affect the implementation of play-based pedagogy?

SECTION D: TLRs that ECE teachers use to facilitate play-based activities.

3. Which kind of learning materials do you use to facilitate play-based activities?

Prompts:

- a. How and when do you use audio-tape materials in your lesson delivery?
- b. How do you use variety of materials which appeal the other senses than that of hearing?
- c. How do children get access to appropriate materials for manipulation?
- d. How does the various learning centers in the classroom enhances play-based pedagogy?
- e. How does the stakeholders help in the provision of learning materials and other resources towards the play-based pedagogy?
- f. What kind of environment is conducive for play-based activities?
- g. In the absence of original materials for learning, how do you facilitate PBA?

SECTION E: Challenges that confront ECE teachers with the implementation of PBA.

4. What challenges do you face with the implementation of play-based activities?

Prompts:

- a. How does your personal beliefs and attitudes affect the implementation of play-based pedagogy?
- b. How does teacher's lack of confidence and inadequate knowledge affect the implementation of PBA?
- c. How does educational policy "No Child Is to Be Left Behind" affect play-based pedagogy?
- d. How does inadequate time to incorporate play activities into instructions hinders its implementation?

- e. Do stakeholders value play and do not see it as waste of time?
- f. Do lack of professional development in PBA and pressure from stakeholders to achieve prescribed academic outcomes affect its implementation?
- g. How does inadequate facilities and play equipment affect PBA?
- h. Do you think the perceptions and reactions of colleague teachers and circuit supervisors hinders the implementation of PBA?



APPENDIX D

Observational Checklist

OBSERVATIONAL CHECKLIST

This checklist sought to obtain data on the how ECE teachers implement play-based activities. Nonetheless, it also gathers data on the use of TLRs by ECE teachers to facilitate play-based activities. Apart from this checklist, the researcher shall pay attention to emerging information in the process of observation.

| ITEMS | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| The how ECE teachers implement play-based activities. | | Yes | No |
| 1. | Teacher uses PBA to captivate learners' attention during lessons. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | Teacher integrates play-based activities into lessons for effective learning. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | Teacher organizes and use materials in playful learning situations for the benefit of learners. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | Teacher makes materials and other resources at the reach of learners during lessons. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | Teacher involves himself and scaffold children's play in playful learning situations. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | Teacher involves learners actively in play-based activity lessons. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. | Teacher arranges classroom environment to allow free movement during PBA. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| TLRs that ECE teachers use to facilitate play-based activities | | | |
| 8. | Teacher uses plane books and crayons for tracing and colouring activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. | Teacher uses reading books for read aloud and decodable reading activities. picked | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. | Teacher uses story books to aid story telling activities. picked | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. | Teacher uses conversational poster for predictions activities during introduction stages of lessons. picked | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. | Teacher uses word cards and sentence cards for "find me game" during literacy lessons. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. | Teacher uses television to enhance audio-visual activities during lessons. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. | Teacher uses Bluetooth speakers for oral and listening activities during lessons. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. | Teacher uses computer for computer literacy activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. | Teacher uses empty cans and boxes to introduce shapes to learners. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. | Teacher uses counters (Bottle tops, sticks, and or straw for numeracy) for numeracy activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. | Teacher uses realia to enhance first hand experiences of learners. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. | Teacher uses the learning centres for miniature and pretense play activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 20. | Teacher uses sand tray for learners to practice writing activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. | Teacher uses TLRs (cardboards, crayons, Scissors, Sellotape, play dough and puzzles) for group activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. | Teacher uses pictures and paintings of scenes on the walls to enhance independent learning among learners. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. | Teacher uses age-appropriate play equipment and manipulatives for fine motor and gross motor development of learners. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



APPENDIX E

Evidence of Taguette (Online Qualitative Analysis Software)

