

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**CHALLENGES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAY-BASED
PEDAGOGY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES IN THE SUNYANI
MUNICIPALITY**



**A thesis in the Department of Early Childhood Education,
Faculty of Applied Behavioural Science in Education, 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**

FEBRUARY, 2024

DECLARATION

Students Declaration

I, Helina Korkor Bamfo, hereby declare that, this project work with the quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and dully acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature.....

Date:.....



Supervisors Declaration

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

Supervisor's name: Dr. Michael Subbey

Signature.....

Date:.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family



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My profound gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Michael Subbey for his dedication and timeless guidance throughout this research. I also express my appreciation to all the lecturers of the Department of Early Childhood Education for their help in diverse ways. Special thanks to my husband and children for their moral support and encouragement. Again, I would like to thank all my colleagues whom in diverse ways assisted me in this thesis.



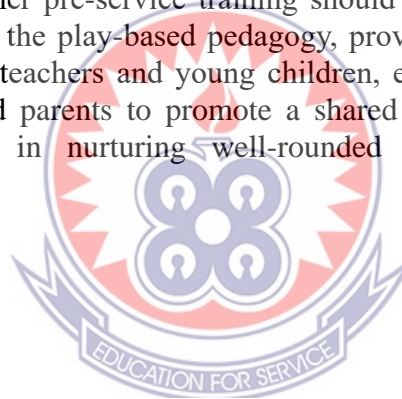
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the challenges with the implementation of play-based pedagogy in the Sunyani Municipality. The case study design was adopted for the study. The study used convenient sampling technique to select nine (9) kindergarten teachers in the Sunyani Municipality for the study. The instrument used for the collection of data was semi-structured interview guide. The data from the interview were analysed thematically. The study revealed that the implementation of play-based pedagogy is challenged by teacher factors such as their comfort with the use of the traditional approach of teaching, time constraints as well as a lack of understanding regarding the implementation of the play-based pedagogy. Also, the inadequate availability of teaching and learning resources was a contributory factor in implementing play-based pedagogy in kindergarten classrooms in the Sunyani Municipality. Moreover, parents' negative perceptions regarding the use of play in teaching young children. Again, the study further revealed that measures such as provisions of adequate teaching and learning resources, continuous professional development of teachers, and active parental involvement in the education of their children are some of the measures that can be put in place to enhance and promote the use of play-based pedagogy in the Sunyani Municipality. The study therefore recommends that teacher pre-service training should emphasize the importance that comes with the use of the play-based pedagogy, provision of adequate teaching and learning materials for teachers and young children, encourage open communication between educators and parents to promote a shared understanding of the value of play-based pedagogy in nurturing well-rounded learners within the Sunyani Municipality.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Play-based pedagogy, rooted in theories of child development and learning, has garnered attention for its potential to foster holistic growth and engagement in learners (Van der Westhuizen, 2023). While it holds promise for enriching educational experiences, its implementation faces multifaceted challenges across various educational contexts. Given the both immediate and long-term effects that learning experiences have on each child, early life is a very important time in a person's existence. Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) should therefore be considered when designing education and care plans for kids to maximize their learning potential (Edwards, 2017). There's little doubt that providing early childhood education and care may help kids get off to a solid start in life. Developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education rely on a play-based curriculum, meaningful adult-child interactions, healthy relations between the home and programme (Zan, 2005).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child indicated that the views of children are not conceived as objects to be formed, but as human subjects with their own intentions, interests, relational needs, and capacities (UNCRC, 1989). Article 31 of the UN Convention of the Right of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) advocates in favour of children's right to engage in play and recreational activities. Early childhood experiences ought to contribute towards children's holistic development and it is common knowledge that play is an essential and important part of existence, as both people and animals engage in it (Burghardt, 2005). Huizinga, the philosopher,

summarized its significance to existence in 1947 when he claimed that the better description of man was *homoludens*, or "playing man," as opposed to *homo sapiens*, or "wise man." giving children a good start in life, with opportunities to play (Van-Oers, 2013). In more recent times it has been argued that it is through play that human beings make sense of, and operate in, the world (Strandell, 2000). Consequently, the play has been studied and written about by scholars from different theoretical disciplines and is highly valued by children and by many adults who work with them.

Play is pleasurable and an activity is seen as a situation by which children learn and interact with the environment and the world around them. In this regard, since there is no clear and agreed definition, (Gordon, 2009) argues that "play is the voluntary movement across boundaries, opening with total absorption into a highly flexible field, releasing tension in ways that are pleasurable, exposing players to the unexpected and making transformation possible" (p. 8).

A fundamental challenge in implementing play-based pedagogy lies in misconceptions regarding its efficacy and purpose. Traditional educational paradigms often prioritize structured instruction and standardized assessments over child-directed exploration (McMillan, 2013). This leads to skepticism among educators, policymakers, and parents regarding the academic value of play-based approaches (Fleer, 2010). Educators may perceive play as frivolous or incompatible with academic rigor, hindering its adoption in classrooms (Fogarty, 2017). Addressing these misconceptions requires efforts to promote a deeper understanding of play as a dynamic process that supports cognitive, social, and emotional development (Pyle & Bigelow, 2015).

Limited access to appropriate resources, materials, and physical spaces represents a significant barrier to the implementation of play-based pedagogy (Miller & Almon, 2009). Many educational settings lack dedicated play areas, manipulatives, and supportive learning environments essential for facilitating meaningful play experiences (Kostelnik et al., 2007). Inadequate investment in infrastructure and resource provision undermines efforts to create conducive settings for play-based learning (Gordon & Browne, 2015). Addressing resource disparities is crucial for ensuring equitable access to play-based opportunities for all learners (Kuh, 2009).

Furthermore, effective implementation of play-based pedagogy demands skilled educators who can facilitate and scaffold children's play experiences (Wadley et al., 2020). However, many teachers lack training and support in pedagogical approaches that prioritize play (Johnson, 2014). Limited opportunities for professional development and ongoing mentorship exacerbate this challenge (Maynard, 2014). Building teacher competence and confidence in employing play-based strategies requires comprehensive training programs and collaborative learning communities (Kuby, 2013).

According to Wiltshire (2023), the way that play-based education is implemented is greatly influenced by the attitudes and expectations of parents. According to Myck-Wayne (2010), some parents may place a higher priority on academic achievements than on holistic development because they feel that play-based learning methods lack discipline or rigor. To encourage support and understanding, it is essential to involve parents as participants in their children's education and to tell them of the advantages of play-based pedagogy (Sophia Baader, 2004). One way to close the gap between the home and school environments is to have open lines of communication and involve families in their children's play experiences (Chalufour & Worth, 2003).

1.2 Problem Statement

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 that promotes democracy in all preschool settings (Irvin, 2017). The role of the teacher in playful practices for early learners is very paramount.

Early childhood education plays a critical role in laying the foundation for children's lifelong learning and development. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of play-based pedagogy in fostering holistic development and enhancing learning outcomes for young children (Walsh, 2010). However, despite its acknowledged benefits, the effective implementation of play-based pedagogy faces numerous challenges in educational settings within the Sunyani Municipality, Ghana.

Teacher factors significantly influence the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood classrooms. Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and understanding of play as a pedagogical approach can either facilitate or hinder its effective integration into teaching practices (Pyle & Bigelow, 2015). Understanding how teacher factors contribute to these challenges is crucial for developing targeted professional development programs and support mechanisms to enhance teacher competence and confidence in implementing play-based approaches.

Again, access to appropriate teaching and learning resources is essential for facilitating meaningful play experiences in early childhood classrooms. Insufficient resources may hinder teachers' ability to create engaging and supportive play environments, limiting children's opportunities for exploration, creativity, and learning (Kostelnik et al., 2012). Exploring how teaching and learning resources

contribute to the challenges in using play-based pedagogy is critical for identifying areas for resource allocation and support to enhance the quality of early childhood education.

Also, parental involvement and support play a vital role in the successful implementation of play-based pedagogy. However, parental attitudes, beliefs, and expectations regarding early childhood education may vary, impacting their receptiveness to play-based approaches (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). Challenges such as parental misconceptions about the academic value of play, limited understanding of the role of play in learning, and cultural differences in parenting practices may influence parental engagement in children's play-based experiences (Goble & Watts, 2018). Understanding parental factors in the implementation of play-based pedagogy is essential for fostering collaboration between educators and parents and promoting consistency between home and school environments.

In addition to the aforementioned, the researcher's interaction with some of the teachers during her internship as a student teacher in the lower primary level revealed that most teachers in the Sunyani Municipality who teach in early childhood classrooms do not use the play-based approach when teaching their children. Also, it appears there is not enough literature on the challenges early childhood teachers face in the implementation of play-based pedagogy in the Municipality. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the challenges that exist among early childhood learners in the Sunyani Municipality.

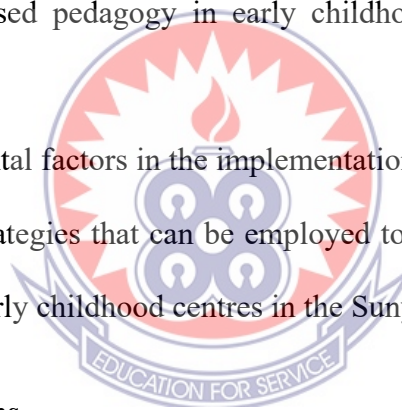
1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges to the implementation of play-based pedagogy and to identify, understand, and address the barriers that hinder the effective integration of play-based approaches in educational settings.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guide the Study

1. Explore how teacher factors contribute to the challenges in the use of the play-base pedagogy
2. Find out how teaching and learning resources contribute to the challenge in the use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood classrooms in the Sunyani Municipality
3. Ascertain parental factors in the implementation of the play-based pedagogy
4. Identify the strategies that can be employed to improve the use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality



1.5 Research Questions

1. How do teachers contribute to the challenge in the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres?
2. How do teaching and learning resources contribute to the implementation of play-based pedagogy?
3. How does parental attitude affect the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching at the early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality?
4. What strategies can be employed to enhance the use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings from the study will provide valuable insights into the policy gaps and barriers that hinder the effective implementation of play-based pedagogy. This information can inform the Ghana Education Service (GES) in developing and revising early childhood education policies to better support the integration of play-based approaches. Also, the study can advocate for increased investment in educational resources, such as the provision of teaching and learning materials, training programmes for teachers, and infrastructure, to support the implementation of play-based pedagogy.

Understanding the challenges faced by educators in implementing play-based pedagogy can inform the development of targeted professional development programmes. These programs can help educators enhance their skills and confidence in utilizing play-based approaches effectively in the classroom. The study can inform strategies for promoting parental involvement and support for play-based pedagogy. By understanding parental factors influencing the implementation of play-based approaches, educators can collaborate with families to create consistent learning environments that support children's development.

The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of play-based pedagogy by identifying challenges and factors influencing its implementation. This can enrich existing theories of early childhood education and contribute to ongoing discussions on the role of play in learning. By grounding the study in theoretical frameworks such as constructivism and socio-cultural perspectives, the findings can inform evidence-based practices in early childhood education. This ensures that interventions and strategies are aligned with established theoretical principles and have a solid foundation in research.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

Geographically the study focused specifically on early childhood teachers in the Sunyani Municipality of the Bono Region of Ghana. While this provides depth and specificity to the research, findings may not be generalizable to other geographic locations with different socio-cultural contexts. In context, the study was delimited to the challenges early childhood teachers encounter in their use of play-based pedagogy.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Findings from the study may lack generalizability to other contexts or settings due to factors such as geographical location, cultural differences, or specific characteristics of the sample population. Limited resources, such as time, funding, and access to participants, also restrict the scope or methodology of the study. For example, scheduling interview time with the respondents was very challenging due to their busy schedule and this may likely affect the findings.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study was organized into five (5) chapters. The first chapter dealt with the introduction which gives an insight into the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions which serve as a guide to the study. It also dealt with the significance of the study and the delimitation, limitations, and organization of the study concludes the chapter. Chapter Two focused on the review of related literature on the topic. It comprises the theoretical framework, the conceptual review, and the empirical review. Chapter Three comprised of methodology. It highlighted the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample, and sampling techniques used in the study. It again described the research design as well as the instruments and methods used for the

study. The analysis of the data collected for the study opens in Chapter Four. It also contains the analysis of the interview about the research questions. Chapter Five, dealt with the summary, conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions made on the topic for future research.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter focused on the review of related literature on the specific objectives of the study. Literature was reviewed on the following sub-headings

Theoretical Framework

- Socio-Cultural Theory

Definition of Concepts

- Concept of Play
- Play in Early Childhood Education

The Empirical Review

- Teacher challenges to the implementation of the play-based pedagogy
- Teaching and learning resources challenge that contribute to the implementation of play-based pedagogy
- Parental factors towards the use of play-based pedagogy
- Strategies to enhance the use of play in early childhood centres?
- Chapter Summary

2.1 Socio cultural Theory of Play

This theory considers social, cultural, and historical factors that may influence cognitive development during social interactions. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), Piaget's Russian contemporary, was interested in how children learn and how learning contributes to development. One contribution he made to the field was his articulation

and demonstration on how a child's development rests on their engagement with their culture.

Vygotsky saw play as a way to construct knowledge during social interactions with the world and as a source of cognitive development. He believed that parents and teachers can assist children's learning by working within their zone of proximal development. In the zone of proximal development, children exhibit higher levels of competence than when outside the zone (Wentzel, et al., 2010).

Vygotsky saw play as having two major purposes. One has to do with the role of pretend or fantasy (Worthington, 2010). He believed that the child creates his or her reality through fantasy or pretend play. An example would be that the child wants to drive a car but is kept from doing so. Therefore, he or she pretends to drive a car. This behavior is important to note as it prompts the child to engage in abstract thought. When the child pretends a branch is a horse, he engages in abstract thought. Vygotsky believed that through symbolic play children come to organize meaning in language and thought (Vygotsky, 2012).

The second purpose Vygotsky found in play was that it originates from the first purpose and involves rules. Children will engage in play with specific behaviors they think are important to the role they are working through. Often the child will not allow anyone else into this world of pretend unless he or she fits the role. The adult needs to enter the world of play to support or scaffold what the child is attempting to understand. Vygotsky contributed to the field of play studies through his demonstration of how children's development rests on their active participation in their culture.

Sociocultural theory or ‘cultural-historical psychology is a theory of the development of higher mental practices that regard social interaction as the core of the communication and learning process (Glăveanu, 2020). Its origin is derived from the sociological and economic writings of Marx and Engels in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Vygotsky, 1978; Leont’ev, 1981; and Wertsch, 1985).

One of the outstanding features of sociocultural theory is considering learning as social in nature where meaning is derived through language use within the social context. Contrary to the followers of cognitive theories who believed in mediation between stimulus and response, Vygotsky’s (1978) theory investigates the context of the behavior or the social situation where the action occurs. The basic assumption in Vygotsky’s theory is the idea that psychological structures do not exist in the individual’s mind; rather, they are formed as a result of interaction with the social context. In other words, the emergence of mental functions depends on social interaction.

According to Mitchell and Myles (2004) sociocultural theory views learners as active constructors of their own learning environment. Confirming Mitchell and Myle’s viewpoint, Guoxing (2004) states that learners in this sense are responsible for their own learning environment and the environment can nurture and scaffold them (Aimin, 2013). Accordingly, teachers are seen as active constructors of their own teaching environment. Whatever teachers think of learners’ language learning will definitely affect their constructions of their teaching environment, though learners are the main focus of the teaching activities. Teachers will reconstruct their perceptions of L2 through practice and progress in language learning and teaching.

It is worth noting here that the main focus of the sociocultural perspective is not on the individual but on the individual's surroundings. Claiming that learning is a social activity, sociocultural experts such as Cole and Engeström (1993), Van Lier (2000), and Lantolf (2000) made a shift in their attention from individual cognition into mental activity of members of the same social community. Wertsch (1991), for example, emphasizes that sociocultural point of view should be distinguished from the other perspectives (e.g., constructivism) based on the context or surrounding of the learners. Learning is considered as the product of shared activity and the traditional teacher-student relationship should be changed to one that leads to collaborative learning (Zhang, Fanyu, & Du 2013). In this sense, solutions to learners' problems are gained through the involved participants' or members' behaviors in a shared context. The 'expert' member or knowledgeable other assists other members who need help in the learning process. This guidance is stopped when the members who need help can act independently. This problem-solving process is accomplished by two learners who possess different levels of knowledge and experiences. In other words, as a result of this guidance, a novice gradually becomes the effective member of that community.

As Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) state, "successful learning involves shifting control within activities from the social to the individual, from the external to within self" (p. 232). This is evident in Vygotsky's (1981) description of cultural development: "Any function in the child's development appears twice or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological category, and then within the child as an intra-psychological category" (p. 163). Expressed differently, the most significant contribution of sociocultural perspective to learning and consequently decreasing learners' problems is providing a supportive environment for cognitive development. Thus, for any

learner to be successful in language learning, during social interaction within a classroom, it is necessary to change his learning status from first dependent other-regulation to subsequent independent self-regulation.

Mediation

Mediation is one of the most significant constructs of Vygotsky's (1978) theory, which is also central to this study. According to Vygotsky, humans do not make their relationship with the outer world only through direct stimulus-response reflexes; rather, they have the ability to use physical tools to make indirect connections and mediate their relationship. In so doing, they can regulate and control their behaviors via psychological and technical tools or artifacts. The physical tools mediating these relationships are generated by human cultures and are gradually transferred to the next generation. From a sociocultural perspective, learning is a mediated process. Mitchell and Myles (2004) believe that "learning is mediated partly through learner's developing use and control of mental tools" (p. 195).

Lantolf (2000) presented three versions of mediation: mediation by others, mediation by self through private speech, and mediation by artifacts (e.g., tasks and technology). Being grounded in Vygotskian perspective and considering Lantolf's taxonomy of mediation, this paper treats mediation by others as the domain of the teacher of the EFL classroom with the focus on the teacher's teaching and scaffolding methods. Human development is not just the outcome of one's personal attempt and individual function but it is a result of a system of social connections and relations.

Three conceptual resources are introduced by Gao (2010) which mediate language learners' language learning: learning discourses, artifacts and material conditions, and social agents (p. 21). By contextual resources, Gao means any learner's beliefs and values present in the learning context in relation with foreign language learning which

may affect learning processes in general and strategy use in particular. He emphasizes that the function of learners' discourses is different at the micro-level and macro-level, as micro-level discourses reinforce the learners to be responsible for their learning processes. For instance, they can control and identify the steps required for removing a learning problem. However, at the macro-level discourses are indicators of learners' values in learning a target language along with the goals they intend to obtain through strategy use.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding

To attain self-regulation, individual learners need to expand their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). As Smidt (2009) notes, the ZPD is one of Vygotsky's central contributions to learning and teaching that arises from his focus on the significance of cultural tools and social learning. Vygotsky (1978) defines ZPD as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). To bridge the gap between Vygotsky's theory of ZPD and its utility in L2 classroom, Ohta (2001) presents an adapted version of Vygotsky's definition suitable to this context: "For the L2 learner, the ZPD is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production, and the level of potential development as determined through language produced collaboratively with a peer or teacher" (p. 9). As illustrated in Figure 1, from Vygotsky's point of view the difference between potential level and actual development is that the former serves more as an indication of mental development than the latter as only a learner with an advanced level of development is able to react to the support provided by the more experienced other.

Vygotsky (1981) believed that during socialization and interacting with others the child is faced with participating in activities with others. This is the first step for the learner to be part of the shared culture through sharing something with another member in that community. Thus, his cognitive development would take place through involvement or “through participation in an ongoing social world” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 50). Nassaji and Cumming (2000) conducted a case study to explain and illustrate different features of the ZPD in language teaching and learning. To do so, they analyzed 95 exchanges obtained from a six-year-old Farsi speaker’s dialogue journal and that of a Canadian teacher who were working interactively with each other for more than 10 months. Their research indicated how both teacher and student constructed a conversation, which involved “intricate patterns of complementary, asymmetrical scaffolding” (Nassaji & Cumming 2000, p. 103).

2.2 Definition of Concept

The definition of concepts focused on the concept of play, types of play, and the relationship between play, learning and development.

Early Childhood Education

Outside a child’s home context, Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings are one of the first places that children go to learn and develop new skills. Teachers play a major role in children’s social and emotional development because children observe their teachers’ words, actions, and body language (Ministry of Education, 1998). ECE teachers may also be the first important non-family adults that interact with young children on a regular basis, therefore, ECE settings provide the opportunity to help address behaviour problems that have developed earlier in the child’s life.

Children enter childcare from 0 to 6 years old or attend preschool from 3 to 5 years old. In New Zealand, although attending an ECE is not compulsory, over 96% of children under the age of five years attend ECE settings such as day-care, preschool, or kindergarten, averaging 20 hours per week (Education Counts, 2014).

Early childhood teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the development of young children and provide multiple learning experiences through teacher and peer interactions (Church, 2004; Coplan, Bullock, Archbell & Bosacki, 2015). They also provide an opportunity to divert a child away from an antisocial pathway before the pattern of challenging behaviours becomes consolidated and resistant to change (Advisory Group for Conduct Problems, 2009). Teacher awareness of children's emotions, needs, and wellbeing can encourage children to engage more in positive behaviours and less in challenging behaviours (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2012). There are various studies, however, that indicate that preschool or day care teachers express concerns in regard to managing children's behavioural difficulties, overactivity, inattention, and relationships with other children (Alter, Walker & Landers, 2013; Campbell, 1995; Mitchell & Hastings, 2001; Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri and Goel, 2011).

2.2.1 The Concept Play

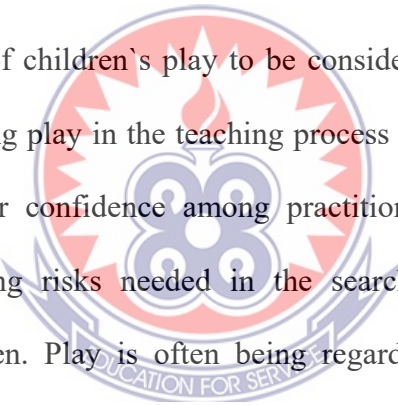
The perspective of children's play was initially considered in education as a yardstick for development of pedagogy (Sommer, Pramling Samuelsson & Hundeide, 2010). There has been lots of research and findings produced over the years relating to the definition of play. Several researchers and theorists define play differently, however, many different perspective views on what play is overlapped with other views. Play can be viewed, conceptualized, and defined from many different theoretical and ideological perspectives.

Gülşeker (2019) defined play as, “an activity that is symbolic, meaningful, active, pleasurable, voluntary, rule-governed and episodic” (Nowak, Nichols, and Coutts, 2009). Play as pleasurable and an activity, is seen as a situation by which children learn and interact with the environment and the world around them. Gordon (2009) also argues that “play is the voluntary movement across boundaries, opening with total absorption into a highly flexible field, releasing tension in ways that are pleasurable, exposing players to the unexpected and making transformation possible.” (p. 8). Through play children learn informally and relate their play to real life experiences. The voluntary movement of children which includes exploration, playing and learning according to their interests, offer them the opportunity to satisfy their curiosity and level of maturation.

Additionally, Wood (2009) indicated that characteristics of play include intrinsic motivation, engagement; dependence on internal rather than external rules, control and autonomy, and attention to means rather than ends”. Children formulate their own rules to suit and match with the play situation. Therefore, children experience the joy and skills development through self- motivation. According to Pramling-Samuelsson and Carlsson (2008) play is considered as a learning situation or an activity initiated by children, on the other hand, learning is regarded as a result of a practice or activity initiated by any adult to help children to learn. They further state that play activities as well as learning situations are as joyful since both play and learning are seen as an activity that is transgression. Play and learning are interrelated; the two words touched on each other in an early childhood setting and further serves as an important process for promoting children’s learning and development (Kieff & Casbergue, 2000). Play provides children the opportunity to discover the world and find new answers through voluntary learning. Also, children’s play promotes and enhances socio-emotional

development, cognitive and physical skills that cannot be taught through formal classroom instruction (Ministry of Education Science and Sports, 2007).

Fromberg (1992) is also of the view that play enhances language development, social competence, creativity, imagination, and thinking skills. He talked about how play can support a child's learning such as concepts and ideas, interactions, emotional well-being and physical development. Play provides children with the opportunity to discover the world and find new answers through voluntary learning. Children are likely to be engaged in play activities that are relevant to them and can play and have an active participation. Additionally, play is pleasurable and can be defined as an activity requiring no end or goal only participation and fun (Nowak, et al., 2009).



One important aspect of children's play to be considered is the use of play in early years setting. Combining play in the teaching process in the early years setting, there is the need for greater confidence among practitioners in approaching problems without fear and taking risks needed in the search for new ideas to help the development of children. Play is often being regarded as cognitively challenging process, which requires the child to make use ability, memory, signs and symbols, cultural tools which includes development of language, social skills such as negotiations, communication, planning and sharing and prediction (Fleer, 2010). Many skills that are needed for later life are developed through play and also are very important in a pre-school setting. Children will continue to make use of different learning situations, experiences and in remembrance for further learning. In general, play is considered as an important learning activity and developmentally appropriate which is considered valuable for all children (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; 2003b). In contrast, however, play can also be seen as an unimportant or even harmful practice or activity both in the home and the school environment (Johnson, Christie & Wardle,

2005; Scarlett, Naudeau, Salonijs-Pasternak & Ponte, 2005; Sutton-Smith, 2001). Although play is very important for children and its usage in the school's context or early year settings, (Hyvonen, 2011) expresses similar sentiment that it should be restricted by hindrances. The discourse of play both in theory and practice in early childhood education is very vital as stages of human evolution.

2.2.2 Types of Play

Given the general difficulty with defining play, and the recognition of its complexity, it is not surprising that there have been numerous attempts to categories different types of play. As Moyles (1989) has demonstrated, for every aspect of children's development, there is a form of play. However, in the contemporary psychological literature the various kinds of play are generally divided into five broad types based upon the developmental purposes which each serve, partly arising from the evolutionary analyses and how each relates to and supports children's learning. These types are commonly referred to as physical play, play with objects, symbolic play, pretence/ socio-dramatic play and games with rules (Power, 2000). Although each type of play has a main developmental function or focus arguably all of them support aspects of physical, intellectual and social-emotional and creative growth. From all the available evidence, a balance of experience of each of these types of play is likely to be beneficial to children's development.

2.2.3 Physical Play

Physical play was the earliest to evolve and can be observed in some reptiles and amphibians and most, if not all, mammals (Power, 2000). In human children it includes active exercise play (e.g.: jumping, climbing, dancing, skipping, bike riding and ball play), rough-and-tumble (with friends, siblings or parents/ guardians) and fine-motor practice (e.g.: sewing, colouring, cutting, junk modelling and manipulating

action and construction toys). Physical play comprises of exercise play and fine motor play.

Exercise play begins to emerge during the second year of life and typically occupies around 20% of children's behaviour by the age of four to five years. The evidence suggests that this type of play is related to children's developing whole body and hand-eye co-ordination, and is important in building strength and endurance (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998).

The most extensively researched aspect of physical play, however, is 'rough-and-tumble' play. It includes chasing, grappling, kicking, wrestling and rolling on the ground and appears to have evolved as a mechanism through which children learn to control aggression. It emerges slightly later than exercise play and is typical amongst early childhood learners. However, like most types of play, it continues to be enjoyed, usually between family members and close friends, right into adulthood. It is easily distinguishable from actual aggression by the evident enjoyment of the participants, and appears to be wholly beneficial. Jarvis (2000) research evidence suggests that it is clearly associated with the development of emotional and social skills and understandings. In human children, it is associated with the development of strong emotional bonds, or attachments, between children and their parents, and with school-aged children's abilities to understand emotional expressions (Jarvis, 2000). A study by Mellen (2002) for example, looked at father-son rough and tumble behaviours that involved direct body contact in 157 suburban families in the United States and found that it related very strongly with three-year-old sons' social competence, as demonstrated in early childhood learners.

There is a concern that children, largely as a consequence of the pressures of urban living discussed above, with the loss of natural environments and concerns about

safety, are over-supervised and do not have the opportunities for ‘risky’ outdoor physical play that supports their developing independence, resourcefulness and self-regulation. A general recognition of this concern is at the basis of pressures to provide outdoor play spaces for children living in urban environments. Amongst early years practitioners these concerns have led to a recent resurgence in the provision of outdoor play, and an increasing interest in Forest schools and the outdoor schools in some areas of Scandinavia (Tovey, 2007; Frost, 2010).

Fine-motor play refers to a wide range of activities which support young children’s development of their fine-motor hand and finger co-ordination skills. These activities are often solitary, can be beneficially supported by an adult (e.g.: sewing, construction) and, due to their absorbing nature, help children develop their concentration and perseverance skills.

2.2.4 Play with Objects

Children’s development through explorations, as young scientists, of the physical world and the objects they find within it is of great value to the wholistic development of the child (Power, 2000). Play with objects begins as soon as infants can grasp and hold on to them. Early investigative behaviours include mouthing/biting, rotating while looking, rubbing/stroking, hitting and dropping. This might be described as ‘sensori-motor’ play when the child is exploring how objects and materials feel and behave (Power, 2000). From around eighteen to twenty-four months toddlers begin to arrange objects, which gradually develops into sorting and classifying activities. By the age of four years, building, making and constructing behaviours emerge (Power, 2000).

As with all other types of play, play with objects often also incorporates other types of play, as it clearly has physical and manipulative aspects and often, in children, is

carried out within a pretence or socio-dramatic context. When young children are making or building, they are also often developing a story or narrative (Power, 2000). It is a relatively well-researched type of play, as it is distinctively related to the development of thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills. When playing with objects, children set themselves goals and challenges, monitor their progress towards them, and develop an increasing repertoire of cognitive and physical skills and strategies (Power, 2000). A study by Pellegrini and Gustafson (2005), for example, in which three to five-year olds were systematically observed over an entire school year, demonstrated that the amount of playful exploration, construction and tool use in which children engaged predicted their subsequent performance on physical problem-solving tasks. Play with objects is also particularly associated with the production of 'private speech', with children commonly commentating on their activity. This appears to have the function of helping the child to maintain their attention, keep their goals for the activity in mind, monitor their progress, make strategic choices regarding ways to proceed, and generally regulate themselves through the task. As a consequence, construction and problem-solving play is also associated with the development of perseverance and a positive attitude towards challenge (Sylva, Bruner & Genova, 1976).

Arising from these findings, a number of studies have investigated the use of constructional play as a kind of therapy with children in clinical groups characterised by problems with aspects of self-regulation, such as autism and (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) ADHD. Owens, Wood, and Bennett (2009), for example, carried out an eighteen-week LEGO Therapy program with six to eleven-year olds with high functioning autism and Asperger Syndrome. Maladaptive behaviours decreased significantly more in the LEGO group than in a matched no

intervention control group.

2.2.5 Symbolic Play

Symbolic play is a play that supports the development of technical abilities to express and reflect upon child's experiences, ideas, and emotions (Christie & Roskos, 2006). Humans are uniquely equipped to use a wide variety of symbolic systems including spoken language, reading, and writing, number, various visual media (painting, drawing, collage) music and so on. During the first five years of life, when children are beginning to master these systems, these aspects of their learning are an important element within their play (Christie & Roskos, 2006).

Play with language starts very early in life with children under the age of one-year-old playing with sounds, and, as they grow older, particularly playing with the sounds of the language or languages they are hearing around them. This play is a very active process and quickly develops into making up new words, playing with rhymes, and eventually young children's love of puns and other jokes with language. Extensive research has clearly established that this type of play is a powerful support for developing language abilities and, crucially, through its support for phonological awareness, impacts upon the ease with which young children develop early literacy skills (Christie & Roskos, 2006). By placing basic numeracy in meaningful, real life contexts, play involving counting and other basic mathematical operations supports young children's ability to engage with formal mathematics with confidence (Whitebread, 2000; Carruthers & Worthington, 2006).

Recent work on play has strongly supported Vygotsky's (1986) insight that there are very close links between early drawing and writing in young children's mark making. In fascinating studies of mark making amongst chimpanzees, for example, Matthews (2011) has shown that drawing was perhaps the earliest evolving type of symbolic

representation, and continues to be a significant aspect of young children's symbolic play. Studies of children's drawings have demonstrated how through drawing, children gradually increase their 'graphic vocabularies', and their ability to organise graphic elements into a pictorial representation (a kind of 'graphic grammar') (Jolley, 2010; Ring, 2010). The evidence from these studies suggests that children's visual literacy (i.e. their ability to understand pictures, photographs, diagrams, scale models, plans, maps etc) is importantly enhanced by their experiences of playing with a variety of visual media.

Musical play is another very under-researched area, despite being a ubiquitous and highly significant form of play in all human cultures. From a very early age, children sing, dance and delight in exploring and making sounds of all kinds, with their own bodies and with all kinds of objects. In extensive research of early mother-infant pre-linguistic interactions, Trevarthen (1999) has clearly illustrated the role of the human infant's innate response to rhythm and sounds in establishing early communicative abilities. A recent review of research in this area concluded that it seems likely that musical play, partly as a consequence of its powerfully social and interactive characteristics, supports a wide range of children's developing abilities, including those related to social interaction, communication, emotion understanding, memory, self-regulation and creativity (Pound, 2010). In a study which involved 96 four-year-olds in joint music making, Kirschner and Tomasello (2010) showed that these children significantly increased subsequent spontaneous cooperative and helpful behaviour, relative to a carefully matched control condition with the same level of social and linguistic interaction but no music.

2.2.6 Pretence/Socio-Dramatic Play

Pretence/Socio-Dramatic play is often characterised and perceived as ‘free play’. During socio-dramatic play, children are obliged to follow the social rules governing the character they are portraying. Berk and colleagues report several studies with three and four-year olds demonstrating a clear link between the complexity of socio-dramatic play and improvement in social responsibility (Whitebread & Jameson, 2010).

In the urbanised, technologically advanced modern world, this is the most prevalent type of play amongst young children, emerging around the age of one year old. It is also the most heavily researched. High-quality pretend play has repeatedly been shown to be very closely associated with the development of cognitive, social and academic abilities. Studies have reported the impact of play world experience on narrative skills in five to seven-year olds (Whitebread & Jameson, 2010), of pretence play on deductive reasoning and social competence, and of socio-dramatic play on improved ‘self-regulation’ among young children who are prone to be highly impulsive.

A range of studies have supported Vygotsky’s (1978) insights concerning the impact of this type of play on children’s representational and self-regulatory abilities (Karpov, 2005). This is also a type of play in which a high prevalence of ‘private speech’ is commonly observed (Berk, Mann & Ogan, 2006). Paradoxically, however, a number of studies have shown that, in fact, it makes some of the greatest demands on children’s self-restraint, or self-regulation. O’Connor and Stagnitti, (2011) have recently reported on a study of thirty-five children aged five to eight in special schools, some of whom were offered a pretend play intervention. Findings revealed that the children participating in the play intervention, compared to a matched group

who did not, showed a significant decrease in play deficits, became less socially disruptive and more socially connected with their peers.

An aspect of socio-dramatic play which often causes concern amongst parents and teachers is that related to play with guns. However, the research evidence suggests that these concerns are misplaced and that attempts by adults to discourage or forbid them are generally counter-productive. Gun play, similar to rough-and-tumble, is easily distinguishable from real aggression or violence. In this kind of play, as in all other aspects of socio-dramatic play, children are developing their co-operative and social skills in contexts which are salient to their interests, and which arise from their real and vicarious experiences (Holland, 2003; Levin, 2006).

2.2.7 Games with Rules

Young children are strongly motivated to make sense of their world and, as part of this, they are very interested in rules. As a consequence, from a very young age, they enjoy games with rules, and frequently invent their own. Opie and Opie's (1959) collections of children games and folklore are a testament to children's love of games with rules. These games include physical games such as chasing games, hide-and-seek, throwing and catching and the like as children mature. They get involved in more intellectual games such as board and card games, electronic and computer games, and the whole variety of sporting activities. As well as helping children to develop their understandings about rules, the main developmental contribution of playing games derives from their essentially social nature. While playing games with their friends, siblings and parents, young children are learning a range of social skills related to sharing, taking turns, understanding others' perspectives and so on (DeVries, 2006).

Through the use of electronic and computer games by today's children it is considered

useful. Another area that have generated of anxiety for parents and teachers. The concerns here relate to violence and to the addictive nature of some games. However, the evidence in this area is equivocal. A recent survey of 346 children from the 7th and 8th grade of seven elementary schools in the United States, for example, found that playing videogames did not appear to take place at the expense of children's other leisure activities, social integration, and school performance. There was also no significant relationship between the amount of time children spent on videogames and aggressive behaviour. A positive relationship was found between time spent on videogames and a child's intelligence (Van Schie & Wiegman, 1997). Other studies in the UK have also shown, furthermore, that well-designed computer games offering open-ended or problem-solving challenges to children are likely to share some of the benefits of problem-solving or constructional play with objects (Siraj-Blatchford & Whitebread, 2003).

2.2.8 Benefits of play

Play has enormous benefits in the development of the child present in this section of the literature are the following benefits:

- Cognitive
- Physical development
- Intellectual development
- Social development/competence
- Emotional development
- Socio-linguistic development

Explaining play in terms of different types of play as well as researching play as an aid to cognitive, social, and socio-linguistic development dominated developmental psychologists concerns for much of the 20th century. By the end of the century there

were substantive claims for the value and significance of play in language and literacy learning (Roskos & Christie, 2000); emotional development (Erikson, 1963; Fein, 1985); social competence and peer group affiliation (Parten, 1932; Garvey, 1977; Giffin, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978); spatial and mathematical learning (Guha, 1988); and the development of positive learning dispositions and orientations (Lieberman, 1977; Sylva, et al., 1976). Parten's (1932) categorization of play in terms of progressive levels of social participation was significant because it emphasised the role of social interaction in play. However, in more recent times, Parten's formulation has been criticised for implying that playing alone was less advanced and that older children engaging in solitary play were socially immature. She also underestimated very young children's ability to engage in social interaction and this has led to the erroneous view that babies and toddlers do not play 'properly' (Manning-Morton & Thorp, 2003).

Piaget's (1962) conceptualisation of play as developing in stages defined by qualitatively different levels of thinking and increased levels of knowledge was particularly influential in ECCE. His constructivist approach, which is summarised in the research paper Children's early learning and development (French, 2007) suggested a dialogue between the child's cognitive structures, internal rules for processing information, and the external world. His cognitive play theory, which focused on the individual's interaction with the environment has been attributed as the basis for a 'laissez-faire' free play curriculum, where children make the choices with the adult intervening as little as possible. This is often positioned in contrast to Vygotsky's social-cultural theory of development, which emphasised the role of adults and peers in development and learning (Smith, 1993).

Vygotsky argued that whilst play was not the predominant feature of childhood, it was a leading factor in development (Berk and Winsler, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). His

attention was focused on the cognitive functioning and social rules involved in maintaining peer interaction in socio-dramatic play. His elevation of socio-dramatic play, as the most valued form of play in early childhood has been hugely influential in early childhood pedagogy (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Lohmander & Samuelsson, 2003). His theoretical framework, incorporating the notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), challenged the efficacy of a free-play curriculum, and suggested that adults need to take an active role in stimulating learning in the context of play. However, this did not mean formal academic teaching. Rather learning was understood as taking place in interactions between children and adults, between peers and in the context of real-life everyday situations.

A typology of play considered useful in describing the different forms of children's play is that developed by Hutt, et al. (1989). Here, play is grouped into three categories: epistemic, ludic, and games with rules. Epistemic play, typically associated with children in the first two years of life, refers to exploratory play with objects and materials whereby children gather knowledge about the world through their senses. Ludic play refers to children's imaginative, fantasy and socio-dramatic play i.e. 'what if' scenarios or pretence. In games with rules, children design their own games with negotiated rules and in time. They also partake in more conventional games with 'external' rules. Vygotsky identified two critical features of pretend play that described its uniqueness. Firstly, all representational play creates an imaginary situation that permits children to grapple with unrealizable desires and so promote self-regulation. Secondly, play always contains rules for behaviour (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

The prevailing approach to considering play in ECCE pedagogy throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s was to link the provision of different types of play to the

principal domains of child development and to look for developmental progression or ‘signs of maturing’ within specific play behaviours. The notion of ‘developmentally appropriate practice’ (DAP) as set out in a document published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp et al., 2000) in the United States, was particularly influential and became a powerful construct in Western ECCE practice. Play as an important vehicle for children’s all-round development, as well as a reflection of their development is one of the key principles informing DAP (Nutbrown, 2011). Different forms of play incorporate cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and moral challenges and support children to develop strengths in a range of areas. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Framework for Early Learning moves away from the earlier approach to linking the provision of different types of play to the principal domains of child development and to view the child instead as developing through four interconnected themes Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, and Exploring and Thinking (NCCA 2004). Just as domains of children’s development are closely related and intertwined, so too, are the different forms of play. In practice, when children are playing, their behaviours may reflect more than one type of play identified above. Furthermore, children often display preferences for types of play.

2.3 Play-Based Learning

The PBL environment is a child-centered pedagogy that promotes the development of children by following their natural inquisitive and explorative disposition. “Young children are naturally predisposed to exploring that which draws their interest and engages them. For them to continue to grow this disposition, they must feel connected to their learning environment and confident in their abilities as a learner” (Aiono, et al, 2023). The power of play as a pivotal precursor to formalised instruction is well

documented within educational research (Bergen, 2009; Canning, 2007; Mastrangelo, 2009; Nolan & Paatsch, 2018; Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978).

The PBL environment consists of a child-directed exploration of phenomena through the method of play (Aiono, 2015, 2017; Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich & Tenenbaum, 2011; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). The pedagogy of exploration, to make sense of the objects in the world around them, has been the focus of early childhood education for many decades (Bergen, 2009; Briggs, 2012; McInerney & McInerney, 2002; Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978). In recent years, the environment of the primary classroom has changed from a teacher-led curriculum to a more child-centered approach, causing great debate in regard to what is deemed to be preschool education/learning pedagogy versus that of the mainstream primary classroom (Aiono, 2015, 2017; Alfieri, et al, 2011; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). Pyle and Danniels (2017) state “The purpose of play-based learning is inherent in its name: to learn while at play” (p. 285). By connecting to their learning environment and feeling confident in their abilities, young children will naturally explore whatever interests them (Aiono, 2015). PBL therefore, within this review, is seen as a child-directed exploration of phenomena through the method of play (Aiono, 2015, 2017; Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich & Tenenbaum, 2011; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). The concept of discovery-learning challenges the notion within education of the child being an empty vessel needing to be filled with adult knowledge, as was once believed (Bandura, 2001). In contrast to this, constructivist educational theorists such as Piaget and Reggio Emilia believed that the child unlocks their own intelligence through a process of discovery (McNally & Slutsky, 2017). The concept of co-constructed and reciprocal development of knowledge (ako)³ aligns with the culturally-responsive framework of Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2013) which outlines the importance of developing positive relationships which allow for

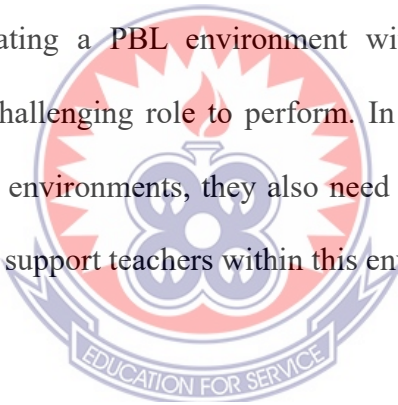
effective teaching through the teacher's ability to engage and motivate the students (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 2009). Therefore, the role of the teacher within these philosophies is to support the child to reach their full potential through self-guided discovery. Vygotsky (1978) documented that the role of the teacher is to identify what the child can currently achieve independently and what they can achieve with support or within "the zone of proximal development" (Khaliliaqdam, 2014, p. 891). In the zone of proximal development (ZPD) the role of the teacher is to scaffold the child's abilities to increase their knowledge and understanding (Cullen, 2001; Wasik & Jacobi-Vessels, 2016). This concept of the ZPD aligns with the pedagogy of PBL with its purpose being to allow children to explore through rich and engaging experiences (Aiono, 2015; Blucher, 2017; Canning, 2007; Mastrangelo, 2009).

2.4 The Role of the Teacher in a Play-Based Learning Environment

Whilst the purpose and pedagogy behind the implementation of a PBL environment is supported by many education theories and associated research (Aiono, 2015; Canning, 2007; Mastrangelo, 2009; Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978) the best practice in terms of the implementation of a PBL environment and the role of the teacher within the PBL environment is less documented. This uncertainty has led to a variance in practice (Pyle & Danniels, 2017). The New Zealand Curriculum for Early Childhood Te Wh riki4 (1996) is world-renowned for the way it follows the natural development of the child through learning dispositions (Carr, 2006). Te Wh riki (1996) aligns the focus of learning and exploration with the threads of the child's natural developmental stages. A child's stages of development can be explored through both social and cognitive scales. Social development focuses on the child's ability to positively interact with others whilst the cognitive scale relates to the child's academic ability (McInerney & McInerney, 2002; Mastrangelo, 2009; Ministry of Education, 1996). Following the

natural progression of learning, teachers within the early childhood sector promote the teaching approach of child-directed elements with some degree of adult guidance (Pyle & Danniels, 2017). However, there is debate over the level of teacher assistance with a caution for teachers to “support, not disturb” (Pramling Samuelsson & Johansson, 2016, p. 48) as adult interference may influence or hinder play (Pyle & Danniels, 2017). A contrasting viewpoint describes teacher involvement as being important to further children’s learning (Pyle & Danniels, 2017). This perspective is supported by Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich and Tenenbaum (2011) who state that “unassisted discovery generally does not benefit learning” (p. 12). Therefore, it is the way in which educators craft the learning environment and learning experience that will have the greatest impact on the way a child learns (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hedges, 2000; McLaughlin & Cherrington, 2018). The way in which a teacher orchestrates the PBL environment “requires skill and professional expertise often under utilised in our classroom teachers ... teachers working within these environments must skillfully walk a fine line between teacher-directed activities and child-directed learning” (Aiono, 2017, p.1). Epstein (2007) referred to this careful and purposeful balance of child versus teacher-directed learning as intentional teaching whereby the teacher is thinking about “how it will foster children’s development and produce real and lasting learning” (p.10). The importance of intentional teaching is also outlined within the revised version of Te Wh riki (Ministry of Education, 2017) which refers to the use of ‘intentional pedagogy’ (p.59) to enhance children’s learning and development. The actions of the teacher within the PBL environment have a major impact on the successful learning achievement of the students (Alton-Lee, 2003; Nolan & Paatsch, 2018; NZC Online, 2019; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). The key practices to support effective play-based learning include:

- Creating a classroom to meet the diverse needs and interest areas of the students (NZC Online, 2019; Terpstra, Higgins & Pierce, 2002).
- Using curriculum knowledge to notice and recognise the learning within the play experiences (Nolan & Paatsch, 2018; NZC Online, 2019).
- Building on the prior knowledge of the students (NZC Online, 2019).
- Participating in purposeful conversations to broaden the students' ideas (Education Review Office, 2017; Nolan & Paatsch, 2018).
- Scaffolding the interactions between students to support their social and emotional competence (Gagnon, et al, 2007; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978; Wasik & Jacobi-Vessels, 2016). Therefore, teachers who are facilitating a PBL environment within their classroom have an important and challenging role to perform. In order for RTLB to work with teachers in PBL environments, they also need to have a strong knowledge of PBL and how to support teachers within this environment.



2.5 Empirical Review

Teacher Challenges to the Implementation of Play-Based Pedagogy

The adoption of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten classrooms has garnered attention for its potential to enhance children's holistic development. However, despite its recognized benefits, the effective implementation of play-based approaches faces numerous challenges. Among these challenges, teachers' traditional beliefs about education emerge as a significant factor influencing their pedagogical practices.

Many teachers hold deep-rooted beliefs shaped by their own educational experiences and societal norms, emphasizing structured instruction and academic rigor over play-based learning (Quackenbush, 2023). According to Piaget (1962), traditional educational paradigms prioritize the transmission of knowledge through formal

instruction, neglecting the importance of hands-on exploration and experiential learning inherent in play. Consequently, teachers may perceive play-based pedagogy as incompatible with their role as educators, leading to skepticism and resistance (Romain-Tappin, 2022).

Research suggests that time constraints within educational schedules often limit the amount of time allocated for play-based activities (Fleer, 2015). This reduction in play opportunities can hinder children's ability to fully engage in meaningful play experiences. Implementing effective play-based pedagogy requires careful planning and preparation by educators (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). Time constraints may limit teachers' ability to adequately plan and design play-based learning experiences tailored to children's interests and developmental needs.

Some kindergarten teachers have some traditional beliefs and often view play as mere recreation rather than a meaningful educational tool. As noted by Smith et al (2017), some educators perceive play-based pedagogy as lacking academic rigor, leading them to prioritize structured activities over open-ended play experiences. This perspective hampers the integration of play-based. Teachers adhering to traditional paradigms tend to prioritize direct instruction and teacher-led activities, viewing them as the most effective means of knowledge transmission (Whitebread, 2018). This preference may stem from a desire to maintain control and ensure academic outcomes align with established standards. Consequently, play-based pedagogy, which emphasizes child-initiated exploration and discovery, may be marginalized in such environments.

Deeply ingrained beliefs about the role of the teacher and the nature of learning can breed resistance to pedagogical innovations, including play-based approaches (Kuby

et al., 2020). Teachers may be reluctant to deviate from familiar practices, fearing that embracing play-based pedagogy could compromise classroom control or undermine their perceived effectiveness as educators.

According to Bennett (2021), in this modern educational landscape, teachers face mounting pressure to adhere to academic standards and achieve predetermined learning outcomes. Play-based pedagogy, with its emphasis on child-led exploration and open-ended activities, may be perceived as diverging from these standards, exacerbating teachers' anxieties about meeting educational benchmarks (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). As a result, teachers may revert to more familiar, traditional instructional methods to ensure alignment with mandated curricula, thereby undermining the integration of play-based approaches.

Furthermore, teachers' reluctance to embrace play-based pedagogy can be attributed to limited exposure and professional development opportunities in this area (Ntshangase, 2022). Pre-service teacher education programs often prioritize conventional teaching strategies, leaving educators ill-prepared to implement innovative approaches such as play-based learning (Pyle et al., 2017). Without adequate training and ongoing support, teachers may default to familiar practices, perpetuating the cycle of traditionalism and impeding the widespread adoption of play-based pedagogy.

Van As and Excell (2018) opined that many educators lack a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations and practical applications of play-based. Without proper training, teachers may struggle to design developmentally appropriate play experiences that align with curricular goals and promote targeted learning outcomes.

According to Fesseha and Pyle (2016), the absence of training leaves educators ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of play-based instruction, including facilitating meaningful play experiences, scaffolding learning, and assessing children's progress. As a result, they may resort to more traditional, teacher-directed approaches, thereby underutilizing the potential of play in early childhood classrooms. In the absence of exposure to innovative instructional strategies, educators may default to familiar teaching methods and routines (Feiman-Nemser, S. 2009; Scheeler et al, 2016). This perpetuates a cycle of pedagogical inertia, wherein play-based approaches are overlooked in favor of conventional practices that offer a sense of security and familiarity.

Rigorous academic standards and prescribed curricula often leave educators with limited time for play-based activities (Nugent, 2017). In an era characterized by accountability measures and standardized testing, teachers may feel compelled to prioritize content coverage over the facilitation of open-ended play experiences, relegating play to a marginal role in the curriculum. Practical considerations, such as classroom schedules, transitions, and administrative requirements, further encroach upon the time available for play-based pedagogy (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014). Teachers must navigate a myriad of competing demands, leaving little room for extended periods of unstructured play within the school day.

The demands of planning, preparation, and assessment impose significant time constraints on educators, limiting their capacity to fully embrace play-based approaches (Barblett et al., 2016). Balancing instructional responsibilities with administrative tasks and professional obligations leaves educators with scant time to cultivate rich, immersive play environments conducive to optimal learning outcomes.

Play-based pedagogy thrives on active engagement and child-directed exploration, requiring educators to strike a delicate balance between facilitating learning and fostering autonomy (Bennett & Smilanich, 2017). However, maintaining students' sustained focus and participation amidst the inherent excitement and spontaneity of play activities poses a formidable challenge, necessitating strategies for scaffolding and redirecting attention as needed.

In heterogeneous classroom environments, educators must navigate diverse learning needs, temperaments, and abilities while fostering an inclusive culture of play (Rudasill et al, 2016). Addressing disparities in skill levels, language proficiencies, and social competencies requires intentional efforts to create opportunities for all children to actively participate and contribute to play experiences.

Smooth transitions between play-based activities and structured learning tasks are essential for maintaining classroom cohesion and maximizing instructional time (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). However, transitions can pose disruptions and challenges, particularly for students who struggle with self-regulation or transitions between play contexts, necessitating clear expectations, routines, and cues to support smooth transitions.

The prevailing focus on academic achievement may prioritize the acquisition of discrete skills and content knowledge over the holistic development nurtured through play (Bayrakm, 2019). Consequently, educators may feel compelled to allocate instructional time towards direct instruction and structured activities, sidelining opportunities for open-ended play experiences.

The proliferation of standardized assessments and accountability measures places schools under heightened scrutiny to demonstrate student proficiency in core subject

areas (Bassok, et al., 2016). In response, educators may adopt didactic teaching methods aimed at "teaching to the test," thereby marginalizing play-based pedagogy in favor of strategies perceived to yield measurable academic gains.

Parents, influenced by societal norms and perceptions of academic rigor, may harbor concerns about the perceived efficacy of play-based approaches in preparing children for future academic success (Coggio, 2023). This pressure can manifest in demands for more structured, teacher-directed instruction, reinforcing educators' apprehensions about deviating from traditional pedagogical models.

Resource Challenges to the Use of Play

Play-based pedagogy has gained recognition for its potential to foster holistic development and enhance learning outcomes in kindergarten settings. However, the effective implementation of play-based approaches is contingent upon the availability and appropriateness of teaching and learning resources. Insufficient access to a diverse array of play materials and manipulatives poses a significant obstacle to the implementation of play-based pedagogy (Acevedo, 2022). Kindergarten classrooms characterized by sparse resources may constrain children's opportunities for imaginative exploration and creative expression, hindering the realization of play's full potential as a vehicle for learning. Limited access to diverse play materials constrains educators' ability to create immersive play environments that stimulate children's imagination and creativity (Rose-Turriglio, 2017). Kindergarten classrooms characterized by resource scarcity often lack essential materials such as blocks, art supplies, and manipulatives, depriving children of opportunities for open-ended exploration and collaborative play.

Disparities in resource allocation across schools and districts exacerbate educational inequities, particularly for underserved communities (Venketsamy et al, 2020).

Kindergarten classrooms serving low-income students often contend with inadequate funding and resource shortages, impeding educators' ability to create rich, immersive play environments conducive to optimal learning outcomes. Resource disparities perpetuate educational inequities, particularly for marginalized communities and underserved populations (Saleema, 2019). Kindergarten classrooms serving low-income students frequently contend with inadequate funding and limited access to materials, exacerbating disparities in learning opportunities and hindering the realization of play's transformative potential as a vehicle for holistic development

Educators' familiarity with play-based pedagogy and their capacity to effectively integrate resources into instructional practices profoundly influence the quality of children's play experiences (Baker et al., 2021). Teachers lacking training or professional development in play-based approaches may struggle to select, adapt, and utilize resources in a manner that promotes meaningful play and scaffolds learning effectively. Educators grappling with resource scarcity experience heightened levels of stress and frustration as they navigate the challenges of implementing play-based pedagogy with limited materials (Lyons, 2020). The pressure to provide engaging, enriching experiences for young learners amidst resource constraints can erode teacher morale and contribute to burnout, undermining the quality of instruction and children's learning outcomes.

Parental Challenges in the Implementation of the Play-Based Pedagogy

Play-based pedagogy, widely acknowledged for its effectiveness in fostering holistic development and creativity in children, faces several challenges in its implementation, one of which is parental factors. Parents' beliefs, expectations, and attitudes toward education significantly influence the acceptance and adoption of play-based approaches in early childhood settings.

Parents' beliefs about education are deeply entrenched and can vary widely based on cultural background, socioeconomic status, and personal experiences. Some parents may hold traditional views that prioritize academic achievement and structured learning over play-based approaches (Pirpir et al., 2000). They may perceive play as frivolous or inferior to more structured instructional methods, leading to skepticism or resistance towards play-based pedagogy (Coggio, 2023).

A common concern among parents is whether play-based pedagogy adequately prepares children for academic success. Some parents may worry that play-based approaches do not sufficiently emphasize literacy, numeracy, and other core academic skills (Baker et al., 2018). They may fear that their children will fall behind their peers who are exposed to more formalized instruction, especially as they progress to higher grade levels.

Parents' understanding of how children learn can influence their perception of play-based pedagogy. Some parents may believe that learning only occurs in structured, teacher-led activities, overlooking the educational value of child-initiated play and exploration (Boyd et al., 2019). They may underestimate the cognitive, social, and emotional benefits of play and erroneously equate learning with rote memorization and direct instruction.

Parental misconceptions regarding play in early childhood education (ECE) classrooms often arise from societal norms and traditional beliefs that prioritize academic achievement over the value of play-based learning. Research has shown that some parents perceive play as merely recreational and fail to recognize its crucial role in promoting children's holistic development. This misconception can lead to

skepticism or resistance towards play-based pedagogy in ECE settings (Pyle et al., 2020).

Parents may mistakenly believe that structured, teacher-directed activities are more effective in preparing children for academic success, overlooking the numerous cognitive, social, and emotional benefits of play. This misconception can result in parental pressure for increased academic instruction and a diminished emphasis on play-based approaches within ECE classrooms.

2.6 Strategies to Enhance the Implementation of Play-Based Pedagogy

Creating Enriched Learning Environments: Early childhood centers prioritize the creation of rich, stimulating environments conducive to play-based learning. They design classrooms with open-ended materials, flexible spaces, and inviting play areas to inspire children's exploration and creativity (Boyd & Uysal, 2020). Incorporating natural elements, such as plants and sensory materials, significantly enhances the effectiveness of play-based pedagogy in early childhood education. By intentionally designing classrooms with open-ended materials, flexible spaces, and inviting play areas, educators inspire children's exploration, creativity, and engagement (Boyd & Uysal, 2020). Enriched environments incorporate natural elements, sensory materials, and interactive learning centers, providing diverse opportunities for hands-on exploration and discovery. These environments stimulate children's imaginations, promote social interaction, and support the development of essential cognitive and motor skills. Moreover, enriched learning environments foster a sense of wonder and curiosity, encouraging children to take ownership of their learning experiences and pursue their interests independently. By prioritizing the creation of enriched learning environments, early childhood educators cultivate dynamic spaces where play flourishes as a central vehicle for learning and

development, ultimately fostering optimal outcomes for young children. materials further enrich the sensory experiences and support children's holistic development.

Professional Development and Training: Investing in ongoing professional development is essential for empowering educators to effectively implement play-based pedagogy. Early childhood centers provide training sessions, workshops, and coaching opportunities to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in designing and facilitating play-based activities (Baker et al., 2018). By cultivating a culture of continuous learning, centers ensure that educators remain abreast of current research and best practices in play-based education.

Professional development and training play a crucial role in enhancing the use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood education. By investing in ongoing training sessions, workshops, and coaching opportunities, educators gain the knowledge and skills needed to design and implement effective play-based activities (Baker et al., 2018). Professional development empowers educators to understand the theoretical underpinnings of play-based learning, cultivate supportive learning environments, and scaffold children's play experiences appropriately. Through continuous learning and reflection, educators stay abreast of current research and best practices, ensuring that play remains at the forefront of their instructional approach. Ultimately, professional development and training foster a cadre of skilled educators equipped to harness the transformative power of play in promoting children's holistic development and academic success.

Collaborative Planning and Reflection: Collaborative planning and reflection significantly enhance the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood education. Educators engage in regular team meetings and reflective practices to

evaluate the effectiveness of their pedagogical strategies and adjust them based on children's interests and developmental needs (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2019). By sharing ideas, resources, and insights, educators collaborate to co-create curriculum plans that prioritize play-based approaches. This collaborative process fosters a culture of innovation and continuous improvement within early childhood settings, ensuring that play remains central to children's learning experiences.

Engaging Families as Partners: Early childhood centers recognize the importance of engaging families as partners in children's learning journey. They involve parents in curriculum planning, encourage participation in classroom activities, and provide resources for extending play-based learning experiences at home (Epstein, 2018). Open communication channels, such as newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, and family workshops, foster meaningful connections between educators and families, ensuring alignment between home and school environments.

Parental involvement is pivotal in facilitating the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood education. Engaging parents through open communication channels, such as newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, and family workshops, fosters meaningful partnerships between educators and families (Epstein, 2018). When parents understand the value of play in promoting children's learning and development, they are more likely to support play-based approaches both at home and in school. By involving parents in curriculum planning, encouraging participation in classroom activities, and providing resources for extending play-based learning experiences, educators create cohesive learning environments that promote children's holistic growth and well-being.

Chapter Summary

Chapter two delved into a comprehensive review of the existing literature related to the study's focal points, emphasizing the critical challenges to the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood classrooms. The chapter is structured around key themes and concepts, beginning with play as a concept in early childhood education. It then navigates through the benefits of play as well as play-based learning in early childhood classrooms.

The literature review proceeded to examine the teacher challenges to the implementation of play-based pedagogy. It underscored what early childhood teachers go through in their quest to use play in their teaching. The chapter also delved into the challenges that teaching and learning resources pose in using play-based pedagogy in teaching young children. The chapter also integrated the parental challenges as well as strategies to improve the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching at early childhood centres. The empirical studies offer evidence that reinforces the theoretical underpinnings of Sociocultural learning theory to teaching and learning which explores how individuals are influenced by their social environment. The chapter emphasizes the applicability of this theory in understanding the challenge of the use of play-based pedagogy.

Overall, this comprehensive literature review sets the stage for the study by providing a robust theoretical framework and empirical evidence to support the research questions, shaping the foundation for the subsequent chapters. It underscores the challenges of the teacher, resources as well as parents in the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching children in early childhood education settings, laying the groundwork for the study's subsequent analysis, findings, and recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter covered the research paradigm, research approach and design, study area, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, data collection instruments, pilot-testing, validity and reliability of instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis plan and ethical considerations.

3.1 Philosophical Underpinning

The study was routed in the interpretive research paradigm. Interpretivism, as a research paradigm, offers a distinctive philosophical approach that emphasizes the subjective nature of reality and the importance of understanding social phenomena within their specific contexts (Schwandt, 2001). Rooted in the traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology, interpretivism rejects the positivist notion of an objective reality that exists independently of human perception, instead asserting that reality is socially constructed and shaped by individuals' interpretations and interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Central to interpretivism is the idea that individuals actively construct meaning through their interactions with the world and that these meanings are contingent upon their cultural, historical, and social contexts (Potrac, Jones, & Nelson, 2014). As such, interpretivist researchers seek to explore and understand the subjective perspectives and lived experiences of individuals, rather than uncover universal laws or causal relationships. This is often achieved through qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis, which allow researchers to delve into the complexity and depth of human experience (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

One of the strengths of interpretivism lies in its ability to capture the richness and diversity of human experience by embracing subjectivity and contextuality (Creswell, 2014). By acknowledging the importance of individuals' interpretations and the social contexts in which they are situated, interpretivism research can provide nuanced insights into complex social phenomena. This qualitative richness allows researchers to uncover meanings, values, and beliefs that may be overlooked by quantitative approaches, leading to a deeper understanding of the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Moreover, interpretivism encourages reflexivity and self-awareness on the part of the researcher, recognizing that their own biases, assumptions, and perspectives shape the research process and outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This reflexivity enhances the credibility and rigor of interpretivism research by promoting transparency and critical reflection. By acknowledging and addressing their positionality, researchers can better understand how their perspectives may influence the interpretation of data and the construction of knowledge (Schwandt, 2001).

However, interpretivism also has its limitations. Critics argue that its emphasis on subjectivity and contextuality can lead to relativism, where all interpretations are considered equally valid, undermining the pursuit of objective knowledge (Maxwell, 2014). Additionally, interpretivist research may be criticized for its lack of generalizability, as findings are often context-bound and may not be applicable beyond the specific social and cultural context in which they were generated (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Research Approach

The qualitative research approach was suitable for the study of factors affecting literacy skills development among learners in early childhood centers because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of learners, teachers, and caregivers. This approach emphasized the importance of understanding the social and cultural contexts in which literacy skills were developed, as well as the subjective experiences of individuals who were involved in the process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023).

The qualitative research approach involves collecting rich and descriptive data through a variety of methods, including observations, interviews, and focus groups. This approach enabled the researcher to explore the challenges early childhood teachers face in their implementation of the play-based pedagogy.

One of the key strengths of qualitative research lies in its ability to capture the depth and complexity of human experiences and behaviors related to play-based pedagogy. Through methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, qualitative researchers can delve into the lived experiences of educators, parents, and policymakers, gaining insights into the challenges they encounter (Merriam et al., 2019). By allowing participants to share their perspectives in their own words, qualitative research provides rich, detailed data that can illuminate the underlying factors contributing to the challenges of implementing play-based pedagogy.

Moreover, qualitative research is well-suited to exploring the socio-cultural context in which play-based pedagogy is implemented in the Sunyani Municipality. By conducting fieldwork and immersing themselves in the educational settings, researchers can observe firsthand the dynamics of play-based learning environments,

the availability of resources, and the interactions between educators, children, and parents (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This holistic approach enables researchers to uncover contextual factors that may influence the implementation of play-based pedagogy, such as cultural beliefs about education, socio-economic disparities, and policy frameworks.

Additionally, qualitative research encourages reflexivity and acknowledges the role of the researcher in shaping the research process and outcomes. Researchers adopting a qualitative approach recognize their own biases, assumptions, and perspectives, and actively reflect on how these may influence data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This reflexivity enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research findings by promoting transparency and self-awareness.

However, qualitative research also has its limitations. Critics may argue that its findings lack generalizability, as they are often context-bound and may not be applicable beyond the specific setting or population studied (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, qualitative research can be time-consuming and labor-intensive, requiring extensive fieldwork, data collection, and analysis, which may limit the feasibility of conducting large-scale studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.3 Research Design

A case study research design was the appropriate design used to explore the challenges that affect the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood classrooms in the Sunyani Municipality. Case study research involves in-depth exploration of a particular phenomenon within its real-life context, often focusing on a specific case or multiple cases over time (Yin, 2018). In the context of challenges to implementing play-based pedagogy, a case study design allows researchers to

examine the issue holistically, considering various factors such as teacher practices, resource availability, parental involvement, and policy frameworks.

One of the key strengths of the case study design is its ability to provide rich, detailed insights into the implementation of play-based pedagogy within the Sunyani Municipality. By focusing on real-life examples and contexts, researchers can capture the complexity and dynamics of play-based learning environments, including the interactions between educators, children, and parents (Yin, 2018). This depth of understanding is valuable for uncovering the underlying factors contributing to the challenges faced in implementing play-based pedagogy.

Moreover, the case study design allows for a multi-faceted analysis of the challenges, considering multiple perspectives and dimensions of the issue. Researchers can collect data through various methods such as interviews, observations, document analysis, and surveys, enabling a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing the implementation of play-based pedagogy (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This multi-method approach enhances the credibility and validity of the findings, as data triangulation helps corroborate and validate the results.

However, the case study design also has its limitations. Critics may argue that findings from case studies lack generalizability, as they are often context-specific and may not be applicable beyond the specific cases studied (Yin, 2018). Additionally, case studies can be resource-intensive and time-consuming, requiring extensive fieldwork, data collection, and analysis, which may limit the feasibility of conducting large-scale studies (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

3.4 Population

According to Levy and Lemeshow, (2013), a population is the aggregate of all the elements showing some common set of characteristics that comprises the universe for the marketing research problem. The target population for the study was all public early childhood teachers in the Sunyani Municipality (KG 1 to Class 3) teachers as well as parents of early childhood learners. The total number of these teachers from KG 1 to Class 3 was 462 teachers.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique

The quality of any research not only stands or falls on the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also on the suitability of the sampling strategy that is adopted (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). To obtain the sample for this study, a convenient sampling technique was employed to select nine (9) early childhood teachers for the study. Convenience sampling is a widely used technique in qualitative and quantitative research, particularly in situations where access to the target population is limited or difficult to obtain (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

One of the key strengths of convenience sampling is its practicality and ease of implementation. Researchers often opt for convenience sampling when time, resources, or logistical constraints make it challenging to recruit participants using probability sampling methods (Etikan et al., 2016). By selecting participants based on their accessibility and availability, convenience sampling allows researchers to quickly gather data and proceed with their research, making it a valuable option in situations where efficiency is a priority.

However, convenience sampling also has its limitations. One of the primary concerns is the potential for selection bias, whereby the characteristics of the sample may not

accurately reflect those of the target population (Bryman, 2016). Because participants are selected based on their convenience rather than through random sampling, the sample may overrepresent certain demographic groups or perspectives, leading to biased or skewed results.

3.6 Data Collection Instrument

The study employed interview and observation as the data collection instruments.

3.6.1 Interview

A semi-structured interview guide was employed for this study, and it was based on the objectives and research questions of the study. According to Creswell (2009), a semi-structured interview is neither completely fixed nor completely free, and they are arguably best understood as *adaptable*. In most cases, interviews begin with some sort of predetermined questioning plan, but they then transition into a more conversational format, in which the questions may be answered in a sequence that is more natural to the flow of the conversation. It is possible that it will begin with only a few clearly stated inquiries, but it will pursue any fascinating abilities that may emerge.

When developing the schedule for the semi-structured interviews, the primary objective was to collect data in order to provide responses to the study questions. As a result, a series of questions relevant to the primary focus of each research issue were posed to the participants in order to elicit the replies and perspectives that were sought after. Questions concerning the application of the kindergarten curriculum were included in the interview guide that was provided. It was divided into two parts. The responses to the questions in Section A were used to compile participants' demographic information. In Section B, detailed and methodical questions were asked on the aforementioned research questions. According to Kusi (2012) using this

instrument in collecting data enables the researcher to increase the likelihood that all of the study questions will be answered.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the instrument

Trustworthiness criteria were established for the semi-structured interview guide. One major aim of research was to put the knowledge created into practice. As a result, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and the general public must understand and accept the findings as legitimate. Trustworthiness criteria are one-way researchers can convince themselves and readers that their study findings are worthy of attention (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). The criteria established were confirmability, dependability, transferability and credibility.

3.7.1 Confirmability

In qualitative research, confirmability is a crucial criterion for establishing the trustworthiness of the study. It refers to the degree to which the researcher's biases are minimized and the findings accurately reflect the participants' perspectives and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Techniques such as member checking and maintaining an audit trail are commonly used to enhance confirmability (Creswell, 2013). The researcher guaranteed confirmability by preventing his knowledge, values, and conclusions from impacting the study's findings. Each phase of the data analysis was included in the study, including the conclusions that were derived as suggested by Charmaz in Kusi (2012).

3.7.2 Dependability

Dependability is a critical aspect of qualitative research, emphasizing the need for consistency and traceability in the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By maintaining an audit trail and providing clear documentation of research procedures, researchers enhance the dependability of their study (Creswell, 2013). To increase the

dependability of the study findings, the researcher asked clear questions throughout the data collection, minimized bias, and controlled objectivity.

3.7.3 Transferability

Transferability is a key consideration in qualitative research, focusing on the applicability of the study's findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context and participants, researchers enhance the transferability of their findings, enabling readers to assess the relevance to their situations (Creswell, 2013).

3.7.4 Credibility

Credibility is a cornerstone of ensuring the trustworthiness of the study. It focuses on demonstrating the rigor of the research process and the soundness of the interpretations drawn from the data (Horsman, 2018). Techniques such as prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking contribute to enhancing the credibility of the study's findings (Creswell, 2013).

3.8 Data collection procedure

The researcher first obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Early Childhood, University of Education, Winneba to seek permission from the various schools, offices, and other concerned authorities. The letter spelled out the purpose of the study, the need for individual participation and anonymity as well as the confidentiality of respondents' responses. The management of the Sunyani Municipal Education Directorate issued an introductory letter to the sampled schools to grant the researcher access to the data collection. After establishing the necessary contact with the head teachers of the selected schools and authorized offices, permission was obtained for the administration of the instruments. The researcher self-administered the instrument on the respondents. The responses from the respondents were recorded

with an audio recording device. Each person spent between 20-30 minutes responding to the questions from the instrument. The data collection exercise was conducted within a period of one (1) week.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible and comprehensive method that allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process involves several steps, including data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining themes, and finally, writing up the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

First, the researcher transcribed all the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and observational checklists. The transcribed data was read thoroughly multiple times to ensure a deep understanding of the content. The researcher then generated initial codes by highlighting significant statements and concepts in the data that are related to the research questions.

Next, the researcher organized the codes into potential themes by grouping related codes. The researcher then reviewed and defined each theme, ensuring that they accurately represent the data and are relevant to the research questions. The researcher again named each theme, create a thematic map, and write a narrative description of each theme.

The final step involved integrating the themes into a coherent and comprehensive analysis of the data, using selected quotes and examples from the data to illustrate the themes. The analysis was written up clearly and concisely, using tables, graphs, and visual representations to enhance clarity and coherence. The researcher ensured that

the themes were well-supported by the data and reflected the experiences and perspectives of the participants in the study.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

To abide by the ethical principles of the study, the study addressed some ethical concerns which include informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

Informed consent

Informed consent is a fundamental ethical principle in research, especially when involving human participants. It refers to the process through which researchers obtain voluntary and well-informed agreement from individuals before they participate in a research study (Seidman, 2016). Informed consent ensures that participants understand the purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants in the research.

Anonymity

Anonymity in research refers to the practice of keeping the identities of participants completely hidden and untraceable. This is crucial to protect participants' privacy and encourage honest responses, particularly when discussing sensitive topics (James & Busher, 2007). This was ensured by the researcher by assigning codes to participants, to prevent any direct link between the data and the individuals providing it. Anonymity fosters a sense of security, enabling participants to share their experiences candidly. It also mitigates potential risks, ensuring that personal information remains confidential. Ethical research upholds anonymity as a fundamental principle, maintaining trust, respecting autonomy, and facilitating a more open and accurate exploration of subjects' perspectives.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality in research pertains to safeguarding participants' personal information and ensuring that their identities and sensitive data are kept private. This ethical consideration was crucial for maintaining trust and protecting participants' rights. On the issue of confidentiality, an effort was made to maintain the privacy of the responses of the participants. Participants were told that their responses would be kept confidential and that no one would have access to the information provided and none of the respondents' names would be recorded in the study.

Transparency

Researchers should provide clear and honest information about their intentions, methodologies, and any potential conflicts of interest. This helps build trust with participants and the wider community.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of data based on the purpose of the study. The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges to the implementation of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten centres in the Sunyani Municipality. The analysis and interpretation of data were carried out based on the results of the four (4) research questions. The analysis was done based on the responses from the respondents during the interviews used in this study. The data were analysed using thematic analysis and were analysed from research question 1- 4.

4.1 Research question 1: **How do teachers contribute to the challenge in the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres?**

This research question seeks to explore the challenges teachers encounter in their quest to use the play-based pedagogy in their lesson delivery in various kindergarten centres in the Sunyani Municipality. Here are some of the themes and excerpts that were generated from the interview.

Theme 1: Traditional Teaching Mindset

Here are some of the responses from the respondents;

Teacher A said

“As a teacher with years of experience in a traditional classroom setting, I initially found it challenging to embrace play-based pedagogy. I was accustomed to a more structured approach where I was the primary source of knowledge and direction in the classroom”

Another teacher said

*“lack of understanding or appreciation for the cognitive and developmental benefits of play are some of the challenges in using play in teaching. Some teachers may view play as frivolous or unproductive, failing to recognize its role in promoting critical thinking, creativity, and social-emotional skills. **Teacher E***

*“I have encountered doubt about adopting play-based pedagogy because it makes it hard to meet academic standards and prepare children for standardized tests”.
Teacher G*

The implications of these quotes highlight the challenges and misconceptions surrounding the adoption of play-based pedagogy in traditional educational settings. Experienced teachers may struggle to transition from structured approaches to embracing play-based methods due to ingrained practices. Additionally, the lack of understanding or appreciation for the cognitive and developmental benefits of play perpetuates misconceptions about its effectiveness, hindering its adoption. Moreover, doubts about meeting academic standards and standardized testing requirements further complicate the implementation of play-based pedagogy, despite its potential to promote critical thinking, creativity, and social-emotional skills.

Theme 2: Time Constraints

*It is time-consuming for me when using play-based pedagogy in my teaching. Looking at how packed the curriculum is structured and with limited class time, I often find it difficult to allocate sufficient time for play-based activities without compromising other learning objectives. **Teacher C***

*Meaningful play experiences require children to have the freedom to immerse themselves in activities, experiment, and engage in sustained exploration. However, the pressure to cover curriculum content quickly often results in its usage.
Teacher B*

Theme 3: Classroom Management

*Classroom management poses a challenge to the use of play-based pedagogy as teachers strive to strike a balance between fostering child-directed exploration and maintaining a structured learning environment. **Teacher D***

*In a play-based classroom, teachers face the challenge of facilitating meaningful play experiences while ensuring that all children are actively engaged and that the learning environment remains safe and conducive to learning. This requires the teacher to have adequate classroom management skills to set clear expectations, and effectively address behavior issues that may arise during play. **Teacher A***

The narrative from the interview implies that balancing child-directed exploration and maintaining a structured learning environment challenges teachers implementing play-based pedagogy. They must ensure all children engage meaningfully while maintaining safety and conducive learning environments. This necessitates strong classroom management skills, including setting clear expectations and addressing behavior issues promptly. Without effective management, disruptions may hinder the quality of play-based learning experiences, impacting children's engagement and learning outcomes. Thus, teachers must develop and refine their classroom management abilities to create an environment where play thrives while supporting children's development and safety.

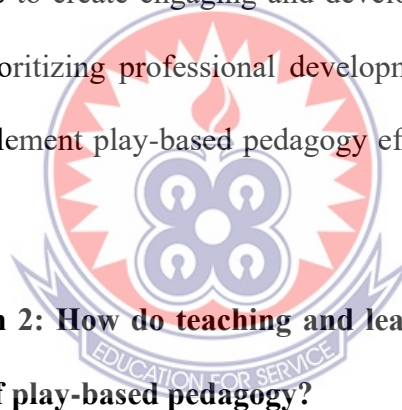
Theme 4: Professional Development

Teacher C said

'the absence of ongoing training and support in this area can leave educators feeling uncertain or unprepared to integrate play-based learning into their classrooms. Without access to relevant professional development opportunities, teachers may rely on outdated or ineffective instructional practices that do not align with current research and best practices in early childhood education

Teachers require specialized knowledge and skills to implement play-based pedagogy successfully, including an understanding of child development, knowledge of play-based learning theories, and proficiency in observation and documentation techniques. Teacher F

The absence of ongoing training and support in play-based pedagogy can leave educators feeling ill-equipped to integrate it effectively. Without access to relevant professional development opportunities, teachers may rely on outdated practices, hindering alignment with current research and best practices. Implementing play-based pedagogy successfully requires specialized knowledge in child development, play-based learning theories, and observational techniques. Without these skills, educators may struggle to create engaging and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Thus, prioritizing professional development ensures teachers have the necessary tools to implement play-based pedagogy effectively and support children's holistic development.



4.2 Research question 2: How do teaching and learning resources contribute to the implementation of play-based pedagogy?

This research question explored the challenges that arise as a result of the absence of adequate teaching and learning resources in various kindergarten centres in the Sunyani Municipality. Here are the themes that were generated from the interview;

Theme 1: Inadequate teaching and learning resources

From the interview, here are some of the excerpts that were recorded;

I find it challenging to use play-based pedagogy in my classroom due to the limited availability of teaching and learning resources. Play-based teaching is effective when resources for teaching and learning are available. Teacher G

Inadequate teaching and learning resources result in decreased engagement of learners in teaching and learning and teachers facilitating the teaching and learning process.

Teacher E

From the quotations above, the limited availability of teaching and learning resources poses challenges to implementing play-based pedagogy. Without adequate resources, educators may struggle to effectively engage learners, resulting in decreased student participation and teacher facilitation. Access to diverse materials supports the effectiveness of play-based teaching methods, enabling educators to create enriching learning experiences. Teachers must advocate for sufficient resources to foster active engagement and facilitate meaningful learning interactions in the classroom.

4.3 Research question 3: How does parental attitude affect the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching at the early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality?

This research question seeks to identify the perspectives of parents regarding the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching children in kindergarten classrooms. It highlights on the challenges that their views pose to teachers in the use of the play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality. Here are some of the themes that emerged from the interview;

Theme 1: Emphasis on academic performance

Here are some of the statements from the respondents;

Teacher H said

“some parents prioritize academic achievement and standardized testing and as such may be skeptical of play-based pedagogy, fearing it may not adequately prepare their child for academic success or meeting future educational benchmarks”.

*Some parents always say we don't teach their children anything when we come to school the only thing we do is sing and play the whole day. This is because they have some misconception of play in teaching children. **Teacher A***

The quotations reveal parental skepticism towards play-based pedagogy due to concerns about academic preparation. Teacher H suggests some prioritize standardized testing over play's educational value. Teacher A highlights parents' misconception that play lacks educational merit, emphasizing the need for bridging understanding between educators and parents regarding play's crucial developmental role.

Theme 2: Lack of Parental involvement

*Most of the parents in this school do not even attend parent parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings so that the benefits that comes as a result of the use of play in teaching children. This may influence their negative thought about the use of play. **Teacher B***

The excerpts above suggest that parents' absence from PTA meetings may hinder their understanding of the benefits of play in education. This lack of engagement may contribute to negative perceptions of play-based teaching methods. Effective communication and involvement in PTA meetings could help parents recognize the value of play in their child's learning experience.

What strategies can be employed to enhance the use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality?

This research question was geared toward the development of strategies that will enhance teachers' use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood settings in the Sunyani Municipality. Several themes were generated from the interview which include;

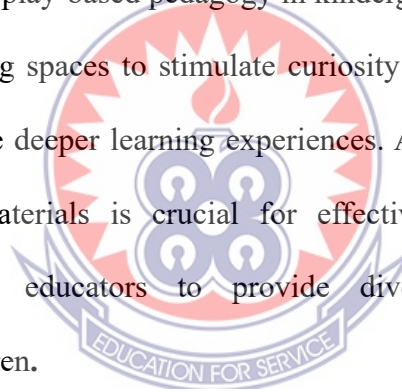
Theme 1: Prepared environment

*Teachers should carefully arrange materials and design spaces to promote curiosity and discovery in the classroom, children are encouraged to engage in self-directed play, leading to deeper learning experiences. **Teacher E***

Also, another teacher has this to share;

*As teachers, I believe we should ensure that adequate teaching materials are provided so that play-based pedagogy can be effectively implemented. **Teacher C***

The statements emphasize the importance of intentional preparation and resource availability to enhance play-based pedagogy in kindergarten classrooms. By arranging materials and designing spaces to stimulate curiosity and support self-directed play, educators can facilitate deeper learning experiences. Additionally, ensuring access to sufficient teaching materials is crucial for effectively implementing play-based approaches, enabling educators to provide diverse and engaging learning opportunities for children.



Theme 2: Active Parental involvement

*“When parents of kindergarten children are actively involved in the education of their children, they will understand the efficacy of the use of play-based pedagogy in the early stage of the education of young children. Here, their focus will not be on academic achievement but holistic development of the young child”. **Teacher F***

The narrative above indicates the need for educators to communicate the benefits of play-based learning to parents and address any misconceptions they may have. Play-based pedagogy has been shown to foster creativity, problem-solving skills, social-emotional development, and a love for learning in young children. Educators can

work to bridge the gap between parental expectations and the evidence supporting the effectiveness of play-based approaches in early childhood education.

Theme 3: Professional training

“Professional training equips educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the principles and benefits of play-based pedagogy. Through training workshops and courses, teachers learn how to effectively design learning environments, plan curriculum, and facilitate play-based activities that promote children's holistic development.

Teacher E

Professional training fosters a collaborative learning environment where educators can exchange ideas, share experiences, and receive feedback on their practice. By engaging in reflective discussions and peer learning opportunities, teachers enhance their understanding of play-based pedagogy and refine their teaching techniques to better meet the diverse needs of children in kindergarten centers.

Teacher H

These quotes underscore the critical role of professional training in enhancing the implementation of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten settings. By equipping educators with knowledge, skills, and updated practices, training fosters effective curriculum planning, environment design, and facilitation of play-based activities. This results in enriched learning experiences that support children's holistic development. Moreover, training encourages collaboration and continuous improvement among educators, ultimately enhancing the quality and effectiveness of play-based teaching approaches.

4.4 Discussions

Research question 1: How do teachers contribute to the challenge in the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres?

The data from the analysis shows that some teachers have some misconceptions about the adoption of play-based pedagogy in traditional educational settings. Experienced teachers may struggle to transition from structured approaches to embracing play-based methods due to the entrenched position they have regarding the practices. Additionally, the lack of understanding or appreciation for the cognitive and developmental benefits of play perpetuates misconceptions about its effectiveness, hindering its adoption. This is in line with what Piaget (1962) said that traditional educational paradigms prioritize the transmission of knowledge through formal instruction, neglecting the importance of hands-on exploration and experiential learning inherent in play. Some kindergarten teachers have some traditional beliefs and often view play as mere recreation rather than a meaningful educational tool. As noted by Smith et al (2017), some educators perceive play-based pedagogy as lacking academic rigor, leading them to prioritize structured activities over open-ended play experiences.

Similarly, the data analysed shows that time constraints when it comes to the use of play-based pedagogy, as well as classroom management, are some challenges kindergarten teachers face when implementing play-based pedagogy in their classrooms. Flear (2015) suggested that time constraints within educational schedules often limit the amount of time allocated for play-based activities.

Also, from the data analysed, the lack of professional competence regarding the implementation of play-based pedagogy is one of the challenges that teachers face. teachers' reluctance to embrace play-based pedagogy can be attributed to limited

exposure and professional development opportunities in this area (Ntshangase, 2022). Pre-service teacher education programs often prioritize conventional teaching strategies, leaving educators ill-prepared to implement innovative approaches such as play-based learning (Pyle et al., 2017).

Research question 2: How do teaching and learning resources contribute to the implementation of play-based pedagogy?

The data from the analysis also shows that limited availability of teaching and learning resources poses challenges to implementing play-based pedagogy. Without adequate resources, educators may struggle to effectively engage learners, resulting in decreased student participation and teacher facilitation. This is in consonance with the study by Acevedo (2022) which opined that Insufficient access to a diverse array of play materials and manipulatives poses a significant obstacle to the implementation of play-based pedagogy. Kindergarten classrooms characterized by sparse resources may constrain children's opportunities for imaginative exploration and creative expression, hindering the realization of play's full potential as a vehicle for learning. Limited access to diverse play materials constrains educators' ability to create immersive play environments that stimulate children's imagination and creativity (Rose-Turriglio, 2017).

Research question 3: How does parental attitude affect the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching at the early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality?

The results from this research question revealed that parental skepticism towards play-based pedagogy due to concerns about academic preparation. Some parents prioritize standardized testing over play's educational value. This suggests that parents' have some misconception that play lacks educational merit, emphasizes the need for bridging understanding between educators and parents regarding play's

crucial developmental role. Some parents may hold traditional views that prioritize academic achievement and structured learning over play-based approaches (Pirpir et al., 200). They may perceive play as frivolous or inferior to more structured instructional methods, leading to skepticism or resistance towards play-based pedagogy. Also, a lack of engagement with parents may contribute to negative perceptions of play-based teaching methods. Also, poor parental involvement emerges as a pivotal barrier that significantly hampers the efficacy of the use of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten centres (Coggio,2023).

Research Question 4: What strategies can be employed to enhance the use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality?

The analysed data prove that an intentionally prepared environment with resource availability enhances play-based pedagogy in kindergarten classrooms. Boyd and Uysal (2020) posit that by intentionally designing classrooms with open-ended materials, flexible spaces, and inviting play areas, educators inspire children's exploration, creativity, and engagement. Also, the analysis shows that equipping educators with knowledge, skills, and updated practices, and training fosters effective curriculum planning, environment design, and facilitation of play-based activities. This aligns with a study by Baker et al., (2018) which suggest that early childhood centers provide training sessions, workshops, and coaching opportunities to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in designing and facilitating play-based activities.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This final chapter comprises a summary of the study, emphasizing on the major findings. It discusses the conclusion, recommendations as well as suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges to the implementation of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten centres in the Sunyani Municipality. To achieve this purpose, the following research objectives were formulated to guide the study:

5. Explore how teacher factors contribute to the challenges in the use of the play-based pedagogy
6. Find out how teaching and learning resources contribute to the challenge in the use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood classrooms in the Sunyani Municipality
7. Ascertain parental factors in the implementation of the play-based pedagogy
8. Identify the strategies that can be employed to improve the use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality

Key findings

1. The findings from the study revealed that the implementation of play-based pedagogy is challenged by teacher factors such as comfortable with the use of the traditional approach of teaching, time constraints that come with the use of play in teaching kindergarten learners as well as the lack of understanding regarding the implementation of the play-based pedagogy. Also, poor parental

involvement in the education of their wards is a challenge to the use of play in teaching children.

2. The study also revealed that inadequate availability of teaching and learning resources is a contributory factor in implementing play-based pedagogy in kindergarten classrooms in the Sunyani Municipality since play is more effective when there are teaching and learning materials for learners to interact with.
3. Moreover, the study findings revealed that parents' negative perception regarding the use of play in teaching young children challenges its effective implementation. This arises when their focus is on standardized text and the academic achievement of their wards at the expense of holistic development.
4. The findings from the study further revealed that measures such as provisions of teaching and learning resources, continuous professional development of teachers, active parental involvement in the education of their children are some of the measures that are put in place to enhance and promote the use of play-based pedagogy in the teaching and learning of young children in the Sunyani Municipality.

5.2 Conclusions

The following conclusions emerged from the study;

1. The study identifies key challenges hindering the implementation of play-based pedagogy, including teacher preferences for traditional methods, time limitations, and a lack of understanding of play-based approaches. Additionally, poor parental involvement presents a significant obstacle. Addressing these challenges requires targeted teacher training, curriculum adjustments, and efforts to enhance parental engagement.

2. The study concludes that Insufficient availability of teaching and learning resources emerged as a significant barrier to implementing play-based pedagogy in Sunyani Municipality's kindergarten classrooms. Effective play relies on ample access to materials for interactive learning. Addressing this challenge necessitates investment in resources to support play-based approaches, thereby enhancing the quality of early childhood education in the municipality.
3. The study highlights parents' negative perceptions of play-based teaching as a significant hurdle to its successful implementation. Such attitudes often prioritize standardized testing and academic achievement over holistic development. Educators must engage in dialogue with parents to shift perceptions and emphasize the vital role of play in fostering well-rounded growth. Collaborative efforts can bridge this gap, ensuring children receive the full benefits of play-based pedagogy.
4. The study underscores the importance of implementing measures such as providing teaching resources, offering continuous professional development for teachers, and encouraging active parental involvement to promote play-based pedagogy in Sunyani Municipality. These efforts are crucial for enhancing early childhood education by creating an environment conducive to effective play-based learning experiences for young children.

5.3 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations made from the study;

1. It is recommended that educational institutions and policymakers that is; the Sunyani Municipal Education Directorate should prioritize comprehensive training and ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to

familiarize them with the principles and methods of play-based pedagogy. Also, kindergarten teachers should implement time management strategies within the curriculum to address the challenges posed by time constraints. Designate specific periods for play-based activities and integrate them seamlessly into daily schedules to maximize learning opportunities while accommodating other educational requirements.

2. To address the challenge of inadequate teaching and learning resources in Sunyani Municipality's kindergarten classrooms, it is recommended to allocate sufficient funding for the procurement of age-appropriate materials and tools. Additionally, establish mechanisms for regular inventory checks and resource replenishment to ensure ongoing availability and accessibility, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of play-based pedagogy in early childhood education.
3. It is imperative to address parents' negative perceptions of play-based teaching by fostering awareness of its benefits for holistic child development. Implement parent education programmes highlighting the importance of play in fostering creativity, critical thinking, and social skills alongside academic achievement. Encourage open communication between educators and parents to promote a shared understanding of the value of play-based pedagogy in nurturing well-rounded learners.
4. To enhance play-based pedagogy in Sunyani Municipality, prioritize measures such as adequate provision of teaching resources, ongoing professional development for teachers, and fostering active parental involvement. These actions promote a supportive environment for effective play-based learning

experiences, ultimately enriching the education of young children in the municipality.



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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Dear respondents,

Thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges to the implementation of play-based pedagogy in the Sunyani Municipality. Your insights and experience as teachers are valuable to this study.

The interview guide consists of a series of questions that will delve into the challenges to the implementation of the play-based pedagogy. Your honest and open responses will help gain in-depth information regarding these challenges as far as the use of the play-based pedagogy is concerned.

Research question 1: How do teachers contribute to the challenge in the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood centres?

1. Can you describe your experience with play-based pedagogy in early childhood education?
2. In your opinion, what are the main challenges in implementing play-based pedagogy in early childhood centers?
3. Can you provide examples of specific obstacles or difficulties you've encountered in implementing play-based pedagogy?

Research question 2: How do teaching and learning resources contribute to the implementation of play-based pedagogy?

1. Can you describe the role of teaching and learning resources in supporting play-based pedagogy in early childhood education?
2. What types of teaching and learning resources do you typically utilize in a play-based learning environment?
3. How do you select or create teaching and learning resources that align with the principles of play-based pedagogy?
4. Can you provide examples of specific teaching and learning resources that have been particularly effective in facilitating play-based learning experiences?

Research question 3: How does parental attitude affect the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching at the early childhood centres in the Sunyani Municipality?

1. How would you describe the overall level of parental involvement in early childhood education in the Sunyani Municipality?
2. Can you discuss any observed correlations between parental attitudes towards play-based pedagogy and their engagement with their child's education?
3. What are some common perceptions or beliefs among parents in Sunyani regarding play-based learning?

Research question 4: What strategies can be employed to enhance the use of play in early childhood centres?

1. Can you provide examples of successful strategies or approaches you've used to promote and enhance play in the classroom?
2. How do you ensure that play-based activities align with curriculum goals and learning objectives?
3. What role do educators play in facilitating and scaffolding play experiences for children in early childhood centers?

