

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN GHANA:  
PERSPECTIVES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE BONO EAST REGION**



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PERSPECTIVES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE BONO EAST REGION**

**INUSAH BOMBANNI ISSAKA**



**A Thesis in the Department of Early Childhood Education,  
Faculty of Educational Studies, submitted to the school of  
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment**

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

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## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

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

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

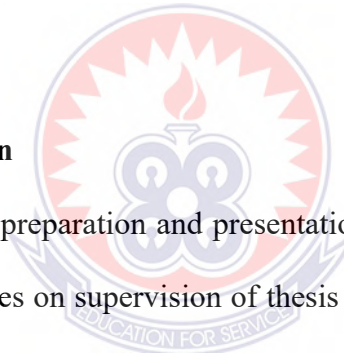
### Supervisor's Declaration

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

**Name of Supervisor:** Prof. Yayra Dzakadzie

**Signature:**.....

**Date:**.....



## **DEDICATION**

I wholeheartedly dedicate this work to my wife and the rest of the family.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest gratitude goes to the almighty Allah for the protection and blessings in the course of carrying out this study. I would like to extend my profound gratitude to my wife Alima Nasipa Abdulai for his support on my education and career. Besides I thank my parents and the rest of the family for their support and prayers. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor; Prof. Yayra Dzakadzie a senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Foundations and other lecturers for their input in the study. I am grateful to them all.



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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perspectives of stakeholders on quality early childhood education in the Bono East Region, Ghana. The study employed the cross-sectional survey design. The convenience sampling techniques was used to sample hundred (100) parents, fifty (50) teachers and four (4) head teachers. Data collection was carried out using structured questionnaires and observation checklist. The data obtained from the structured questionnaire was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS version 21.0) to generate frequency and percentage distributions. The study results indicated that, both parents and teachers had similar views with regard to the indicators of quality ECE. Also, both teachers and head teachers had similar level of knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices. The study results imply that with regards to the dissemination of research-based findings to practitioners, there is a knowledge gap and much needs to be done within the fields of developmental and educational psychology. It is therefore recommended that there should also be continuous in-service training for early childhood teachers. Again, some stakeholders were not too satisfied with the services being rendered therefore the service providers should provide the necessary resources to enhance quality service delivery.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Early childhood education is one of the best investments any country can make in its future workforce (Reckhow, 2013). Thus, enhancing the quality of young children's lives is a national and international priority. There has been increased international attention to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and progress have been made in enhancing the quality and access to early childhood care and education worldwide (Belsky, Burchinal, McCartney, Vandell, Clarke-Stewart & Owen, 2007; Helburn, Culkin & Mocan, 2014). Notwithstanding, little is known regarding the quality of services being rendered in the preschools in Ghana as against the internationally approved quality standards that have been set by researchers and Early Childhood Development (ECD) experts in the field of ECCE and whether those experiences are developmentally appropriate.

In Ghana and Africa as a whole, Early Childhood Education was previously taken as the responsibility of parents and families and not the state (The White Paper, 2014: 7). This makes it difficult for one to find tangible documents and evidence on how Early Childhood Education has evolved over the years. Elements of Early Childhood Education interventions in Ghana can, however, be traced to as early as the 1950s. The focus at that time was largely on the provision of care to young children before starting class one. Ghana and Africa for that matter have a well-organised traditional education and welfare system. The community ensured that every child born was brought up according to its social and valued knowledge, skills and attitudes (Jarvis (2012). As a result of the importance the various communities attached to the education of their children, they contributed all the necessary resources to ensure that the children were

well-equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for their lives Jarvis (2012), to enable them to contribute meaningfully to the social, economic, and technological development of their societies.

Unfortunately, the beliefs and values of the traditional set-up have broken down due to prevailing dynamic social changes. Many young people do not benefit from what used to be available from the community (Jacobson, Mulick & Green, 1998). In most cases, most parents do not have sufficient knowledge, skills and proper attitudes to bringing up their children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This situation became worse with the advent of the new economic situation where both parents are forced to rely on salaries from external employers. This forces children to be abandoned for most of the day either alone or in the care of babysitters who are largely untrained. Grandparents and other members of the community are not around to watch over their nuclear families. Extended families are, as a matter of fact, becoming non-existent (Wallerstein & Smith, 1992) This called for the need for the education of the children at the early stages of their lives and consequently the need for the government to be involved in Early Childhood Education at the earliest possible stage as well as the establishment of pre-schools to cater for the children

Government, teachers, parents and NGOs are vital stakeholders in early care and education, and the choices they make about early care and education have important ramifications for children, families, and the early care and education system (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2012). It has been established that children who receive quality preschool education are more likely to succeed in school and life (Edsall, 2015). Parents are the consumers of the ECCE service and teachers play a significant role in the service delivery and they also have a great influence on childcare quality (Banu, 2014), hence

their perceptions matter. The quality of early care and education is of concern not only to parents, but also to policymakers, caregivers, and researchers. Yet little is known about how parents' perceptions of quality compared to those of other stakeholders (teachers and providers) (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2012; Rose & Elicker, 2017). Parents place greater emphasis on quality child care now more than ever before (Chase & Valarose, 2010; Gamble, Ewing, & Harmon, 2005); however, there are both matches and mismatches in what parents and other stakeholders perceive as important. The Government of Ghana has shown interest in improving the quality of early childhood programmes offered in ECE centres in Ghana. This is reflected in the government's policy statement on the agenda for growth and prosperity, the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (2002-2004). In Ghana there are different forms of ECE programmes delivering services directly to children. These include institutional/center-based preschool programmes which are either publicly or privately owned and managed, and home-based care. Public preschool programmes are mostly community-based programmes while private centres are mostly urban-based (Este, 1997).

In Ghana, it is the few years (usually two to three) which some children go through before entering primary school. The education reforms launched in January 2006, recommended a two-year pre-school education for all children before primary class one. Ghana has made many attempts to reform the model of schooling bequeathed to it by the colonial masters. According to Mankoe (2002), the attempts came in the forms of reforms, review committees and reviews. All the reforms followed at the tail of grave dissatisfaction among the populace of the state of affairs at the education front.

The reforms have largely aimed at improving access and efficiency in the delivery of education and, above all, making education more relevant to national development need. The recommendation on kindergarten education was accepted and the policy was

specifically captured thus; Recognising the crucial role that pre-school education plays in the formative years of the child, especially its potential for overcoming the educational disabilities of children from less favoured family backgrounds, government has decided that kindergarten education should progressively become part of the Universal Free and Compulsory Basic Educational structure (White Paper on the Report on Education Reform Review, 2004).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes are designed to meet the developmental needs of children transiting from home to school and to help children develop to their full potential to become responsible adults in later life (World Health Organization, 2012). It has been established that children who receive quality preschool education are more likely to succeed in school and life (Ramey, 2004). Nevertheless, there has been a concern over the declining standard of education in Ghana, especially in public schools. Many factors have been cited as being responsible for this unfortunate phenomenon, among which is weak foundation at the ECE. Many people have tried to link the problem to lack of logistics, infrastructure, trained and committed teachers among others (Gbate, 2001).

Most of these early childhood center operates under sheds, trees and in old church buildings. In the urban centers most proprietors of pre-school use their garages as classrooms; a very bad practice. Some centers are overcrowded and lack many facilities such as kitchen and toilet. Those who have kitchen facilities do not have qualified people to cook meals for children (Education International, 2010). Most of these centers lack qualified teachers and they do not follow the syllabus. The centers are accused of being inefficient and as lacking the necessary material and human resources needed for

providing effective care and education (Boakye, 1993). In fact, no matter what factors cause the problems, it is certain that they affect ECE.

Furthermore, these challenges might create adverse effects on the quality of teaching and learning and total development of the children. There is therefore the need to understand what they are, so as to take necessary precautions to eliminate their negative effects through the recommendations that may come out of the results of this study. In other words, identifying the stakeholders (teachers and parents) perspectives on quality ECE is a necessity, when detected could become easier to deal with and ways for addressing them could be found.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perspectives of stakeholders (teachers and parents) on quality early childhood education in the Bono East Region, Ghana.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives are to:

1. Investigate stakeholders' (teachers and parents) views on quality ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana.
2. Examine the quality indicators stakeholders, perceive as important in ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana.
3. Ascertain stakeholder's knowledge on Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) in ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:



1. What are the stakeholders' (teachers and parents) views on quality ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana?
2. What quality indicators do stakeholders perceive as important in ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana?
3. Do stakeholders have knowledge on Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) in ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study would help identify the stakeholders that are actively involved in the implementation of early childhood education programmes and policies in the region. Also, the findings of the study would reveal the stakeholders' perception of early childhood education and how these perceptions influence the performance of their roles to ensure the successful implementation of early childhood education policies and programmes. Many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) may find this study important as the findings will lay a foundation on where to base on community awareness of early childhood education. This would help policy planners to plan relevant policies and programmes that would promote early childhood education in the region.

The findings would also help the government to design pragmatic strategies to educate other stakeholders on the relevance of early childhood education in the region so that they would all put their hands together to ensure the successful implementation of early childhood education programmes and quality primary education in the region. The findings of this research will add to the body of literature for future scholars and researchers to develop an insight mind, and broaden their knowledge about Early Childhood Care and Education.

### 1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The delimitation of the study explains the extent to which the research area is explored and specifies the parameters within which the study was operating. However, the study will be restricted to Parents who have their children in early childhood schools and ECE teachers who are involved in early childhood education activities in the Bono East Region, Ghana.

### 1.8 Definition of Key Terms

The definitions of terms are used in this study.

- ❖ **Early Childhood Development:** All programs, services or activities that are provided to children in order to promote holistic development.
- ❖ **Early Schooling:** School education children enroll before the age of six years
- ❖ **Perceptions:** Opinions, views, insights or understandings of an individual over something
- ❖ **Pre-School:** Formal education before primary school education.
- ❖ **Stakeholders:** Stakeholders refer to any group that is affected by organisational discussions and policies (Robbins & De Cenzo, 2001:41). Stakeholders are encouraged to get involved in the learning of their children from an early age.

### 1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one covers the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, Significance of the study, delimitation of the study, definition of operational terms and organization of the study. Chapter two entails reviewed literature related to the study. Chapter three is about the methodology used for the study which included the research approach, research design, population, sampling procedures, data collection instrument,

and data analysis. Chapter four has the presentation and analysis of results and a discussion of the findings. Chapter five deals with the summary of the key findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature in relation to the study. The literature reviewed covered the following areas:

1. Concept of Perception
2. Quality in Early Childhood Education
3. Stakeholders Perceptions of Early Childhood Education
4. Early Childhood Education
5. The Global View on Early Childhood Education
6. Importance of Early Childhood Education
7. The Involvement of Stakeholders in Early Childhood Development
8. Summary

#### 2.2 Concept of Perception

Amissah and Agbeke (2015) defined perception as a process of building on our ill-defined and incomplete sensory experiences. Perception is any act or process of knowing objects, facts and truths whether by sense, experience or by thought; it is awareness of consciousness. Perception is a reference to sensation of an external object (Allport, 2014).

To Davidoff (2018) perception is a cognitive process, a way of knowing about the world. To her, perception is the point where cognition and reality meet-that is information must be taken into the mind before one can do anything else with it. Petry and Meyer (2016) said perception involves interaction or transaction between an individual and his environment; the individual receives information from the external

world which in some ways modifies his experience and behaviour. The term perception refers to how organisations or individuals respond to the stimulus picked by their sense organs. It is used to be thought of as something analogous to such mechanical processes as photography of an object or recording sound on a record. That analogy of mechanical sequence is inadequate since it ignores the fact that perception is influenced by interest, needs and past experience (Lindesmith, 2010).

Yinger (2017) is of the view that perception in its general sense is an experience produced by an outside stimulation of the senses. Meador and Rogers (2019) also define perception as a hypothesis or prognosis for action that comes into being in awareness when stimuli impinge on the organism. Bruner (2017) explained perception as a decision process involving the placement of incoming information into a network of meaningful categories developed largely from prior learning. It can be seen from the above that almost all the definitions point to the fact that perception is a process. It is a process that is ongoing. It occurs over a period of time.

### **2.3 Quality in Early Childhood Education**

The study of quality in ECE has become increasingly relevant because research has continued to demonstrate consistent associations between various aspects of classroom quality and improved social and academic outcomes for young children (Belsky, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Van IJzendoorn, 2007). Although quality continues to be a major focus of research in ECE, defining this construct continues to challenge the field, both methodologies in research and practice in quality enhancement initiatives aimed at ensuring optimal experiences for children in early childhood education programmes (Howes, Burchinal, Pianta, Bryant, Early, Clifford & Barbarin, 2008; Mashburn, 2008). Definitions of quality in child care vary in accordance with the perspectives of

stakeholders (Huntsman, 2008; Ishimine, Tayler, & Bennet, 2010). Research has predominantly adopted a developmental perspective, where high quality care is defined as that which promotes optimal child outcomes in all domains of development, while low quality care is associated with negative outcomes for children.

A number of researchers have indicated that structural indicators of quality are especially useful since they can be quantified and measured, allowing researchers to estimate the relative quality of particular programmes. They can also be regulated through licensing or used to set standards in accreditation systems (Colbert, 2002; Hayes, Palmer, & Zaslow, 1990; Huntsman, 2008; NHSPS, 2002). Examples of indicators of structural quality posits by Espinosa (2002), cited in Casper and Theilheimer (2010) include;

**Staff to child ratio:** This refers to the ratio of the number of children per caregiver. A number of studies have found that the ratio significantly affects children's behaviour and child-adult interaction (Howes, 1997; Phillips & Howes, 1987). According to Casper and Theilheimer (2010), there is no definitive answer when it comes to the question of the ideal number of children to a staff. However, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) suggests a ratio of 3:1 for infants, 6:1 for toddlers, 8:1 for three year olds, 10:1 for four and five year olds, and 15 to 18:1 for children in the primary class (Bredekamp, 1987).

**Group size:** This refers to a specific number of children, distinct from the larger population of children, who are together regularly and interact with each other, and with one or more specific staff member, in an assigned space (Colbert, 2004). Researchers have identified group size as an iron triangle, variable in Who Cares for America's Children (Hayes, Palmer, & Zaslow, 1990). The authors concluded that "if there is a

single critical component to quality, it rests on the relationship between the child and the teacher/caregiver and in the ability of the adult to be responsive to the child”.

**Caregiver education and/or training:** This aspect of structural quality develops a teacher/caregiver’s skill in working with children. A caregiver with the Child Development credential or an early childhood education degree or certification provides better quality care than a provider with a degree in an unrelated field (National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (NAECP, 1998). The trained childcare staff quietly and privately guide the children. They do not keep telling children what they should not do. They teach children how to behave well. For example, if a child runs with scissors, the teacher shows the child how to sit and use the scissors on paper. The teacher thus, permits the child to use the scissors while seated. For children who cannot remain seated despite all efforts, the teacher guides such children to another activity in which such energy is directed into more appropriate use.

**The physical environment:** The quality of the learning environment has a significant impact on learning outcomes for children. A safe and welcoming physical environment plays an important role in enhancing children’s learning and development. The characteristics of the physical environment include the location, accessibility, safety, flexibility, scale and visibility (OECD, 2010). The environment of service includes: indoor and outdoor play areas, the equipment available at the service, and the resources that are provided for the children. Both inside and outside environments should be attractive and stimulating, inviting curiosity and exploration. The environment, resources and equipment should meet the specific needs of the infants, toddlers and young children.

High quality services offer children more than just the opportunity to play in open spaces or with a range of equipment, they offer a variety of opportunities for learning

and discovery through play. These opportunities may include planned areas set up for dramatic play, block building and construction; quiet spaces for reading, art and creativity; or room set aside for children to experiment with music and movement.

### **2.3 Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Education**

Developmentally Appropriate Practice, often shortened to DAP, is an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young children develop and learn. Its framework is designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development Ritter, (2019).

The expanded version of the guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987) presents a component of appropriate and inappropriate practice for five age groups: infants, toddlers, 3-year-olds, 4- and 5-year-olds, and primary grade children. The organization of the guidelines begins with a general position statement or statement of philosophy concerning developmental appropriateness in programmes for children from birth to age 8; the guidelines, then provide a list of specific practices which are designated as "appropriate" or "inappropriate" for each age group and a developmentally appropriate teaching practices suitable to match the capabilities and interests of children, and the expectations of the curriculum and teaching methods. Judging from the references cited in the 1987 edition (including Piaget, Erikson, Biber, Asher, Rubin, and Forman), the content of the guidelines was strongly influenced by those developmental and educational theories and research findings which emphasize direct experience, adult warmth, concrete materials, child-initiated activity, and social interaction.



## 2.4 Stakeholders Perceptions of Early Childhood Education

Ceglowski and Bacigalupa (2012) reviewed stakeholder perceptions about childcare quality, which included parents' perceptions. They reported that child care is often used by parents as a means of enhancing academic and social skill growth and development, even among parents who do not need childcare due to employment constraints. They also found that many parents believe that childcare centers can offer developmental opportunities for their children that they cannot offer, including social opportunities and exposure to academic skills. However, their review was short and limited likely due to the scarcity of studies on parent perceptions about childcare quality conducted prior to 2012. In current times, families rely more on childcare services than they did in the past (Kim & Fram, 2009). According to Mulligan *et al.*, (2005), approximately 60% of young children under the age of 6 years have been enrolled in a childcare programme on regular basis.

In the U.S., the quality of childcare varies greatly with most programs falling into the "average quality" category and very few falling into the "high quality" category (Cryer, Tietze, & Wessels, 2012). In addition to high quality care being limited in the U.S., high quality care is also something that tends to be out of most parents' budgets. Thus, it is incredibly important that parents are able to discern the relevant markers of quality in the childcare that is available and affordable because childcare quality matters for child growth, development, and learning in cognitive, social, and health domains (Love, Lucas, Kelbert, & Bedrosian, 2018; Peisner, 2000; Burchinal, Roberts, Nabors & Bryant, 1996; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1990).

Yen, Zhang, Deng, Usman, Smith, Parker-Thornburg & Behringer, (2014) conducted a study in rural America on the perceptions of rural mothers, child care providers,

teachers and employers on child care. Mothers in their study reported that they were "very satisfied" with the quality of child care services they were receiving and the degree of employer support. Although the majority of childcare providers had a limited infrastructure, support and information, they had positive attitudes toward training, perceived relatively little stress, and were "extremely satisfied" with the amount of support received. The teachers rated children as most deficient in problem-solving skills (32%), paying attention (28%), taking turns and sharing (25%), and math and literacy readiness (25%).

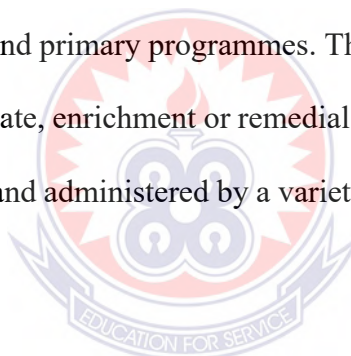
Similarly, Mathews, Thornburg, & Ispa (2018) indicated in their study in Columbia that the majority of rural mothers were "very satisfied" with their childcare arrangements that had been independently rated by a team of researchers as being of low to average quality, hence child care satisfaction may be more a measure of parental well-being than the wellbeing of the children. In Ghana, however, there has not been any study conducted that compared how parents and teachers perceive the quality of ECD centres. This study therefore will serve as a reference for future research.

In summary, the current study reviews the literature on parents' and teachers' perceptions of quality in Early Childhood Programmes. The literature reviewed in this study suggests that there has been a significant amount of research that extols the benefits of quality early childhood education (Imig, 2011), how one defines quality varies among parents, teachers, administrators and policy makers (Huntsman, 2017; Ishimine, Tayler, & Bennet, 2010). Based on an extensive search of the literature, among the frequently stated indicators parents and teachers deem as important in childcare quality were healthy and safe environments, warm and nurturing providers, continued education and training for providers, cost and location (Ceglowski &

Bacigalupa, 2012). However, the researcher found previous reviews to be limited likely due to a lack of studies on stakeholders' perceptions of childcare quality. This study provides a more complete understanding of why this topic is necessary to explore as well as how parents and teachers perceive childcare quality.

## **2.5 Early Childhood Education**

Early childhood education involves any group programme serving children from birth to 8 years of age that is designed to promote children's intellectual, social, emotional, language, and physical development and learning (Bredekamp & Copple, 2014). This translates into a wide array of programmes attended by children of many different ages. Early childhood education includes programmes for infants and toddlers, as well as preschool, kindergarten and primary programmes. These programmes may be half-day or full-day, public or private, enrichment or remedial in focus, targeted at low, medium or high-income families and administered by a variety of institutions in the community (Kolstelnik, 1992).



## **2.6 The Global View on Early Childhood Education**

Worldwide, Early Childhood Education has been recognized as a very important stage in the education of a child and the subsequent educational development of an individual. According to UNESCO (2009), "Recently, national governments have begun to recognize the power of ECE to develop equitable educational provision for all children." UNESCO (2009) reports that several countries such as Ghana, Gambia and Kenya have developed ECE plans for poor, remote and disadvantaged children so that they could achieve universal basic education by the year 2015. Numerous studies can be cited that show how ECE has been valued and established in many countries. Taguma, Litjens & Makowiecki, (2012) indicates that ECE is a topic of increased policy

interest in Japan, where improving quality in the ECE sector is a subject of growing importance. They have identified five effective policy levers to encourage quality in the sector: 1) quality goals and regulations; 2) curriculum and guidelines; 3) workforce; 4) family and community engagement; and 5) data, research and monitoring.” Of the five aspects, Japan considers improving quality in the workforce as a priority; it considers well-educated, well trained professionals the key factor in providing high-quality ECEC with the most favorable cognitive and social outcomes for children.

According to Teguma, et.al (2012), Japanese preschool education has been influenced more or less by foreign educational philosophies and methods, such as the Frobelian Method, since the latter half of the 19th century; child-centred education from America and Europe since the 1920’s, including that of Dewey and Montessori; nursing theory from the Soviet Union from the 1930’s to the 1950’s; and the Reggio Emilia approach from Italy since the 1990’s. In any case, they have been digested and adapted to conform to the Japanese climate and context, and are in the process of changing.

To show how ECE has been valued in Japan, Zhang Yan (2010), a researcher from China who visited Japanese ECE settings in 1996, made several observations of the characteristics of Japanese pre-school education. One of the observations the researcher made is that free playtime was much longer than that of Chinese ECE institutions, and teachers tended to play with children just like their peers, playing the hidden role of activating children’s play. This approach was quite different from that used by Chinese ECE teachers. The other observation made is that Japanese ECE did not overprotect young children, letting them wear fewer clothes with their feet often bare, and experience small and slight injuries. On the other hand, teachers kept contact with parents about children’s daily health, behaviour, and learning, using notebooks for two-

way communication. The researcher also observed that on the playground there were slopes, small hills, some tall trees, and various places where children could play with sand, water, and small animals and plants, and where children could enjoy trying and erring. Outdoor activities as well as indoor activities were very well facilitated. Further, educational content was greatly related to seasonal events or things. Some traditional festivals, which were transported from China a long time ago but had already vanished, were still alive in Japanese kindergartens and day nurseries. Finally, the researcher observed that the kindergarten pupils' lunch boxes made by their mothers were beautiful like fine art; many daily personal items used in kindergarten were mothers' handmade.

Many other scholars showed how ECE was valued and managed around the globe. In China, however, studies exist that describe the nature of China's ECE in both urban areas and rural areas. Preschool education is also seen as vital there and begins at age of three (3). According to Emily and Albert (2007), pre-school education was one of the targets in the 1985 education reform. This reform articulated that pre-school facilities were to be established in buildings made available by public enterprises, production teams, municipal authorities, local groups, and families. The government announced that it depended on individual organizations to sponsor their own preschool education and that preschool education was to become a part of the welfare services of various government organizations, institutes and collectively operated enterprises. Costs for preschool education varied according to services rendered. Officials also called for more preschool teachers with more appropriate training.

Although the Ministry of Education is officially responsible for promoting ECE in China, only a small number of ECE institutions are run by government departments and

few of them are located in rural China. With only low levels of support from local governments, most ECE institutions in rural China suffer from unqualified teachers, poorly developed curricula and inadequate and poorly maintained facilities (World Bank, 1999; Yu, 2005; Zeng, Zhu, & Chen, 2007).

Doherty (2018) writes that the extent to which an ECEC program is accessible for a child depends upon several factors. First, there has to be available space and then, if there are eligibility criteria, the child or family has to be able to meet them. In addition, if there is a fee, the parent has to be able to afford it. Finally, the program must be appropriate (i.e. able to meet both the child's and the family's needs).

In Ghana, the picture and the drive towards ECE are not different from other countries. The Jomtien World Declaration on Education For All of 1990, the Dakar Conference of 2000 and 2000 Millennium Conference emphasized the need to provide Education For All by the year 2015 (UNESCO Report, 2015). Since this was an important milestone in the history of education, Early Childhood Education fraternity was not an exception in many, if not all African countries. Ghana was among the African countries that acknowledged ECE inclusion in the main education system.

The Ghanaian government has considered Early Childhood Education of great importance to the nation's Ministry of Education (MoE). Currently, under the MoE, educational provision is guided by the national education policy document, *Educating Our Future*, which focuses on equitable access to quality education at all levels (MoE, 1996). The Fifth National Development Plan 2006-2010, a policy paper outlining educational provision by the MoE, defines Early Childhood Care, Development and Education as the level of education, both informal and formal, which a child from birth to age six undergoes prior to reaching the compulsory age (seven years) of entry to a

primary or basic school (MoE, 2006). This policy paper outlines critical strategies to develop a national Early Childhood Care, Development and Education curriculum framework, to produce and distribute teaching materials for early learners. Additionally, it states the need to develop monitoring and evaluation instruments for this level of education. Regarding the development of ECE, it further notes major challenges in this sub-sector in past years: fragmented curriculum; lack of standards, monitoring and supervision; and the confinement of ECE to pre-schooling instead of offering a more comprehensive learning experience (Kamerman, 2006).

The MoE states, in its Strategic Plan 2018-2007, that Early Childhood Care and Education is an integral part of basic education, especially in rural areas. Pre-schools are operated by local authorities, Faith Based Organization, local communities, NGOs and private individuals (UNESCO, 2006). However, because education at this level is in the hands of private providers, financing of early childhood care and education has remained unclear. Home-based pre-schools in urban areas have mushroomed, albeit at the expense of quality education. It has been documented that much of the curricula of private pre-schools are outdated and inadequate for this age group and the home environments are not conducive to learning (UNESCO, 2006).

## **2.7 Importance of Early Childhood Education**

In recent decades, studies have shown that early childhood education is critical in preparing children to enter and succeed in the (grade school) classroom, diminishing their risk of social-emotional mental health problems and increasing their self-sufficiency as adults. In other words, the child needs to be taught to rationalize everything and to be open to interpretations and critical thinking. There is no subject to be considered taboo, starting with the most basic knowledge of the world he lives in,

and ending with deeper areas, such as morality, religion and science. Visual stimulus and response time as early as 3 months can be an indicator of verbal and performance IQ at age 4 years (Aidoo, 2006). By providing education in a child's most formative years, ECE also has the capacity to preemptively begin closing the educational achievement\_gap between low and high-income students before formal schooling begins. Freeman and Dohoo (2018) report that children that come from low socio economic status (SES) often begin school already behind their higher SES peers; on average, by the time they are three, children with high SES have three times the number of words in their vocabularies than children from low SES. Participation in ECE, however, has been proven to increase high school graduation rates, improve performance on standardized tests, and reduce both grade repetition and the number of children placed in special education.

Especially when the first wave of results from the Perry Preschool Project was published, there was widespread consensus that the quality of early childhood education programs correlates with gains in low-income children's IQs and test scores, decreased grade retention, and lower special education rates (Freeman & Dohoo, 2018).

Several studies have reported that children enrolled in ECE increase their IQ scores by 4-11 points by the age of five, while a Milwaukee study reported a 25-point gain. In addition, students who had been enrolled in the Abecedarian Project, an often-cited ECE study, scored significantly higher on reading and math tests by age fifteen than comparable students who had not participated in early childhood programs. In addition, 36% of students in the Abecedarian Preschool Study treatment group would later enroll in four-year colleges compared to 14% of those in the control group (Freeman & Dohoo, 2018).



Beyond benefitting societal good, ECE also significantly impacts the socioeconomic outcomes of individuals. For example, by age 26, students who had been enrolled in Chicago Child-Parent Centres were less likely to be arrested, abuse drugs, and receive food stamps; they were more likely to have high school diplomas, health insurance and full-time employment (Freeman & Dohoo, 2018). Unlike other areas of education, early childhood care and education (ECCE) places a strong emphasis on developing the whole child – attending to his or her social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs – in order to establish a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. ‘Care’ includes health, nutrition and hygiene in a warm, secure and nurturing environment; and ‘education’ includes stimulation, socialization, guidance, participation, learning and developmental activities. ECCE begins at birth and can be organized in a variety of non-formal, formal and informal modalities, such as parenting education, health-based mother and child intervention, care institutions, child-to-child programmes, home-based or centre-based childcare, kindergartens and pre-schools. Different terms to describe ECCE are used by different countries, institutions and stakeholders, such as early childhood development (ECD), early childhood education and care (ECEC), early childhood care and development (ECCD), with Early Childhood Care and Education as the UNESCO nomenclature (Global Campaign for Education, 2015).

As research shows, children’s care and educational needs are intertwined. Poor care, health, nutrition, and physical and emotional security can affect educational potentials in the form of mental retardation, impaired cognitive and behavioural capacities, motor development delay, depression, and difficulties with concentration and attention Shankar, Chung & Frank, (2017). Inversely, early health and nutrition interventions, such as iron supplementation, deworming treatment and school feeding, have been

shown to directly contribute to increased pre-school attendance. Studies have demonstrated better child outcomes through the combined intervention of cognitive stimulation and nutritional supplementation than through either cognitive stimulation or nutritional supplementation alone. Quality ECCE integrates educational activities, nutrition, health care and social services (Global Campaign for Education, 2015).

## **2.8 The Involvement of Stakeholders in Early Childhood Development**

Ornstein and Levine (2000) maintain that if the involvement of stakeholders started today, we could ensure that virtually every child born in the 21st century would be reading well by age nine and that every child now in primary school would graduate from high school a reader. Foundations for Learning (FFL) is a campaign that is now in place and used by the government to remedy the situation of learners who are unable to read and write, a situation which at a later stage, affects their performance at the matric level. Through this campaign, stakeholders are encouraged to get involved in the learning of their children from an early age. Daily Sun Newspaper notes that every child has the right to the best possible start in life and that early childhood education (0 to 9 years) represents the most critical phase in the development cycle of human beings. ECD services are recognised as the ideal phase for the passing on of values that are important for the building of a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society. The Department of Health and Social Development is therefore geared towards increasing support for ECD centres in an effort to build a solid foundation for future leaders. Support is provided by immunizing the learners to prevent diseases, monitoring cleanliness around the centre by deploying inspectors to check the surroundings once a month, and even providing food for them considering the fact that some are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Rudolph and Cohen (2010) argue that what happens to children long before they dream of entering school markedly influences their capacity to grow in school. Relationships with the parents, the outside world, health, nutrition and space are among the many factors that are necessary for positive growth. Criessel (1992:23) notes that parents are also given an educational responsibility as far as raising their kids is concerned. He further mentions that the child appeals to the parents to act as helpers, especially during the first years of schooling such as helping them with their school work at home. This results in parents accepting a particular responsibility for the well-being of the child, his care, protection, development and growth towards adulthood. A link, therefore, should be established between home and school to assist the child. Educators should also have knowledge of the child and respect the child so that the development process does not get compromised.

According to De Vries (1986) the appearance of the most fundamental characteristics and functions of man depend upon an event known as child development. In the concept of child development, there is in it the idea of change or progress. The child development stage is a vulnerable stage which calls for stakeholders to work together with the school to develop the child holistically. Child development as a process is guided by specific principles of development such as the principle of biological growth, principle of helplessness, principle of safety and protection, principle of exploration and principle of emancipation.

Fleish (2017) suggests that there should be a link between literacy in the home and pre-literacy development in early childhood centers. He indicates that if children do not acquire basic pre-literacy skills it might be due to a lack of books and literacy objects at home and in the pre-school environment. Many families struggle to play an enabling

role in pre-literacy skills development due to a lack of information. The District Development Support Programme (DDSP) is an initiative by the government to improve primary education. The programme is intended to give a boost to the universalization of primary education, by increasing enrolment, retention, and attendance and simultaneously impacting nutrition for learners in primary classes.

Meier and Marais (2007) define parental involvement as a dynamic process whereby educators and parents work together for the ultimate benefit of the learner. The process involves collaborating on educational matters, setting goals, finding solutions, implementing and evaluating shared goals as well as inspiring and maintaining trust between home and the school. The term “parents” therefore refers to all advice caregivers, whether legally appointed or not. Parental involvement is therefore seen as a very important aspect of the successful schooling and education of the young learner, and it requires commitment from the government, parents and teachers.

## **2.9 Summary of the Literature Review**

From the viewpoints and perspectives of various education experts, it is clear that parental involvement and participation in school activities such as attending parents’ information evenings, parents consultations and parents’ meeting is vital. Any answer to the question of how to deal with stakeholder participation in Early Childhood Development requires a multi-faceted approach consisting of education, clear public standards and personal responsibility. All these elements are important for the effective implementation of the programme.

Parental involvement requires that parents participate in one or more school activities such as assisting educators during school trips, fundraising and even providing some resources. In order to achieve maximum effectiveness, all stakeholders must take centre

stage in the child's educational process. A good parent or stakeholder must always take the interest of children into account. To make provision for the interest of children, stakeholders must actively participate in school activities in these centers. Effective two-way communication between school and home is the key function of the school which enhances the child's learning. The next chapter will discuss the research design and methodology used to collect data. This will be done by indicating the research approach, kinds of data, target population, data collection and analysis methods.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research method and various steps adopted in carrying out the study. It was organized under the following sub-headings; research approach, research design, area of the study, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, instrument for data collection, validation of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, method of data collection and methods of data analysis.

#### **3.2 Research Approach**

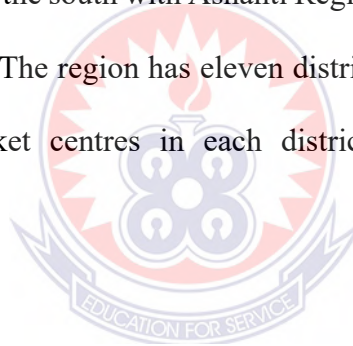
This research approach will involve conducting a literature review to gather existing knowledge on quality of early childhood education in Ghana: perspectives of stakeholders in the bono east region. Additionally, interviews or surveys will be conducted with a diverse group of teachers to gain insights into their experiences and early childhood education in Ghana: perspectives of stakeholders in the bono east region.

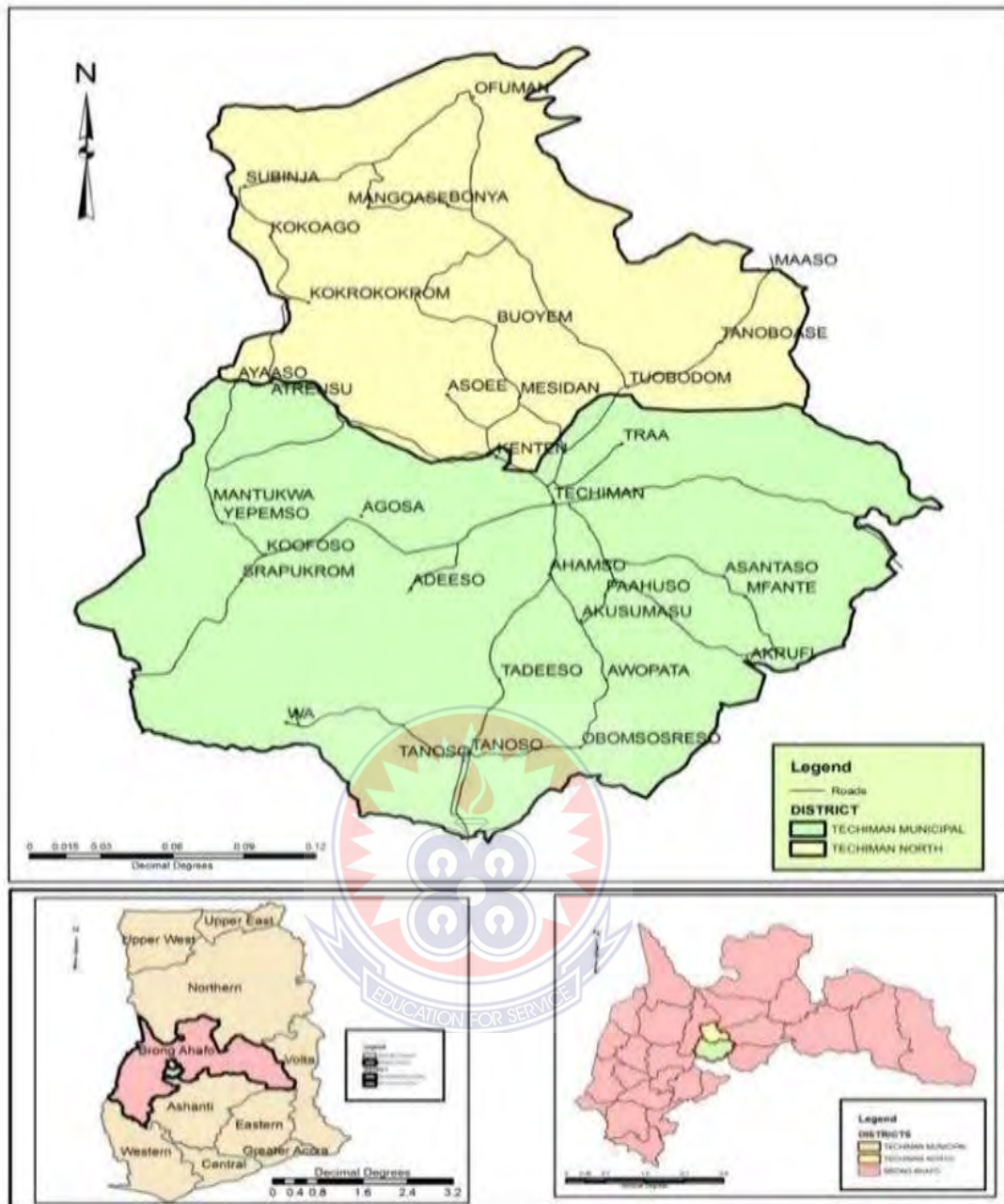
#### **3.3 Research Design**

The study employed the cross-sectional survey design. A cross-sectional survey is used to collect information at just one point in time from a subset of the target population (Lee, 2018). This design was used because a small sample of stakeholders involved in early childhood education was studied at a fixed point in time. Bryman (2008), contends that cross-sectional design helps to deal with various categories or cases simultaneously. The design relies on existing phenomenon at the time of data collection than change resulting from interventions. Cross-sectional was preferred because of its ability to deal with various cases and variables (Bryman, 2008).

### 3.4 Setting

The study was conducted in the Bono East region of Ghana. The region is part of the new regions recently created by the government of Ghana, created from formally Brong Ahafo Region (Local Government Services, 2018). The region is rich in good soils and climatic conditions. Vegetation types in the region consist of semi-deciduous forests and fertile soil conducive for the production of a variety of cash and food crops like cashew, cocoa, maize, onion, and groundnut among others. The region has a population estimate of 1,179,649, (Local Government Services, 2018) total land area of 39,557 square kilometres (Ghana Districts, 2019), with an annual average rainfall of 750 to 1050 mm. The region shares boundaries with Bono Region to the west, to the north with Northern Region, to the south with Ashanti Region and to the east with Volta Lake (Ghana Districts, 2019). The region has eleven districts with Techiman as its regional capital. There are market centres in each district which promote business and commerce.





**Figure 1: The region has eleven districts with Techiman as its regional capital**

**Source:** Researcher, (2023).

### 3.5 Population

The target group of the present study was parents and ECE teachers. Parents were selected since they are the immediate guidance, teachers play a vital role in the delivery of childcare quality This target group was chosen for a specific purpose namely, to find



the perceptions of stakeholders (teachers and parents) in the quality early childhood education in the Bono East Region, Ghana.

### **3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique**

A total of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents from the target population were sampled for the study comprising one hundred (100) teachers, fifty (50) parents in the Bono East Region.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where units are selected for inclusion in the sample because they are the easiest for the researcher to access. This can be due to geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or willingness to participate in the research Obilor, (2023). A convenience sampling technique was used to recruit both parents and teachers. After explaining the purpose of the study to the heads, the researcher recruited parents and teachers who met the inclusion criteria and were willing to participate in the study. This procedure was followed for all the selected pre-schools until the targeted sample size was obtained (Okongo, Ngao, Rop & Wesonga, 2015).

### **3.7 Research Instruments**

Data was elicited using three versions of a structured questionnaire (teachers and parents) and an observation checklist.

#### **3.7.1 The structured questionnaire**

The structured questionnaire consisting both open-ended and closed-ended questions was used to obtain information on:

- Socio-demographic characteristics of teachers and parents. Examples of these characteristics are gender, age, marital status, number of children, number of years

of teaching experience, educational attainment, professional training attended, duration of training and salary.

- Knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices . This was assessed using 11 items from an adapted Classroom Practices Inventory (CPI) based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)'s Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practices for 3-5 year-old children (Hyson, Hirsh-Pasek & Rescorla, 1990). Respondents were to indicate if they agreed or disagreed to the 11 developmentally appropriate or inappropriate practices.

### **3.7.2 Observation Checklist**

The flexibility of launching the observation checklist allows for a seamless integration into various workflows and ensures that it can be accessed by different users across different time zones (Ebert & De Neve, 2001). This feature enhances the efficiency and accessibility of the checklist, making it a valuable tool for organizations with diverse teams and schedules. The researcher also modified an observation checklist to be used at the ECE facilities. A description of the centers' amenities, furnishings, educational resources, kid characteristics, position as a teacher, and interactions between teachers and students was given by the checklist. The ECE environment was described using the items on the check list. There was room for the observer to provide more remarks on noteworthy topics or provide clarifications as needed.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedure**

Before commencing the exercise of data collection in the field, an initial visit was made to all four pre-schools before collection of data began where the researcher contacted the heads of the selected pre-schools to ask permission to carry out the research. The researcher had an introductory letter from the Head of Department of Early Childhood

Education, University of Education, Winneba. Not less than five days were spent in each visited school. Before administering any instrument, the researcher got permission from the head teachers of the selected schools. The researcher also got consent from all participants. The teachers were interviewed at each particular school. The researcher winded up data collection at each selected school on the sixth day by embarking on non-participant observation in the classroom learning process. After conducting interviews and carrying out lesson observation on teachers, the researcher started interviewing the parents from areas where the schools were located and also a few of the government officials to get their perceptions of early childhood education in the Bono East Region, Ghana.

### **3.9 Data Analysis Procedure**

After the data collection, data for each of the research questions were hand-coded, edited and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 21.0) computer software to generate mean, frequency and percentage distributions.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were taken into account in this study by assuring all respondents' confidentiality. The names of all the respondents in this study remained anonymous. The researcher also came up with questions that did not cause psychological harm to the respondents emotionally. The researcher also sought permission from the stakeholders and obtained consent from the actual participant before collecting the data. The respondents were further guaranteed that the data obtained was to be used for academic purpose only. The researcher further ensured that the data collected was treated confidentially as it was not shared with anyone to maintain high levels of confidentiality. Confidentiality was also ensured by using pseudonyms for the schools

which participated in this study to hide their identity. The respondents were also fully informed about the aim of the study.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The purpose of the study was to investigate the perspectives of stakeholders (teachers and parents) on quality early childhood education in the Bono East Region, Ghana. The analysis was based on the responses given to the questionnaire. Information obtained is presented in the form of tables and figures where appropriate. The data analysis has been presented in two main parts: the demographic data and the analysis of data on the research questions.

#### 4.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

**Table 1. Socio-demographic Profile of Parents and Teachers**

Characteristics	Teachers (N=100)		Parents (N=50)	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Age (yrs)</b>				
< 30	11	11.0	27	54.0
30 – 39	66	66.0	17	34.0
40 and above	23	23.0	6	12.0
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single/Divorced	8	8.0	19	38.0
Married	92	92.0	31	62.0
<b>Highest Educational Level</b>				
S.H.S/Voc./Tech.	21	21.0	20	40.0
Tertiary	79	79.0	30	60.0
<b>Occupation</b>				
Formal	86	86.0	12	33.0
Informal	14	14.0	38	67.0
<b>Level of Income (GHC)</b>				
100 – 500	15	15.0	33	66.0
501 – 1000	26	26.0	15	30.0
1001 – 2000	29	29.0	1	2.0
2001 – 3000	23	23.0	1	2.0
<b>Above 3000</b>	7	7.0	0	0.0

**Source:** Field Survey, (2023)

#### **4.2.1 Age of Respondents**

Parents were aged between twenty-five (25) and forty-nine (49) years with a mean age of  $35.5 \pm 4.98$  years. The ages of teachers also ranged between twenty (20) and eighty (80) years with a mean age of  $31.4 \pm 10.66$ . Majority (88%) of the teachers were aged below forty years while seventy-seven percent (77%) of parents were aged less than forty years. Parents had a slightly higher mean age than the teachers (see Table 4.1).

#### **4.2.2 Marital Status of Respondents**

A sizable proportion of teachers (92%) are married, with the remaining (8%) being single or divorced. However, high representation seems to give an impression that both parents were in-charge of the upbringing of the child. Over a third of the parents (62%) were married while close to two-thirds (38%) were single or divorced (Table1).

#### **4.2.3 Educational Levels Attained by Respondents**

All the respondents had formal education ranging between senior high school and tertiary level. Close to three-quarters (79%) of teachers had educational training up to the secondary/vocational/technical level while the remaining had tertiary training. As regards parents, over a third (40%) had secondary level training with the remaining having tertiary training (Table 1). This suggests that a higher number of the teachers might not have any professional training. A number of studies have linked teachers' formal education with better quality care for children (Arnett, 1989; Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early & Barbarin, 2005; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000). Arnett (1989) found that teachers completing a 4-year college degree engaged in more positive interactions with children.

#### **4.2.4 Occupation of Respondents**

As presented in Table 4.1, majority (86%) of parents were gainfully employed in the formal sector as civil servants, bankers, secretaries, engineers, accountants and consultants while few (14%) were employed in the informal sector as traders, seamstresses, hair dressers, caterers, and farmer.

#### **4.2.5 Level of Income of Respondents**

Parents had a higher income as compared to teachers. While close to (60%) of parents had incomes greater than GHC1,000, only (4%) of teacher had above GHC1,000 (Table 1). A Pearson chi-square test conducted revealed that there was a significant difference between the occupation of parents and their level of income ( $\chi^2 = 51.687$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Majority of parents who earned more than GHC1,000 were gainfully employed in the formal sector. As such, it is likely parents in this study could afford to send their children to high quality childcare centres. Early childhood researchers propose that a professional wage standard for teachers would increase staff productivity (i.e. quality of care) as well as attract more qualified individuals into the field of child care (Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995). Findings from a Nigerian study, (Olaleye, Florence & Omotayo, 2009) revealed that remuneration and benefits of ECD teachers were inadequate and argued that the effect could lead to poor quality service.

### **4.3 Analysis of Research Questions**

#### **Stakeholders' (teachers and parents) views on quality ECE**

The first objective of the study was to investigate stakeholders' (teachers and parents) views on quality ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana. The information on this variable was obtained from parents. The findings are presented in Tables 2

**Table 2: Parents' Views on quality ECE in the Bono East Region**

Views	Frequency	Percent
Children's Health and Safety	18	40.7
Leadership and Management	9	16.3
Quality of Interaction and Relationship between Children and Staff	11	22.0
Physical Environment	5	9.1
Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities	4	6.8
Staff Qualification and Training	3	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, (2023)

Table 2 shows that parents in this study cited several ways in which ECE providers could improve the quality of their centres. The topmost three ways reported by parents were attention given to children's health and safety 18 (40.7%), leadership and management 9 (16.3%) and quality of interaction and relationship between children and staff 11(22.0%). This finding gives an impression that parents are really concerned about their children's health and safety. The heads of the ECE centres confirmed that parents often visited the centre to discuss child's progress, attend P.T.A meetings and other programs at the centre. (McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, & Wildenger, 2007) revealed that children are more likely to experience positive outcomes when parents take an active role in their children's education.

It is noteworthy that in other researches, parents suggested that providers participate in training (Harrist, Thompson, & Norris, 2007) hence the need for more trained staff. Recently, however, parents are also indicating that the quality of the caregiving environment is important to them (Shlay, Tran, Weinraub, & Harmon, 2005; Kim & Fram, 2009; Chase & Valorose, 2010; Yamamoto & Li, 2012). This confirms findings



by other findings when about 7% of the parents indicated that quality of interaction and relationship between children and staff could improve the quality of childcare.

**Presents respondents' responses on stakeholders' (teachers and parents) views on quality ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana.**

The first objective of the study was to investigate stakeholders' (teachers and parents) views on quality ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana. The information on this variable was obtained from teachers. The findings are presented in Tables .3

**Table 3: Teachers' Views on quality ECE in the Bono East Region**

Views	Frequency	Percent
Quality of Interaction and Relationship between Children and Staff	40	40.0
Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities	20	20.0
Children's Health and Safety	20	20.0
Physical Environment	9	9.0
Leadership and Management	8	8.0
Staff Qualification and Training	3	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, (2023)

From the Table 3, several ways in which ECE providers could improve the quality of the ECE centres were cited by respondents. The topmost three ways mentioned by teachers were quality of interaction and relationship between children and staff 40(40.0%), collaborative partnerships with families and communities (20.0%) and children's health and safety (20.0%).

Other ways of improving the level of quality were staff qualification and training, a good leadership and physical environment.

### Quality indicators stakeholders, perceive as important in ECE centres

The second objective of the study was to examine the quality indicators stakeholders, perceive as important in ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana. The information on this variable was obtained from the stakeholders. The findings are presented in Tables 4

**Table 4: Quality indicators stakeholders, perceive as important in ECE in the Bono East Region.**

Indicators	Frequency	Percent
Physical Facilities and Equipment for Play and Learning	73	40.4
Providers' Warmth and Care	33	22.8
Stimulating Activities and Programmes	33	22.8
Physical Environment	9	9.0
Caregiver-Child Ratio	7	12.3
Trained Staff	4	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

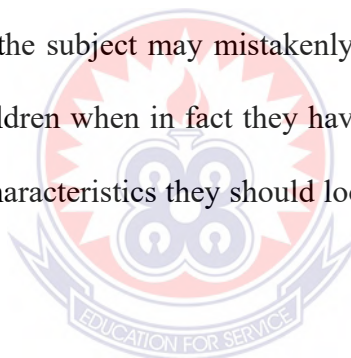
**Source:** Field Survey, (2023)

Table 4 shows that, close to half (40.4%) of the stakeholders cited physical facilities and equipment for play and learning as a characteristic that determines high quality in ECE centres. Other important indicators cited were warmth and care (22.8%), Stimulating activities and programmes (22.8%). Caregiver-child ratio and trained staff were the least cited characteristics by 12.3% and 2% respectively.

However, the researcher observed that only two out of the four ECD centres had adequate outdoor play area and enough outdoor play equipment for the children. The findings implies that stakeholders are not really concerned about the caregiver-child ratio even though experts deem it as very important. Ceglowski (2004) found that stakeholders associated a quality ECE programme with cultural and community sensitivity, parent-friendly and parent-supportive learning environments (Le Tendre,

1999; Arnold & Colburn, 2009). Other quality indicators researchers have identified include child-teacher ratio; teacher retention rates; the accreditation of the facility; teacher pre-service education; learning activities; social and emotional development of the child; and environmental factors like safety, space, cleanliness (Epstein, 1995; Rouse and Fantuzzo, 2009). Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) highlighted the need for warm and supportive interactions within the learning environment of ECD centres.

According to Fenech, Harrison and Sumsion (2011), there is a supposition that the quality indicators held as important by stakeholders are contained within the quality indicators deemed important by experts and researchers (Fenech *et al.*, 2011). Raikes *et al.* (2012) noted that without education about what high quality care is, stakeholders who are uninformed on the subject may mistakenly believe they have obtained high quality care for their children when in fact they have not. It is therefore necessary to educate parents on the characteristics they should look out for as signs high quality in childcare.



### **Stakeholder's Knowledge on Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) in ECE**

The third objective of the study was to ascertain stakeholder's knowledge on Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) in ECE in the Bono East Region, Ghana. The information on this variable was obtained from the stakeholders. The findings are presented in Figure 2

Figure 2 shows the level of knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices of parents and teachers. Level of knowledge of DAP was assessed using 26 items of developmentally appropriate practices (Program practices and emotional practices) developed by (Hyson, Hirsh-Pasek, n& Rescorla, 1990). Respondents were asked to

ascertain if they agreed or disagreed to the practices. The maximum attainable score was 26 while the minimum attainable score was 0. Respondent's knowledge was rated as good (scores between 20 and 26), fair (scores between 13 and 19) and poor (scores less than 13).

**Figure 2: Level of Knowledge of DAP**

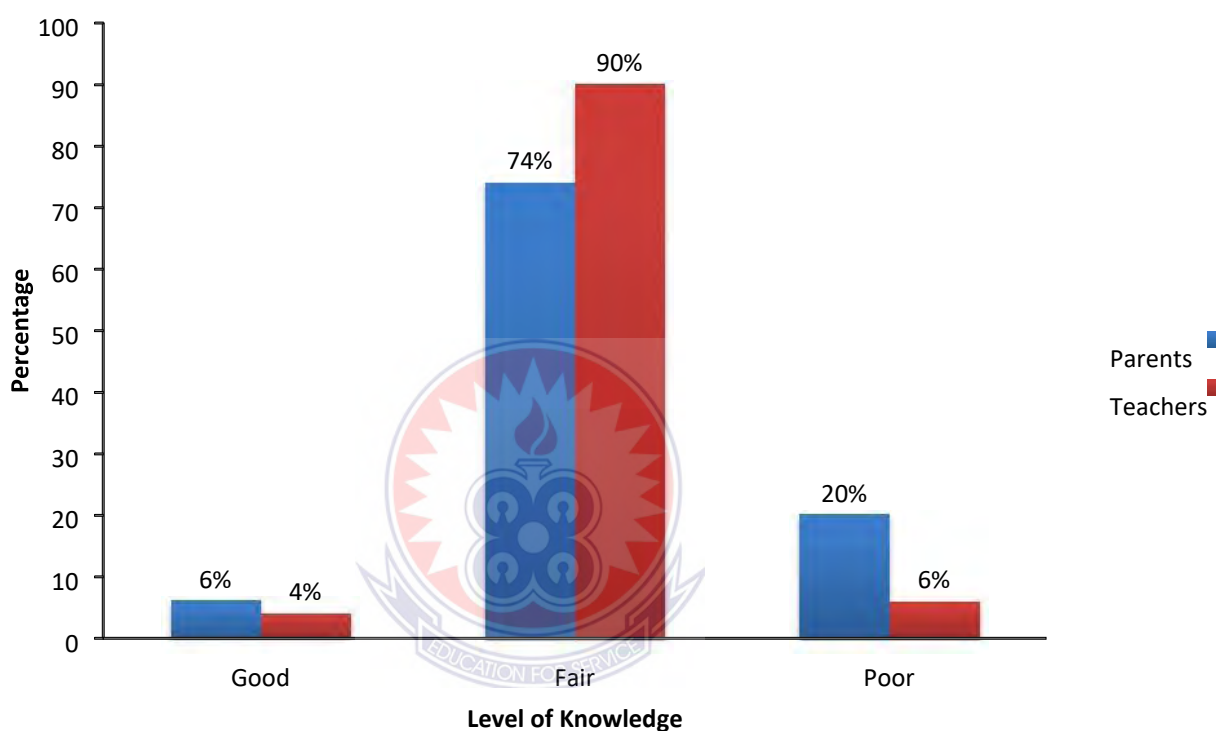


Figure 2 shows that, close to three-quarters (74%) of parents had fair knowledge of DAP while about a quarter (20%) had poor knowledge of DAP. Only (6%) of parents had good knowledge of DAP. This implies that parents are not be aware of best practices that should be seen in a high quality ECE programme. It could also mean that parents do not look out for anything in particular at the centres but rather follow recommendations by friends or childcare experts. Parents' knowledge of DAP improved with high level of education as those with education up to the tertiary level (70%) had fair to good knowledge of DAP while only 10% of respondents with education up to the second cycle had fair to good knowledge. Furthermore, knowledge

of DAP improved with high income while parents' knowledge of DAP increased with decreasing number of children in the family. Research speaks clearly concerning the efficacy of developmentally appropriate practice as a predictor of school success (Dunn & Kontos, 1997).

With regard to teachers, a significant proportion (90%) had fair knowledge on best childcare practices, with the remaining having good (4%) or poor (6%) knowledge of DAP. Just a few (6%) teachers had poor knowledge of DAP because earlier on, over a half (52%) of respondents reported that they had received professional training. It may also imply that most teachers had been given on the job training. There should be a platform where research-based findings could be disseminated to practitioners to enhance the quality of childcare in the country. According to Shonkoff and Phillips (2000), in the context of relationships, children's development is enhanced when teachers have higher levels of education, have knowledge of how children grow and develop, and understand how to implement developmentally appropriate activities. Teachers who employ DAP successfully have knowledge of age related development that facilitates common predictions about children's learning and development (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of major research findings, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

#### 5.2 Summary of the Findings

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perspectives of stakeholders (teachers and parents) on quality early childhood education in the Bono East Region, Ghana. The study employed the cross-sectional survey design. The convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from one hundred and fifty-four stakeholders in early childhood development centres comprising 100 teachers, 50 parents and 4 heads of school in the in the Bono East Region. The data obtained from the structured questionnaire was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS version 21) to generate frequency and percentage distributions. The findings of the study shows that, stakeholders in the study had a fair knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices. Furthermore, knowledge of DAP improved with high income while parents' knowledge of DAP increased with decreasing number of children in the family. This means that parents with fewer number of children had better knowledge of DAP because they paid more attention to the children.

The indicators of quality that stand out for both parents and teachers were children's health and safety; and quality of interaction and relationship between children and staff. Parents cited physical facilities and equipment for play and learning; warmth and care; stimulating activities and programmes; caregiver-child ratios; and trained staff as characteristics that determines the high quality in child care centres. A greater

proportion (79%) of parents were not willing to change their childcare provider if given the opportunity because they were satisfied with the services rendered at the childcare centre. Three-quarters (78%) of the respondents therefore rated their childcare provider as excellent, very good or good.

Again, the topmost three ways of improving the quality ECE reported by parents were attention given to children, recruitment of trained teachers and strict supervision of caregivers. Also, the topmost three ways mentioned by teachers were developing a deeper understanding of children, provision of teaching and learning materials and adequately trained staff. The head teachers stated that staff training, intensive inspections, provision of playing and teaching materials, and staff motivation were some of the ways in which childcare providers could improve the quality of child care.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that parents, teachers and head teachers have fair idea about DAP in early childhood education as majority had fair knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices. This is an indication of knowledge gap with regards to the DAP construct. Knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices improved with high income while parents' knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices increased with decreasing number of children in the family. This means that parents with fewer number of children had better knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate Practices because they paid more attention to the children. About half of the teachers in this study did not have professional training in early childhood education which might have accounted for their fair knowledge of DAP. Respondents were satisfied with the services rendered by the ECD centres their wards were currently enrolled despite few challenges which need to be addressed, such

as asking parents to leave their places of work to pick children up when they are sick. Again, findings indicated that the schools sampled did not have enough infrastructural facilities. Teacher-child ratio was low, thus interaction between teacher and child was inadequate. The indicators of quality that stood out by stakeholders in this study were children's health and safety and quality of interaction and relationship between children and staff. Although parents and teachers scored similar in the indicators, nonetheless, disparities with these two stakeholders were identified. This could probably be due to the professional and on-the-job training most teachers had received.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the results of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. The findings of the study revealed that a significant proportion of respondents had only fair knowledge of DAP. It would be expected that teachers and parents would have good or excellent knowledge but they only had fair knowledge. It is therefore recommended that policy makers and the Ministry of Education organize workshops to educate teachers and parents on best practices in child care. Skills and knowledge acquired by child care providers will ensure that the children have a good educational foundation.
2. The study showed that some parents were not too satisfied with the services being rendered therefore, Government should provide the necessary resources to enhance quality service delivery.
3. The study showed that about half of the teachers did not have professional training in early childhood education. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education encourages providers of ECE services to sponsor non-professional teachers to further their studies in early childhood education and bond them reasonably to



ensure their continuous stay on the job. There should also be continuous in-service training for early childhood teachers.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

The current study is limited in scope because it was based on samples from only pre-schools in the Bono East Region, Ghana. To make the study more representative and the results generalisable for the whole country, there is the need to replicate this study among population groups using larger geographic areas.



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11. Salary: a) Gh¢ 100 - Gh¢ 500                      b) Gh¢ 500 – Gh¢ 1,000  
c) Gh¢ 1,000 - Gh¢2,000                              d) Gh¢2,000 - Gh¢ 3,000

**Section 2 – Items concerning participants view of Quality Early Childhood**

**Education.**

**Directions:** Please rank these quality characteristics in the order of importance to you on a scale of 1-5, where

- 1= (Not important)                      2= (Less important)    3 = (Moderately important)**  
**4= (Very important)                      5= (Extremely important).**

Please place the number in the blank space before each item. Please be sure to mark each item. There is no wrong or right answer.

In your opinion, how important are the following items in judging the quality of early childhood education?

12. ----- Children’s health and safety (such as health care needs, hygiene practice, nutritional food and supervision).
13. ----- Physical environment (such as classrooms, playground, educational materials and equipment).
14. ----- Staff qualifications and training.
15. ----- Quality of interactions and relationships between children and staff.
16. ----- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities (such as PTA meetings).
17. ----- Leadership and management (evaluation of staff performance and effective administrative policies and procedures).

18. What other characteristics of an ECE center do you think indicate high quality care?

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.....  
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19. If you had the means and opportunity, would you move your child to a different ECE provider? Explain

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

20. How would you grade or rank the ECE provider in which your children are enrolled?.....

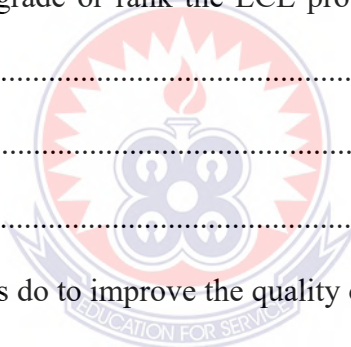
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21. What could caregivers do to improve the quality of child care?

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22. What could policy makers and governments do to improve the quality of child care?

.....  
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23. Is there anything about the centre that could be changed to improve the level of quality?

.....

.....

.....

### Section 2: Developmentally Appropriate Practices

The following items are practices that take place in preschools. Now, please indicate how you disagree or agree with each of the following statements by circling the number that corresponds with your opinion.

**Directions:** Rate the following items on a scale of 1-5, where

**1 = Do not know (no knowledge of the survey item)**

**2 = Strongly disagree with statement**

**3 = Disagree with statement**

**4 = Agree with statement**

**5 = Strongly agree with statement**

Now, please rate each item according to your opinion.

<u>Program Activity/ Practices</u>	<u>Degree of Disagreement or Agreement</u>				
24. Children select their own activities from among a variety of learning areas the teacher prepares, such as dramatic play, blocks, games and puzzles, books, recordings, art, and music.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Large group, teacher directed instruction is used most of the time. Children are doing the same things at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5

26. Children are involved in concrete learning activities with materials closely related to their daily life experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The teacher tells the children exactly what they will do and when. The teacher expects the children to follow her plans.	1	2	3	4	5

28. Children are physically active in the classroom, choosing from activities the teacher has setup and initiating many of their own activities.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Children work individually or in small, child-chosen groups most of the time. Different children are doing different things.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Children use workbooks, flash cards and other abstract or two-dimensional learning materials.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Teachers ask questions which encourage children to give more than one right answer.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Teachers expect children to sit down, watch, be quiet, and listen, or do paper and pencil tasks for major periods of time.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Reading and writing instruction emphasizes direct teaching of letter recognition, reciting the alphabet, colouring within the lines, and being instructed in the correct formation of letters.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Teachers use activities such as block building, measuring ingredients for cooking, woodworking, and drawing to help children learn concepts in math, science, and social studies.	1	2	3	4	5

**Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire**



- f) Doctoral degree  
g) Other (please specify).....

41. What is your occupation?

- a) Farmer  
b) Trader  
c) Government Employee  
d) Businessperson  
e) Not employed  
f) Any other (Please specify).....

42. Salary: a) Gh¢ 100 - Gh¢ 500

b) Gh¢ 500 – Gh¢ 1,000

c) Gh¢ 1,000 - Gh¢2,000

d) Gh¢2,000 - Gh¢ 3,000

**Section 2 – Items concerning participants view of Quality Early Childhood**

**Education.**

**Directions:** Please rank these quality characteristics in the order of importance to you on a scale of 1-5, where

- 1= (Not important)      2= (Less important)      3 = (Moderately important)  
4= (Very important)      5= (Extremely important).

Please place the number in the blank space before each item. Please be sure to mark each item. There is no wrong or right answer.

In your opinion, how important are the following items in judging the quality of early childhood education?

43. ----- Children’s health and safety (such as health care needs, hygiene practice, nutritional food and supervision).

44. ----- Physical environment (such as classrooms, playground, educational materials and equipment).

45. ----- Staff qualifications and training.

46. ----- Quality of interactions and relationships between children and staff.

47. ----- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities (such as PTA meetings).

48. ----- Leadership and management (evaluation of staff performance and effective administrative policies and procedures).

49. What other characteristics of a ECE center do you think indicate high quality care?

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.....  
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50. If you had the means and opportunity, would you move your child to a different ECE provider? Explain

.....  
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.....

51. How would you grade or rank the ECE provider in which your children are enrolled?.....

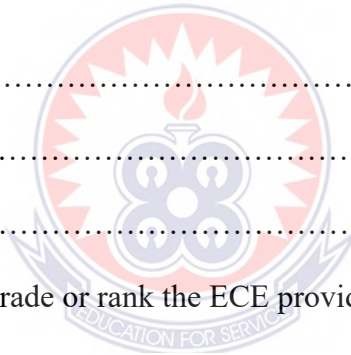
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52. What could caregivers do to improve the quality of ECE?

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53. What could policy makers and governments do to improve the quality of ECE.

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54. Is there anything about the centre that could be changed to improve the level of quality?

.....  
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**Section 3: Developmentally Appropriate Practices**

The following items are practices that take place in preschools. Now, please indicate how you disagree or agree with each of the following statements by circling the number that corresponds with your opinion.

**Directions:** Rate the following items on a scale of 1-5, where

**1 = Do not know (no knowledge of the survey item)**

**2 = Strongly disagree with statement**

**3 = Disagree with statement**

**4 = Agree with statement**

**5 = Strongly agree with statement**

Now, please rate each item according to your opinion.

<u>Program Activity/ Practices</u>	<u>Degree of Disagreement or Agreement</u>				
55. Children select their own activities from among a variety of learning areas the teacher prepares, such as dramatic play, blocks, games and puzzles, books, recordings, art, and music.	1	2	3	4	5
56. Large group, teacher directed instruction is used most of the time. Children are doing the same things at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5



57. Children are involved in concrete learning activities with materials closely related to their daily life experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
58. The teacher tells the children exactly what they will do and when. The teacher expects the children to follow her plans.	1	2	3	4	5
59. Children are physically active in the classroom, choosing from activities the teacher has setup and initiating many of their own activities.	1	2	3	4	5
60. Children work individually or in small, child-chosen groups most of the time. Different children are doing different things.	1	2	3	4	5
61. Children use workbooks, flash cards and other abstract or two-dimensional learning materials.	1	2	3	4	5

62. Teachers ask questions which encourage children to give more than one right answer.	1	2	3	4	5
63. Teachers expect children to sit down, watch, be quiet, and listen, or do paper and pencil tasks for major periods of time.	1	2	3	4	5
64. Reading and writing instruction emphasizes direct teaching of letter recognition, reciting the alphabet, colouring within the lines, and being instructed in the correct formation of letters.	1	2	3	4	5
65. Teachers use activities such as block building, measuring ingredients for cooking, woodworking, and drawing to help children learn concepts in math, science, and social studies.	1	2	3	4	5

**Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire**

## APPENDIX 2

### OBSERVATION CHECK -LIST

Name of Centre.....

Name of Community.....

District.....

Class (eg Nursery I, 2, or 3).....

Date of Observation: .....

Name of Observer: .....

Please check either Yes or No

<b>1. Facilities and Equipment</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Safe environment	(    )	(    )
Toilet Facility	(    )	(    )
Adequate lighting	(    )	(    )
Adequate ventilation	(    )	(    )
Clean water	(    )	(    )
Sleeping space	(    )	(    )
Sleeping mats	(    )	(    )
Outdoor play area	(    )	(    )
Outdoor play equipment	(    )	(    )
Kitchen/cooking area	(    )	(    )
First Aid box	(    )	(    )
Scale/Growth Monitoring Charts	(    )	(    )
Chair per child	(    )	(    )
<b>2. Learning Materials</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Easel	(    )	(    )
Puzzles and games	(    )	(    )



Play materials	( )	( )
Display of children's art work	( )	( )
Teacher-made Toys	( )	( )
Teaching aids	( )	( )
Teacher's Manual	( )	( )
Materials easily available to children	( )	( )

**3. Teacher/child interaction** **YES** **NO**

Asks questions/responds to verbal requests	( )	( )
Responsive to children's needs	( )	( )
Affectionate (teacher to child)	( )	( )
Affectionate (child to teacher)	( )	( )
Praise/acknowledgement of behaviour	( )	( )
Independent play encouraged	( )	( )
Co-operative Play encouraged	( )	( )
Handles child-child conflict with reason	( )	( )

**4. Children's health and safety** **YES** **NO**

Health care needs/services	( )	( )
Hygienic practices	( )	( )
Nutritional foods	( )	( )
Supervision	( )	( )

**5. Staff qualifications and training** **YES** **NO**

Enough qualified teachers	( )	( )
Teacher/child ratio	( )	( )

**6. Leadership and management** **YES** **NO**

Effective leadership	( )	( )
Evaluation of staff performance	( )	( )
Effective administrative procedures	( )	( )

**Comments:** .....

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