UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

PERCEPTIONS OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS USE OF PLAY AS

A TEACHING TECHNIQUE IN AFADJATO SOUTH DISTRICT,

VOLTA REGION

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DECLARATION

STUDENTS' DECLARATION

I, Divine Koku Kekesi, 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 work, and has not been submitted either in part or whole for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Signature: ……………..………………..

Date: ………………….....…..………..

SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with guidelines and supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: Edison Pajibo (Ph.D)

Signature: …………..……..………………..

Date: …………………..……....…..………..

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

To my mother; Elizabeth Afua Dzomeda, my wife; Diana Nenye Dzongo and my

daughter; Laudina Edudzi Kekesi.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated perceptions of kindergarten teachers on the use of play as teaching technique in Afadjato South District, Volta Region. The study used concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design. A sample of 130 participants was selected for the study: 100 kindergarten teachers, 20 basic school heads and 10 school supervisors. Multistage (comprehensive selection, simple random and convenience) sampling technique was used to select the participants. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to analyse the quantitative data. Thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data. The study found that to a very large extent, kindergarten teachers' perceptions affected their use of play as a teaching technique; again, kindergarten teachers' perceptions positively influenced their use of play as a teaching technique; factors influencing the perceptions included availability of play materials, the kind of motivation teachers receive and many others; measures to be employed to positively shape the perception of kindergarten teachers and help them use play to effect learning comprised availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching experience, organisation of in-service training, motivation and regular supervision. It was concluded that kindergarten teachers used play as a teaching technique. Moreover, factors that contributed to their use of play as a teaching technique included: availability of play materials, the kind of motivation teachers receive and their teaching experiences. It was recommended that through in-service training, headteachers should encourage kindergarten teachers to continuously have positive perception towards play as a teaching technique.
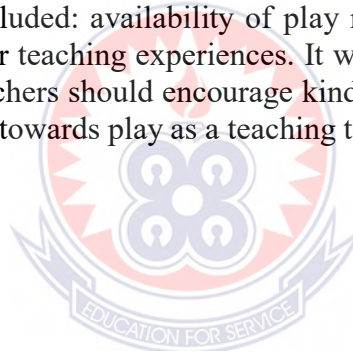
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Children in literate and non-literate cultures play regardless of their strength, challenges, mental health, socioeconomic status and parenting. Play is a crucial component of an appropriate early childhood classroom. The past decade has seen an increase in research documenting the benefits of children learning through play. However, in the global world, the amount of play in American kindergarten classes for instance, remains on a steady decline (Eberle, 2011). Play research has witnessed a rise in two seemingly contradictory trends. First, research increasingly shows that play expedites a variety of social, cognitive, motor, and linguistic improvements (Eberle 2011; Fisher, Lepper & Henderlong, 2011).

Froebel (1987) writing on children's play contends that, play is not only the children's natural occupation before constraints and formal schooling takes over but it also serves as a major means by which children use to communicate to themselves and to the world around. Research has shown that, at birth, a child's brain growth and development has reached 40%, and it rapidly grows and develops to 80% by the age of three (UNICEF, 2007). This implies that for the child to thrive and reach his full potential, it is crucial for teachers and caregivers to have proper knowledge and skills on how to harness children' play behaviour to enhance both stimulation and smooth adaptability in teaching and learning activities.

The activity of play in kindergarten is crucial to the development of children (Graue, 2009; Miller & Almon, 2009). With obligations to fulfill mandates such as ―No Child Left Behind'' (Lee, Burkam, Ready, Honigman & Meisels, 2006) and pressure to meet

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state and national standards, teachers are continuously decreasing the amount of play-centered activities in kindergarten classrooms. However, it is important to incorporate play into the curriculum for the development of children. Miller and Almon (2009) discuss that, "the traditional kindergarten classroom that most adults remember from childhood-with plenty of space and time for unstructured play and discovery, art and music, practicing social skills, and learning to enjoy learning-has largely disappeared" (p.42).

Ghana is among African countries that gave Early Childhood Development (ECD) program a minimum attention in the past three decades. During this period the children's early learning and stimulation was informal and unstructured. The absence of the formal Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes made children below eight years invisible in the country's education programme system, a situation that denied children the opportunity to thrive both academically and socially. In the year 2007, a policy document on Early Childhood Care and Development for Ghana was made operational. The document, forms part of the recommendations of the Government's White Paper on Educational Reforms. It therefore makes kindergarten education progressively part of the Universal Free and Compulsory Basic Education (Ghana News Agency May 31, 2005).

Under the policy, all Ghanaian children at the age of four are to receive two years compulsory kindergarten education before entering primary one. Early childhood is the period of a child's growth from conception to the first eight years. Pupils have the opportunity to explore their learning environment by means of free-play as well as through teacher-initiated play. Free-play is play that is initiated by the child (Graue, 2009).

Play-based learning activities emphasize the importance of process and product. Contrary to what developmental theory suggests, the focus in contemporary kindergartens is put on the knowledge children may need in latter grades to succeed and not on the development of fundamental cognitive, psychological, social and emotional abilities for which their minds and bodies are adapted to develop at this time in their lives and that form the foundation to their happiness and success now and in the future (Eberle, 2011).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A study by Lyabwene (2010) found that issues of pre-primary school teachers' professional qualifications affected the quality of classroom interaction, hence, impacting on teaching and learning approaches significantly. The complaints are raised by different ECE stakeholders on the unaddressed pedagogical challenges, especially teachers' tendency of using compulsive, direct and unfriendly teacher-centered teaching strategies (Lyabwene, 2010). However, the study by Lyabwene did not focus on the use of play as a teaching technique among kindergarten children. Besides, it was conducted outside Ghana. Also, his study used only kindergarten teachers while the current study used kindergarten teachers, school heads and school supervisors.

In spite of the government of Ghana's strong policy commitment to the kindergarten sector, it continues to face challenges of access and quality. The needs at this level are significant, whereas learning materials are in short supply: almost half of all kindergarten teachers have never received any formal training (Ministry of Education MoE, Ghana 2013 as cited in Sabre Charitable Trust country report November 21, 2017). A Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) called The Right to Play (2016)

reports that early childhood educators still face curricula and pedagogical challenges and there is a discrepancy between the emphasis and the teaching methods at the kindergartens (Right To Play Ghana, 2016). Though the study by Right To Play was done in Ghana, it was not on play as a teaching technique for kindergarten teachers. Again, it was not conducted among kindergarten schools in the Afadjato South District.

Moreover, a study by Hargreaves and Shirley (2011) found that in the field of early childhood education, children's play should be considered as an integral element in the teaching and learning process that can be seen as part of an education process which promotes democracy in all pre-school settings. Techniques used by kindergarten teachers in teaching are therefore critical to the achievement of curricular goals in kindergarten centres. As it stands now it is not very clear whether kindergarten teachers in public basic schools in the Afadjato South District use play as a technique for teaching children.

A visit to some kindergarten schools in the Afadjato South District by the researcher from 21st September, 2017 through to 5th October, 2017 indicates that, play seems to be on a lower side as far as teaching and learning is concerned. Five schools visited in the district revealed that, most of the kindergarten teachers seem not to have enough knowledge on using play as a teaching technique.

Most of the educators in the Afadjato South District also seem not to have full control over play activities. What is common is that, young children are most often allowed to go out for free play with little or no guidance or supervision. There are debates in the literature (Graue, 2009; Ashiabi, 2007) that one factor that accounts for the limited use of play in the kindergarten is the kind of perception teachers hold regarding play

as a teaching technique. There are some early childhood educators who believe that play as a teaching technique is not effective. Some think otherwise (Eberle, 2011). It is therefore necessary to assess the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in Afadjato South District of the use of play as a teaching technique.

1.3 The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as teaching technique in Afadjato South District of the Volta Region.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. assess the perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as a teaching technique in Afadjato South District.

2. find out the extent to which kindergarten teachers of Afadjato South District engage in the use of play as a teaching technique.

3. identify factors that affect the perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as a teaching technique.

4. evolve strategies aimed at positively influencing the perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as a teaching technique.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the perception of kindergarten teachers in the Afadjato South District of the use of play as a teaching technique?

2. To what extent do kindergarten teachers of Afadjato South District use play as a teaching technique?

3. What factors affect Afadjato South District kindergarten teachers' perception of the use of play as a teaching technique?

4. What measures can be employed to positively shape the perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play to affect learning?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study findings would potentially improve the way kindergarten teachers employ the activities in their teaching. Additionally, this research will help Early Childhood Educators in the Afadjato South District to uncover their own perceptions about play. The findings would also allow in-service and pre-service teachers to understand ways to include play in kindergarten settings. Again, the study would help to shed light on the state of affairs regarding the use of play as a pedagogical approach to teaching in ECE in the district. The findings would re-awaken the awareness of kindergarten teachers on the role of play in holistic development of children. Moreover, findings of the study would serve as bedrock upon which future studies can be conducted.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The study was limited to perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as teaching technique in Afadjato South District of the Volta Region. The study covered the following themes: perceptions of kindergarten teachers on the use of play as a teaching technique; extent to which kindergarten teachers use play as a teaching technique; factors that affect the perceptions of kindergarten teachers on the use of play as a teaching technique; strategies aimed at positively influencing the perceptions of kindergarten teachers on the use of play as a teaching technique. Data for the study was gathered from kindergarten teachers, school heads and school supervisors. Also, the study used concurrent mixed methods approach.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

It was realised that very few of the kindergarten teachers failed to respond to the administrative strategy of their head teachers in the questionnaire. This might negatively affect the findings of the study. Also, schools used for the study were selected from a list of public schools in the Afadjato South District. This selective sampling may decrease the generalisation of the findings. Therefore, findings of this study could not be generalised to the public basic schools that were not in Afadjato South District.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Perception: A judgment or interpretive ability based on knowledge and insight gained through teachers' senses, observation or awareness of some condition, event or concept.

Kindergarten: A programme or class for four to six year old children that serves as an introduction to school.

Early Childhood Education: Education given to young children from birth through to age eight.

Technique: Procedures, styles or ways in which a teacher has selected to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

1.10 Organization of the Study

The study report is in five chapters. Chapter One presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study and objectives of the study. Also in this chapter are the research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms and organisation of the study. Chapter Two presents the literature review. Chapter Three presents the methodology of the study. Thus, discussion on the research design, population of the study, sample and sampling techniques was done. The chapter also discussed the instrumentation, validity and reliability of the instruments, data collection procedures, data analyses and ethical considerations. Chapter Four focused on results, findings and discussions. Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the review of related literature. The literature is reviewed under the following topics:

1. Theoretical framework of the study

2. Early childhood theories

3. Concept of Early Childhood Education, Kindergarten and Play

4. Teaching Technique

5. Play as a Teaching Technique in Early Childhood

6. Theories of play

7. Types of play

8. Perception of Kindergarten Teachers on the use of Play as a Teaching Technique

9. Summary of Literature and Gaps
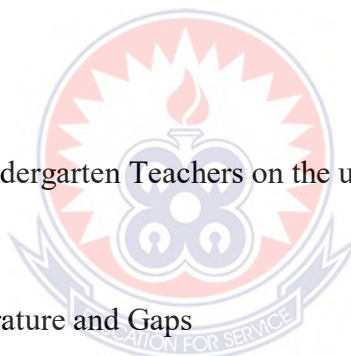
2.1 Theoretical Framework of the Study

A theory is defined as a set of interrelated concepts, assumptions and generalizations that systematically describes and explains behaviour (Ndurumo, 2007). Therefore, a theory attempts to fit relevant facts into a logical explanation and also serves as a framework for collecting more information. Philosophers of science have argued that one of the most important functions of theoretical framework is that it guides observation. In other words, observation statements cannot be made without using the language of some theory, and in turn, these theories determine what is investigated. Thus, the framework plays an important role by guiding the kinds of questions that we

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can ask, the nature of evidence that is to be collected, the methodologies that are appropriate for collecting this evidence, the strategies available for analysing the data and finally, interpretations that we make from this analysis.

The study adopted the Personal Investment Theory by Maehr (1986). According to Maeher's (1986) Personal Investment Theory, a person's Perception towards particular behaviour determines the way he or she invests his or her time, talent and energy. The theory contends that the meaning of the activity, for example the meaning of play or use of play to a teacher, basically determines his or her Perception towards people, situations, objects and actions related to the play. The theory further suggests that a person may have a recognized talent or ability in performing a task but may not be interested to exhibit the behaviour if the practice is not encouraged by his or her reference group. Thus, when a teacher's play behaviour or other related play activities are favored or appreciated by social group(s) for instance, school management, other teachers or parents, the teacher is likely to choose to exhibit the behaviour more frequently. Consequently, frequency in behaviour would lead to increased investment of his or her additional time, energy and skills in the behaviour. In this view the school management may influence a teacher's use of play as a teaching method.

Explaining whether extrinsic rewards control a person's behaviour in a particular situation Maher (1986) argues that, some people when assured of the means to obtain the rewards, will strive to maximize their chances to get them and in this manner exhibit the rewarding behaviour. In the context of this study, when a teacher is assured of enjoying a variety of motivational packages from the school management, he or she will reciprocate by spending more time, energy and skills in play related teaching and learning activities. In addition, some teachers may opt to use play as a

teaching method if they perceive that the actions and the outcome will render them recognition. This theory is relevant in establishing how the motivating school environment influences use of play as a teaching technique in kindergarten settings.

The theory further proposes that a person's subjective judgment of his or her ability to perform a task effectively tends to influence the individual's choice to exhibit or inhibit behaviour. When a teacher believes in his or her competence and knowledge in Early Childhood teaching practices, he or she will increase his or her investment of skills, energy and talents in use of play as a child-centred teaching and learning approach. The theory suggests that a knowledgeable and skilled person in any area of specialty tends to exhibit a professional behaviour in autonomous and assertive manner regardless of existence of some impeding factors (Boulet, 2015). This premise offers a basis for establishing how kindergarten school teachers perceive the use of play as a teaching method in Afadjato South District of the Volta Region of Ghana.

2.2 Early Childhood Theories

Throughout the past century, there have been many researchers who have contributed to the development of early childhood theories, strategies, and procedures. Five of the early advocates of early childhood education are: John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Jean Piaget, Loris Malaguzzi and Lev Vygotsky. Dewey, Montessori, Piaget, and Vygotsky are recognized leaders of early childhood education (Early Childhood Today, 2000) because of their contributions to current kindergarten programmes. Reggio Emilia is credited with introducing a modernized approach to preschool education that focused on exploration and discovery through a self-guided curriculum (Vodopivec, 2012).

John Dewey

John Dewey was one of the early advocates of early childhood education during the late 1800s and early1900s. He wrote over 40 books and 700 articles relating to educational concepts and is credited for being one of the most significant theorists to contribute to the development of early education thinking (Early Childhood Today, 2000; Hsin, 2014). Dewey conducted research that showed how education and life are interrelated, not separate, and that children can learn best by doing, and that continuity of experience is essential to growth (Dewey, 1970; Early Childhood Today, 2000). Dewey organized and opened the first experimental school in 1896 called University Elementary that emphasized a practical approach to solving problems. The school focused on making connections with learning between the home and school setting. Dewey (1897) stated:

The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences. (p. 78) Dewey advocated for schools and the community to work together (Hsin, 2014; Kretschmer, Wang, & Hartman, 2010). He believed that societal issues heavily impact learning (Popp, 2015). Society can impact young children, as they have an impulse and desire to tell and represent, especially through art (Dewey, 1902). Dewey claimed that the interest in conversation, communication, inquiry, discovery, creation, construction, and artistic expression are the natural resources which affect active growth of the child (Dewey, 1902). Active growth of the child also means capitalizing on their imagination. Dewey stated, ―imagination is the medium in which the child lives" (p. 61). Educators can employ his theory and offer many opportunities for children to use make believe and activities to strengthen their creativity. Imagination

can become symbolic because it is a world in which a child lives (Dewey, 1902). Dewey found ―when nature and society are present in the classroom, and learning is subordinated to experience, the culture shall be the democratic password" (p. 62).

Dewey (1915) believed that democracy has to be redeveloped during every generation, and education is most important. It is a psychological necessity for schools to represent life that is familiar to the child outside of the school setting (Dewey, 1940). School should be full of activities that are vital and important to the learner now. According to Dewey (1915), it should ―be a miniature community, an embryonic society" (p. 15). Dewey (1940) believes that ―much of present education has failed because it neglects the fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life" (pp. 7-8) so he began to share his theories with others to change the way education was designed. Dewey is known as the founder in the movement of progressive education, which is part of preschool programs today. Thinking about progressive education, one must consider what is education really about? Education is preparation for life, a way to learn how to live, a means to give the child what he needs or will need to know, to develop good citizens, and to develop well rounded happy individuals (Dewey, 1940).

According to Dewey (1940), the progressive education movement is the outgrowth of the realization by educators of the fact that our highly complex, rapid, crowded civilization demands and has been met by changes in the school subjects and practices; that to make these changes effective something more is needed than simply the addition of one subject after another (p. 274).

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His theory emphasized many key points that are utilized in several preschool classrooms, aimed at giving greater attention to individual needs and characteristics. A preschool classroom today based on the views of John Dewey would have the teacher act as a facilitator for learning. Children would be engaged in conversations, working in groups, and exploring various aspects of the curriculum. Assessments would not just be written tests; students would be completing portfolios, journaling, and projects. Because of Dewey's contributions to early childhood research, preschools have transformed and are offering an environment that fosters independence, cooperative learning, differentiation, and self-guided discovery (Hsin, 2014).

Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori's method for educating preschool students focused on a child's level of development and his/her physical and emotional needs (Thayer-Bacon, 2012). Montessori started her career as the first female to graduate in Italy with a medical degree (Montessori, 1965; Ross, 2012). She worked for many years in hospitals helping physically and mentally handicapped students (Montessori, 1966; Thayer-Bacon, 2012). When other people had given up hope that these children could learn academic subjects such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, Montessori fought harder to discover ways to prove them wrong (Ross, 2012). In the early 1900s, she began to use her scientific knowledge to study children and their behaviour (Thayer-Bacon, 2012). Although the beginning of her research was spent with students who were mentally challenged, Montessori began to wonder what was happening in the educational system across Italy (Ross, 2012). She opened her first school for children age's three to six in January 1907, known as The Children's House (Jokanovic, 2013; Montessori, 1965). Because of her medical background, Montessori spent a lot of

time studying children and quickly realized that many of their problems were educational and not medical, sparking her desire to research educational pedagogy and study how very young children learn (Jokanovic, 2013; Montessori, 1965). By 1908, she became world famous for describing and writing about the world within the child (Ross, 2012).

Montessori discovered that preschool aged children have a strong desire to learn, and they can learn on their own if placed in an environment that allows them the opportunity to do so (Bacon, 2012). Montessori (1965) stated that ―the school should become the place where the child may live in freedom, and this freedom must not be solely the intimate, spiritual liberty of internal growth" (p. 142). Children are eager observers and they like to imitate what they observe. They develop self-realization skills when presented with significant opportunities that provide personal experiences and engagement (Montessori, 1966). Since Montessori believed that the environment should be the centre of instruction, she developed a classroom atmosphere that promoted self-realization encompassing four general areas: a practical life area, a sensorial area, a language area, and a math area (Montessori, 1966). Practical life opportunities help to build a child‗s ability to concentrate, promote coordination, establish order, and encourage independence (Lillard, 2013). Giving children the foundation to believe in themselves will help promote self-confidence (Montessori, 1966). Sensory areas within the classroom help the children develop and enhance their five senses by permitting them to explore their environment and develop their mind (Montessori, 1965). Language activities strengthen the child‗s ability to decode words, to utilize phonemic awareness skills, and to enhance sight word identification (Lillard, 2013; Montessori, 1966). This station is the foundation for becoming an avid reader (Lillard, 2013; Montessori 1965).

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Montessori also observed that all children have a mathematical mind-set and when given the opportunity to use hands on manipulative they will become comfortable with math concepts throughout life (Montessori, 1965). Throughout the next several years schools opened that embraced Montessori's teaching and learning concepts (Lillard, 2013).Within a short time, Montessori began writing books regarding her beliefs about child development and she encouraged teachers to experiment with her methods. She believed that one of her most interesting and unexpected discoveries in the school setting was viewing the child as a discoverer; observing the way they acted freely and how they carried out their actions (Montessori, 1966). By 1915, Montessori's child-centred educational philosophy, with strong ties to the environment, spread internationally.

Today, Montessori preschools promote motor development, which leads to an increase in cognitive development (Lillard, 2013). A preschool that uses Montessori's methods provides instruction that focuses on key developmental stages, encourages cooperative play, has child centred learning that teaches self-discipline, has a classroom environment that teaches order, includes lessons that are hands on and inspire creativity, and has a system that is individualized to meet each student's needs (Lillard, 2013; Montessori,1966). Although there are many Montessori schools operating successfully in the United States, there are other preschools that emphasize family engagement and problem solving activities due to the research of Lev Vygotsky.

Lev Vygotsky

Lev Vygotsky, like Montessori, became noted for his work with preschool children in Russia in the 1920s (Moll, 2014). Vygotsky's research showed that he believed that children learn best from their interactions with their family, significant objects, their favourite toys, and practices that engaged them in the classroom problem solving activities (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). His beliefs centred on designing activities that are developmentally appropriate for preschool children. In reference to child development, Vygotsky (1935) stated, ―The environment is the source of development and not its setting" (p. 338). The environment in which a child is placed should be realistic according to the child's interaction with life itself. Vygotsky (1926) believed that ―education is just meaningless outside the real world as is a fire without oxygen, or as is breathing without a vacuum" (p. 345). After the environment is established, Vygotsky focused on language and development. Vygotsky and his colleagues focused on a child's developmental stages (Vygotsky, 1978). They discovered that children have two developmental levels: the actual developmental level, (what they can accomplish on their own) and the proximal level (what can be done with assistance) (Moll, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978).

Another characteristic of Vygotsky's theory was the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual development level and level of potential development (Vygotsky, 1978). This level of development is needed for children to develop cognitively and is attained when children engage in social interaction. Although Vygotsky's main focus was on cognition, he recognized the importance that social interaction had on instruction and the learning cycle. Vygotsky suggested that instruction must be geared at the proximal level so maturation can occur (Vygotsky, 1978). When thinking about instruction, one must

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remember that learning and development are inseparably blended (Vygotsky, 1978). A child begins to learn afterbirth, long before they attend school. With that knowledge, it is important to remember that any learning that occurs in school always has a previous history (Vygotsky, 1978).This history will need to be matched in some way with the child's developmental levels. This point of view called for a different approach to education, one that would focus on the competencies that are still developing, not on the ones that currently exist (Bodrova & Leong, 2005). Preschool design should focus around dramatic play and that play will scaffold a child into developing a wide variety of skills (Vygotsky, 1967).Vygotsky (1978) stated that ―play is not the predominant feature of childhood but it is a leading factor in development" (p. 101). Preschools that follow the beliefs of Vygotsky concentrate on the scope of play that is dramatical or make-believe with opportunities for children to create imaginary situations, take on and act out roles, and follow a set of rules determined by these specific roles (Bodrova, Germeroth, & Leong 2013). Many aspects of the teaching curriculum today embrace some of Vygotsky's cognitive and social development perspectives which will contribute to the information that will be gathered from this study.

Jean Piaget

Piaget is credited for fundamentally altering conceptions of how a child learns (Dulberg, 2005; Early Childhood Today, 2000). He worked for many years in the early 1920s within Europe to conduct observations and research how a student learns and why so many students at the same age make similar mistakes (Pallini, & Barcaccia, 2014). Piaget observed them playing, listened to them talk to one another, asked them questions about the world, studied their games, and focused in on what they believed was right and wrong (Beatty, 2009; Piaget, 1950; Piaget, 1955). Piaget

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spent time listening to conversations between children. He concluded that collective monologue develops between the ages of three-five (Piaget, 1955). Piaget spent time focusing on the reason children around the age of three focused their questions around the different types of ―whys." He concluded that there are three ―why" principles; causal explanation, motivation, and justification (Piaget, 1955).

Dialogue can be an indicator of learning, so this skill can be important for teachers to recognize this type of development in young children. With his focus on language and the thought of the child, he discovered that children are wired in a process. This process consists of developmental stages, similar to the research conducted by Vygotsky (Pallini &Barcaccia, 2014). He concluded that children develop in four stages: the sensorimotor stage, preoperational stage, concrete operations stage, and formal operations stage (Ojose, 2008; Piaget, 1950). Examining sensorimotor intelligence, Piaget discovered that children rely heavily on symbols and signs, dictating why symbolic and imaginative play is essential during this development period (Piaget, 1950). Piaget advocated that preschool education should be limited to a sensorimotor design and the focus on reading, writing, and mathematics should be held until elementary school (Piaget, 1971). Since the inception of Piaget‘s four developmental stages, preschools began changing the curriculum to align with Piaget‘s process of development. A typical preschool classroom that is based on Piaget‘s stages would have discussions that focus on how the answer was discovered, discovery through the environment, and differentiated activities that focus on each child‘s level of development (Diachenko, 2011). Preschool classrooms today that are aligned to Piaget‘s theory would be much more interactive, full of manipulative and imaginative play and the majority of the educational curriculum would be devoted to self-discovery and play time (Diachenko, 2011). The teacher is a facilitator; he/she

arranges the environment and prepares activities and experiences appropriate to the developmental level of the children (Houde, Pineau, Leroux, Poirel, Perchey, Lanoe, & Mazoyer, 2011). Although Piaget felt that reading, writing, and mathematics should not be the focus of preschools, most states require that preschools introduce these basic skills as part of their curriculum to help prepare children for kindergarten.

Piaget is one of the four theorists mentioned that contributed to the nursery school movement that has formed many of todays' preschools. Because of his research related to a child's developmental stages, some preschools have centred the design of their classroom environment, instruction, and interactions with children on his findings for growth and development. Although his research was conducted in the past, preschools currently use this learning approach. Piaget's approach focused heavily on social interactions and development as related to this study. The researcher also reviewed amore modernized approach to the design of preschool, and found Reggio Emilia.
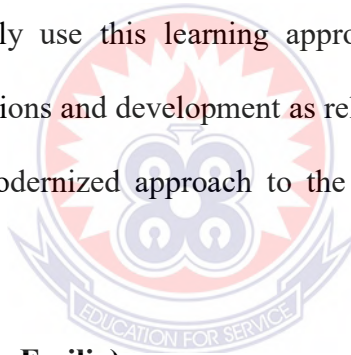
Loris Malaguzzi (Reggio Emilia)

Although Piaget had a strong influence on the preschool movement, his influence diminished for some and was replaced by Loris Malaguzzi's creation of the Reggio Emilia approach. In fact, Reggio Emilia is often referred to as one of the best preschools in the world (Bond, 2013; Vodopivec, 2012). The first Reggio inspired preschool opened in 1963 in the small Italian village of Reggio Emilia (Kelemen, 2013; McCann, 2014). Although the Reggio Emilia approach does not have a specific curriculum, the focus is on how children are taught and how they learn (Papatheodorou, 2010). This model focused on academic and social development and is based on the concept of locality, keeping a sense of local identity, and maintaining

community traditions (Giamminuti, 2011). Malaguzzi's philosophy was that all children are curious and creative, which should inspire educators to capitalize on those principles (Kelemen, 2013). Children should be given opportunities to notice the beauty, diversity, and detail of the environment surrounding them (Cadwell, 1997).

Educators need to assist the child with their cognitive development, not cultivate cognition for them. Children should not be taught information that they would not be able to discover on their own (Vodopivec, 2012). The key to success is to guide the child through the process and ask the right questions (Vodopivec, 2012). Malaguzzi (1992) stated: There are a few essential elements of a good project. The first is to find an initial motivation, which warms up the children, then we help the children expand their intentions and at the same time, we expand ours. The adults should set up situations in advance that facilitate the work of the children. The adults have to revisit what has happened, to listen a great deal and to know how to enter and how much. Teachers must know how to keep the motivation high (p. 3).

The orientations of the Reggio Emilia approach include having a child centred approach, preparing children for a free democratic life, emphasizing the importance of the triple relation (family, school, and community), and stimulating communication, conversations, and interrelations (Cadwell, 1997; Kelemen, 2013). The Reggio Emilia approach has inspired a change in the design of preschools. Preschools that embrace this perspective of learning allow the children to design the curriculum, whereas teachers are seen as cleaners and observers, and the environment is known as the third teacher (Cadwell, 1997; Ruland, 2012).

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The researcher has provided an overview of five theorists and their program designs that have contributed to the types of preschool programs that can be seen in today's society. Although, most of the theorists focus on child development that leads to academics, some research has also been conducted on the development of social skills.

2.3 Concept of Early Childhood Education, Kindergarten and Play

The term _education' is a very common and a popular word that is uttered by many of us but understood by a very few in its right perspective. It is in one way or the other appears to be as old as the human race, though during the course of time, its meaning and objectives have inevitably undergone certain changes, Understanding the concept of education and its dynamic features will help us to develop insights about the purpose of becoming a teacher and help us while educating our pupils (Peters, 1967).

Etymologically, the word education is derived from the Latin word _educare' meaning _to raise' and _to bring up'. According to few others, the word _education' has originated from another Latin term _Educere' which means _to lead forth' or _to come out'. These meanings indicate that education seeks to nourish the good qualities and draw out the best in every individual (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005). Education seeks to develop the innate or the inner potentialities of humans. Some other educationists believe that the word _education' has been derived from the Latin term _Educatum', which means the act of teaching or training. According to Raymont (1906), the meanings of these root words lead us to believe that education aims to provide a nourishing environment that would facilitate or bring out and develop the potentialities in an individual. Referring to Dictionary of Education (edited by Good, 1973), indicate that education is defined as ―the aggregate

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of all the processes by which a person develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour of practical values in the society in which s/he lives; the social process by which people are subjected to the influence of selected and controlled environment (especially that of the school), so that they may obtain social competence and optimum individual development". The concept of education has been used in a variety of contexts with different meanings. To give a precise definition of education, just as we define certain concepts in science or other technical subjects, is difficult, as there is no one meaning of education held in common by people.

According to Dewey (1916), ―Education is reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experiences." This view implies that the child already has acquired some experiences from his/her interaction with the environment. And education plays a role in reconstructing these experiences in the required direction in order to add meaning to those experiences.

According to Taylor and Buku (2003), education involves the process of imparting knowledge, values and skills to bring about a change in the behaviour of the individual. Tilabi (2008) defines education as the process by which people acquire knowledge, skills, habits, values, attitudes and moral behaviour. Considering what those we are supposed to be teaching need, and what might be going on for them, is one of the main things that makes ‗education‗ different to indoctrination. Indoctrination involves knowingly encouraging people to believe something regardless of the evidence (Snook 1972; Peterson, 2007). It also entails a lack of respect for their human rights. Education can be described as the ‗wise, hopeful and respectful cultivation of learning undertaken in the belief that all should have the

chance to share in life' (Smith 2015). According to Smith (2015), the process of education flows from a basic orientation of respect–respect for truth, others and themselves, and the world. In Ghana the formal educational process begins from early childhood to tertiary level with varying teaching methods.

Early childhood education is a highly diverse field that serves children from birth through age eight. During these years, children participate in many different kinds of care and education settings. Regardless of where they work or what their specific job titles are, however, early childhood teachers are professionals. This means that they make decisions based on a specialized body of knowledge, continue to learn throughout their careers, and are committed to providing the best care and education possible for every child (Garvey, 1977).

Generally, early childhood education refers to the education given to children from prenatal period to eight years of age and it is the most intensive period of brain development throughout the lifespan (WHO & UNICEF, 2012). This period is the most critical time for the growth and development of the child and needs the utmost attention and appropriate care. The early childhood period is the basis for later success in life. It is the time when a child's brain develops at a rapid rate creating plenty of opportunities for children' learning and development.

A child can have a good start in life when he/she grows up in a nurturing and stimulating environment that meets his/her essential needs such as nutrition, health, and safety, as well as the psychological, social, spiritual, and intellectual needs. This also means that the child has a greater chance of reaching his/her full potential later in life. Therefore, it is important to address children's needs holistically because the absence of one or more essential needs can lead to negative developmental outcomes

for children. Each and every child has a right to early childhood development. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 6 (Article 6, UNICEF) highlights that the child has ―a right to live…and develop healthy‖ and that every child has ―the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs‖ (Article 27, UNICEF).

The Early Childhood Education (ECD) policies of Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia recognize that investment in the early years of life has multiple return values to the development of both children and society. For example, Kenya‘s national ECD policy document (June, 2006, pp. 2-4) states the benefits of investing in early childhood development as follows:

Brain development: The development of the brain is most rapid during the first three years of life. Quality early childhood stimulation, nutritional support, and nurturance enhance the development of the brain. Lack of a responsive and sensitive caregiving can seriously affect the child‘s development, and cause failure to thrive.

Early identification and intervention: Investment will be spent not only to deliver outcomes but to also reach the children who need it most. Therefore, children with disabilities and vulnerable children who are socially marginalized and discriminated against will have opportunities for early detection and intervention which ensures child‘s survival, health, growth, and psycho-social and intellectual development. School readiness: All children, regardless of their sociocultural background, will have equal opportunity to enter school at their appropriate age. The opportunity to help disadvantaged children attain an equal start in schooling is in the early years of life. The experiences of early years help young children to build their competence in all

areas of development; the physical-motor, the social-emotional, the cognitive language and the moral-spiritual, including a positive attitude towards learning.

Cost savings for society: A quality early childhood environment and education will translate into better health, fewer illnesses, good academic skills, and fewer school drop outs and repetition, preparing the child to become a productive citizen. Families and social services will have less cost in child care and intervention and invest in other family or national development programs.

Poverty reduction: Quality early childhood development experiences and education lead to better success in school, which in turn prepares the child to become an adult with higher employment and earnings, better health, and lower levels of dependency on families and society as well as lower crime rates compared to children who don't have these opportunities.

Ghana defines early childhood care and development as a holistic approach to the implementation of policies and programmes for promoting the growth and development of children between zero to eight. Ghana as a country was able to mainstream its KG school system with basic school education as part of the recommendations of the Dakar World Forum for Education and the Millennium Development Goals (MoE Ghana, 2013).

The Strategic Plan (2010-2020) also supports the prioritization, expansion and improvement in the delivery of ECCD services. GES in July 2011 embarked on a process of developing an operational plan to scale up the quality of KG education in the country where learning activities and processes were mostly participatory, collaborative and interactive with the participation of a broad spectrum of stakeholders including foreign donors (MoE Ghana, 2013).

Globally, participation in early childhood programmes has increased steadily for many decades as more children participate in group programmes at younger ages. In 1965, only 60% of 5-year olds went to kindergarten, whereas today almost 95% do (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2011a). A similar but steeper growth trend is apparent for younger children. In 1960, only 10% of 3- and 4 year-olds were enrolled in any type of early childhood programme. In 2011, 40% of 3- to 5-year-olds were enrolled in preschool (Barnett, Wong, Westley, Adderley & Smith, 2011) and many other young children participated in child care programmes. Although the economic downturn has affected enrolment, all types of early childhood programmes have seen growth over the years, including private preschools and child care centres (Barnett et al., 2011; National Centre for Education Statistics, 2011).

In America, Changes in preschool participation are apparent in the findings of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (Jacobson Chernoff, Flanagan, McPhee & Park, 2007). The study identified the primary setting where 4-year-old children received the most hours of early care and education. Only 20% were in no regular setting outside their home. Almost 60% were in a child care centre, preschool, or Head Start centre; 13% were cared for by a relative; and 8% were in a home-based, nonrelative care setting such as a family child care centre or care provided by a neighbour or friend.

Study reveals that preschool, rather than kindergarten, is now seen as the first year of school for children (Jacobson Chernoff et al., 2007). The percentage of children who attend centre -based preschools is approximately the same whether or not their mothers are employed. This finding indicates that the growth in preschool enrolment

is related to increased demand for early education as much as increased need for child care (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007).

Early childhood education teachers, ought to know how much children need to play and how much their healthy development depends on it. This awareness may become relevant if play is used as one of the effective tools in early childhood education. Garvey (1977) states that play is most common during childhood when children's knowledge of self, comprehension of verbal and nonverbal communication, and understanding of the physical and social worlds are expanding dramatically. Fromberg (1990) claims that play is the ―ultimate integrator of human experience" (p. 223). This means that when children play, they draw upon their past experiences-things they have done, seen others do, read about, or seen on television-and they use these experiences to build games, play scenarios, and engage in activities.

Children use fine and gross motor skills in their play. They react to each other socially. They think about what they are doing or going to do. They use language to talk to each other or to themselves and they very often respond emotionally to the play activity. The integration of these different types of behaviours is key to the cognitive development of young children. According to Rogers and Sawyer (1988), "until at least the age of nine, children's cognitive structures function best in this unified mode" (p. 58). Because children's play draws upon all of these behaviours, it is a very effective vehicle for learning.

Early childhood education (ECE) is the organized practice of educating young children in the early stages of life (birth to age eight), according to National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Epstein (2007), the age range spans from birth to age eight (thus from Nursery to Basic three) (Groark et al.,

2008). In support, UNESCO International Bureau of Education (2006) acknowledges that children who benefited from ECE are between the ages from birth to eight (8) years old.

It is a time of remarkable brain development that lays the very foundation for subsequent learning in the development of human life. According to the Global Monetary Report (2007), ECE includes nursery, kindergarten and the first three years of primary education. Other frequently used terms include pre-school, early years, kindergarten, playgroup, nursery, pre-grade one, preparatory year, ‗æro year' etc. (International Bureau of Education, 2006).

According to the Regional Bureau for Education in Africa (RBEDA), early childhood education refers to a holistic and integrated approach to health, nutrition, protection, and education needs and services (Regional Bureau for Education in Africa, 2010). The Working Group on Early Childhood Development which brings all the key stakeholders including international partners, governments, NGOs, experts and academics officially term early childhood education as Early Childhood Development (ECD).

In Australia, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services for children below school age are usually referred to as either childcare, children's services or early childhood services. ECEC therefore includes the range of formal care and education services for children under school age and in the early years of school. According to the World Bank (2001), early child development includes services designed for the physical and intellectual growth of children in their early years (ages 0-6). These services incorporate day care, pre-school, home visits by trained professionals, health and nutrition services, and parental education. Bowman (2000) states that:

‖Early childhood education does not refer to a single entity; rather, the term covers a variety of programmes for young children between birth and age 8. These programmes take place in children's own homes and in public schools, private pre-schools, and child-care homes and centres. Each of these settings may have quite different characteristics (adult/child ratios, group sizes, age ranges, cultural practices, and adult training and teaching styles) that in turn affect what and how children learn" (page 12).

Based on the statement above, it can be argued that, Early Childhood Education is seen as the kind of education which is geared towards total development of young children regardless of their location and socio economic background. However, the above can be achieved if professionals who handle these children use varied teaching strategies with emphasis on play to impart knowledge to the child.

The UNESCO (2007) indicates that the majority of children in early childhood education are between the ages of three and six years. In Ghana, pre-school education refers to the type of education given to children from ages zero (0) to five (5) years, after which they enrol in the formal primary school (Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002).

2.3.1 Classification of Early Childhood Education

Charlesworth (2012) categorized the early childhood period from birth through age eight as Infancy: Birth to one year, Toddlerhood: One to three years, Preschool age: Three to five years, Kindergartners: Five to six years and Primary: Six to eight years.

The main purpose of traditional pre-schools and nursery schools is to provide early education experiences to 3- and 4-year-olds. These programs are often part-day and part-week, although with increasing numbers of parents working. They are serving children for longer hours and providing wraparound (full-day) care (Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm & Waldfogel, 2004).

Early childhood education has been categorized at various levels usually using parameters such as the age and developmental growth of the child. In Ghana, Pre-school education falls under various levels namely, crèche which is for children aged 0 to 2 years, Day Care (2 to 3 years), Nursery for 3 to 4 years and Kindergarten for children aged between 4 and 5 years (Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002). The report future stated that, Early Childhood Development Programmes comprise Day Care programmes based at centres or schools, in-home programmes (where caregivers go to the homes of children), nanny homes (where parents take children to homes of nannies), and afterschool- homecare (where children who close earlier from their centres are sent until their parents pick them up after work).

There are Nurseries for children aged 3-4, day care centres for the age group 2-3 years, and crèches that cater to children under 2 years of age. Agorsah (2005) explained that, programmes are run by the Department of Social Welfare, the Ghana Education Service, and private proprietors and NGOs. The introduction of Day Care Centres by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) was to enable working mothers, especially after maternity leave, to have a reliable place for their children. On the other hand, pre-schools established under the Ghana Education Service were to prepare children for primary school. Although there has been a rapid expansion in ECD and pre-school services, the quality of many ECD centres (both public and private) leaves much to be desired and only a relatively low proportion of children benefit from their services. While some centre s, especially in the rural areas are held under trees and in old dilapidated rooms, others are poorly ventilated with bad lighting and little or no room for play (Agorsah, 2005)

According to Melhuish (2005), day care refers to childcare by someone other than the parent and most research is concerned with the years 0–5. To Bowman (1993), Day-care programs and half-day pre-schools have different philosophical and programmatic roots, and different factors have been stressed in research on these programs. Daycare research, emanating from social welfare (principally medicine and social work) tends to be concerned with factors affecting the welfare of poor and vulnerable children and families. Nursery school or pre-school education, rooted in developmental psychology, is more often focused on social or emotional and cognitive development.

Aside formalized early childhood facilities, there are other informal childcare programs that children may receive prior to school entry. These include care provided by family childcare providers, babysitters, or relatives. Informal childcare is widely used for children under age three but it is still common for 3 and 4-year-olds as well (Magnuson et al, 2004). In most countries, schools may be classified under sources of funding and ownership, thus public owned and funded schools, private; but public funded schools (often religious schools) and private owned and funded schools (Dronkers & Robert, 2003) are all available.

Early childhood education takes many forms globally depending on the beliefs of the educator or parent. The challenges of early childhood education arose when developmental psychologists and individual experts in the field of early childhood interestingly felt the need to emphasize the uniqueness of zero to eight year old children and the urgent need to provide them with learning experiences that were appropriate to their level of development (Developmentally Appropriate Practices) (Bredekamp,1987 cited in NAEYC 2009).

This growing interest in providing educational experiences for early childhood children promoted the establishment of the first nursery school in New Harmony, Indiana in the United States in 1820. Since then, the growth of early childhood education program has been given greater attention. According to some writers in the field of early childhood education, scientific evidence accumulated during the first decade has also demonstrated the importance of the early years of the child life and the developmental costs of inadequate care. It found out that the quality care and interaction provided to the child during the early years enhances his or her psychological, cognitive and social development (Mallory & New, 1994)

Jean Jacques Rousseau was a great educator who believed in natural way of educating children. He therefore called for the child's nature to be identified in order to educate him or her accordingly. Dr. Maria Montessori was also a great educator who influenced early childhood education. She devised special teaching techniques which early childhood teachers or caregivers should use in dealing with children between three and six years. Her method was to develop a child's own natural desire to learn and perform the task involved. As such, rewards and punishments should be eliminated and tasks must rather be provided to the child as the teacher serves as a guide. Again, she emphasized the development of the child's sensory and muscular responses in order for the child to develop understanding of the learning concepts through the senses and also to develop their muscles in activity learning (Bredekamp, 1987 cited in NAEYC, 2009).

It should, however, be borne in mind that all these cannot be achieved in a vacuum but should come through the efforts of competent and well trained caregivers and teachers. Teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin. It should be noted

that learning takes place in the appropriate learning atmosphere where social, intellectual, physical and emotional logistics of the school are put right. This calls for the application of pedagogical skills of the teachers and caregivers. On a more serious note, the kind of training required by these educators goes beyond, to some extent, those of the traditional program. At the early childhood stage, children need special and holistic care in order to develop to an expected end (The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) of Australian Department of Education, 2018).

2.3.2 Teaching

Teaching is the process of attending to people's needs, experiences and feelings, and making specific interventions to help them learn particular things. In education, teaching is the concerted sharing of knowledge and experience, which is usually organized within a discipline and, more generally, the provision of stimulus to the psychological and intellectual growth of a person by another person or artefact. Teaching is an activity aimed at bringing about meaningful learning through a method that is morally and pedagogically acceptable. It involves a teacher, a learner; content in form of knowledge, facts, information and skills to be imparted, a deliberate intention on the part of the learners to learn, and finally a method that respects the learners' cognitive integrity and freedom of choice (Layne, 2012.)

There are two fundamentally different ways of understanding teaching. The first sees teaching as an instructor-centred activity in which knowledge is transmitted from someone who has acquired that knowledge to novice learners: teaching as knowledge transmission. The second sees teaching as a learner-centred activity in which the instructor ensures that learning is made possible for novice learners and supports,

guides, and encourages them in their active and independent creation of new knowledge: teaching as assisted knowledge creation (Layne, 2012)

Teaching and learning are the two sides of a coin. The most accepted criterion for measuring good teaching is the amount of student learning that occurs. There are consistently high correlations between students' ratings of the ―amount learned" in the course and their overall ratings of the teacher and the course. Those who learned more gave their teachers higher ratings (Cohen, 1981; Theall & Franklin, 2001). This same criterion was also put forth by Thomas Angelo, when he said; ―teaching in the absence of learning is just talking" (Doyle, 1993). A teacher's effectiveness is again about student learning. The literature on teaching is crammed full of well researched ways that teachers can present content and skills that will enhance the opportunities for students to learn. It is equally filled with suggestions of what not to do in the classroom. However, there is no rule book on which teaching methods match up best to which skills and/or content that is being taught. Students often have little expertise in knowing if the method selected by an individual instructor was the best teaching method or just ―a method" or simply the method with which the teacher was most comfortable (Doyle 1993).

―Research indicates that students are the most qualified sources to report on the extent to which the learning experience was productive, informative, satisfying, or worthwhile. While opinions on these matters are not direct measures of instructor or course effectiveness, they are legitimate indicators of student satisfaction, and there is substantial research linking student satisfaction to effective teaching (Theall & Franklin, 2001)." There is much debate within the higher education community on how teaching or teaching effectiveness may be defined (Braskamp & Ory, 1994). For

instance, Centra (1993), defines effective teaching as ―that which produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures" (p. 42), Braskamp and Ory, (1994, p. 40) include both teaching and learning in their definition, defining effective teaching as the ―creation of situations in which appropriate learning occurs; shaping those situations is what successful teachers have learned to do effectively". Choosing to teach young children, like every career decision, involves weighing many factors. Prospective teachers need to be familiar with what the work entails and the possible career options. Most importantly, they need to determine whether the demands and rewards of their chosen profession are a good match with their own strengths, dispositions, and personal goals (Colker, 2008).

Working with children demands patience and the willingness to care for and about other people's children, even or especially the least lovable of those children. Teaching young children is truly rewarding work, even when it is most challenging (Colker, 2008). Each day brings new discoveries, accomplishments, and joys for children and teachers. Excellent early childhood teachers take advantage of young children's deep desire to actively engage with and make sense of the world around them. Recall the sense of satisfaction that was felt when one mastered a difficult task such as learning to read or ride a bike. Children, too, gain great pleasure from the sense of mastery that comes from learning something new or overcoming an obstacle. Another word that comes to mind when thinking of children is *fun*. Yes, early childhood programs prepare children for success in school, but they also provide them with joyful learning experiences every day of their young lives. Children should have fun in child care centres and homes, preschools, and schools. They love to joke, tease, and be silly; to sing, move, and dance; to play by themselves and with friends; to know that adults care for them; to wonder about and explore the natural world; and to

generally enjoy living. When teachers create a safe and supportive place for children to experience the unique joys of childhood, children will thrive and teachers will also do (Colker, 2008). One overarching theme of effective early childhood practice requires teachers to be intentional in everything they do. Intentional teachers have a purpose for the decisions they make and can explain that purpose to others (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Epstein, 2007). However, it is believed that intentional teaching involves much more. Intentional teaching is a multifaceted, multidimensional concept that conveys many of the personal and professional qualities of an early childhood educator.

2.4 Teaching Technique

The term _teaching technique' commonly refers to the general principles, pedagogy and management strategies used for classroom instruction. The teacher's choice of teaching method depends on what fits his/her educational philosophy, classroom demographic, subject area(s) and school mission statement. According to Wikipedia (2007) a teaching technique comprises the principles and methods used by teachers to enable student learning. These strategies are determined partly on subject matter to be taught and partly by the nature of the learner. For a particular teaching method to be appropriate and efficient it has to be in relation with the characteristic of the learner and the type of learning it is supposed to bring about.

According to Westwood (2008), the approaches for teaching can be broadly classified into teacher-centred and student/child-centred. In Teacher-centred Approach to Learning, Teachers are the main authority figure in this model. Students are viewed as ―empty vessels‖ whose primary role is to passively receive information (via lectures and direct instruction) with an end goal of testing and assessment. It is the primary

role of teachers to pass knowledge and information onto their students. In this model, teaching and assessment are viewed as two separate entities. Student learning is measured through objectively scored tests and assessments (Featherstone, 2011). In Student/ Child-Centred Approach to Learning, while teachers are an authority figure in this model, teachers and students play an equally active role in the learning process. The teacher's primary role is to coach and facilitate student learning and overall comprehension of materials. Student learning is measured through both formal and informal forms of assessment, including group projects, student portfolios, and class participation. Teaching and assessments are connected; student learning is continuously measured during teacher instruction. Commonly used teaching methods may include class participation, play, demonstration, recitation, memorization, or combinations of these.

2.5 Play as a Teaching Technique in Early Childhood

Dewey (1965) defines play as a subconscious ability that helps an individual to develop mentally, socially, morally and emotionally. Undoubtedly, this implies that, children themselves do not know whether they are developing but others near them can tell, therefore in the school system the caregivers, teachers and parents can tell whether they are developing or not and this development could be enhanced through play in early childhood.

According to Glover (1999), ―play is a subset of life and an arrangement in which one practices behaviour without dreading its consequences". This means that element which is part of life is crucial and determines the extent to which someone develops and grows. In play, the child is given opportunity to practice several activities and if

he fails he continues to try over and over again. The child is not being judged till the child has a mastery over a particular task.

Also, Berlyne (1960) define play as a functional disposition with which activities are engaged. The behaviour is intrinsically motivated and it is done for one's own sake. This requires intentional teachers in early childhood education to plan and incorporate play in their teaching. According to (Day, 1999: Levin, 1996), play constitutes a way for the child to make sense of his or her world. Play in early childhood also gives children opportunities to be in control of what is happening and what they know. Glover (1999) opines that, playing together with friends allow children to exercise self-controls and develop what they already know, take turns, cooperate and socialize with others. In children's play there are unsuspected opportunities to symbolize and use objects in a way that is meaningful and trilling to them.

Furthermore, Dulberg (2005) stresses that, play in early childhood enables children to communicate and interpret continuously in the negotiation with peers and role play. At the same time as they act the play, they produce the context of it by talking about what to do and in what way it should be done. That is the medium of communication approach children take in their play. Brunner (1972) proposes that play contributes to children's ability to solve problems by increasing their behavioural options and suggests that block play encourages inventive thinking and logical reasoning while constructing three dimensional patterns.

Moreover research by Pickett (1998) shows that adding writing materials to block centres results in a large increase in emergent writing including making signs to identify function and ownership, regulate behaviour and communicate messages. Literacy-enriched play centre s contain theme related reading and writing materials.

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For example, a block centre might contain pencils, pens, materials for making signs, storage (for large blocks and Legos) and so on.

Research indicates that when children play in print-enriched settings, they often learn to read play-related print (Newman & Roskos, 1993; Vukelish, 1994). Also research by Cohen (2006) shows that children learn new vocabulary words as they socially interact with partners in groups during constructive play. Our thinking about play has been influenced over the years by the work of many educationalists, psychologists, researchers and practitioners, and much has been written about how young children learn and how adults can support this learning (Roskos & Neuman, 1998).

In the opening chapter of her book ―Early Childhood Education", Tina Bruce traces this history of research from Rousseau and Kant in the 18th century, the 19th century practitioners like Froebel, Montessori and Steiner, and on through to 20th century thinkers like Piaget, Vygotsky and Brunner (Kartz 1999). At this point in time our knowledge base is being challenged further by the work of Howard Gardner, Ferre Laevers, Loris Malaguzzi, Chris Athey and others. What has emerged from all of this thinking is a set of common principles to which all early years practitioners can sign up.

It is globally recognized that experience in early childhood strongly affects human development. Research evidence from longitudinal and neuroscience studies has shown that children's earliest learning experiences are most significant in determining their future progress in education and subsequent success in life (Kwan, 1998). The quality of ECE has a significant and long-term influence on their educational performance and life chances (Sylva, 2004). Analytically, for young children's optimal development, there is need for consistent and responsive caregivers within

stimulating environments where play materials and other opportunities for interaction are abundant.

Froebel argues that play is children's natural occupation before cultural restraints and formal schooling takes over. Play is the first means of development of the human mind. It is the first effort to make acquaintance with the outward world, to correct original experiences, to reinforce facts and to exercise the powers of body and mind (Froebel, 1987).

Brunner (1975) argues that play serves as a vehicle for social, emotional and cognitive development. This implies that the negative emotional and serious consequences of errors and setbacks are reduced in play. In play, children talk freely, explores freely and when one is mistaken, he or she is freely corrected causing no ill feelings on both mistaken and on the part of the corrector. By discussing and questioning in such a friendly atmosphere, they develop a critical outlook on issues, which is in itself, prerequisite for academic autonomy. Erikson (1963) agrees with the idea that children use play to make up from defeat, suffering and frustration. Play has a therapeutic value in that, it takes away the attention from the objective worries about self and focuses on an interesting objective pursuit (Brunner, 1975).

In addition, Brunner (1975) contends that when children play in a rich environment, they can exercise judgment, mastery and competence, and if they are unable to experience power and satisfaction that comes through play, their holistic development is likely to be jeopardized. Thus, ECE programme is supposed to translate the theories and principles related to early childhood development into practice. This involves focusing on the use of child-centred teaching and learning methods specifically emphasizing on the use of play as a teaching method. Arguably, play is an important

experience for children. Young children recognize social play as essential for connecting to their peers. Social play opportunities promote social competence in a variety of ways including strengthening skills such as sharing, perspective taking, and negotiating. Social play opportunities also enhance conflict resolution skills and enrich self-concept (Frost, Wortham & Reifel, 2001).

In addition, emotional development is supported as children develop self-esteem through play by becoming more skilled with regulation of distress and learning to identify emotional states of others (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Lindsey & Colwell, 2003; Normandeau & Guay, 1998). Through conflicts and resolutions embedded in social play, children learn to handle internal and external conflicts in an appropriate manner. Furthermore, play has the potential to strengthen empathy and feeling towards others through perspective taking. As children gain experience imagining what others are thinking and feeling, they become more skilled in expressing empathy and compassion towards others (Frost, Wortham & Reifel, 2001).

Developmental theorists Piaget and Vygotsky provide frameworks for considering the cognitive implications of play for development. While Piaget describes play as practice for strengthening of skills and existing schema (i.e. assimilation), Vygotsky ascribes a more central role of play as a mechanism for building cognitive structures, such as symbolic representation of thought. Building upon these theories, there are many ways in which engaging in play facilitates the development of cognitive skills. For instance, through fantasy play children begin using symbols. Symbolic representation is the fundamental cognitive skill underlying literacy, writing, mathematics, and other complex skills essential for functioning in modern cultures. Through social play, particularly fantasy play, children develop theory of mind, the

understanding that others experience unique thoughts (Astington & Jenkins, 1995; Watson, Linkie-Nixon, Wilson & Capage, 1999).

Contemporary researchers have extended these theoretical considerations to address the role of play in literacy development (Owocki, 1999; Roskos & Neuman, 1998), attachment to caregivers Kerns & Barth , 1995; Schiffman, 2003), social competence in a variety of settings (Connolly & Doyle, 1984), and assessment of functioning (Casby, 2003). Furthermore, when children demonstrate pro-social inclusive behaviours, classrooms become environmentally conducive to overall learning (Wentzel, 1991).

Although teachers seem to acknowledge the role of play in developing skills, they seem unsure of how to utilize play in an instructional manner (Saracho & Spodek, 1998). Despite a plethora of research suggesting positive outcomes associated with opportunities to engage in social play and negative out-comes associated with peer rejection, there is often a hands-off policy during recess and free-play time in school. Teachers tend to underestimate the prevalence of bullying and do not appear to recognize their potential role as preventing violence and promoting pro-social skill development (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). When teachers do attempt to implement strategies supporting friendships among children in their classrooms, often indirect strategies such as providing free time for play, allowing children to choose with whom they would like to play, and making informal comment on the play between friends are used (Buysee, Goldman & Skinner, 2003). Overall, there appears lacking a curriculum or integrated strategy to weave teaching of pro-social interactions into the entire school day.

Bodrova and Leong (2007) highlight the important role that play has in preparing children for the rigours of formal schooling and suggest that the current dilemma facing early childhood teachers is whether to focus on teaching academic skills or to promote and encourage developmentally appropriate activities for children. They identify that one of the important elements of play is the restraint placed upon the activity by the children themselves in the form of rules that the child must follow in order to play _properly'. This notion of self-regulation was considered by Vygotsky (1978) as a way in which young children learned to follow rules and control their emotions rather than acting on impulse and suggests that if children are able to do this they are likely to be able to master the academic skills required in formal schooling. It is reasonable to assert that, while play is considered to be an important element in an early year's environment many kindergarten teachers are unsure of how to plan for such a curriculum (Moyles et al., 2002).

Wood and Attfield (2005) suggest that an approach based on both curriculum-generated play to support the development of specific skills and knowledge and a play-generated curriculum based on teachers responding to the interests of the children is the best approach to curricular planning. This type of responsive planning is common in the kindergarten environment in Ghana but has been less so in the formal school sector and is not supported by many of the planning frameworks commonly used in primary schools.

Walsh et al. (2006) undertook a study which explored an appropriate curriculum for 4-5 year old children in Northern Ireland, where children commence formal schooling in the school year of their fifth birthday. They compared a play-based curriculum with a more formal, traditional curricular approach. Their findings indicated that the play

based curriculum (Enriched Curriculum) offered 4–5 year old children a higher-quality learning experience than that of the more traditional formal curriculum.

Broadhead (2004) describes children's play as becoming more complex as they become more skilled and develop their play into a more organised and structured process. Sutton-Smith (1997) highlights that as children play they develop play skills which enable them to interact with other children thus improving their social and cognitive skills. Children become more adept at creating rules and subsequently develop more awareness of outcomes as well as processes. Sawyer (1997) suggests that pretend play with peers contributes to children's development and allows them to understand the thoughts and feelings of others; he describes this ability as metacognition or theories of mind (Sawyer, 1997, p. 23).

2.5.1 Play and cognitive development

The relationship between play and cognitive development is described differently in the two theories of cognitive development which dominate early childhood education Piaget and Vygotsky's. Piaget (1962) defined play as assimilation, or the child's efforts to make environmental stimuli match his or her own concepts. Piagetian theory holds that play, in and of itself, does not necessarily result in the formation of new cognitive structures. Piaget claimed that play was just for pleasure, and while it allowed children to practice things they had previously learned, it did not necessarily result in the learning of new things. In other words, play reflects what the child has already learned but does not necessarily teach the child anything new. In this view, play is seen as a "process reflective of emerging symbolic development, but contributing little to it" (Christie, 1986, p. 51).

2.5.2 Play-indoors and out

Early childhood teachers have long recognized the value of play in programs for young children. Unfortunately, teachers often fail to take advantage of the opportunities play provides for observing children's development and learning. Through such observations teachers can learn about children's social interactions, cognitive and language abilities, motor skills, and emotional development. Frost (1992) recommends that observing children at play be a daily responsibility for early childhood professionals. Regular observations provide teachers with assessment information for identifying children with special needs, planning future play experiences, evaluating play materials, determining areas of strength and weakness for individual children, planning curriculum for individual children, reporting to parents, and checking on a child's on-going progress. The increased use of authentic assessment strategies is making observations of children's play more commonplace in early childhood classrooms (Frost, 1992).

Hymes (1981) recommends that children have two classrooms—one indoors and one outdoors. The outdoor play environment should be used as an extension of the indoor classroom. It should be a learning environment as carefully planned as the indoor activity centre s and should encourage motor and social skills as well as help children refine existing cognitive structures and construct new ones. Used in this way, the outdoor play environment provides a basis for observational assessments in all areas of development. Fox (1993) researched the practicality of observing young children's cognitive development during outdoor play. Her observations of four and five-year-old children during outdoor play found examples of addition and subtraction, shape identification, patterning, one-to-one correspondence, number sense, sequencing of events, use of ordinal numbers, knowledge of prepositions, and identification of final

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and initial consonants. Fox's outdoor observations also found multiple examples of problem-solving, creative thinking, social competence, language use, and gross and fine motor skills.

Although outdoor observations do not replace classroom assessment, they can provide valuable information for teachers of young children. As Fox stated, "These observations can be performed unobtrusively, without intruding upon the children's activities and without placing children in a stressful testing situation" (p. 131). Deductively, although play is a difficult concept to define, it is very easy to recognize. Children actively involved in play may be engaged in a variety of activities, independently, with a partner, or in a group. Because play is closely tied to the cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor development of young children, it is an important part of developmentally appropriate early childhood programs. Play can be fun, challenging and enjoyable for both adults and children. By helping children to take part in different types of play on their own and with others, and by providing a well-resourced play environment inside and outside, adults can greatly enrich the learning opportunities that play provides (Parley, 1992).

2.5. 3 Play as a teaching technique

Play is a medium for learning and an important stimulant which accelerates children's intellectual growth. This implies that play can have a significant role in teaching in Kindergarten setting. Vygotsky (1978) supports this thinking when he asserts: ―In play, a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour, in play it is as though he were a bit taller than himself" (p. 102). This statement means that play can awaken children to think at a higher level. In addition, it is an important and effective medium of teaching in Kindergarten setting.

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Roberts (1977) argued that educators can most effectively harness the power of children's learning by presenting new ideas and reinforcing concepts by use of play, a potential which is intrinsic in children. Bredekamp (1987) while writing on relevance of play in teaching and enabling children's learning, commented that teachers' support in children play activities is an extremely important developmental practice as it enhances smooth teaching and facilitates children's learning at their own pace. Ng'asike (2004), purports that teachers in pre-primary schools should focus on investing in play as an appropriate and natural opportunity to reinforce and introduce new concepts to children. That is the more reason why the researcher sought to establish whether kindergarten teachers in Afadjato South District in the Volta region invested in use of play in facilitating teaching and children's learning processes. Children love to play, and play often mirrors what is important in their lives. When asked about play children talk about having fun, being with friends, choosing activities themselves, and being outdoors.

Play can be quiet or noisy, messy or orderly, funny or serious, strenuous or effortless. It can take place inside or outside and develops as children grow and change. Children play for different reasons. Sometimes they are exploring or learning new things. At other times they are consolidating existing learning or practicing a skill. Play can also be a way of building or strengthening a relationship (Parley, 1992). Children often play simply for fun and enjoyment. They bring their own interpretations of situations, events, experiences, and expectations to their play. Children need time to develop their play. They like having spaces inside and outside, and often enjoy playing with other children and adults. They also need props such as toys, equipment and real objects to play with and manipulate. They love to make choices about when, what, where, how, and with whom to play (Pence, 1999).

2.6 Theories of Play

There are two main classes of theories of play that are termed to explain the reason why young children all the time engage in play. These are classical theories of play comprising a group of psychologist who work on why children play in the 18th and 19th century. Some examples include surplus energy theory, relaxation theory, and cathartic theory and so on. The second is the modern theories of play which includes rehearsal, intellectual development theory, social development theory, therapeutic theory of play and many more.

Three distinct differences between classical theories of play and modern theories are: Firstly Classical theories of play predates modern theories of play, Secondly, the focus of modern theory of play is on the psychological development of the child while classical theories of play focus on holistic development of the child. Thirdly, modern theories of play differ from classical theories of play in terms of substance thus practical value (Corbetta, 2003).
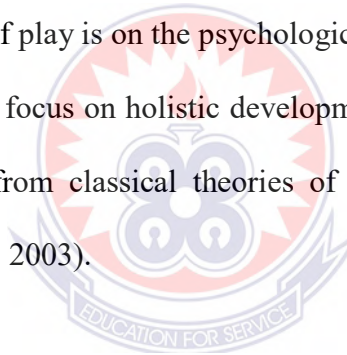
2.6.1 Surplus energy theory

The theory was propounded by Schiller in 1873 and Spencer in 1875. This theory contends that, play is motivated by the need for young children to release surplus energy. In other words, play is the result of surplus energy that exists because the young are freed from the business of self-preservation through the activities of their parents. Energy however finds its release in the aimless exuberant activities of play, to further buttress the views of Schiller and Spencer, it is obvious that, as one observe children at play from start to finish one reality that comes to fore is that, at the start of the play, children are full of energy but getting to the tail end of the play, they will become exhausted and this gives a signal that, the play is on the verge of coming to an

end. However, one weakness of this theory according to Ginsburg (2001), is that, it does not explain why young children who are weakened by sickness still engage in play.

Implications to KG Teachers

Teachers, need to observe children in class especially when they begin to show signs and signal that, they need to go out and play. By so doing, children will be able to release a lot of the energy in them as they go out for break and play. Again, teachers, need to plan activities within the daily routines that involve the use of the motor skills such as jumping, hopping, skipping, climbing, lacing, buttoning and waving hands in the course of the daily schedule. Also, teachers need to allow children to move around in small or large groups, interact with one another, take turns and so on to keep them active all the time. Furthermore, early childhood education teachers need to plan activities that will involve the use of the entire body to enhance the holistic development of the young child and release of surplus energy (Corbetta, 2003).

2.6.2 Relaxation theory of play

This theory is also called recreational theory of play. The proponents include Lazarus (1883) and Patrick (1916). This theory stipulates that, young children play because of the need for them to relax from the stressful daily activities young children are made to go through by their parent and other older people. Also, play is seen as a mode of dissipating the inhibitions built up from fatigue due to task that are relatively new to the organism. Lazarus (1883), posited that, play restores energy lost from work related activities. However, there are some criticisms against their theory and are as followers: Some young children do not lead stressful life but yet still they play Secondly, recreation can become stressful and competitive at times (Corbetta, 2003).

Implication to KG Teachers

As teachers, there is the need to create awareness for children to play and get involved in all activities in the course of the day. When children exhibit behaviour in class as though they are tired or stress up with an activity, it is the duty of teachers to allow them time to play and release boredom. Also, teacher needs to be mindful of the benefits of play therefore as children pass through stressful daily activities, teachers need to allow children to go out and play. As they move around, run, clap etc. it enhances their cognitive, emotional, physical and creative skills which geared towards their holistic development (Roskos & Neuman,1998).

2.6.3 Pre-exercise theory

This theory was propounded by Karl Groos in 1898. His work on play contends that, play is the necessary practice for behaviours that are essential to later survival. Groos, (1898) is of the view that, playful fighting of animals or the rough and tumble play of children are essentially the practice of skill that will later aid their survival. Karl Groos was a philosopher and a psychologist who proposed on evolutionary instrumentalist theory of play. His 1898 book on the play of animals suggested that play is a preparation for later life. His main ideas were that, play is basically useful and so it can be expanded by normal process of evolution by natural selection. When ‚animals play' they are practicing basic instinct such as fighting for survival. This is translated from the original as ―pre-turning‖. Despite this insight, Grooses work is seldom read today and his connection of play with aesthetics is though misguided.

Implications to the KG Teachers

Since play is essential for later survival, the teacher of young children owes it a duty to guide children through play activities that will aim at harnessing their hidden potentials. Plays such as Ampe, Pilolo, Odenke, Asikpe, Aditere, Adito etc. should be planned as part of the lesson and encouraged in early childhood settings to enable the young children have full participation and knowledge for growth and survival in future. It has been observed that most children find it difficult to perform certain task or activities when they getting older. Some finds it difficult to hold pencil to scribble or write clearly, others have problems with coordination in terms of eye and hand. One important implication from the work of Groos (1898) is that, teachers should allow children to play and learn basic skills of holding with their fingers to develop their fine motor skills. Similarly, KG teachers need to plan play activities that will enable young children to play with colours, crayons, musical instrument and some miniature sculpture work could be assigned to children and young people to enable them gain some skills needed in future as they grow to become adults and independent beings (Paley, 1992).

2.6.4 Recapitulation theory of play

Recapitulation theory of play was propounded by G. Stanley Hall in 1906 and Wundt 1913. These theorists are of the view that, play serves to rid the organism of primitives and unnecessary institutional skills carries over by hereditary. In other words, play is seen not as activity that develops future institutional skills. Each child passes through series of play stages corresponding to and recapitulating the cultural stages in the development of the race past experiences or inherited traits from parent and other close relations both in school and at home for future use. According to

Albert Bandura Children learn by observing and so as young children observe teachers and parent play, they imitate and it help them in future.

Implications to the KG Teacher

One major implication of the above theory is that, teachers are to serve as role models for children and young people to emulate. This will enable young children not to inherit negative or bad behaviour or traits from their teachers but rather learn good behaviour from them. Secondly, play activities should be one that will be of great benefit to young children, teachers must plan play activities such as Oware, Ludu, hide-and-seek, etc. for children to learn consciously and unconsciously. Teachers must be very observant in their early childhood settings, and must guide play activities so that young children do not hurt themselves but rather gain knowledge that will be of use to them in future (Roskos & Neuman, 1998).

2.6.6 Growth theories of play

Growth theory of play was propounded by Appleton in 1919. According to (Appleton 1919), play prepares young children for adult life. This is so because; play engenders the spirit of team work following the rule and tolerance in or among young children. This helps them to grow up to become responsible adults in future. He stressed that; play is a response to a generalized drive for growth in an organism. Play serves to facilitate the mastery of skills necessary to the functions of adult behaviour (Corbatta 2003). The question however is ―are children able to master all the challenges that are associated with adult life in the course of engaging in play activities"?

Implications to the KG teacher

Teachers should give opportunity to children to perform more activities, try out many times as much as possible for them to master some particular skills. For instance children should be allowed to practice playing football over and over again to enable them become competent in playing later in their lives Again, teachers should organize play activities that will enhance team work and co-operation, learning to take turns, learning to follow rules and regulations et cetera. Further, teachers of young children need to allow children to role play some learning activities such as bathing of the doll, sweeping the compound, washing of dishes, brushing of teeth, buying and selling, bargaining etc. to prepare children for future since these activities form part and parcel of human life (Parley, 1992).

Three main significance of classical theory of play emerge from the discussion. In the first place, it can be said that there is no one single theory that can explain recreation behaviour of young children. Also, teachers at the pre-school level would understand children better if they understand their motivation of play. Further, play can be the greater motivator in harnessing the potentials of young children, arguably, early childhood education teachers need to take note of the various theories and use play effectively and efficiently as a teaching method to help in the total and/or holistic development of young children (Corbetta, 2003).

2.7 Types of Play

Types of play connote a theory and classification of children's participation in play developed by Mildred Parten Newhall in her 1929 dissertation. Parten observed American preschool age 2 to 5 children at free play. Play for young children assume many different forms. Parten (1932) was one of the early researchers studying children at play. She focused on the social interactions between children during play activities. Parten's categories of play are not hierarchical. Depending on the circumstances, children may engage in any of the different types of play. Parten does note, however, that in her research with two- to five-year-olds, "participation in the most social types of groups occurs most frequently among the older children" (p. 259). The six types of play identified by Parten are discussed below:

2.7.1 Unoccupied play

When the child is not playing, then he is just observing. A child may be standing in one spot or performing random movement (Parten, 1932). To some extent, unoccupied play refers to activity when a child is not playing at all. The child may be engaged in seemingly random movements, with no objective. It is reasonable to assert that, teachers view this kind of as having nothing significant to offer the young child's development. Despite appearances, this is definitely play and setting the stage for future play exploration.

2.7.2 Onlooker play

Playing passively by watching.When the child watches others at play but does not engage in it. According to Parten, (1932), the child may engage in forms of social interaction, such as conversation about the play without actually joining in the activity. This suggests that, the child takes a passive role in the experience. The child

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stands back and observes other children play. Children of all ages can and do engage in onlooker play. It is worth noting that, teachers might take this kind of play as not necessary since it may not help the child in any way. It can well be argued that, onlooker play helps children who are working on their vocabulary development (Roskos & Neuman 1998).It well be argued that, the child feels shy, needs to learn the rules or maybe is the youngest and just want to take a step back for a while.

2.7.3 Solitary play

This according to Parten (1932), is playing by oneself; when the child is alone and maintains focus on its activity. In this type of play, there is no interaction with peers or adults. However the child may talk to himself or the play materials. Many teachers view this type of play as a total time wasting. Some wonders how they can plan play for an individual child when they have over thirty children to care for. it must however be appreciated that, Solitary play is important because, it teaches a child how to keep himself entertained, eventually setting the path for being self-sufficient. Any child can play independently, but this type of play is most common around ages two or three.

At that age, they are still pretty self-centred, but lack of good communication skills. Early childhood education teachers must borne in mind that, if a child is on the shy side and doesn't know her playmates well, she may prefer this type of play this implies that, the teacher must make frantic effort to help children to overcome their challenges by regularly using play in their teaching (Parten, 1932).

2.7.4 Parallel play

Playing even in the middle of a group, while remaining engrossed in one's own activity. To Parten (1932) this is when the child plays separately from others but close to them and mimicking their actions. This type of play is seen as transitory stage from a socially immature solitary and onlooker type of play, to a more socially mature associative and cooperative type of play. This type of play to some extent is perceived by teachers as negatively impacting on the child's social and emotional development. Despite having little social contact with her playmates, children who parallel play actually learn quite a bit from one another like taking turns and other social niceties, because even though it appears they are not paying attention to each other, they truly are and often mimic the other ones behaviour. As such this type of play is viewed as an important bridge to the later stages of play (Parten, 1932).

2.7.5 Associative play

When the child is interested in the people playing but not in coordinating their activities with those people, or when there is no organized activity at all. There is a substantial amount of interaction involved, but the activities are not in sync. For example children playing with trucks may ask each other question, share ideas and carry on conversation about the play materials. Some benefits of this type of play is tolerance, humility, and spirit of forgiveness (Parten, 1932). Teachers who indicated general positive attitude towards this kind of play seems to allot more time for play in schools. Their role first and foremost is to be a partner, teachers learn with the children and share in their experiences. Early childhood education teachers support learning by providing activities and materials that children find engaging. Nurturing a child encompasses all aspects of development thus social, emotional, cognitive and physical development (Parten, 1932).

2.7.6 Cooperative play

This occurs when a child is interested both in people playing and in the activity they are doing. In cooperative play, the activity is organized, and participants have assigned roles. There is also increased self-identification with a group, and a group identity may emerge (Parten, 1932). This is relatively uncommon in the preschool and kindergarten years, because it requires more social maturity and more advance organization skills. Examples include; football, ampe, cards, oware and ludo. In as much as novice teachers see this type of play as a great deal of preparation, it can be argued that, when teachers plan well, cooperative play can be executed without any stress. Some benefits of this type of play are respect, accepting other people's views, leadership roles, and responsible behaviour (Santrock, 2007).

According to Parten (1932), as children became older, improving their communication skills, and as opportunities for peer interaction become more common, the nonsocial (solitary and parallel) types of play become less common and the social (associative and cooperative) types of play become more common. Modern scholars agree that Parten's theory has contributed substantially to our understanding of play, and while alternative classification schemes have been proposed, Parten's stages of play are still widely used.

However, there is disagreement on whether there is indeed a sequence of play stages that children go through. For example, whether toddlers are really unable to play cooperatively, and whether solitary play in older children is less common or a sign of maturity. Alternative explanations in the literature suggests that, types of play may be influenced by other circumstances such as how well the child knows or are familiar with one another, knowledge in the use of the play material, and age (Santrock, 2007).

2.7.7 Common play activities

Exploration play

According to Bornstein (2006), explorative play refers to investigative with objects characterized by curiosity about what is novel and not well-understood. For example, if a child sees another child created a noise with a toy they might handle the toy with a goal of producing that noise. This implies that, early childhood educators role is to plan various forms of explorative play to expose young children at an early stage to help them explore and discover things around them.

Rough and tumble play

This is a prominent type of play in animals. Bornstein (2006), describes play fighting interaction, such interactions can also be common in children. For example, two children or animals tumbling on top of each other with the aim of holding the controlling position of their body. By implication, it can be argued that, early childhood educators have an obligation to allow children time for outdoor play, running after one another, jumping and skipping here and there to create avenue for co-operation and physical development.

Constructive play

According to Rubin and Harmung (1976), constructive play involves building things with constructive materials such as Legosor clay. Sometimes it overlaps with art or objects play. It is common activities in pre-school classrooms, occupying 40% to 50% of children‘s time in some observational studies.

Physical or locomotor play

Another common category of play is the physical or locomotor play. According to (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998), this type of play activity is characterized by gross motor

movement and by ones metabolic rates exceeding the rate it has when one is at rest, such play include shops, bounces or rotational movements.

Symbolic play

According to Piaget (1962), symbolic play is characterized by using one object to stand for another. Symbolic play is the ability of children to use objects, actions or ideas to represent other objects actions or ideas as play. An example, is a three year old child using the stuffed cats to stand for a person in play. Also, a child may push a block around the floor as a car or put it to his ear a cell phone. Symbolic play is so important in a child's life.

As a child shifts from infancy to early childhood, their mental development begins to change through what we know as pretend play. Children at this point begin to treat things as if it were another. Children live by example so often times, they tend to model what they see in their environment whether that be through teachers, parents, siblings, peers and or the media. For example children will pretend to be talking on the phone and they will walk around while they are talking. It is important to understand how relevant symbolic play is in children and how they need time to have structured and unstructured play so their imaginations lead the play (Paley 1992).

2.8 Perception of Kindergarten Teachers on the use of Play as a Teaching Technique

Children who do not play as often or who do not play as other children are at increased risk of psychological, intellectual and social deficits. According to (Sutton - Smith,1997, p.17), a child who is not being stimulated, by being played with and who has few opportunities to explore his or her surroundings, may fail to link up fully to this we neutral connections and pathways which will be needed for later learning. Similarly, Azar (2002), opines that, the brains mature slowly if humans or animals are deprived of play. He continued that, play increases gene expression in the frontal lobe for a protein thought to be involved with brain maturation. McArdle (2001), finalized it by noting that, play may well be central to normal personality development. However, its place in contemporary Western society is not secured perhaps risking the development and well-being of urban and disadvantaged children in particular. This shows that lack of play threatens children's personality development.

The early childhood curriculum has seen a dramatic decrease in the amount of play that is incorporated into classroom instruction and in the amount of time used by teachers on play in schools today. Meisels and Shonkoff (2006), described some factors that caused play to decrease in the kindergarten classroom when they stated,

> ‒The spirit of Froebel's philosophy remained intact until the 1970s, when the educational value of early childhood programs began to be recognized. Several factors sparked this shift: Sputnik, rejection of the principles of progressive education, emerging research on cognitive growth in infants and young children, such intervention programs for poor young children as Head Start, and the growing importance of quality early education to the middle class (p.296)."

These factors focused on the academic dimensions of child development. Early childhood education teachers view the curriculum as a shift from a play-based curriculum to a curriculum focused on formal teaching and meeting standards. The standards movement of the 1990s reinforced the focus of academic success. Collectively agreeing with this, Miller & Almon (2009) summed up this alarming trend in kindergarten: Too few Africans are aware of the radical changes in kindergarten practice in the last ten to twenty years. Children now spend far more time being instructed and tested in literacy and numeracy than they do learning through play and exploration, exercising their bodies, and using their imaginations. Many kindergartens use highly prescriptive curricula linked to standardized tests. An increasing number of teachers must follow scripts from which they may not deviate. Many children struggle to live up to the academic standards that are developmentally appropriate. At the same time that we have increased academic pressure in children's lives through inappropriate standards, we have managed to undermine their primary tool for dealing with stress- freely chosen, child-directed, intrinsically motivating play. (p.15).Kindergarten classrooms are beginning to resemble first-grade classrooms with their emphasis on formal reading and mathematics instruction rather than a focus on the development of social skills and play (Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). The focus on academics has increased and led to the emergence of academic kindergartens, where, ―5-year-olds are more likely to encounter skill-and-drill exercises and nightly homework more than unstructured, imaginative playtime" (Currwood, 2007). Many ECE teachers are feeling the pressure to teach essential literacy and numeracy skills rather than using instructional time to play.

―Kindergarten isnow first grade, and first grade is now second grade. It used to be normal for first graders to still be learning to read. Now, the handful of kindergartners who aren't reading by the end of the year are considered behind or low achievers" (Curwood 2007 p.30). If we go back one decade, only 15 percent of kindergartners were reading, if we go back thirty years, there were only 5 percent of kindergartners reading, and now nearly 90 percent of kindergartners are reading at the end of kindergarten (Currwood, 2007). The latest research indicates that on a typical day in an all-day kindergarten children spend four to six times more time in literacy and numeracy instruction and preparing for tests than in free time or 'choice time' (Miller & Almon, 2009).

High-stakes testing and test preparation are the driving force behind moving play out of early childhood education. Today, in Ghana, to succeed one must be well-trained in academics and ready to join the work force. However, Pink (2006), states, ―People have to be able to do something that's hard to automate and that delivers on the growing demand for nonmaterial things like stories and design. Typically, these are things we associate with the right side of the brain, with artistic and empathetic and playful sorts of abilities. (p. 123)." Society wants children to perform well on academics and standardized tests. The belief that didactic, teacher-centred instruction and worksheets are effective strategies to promote successful performance on standardized tests has resulted in the exodus of play from not only the classroom but from the school entirely (Miller & Almon, 2009). In a larger context, this neglects the development of the right side of the brain, which is important for performing tasks that require creativity, empathy and behavioural flexibility (Sutton-Smith, 1997). Ghana is now a nation that is driven by assessments, not creativity and this has affected kindergarten teachers' view on using play as a teaching technique.

2.8.1 Factors influencing perceptions of kindergarten teachers in using play as a teaching technique

There are several factors affecting perceptions of kindergarten teachers in using play as a teaching technique. This research focuses on five of them which includes; availability of play materials, teacher's experience, and teacher's training status, type of school and play, and teachers' motivation.

On availability of play material, it is an undeniable fact that, educational facilities and instructional material are essential because they make teaching more effective and meaningful, increase learner's motivation and concentration span and simplify concept taught. Lack of instructional materials negatively affects the learning process. This is highly detrimental especially to children in early childhood settings who need a variety of materials to reinforce or capture new experiences.

Jones (1972) cited in Waithaka (2009), defines play resources in an early childhood school setting as anything natural or artificial, real or imaginative, visual or invisible, big or small, structured or unstructured, props or loose parts, which a child or a teacher or groups uses for teaching, fantasy, recreation, encourage creativity or can be used to enrich their play. Ndani (1994), studying factors that influence a teacher's attitudes towards teaching social science and ethics, argued that without the necessary tools even the best and most experienced teacher is handicapped. In general government and society have to support the programmes in offering appropriate materials for teaching and learning.

Children in the nursery schools have limited experience and less developed abilities to cope with abstract ideas. Saunders (1974), when stressing the importance of using variety of instructional materials observed that:

―People receive experience through all the five senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight). If you can appeal to more than one sense at a time your message is likely to be understood and accepted more permanently. Different materials appeal to different people. When you plan your work, don't concentrate on memory work alone, but on hearing, seeing, touching, doing and making" (p 271).

Applied to early childhood learning, this argument is relevant because much of the children's knowledge is attained by coming into contacts with objects and situations which always give them a new experience. Teachers have to allow children to participate freely in activities of their own choice and also have to organize instructional materials at free choice activity corners. Omwondho (1984), observes that educational materials provide for teachers and pupils with psychological and physical comfort. .

Similarly, Sifuna (1974) pointed out that instructional materials in a teaching environment were a major determinant of failure or success in the teaching or learning process. It is therefore important to enrich children's experience with numerous objects in order to give them opportunities to manipulate them.

In a study by Kimengi (1991), on determinants of primary school teachers commitment in teaching from three districts; Keiyo Marakwet, Nyeri and Kakamega in Kenya, teachers were asked to rank eight important factors that influence their non-commitment to teaching. It has become clearer that, slow process of ordering and supplying instructional material was ranked number one and number two by men and women, respectively. These findings demonstrated the importance of play materials in teaching and learning process especially in pre-primary school children (Parley, 1992). Instructional resources are key to teaching in pre-primary schools and teachers need to have sufficient indoor and outdoor play materials.

Ng'asike (2004) commented that pre-primary school teachers tend to actively engage play materials in their teaching when the teaching and learning environment is conducive. In addition, a study by Sifuna (1986) revealed that parents and community support for putting adequate facilities, providing extra books and teaching materials were important not only in raising the standard of teaching and learning but also boosted teachers' morale in teaching activities.

Another important factor is teacher's experience. Different scholars have different opinions on whether the numbers of teaching years have an influence on teacher's attitude and self-efficacy (Branyon, 2002; Ndegwa, 2005). A study by Aiken (1970), on whether experience influences teacher's attitude towards arithmetic revealed that experienced teachers had more positive attitude towards the subject than the less experienced teachers.

Good and Brophy's (1990) opinion on the effect of experience on behaviour asserted that people with confident of their abilities will seek challenge while those who lack confidence will avoid it. However, another study by Whitebook (2003), cited in Kinuthia (2009), gave contradicting conclusions. It suggested that the number of years of experience is not a good indicator of quantifying teacher's attitude or behaviour in using or disusing a particular teaching approach. A person's past success or failure determines his/her future response to the same task or activity (Sifuna, 1974). In this study, it was expected that teachers who had experienced positive results in the use of play as a teaching method would reinforce the play use behaviour during teaching and learning sessions.

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Adding to the above, teachers training status is yet another factor underpinning early childhood educator's perception on the use of play as a teaching method. A trained teacher will avoid a method like the ―jug‖ and ―mug‖ where the teacher is the ―jug‖ who fills the knowledge to a passive child who is the ―mug‖. The danger of such a method is the perpetuation of a situation where the school is full of teaching and no learning is taking place (Good & Brophy, 1990). Training as an educational process enhances learning and reinforcement of the existing knowledge and most significantly it enables time to think and consider what new options help to improve the effectiveness at work.

The ECE school teachers are entrusted with massive responsibility on helping children to grow physically, emotionally and socially (Sutton-Smith 1997). ECE school teachers should undergo training so that they can be occupied with the skills required to cope with the demands of the young children. Training will also ensure provision, expansion and improvement of quality and relevant education. Through the training, teachers will develop professional attitudes, skills and knowledge to adapt the learning environment. A study conducted by Lyabwene (2010) in Tanzania on the relationship between ECE school education policy and actual practice, revealed that a teacher's professional qualifications appear to influence the quality of classroom interaction more than physical setting and resources (Lyabwene, 2010). Much of teacher's self-esteem and behaviours come from competencies. Self-competency is not given by others, but it comes from knowing that one can do certain things. It is belief in oneself and his/her competence (Evans, 1965).

Judge (1998) in his core-self evaluations model argued that one's self-disposition towards job performance is determined by general self-efficacy, which is a belief in one's own competence in performing behaviour. It is reasonable to assert that, teachers who have undergone ECE training are more enlightened on such important educational issues like the curriculum of the ECE programme, philosophy of education, sociology of education and educational psychology (Lyabwene, 2010).

Despite the importance of teachers undergoing training, the minimum academic requirements to train as an ECE school teacher in Ghana is West Africa Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and that of professional qualification is Certificate or Diploma in Early Childhood Education. These minimum academic qualifications are likely to affect the ECE teachers, particularly their ability and confidence to articulate child centred issues which are relevant in teaching and learning in ECE schools.

A study by Makoti (2005) indicated that one of the constraints of Early Childhood Care and Education in Kenya is the method of recruitment to training. Further, the way the ECE school teachers are supported and evaluated by the public during and after training holds back the progress of the program. Swadener, Kabiru and Njenga (2002) further argued that teachers working in ECE should have sufficient academic background to give them the intellectual and personal moral strength to articulate issues related to their profession.

Last but not least is the type of school and play. Work place environment affects how individuals feel about their jobs and can influence their working habits. Work environment has much of profound impact on job performance as does the salary. Similarly, the type of school environment whether public or private school, influences

teacher's teaching habits and their general teaching performance. Global studies indicate that the type of school influences teacher's attitude towards teaching (Ezewu, 1983; Kinuthia, 2009).

According to Good and Brophy (1990), a school's physical and social environment as well as type of school's management constitute what they referred to as teaching and learning situation. The teaching and learning situation affects a person's attitude towards task performance and task design. The pressure from school management and socio-economic context of the school, influence teachers and compel them to behave in a particular manner. Ajzen (1974) claimed that human behaviour is rational and always under his/her conscious control depending on the way he perceives his environment.

Similarly, Hackett (1996) analysing Herzberg's (1959) Motivation Hygiene Theory, concurs with the theorist's major argument that, individual's behaviour and his ultimately job performance is influenced by the context of environment and person's relationship to the context. Okumbe (1998) stated that educational managers should provide environments which will enhance ECE teachers to use their skills autonomously for the betterment of their institutions.

To conclude, teachers' motivation is the last factor under discussion. Motivation as a process initiates, guides and maintains goal oriented behaviour. Basically, motivation is what causes us to act. It involves social and cognitive forces that activate a particular behaviour of the individual in his/her everyday life. Studies have indicated that motivational factors such as supervisory practices and other working conditions do influence an individual's morale and performance towards a particular task (Strage, 1993; Franser, 1989).

Hackett (1996) and Cole (1997) while writing on motivation theories, concur with the basic argument in the Herzberg's (1959), Motivation Hygiene Theory that, a person's attitude and job performance are determined by two major factors which he referred to as motivator's and satisfier's. Motivators include such aspects as personal achievement, recognition and responsibilities, while satisfiers entailed aspects such as supervisory practices and other working conditions. The mentioned aspects tend to influence the manner and quality of the job.

Mamoria and Gankar (2001), writing on Mayo's (1982), Human Relation Theory, agreed with his basic premise that it is important for managements to understand the needs of workers and social aspect of work performance and that failure or success of the organization is directly related to the extent to which an individual is motivated.

2.8.3 Strategies needed to positively affect kindergarten teachers' perceptions of play as a teaching technique

Kindergarten teachers need to have positive perception on using play as a teaching method. As educators, we know we need more play in our classrooms, but we are pushed to meet academic standards. We are told to prepare students for testing. We are discouraged from allowing students to just play. Fortunately, it is possible to incorporate more play, meet academic standards, and maybe even convince others of the value of play while we are at it (Good & Brophy, 1990). Here are some ways early childhood educators can incorporate more playful learning in the classroom.

Create play-based learning centres

This is an easy way to sneak play into the child's daily routine. Whether traditional play centre s (sand, dramatic play, blocks and many others) or a collection of bins on a shelf, having play materials available is the first step to adding more play into our

routine. If we do not yet have centres, we can start with a few bins and add things like puppets, blocks, puzzles, and games. Switch the contents often and connect them to classroom learning. For instance, one might have:

1. Puppets for characters in a book we read together

2. Blocks with task cards relating to what we are learning in math such as build a castle that has 6 triangles.

3. A matching game of science concepts such as matching the animal with their habitat (Rubin & Harming, 1976, p. 71).

It has become clearer that, learning Centre's plays a vital role in the child's development. Teachers who view such activities as time wasting need a change in mind-set as well as training in designing and setting up learning Centre's for Puppets, block areas and science Centres. Teachers can plan learning Centre activities and make it part of the daily schedule. This will enable children to visit the Centre of their choice to learn.
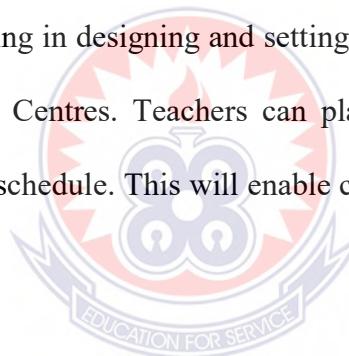
Use manipulative

Young children are concrete learners who learn by doing. This is why play is such a powerful tool. Instead of using pencil and paper to teach new concepts, use manipulative. They don't have to be fancy teacher-store items either.

Manipulative aren't just for mathematics. They can equally be used as:

a. Cars to practice blending sounds,

b. Slinkies for stretching out new words

c. Letter tiles for spelling

d. Legos for letter formation

e. Art materials for just about everything (Rubin & Harming, 1976, p. 73).

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According to John Amos Comenius, children retain longer when concrete materials are used in teaching. By implication, teachers need to plan activities and provide the necessary materials for children to manipulate. The use of manipulative helps children to understand and recall facts without struggling. It is very important for early childhood teachers to involve manipulative in their teaching.

Play games

The early childhood classroom must be full of games and activities which involve the use of games. We can use games to practice and review concepts. They don't have to be complicated or even competitive. Young Children love:

   a. Guessing games

   b. Eye spy

   c. Hide-and-seek type games

   d. Solving puzzles together and so on (Rubin & Harming, 1976, p. 74).

It can be argued that, early childhood teachers who frown at using play games in class are by away causing more harm than good to the children. This stem to the fact that, not only do the above activities bring enjoyment, they also help in the total development of children.

Take play breaks

Children naturally have short attention span. We know they need breaks, and recess is often too short. After a bit of hard learning, we need to reward our children with a play break. Pull out the learning centres and let them have a few minutes to relax and re-energize for your next lesson. These periods helps children to refresh their system and get them prepared for the next lesson or activity for the day.

Take learning outside

There is lots of learning that can be done outside, no matter the weather. One can engage pupils to do the following outside the classroom:

a. Create their own sculptures to represent the characters in a book,

b. Practice writing words in the sand and mud,

c. Collect seeds, flowers, and grasses and sorted them, measured them and divided them into fair shares

d. Find shapes in the playground structures

e. Go hunting for letters and words (Roskos & Neuman, 1998, p. 16).

Teaching in the kindergarten requires a good amount of commitment by the teacher. It must be appreciated that, whenever children go outside the classroom for learning, the fun alone is overwhelming. Teachers need to realize that, a great deal of change from the classroom to outside the classroom promote active learning. Children need to be given the opportunity to go for field trips/nature walk, etc.to enable them explore, ask questions, dismantle, construct, fix and bring out their own findings about the world around them. This can be achieved if the teacher plan, and prepare the instructions using play as a teaching method.

Act it out

Instead of having students retell a story – act it out!

One can also help children act out:

a. Scientific processes,

b. Mathematical operations

c. Concepts such as fractions, patterns, and ordinal numbers

d. Letter formation

e.   Sentence structure

f.   Social problem solving

g.   Whatever else we can come up with (Caples, 1996, p. 32).

Understandably, using drama in class brings a lot of benefits to children. It enables children gain wonderful skills that they can carry through life and put to use in many areas. Not only does it instil creativity and self-expression as well as nourishing the imagination, it can teach a child to think outside the box which is a great skill for future endeavours. Early childhood teachers need to be reminded of the fact that, drama is a versatile hobby and in the main, it should bring fun and enjoyment to the child's life. Children's love to be chosen to be actors and they will be fully engaged in learning. It is however the duty of the teacher to create a congenial atmosphere within the class setting for children to act out various roles in the form of drama to promote effective and useful outcomes in the life of the children entrusted into their care (Garvey, 1977).
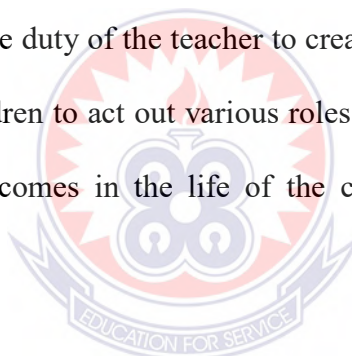
Play with your pupils

When teachers plan their lessons with play as a teaching method, the best way for its success is by participating in the play activity by themselves. When pupils are playing, don't be shy – join in. Playing together builds bonds with pupils and creates a classroom community of shared learning and fun. As a participant in the play, a teacher has the ability to scaffold the child's learning and to stretch them and challenge them and help them to grow (Frost, 1992).

Make learning an adventure

Imagine two introductions to a lesson. The first: ―Today, we are going to learn about African animals." The second: ―Today we are going to go on an adventure! We are going to take the school bus to a place halfway around the world. While we are there, we are going to meet some weird and wonderful creatures that live in this amazing place. Are you ready to begin our journey?" In the first lesson, the teacher might show some photographs of each animal and talk about each one. In the second lesson, the students actually pretend to get on a car, and get to the Zoo and view the photos of animals placed around the classroom in the role of explorers in a new land. Both lessons will teach the same content, but one feels like playing. The best part – to the students, a journey to a new place in their imagination is almost the same as being there, and they will remember the lesson months later (Frost, 1992).

Create parent buy-in

Parents love their children and want them to learn and so do educators of early childhood. If parents (or administration) are giving you a hard time about play in the classroom, try to show them all the learning that is happening. Through our classroom blog we would often include a photograph of playful learning in action and explain exactly what the students are learning and how we are assessing their learning through play (Bronson, 2010). If there is no blogging in the school, we can do same in our weekly newsletter. This will go a long way towards gaining support for play in the classroom. No matter what, we don't have to give up. The power of playful learning is worth fighting for.

2.9 Summary of Literature and Gaps

Play in Kindergarten education is vital in the total/ holistic development of the child. Kindergarten was meant to be a place where children are nurtured to grow and develop their full potentials using play as initiated by Froebel (1902) the father of kindergarten. Play aids children in developing social, emotional, and physical skills (Ashiabi, 2007; Brownson, 2010; Frost, Wortham & Reifel, 2008; Hadley, 2002; Rieber et al., 1998).Today, there are two main types of kindergartens, play-based and didactic. In play-based kindergartens, children have the opportunity to learn through play and exploration, whereas in the didactic kindergarten, the children learn through drills and worksheets. The decrease in the amount of time spent playing seems to be driven by the need to meet standards and how to perform well on standardized assessments (Ashiabi, 2007; Brownson, 2010; Graue, 2009; Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2008; Hadley, 2002; Rieber et al., 1998).

Aside this, the Kindergarten educators perception on using play as a teaching method has been influenced by factors such as availability of play materials, teacher's experience, teacher's training status, type of school and play, and teachers' motivation. Some strategies needed to positively influence teacher's perception include but not limited to the following- Creating play-based learning centre s, use of manipulative, play games, taking play breaks, educators take their learning outside, acting play out, play with pupils, making learning an adventure, and creating parent buy-in.

It is important to note that, two major key areas that literature could have touched but failed to do is Technology and play, and Parental or Family involvement in play? Technology is a main competitor of play in children's lives today (Carlsson-Paige,

2008).Children spend an average of 2 hours per day using computers, iPads, and iPhones and watching television as well as playing computer games. One major problem with ‒screen time" is that it is a symbolic representation of the real world and not direct experience with people and materials. The more time children are watching screens, the less opportunities they have for play and interactions with nurturing adults both of which are critical to healthy development and learning. Research also indicates that, screen time has a negative impact on attention and self-regulation for young children (Carlsson-Paige, 2008).

Academic expectations have been pushed down and early acquisitions of skills and content knowledge have left little room for play in early childhood classroom. Many classrooms have replaced play with structured, teacher-directed activities leaving little time to nurture children exploration and creativity. It is reasonable to also assert that, the critical role of the teacher during play was also not stressed in the literature. Teachers must embrace play and learn to use play as a valuable tool for children's learning (Curwood, 2007). The roles of the early childhood education teacher must include facilitation, engagement, and appropriate individualization for each child developmental milestone. Planning for play must be intentional. Focus must be on creating opportunities for higher level thinking by incorporating time, space and materials for play (Buysee, Goldman & Skinner, 2003).

Similarly, administrators, parents and families need to appreciate the essential function of play in every child's development. This can be achieved by securing a prominent place in their curriculum planning for play; teachers will encourage their colleagues, administrators and families to support their effort in promoting play. Implicitly, educating parent on the value of play, building parental understanding and

securing parental support for play in the curriculum must be stressed (Ginsberg, 2001).

It was identified from the review that much have being done by way of research on the use of play as a teaching technique. However, it looks as if majority of the studies were conducted in the western world with very few in Africa. Also, majority of the studies review indicated that quantitative research approach was used. This suggests that the voice of the participants were not directly heard. Likewise, few of the studies reviewed used qualitative research approach. This suggests that such studies cannot be generalised. It was upon these gaps identified that the study sought to investigate perceptions of kindergarten teachers on the use of play as teaching technique in Afadjato South District of the Volta Region using concurrent mixed methods approach.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter discusses the methodology of the study. It discusses the research design, population of the study, sample and sampling techniques, instrumentation, validity of the research instruments, reliability of the instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis procedure and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

Concurrent triangulation design was used for the study. Concurrent triangulation design is one of the mixed method approach where a researcher gathers quantitative data and qualitative data at the same time (Creswell, 2009). In this design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently in one phase. Data were analysed separately and then compared and/or combined. Concurrent triangulation design was used to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate findings of the study.

Moreover, according to Watson and Welch-Ross (2000), the rationale for concurrent triangulation design is that, neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient by themselves to capture the trends and details of a situation. The design was further used for the study because it helped for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration, which was, obtaining a fuller picture and deeper understanding of perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as teaching technique in Afadjato South District of the Volta Region, Ghana.

3.2 Population of the Study

A population can be defined as a group of individuals or people with the same characteristics and in whom the researcher is interested in (Kusi 2012). To Sugiyono (2012) a population is set or collection of all elements possessing one or more attributes of interest. The population of the study was 180 (69 males and 111 females) participants. It comprised 20 (8 males and 12 females) basic school heads, 20 (8 males and 12 females) school supervisors and 140 (48 males and 92 females) kindergarten teachers from the Afadjato South District.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample of 133 participants was selected for the study. It comprised 103 kindergarten teachers, 20 basic school heads and 10 school supervisors. The sample for kindergarten teachers was based on Krejcie and Morgan (1979) sample size criteria. According to Krejcie and Morgan, a population of 140 should have a sample of 103 participants. Also, 20 school heads were selected because according to Elliot (2010), the population can be used as the sample if it is manageable in size. Moreover, 10 school supervisors were selected because according to Creswell (2009), interviews can be conducted between 5-25 participants.

Multistage (comprehensive selection, simple random, and convenience) sampling technique was used to select twenty kindergarten centres in the Afadjato South District. First, comprehensive selection (criterion-based) which implies universal coverage, thus, examining (studying) each and every case in a population was used for the school heads. Thus, all the 20 school heads served as the sample for the study. The reason for using this sampling technique was that the population was manageable in size.

Second, simple random sampling was used to select 103 kindergarten 1 and 2 teachers. Numbers ―1‖ and ―2‖ were written on pieces of papers, folded and placed in a basket. Thus, kindergarten 1 and 2 teachers were asked to select one of the papers and those who selected ―1‖ were made to respond to the questionnaire. In all, 51 kindergarten 1 and 52 kindergarten 2 teachers were sampled for the study.

Fourth, convenience sampling technique was used to select ten 10 school supervisors for the interview. In this technique, school supervisors were asked for their consent to be interviewed and those who accepted were selected. In all, 123 questionnaires (103 for teachers and 20 for heads) were administered while 10 interviews for were conducted for school supervisors.

3.4 Instrumentation

Self-developed questionnaires and interview guide were used to collect data. According to Kankam and Weiler (2010), research instruments are tools researchers can use to help them find information. To Seidu (2007) instruments are documents that researchers use for data collection. The researcher used questionnaire to elicit information from the teachers and headteachers and interviews to elicit information from school supervisors.

The questionnaire comprised two sections: Section ‗A‘ and ‗B‘. Section ‗A‘ focused on background information (such as the gender, age, years in the current school, teaching experience and so on). Section ‗B‘ comprised 5-points Likert scale items which were weighed as: Strongly Agree (SA)=5, Agree (A)=4, Undecided (UD)=3, Disagree (D)=2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1. However, negative statements on the questionnaire used the reverse scoring. Statements 1-5 were used to gather data to answer research question 1 and statements 6-10 used to gathered data to answer

research question 2. Also, statements 11-15 were used to gather data to answer research question 3 and statements 16-20 were used to gather data to answer research question 4.

The interview guide had two sections: Section _A' and _B'. Section _A' focused on demographic information of respondents (such as the gender, age, working experience and so on). Section _B' focused on questions that helped to gather data so as to address the research questions. This is to help the researcher obtain deeper insights about the research problem. The semi-structured interview allowed flexibility in asking follow-up questions. It also offered opportunity for the researcher to seek clarification through probing and expand the responses of the interviewees to ascertain their perception about using play as a teaching method in kindergartens. Interview guide was also selected because it allowed the researcher to enter head's viewpoint, to better understand their perspectives (Lichtman, 2010). More so, it revealed important aspects of the phenomena under study that were not captured in the questionnaires.

3.5 Validity of the Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which research instrument serves the use for which it is intended to (Seidu, 2006). Validity of the instruments in this study was tested through face and content validation procedures. Face validity of the instrument was established by giving the prepared instrument to the researcher's colleague students. For face validity of the instruments, the structure, layout, alignment and configuration of the instrument in relation to the research questions were examined by researcher's colleague students. Comments from them helped to effect changes before the instruments were administered.

Content validity of the instruments was ensured by the research supervisor who examined the research questions alongside with each item of the instrument in order to determine whether the instruments actually measured what they were supposed to have measured. Comments from the research supervisor helped to effect changes before the instruments were administered.

3.6 Reliability of the Instruments

Joppe (2000) defined reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time and if the result of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. To ensure reliability of the questionnaire, pilot test was conducted on 50 kindergarten teachers, 5 heads and 5 school supervisors in kindergarten centres in Hohoe that were not included in the main study. These participants were selected because they have almost same characteristics and those in the study areas. After the pilot test, Cronbach's alpha reliability co-efficient was calculated and 0.87 was obtained.

This rendered the questionnaire reliable (Amin, 2005). Cronbach's alpha was selected since it was a much more general form of measuring the internal consistency than the other forms of test reliability (Amin, 2005). On the other hand, in checking the trustworthiness of the interview guide, the researcher used member checks. This was where the recorded interviews were played to interviewees for confirmation. Afterwards, all the interviewees agreed to the information they shared.

Pre-test

The pre testing was conducted in St. Teresa's Demonstration school. This was meant to establish reliability of the questionnaire used. It was also meant to improve items format and reduce inadequacies and ambiguities in the items. St. Teresa's

Demonstration school was selected because it has similar features as the kindergarten centres used for the main study. The questionnaire was personally administered to 30 kindergarten teachers and 5 heads. Participants were given 30 minutes to respond to the questionnaires. Based on the defects that were revealed, the questionnaire was reconstructed to help gather the needed data for the main study.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

An introductory letter from the Head, Department of Early Childhood Education of University of Education, Winneba was obtained to seek permission from the District Director of Education, Afadjato South District, headteachers, school supervisors and teachers. Teachers and headteachers were given explanations of the purpose of the research, aspects of confidentiality and the intended use of the data. Also, they were assured that no information given by them would be shared with other individual participants or outsiders. One hundred and twenty-three questionnaires were given out to kindergarten teachers and headteachers (103 for kindergarten teachers and 20 for headteachers). Explanations of the questionnaires were given to kindergarten teachers and headteachers and 30 minutes was given to them to respond to the items on the questionnaires. Questionnaires were retrieved on same day which resulted in about 97 percent return rate.

Face-to-face interviews were also conducted using the interview guide on 10 school supervisors. This helped in improving the reliability of the interview process since a consistent approach was used. Participants were interviewed during their leisure time and this helped not to disrupt their personal schedules. Interviews were audio taped and this helped to ensure more accurate picture of the questions and answers (Patton, 2002). It further enhanced the validity of the instruments as suggested. Likewise,

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recording the interviews allowed the researcher to give full attention to the interviewees (Patton, 2002; Elliot, 2005). However, permission was sought from all the interviewees and was granted.

While the interview was in progress, it was found that some participants had misinterpreted the questions so it was rephrased for them. This made participants to be on track; hence, they gave the right responses (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2006). At the end of each interview, the recorded interviews were played to the interviewees to make sure they agreed to what had been shared. This approach (playing the interview audio to the participants) helped participants to confirm the information shared.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis was done quantitatively and qualitatively. Descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to analyse the quantitative data involving research questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS- version 2.1) was employed to aid in the analysis of the quantitative data.

Thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data. The interview data were first transcribed by focusing on the key elements in the narrative that highlighted the aims of this research. Personal and identifying details were left out which ensured the anonymity of the participants. Additionally, only those direct quotes, grammatical nuances, idioms and figures of speech deemed necessary were included in the transcript in order to create data that was as close to the recorded voice as possible (Bedu-Addo, 2010). The audio taped proceedings of the interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis (Bedu-Addo, 2010).

According to Kusi (2012), thematic analysis is an analytical strategy which requires the researcher to organize or prepare data, immerse him or herself in and transcribe the data, generate themes and code the data, and describe them. In this sense, thematic analysis revealed themes related to the interview questions. Axial coding was used to organize themes into a coherent manner. This helped in aligning similar ideas into their corresponding themes. This helped to cluster the emerging ideas into coherent units, which allowed the emerging themes to stand out clearly. Summary of the coding used to generate the themes was presented in a table in chapter four.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

For ethical reasons, a letter of introduction from the Head, Department of Early Childhood Education of University of Education, Winneba was obtained to introduce the researcher during the data collection, after establishing the necessary contacts with the participants. It was also made clear to participants that they could terminate the interview at any stage should they felt uncomfortable. In discussing the themes participant's identity was hidden by using a code for each of them. For instance, school supervisors interviewed were coded school supervisor one to ten (SS:1 to SS:10). This helped to promote confidentiality in this study. According to Kusi (2012), the participation of human subjects in research, especially if one is researching experiences, must be taken care to ensure that the participants are protected. Therefore, interviews were audio-taped but permission was first sought from participants. Additionally, all references were duly acknowledged to avoid plagiarism.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the data analysis and discussion of results. The presentation is under two sections: Sections A and B. Section A presents the background information of students. Section B deals the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and discussion of results.

4.1 Section A: Background Information of Participants

Statements 1-4 on the questionnaires were used to gather data on the background information of kindergarten teachers, heads and school supervisors. Table 1, 2 and 3 respectively present the results after the analysis.

Table 1: Background information of teachers (N=100)

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	25	25
	Female	75	75
Age (in years)	25 and below	10	10
	26-30	32	32
	31-35	28	28
	36-40	16	16
	41 and above	14	14
Teaching Experience	1-10	30	30
	11-20	25	25
	21-30	24	24
	31-40	15	15
	41 and above	6	6
Years in Current school	1-10	48	48
	11-20	32	32
	21-30	15	15
	31-40	5	5
	41 and above	0	0

Source: Field data, 2018

Results from Table 1 show that majority 75 (75%) of the kindergarten teachers were females as compared to their male counterparts who were 25, (25%).

This result implies that male and female kindergarten teachers were disproportionally represented. This result implies that there were more females kindergarten teachers assigned to kindergartens in the Afadjato South District. The results also revealed that majority of the teachers at the kindergarten were between 26-30 years (32%), followed by 31-35 years (28%), 36-40 years (16%), 41 and above (14%) and 25 and below (10%). These results suggest that kindergarten teachers selected cut across all ages with majority being in their youthful stage. Implicitly if these youths are guided on how to effectively use play as a teaching method in the Afadjato South District, it would help improve children's understanding of concept taught. Likewise, these results imply that most of the teachers were in their youthful stage and therefore should the conditions and relevant components of teaching at the kindergarten be addressed, then, the youthful exuberance of these teachers could be tapped for the development of the teaching profession.

The results in Table 1 further show that majority (30%) of the teachers had 1-10 years of teaching experience, followed by 11-20 years (25%), 21-30 years (24%), 31-40 years (15%) and 41 and above (6%). These results imply that kindergarten teachers had long and short teaching experiences respectively. The results from Table 1 also show that majority of them had stayed in their current schools between 1-10 years (48%), as compared to 11-20 years (32%), 21-30 years (15%), and 31-40 years (5). This result could suggest that these teachers have gained some form of experience in their current schools and therefore were likely to help gather data to address the research questions.

Table 2: Background information of headteachers (N=20)

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	8	40
	Female	12	60
Age (in years)	25 and below	0	0
	26-30	4	20
	31-35	6	30
	36-40	8	40
	41 and above	2	10
Teaching Experience	1-10	4	20
	11-20	10	50
	21-30	4	20
	31-40	2	10
	41 and above	0	0
Years in Current school	1-10	8	40
	11-20	10	50
	21-30	2	10
	31-40	0	0
	41 and above	0	0

Source: Field data, 2018

Results from Table 2 show that majority 12(60%) of the heads were females as compared to males 8(40%). The results correspond with the results on the gender of teachers used in this study. The results suggest that male and female headteachers were given almost a fair representation in this study. This results infer that the more female teachers in the Afadjato South District, the higher the likelihood of having more female heads. The results could imply that these female heads were likely to find it difficult to control their male teachers during instructional supervision.

The results further show that majority (40%) of the heads were between 36-40 years, followed by 31-35 years (30%), 26-30 years (20%) and 41 and above (10%). The results imply that though majority of the heads were in their youthful stage, they have been able to climb higher on the educational ladder and this has implicitly resulted in their headship positions. The results could infer that if these heads are given the

needed support in their headship, it would help improve teaching and learning in the Afadjato South District.

The results from Table 2 further show that half (50%) of the heads had 11-20 years of teaching experience, followed by 1-10 years (20%), 21-30 years (20%) and 31-40 years (10%). The results also show that half (50%) of them had been in their current schools between 11-20 years as compared to 1-10 years (40%), and 21-30 years (10%). It is worth nothing that though selection of supervision position (headteacher) in Ghana is based on professional background and rank in Ghana Education Service (GES), which is also determined by the length of service and not necessary the academic qualification, the crop of headteachers in the Afadjato South District could be highly commendable for their working experiences. These results therefore advocate that, in the near future, leadership management position would not be a major issue to bother about in the Afadjato South District.

Table 3: Background information of school supervisors (N=10)

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	6	60
	Female	4	40
Age (in years)	25 and below	1	10
	26-30	2	20
	31-35	3	30
	36-40	2	20
	41 and above	2	20
Working Experience	1-10	4	40
	11-20	3	30
	21-30	2	20
	31-40	1	10
	41 and above	0	0
Years in Current school	1-10	6	60
	11-20	4	40
	21-30	0	0
	31-40	0	0
	41 and above	0	0

Source: Field data, 2018

Results from Table 3 show that majority 6(60%) of the school supervisors were males as compared to males 4(40%). The results recommend that both male and female teachers have been given the opportunity to supervise public basic schools in the Afadjato South District. The results further show that majority of the supervisors were between the ages of 31-35 years (30%), as compared to 26-30 years (20%), 36-40 years (20%), 41 and above (20%) and 26-30 years (10%). The results also show that majority (40%) of the school supervisors had 1-10 years working experience, followed by 11-20 years (30%), 21-30 years (20%) and 31-40 years (10%). Again, the results from Table 3 show that majority of the school supervisors had spent 1-10 years in their current schools (60%) as compared to 11-20 years (40%). In general, background information of participants indicates that participants have different demographic information. Also, it revealed that they have the needed information that can help in addressing the research questions.
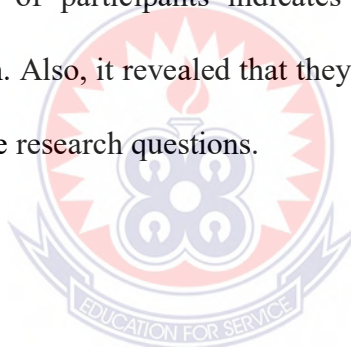
4.2 Section B: Results and Discussions

4.2.1 Research Question 1: What is the perception of kindergarten teachers in the Afadjato South District of the use of play as a teaching technique?

Research question one sought to find out perception of kindergarten teachers in the Afadjato South District of the use of play as a teaching technique. Statements 1-5 on the questionnaires for kindergarten teachers and school heads were used to address this question. Means and standard deviations were used to analyse the quantitative data. The results are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as a teaching technique (N=100)

Statements	Means	Standard Deviations
Teachers use play as a teaching technique because it helps the children to understand lessons easily	4.42	.32
Teachers don't use play in teaching because of lack of teaching and learning materials	3.80	.28
Some parents see play as a waste of time; hence, teachers don't use it when teaching	3.38	.76
Using play requires a lot of time and since teachers have less time to teach a lesson they don't use it at all	3.30	.79
Teachers use play and this makes children to actively involve themselves in the teaching and learning process	3.85	.25
Total	**18.75**	**2.4**
Mean of Means	**3.75**	**1.5**

Source: Field data, 2018

Mean Ranges: 0.00 – 1.59 not at all: 1.60 – 2.59 to some extent: 2.60 – 3.59 to large extent: 3.60 – 4.00 to a very large extent.

The results from Table 4 show that majority (M=4.42, SD=.32) of the teachers appear to believe that ―teachers use play as a teaching technique because it helps the children to understand lessons easily", followed by ―teachers use play and this makes children

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to actively involve themselves in the teaching and learning process" (M=3.85, SD=.25), ̶teachers do not use play in teaching because of lack of teaching and learning materials" (M=3.80, SD=.28), ̶using play requires a lot of time and since teachers have less time to teach a lesson they don't use it at all" (M=3.38, SD=.76), and ̶some parents see play as a waste of time; hence, teachers don't use it when teaching" (M=3.30, SD=.79). It can be inferred from the Table 4 that the mean of means was 3.75 which falls within the mean range of 3.60–4.00. The results therefore suggest that kindergarten teachers' perceptions affected their use of to play a very large extent.

Table 5: Perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as a teaching technique (N=20)

Statements	Means	Standard Deviations
Teachers use play as a teaching technique because it helps the children to understand lessons easily	2.98	.11
Teachers don't use play in teaching because of lack of teaching and learning materials	2.97	.12
Some parents see play as a waste of time; hence, teachers don't use it when teaching	2.94	.10
Using play requires a lot of time and since teachers have less time to teach a lesson, they don't use it at all	2.92	.10
Teachers use play and this makes children to actively involve themselves in the teaching and learning process	2.89	.13
Total	14.70	.56
Mean of Means	2.94	.11

Source: Field data, 2018

Mean Ranges: 0.00 – 1.59 not at all: 1.60 – 2.59 to some extent: 2.60 – 3.59 to large extent: 3.60 – 4.00 to a very large extent.

The results from Table 5 show that majority (M=2.98, SD=.11) of the school heads appear to believe that ―teachers use play as a teaching technique because it helps the children to understand lessons easily‖, followed by ―teachers don‗t use play in teaching because of lack of teaching and learning materials‖ (M=2.97, SD=.12), ―some parents see play as a waste of time; hence, teachers don‗t use it when teaching‖ (M=2.92, SD=.10), ―using play requires a lot of time and since teachers have less time to teach a lesson they don‗t use it at all‖ (M=2.92, SD=.10), and ―teachers use play and this makes children to actively involve themselves in the teaching and learning process‖ (M=2.89, SD=.13). The results therefore suggest that school heads claimed that kindergarten teachers‗ perceptions affected their use of play to a large extent. It was concluded that to a very large extent, kindergarten teachers‗ perceptions affected their use of to play as a teaching technique.

The results support the findings of Ashiabi (2005). Ashiabi through a literature review evaluated the value of play in regards to its ability to foster socio-emotional developmental progress. He claimed play to be the perfect venue for the development of socio-emotional readiness and overall success in school and life. Play enhanced the children‗s ability to role-play, reflect before acting, the ability to show empathy, and their emotional understanding and self-regulation. Cooperation, negotiation, problem solving, group work and getting along are also stimulated in children‗s play even without adult intervention. Both student-initiated and teacher-guided play is important to children‗s development. Ashiabi (2005) stated early childhood educators have a role in making play a developmental and learning experience for young children.

These results imply that kindergarten teachers appear to believe that for children to have a better understanding of concepts taught, then, they have to use play as a teaching method. This result infers that when kindergarten teachers allow children to have a feel of the teaching and learning materials, permit them to manipulate the learning materials, children are given the opportunity to freely interact with their peers and many others during learning. It could help them have better understanding of the lesson taught. This result could also suggest that anytime teachers at the kindergarten fail to use play as a teaching method, it could negatively influence children's understanding of lessons taught.

Further, the results could imply that kindergarten children grasp lessons taught by their teachers when they use more of play as a teaching method. The results suppose that these teachers would have positive behaviour towards the use of play teaching method as confirmed by the Personal Investment Theory (Maher, 1986) used in this study. Thus, early childhood teachers in the Afadjato South District would invest their time, talents and energies when it comes to the use of play teaching method. From these results it could be concluded that kindergarten teachers in Afadjato South District have positive perception on the use of play as a teaching method.

These findings are in consonance with the findings of Bredekamp (1987) and Ng'asike (2004). According to Bredekamp teachers' support in children play activities is an extremely important developmental practice as it enhances smooth teaching and facilitates children's learning at their own pace. Ng'asike (2004) purports that teachers in pre-primary schools should focus on investing in play as an appropriate and natural opportunity to reinforce and introduce new concepts to children.

These findings are contrary to the findings of some other studies. For example, there are debates in the literature (Graue, 2009; Ashiabi, 2007) that one factor that accounts for the limited use of play in the kindergarten is the kind of perception teachers hold regarding play as a teaching methodology. There are some early childhood educators who believe that play as a teaching method is not effective. Some thinks otherwise (Eberle, 2011).

These findings correspond with the findings of other earlier studies. For example, Warner and Parker (2005) expressed that, ―play is healthy and in fact, essential for helping children reach important social, emotional, and cognitive developmental milestones as well as helping them manage stress and become resilient" (p. 2). Therefore, it is critical for teachers to understand the importance of play in improving stress management and social skills, as well as to feel empowered to integrate play based learning activities in their kindergarten instruction.

However, these findings contradict findings of other studies. Although teachers seem to acknowledge the role of play in developing skills, they seem unsure of how to utilize play in an instructional manner (Saracho & Spodek, 1998). Despite a plethora of research suggesting positive outcomes associated with opportunities to engage in social play and negative out-comes associated with peer rejection; there is often a hands-off policy during recess and free-play time in school. Teachers tend to underestimate the prevalence of bullying and do not appear to recognize their potential roles as preventing violence and promoting pro-social skill development (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003).

When teachers do attempt to implement strategies sup-porting friendships among children in their classrooms, often indirect strategies such as providing free time for play, allowing children to choose with whom they would like to play, and making informal comment on the play between friends are used (Buysee, Goldman & Skinner, 2003). It was concluded that there was lack of curriculum or integrated strategy to weave teaching of pro-social interactions into the entire school day.

4.2.2 Research Question 2: To what extent do kindergarten teachers of Afadjato South District use play as a teaching technique?

Research question two sought to find out the extent do kindergarten teachers of Afadjato South District use play as a teaching technique. Statements 6-10 on the questionnaires for kindergarten teachers and school heads were used to gather data to address this question. Means and standard deviations were used to analyse the quantitative data. The quantitative data results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Extent to which kindergarten teachers use play as a teaching technique (Data from teachers) (N=100)

Statements	Means	Standard Deviations
I use play most of the time	4.12	.31
I use play only when there is adequate TLMs	3.78	.27
I use play when they realise the children are willing to play	3.28	.75
I don't use play most of the time	3.25	.78
I use play when teaching specific lessons in some subjects	3.84	.24
Total	18.27	2.35
Mean of Means	3.70	.47

Source: Field data, 2018

Mean Ranges: 0.00 – 1.59 not at all: 1.60 – 2.59 to some extent: 2.60 – 3.59 to large extent: 3.60 – 4.00 to a very large extent.

Results from Table 5 show that kindergarten teachers use play most of the time had the highest score (M=4.12, SD=.31), followed by they use play when teaching specific lessons in some subjects (M=3.84, SD=.24), use play only when there is adequate TLMs (M=3.78, SD=.27), use play when they realize the children are willing to play (M=3.28, SD=.75), and don't use play most of the time (M=3.25, SD=.78). The results show that the grand total was (M=18.27,

SD=2.35). The results further show that the means of mean was 2.70 which fall within the mean range of 3.60–4.00. The results therefore indicate that to a very large extent, kindergarten teachers of Afadjato South District use play as a teaching technique.

Table 6: Extent to which kindergarten teachers use play as a teaching technique (Data from Headteachers) (N=10)

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
They use play most of the time	2.95	.35
They use play only when there is adequate TLMs	2.83	.57
They use play when I realise the children are willing to play	2.87	.43
They don't use play most of the time	2.66	.39
They use play when teaching specific lessons in some subjects	2.79	.54
Total	14.10	2.28
Means of Mean	2.82	.46

Source: Field data, (2018)

Mean Ranges: 0.00 – 1.59 not at all; 1.60 – 2.59 to some extent; 2.60 – 3.59 to large extent; 3.60 – 4.00 to a very large extent.

Results from Table 6 show that headteachers claimed that kindergarten teachers use play most of the time had the highest score (M=2.95, SD=.35), followed by use play when I realized the children are willing to play (M=2.87, SD=.43), use play only when there is adequate TLMs (M=2.83, SD=.57), use play when teaching specific

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lessons in some subjects (M=2.79, SD=.54) and don't use play most of the time (M=2.66, SD=.39). The results show that the grand total was (M=14.10,

SD=2.28). The results further show that the means of mean was 2.82 which fall within the mean range of 2.60-3.59. The results therefore signify that to a large extent, kindergarten teachers of Afadjato South District use play as a teaching technique.

The results confirm that of Fogle et al. (2006). Fogle et al. correlated the data reported in the Parent Play Belief Scale (PPBS) and the Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale (PIPPS). The authors concluded that parents' positive attitudes towards play were related to children's social competence. The researchers found a correlation between the PPBS and children's positive peer play behaviour. Fogle et al, concluded that children whose parents had a greater knowledge of the need for play also had high levels of social competence. Parents' beliefs about play appeared to be worthy of consideration. Some parents may not be aware of the importance of play in building social competence. Parents with high academic focus scores on their PPBS showed a negative correlation to their reported level of educational achievement.

This indicated that parents with less education valued academics highly for their children. Further, Fogle et al. found a correlation between parents' positive beliefs about play and their children's social competence. Both parents and early childhood educators can feel confident that important social skills are being learned through play. This study delivered quantitative evidence correlating positive parent views of play with their children's social competence.

Also, interview guide data from research questions two (2) based on direct quotes and explanations used were analysed. For instance, one school supervisor said:

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> *In my attempt to go round the school to supervise kindergarten teachers' method of teaching, I realised that some teachers have positive perception of play and as a result take the initiative to use play as a teaching method [SS: 2].*

Another participant said something similar:

> *From my experience as a school supervisor for the past ten years, I have realised that the perception teachers have towards play as a teaching method is the only way that can guarantee their use of it [SS: 8].*

Similarly, a third participant said:

> *I strongly believe that when teachers have positive perception to the use of play, it could encourage them to use it during teaching and learning process [SS: 5].*

These comments connote that the kind of perception a teacher has towards play could influence its use as a teaching method. These comments advocate that if kindergarten teachers have positive perception towards play, they would use it as a method of teaching. However, if they have negative perception, it could adversely influence its use as a teaching method.

Interestingly, as it pertains to the extent to which early childhood teachers perceive the use of play as a teaching method, these findings confirm with the Personal Investment Theory by Maehr (1986). The theory proposes that a person's subjective judgment of his or her ability to perform a task effectively tends to influence the individual's choice to exhibit or inhibit behaviour. When a teacher believes in his or her competence and knowledge in early childhood teaching practices, he or she would increase his or her investment of skills, energy and talents in use of play as a child-centred teaching and learning approach. The theory suggests that a knowledgeable and skilled person in any area of specialty tends to exhibit a professional behaviour in autonomous and assertive manner regardless of existence of some impeding factors.

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Moreover, developmental theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky posit that teachers' positive perception towards play as a teaching method contributes to the cognitive implication of play for development (Schiffman, 2003). While Piaget describes play as practice for strengthening of skills and existing schema (i.e. assimilation), Vygotsky ascribes a more central role of play as a mechanism for building cognitive structures, such as symbolic representation of thought (Astington & Jenkins, 1995). Building upon these theories, there are many ways in which engaging in play by early childhood teachers facilitate the development of cognitive skills. For instance, through fantasy play children begin using symbols.

Furthermore, Owocki (1999) posited that symbolic representation is the fundamental cognitive skill underlying literacy, writing, mathematics, and other complex skills essential for functioning in modern cultures. Through social play used by early childhood teachers, particularly fantasy play, children develop theory of mind, the understanding that others experience unique thoughts (Astington & Jenkins, 1995; Watson, Linkie-Nixon, Wilson, & Capage, 1999). Contemporary researchers have extended these theoretical considerations to address the role of play in literacy development (Owocki, 1999; Roskos & Neuman, 1998; Kerns & Barth , 1995; Schiffman, 2003), social competence in a variety of settings (Connolly & Doyle, 1984), and assessment of functioning (Casby, 2003). Additionally, when children demonstrate pro-social inclusive behaviours, classrooms become environmentally conducive to overall learning (Wentzel, 1991). Based on the quantitative and qualitative results it was concluded that to a very large extent, kindergarten teachers of Afadjato South District use play as a teaching technique.

4.2.3 Research Question 3: What factors influence the perception of kindergarten teachers on the use of play as a teaching method?

Research question three sought to identify factors that influence the perception of early childhood educators on the use of play as a teaching method. Statements 11-15 on the questionnaires for kindergarten teachers were used to address this question. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the quantitative data. The quantitative data results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Factors that influence the perception of kindergarten teachers on the use of play as a teaching technique (N=100)

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Rank
Availability of play materials influence the use of play as a method of teaching	70(70)*	10(10)	-	10(10)	10(10)	1st
My experience as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching	53(53)	30(30)	7(7)	10(10)	-	3rd
My training background sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching	7(7)	10(10)	-	45(45)	38(38)	5th
The kind of motivation teachers receive as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching	62(62)	10(10)	-	8(8)	20(20)	2nd
Teachers perception sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching	40(40)	28(28)	10(10)	7(7)	15(15)	4th

Source: Field data, 2018   *Percentages are in parentheses

Results from Table 7 show that majority 70 (70%) of the kindergarten teachers strongly agreed to the statement that ―availability of play materials influence the use of play as a method of teaching", followed by the ―kind of motivation teachers received as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching" (62%), ―my experience as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching" (53%), ―teachers perception sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching" (40%), and ―my training background sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching" (7%).

The results correspond with that of Marek and Cavallo (1997). Marek and Cavallo posited that theory surrounding play is of a constructivist nature. Constructivist learning theory means learners must actively construct their own knowledge using their previous experiences. This theory of learning challenged the accepted belief in behaviourist theory, which focused more often on rote memorization and retrieval of facts (Marek & Cavallo, 1997). The theory of cognitive development became accessible to the general public with the help of Piaget (2002). Likewise, Piaget claimed that adaptation is the way in which human beings adjust to their environments. He used adaptation to explain cognition. Adaptation is composed of two mental processes in which he termed assimilation and accommodation.

On the contrary, the results show that less than half (38%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement that ―my training background sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching", as compared to the ―kind of motivation teachers receive as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching" (20%), ―teachers perception sometimes influences the use of play as a method of teaching" (15%), ―availability of play materials influence the use of play as a method of teaching"

(10%) and ―my experience as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching" (0%).

These results propose that whenever there is play materials in the school, kindergarten teachers were likely to have used play as a teaching method. This result could also suggest that, the absence of play materials in the school could negatively influence kindergarten teachers' use of play as a teaching method. The result could also mean that the presence of play materials such as card boards, paper cut out, charts, books, magazines and solid shapes and so on is likely to influence kindergarten teachers' use of play as a teaching method.

Also, question 3 on the interview guide for the school supervisors (early childhood education coordinators) was to gather data to answer this question. Also, regarding research question three (3), themes, direct quotes and explanations were used to analyse the qualitative data. For instance, one school supervisor said:

> *I am expected to run a number of tests within the term and this does not permit me to use play as a teaching method [SS: 4].*

One participant emphatically said:

> *Nowadays the teachers' performance is on the kind of results the children will produce. As a result we are under pressure to meet certain standard and this does not permit us to use play as a teaching method [SS: 1].*

Another participant said:

> *Gone were the days the government supplies teaching and learning materials to basic school. Nowadays, hardly do the government supply the schools with teaching aids and I think that is the main reasons why some kindergarten teachers do not want to use play as a teaching method [SS: 6].*

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Another participant said something similar:

> *From my personal observations, there is ineffective instructional supervision by headteachers in basic schools in this District. As a results majority of the teachers are not doing what is expected of them. One of them is the use of play as a teaching method. So, if headteachers are able to intensify their instructional supervision it could make kindergarten teachers play as a teaching method [SS: 3].*

Similarly, one participant said:

> *Headteachers nowadays do not organise in-service training for teachers and I think is one of the contributory factors to their unwillingness to use play as a teaching method [SS: 10].*

These comments suggest that though school supervisors were of different views, they implicitly believed that availability of teaching aids, regular school supervision and in-service training were some of the factors that could influence the perception of kindergarten teachers in their use of play as a teaching method. From these results it can be concluded that among other factors, availability of play materials, test assessment, the kind of motivation teachers receive and their teaching experiences were the most influential factors to kindergarten teachers' use of play as a teaching method.

These findings run parallel with the findings of several reports from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) including Sabre Charitable Trust, US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Right to Play and many others. One report stated that in spite of the government of Ghana's strong policy commitment to the kindergarten sector, it continues to face challenges of access and quality. The needs at this level are significant, whereas learning materials are in short supply, almost half of all kindergarten teachers have never received any formal training (Ministry of Education (MoE) , Ghana 2013) cited in (Sabre Charitable Trust country report November 21, 2017). Also, an NGO called the Right to Play reports

that early childhood educators still face curricula and pedagogical challenges and there is a discrepancy between the emphasis and the teaching methods at the kindergartens (Right to Play Ghana, 2016).

Also, findings of Meisels and Shonkoff (2000) show that kindergarten classrooms are beginning to resemble first-grade classrooms with their emphasis on formal reading and mathematics instruction rather than a focus on the development of social skills and play. The focus on academics has increased and led to the emergence of academic kindergartens, where, ―5-year-olds are more likely to encounter skill-and-drill exercises and nightly homework more than unstructured, imaginative playtime‖ (Currwood, 2007).

Further, Curwood (2007) found that many ECE teachers are feeling the pressure to teach essential literacy and numeracy skills rather than using instructional time to play. ―Kindergarten is now first grade, and first grade is now second grade. It used to be normal for first graders to still be learning to read. Now, the handful of kindergartners who aren't reading by the end of the year are considered left behind or as low achievers‖ (p. 30). If one goes back one decade, only 15 percent of kindergartners were reading, if one goes back thirty years, there were only 5 percent of kindergartners reading, and now nearly 90 percent of kindergartners are reading at the end of kindergarten (Currwood, 2007). Research also indicates that on a typical day in an all-day kindergarten children spend four to six times more time in literacy and numeracy instruction and preparing for tests than in free time or ‗choice time‘ of play (Miller & Almon, 2009).

Additionally, according to Maeher's (1986) Personal Investment Theory, a person may have a recognised talent or ability in performing a task but may not be interested to exhibit the behaviour if the practice is not encouraged by his or her reference group. Thus, when a teacher's play behaviour or other related play activities are favoured or appreciated by social group(s) for instance, school management, other teachers or parents, the teacher is likely to choose to exhibit the behaviour more frequently. Consequently, frequency in behaviour will render to increased investment of his or her additional time, energy and skills in the behaviour. In this view the school management may influence a teacher's use of play as a teaching method.

However, these findings depart from the findings of Lyabwene (2010). Lyabwene (2010) conducted a study in Tanzania and found that issues of pre-primary school teachers' professional qualifications affected the quality of classroom interaction, hence, impacting on teaching and learning approaches significantly. The complaints are raised by different ECE stakeholders on the unaddressed pedagogical challenges, especially teachers' tendency of using compulsive, direct and unfriendly teacher-centred teaching strategies (United Republic of Tanzania URT, 2008).

4.2.4 Research Question 4: Measures to be employed to positively shape the perception of Afadjato South District kindergarten teachers and help them of play to affect learning?

Research question four (4) sought to suggest strategies that can positively influence the perception of early kindergarten teachers and help them of play to effect learning. Statements 15-20 on the questionnaires for kindergarten teachers and heads of schools were used to address this question. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the quantitative data.

Table 8: Measures to be employed to positively Shape the perception of teachers and help them to use play for effective learning (Data from Teachers) (N=100)

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Rank
Regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	53(53) *	30(30)	-	4(4)	13(13)	5th
Provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	71(71)	29(29)	-	-	-	1st
Motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching	70(70)	30(30)	-	-	-	2nd
Having positive perception on play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	56(56)	15(15)	15(15)	4(4)	10(10)	4th
Organising regular in-service training for teachers can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	62(62)	30(30)	-	-	20(20)	3rd

Source: Field data, 2018   *Percentages are in parentheses

Results from Table 8 show that majority 71 (71%) of the teachers strongly agreed to the statement that ─provision of adequate TLMS can shape perceptions and help teachers use play as a method of teaching", followed by ─motivating teachers as a means of using play as a method of teaching" (70%), ─organising regular in-service training for teachers can help teachers use play as a method of teaching" (62%), ─having positive perception on play can help shape perception on the use of play as a method of teaching" (41%) and ─regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching" (65%).

These findings confirm that of Maher (1986), Personal Investment Theory. Explaining whether extrinsic rewards control a person's behaviour in a particular situation Maher (1986) argues that, some people when assured of the means to obtain the rewards, would strive to maximise their chances to get them and in this manner exhibit the rewarding behaviour. In the context of this study, when a teacher is assured of enjoying a variety of motivational packages from the school management, he or she would reciprocate by spending more time, energy and skills in play related teaching and learning activities. In addition, some teachers may opt to use play as a teaching method if they perceive that the actions and the outcome would render them recognition. This theory therefore is relevant in establishing how the motivating school environment influences use of play as a teaching method in kindergarten settings.

On the other hand, 20% of the teachers strongly disagreed to the statement that ─organising regular in-service training for teachers can help shape perception on the teachers' use play as a method of teaching", followed by ─regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching" (13%), ─having positive perception on

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play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching" (10%), ―provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a method of teaching" (0%) and ―motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching" (0%).

These results put forward that to change the perception and encourage kindergarten teachers to use more of play as a teaching technique; there is the need for the availability of teaching and learning materials. The results infer that if the school lacks teaching and learning materials, there is the likelihood that kindergarten teachers would not use play as a teaching technique. The results could also submit that, if the headteacher is unable to supply teaching and learning materials to kindergarten teachers and the teachers are also unable to improvise these TLMs, there is the likelihood that kindergarten would use other teaching technique aside play.

Table 9: Measures to be employed to Positively Shape the Perception of Teachers and help them to use Play to Effect Learning (Data from Headteachers (N=10)

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Rank
Regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	10(50)*	8(40)	1210)	-	-	2nd
Provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	10(50)	6(30)	-	2(10)	2(10)	3rd
Motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching	4(20)	2(10)	2(10)	4(20)	8(40)	5th
Having positive perception on play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	8(40)	4(20)	-	4(20)	4(20)	4th
Organising regular in-service training for teachers can help teachers use play as a method of teaching	12(60)	6(30)	-	2(10)	-	1st

Source: Field data, 2018   *Percentages are in parentheses

Results from Table 9 show that majority 12(60%) of the headteachers strongly agreed to the statement that ―organising regular in-service training for teachers can help shape teachers' perception on the use play as a method of teaching", as compared to provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a method of teaching (50%), regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching (50%), having positive perception on play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching (40%), and motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching (20%).

Both Vygotsky and Piaget saw the need for play in young children (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1967). Each lived to study how knowledge is formed, drawing from their research and interactions with children. Each wrote volumes of literature and at least one book on play. They both understood the importance of social learning, constructing knowledge and children's innate ability to play. Piaget and Vygotsky contributed the theory behind much research to follow on play in the elementary classroom (Fromberg, 2002; Van Hoorn, 2003).

On the other hand, 40% of the headteachers strongly disagree to the statement ―motivating teachers can help us use play as a method of teaching", as compared to ―having positive perception on play can help teachers use play as a method of teaching" (20%), ―provision of adequate TLMs can help teachers use play as a method of teaching" (10%), ―regular supervision can help teachers use play as a method of teaching" (0%), and ―organising regular in-service training for teachers can help teachers use play as a method of teaching" (0%).

This result implies that if headteachers are able to organise in-service training for kindergarten teachers, it would help shape their perceptions and influence them to have better understanding of play as a teaching method; hence, use it during teaching.

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This result could also connote that perhaps as it stands now, kindergarten teachers are not aware of the importance of play as a teaching method; therefore, they should be enlightened through in-service training organised for them. The results also infer that headteachers did not believe that motivating teachers could serve as a strategy for them in using play as a teaching method.

Also, question 4 on the interview guide for the school supervisors (early childhood education coordinators) was to gather qualitative data to answer this question. Themes, direct quotes and explanations were used to analyse the qualitative data. For instance, one school supervisor said:

> *I personally interviewed some teachers to find out the reason why they have not been using play as a teaching method and their response was that there is no teaching and learning materials that could enhance the use of play [SS: 1].*

Another participant said something different:

> *If supervision by heads of schools and school supervisors are intensified, I think the use of play as a teaching method would be frequently used by teachers [SS: 4].*

One participant emphatically said:

> *One's teaching experience can also influence his/her choice of teaching method. For example, teachers who are well experience most of the time use teaching methods that helps children to learn better [SS: 2].*

A third participant also said:

> *If the government is able to supply basic schools with the needed teaching and learning materialist can motivate kindergarten teachers to use play as a teaching method [SS: 10].*

Another participant said:

> *Kindergarten teachers need to be given in-service training on the need to use play as a teaching method. When this is done it would pave way to the use of play since they now understand its importance in the teaching and learning process [SS: 7].*

Comments from the qualitative data imply that among other measures, provision of teaching aids, regular school supervision and in-service training were some of the strategies that can positively influence the perception of early childhood teachers on the use of play to effect learning. Based on the quantitative and the qualitative results it was concluded that availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching experience, organisation of in-service training, motivation for teachers and regular supervision were the major measures that can be employed to positively shape the perception of teachers on the use of play to effect learning.

These findings are in agreement with the findings of Ng'asike (2004). Ng'asike found that instructional resources are key to teaching in pre-primary schools and teachers need to have sufficient indoor and outdoor play materials. Also, Ng'asike (2004) commented that pre-primary school teachers tend to actively engage play materials in their teaching when the teaching and learning environment is conducive. In addition, a study by Sifuna as cited in Ng'asike (2004) revealed that parents and community support for putting adequate facilities, providing extra books and teaching materials were important not only in raising the standard of teaching and learning but also boosted teachers' morale in teaching activities.

A similar study by Jacoby (2003) identified a problem that dramatic play had disappeared from her preschool's classrooms. She realised that the teachers in her preschool lacked the knowledge of the importance of play. Therefore, in-service training should be organised for them update their knowledge so as to improve their teaching practices. Jacoby desired to know what the attitudes and beliefs about play in preschool were for the teachers in her school. The goal in this study was for the

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teacher's to increase their knowledge of the importance of play, to extend the amount of play time and to be facilitators in the classroom.

Another study by Whitebook as cited in Kinuthia (2009) gave contradicting conclusions. It suggested that the number of years of experience is not a good indicator of quantifying teacher's attitude or behaviour in using or disusing a particular teaching approach. A person's past success or failure determines his/her future response to the same task or activity. In this study, it was expected that teachers who had experienced positive results in the use of play as a teaching method would reinforce the play use behaviour during teaching and learning sessions. A study conducted by Lyabwene (2010) in Tanzania on the relationship between ECE school education policy and actual practice, revealed that a teacher's professional qualifications appear to influence the quality of classroom interaction more than physical setting and resources.

4.2.5 General Implications of the Findings for Early Childhood Education

Based on the findings, there is the need for teachers, school supervisors and other stake holders to collaborate to minimized the challenges of early childhood education in terms of policies, practices and implementation as far as using play as a teaching method is concerned.

The benefits of play are maximized when teachers facilitate play as integral part of children learning. Teacher's support is seen as a necessary component of developmentally appropriate practices. Teacher intervention during play takes on many possibilities from assisting with problem solving, questioning, redirecting undesired behaviours and enticing children to play themes. Teachers must also teach play skills to children who have difficulty entering into play scenario.

Curriculum content for young children is often presented and/or reinforce in the context of play, as teachers introduce play themes, provide materials, and help children expand on their ideas. By helping children when planning roles, encouraging children to talk to peers, posing open ended questions and becoming involved in the play, the teacher extends and enhance learning. For example, one role of the teacher is developing an understanding of the specific skills and knowledge children develop. The teacher by being present in the child's learning environment and on the eye level during the play activity, teacher interactions increase the frequency, duration, and complexity of children's play, with increased levels of linguistic and cognitive competence (McAfee & Leong, 2010).

Another implication for the teacher is that, when planning for play, the teacher should determine specific goals and outcomes they want the children to achieve. Teachers should also individualize for children keeping in mind their current level of cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development. By implication, play and learning should be integrated throughout the day. The Facilitation will be very effective if complemented by a carefully planned classroom environment, prepared environment with learning centres will undoubtedly help children to have enough time and space for play. The last implication to the teacher is that, they must be intentional in their planning to use play as a teaching method. This includes using their knowledge of growth and development to determine what is age and stage appropriate, individually appropriate and culturally appropriate for each child in the classroom. Play serves several functions in contributing to children social and emotional development when they assume new roles that require new social skills and take the perceptiveness of their peers. They negotiate roles, share space and materials,

express different points of view, resolve disputes and persuade their peers to assume certain roles (Kostelnik, Whiren, Soderman & Gregory, 2009).

The early childhood teacher is the facilitator of play in the classroom. The teacher facilitates play by providing appropriate indoor and outdoor play environments. Safety is, of course, the primary concern. Age and developmental levels must be carefully considered in the design and selection of materials. Guidelines for selecting safe and appropriate equipment for outdoor play environments are available in the new minimum standards for operating a pre-school in Ghana. Globally, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's Handbook for Public Playground Safety and the Playground Safety Manual by Jambor and Palmer (1991) are all in use. Similar guidelines are also available for indoor settings (Torelli & Durrett, 1996; Caples, 1996; Ard & Pitts, 1990). Once appropriate environments and materials are in place, regular safety checks and maintenance are needed to ensure that the equipment is sound and safe for continued play.

Teachers also facilitate play by working with children to develop rules for safe indoor and outdoor play. Discussion about the appropriate use of materials, the safe number of participants on each piece of equipment, taking turns, sharing, and cleaning up provides the children with information to begin their play activities. These discussions need to be on-going because some children may need frequent reminders about rules and because new situations may arise (e.g., new equipment).

By providing play materials related to thematic instruction, early childhood teachers can establish links between the children's indoor and outdoor play and their program's curriculum. Thematic props for dramatic play can be placed in the dramatic play centre or stored in prop boxes and taken outside to extend the dramatic play to a new

setting. An art centre in the outdoor play environment may encourage children to explore the possibilities of using leaves, twigs, pebbles, and sand in their three-dimensional art productions. Painting easels and water tables may also be moved outside periodically for children's use during outdoor play periods. Finally, a collection of books stored in a wagon to be taken outside during play time may offer some children a needed alternative to more active play.

As facilitators of children's play, teachers should closely observe children during play periods not only for assessment purposes, as stated earlier, but also to facilitate appropriate social interactions and motor behaviours. It is important that children be the decision-makers during play, choosing what and where to play, choosing roles for each player, and choosing how play will proceed. Occasionally, however, some children will need adult assistance in joining a play group, modifying behaviour, or negotiating a disagreement. Careful observation will help the teacher to decide when to offer assistance and what form that assistance should take.

The implication of the findings on stakeholders in Early Childhood Education is that, sound policies, such as provision of play materials, motivation of teachers and allowing for teacher professional development in forms of granting study leave, organizing in-service training and workshops for teachers in the kindergarten will go a long way to enable them make good use of play all the time in their teaching expedition. Curriculum developers should make frantic efforts to make the curriculum flexible by indicating appropriate use of play in each of the contents to be covered.

Finally, the school supervisors must be well equipped to enable them regularly monitor, supervise and evaluate the efforts of the teachers as far as play as a teaching method in the kindergarten is concerned.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of the study is to investigate the perceptions of kindergarten teachers on the use of play as teaching technique in Afadjato South District of the Volta Region. The chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this study.

The objectives of the study were to:

1. assess the perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as a teaching technique in Afadjato South District

2.   Find out the extent to which kindergarten teachers of Afadjato South District engage in the use of play as a teaching technique.

3. Identify factors that affect the perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as a teaching technique.

4. Evolve strategies aimed at positively affecting the perception of kindergarten teachers of the use of play as a teaching technique.

The study used concurrent mixed-methods approach. The target population of the study was 180 participants. It comprised 20 basic school heads, 20 school supervisors and 140 kindergarten teachers in the Afadjato South District. A sample of 130 participants was selected for the study: 100 kindergarten teachers, 20 basic school heads and 10 school supervisors. Multistage (comprehensive selection, simple random and convenience) sampling technique was used to select the participants. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics

such as frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to analyse the quantitative data. Thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data.

5.1 Summary of Findings

5.1.1 What is the perception of kindergarten teachers' in the Afadjato South District on the use of play as a teaching technique?

The findings show that to a very large, kindergarten teachers' perceptions affected their use of to play as a teaching technique.

5.1.2 Extent to which kindergarten teachers' perception influences their use of play as a teaching technique.

The findings indicated that kindergarten teachers' perceptions positively influenced their use of play as a teaching technique.

5.1.3 Factors influence the perceptions of kindergarten teachers on the use of play as a technique

The findings revealed that among other factors, availability of play materials, test assessment, the kind of motivation teachers receive as a teacher influence the use of play as a method of teaching and the teaching experience were the most influential factors to kindergarten teachers' use of play as a teaching technique

5.1.4 Measures to be employed to positively shape the perception of Afadjato South District kindergarten teachers and help them of play to effect learning.

The findings discovered that availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching experience, organisation of in-service training, motivation for teachers and regular supervision were the major measures that can be employed to positively shape the perception of teachers and help them of play to effect learning.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on these findings the following conclusions have been drawn: To commence with, kindergarten teachers in Afadjato South District were ready and willing to use play as a teaching technique. This suggests that kindergarten teachers in Afadjato South District purposed to use play in their day-to-day learning activities with kindergarten children. Moreover, factors that contributed to kindergarten teachers in Afadjato South District use of play as a teaching technique included: availability of play materials, test assessment, the kind of motivation teachers receive and their teaching experiences. Again, measures that can be adopted to promote the use of play as a teaching technique so as to effect learning included: availability of teaching and learning materials, teaching experience, organisation of in-service training, motivation for teachers and regular supervision.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn the following recommendations are made:

1. Through in-service training, headteachers should encourage kindergarten teachers in Afadjato South District to continuously have positive perception towards play as a teaching technique. This could help them to continuously use play as a teaching technique in teaching kindergarten children in Afadjato South District.

2. Personnel in charge of supervision at the Afadjato South District Education Directorate should educate kindergarten teachers on the use of play as a teaching technique. This could help them use it more often in their lesson delivery; hence, could help children have better understanding of lessons taught.

3. Through capitation grant, the government of Ghana should supply play materials to basic schools. Also, personnel for supervision in the District should organise in-service training for teachers on how to improvise teaching aids in place of the sophisticated ones. This could help make teaching aids available all the time; hence, promoting the use of play as a teaching technique.

4. Headteachers should intensify instructional supervision so as to ensure that kindergarten teachers frequently use play as a teaching technique. Also, head teachers and human resource managers at the education office should assign teachers who have long years of teaching experience to kindergarten classes. This would encourage them to use more of play as a teaching technique.

5.4 Suggestion for Future Studies

Future studies can research into the following topics:

1. Examining the use of play as a teaching technique among kindergarten teachers in the Greater Accra Region, Ghana.

2. Challenges that confront kindergarten teachers in their use of play as a teaching technique: a case of kindergarten teachers in the Afadjato South District.

3. The influence of curriculum in the use of play as a teaching technique among kindergarten teachers in the Afadjato South District.

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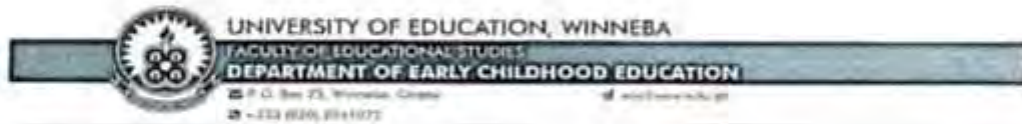
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
P. O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana

FES/DECE/S.6

16th February, 2018

The District Director
of Education,
Afadzato South District
P. M. B
Ve-Golokwati V/R

Dear Sir/Madam,

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

The bearer of this letter, Ms/Mr/Mrs/Rev/Sir, Divine Koku Kekesi, with index number 8160150013, is a Second Year M.Phil student in the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Education, Winneba.

He/she is to collect data as part of the requirement in the University in your noble institution. I shall be grateful if he/she is offered the necessary assistance needed in that direction.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

SAMUEL OPPONG FRIMPONG (PhD)
AG. HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

DEPT. OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & DEVELOPMENT
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION
P. O. Box 25
WINNEBA

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APPENDIX B

ACCEPTANCE LETTER

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE
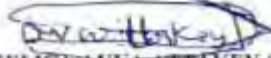
Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The bearer of this letter Mr. Divine Koku Kekesi with index number 8160190013 is a second year M.Phil Student in the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Education, Winneba. He is conducting a research on the topic: *Perception of Early Childhood Education Teachers on the use of Play as a Teaching Method in Afadzato South District of Volta Region".*

He has been granted permission to collect data in your school.

Kindly accord him the necessary assistance needed in that direction.

Thank you.

ANGELICA AKUA ATTAKEY (MRS)
AG. DISTRICT DIRECTOR

DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE
AFADZATO SOUTH DISTRICT
VE-GOLOKUATI

cc: Circuit Supervisors
All Basic Headmasters

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APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR KINDERGATEN TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS HEADS

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Dear Sir/Madam:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on the topic: **PERCEPTIONS OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS USE OF PLAY AS A TEACHING TECHNIQUE IN AFADJATO SOUTH DISTRICT, VOLTA REGION**

The researcher is a student of the University of Education Winneba, conducting this study as part of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy in Early Childhood Education.

Your contribution towards completion of this questionnaire will be highly appreciated and the information provided will be used for academic purposes only. The information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality it deserves. This questionnaire has two sections: Section A and B. Please, answer all the statements in this questionnaire. Thank you.

SECTION A

Background Information

1. Gender:

   Male [ ]   Female [ ]

2. Class you teach.

   KG1   [ ]   KG 2 [ ]

3. Age (in years): 1. 25 and below [ ]   2. 26-30 [ ]   3. 31-35 [ ] 4. 36-40 [ ] 5.

   41 and above [ ]

4. Teaching Experience (in years): 1. 1-10 [ ] 2. 11-20 [ ] 3. 21-30 [ ] 4. 31-40 [ ]
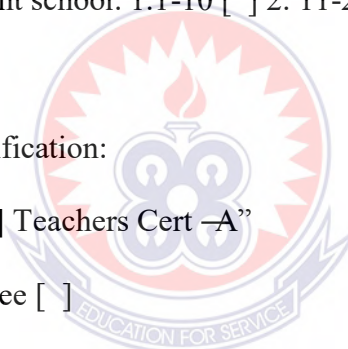
   41 and above [ ]

5. Years in the current school: 1.1-10 [ ] 2. 11-20 [ ] 3. 21-30 [ ] 4. 31-40 [ ]

   41 and above [ ]

6. Educational Qualification:

   MSLC [ ] SHS [ ] Teachers Cert ―A‖

   Diploma [ ] Degree [ ]

SECTION B

Please, respond to all the items on this page by putting a tick (√) in the appropriate space provided using the following scale: 5-Strongly Agree (SA), 4-Agree (A), 3- Undecided (UD), 2- Disagree (D), 1- Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/No	Items	SA	A	U	SD	D
1.	Teachers use play as a teaching method because it helps the children to understand lessons easily					
2.	Some parents see play as a waste of time; hence, teachers don't use it when teaching					
3.	Using play requires a lot of time and since teachers have less time to teach a lesson they don't use it at all					
4.	Teachers use play because it makes children to actively involve themselves in the teaching and learning process					
6.	They use guided play most of the time					
7.	They use guided play only when there is adequate TLMs					
8.	They use guided play when they realize the children are willing to play					
9.	They do not use guided play most of the time					
10	They use guided play when teaching specific lessons in some subjects					
11	Availability of play materials influence the use of play as a method of teaching					
12	My experience as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching					
13	My training background influences the use of play as a method of teaching					
14	The kind of motivation I receive as a teacher influences the use of play as a method of teaching					

15	My perception that play is the most effective method for children influences my use of play as a method of teaching					
16	Regular supervision will help teachers use guided play as a method of teaching					
17	Provision of adequate TLMs will help teachers use guided play as a method of teaching					
18	Motivating teachers would help us use guided play as a method of teaching					
19	Having positive perception on guided play would help teachers use guided play as a method of teaching					
20	Organizing regular in-service training will help teachers use guided play as a method of teaching					

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SCHOOL SUPERVISORS

1. Please, what perceptions do you think kindergarten teachers have of the use of play as teaching technique on kindergarten children?

2. Kindly tell me the extent to which kindergarten teachers use play as teaching technique on kindergarten children?

3. Please, what do you think are some of the factors that affect kindergarten teachers' perception of the use of play as teaching technique?

4. Kindly tell me some of the measures that can be employed to positively shape the perceptions of early kindergarten teachers of the use of play to affect learning?

5. Please, do you have any comment based on what we have discussed so far?