

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**THE PERSPECTIVE OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS ON THE CHALLENGES
OF KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION IN THE AFIGYA KWABRE DISTRICT**



**A Dissertation in the Department of Educational Leadership, Faculty of Education
and Communication Sciences, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
University of Education, Winneba, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
award of the Master of Arts (Educational Leadership) degree**

DECEMBER, 2020

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: REV. SR. DR. MARY ASSUMPTA AYIKUE

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

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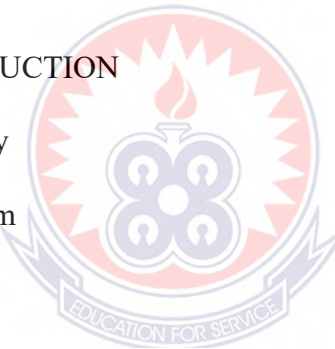
DEDICATION

To my dear husband Mr. Scout Brantuo and my lovely children; Isabella, Elisah,
Nissi and Lois.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
TITLE PAGE	
DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
GLOSSARY	x
ABSTRACT	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	2
1.3. Purpose of the Study	4
1.4 Objectives of the Study	4
1.5 Research Questions	5
1.6 Significance of the Study	5
1.7 Limitations	6
1.8 Delimitations	6
1.9 Organization of the Study	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Theories of Learning and Child Psychology	8



2.3 The Meaning and Need for Kindergarten Education in Ghana	9
Table 2.-1: An outlook of the educational system in Ghana at the basic level	10
2.4 Selected National and International Commitments on Kindergarten Education in Ghana	12
2.5 International Commitments on Early Childhood Education	12
2.5.1 Millennium Development Goals (Goal 2)	12
2.5.2 The World Conference on Education for All: Jomtien	13
2.6 Local / National Commitments on Early Childhood Education	14
2.6.1 The 2007 Education Reforms	14
2.6.2 Education Act 778, 2008	15
2.6.3 The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2010-2020	16
2.6.4 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy 2004	16
2.7 The State of Affairs on Kindergarten Education in Ghana	17
2.8 The Challenges of Kindergarten Education in Ghana	19
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	24
3.1 Introduction	24
3.3 Research Design	24
3.4 Population	25
3.5 Sampling and Sampling Techniques	26
3.6 Data Collection Instruments	27
3.7 Data Collection Procedure	27
3.8 Reliability and Validity of the instruments	28
3.8.1 Reliability	28

3.8.2 Validity	28
3.9 Data Analysis	28
3.10 Ethical Consideration	29
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS/ FINDINGS/DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	30
4.1 Introduction	30
4.2 Data Analyses	30
4.2.1 Demographics Characteristics of Teachers	30
4.2.2 Teachers' perspective on Early Childhood Educational (ECE) Policies	34
4.2.2 Teachers' Efficiency Level	36
4.3 Demographics Characteristics of Parents	37
4.4 Discussion of Results	42
4.4.1 The perspective of Teachers	42
4.4.2 Professional qualifications of ECE Teachers	42
4.4.3 Teachers' perspective on Changes Needed in ECE	43
4.4.4 Teachers' perspective on their level Satisfaction with work	44
4.4.5 Teachers' perspective on the Challenges Faced by ECE Teachers	44
4.5 Results on Parents	45
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	46
5.1 Introduction	46
5.2 Summary of Findings	46
5.2.1 Demographics of Teachers	46
5.2.2 Demographics of Parents	47

5.2.3 Parents' perspective on the Current State of ECE in the Afigya Kwabre District	48
5.2.4 Parents' perspective on the Challenges Facing ECE in Afigya Kwabre District	51
5.3 Conclusions	52
5.4 Recommendations	54
5.5 Areas for Future Research	55
REFERENCES	56
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS	62
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS	66



LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
2.1: An outlook of the educational system in Ghana at the basic level	10
4.1: Case Processing Summary for Teachers	31
4.2: Case Processing Summary for Teachers' perspective on ECE policies	35
4.3: Case Processing Summary for Teachers' perspective on work experiences	36
4.4: Case Processing Summary for Parents' demographics and perspective on ECE	39



GLOSSARY

ECE	Early Childhood Education
DED	District Education Directorate
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific Organisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
MoE	Ministry of Education
IBE	International Bureau of Education
GES	Ghana Education Service
NTTC	Nursery Teachers Training Centre
NGOs	Non – Governmental Organisations
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
GNCC	Ghana National Commission on Children
K G	Kindergarten
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education

ABSTRACT

This study was done to investigate the stakeholders' perspective of early childhood education (ECE) in the Afigya Kwabre District. A quantitative research approach methodology and simple random sampling was used for the survey. Two hundred and eighteen (218) respondents consisting of 100 parents of ECE pupils and 118 teachers took part in the survey. The questionnaire for the quantitative survey, involving teachers and parents showed an overall Cronchbach's Alpha of 0.82, which means the data collection instruments had high degree of internal consistency and reliability. The study revealed several challenges facing ECE in Afigya Kwabre District such as, failure of the District Education Directorate (DED) to follow through with ECE policies and programmes guidelines, lack of infrastructure at ECE schools, unqualified teachers handling ECE, large class size sometimes resulting in overcrowding, and low level of salaries, of ECE teachers. The study recommends that the ECE teachers and other ECE staff should be adequately and meaningfully motivated in the form of paying them sustainable salaries and providing them with professional and additional responsibility allowances and low interest rate loans to enable them take care of their basic needs. This will go a long way to forestall the problem of qualified teachers refusing posting to kindergarten schools.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Early childhood is the basic term used to describe the period of a child's life before age 6, but specifically age 4 in the context of Ghana, since Kindergarten education starts at age 4 and ends at age 6, after which the child enters grade 1. It is also described as a period where the child's potentials are moulded for future achievements, and more importantly he or she considered as the most vulnerable stage of human life. This is because if the environment in which the child is growing up is not supportive and stimulating enough, the child's development is negatively affected. The words of Nance (2009), "All I really need to know, I learned in kindergarten" (Nance, 2009, p. 3), reinforces the importance and benefits of kindergarten education. Then it is inevitably true that giving younger children the best education is the only determinant of their future success. This is probably the reason why the attention of governments worldwide has been gradually shifting towards early childhood education, with no exception to Ghana.

In Ghana formal early childhood education starts at age 4. Even though it starts much early in the developed world, it is almost correct to say that kindergarten education in Ghana is the equivalent of early childhood education, as it exists in the developed world.

The 2007 educational reforms brought major changes in the educational structure of Ghana. Consequently, formal education which, in the past commences at age 6, now starts as early as age 4. The reason behind the increased attention on matters concerning

the education of young children is that, many countries have signed on to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, one of which is universal primary education.

Even though this project is not about primary education, it is important to relate kindergarten education to primary education since the two are inseparable, more especially that kindergarten education is the foundation for primary education. For purpose of emphasis, UNICEF (1996) states that, early childhood education is a pre-requisite for primary education because it forms the foundation for future learning, and it prepares the child for studying successfully at the primary level. Larney (2015) emphasised the widely held view that eighty percent of all life's learning is acquired by the age of 8. This is because it is in such years that the brain develops. Therefore, it is very critical that parents and duty bearers ensure that children in early years receive the right method of teaching and learning (Larney, 2015). Thus, it makes a lot of sense to invest in the young, for early learning begets later learning, and early success breeds later success.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The importance of kindergarten education cannot be over-emphasised since today's children are tomorrow's leaders. It seems the benefits of early childhood education are universally accepted, but kindergarten education is still faced with numerous challenges.

There is also an increasing need for kindergarten education on the part of parents in the Afigya Kwabre District because it is a relatively with increasing educational needs due to increase in workforce population. All newly-posted workers usually move with

their families, and this has implication on population. In addition, some employers are uncomfortable with working mothers bringing their younger children to their workplaces. Murtagh and Moulton (2011) stated that employers have a perception that the presence of children in the workplace reduces the mother's productivity. This is an impediment to working mothers who do not have family support and have to go to work with their children. This might be the reason why mothers who work in the formal sector send their children to school earlier than age 4.

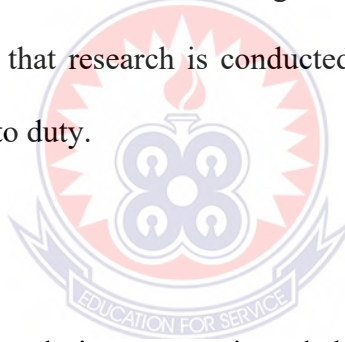
In spite of the countless importance and benefits associated with kindergarten education, it is faced with numerous challenges, and these challenges are still struggling for universal recognition. In addition to that, to a certain degree, some parents still do not recognise the importance of kindergarten education, and they do not enroll their wards below age six in any school. It is also a widely held view that the kindergarten teacher or teachers involved in the education of younger children are people with low education levels, poor English language skills, low wages, and are generally female. If this perception is true, then it poses a serious problem for the wellbeing and educational needs of the children.

Notwithstanding the important role played by ECE in the holistic development of children, ECE is bedeviled with a lot of challenges which inhibits effective impartation of knowledge and developmental skills to children of ECE going age.

The factors that influence the quality of early learning and ECE include the following: the playground being too small for the effective playing by children, ECE teachers being swift in attending to children's toilet needs but are unqualified for effecting ECE teaching practices, classrooms equipped but being very small for the

children's learning, contribution of Parent Teachers Association being rather poor, the teachers had no pre-service education in ECE programme. Yorke (2013) and Twum (2017) also identified additional challenges, such as, lack of places of convenience, lack of light in classrooms, inadequate furnishing in classrooms, the lack of interest on the part of parents to take active role in the educational needs of their children, the importance of ECE being downplayed by parents and the inability of DED to follow through the policies and guidelines for ECE.

The physical conditions under which the children are kept are not good enough. Up to now accommodation is still a problem and there is lack of learning materials which, all together does not make the learning environment child-friendly. For these reasons, it is so important that research is conducted in this direction to inform policy makers to wake to the call to duty.



1.3. Purpose of the Study

The main objective of the study is to ascertain stakeholders' perceptions regarding early childhood education in the Afigya Kwabre District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- 1) To assess the perspective of parents and teachers about the existing policies and programmes on Kindergarten Education in the Afigya Kwabre District of the Ashanti Region.
- 2) To assess the perspective of parents and teachers pertaining to the current state of Kindergarten Education in the Afigya Kwabre District.

- 3) To evaluate the perspective of parents and teachers concerning the challenges of Kindergarten Education in Afigya Kwabre District.

1.5 Research Questions

- 1) What is the perspective of parents and teachers about policies and programmes available for Kindergarten Education in the Afigya Kwabre District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana?
- 2) What is the perspective of parents and teachers concerning the current state of Kindergarten Education in Ghana in Afigya Kwabre District?
- 3) What is the perspective of parents and teachers relating to the challenges of Kindergarten Education in Afigya Kwabre District?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The research is intended to expose the problems facing kindergarten education in the Afigya Kwabre District as a geographical area, with the purpose of relating it to Ghana as a whole. It is the hope of the researcher that the project will serve as a wake-up call to all stakeholders in kindergarten education and other early childhood education programmes to begin to strengthen efforts towards achieving a quality and better education for future generations. This is because the benefits of early childhood education are unquestionably many and there is the need that more focus should be put on improving the system.

The Afigya Kwabre District was intentionally chosen as a study area because of its rural nature, as challenges of education usually manifest more seriously in rural areas.

More so the related literature and research herein referred to (the literature review and references), were not studied using a sample from the Afigya Kwabre District.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

In undertaking a study of this nature, several limitations were encountered. The first limitation was the sample size chosen. A census was possible however due to time and financial constraints, as well as the unwillingness of some of members of the population to partake in the survey, made the researcher conclude that the sample size deployed was representative.

Another limitation was that the study was not conducted over a period of time, so the sample had not been studied for a longer period of time to be able to generalise that the conclusions arrived at are valid for all times.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The main focus of the study was to find out the perspective of parents and teachers on the challenges of kindergarten education in the Afigya Kwabre District of the Ashanti. The respondents were limited to parents who have their children in KG 1 and/or KG 2, and teachers who teach children in KG 1 and KG 2. The study area was limited to only the Afigya Kwabre District of the Ashanti Region.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This work was grouped under five main chapters as follows: Chapter one provides an introductory overview of the full study comprising the statement of the problem,

objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, limitations and the delimitations of the study and how the study was organized. Chapter two follows with a review of relevant literature which relate to the study.

Chapter three presents the methodology used for the study and gives a description of the research design, a detailed overview of the population, sampling techniques, the data collection instruments and data analysis procedures. Chapter four focuses on the characteristics of the respondents and the analysis of the data. Chapter five summarizes, concludes and offer recommendations for future research.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The review of related literature is centred on the following thematic areas, namely; the meaning and need for kindergarten education in Ghana, some national and international commitments on kindergarten education, the state of affairs on kindergarten education in Ghana and the challenges of kindergarten education in Ghana. The issues affecting Early Childhood Education in developing countries and /or Africa can be situated in the Ghanaian context as well. Some of the reviewed literature may not be specific to Ghana.

2.2 Theories of Learning and Child Psychology

There are various theories of learning but the three most popular theories of how learning takes place lays the foundation on which the research would be laid. This is because theories of learning are so fundamental to the subject of early childhood education, to the extent that an understanding of Early Childhood Education (ECE) is not complete without an understanding of the fundamental theories of learning. The three main theories of learning under the focal lens of this research are: Behaviourism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism.

According to encyclopedia, Behaviourism focuses on the objectively observable aspects of learning, that learning is manifest by a change in behaviour, and more significantly, that environment shapes and contiguity and reinforcement are central to explaining the learning process. For behaviorists, learning is the acquisition of a

relatively new behaviour or a change in behaviour through conditioning. Behaviour therefore becomes a reflex response to stimulus and Operant conditioning where there is reinforcement of behaviour by reward or punishment.

Sarfo, (2011) posits that, Cognitive Learning theories look beyond behaviour to focus on the re-organisation of one's perceptions in order to achieve learning. Basic cognitive theory states that: (1) The memory system is an active organised processor of information, and (2) Previous knowledge plays an important role in learning. For Cognitivists, the locus of control over the learning processes lies with the individual learner, rather than with the environment as behaviourists believe. Constructivism views learning as a process in which the learner actively builds new ideas or concepts based upon current and past knowledge. In simple terms, learners construct their own knowledge from their own experiences. Constructivist learning, therefore, is a very personal endeavour, whereby internalised concepts are subsequently applied in a practical real-life situation. This is also known as social constructivism, where knowledge is constructed when individuals engage in a social activity about shared problems or tasks.

2.3 The Meaning and Need for Kindergarten Education in Ghana

According to Neaum (2010), the understanding of what it means to be a child or to be in childhood has political and cultural characteristics. It therefore follows that the political, economic and cultural background of a society determines how it treats children and the kind of educational programmes it offers to its children. Consequently, the definition of a child as used by foreign writers is different from the Ghanaian context. As a result of this contextual difference, the literature of foreign writers has been applied and merged with the Ghanaian situation. Therefore, for the purpose of this study alone, early

childhood education (irrespective of when it starts) is synonymous with kindergarten education in Ghana. This is so because formal education, in the advanced world, starts quite early in the child's life than in the Ghanaian context.

Early childhood education refers to a process or approach intended to effect developmental changes (physical, cognitive, social and emotional) from birth through to the end of age 6 (Ampadu & Ofofu, 2007). This is a classical definition as it encompasses what goes on with the child as soon as he/she is born. Ampadu and Ofofu (2007) are Ghanaian writers and scholars in teacher education, but ironically, their definition of childhood has little impact on the views of stakeholders in early childhood education. This view seems true because formal early childhood education does not start before age 4. Even at age 4, the decision to send children to school is voluntary and left in the hands of parents. This makes any one reading this definition pause and ask- has the Ghanaian society paid enough attention to what goes on with the child from birth till about age 4 when formal education starts?

The table below was extracted from Ansah & Agyemang (2015), which shows an outlook of the educational system in Ghana at the basic level.

Table 2.-1: An outlook of the educational system in Ghana at the basic level

LEVEL	NUMBER OF YEARS	RECOMMENDED START AGE
Nursery	2	2
Kindergarten	2	4
Lower Primary	3	6
Upper Primary	3	9
Junior High School	3	12

Source: Ansah & Agyemang (2015).

Numerous literature attest to the fact that early learning is helpful to the child and the society. Kabita (2008), states that the world conference, “Education for All”, held in Thailand in 1990 resolved that pre-primary education should be an important element of basic education and countries should set targets in this area of education. It is based on this position that the government of Ghana included kindergarten education in the formal educational system.

According to Nance (2009), the future of any society rests on its commitment and ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation. To him, today’s children will become tomorrow’s citizens, workers, and parents. If this is done, they will pay that investment back through their productivity and responsible citizenship. A nation puts its prosperity and security at risk if it fails to provide children with what they need to build a strong foundation for their future.

Early childhood education programmes are not only beneficial to children; they also have positive impacts on parents and the economy as a whole. Many employers are no longer comfortable with women bringing their younger children to the work place. The existence of high quality childhood education centre will allow working mothers leave their younger children in the care of teachers while they concentrate on their work. This will go a long way to increase female work force participation and productivity.

Whitebread (2002), also states that “it is now well established that a child’s educational experience in the early years has both immediate effects upon their cognitive and social development and long-term effects upon their educational achievements and life prospects” (Whitebread 2002, p. 17).

It is reasonable to conclude that children's success or failure in education begins in their early childhood years. The quality of kindergarten education determines the number of pupils moving to the primary stage and beyond. However, little attention has been given to kindergarten education in Ghana.

2.4 Selected National and International Commitments on Kindergarten Education in Ghana

This part of the review examines the national policies and commitments aimed at addressing issues affecting Kindergarten education in Ghana. Some of the policies have national (local) character and others have international character.

2.5 International Commitments on Early Childhood Education

2.5.1 Millennium Development Goals (Goal 2)

One of the international policies is the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which Ghana signed unto. The specific MDG relating to early childhood education is the MDG 2, which states: all children should complete a full course of primary schooling. More importantly, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2000 target for universal primary level education and the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2010-2020 stipulated a hundred per cent (100%) enrollment for KG schools. It is not a hidden truth that as of present, the MDG (2000) target as well as the hundred per cent (100%) stipulated by the ESP (2010-2020) has not been achieved.

2.5.2 The World Conference on Education for All: Jomtien (1990).

The world Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand in March, 1990 adopted two historical documents, namely;

1. The World Declaration on Education for All.
2. The Framework for Action to Meet Basic Needs.

Prominent among the objectives of the Jomtien Declaration which have a bearing on basic education are:

1. Expansion of early childhood care and development activities;
2. Universal access to and completion of primary education, and
3. Improvement in learning achievement.

Even though signatories to this declaration have tried to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, implementation problems still persist. As contained in the literacy Watch Committee of Nepal (bulletin No. 11), among other persisting problems, countries are faced with;

- (a) The springing up of pre-primary schools occurred largely in urban areas to the neglect of the rural areas,
- (b) Most of the books are not written according to the curriculum and they have not taken into consideration child psychology and principle of early childhood development, and
- (c) No organised training program for early childhood school teachers of private schools.

2.6 Local / National Commitments on Early Childhood Education

2.6.1 The 2007 Education Reforms

According to UNICEF (2013), before 2002 pre-school education was not part of the formal system. It was introduced as a result of recommendation made by the then President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms. As part of the 2007 education reforms, Early Childhood Development (kindergarten) was included in the formal system. With these new educational reforms, every child of four years is supposed to begin school at KG 1 and move on to KG 2.

In the report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms, the Government of Ghana decided that kindergarten education should progressively become part of the universal, free compulsory basic education structure. The report also has it that, by the end of 2010, 100% gross enrolment ratio and gender equity (enrolment, retention and completion) in basic education including KGs would have been realised in most of the deprived districts. The years have gone by, and a lot of children are out of school because the compulsory aspect of the policy has not been fully implemented. The few early childhood development centres in existence are overcrowded and there is the need to put up more centres.

According to a whitepaper report on educational reforms, government would also provide resources to support the expansion of kindergarten facilities by District Assemblies, NGOs, Churches and communities among others. This is to make sure that eventually, every Ghanaian child has access to kindergarten education. According to UNICEF (1996), the aim is to ensure that all primary school children have basic education that is rooted in good kindergarten training.

2.6.2 Education Act 778, 2008

The act clearly spells out in article 1 (1), the educational system has been organised in the following progressive levels:

- (a) Basic education
- (b) Second cycle education, and
- (c) Tertiary education

At the heart of this project is the kindergarten aspect which is a sub-section of the basic level. It is therefore appropriate to highlight the aspect that of the act that deals with kindergarten education.

According to the same act 1 (2), the basic level of education is further divided into:

- (a) 2 years of kindergarten education
- (b) 6 years of primary education, and
- (c) 3 years of junior high school education.

Article 2 (1) of the Education Act 778 (2008) stipulates that education at the basic level is free and compulsory. In accordance with this provision, a district assembly shall provide the necessary infrastructural needs and any other facilities for the education of the population in the area of its authority. Where a child does not attend a course of instruction, a parent, in the first instance, appear before the social welfare committee of the district Assembly for appropriate action. The sanctions are therein stated that if a parent should fail to comply with the appropriate action agreed on with the social welfare committee, he or she is commits an offence and is liable on conviction by a District court.

2.6.3 The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2010-2020

The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2010-2020 is a ten-year development plan which spells out the strategies of the government of Ghana from 2010 to 2020. Abdullahi (2014), states that the ESP 2010-2020 stipulates a 100% enrollment for KG schools.

Focal areas contained in the ESP are access, quality, and management of education as major policy drivers to meet Ghana's developmental aspirations. "It aims to ensure that education makes a positive and permanent contribution to achieving the international development goals" (ESP 2010-2020, Vol. 1 p. 6). The ESP (2010-2020 vol.1), also has it that basic education shall be free for all children of school-going age, in line with the 1992 constitution, national Strategies and Millennium Development Goals.

2.6.4 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy 2004

According to ECCD (2004), the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy of Ghana provides the broad policy goal which is to promote the survival, growth and development of all children (0-8) in Ghana and to ensure improved standard of living and enhance quality of life for families in Ghana.

The ECCD (2004) Policy also brought on board a new approach as it aims at formulating comprehensive policies and programmes for children from birth to age eight, their parents and caregivers. This is a little shift from the focus on only the cognitive development of the child to protecting the child to develop holistically, in terms of their cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. In order to facilitate this relatively new approach, the responsibility for policy making in respect to children has shifted from the Ghana National Commission on children (GNCC) to the then Ministry of Women and

Children's Affairs (MOWAC) with the establishment of the Ministry in 2001. This makes the position of government unclear.

2.7 The State of Affairs on Kindergarten Education in Ghana

There is no doubt that in the last decade, governments of Ghana have paid more attention to early childhood education in broad terms and kindergarten education in specific terms. This is manifest in the introduction of education reforms to include Kindergarten (for four-year olds) in the formal educational system. The ECCD (2004), the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy of Ghana provides the broad policy goal which is to promote the survival, growth and development of all children (0-8) in Ghana and to ensure improved standard of living and enhance quality of life for families in Ghana. This clearly shows that the country has taken the education of younger children seriously but issues relating to access and quality are not yet resolved.

In terms of access, only 62% of children aged 4 are in KG 1. This implies that 38% of the children aged 4 in Ghana are denied Kindergarten education each year due to the absence of KGs in some public basic schools, especially in rural areas (Asare, 2012). This situation leaves parents with no choice than to enroll their children directly into primary one (1) since there is no early childhood development centre where they live. According to Asare (2012), the problem is not only about access to education but also about the quality of education because kindergarten teachers remain untrained. The children in these rural areas are therefore denied the privilege of cognitive and psychosocial development (cited in MoE, 2011).

Nyarko and Addo (2013) state that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNICEF) and International Bureau of Education (IBE) country profile report on early childhood care and education programmes in Ghana that, only 22.2% of 22,014 early childhood teachers had received training.

To throw more light on the problem of teacher training in early childhood education, Morrison (2008) states that formal teacher -training college or university-based early childhood teacher training is yet to be realised for the thousands of teachers of children 3-5 years old in government or government - supported primary schools. “The effort of Ghanaian Universities and colleges of Education in training pre-school teachers has been found inadequate” (Nyarko & Mate-Kole, 2016 p. 1). Nyarko and Mate-Kole (2016), further write that there are only two private institutions accredited to offer formal training leading to the award of Certificate and Diploma in Early Childhood, namely;

- (1) May’s Day Care & Educational in collaboration with the University of Education, Winneba.
- (2) The Ghana Montessori International Teacher Trainers Centre which offers training in the Montessori methodology, accredited by the Montessori International Centre in the UK.

Nyarko and Mate-Kole (2016), state the problem posed by the emergence of private training institutions when they quoted that “it is not currently known how many similar private institutions exist with the capacity to train teachers, and the existence of such parallel schemes could create difficulties for Ghana Education Service (GES) in determining which qualifications are accepted for government employed teachers” (cited in Ministry of Education Ghana, 2012a, 2012b).

In addition to these private institutions, Nyarko and Addo (2013), state that government of Ghana set up the National Nursery Teachers' Training Centre (NNTTC) to offer specialised training in nursery education for teachers and nursery attendants. In connection with this, Nyarko and Mate-Kole (2016), contend that the original plan of having NNTTC in each region in Ghana has not been fulfilled as only one of the three initiated institutions is fully functional- and this can be found in the capital city of the greater Accra region.

The following tables were created after a careful study of a summary of findings by Nyarko and Mate-Kole (2016) which was extracted from Ministry of Education EMIS 2011/2012. This further emphasises the deficiency of trained personnel required to teach in early childhood classrooms.

2.8 The Challenges of Kindergarten Education in Ghana

According to Kabita (2008), many literatures attest to the fact that there are weighty issues affecting early kindergarten and/or early childhood education (ECE) worldwide. Ghana is not an exception when it comes to the challenges facing kindergarten education.

Ampadu and Ofosu (2007), outline a number of challenges facing nursery and Kindergarten education. One critical issue affecting Nursery and Kindergarten education in Ghana is the qualification of teachers in the early childhood education centres. Ampadu and Ofosu (2007), state that most nursery and Kindergarten schools are staffed with untrained and unqualified personnel and this makes them inefficient in their performance. This makes correct the widely held view that the teachers in the early

childhood centres are generally female, have bad English skills, and have never been to any teacher training college. The quality of education that young people receive is inextricably linked to the knowledge, intelligence, professional skills and competencies of teachers. Westbrook (2013), (cited in UNESCO, 2005, p.152) point to the fact that “the classroom pedagogy used by teachers is consistently seen as the crucial variable for improving learning outcomes and is it critical in any reform to improve quality of education”. He further states that if the children are not taught the basics correctly, in later learning, the rest of the curriculum will not make sense to them, leading to school drop-out.

Directly linked with the problem of untrained personnel is the lack of a well-planned curriculum. Ampadu and Ofori (2007) mention that, the public nursery schools in the country do not engage the children in any organized and planned activities. The children are made to sing and dance. According to them, a well - planned curriculum without the requisite personnel to carry out the planned curriculum is as bad as not having it all. According to Ampadu & Ofori (2007), there is also a low level of public awareness of the importance of kindergarten education in Ghana. Many people, especially the rural folk do not see the need for sending their children to early childhood centres.

Ampadu and Ofori (2007), write that another problem facing the development of kindergarten education in Ghana is poor accommodation. The conditions under which some kindergarten schools operate is not conducive for the health and well-being of the children. Most kindergarten schools are characterised by: inadequate space for children to engage in outdoor activities, the facilities may not be clean, airy or well-illuminated.

Ampadu and Ofosu (2007) also mention that there is overcrowding in the rural areas because the number of kindergarten schools in those areas is limited.

The current threshold teacher-pupil ratio is 1:15. Even though the Private schools also exist to support in the education of children they are usually sited in the urban areas because business is good there. This makes the rural areas unable to benefit from their services either because they are unavailable or their service is too expensive (Ampadu & Ofosu, 2007).

Singh, (2004) questions the professional training of private individuals who set up early childhood schools haphazardly because it has become a source of income. There seems to be no standard curricula or guidelines from the Ministry of Education on the operation of private schools. Singh, (2004) added that many of the preschools do not have the necessary facilities and described them as having: uncongenial environmental conditions, high teacher-pupil ratio, high charge of fees, no control of government, and lack of recreational facilities. Policies on ECE are not usually fully implemented leading to implementation gaps. Subsequently similar policies are developed, thereby resulting in duplication of efforts and waste of resources.

Another problem is the controversy over the language to be used as a medium of instruction. According to Owu-Ewie (2006), before 2002, a Ghanaian language (L1) was used as the medium of instruction from grade one to the end of lower primary. A Ghanaian language in this case is the language of the locality which includes one of the following: Akan (Fante and Twi), Nzema, Ga, Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani, and Dagaare.

Research has proven that children who are taught in their mother tongue tend to grasp educational concepts faster and easier than they do, when they are taught in other languages (Baffoe & Amoah, 2015). This therefore means that fluency and control over one's own language can set the foundation for better understanding of educational principles. The language policy was reversed in 2002 when the government of Ghana approved English as the medium of instruction from primary one, with a Ghanaian language studied as a compulsory subject. The question to ask is what necessitated the change?

According to Owu-Ewie (2006), the policy states that English should be used as the medium of instruction from primary one with a Ghanaian language studied as a compulsory subject in the Senior High School (cited in Ameyaw-Ekumfi, 2002). Since the commencement of the English-only policy in 2002, there has been a debate on the part of stakeholders and the general populace. Under the new policy, from nursery to the end of lower primary, the child will be taught in English. This poses a problem because it seems an attempt to undermine the indigenous languages.

Owu-Ewie (2016) examined a number of reasons for the change, including:

1. The previous policy of using a Ghanaian language as a medium of instruction was being abused; some teachers never spoke English to the pupils even in class six.
2. Students were unable to speak and write good English even by the time they completed Junior High School.
3. The multilingual situation in the country has made instruction in a Ghanaian language difficult since all the children do not speak one Ghanaian language.

4. There is lack of Ghanaian language teachers specifically trained to teach content subjects in the Ghanaian language because one's ability to speak a Ghanaian language does not presuppose his or her ability to teach in it.
5. English remains the official or lingua franca of the nation and it is very necessary to ensure that children acquire desirable level of competence in both written and spoken forms of the English language.

This back and forth movement has left the decision of language of instruction in the discretion of the teachers concerned.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the research design used in this project work. It further looks at the research methodology and the practical approach adopted to achieve the research objectives. A descriptive survey was employed as it is distinguished by its ability to investigate the perspective of teachers and parents in early childhood education in Afigya Kwabre District. The chapter rationalises the sampling techniques and research methods used for collecting the data used in the study. The data collected made use of two sets of 16 and 14-item questionnaires for teachers of ECE and parents of ECE pupils respectively.

3.3 Research Design

Aaker and Kumar (2001) described a research design as a blueprint that directs the researcher on what methodology to employ in order to achieve the objectives of the research study. Relationally, it established the relationship between parents' and teachers' perspective on the challenges of ECE in Afigya Kwabre District. It also explored and unraveled new areas of ECE that need improvement and policy changes in ECE in Afigya Kwabre District. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used descriptive survey design. Since the study involved data collection from participants on the field where responses were tabulated and converted into percentages, it became appropriate to use survey as study design. This design concerns conditions or relationships that exist such as

determining practices, aptitudes and opinions that are held, processes that are going on or trends that are developing (Aaker & Kumar, 2001).

Similarly, this research design was applied in the sense that it provided a systematic and deep insight into the research problem and facilitated the extraction of scientific and logical explanations and conclusions imbedded in the data collected.

3.4 Population

De Vos, (2002) define the population of a study as the subjects who possess attributes which the researcher wishes to study and a universe of units from which the sample is to be drawn. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995, p. 87) view “a target population as a set of elements on which the researcher focuses and from which the results obtained by testing the sample can be generalized.

With particular reference to this project report, the population is not uniform in nature and was therefore classified into two groups to promote homogeneity. This is because each group, that is teachers and parents, is unique, and is more likely to present different perspectives. The target population of ECE teachers in the District was 176. The population of the parents of ECE children was determined by the information given the headteachers concerning the total number of parents and guardians with children in KG 1 or KG 2 in the selected schools. The schools were selected based on the table provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for determining the sample size of a population. The study used 118 teachers out of a total population of 176. Also, the total number of KG schools is 91 and a sample size of 73 schools was used.

3.5 Sampling and Sampling Techniques

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a population of about 170 should use a sample size of 118 in order that the sample adequately represents the larger population.

This study worked with a target population 176 early childhood teachers in 91 kindergarten schools in the district. Therefore, a sample size of 118 was adopted. As the total number of KG teachers is 176, the sample size of 118 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table. Hence the proportional sample were calculated to represent the various sub-districts. The total number of KG schools in the District was given as 91. Therefore, the KG teachers were selected from the 73 using the convenient sampling technique. The decision to use the convenience sampling technique was informed by the proximity of the schools to one another. It was also aimed at reducing cost of travelling.

Even though convenience sampling was used, which did not give the respondents equal chance of being selected, there was adherence to the proportion of number of schools in each sub-district. The following table summarises the distribution of sampled school across the three sub-districts.

To determine the population of the parents, a follow up was made to the headteachers of the selected KG schools for statistics on the number of parents with children in KG 1 or KG 2. The population of parents of ECE children made use of convenience sampling and a sample size of 100 parents was chosen as a convenient sample size for the study.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

Two sets of questionnaire were administered to two sets of participants in the survey. The first set of questionnaire was administered to ECE teachers. The second questionnaire was administered to parents of children attending ECE centres in the District.

As quantitative approach was adopted, two sets of 16 and 14-item questionnaires were administered to the respondents which included both closed and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were to provide further explanations to certain attributes that were not able to be addressed by closed ended questions and these were also coded along common themes based on the views provided by the respondents.

The questionnaire served four basic purposes to: (a) used to collect the appropriate data; (b) used to make data comparable and amenable to analysis; (c) It minimized bias in formulating and asking question and; (d) It made questions engaging and varied.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

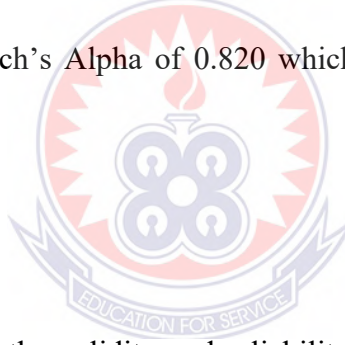
On the part of the teachers, permission was sought from the District Director of Education to conduct research in the various schools. As the schools were visited and upon arrival, self - introduction was done and permission was granted to continue with collection of data from the teachers. The selection of the teachers and parents was based on acceptance of questionnaire. The schools were visited and parents came to drop their children in school, they were approached and given the questionnaire to answer. Most of them could not answer them immediately, so they brought them the next day. In a few

cases, questionnaires were given parents in their homes for them to answer, and follow-up was made to collect them. In all a total of 218 participants who agreed and accepted the questionnaire at the same time were used for the survey.

3.8 Reliability and Validity of the instruments

3.8.1 Reliability

Reliability was used to test the internal consistency of the instrument and the overall Cronbach's Alpha was employed determined whether the instrument of measure is reliable or otherwise. A Cronhbach's Alpha of 0.70 or more means the instrument of measure can be relied on and have a high internal consistency. Two tests were conducted and the Cronbach's Alphas of the individual items as well the overall Cronbach's Apha showed an overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.820 which is well above the 0.70 reliability coefficient criterion.



3.8.2 Validity

To further enhance the validity and reliability of this instrument, this researcher validated the instrument by letting experts including managers and those in academia look critically at the items on the questionnaire and those that were found likely to impede the full understanding of the respondent were either modified or removed from the questionnaire. Two pilot tests of the data to be collected were carried out before the actual data collection was done.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data from the field was cleaned and rid of unwanted information to ensure that outliers are removed before interpreting the results. All responses are converted into

numbers to correspond with the responses given by every participant. This ensured easy entering of data into the SPSS package. The Statistical Product for Service solutions (SPSS) version 20.0 software was used to present analyse and interpret the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, percentages and cross - tabulations were used for the analysis of the quantitative data. Open-ended questions were also coded and converted into quantitative data along various themes identified from the responses to those items on the questionnaire.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

In carrying out a research, the researcher must consider ethical issues. According to Anyedina (2017), research must be sensitive to the rights of the participants involved in the study. This study considered the needs and concerns of the participants so as to ensure their safety and protect their dignity and privacy. Consequently, a written permission obtained from the District Director of Education at the Afigya Kwabre District. Verbal consent was sought from headteachers of the schools involved. The consent of the participants themselves was also sought in the sense that only those who were willing took part in the study.

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009), confidentiality refers to the prevention of disclosure of data that would reveal the identity of participants. All information collected from participants was handled with utmost confidentiality as promised them before the survey was done.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS/ FINDINGS/DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the field data collected. The overall objective of the study was to investigate the perspective of teachers and parents on the challenges facing early childhood education (ECE) in the Afigya Kwabre District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study also set out to assess the current state of programmes and policies put in place by policy makers to mitigate or eliminate these challenges. Two different set of questionnaire were administered to two (2) distinct groups of participants. One set were administered to 118 teaching staff of ECE schools in the Afigya Kwabre District to assess their knowledge and perspective of the state of ECE in the Afigya Kwabre District. The second set of questionnaire were given to 100 parents who have children between the ages of 1 and 6 who are currently enrolled in ECE centres in the district to ascertain what their perspective were regarding the state of ECE in the study area.

4.2 Data Analyses

4.2.1 Demographics Characteristics of Teachers

The Case Processing Summary of Teacher Respondents in tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 show summary of the demographic characteristics and other information on the field data collected.

Table 4.1: Case Processing Summary for Teachers

<i>Case Processing Summary for Teachers</i>			
Gender		Frequency	Percent
	Male	41	35
	Female	77	65
	Total	118	100
Age		Frequency	Percent
	11-20	8	7
	21-30	60	51
	31-40	35	29
	41-50	6	5
	51-60	9	8
	Total	118	100
Education Level		Frequency	Percent
	SSCE/WASSCE	58	49
	Diploma	56	48
	First Degree	3	2
	Second Degree	1	1
	Total	118	100
Marital Status		Frequency	Percent
	Married	65	55
	Divorced	3	3
	Single	45	37
	Separated	2	2
	Widowed	3	3
	Total	118	100
Nature of School		Frequency	Percent
	Public	79	67

	Private	39	33
	Total	118	100
Size of Class		Frequency	Percent
	0-15	2	2
	16-25	20	17
	26-35	29	25
	36-45	40	33
	Above 45	27	23
	Total	118	100
Age Group of class taught		Frequency	Percent
	0-1	8	7
	2-3	24	20
	4-5	86	73
	Total	118	100
Number of Years Teaching in KG		Frequency	Percent
	0-5	84	71
	6-10	24	20
	11-15	6	5
	16-20	3	3
	Above 20	1	1
	Total	118	100

Formal Training in Early ECE		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	74	63
	No	44	37
	Total	118	100

Why no Formal Training in ECE		Frequency	Percent
	Teaching is not My Career	8	7
	Lack of Funds	8	7
	Lack of Qualifications	17	14
	Any Other Reason	11	9
	N/A	74	63
	Total	118	100

Table 4.1 shows that one hundred and eighteen teacher respondents were used for the study out of which 77 of them representing 65 % were females while 35% were males. Majority of the respondents representing 87% are in the economically active and youthful population brackets of 11-40 years. Five teachers representing two percent are in the age group of 41-50 years. Eight percent of parent respondents are in the age group of 51-60 years. No respondent was in the age of 60 years and above. The study sample of teacher respondents revealed low level of education of teachers with only 3 respondents representing 2% had first degree. Majority of 49% had SSSCE/WASSCE certificate, 48% had diploma qualification and 1 respondent representing 1% of the sample has a second degree. In terms of marital status, majority of 55% teachers sampled for the study are married, 37% of them single and 8% are divorced, separated or widowed. Sixty-seven of

the teacher respondents teach in public KG schools and 33% teach in private schools. Forty respondent representing 33% of the total respondents teach in class of between 36 and 45 children, 25% teach class sizes of between 26 and 35 children, 23% teach class size of over 45 children and 19% teach class sizes from 0-25 children.

Seventy-three percent of KG school children are between the ages of 4 and 5 years and 23% of the children are between the ages of 0 and 3 years. Seventy-one percent of KG teachers have been teaching KG children for between 0 and 5 years, 20% had been teaching KG children between 6 and 10years, and 9% had been teaching at the KG level for more than 6 years. Sixty-three percent of the teachers sampled for the study have received formal training in early childhood education (ECE) and the 37% had no formal qualification or training in ECE. Out of the total number of 44 respondents who have no formal training in ECE, 32% of them stated that they did not have the requisite qualification(s) to pursue the professional diploma in ECE, another 32% stated that they either were not interested in ECE as a career or lacked the funds to pursue ECE certifications. 34% gave other reasons for not having received formal training in ECE.

4.2.2 Teachers' perspective on Early Childhood Educational (ECE) Policies

On ECE policies awareness, only 37% had knowledge of the Education Strategic Plan (ESP), an average of 54% were aware of the existence of FCUBE and Educational Reforms of 2007. An average of 52% were aware of the existence of Early Childhood Care and Development Policy and the Education Act 778 of 2008.

Table 4.2: Case Processing Summary for Teachers' perspective on ECE policies

<i>Case Processing Summary for Teachers</i>			
Education Strategic Plan		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	69	59
	Neutral	12	10
	Aware	37	31
	Total	118	100
FCUBE		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	35	30
	Neutral	14	12
	Aware	69	58
	Total	118	100
Education Reforms of 2007		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	44	37
	Neutral	14	12
	Aware	60	51
	Total	118	100
Early Childhood Care and Dev. Policy		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	52	44
	Neutral	9	8
	Aware	57	48
	Total	118	100
Education Act 778 of 2008		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	41	35
	Neutral	12	10
	Aware	65	55
	Total	118	100

4.2.2 Teachers' Efficiency Level

Majority of 47% teachers are of the view that it is slightly difficult to teach at KG level, 34% find teaching at KG level very difficult, 14% find it slightly difficult to teach at KG level while only 6% finds it very easy to teach at KG level. 21% of the respondents were satisfied with their job role and job-related experience, 64% were fairly satisfied with the job role and work experience, 9% were fairly dissatisfied with their job roles and experience and 6% express complete dissatisfaction of their job roles and job-related experience.

Table 4.3: Case Processing Summary for Teachers' perspective on work experiences

Level of Difficulty in Teaching Children	Frequency	Percent
Very Difficult	40	34
Slightly Difficult	55	47
Slightly Easy	16	14
Very Easy	7	6
Total	118	100
Satisfaction with Your Work Experience	Frequency	Percent
Completely Satisfied	25	21
Fairly Satisfied	76	64
Fairly Dissatisfied	10	9
Completely Dissatisfied	7	6
Total	118	100

4.3 Demographics Characteristics of Parents

Of the total number of parents of KG children interviewed, 51% are males and 49% are females. The dominant age group is those in the age group of 21-30 years which constitutes 56% of the total respondent. Thirty-eight percent are in the age group of 31-40 years, 4 % in the age group of 41-50 years, at 4 respondents representing 4% of total respondent are not more than 20 years of age, and no respondent was more than 50 years.

Majority respondents of 45% of parents of KG children have diploma qualifications, 30% had first degree, 5% had first degree, 18% hold SSSCE/WASSCE certificates, and 2% had no formal education. Regarding marital status, 60% of the parents are married, 28% had never married before, and 12% are either separated from their spouse, divorced or widowed.

One person representing 1% of total respondent had at least three children attending KG school simultaneously, 13% had 2 children attending KG and 86% had a child each attending KG. Seventy-one percent of children are between the ages of 4 and 5 years, 28% are between the ages of 2 and 3 years and at least one child is one - year old. Sixty-nine percent of parents have their children attending private KGs and 31% attending public KGs. Eight-five percent of KG children started school between the ages between 2 and 3 years, 11% of KG children start schooling at the age of one, and 4 KG children start attending school at age four. 47% of the parents are not able to tell whether the teachers of their children have received any formal or professional training in ECE, 43% of parents said they are not able to tell whether the teachers have any formal training in ECE, 37% said the teachers of their KG children have not received any formal training in ECE and 20% of parent respondent are sure the teachers of their children in KG has

formal or professional training in ECE. An average of 61% of parents are aware of or are knowledgeable in ECE policy in place in Ghana such as the Education Strategic Plan(ECE), Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education(FCUBE), Educational Reforms of 2007, EC Care and Development Policy and the Education Act 778 of 2008. Of these policies majority of parents consisting 77% are aware or have knowledge of the FCUBE Policy. Thirty-three percent of parents on average have no knowledge of all the five educational policies. 32 respondents constituting an average of 7% of total respondents did not respond to the question as to whether they have knowledge in the ECE policies in place in the country.

On whether parents were satisfied with the output of the teachers of KG school teachers teaching their children or wards, 27% respondents were completely satisfied with the teachers' output, 64% were fairly satisfied and 9% were either fairly dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied with KG school teachers teaching their children or wards. 63% of parents were in consonance with the view that the education level of ECE teachers are generally low, with 37 percent disagreeing with the general view of low level of education of ECE teachers.

Table 4.4: Case Processing Summary for Parents' demographics and perspective on ECE

<i>Case Processing Summary for Parents</i>			
	Gender	Frequency	Percent
	Male	51	51
	Female	49	49
	Total	100	100
	Age	Frequency	Percent
	11-20	2	2
	21-30	56	56
	31-40	38	38
	41-50	4	4
	Total	100	100
Education Level		Frequency	Percent
	WASSCE/SSSCE	18	18
	Diploma	45	45
	First Degree	30	30
	Second Degree	5	5
	No Formal Education	2	2
	Total	100	100
Marital Status		Frequency	Percent
	Married	60	60
	Divorced	2	2
	Single	28	28
	Separated	8	8
	Widowed	2	2
	Total	100	100
No. of KG Children		Frequency	Percent
	3	1	1
	2	13	13
	1	86	86
	Total	100	100
Age group of Child		Frequency	Percent

	0-1	1	1
	2-3	28	28
	4-5	71	71
	Total	100	100
Age Child Started School		Frequency	Percent
	1	11	11
	2	42	42
	3	43	43
	4	4	4
	Total	100	100
Nature of School Ownership		Frequency	Percent
	Public	31	31
	Private	69	69
	Total	100	100
KG Teacher Has Formal Training		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	20	20
	No	37	37
	I am Not Able to Tell	43	43
	Total	100	100
Awareness of ESP		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	52	52
	Neutral	6	6
	Aware	42	42
	Total	100	100
Awareness of FCUBE		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	17	17
	Neutral	6	6
	Aware	77	77
	Total	100	100
Awareness of ECCD Policy		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	44	44
	Neutral	10	10
	Aware	46	46
	Total	100	100

Awareness of Education Reforms of 2007		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	24	24
	Neutral	6	6
	Aware	70	70
	Total	100	100
Awareness of Education Act 778 of 2008		Frequency	Percent
	Unaware	28	28
	Neutral	4	4
	Aware	68	68
	Total	100	100
Satisfaction with Teachers' Output		Frequency	Percent
	Completely Satisfied	27	27
	Fairly Satisfied	64	64
	Fairly Dissatisfied	7	7
	Completely Dissatisfied	2	2
	Total	100	100
KG Teachers Have Low Level of Education		Frequency	Percent
	Correct View	49	49
	Somehow Correct	14	14
	Wrong View	37	37
	Total	100	100

4.4 Discussion of Results

4.4.1 The perspective of Teachers

4.4.2 Professional qualifications of ECE Teachers

The findings revealed that most thus 14% of the KG teachers do not have qualifications beyond WASSCE/SSSCE, a significant number of them 49% however hold professional diploma in ECE qualification. Only 2 respondents representing 2% of the teachers possess a first degree and one respondent had a second degree. A significant number of teacher respondent 37% had not received formal training or certification in ECE, and this phenomenon is more dominant among teachers in the private ECE centres or KGs. Some of the reasons given were lack of funds, lack of requisite qualifications or the KG teachers not considering teaching especially at the ECE level as a career but just working to save money to further their education in order to get well paid jobs.

Married people were the most educated followed by those teachers who were single. The least educated were those who are divorced separated or widowed. The public schools had more teachers with higher academic qualifications than those in the private schools. While 55 teachers in public ECE centres had attained educational levels beyond SSSCE/WASSCE, only 8 of teachers in private schools have diploma or higher academic qualifications. More teachers in the private schools found it easier to teach their classes than their counterparts in the public schools. While 73% of teachers in public ECE schools had formal training in ECE, 63% of their counterparts in private schools had ECE formal training. The results implies that most of the quality of service rendered by these teachers need much to be desired. As indicated by (Sheridan, 2009) the main importance of staff lies in their effect on the process and content quality of ECEC. The

training and education of ECEC staff affects the quality of services and outcomes primarily through the knowledge, skills and competencies that are transmitted and encouraged by practitioners. It is also considered important that staff believe in their ability to organise and execute the courses of action necessary to bring about desired results. Qualifications can matter in terms of which skills and what knowledge are recognised as important for working with young children. However, Siraj-Blatchford (2010) also argued that it is not the qualification per se that has an impact on child outcomes but the ability of better qualified staff members to create a high-quality pedagogic environment that makes the difference. There is strong evidence that enriched stimulating environments and high-quality pedagogy are fostered by better qualified staff; and better quality pedagogy leads to better learning outcomes.

4.4.3 Teachers' perspective on Changes Needed in ECE

In response to items 12, 14, 15 and 16 on the questionnaire for teachers which were open-ended questions that required further explanations, the teachers want changes in ECE settings to include provision of adequate infrastructure especially renovation and building of class rooms, provision of appropriate teaching and learning materials, provision of playgrounds with appropriate and safe playground equipment for the children as well as the provision of canteens in the various ECE schools. Teachers also want to see reduced class sizes or engage more ECE teachers to enhance effective teaching, school heads should organise in-house training for newly engaged staff, teacher should be motivated e.g. allowance for extra duty.

Children with disabilities should be separated from those without disability to ensure effective teaching. Schools should stop admitting children under 4 years, and parents should also support teachers in the education of their children. These views have also been made by education researchers including Wood (2007), Broadhead (2006), Buchanan, J., Prescott, A., Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., Burkle, P., & Louviere, J. (2013), Eckert (2013), Jinapor (2014), Twum (2017).

4.4.4 Teachers' perspective on their level Satisfaction with work

Generally, teachers were satisfied with their and status as ECE teachers. Sixty-four percent and 21 % were fairly satisfied and completely satisfied respectively with their job. A few of them (15%) were either fairly or completely dissatisfied with their job.

Those who are dissatisfied as KG or ECE teachers cited reasons such as high amount of pressure in handling children of such age groups, low level of salary, lack of motivation for them taking up additional responsibilities such as feeding some children, cleaning up children who soil themselves, waiting for longer hours for parents to pick up their children after school has closed, parents embarrassing teachers in front of their children.

4.4.5 Teachers' perspective on the Challenges Faced by ECE Teachers

The most daunting challenges the teachers face according to the findings of the survey include: going to school early and staying till every child is picked by the parent, most children not showing interest in learning, children are too many in one class to be taken care of by one person, some parents are not co-operative, assessment of the

children being difficult, lack of places of convenience for both teachers and students, some of the children being too young to be brought to school, some parents want the school to take care of their children 24hours, no training for newly recruited teachers on lesson notes preparation, teachers not having the required textbooks to teach the kids, inadequate and dilapidated classrooms, inadequate classroom furniture and absence of playground spaces and playground equipment especially in the public kindergarten schools.

These challenges of ECE have been echoed by researchers such as (Twum, 2017; Jinapor, 2014; Yorke, (2013) and other stakeholders such as United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2011), Global Partnership for Education (2012), and Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD, 2016).

4.5 Results on Parents

The findings of this study revealed that majority of parent respondents representing 86% had only one child attending KG while 13% had 2 children attending KG school at the same time. One parent representing 1% of the total respondent had 3 children who are all in KG. On the whole, majority of parents have knowledge or are at least aware of ECE policies and programmes in the country. Majority of them have their children attending private ECE centres and are also aware that most of the teachers handling their children at the private schools are mostly senior high schools graduates and have no formal training or certification in ECE.

They are however satisfied with the output of the teachers of their children in terms of curricula delivery and basic skills impartation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings of the study, the conclusions reached by the researcher and recommendations for future studies and policy actions. The main aim of the study was to assess stakeholders' perceptions regarding ECE in the Afigya Kwabre District. In pursuing the main objectives of the study, the research also addressed the following additional questions:

- 4) To assess the perspective of parents and teachers about the existing policies and programmes on Kindergarten Education in the Afigya Kwabre District.
- 5) To assess the perspective of parents and teachers pertaining to the current state of Kindergarten Education in the Afigya Kwabre District.
- 6) To evaluate the perspective of parents and teachers concerning the challenges of Kindergarten Education in Afigya Kwabre District.

The sample for the study was 118 ECE teachers, 100 Parents of children enrolled in and attending ECE centres.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Demographics of Teachers

The Case Processing Summary of Teachers in tables 7, 8 and 9 show summary of the demographic characteristics and other information on the field data collected. One hundred and eighteen teachers were used for the study out of which 77 of them

representing 65 % were females while 35% were males. Majority of the teachers representing 87% are in the age group of 11-40 years. Five teachers representing two percent are in the age group of 41-50 years. Eight percent of parents are in the age group of 51-60 years. No respondent was above 60 years. The study sample of teachers revealed low level of education of teachers with only 3 respondents representing 2% having a first degree. Majority of 49% had SSSCE/WASSCE certificate, 48% had diploma qualification and 1 respondent representing 1% of the sample has a second degree.

In terms of marital status, majority of 55% teachers sampled for the study are married, 37% of them are single and 8% are divorced, separated or widowed. Sixty-seven of the respondents teach in public KG schools and 33% teach in private schools. Forty respondent representing 33% of the total respondents teach in class of between 36 and 45 children. Twenty-five percent teach class sizes of between 26 and 35 children, 23% teach class size of over 45 children and 19% teach class sizes from 0-25 children. Seventy-three percent of KG school children are between the ages of 4 and 5 years and 23% of the children are between the ages of 0 and 3 years. Seventy-one percent of KG teachers have been teaching KG children for between 0 and 5 years, 20% had been teaching KG children between 6 and 10years, and 9% had been teaching at the KG level for more than 6 years.

5.2.2 Demographics of Parents

Out of the total of 100 parents of KG children who took part in the survey, 51% are males and 49% are females. The dominant age group is those in the age group of 21-

30 years which constitutes 56% of the total respondents. Thirty-eight percent are in the age group of 31- 40 years, 4 % in the age group of 41-50 years, at 4 respondents representing 4% of total respondent are not more than 20 years of age and no respondent was more than 50 years. Majority, 45% of the parents of KG children have diploma qualifications, 30% had first degree, 5% had second degree. Eighteen percent hold SSSCE/WASSCE certificates, and 2% had no formal education.

Regarding marital status, 60% of the parents are married, 28% had never married before, and 12% are either separated from their spouse, divorced or widowed. One person representing 1% of total respondent had at least three children attending KG school simultaneously, 13% had 2 children attending KG. Seventy-one percent of children are between the ages of 4 and 5 years, 28% are between the ages of 2 and 3 years and at least one child is one - year old. Sixty-nine percent of parents have their children attending private KGs and 31% attending public KGs. Eighty-five percent of KG children started school between the ages between 2 and 3 years, 11% of KG children start schooling at the age of one year, and 4 KG children start attending school at age 4.

5.2.3 Parents' perspective on the Current State of ECE in the Afigya Kwabre

District

University of Pretoria (2009) states that, the most important conclusions from qualitative research on factors related to achievement in schools are that; (a) teachers are critical resources; (b) the composition of the student body matters; (c) schools make a difference, and (d) physical facilities, class size, curriculum, instructional strategies and

other resources influence student learning indirectly through their effect on the behaviour of teachers and students.

The findings of the study however reveals that majority of the teachers have low level of education and are not adequately compensated or motivated to put in their best. Some of the schools also lack physical facilities such as playgrounds and even in schools where play grounds are, the space is inadequate for the children to play around and explore their surroundings.

McGuinness and Trew (2010) are of the view that, play, as an approach, may act as a primary medium for learning since it creates authentic learning experiences and an ample amount of social interaction. An effective play-based curriculum requires sufficient guidance and intervention from teachers (Broadhead, 2006). The role of adults in providing scaffolding has been emphasized in play and activity-based curriculums for early childhood students. Play, from the perspective of education, should not be interpreted superficially (Broadhead, 2006).

To ensure the effectiveness of a play-based curriculum, a clear objective framework and an activities structure are needed from the teachers' side, and "play" needs to happen within a confined space targeting various learning goals (Wood, 2007). Other schools lack classroom accommodation and even where there are classrooms, the classrooms are in deplorable states due to the fact that such facilities have not seen renovation for several years after they have been constructed.

Eckert (2013) found that teachers with less than three years of teaching experience were unlikely to have reached their full potential in their ability to impact student learning. Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson, Burke, & Louviere, (2013)

found out that teachers who had been teaching longer were more likely to report that they felt they were becoming better teachers, that teaching was more manageable for them, and that they were likely to stay in the profession for a long time.

In this study, however, majority of the ECE teachers representing 71% of the total number of ECE teachers in the District have no teaching experience beyond 5 years. Only 24% of the ECE teachers have between 6 and 10 years teaching experience with just 5% having taught for at least 7 years and above. This has dire implication on their level of efficiency skills and development of the children, coupled with the fact that most of the ECE teachers have low levels of education and formal training in ECE.

Comparing the public and private ECE centres, the public schools have highly qualified teachers with formal training in ECE than the private EECE centres. The private schools rely mainly on products of senior high school products whose interest is not in teaching but to be able to save enough money to rewrite the subjects they have failed or to enable further their education. Almost 90% of ECE teachers in private schools have teaching experience of between 0 and 5 years. Over 75% of private ECE teachers have no formal training in ECE. This corroborates the conclusion reached by Education International (2012) states that, majority of teachers are young females with good school grades who are preparing for higher education. Eckert, (2013) found out that the level of education and professional certifications does not guarantee satisfactory classroom delivery by teachers.

5.2.4 Parents' perspective on the Challenges Facing ECE in Afigya Kwabre District

On the issue of challenges facing ECE in the teachers listed lack of accommodation in the form of classrooms, lack of appropriate infrastructure in the ECE centres, low motivation of teachers, low remuneration especially with the private ECE centres, overcrowding of classrooms, teachers being overloaded with work as most of them have to teach and at the same time attend to other needs of the children such as cleaning them up when they soil themselves, feed them and take them to places of convenience, to undress them to urinate or ease themselves.

The low quality or lack of infrastructure coupled with unavailability of teaching and learning materials, poor curricula and the lack of qualified teachers are some of the challenges bedeviling pre-school education in Sub-Saharan Africa (Twum, 2017).

Falks' (1987) study revealed that: (a) the issues of qualified teachers for the ECE; (b) the issues of poor learning environment; (c) lack of play equipment for the children at the centre; (d) lack of resting rooms for the children at the centre; and (d) classroom overcrowding for a teacher as some of the challenges facing ECE in Sub-Saharan Africa including Ghana.

This study further revealed that irrespective of the additional duties performed by the ECE teachers, their salaries is nothing to write home about and they are not also entitled to any 'additional responsibility' allowances for going an extra mile. Some teachers would even have to stay behind until the last child is picked up by their parents and they also have to trek long hours before getting to their respective schools very exhausted. They also lack sufficient sleep because of the long distance between their places of residence and their schools which demand that they start their journey mostly

on foot or paddling a bicycle for between 5 and 15 kilometres. Some of the teachers were of the view that, when seminars are being organised by the DED for ECE teachers, the people who are not trained in ECE are rather sent to these seminars and when they come back from those seminars, they have nothing to offer with respect to improving ECE in the district.

A study undertaken by Education International (2010) revealed that: (a) majority of teachers are young female high school graduates who are preparing for higher education; (b) ECE centers that are based in rural areas often have poor infrastructure, and lack appropriate facilities, materials and equipment; (c) teaching staff working in early childhood education tend to be underpaid and earn lower salaries compared to teachers at the primary or higher levels; (d) child-teacher ratios are higher in ECE centres (around 34 children per teacher); and (e) there is a large proportion of unqualified teachers employed in ECE. This study corroborates the conclusions reached by research findings of Falks (1987), Education International (2010), Jinapor (2014), Twum (2017) and Yorke (2013).

5.3 Conclusions

The Afigya Kwabre District Education Directorate has not developed its own policies regarding ECE in the district. They follow the policies developed by the Ministry of Education and CRDD of the GES, international conventions on the rights of the child and working papers of international and national conferences on ECCD, ECE and education.

Some of these policies in place in the country in respect of ECE are the FCUBE, the Education Strategic Plan, the Education Reforms of 2007, the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, the Education Act of 2008(Act 778) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Professional teachers are appointed circuit supervisors for ECE centres when in actual fact they have no or limited knowledge about ECE. Also teachers who do not teach kindergarten children are sent to workshops and seminars instead of the ECE teachers. The ECE teachers need those seminars and training to impart appropriate knowledge and skills on the children.

Also some parents refused to take their children to school and the leaders at the DED and District Assembly have not been able to compel parents to take their children to school. The current study also reveals the fact that the Afigya Kwabre District does not even have a bye-law to address the problem of negligent parents who fail to send their children of school going age to school.

The challenges facing ECE in the Afigya Kwabre District are enormous and include but not limited to: majority of teachers being young female high school graduates who are preparing for higher education; ECE centers that are based in rural areas often have poor infrastructure and lack appropriate facilities, materials and equipment; teaching staff working in private early childhood education centres earn lower salaries compared to teachers at the public early childhood centres; child-teacher ratios are higher in public ECE centres (around 34 children per teacher), and there is a large proportion of unqualified teachers employed in private ECE centres. Other challenges are: lack of play equipment for the children at the centre; lack of resting rooms for the

children at the centre; some parents not providing adequately for the needs of their children in ECE centres; some parents failing to pick up their children long after the close of the school day; some parents embarrassing teachers and using abusive language on teachers in the presence of the children.

Some parents do not even feed their children breakfast before sending them to school and as the children are hungry, they lack concentration when lessons are being taught. Some of the children cry in class thereby disrupting the whole class due to the hunger. Sometimes the ECE teachers who earn meagre salaries even have to use their own money to cater for some of the children of needy parents. This makes the profession unattractive to most enterprising graduates.

5.4 Recommendations

The recommendations of the study are as follows:

1. Policy makers should support the professional development of preschool and kindergarten teachers. This can be done through seminars, workshops, continuous professional development courses.
2. Government should provide infrastructure for kindergarten as accommodation remains a serious challenge. Every primary school should have a kindergarten attached to it.
3. The ECE teachers and other ECE staff should be adequately and meaningfully motivated in the form of paying them sustainable salaries and providing them with professional and additional responsibility allowances and interest free loans to enable them take care of their basic needs. This will go a long way to forestall the problem of qualified teachers refusing posting to kindergartens schools.

4. The study recommends that special ECE centres be established in the Afigya Kwabre District to cater for the needs of this class of students and post teachers with professional qualifications and experience relating special needs children be assigned to those special schools.

5.5 Areas for Future Research

Continued longitudinal research on the perspective of broad-based stakeholder engagement in the development and implementation of ECE policies and their impact on the socio-cultural development of Ghana should be undertaken. Future studies should focus more on whether the challenges facing ECE in earlier studies have been addressed, and whether there has been a change in policy implementation and directions regarding ECE landscape in Ghana over the period.

Future research of this nature should be extended to include other stakeholders in ECE such as the district assembly, non-governmental organisations, pressure groups, United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ministry of Education, Social Welfare Department and the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection.

Comparative research should also be undertaken to compare results and recommended solutions to areas that need changes. These comparative studies could be between private schools and public schools, between districts, between Ghana and other West African Nations, between Africa and other continents, or between West Africa and other parts of Africa.

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA (UEW)

COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, KUMASI

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

TOPIC: The Perspective of Parents and Teachers on the Challenges of Kindergarten Education in the Afigya Kwabre District the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

INTRODUCTION: I am a student of UEW undertaking a research on the above topic, which is in partial fulfillment of the award of Master of Arts Degree. The objective of this questionnaire is to enable me (the researcher) gather information regarding perspective of stakeholders on the challenges of Kindergarten education. This is purely for academic purpose, so you are advised to give frank answers to the questions. Your responses will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. **Tick (√)** in the box provided to indicate your choice of response.

1. Age.....
2. Highest level of education: 1) SSSCE/WASSCE 2) Diploma
3) First degree 4) Second degree 5) PhD
3. Marital status: 1) Married 2) Divorced 3) Single
4) Separated 5) Widowed
4. What is the nature of the school you teach in? 1) Public 2) Private
5. What is the size of your class? 1) 1-15 2) 16-25 3) 26-35
4) 36- 45 5) Above 45
6. Which year-group of children do you teach? 1) 0-1 2) 2-3 3) 4-5

7. For how many years have you been teaching in the Kindergarten or nursery?

- 1) 1-5 2) 6-10 3) 11-15 4) 16-20

5) Above 20

8. Have you received any formal training in early childhood care and development?

1) Yes

2) No

9. If your response to question (8) is No, why? 1) Teaching is not my career

2) lack of funds 3) Lack of qualification

4) any other reason (specify).....

10. Please **tick (√)** to indicate your level of familiarity with the following educational

policies. Circle your choice of numerical response (Scale: 1= unaware, 2 =

Neutral, 3 = aware).

Educational Policy	Unaware	Neutral	Aware
Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2010-2020	1	2	3
Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE)	1	2	3
The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy 2004	1	2	3
The 2007 Education Reforms	1	2	3
Education Act 778, 2008	1	2	3

11. How difficult is your work as an early childhood/kindergarten teacher?

- 1) Very difficult
- 2) Slightly difficult
- 3) Slightly easy
- 4) Very easy

12. If there is anything about your work that you want it changed, what would it be?

.....

.....

13. Overall, how satisfied are you with your work experience?

- 1) Completely satisfied
- 2) Fairly satisfied
- 3) Fairly dissatisfied
- 4) Completely dissatisfied

14. Kindly give a reason for your response to question (13).

.....

.....

.....

15. In your own opinion, what challenges do you face in your work as an early childhood/kindergarten teacher?

.....

.....

.....

.....

16. “It is a widely held view that the kindergarten teacher has low education levels, poor English language skills, low wages, and are generally female”. What is your opinion about this public view?

.....

.....

.....

Thank you



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA (UEW)

COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, KUMASI

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

TOPIC: The Perspective of Parents and Teachers on the Challenges of Kindergarten Education in the Afigya Kwabre District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

INTRODUCTION: I am a student of UEW undertaking a research on the above topic, which is in partial fulfillment of the award of Master of Arts Degree. The objective of this questionnaire is to enable me (the researcher) gather information regarding perspective of stakeholders on the challenges of Kindergarten education. This is purely for academic purpose, so you are advised to give frank answers to the questions. Your responses will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. **Tick (✓)** in the box provided to indicate your choice of response.

1. Age.....

2. Highest level of education: 1) SSSCE 2) Diploma 3) First degree
4) Second degree 5) PhD

3. Marital status: 1) Married 2) Divorced 3) Single

4) Separated 5) Widowed

4. How many children do you have who attend kindergarten school?

1) 4 2) 3 3) 2 4) 1

5. What is the age of your child? 1) 0-1 2) 2-3 3) 4-5

6. At what age did your child start school? 1) 1 2) 2 3) 3

4) 4 5) 5

7. What is the nature of the school that your child attends?

1) Public

2) Private

8. Has the teacher of your child received any formal training in early childhood care and education?

1) Yes

2) No

3) I am not able to tell

9. Level of familiarity with educational policies. Circle your choice of numerical response (Scale: 1=totally unaware, 1= unaware, 2= Neutral, 3= aware)

Educational Policy	unaware	Neutral	aware
Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2010-2020	1	2	3
Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE)	1	2	3
The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy 2004	1	2	3
The 2007 Education Reforms	1	2	3
Education Act 778, 2008	1	2	3

10. Overall, I am satisfied with my child's school experience.

1) Completely satisfied

2) Fairly satisfied

3) Fairly dissatisfied

4) Completely dissatisfied

11. Kindly give a reason for your response to question (10)

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

12. If there is anything about your child’s school that you want changed, what would it be?

.....
.....

13. In your own opinion, what challenges do you face as far as keeping your child in school is concerned?

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

14. “It is a widely held view that the kindergarten teacher has low education levels, poor English language skills, low wages, and are generally female”. What is your opinion about this public view?

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

Thank you.