

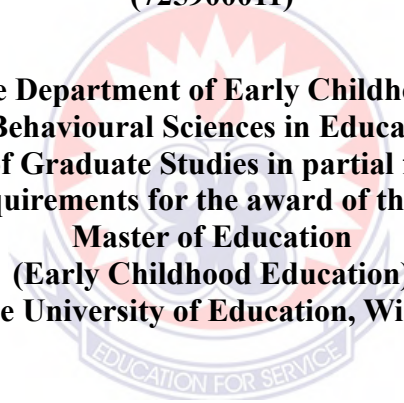
**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**TEACHERS' USE OF PLAY-BASED PEDAGOGY IN TEACHING KINDERGARTEN  
CENTRES IN THE KPANDO MUNICIPALITY**

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



**JANUARY, 2026**

## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

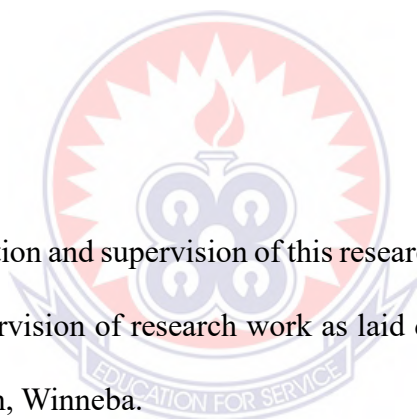
I, **KUDAH VERONICA SEFAKOR**, declare that this thesis is a result of my original research except for references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged and it has neither in whole nor in part been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

**Candidate's Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and supervision of this research work were done in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of research work as laid down by the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education, Winneba.



**Name of Supervisor:** Professor Michael Subbey (Ph.D.)

**Supervisor's Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

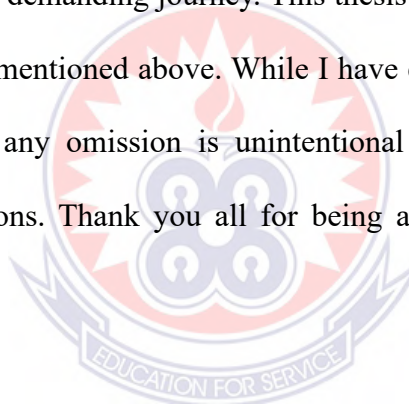
**DEDICATION**

To my lovely Family



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the following individuals whose unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement have been invaluable throughout the journey of completing this thesis. First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Michael Subbey (Ph.D.) for his unwavering dedication and expertise. His mentorship and insightful feedback have been instrumental in shaping the course of this research. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to members of my family for their endless encouragement, love, and understanding. Their belief in my abilities has been my greatest motivation. I want to acknowledge my friends and colleagues for their support, stimulating discussions, and for providing me with much-needed breaks during this demanding journey. This thesis is a culmination of the collective efforts and support of all those mentioned above. While I have endeavored to list everyone, who has played a significant role, any omission is unintentional and in no way diminishes the significance of your contributions. Thank you all for being an integral part of this academic endeavor.



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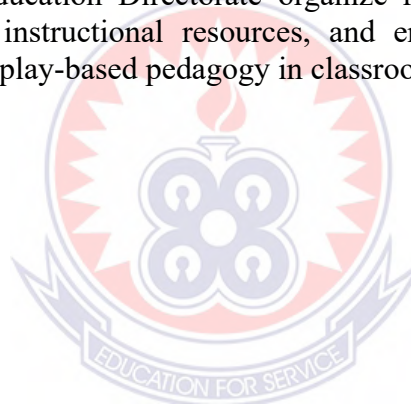
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of play-based pedagogy by teachers in kindergarten centres within the Kpando Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana. The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The study employed a census sampling technique. The study population consisted of 163 kindergarten teachers. The instruments used for data collection were a structured questionnaire. The data from the study were analysed descriptively (frequency counts, Percentages, means, and standard deviations). The study revealed that kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality view play-based pedagogy positively, highlighting its effectiveness in engagement, holistic development, and learning outcomes. Also, findings revealed that kindergarten teachers in Kpando moderately apply play-based pedagogy, prioritizing activities like storytelling, role-play, tracing, and sand tray, while underemphasizing numeracy, creativity, music, and outdoor play due to systemic challenges. Moreover, the findings reveal that kindergarten teachers in Kpando employed strategies such as storytelling, group work, role play, rhymes, and word games to foster learners' understanding. The study further revealed that systemic challenges hindering play-based pedagogy in Kpando included inadequate resources, limited training, parental misconceptions, curriculum pressures, overcrowded classrooms, poor facilities, time constraints, and inconsistent administrative support. It is therefore recommended that the Kpando Municipal Education Directorate organize regular workshops to strengthen teachers' confidence, provide instructional resources, and ensure curriculum alignment for effective and sustainable use of play-based pedagogy in classrooms.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The formative years in a child's education are pivotal for the development of cognitive, social, and emotional skills. Increasingly, play-based pedagogy is acknowledged as an effective means of nurturing these developmental areas within kindergarten settings (Johnson & Baker, 2019). This approach is premised on the idea that young learners acquire knowledge most effectively through hands-on, experiential activities that spark their imagination, foster creativity, and enhance problem-solving abilities (Miller & Snow, 2018). As a result, several nations, Ghana included, have woven play-based learning into the fabric of their early childhood education curricula (Owusu & Mensah, 2020).

Worldwide, studies underscore the contribution of play-based learning to the overall development of children by strengthening their ability to solve problems, express creativity, and interact socially (Thomas et al., 2019). Foundational theories in education, such as those proposed by Vygotsky (1978) and further expanded by Bruner (1972), assert that play is a critical mechanism through which children acquire higher-order thinking skills and engage actively with their surroundings. These theoretical perspectives provide a robust basis for promoting the use of play-based pedagogy in early learning environments.

Within the African context, the adoption of play-based strategies is increasingly viewed as a viable method for improving educational outcomes in early childhood. However, the degree of implementation varies considerably across regions due to differences in educational infrastructure, teacher training, and resource distribution (Mensah, et al, 2021). Research conducted in Ghana has revealed that while kindergartens in urban centers have made notable strides in embracing play-

based methods, rural and under-resourced areas often lag behind (Adjei et al., 2022). This disparity is particularly evident in the Kpando Municipality, which necessitates a thorough exploration of the extent to which play-based pedagogy is being practiced and the factors that shape its adoption.

In Ghana, kindergarten education is recognized as a critical component of the national education system, with the Ministry of Education emphasizing the centrality of play as an indispensable educational tool (Ministry of Education, 2020). The Ghana Education Service (GES) has outlined that play-based learning is vital for fostering comprehensive child development, as it provides opportunities for children to explore, experiment, and build fundamental literacy and numeracy skills (Ghana Education Service, 2021). Despite these well-intentioned policies, the actualization of play-based pedagogy across various regions including Kpando faces significant challenges that hinder its full-scale implementation (Adjei et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence suggests that teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards play-based pedagogy considerably influence its practical application in classrooms (Roberts et al., 2019). Some educators continue to regard play merely as a casual or recreational activity rather than as a structured educational strategy, resulting in inconsistent utilization of play-based methods (Smith, et al, 2019). In the context of Kpando Municipality, there is a conspicuous lack of comprehensive research that captures kindergarten teachers' viewpoints on play-based teaching. This gap highlights the necessity to evaluate their perspectives and assess how their beliefs impact classroom practices.

Moreover, the spectrum of play-based activities deployed by kindergarten teachers is diverse, largely contingent on factors such as their professional training, the availability of resources, and the specific classroom environment (Wilson, Green, & Adams, 2020). Studies have demonstrated that structured play, semi-structured activities, and opportunities for free play all play a beneficial

role in enhancing both cognitive and social competencies among young learners (Black & White, 2019). Nevertheless, it remains imperative to identify and analyze the particular types of play-based activities that are employed in the kindergarten centres of Kpando Municipality in order to ascertain their effectiveness in driving positive learning outcomes (Garcia & Lee, 2021).

A further critical dimension of play-based pedagogy concerns its practical implementation in classroom settings. Successful integration of play into the curriculum hinges on multiple factors, including the extent of teacher training, the design of the curriculum, effective classroom management, and the adequacy of teaching materials (Anderson, 2020). For play-based methods to yield the desired educational benefits, teachers must seamlessly incorporate these activities into daily instruction while ensuring alignment with specific learning objectives (Johnson & Baker, 2019). Nonetheless, many kindergarten centres in Ghana, particularly in regions like Kpando, continue to favor traditional, teacher-centered approaches. Such methods often prevail due to academic pressures and a persistent focus on rote learning, thereby sidelining the potential advantages of play-based pedagogy (Mensah & Amankwah, 2021). A focused investigation into how kindergarten teachers in Kpando Municipality integrate play-based techniques into their teaching practices would offer critical insights into the real-world application of these methods.

Despite the well-documented benefits of play-based pedagogy, its effective incorporation into early childhood classrooms is fraught with challenges. Numerous studies have reported issues such as insufficient teacher training, a dearth of adequate teaching and learning resources, overcrowded classrooms, and limited parental understanding of the role of play in education (Davies, 2019; Brown & Taylor, 2018). In Ghana, these challenges are exacerbated by infrastructural deficits and cultural norms that continue to prioritize conventional, memorization-based instruction over exploratory, play-centered learning (Nkrumah & Mensah, 2020). It is therefore critical to explore

and understand the specific obstacles that kindergarten teachers in Kpando Municipality encounter in their efforts to implement play-based pedagogy. Such understanding is essential for devising targeted strategies that can bolster the effective use of play in these educational settings.

This study is designed to assess kindergarten teachers' perceptions regarding the use of play-based pedagogy in Kpando Municipality, identify the variety of play-based activities they implement, scrutinize how these methods are integrated into daily classroom routines, and pinpoint the challenges teachers face in employing play as a teaching tool. The outcomes of this research are expected to contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge on early childhood education in Ghana. Furthermore, the insights gleaned from this study will be instrumental for policymakers, educational administrators, and other stakeholders who are committed to enhancing play-based learning practices in kindergarten centres throughout the Volta Region.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Play-based pedagogy is increasingly recognized as an essential approach to early childhood education, promoting creativity, problem-solving, and social interaction for young learners (Pyle & Danniels, 2017). Both the Ghana Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) advocate for this methodology as highlighted in the 2019 Kindergarten Curriculum, wherein play is emphasized as the central teaching method (MoE, 2019). Despite these policy directives, there remains a significant gap between policy and practice in many classrooms across Ghana, especially in rural regions such as the Kpando Municipality, where the effective use of play-based pedagogy continues to face challenges. The primary concern addressed in this study is the insufficient adoption of play-based methods by kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality. Research highlights that many educators still prioritize traditional rote learning due to inadequate teacher training, a lack of resources, and cultural attitudes that view play as incongruent with

academic rigor (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2021). This misalignment with best practices deprives students of valuable, hands-on learning experiences crucial for early development (Howard, et al, 2018). The limited integration of play-based pedagogy negatively affects both teaching and learning outcomes. It is well-documented that children learn most effectively through engagement, exploration, and discovery key aspects of play-based learning (Parker & Thomsen, 2019; Weisberg, et al, 2016; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). In contrast, when classrooms rely predominantly on direct instruction, children often experience difficulties with engagement, comprehension, and knowledge retention (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2020). Moreover, the absence of play in early education stifles creativity, impedes problem-solving, and reduces young children's motivation (Zosh et al., 2018). Teachers in the region also face difficulties implementing play-based methods due to a lack of structured support, limited professional development, and insufficient teaching materials (Nyarko-Sampson et al., 2021). Ideally, kindergarten teachers should incorporate various forms of play, including free play, guided play, and structured play, to foster a dynamic learning environment (Edwards, 2017). The 2019 Kindergarten Curriculum stresses the importance of interactive, hands-on teaching methods that align with developmental goals (GES, 2020). Successful examples of play-based pedagogy, such as those in Finland and Sweden, show that children exhibit greater social adaptability, cognitive skills, and academic achievement (Lynch, 2018). However, this expected practice is not consistently realized in Ghana, particularly in rural areas like Kpando, due to numerous systemic and contextual obstacles. This study is necessary to address several research gaps. First, there is a geographical gap in the literature, as most studies on play-based learning in Ghana concentrate on urban centers like Accra, Kumasi, and Cape Coast (Marfo et al., 2020). This focus has limited understanding of the unique challenges faced by teachers in rural areas, where infrastructure limitations, scarcity of resources, and socio-cultural

factors present additional barriers to the implementation of play-based strategies (Pence & Nsamenang, 2018). Tackling this gap will help develop tailored strategies to enhance early childhood education in underserved communities. Additionally, there is a gap in literature regarding empirical investigations into the actual delivery of play-based pedagogy in Ghanaian kindergartens.

While global research supports the benefits of play-based learning (Wood, 2020; Weisberg et al., 2016), there are few studies examining how teachers in Ghana interpret and incorporate play into their classrooms (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2021). Existing research primarily focuses on theoretical deliberations instead of real-world classroom applications (Brew, Yeboah, & Mahama, 2021). Additional research is needed to capture teachers' experiences, the types of play activities used, and the challenges faced during implementation. By addressing these gaps, this study aims to give empirical insights into how kindergarten educators in Kpando Municipality perceive, apply, and encounter challenges with play-based pedagogy. These findings will offer valuable contributions to Ghana's discourse on early childhood education and provide actionable recommendations for improving play-based learning in rural municipalities.

Play-based pedagogy is broadly acknowledged as a core method in early childhood education, promoting creativity, analytical thinking, and interpersonal skills among young students (Anderson & Carter, 2018). The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service support this approach via the 2020 Kindergarten Curriculum, which prioritizes play as the central instructional strategy (Ministry of Education, 2020). Nonetheless, a significant discrepancy persists between policy and practice in numerous Ghanaian classrooms especially in rural areas like the Kpando Municipality where effective implementation of play-based methods remains problematic.

The primary issue examined in this study is the insufficient application of play-based pedagogy by kindergarten educators in Kpando Municipality. Research shows that many teachers continue to depend on conventional rote-learning techniques because of inadequate professional training, scarce resources, and pervasive cultural beliefs that dismiss play as lacking academic seriousness (Amoah, Owusu, & Boateng, 2022). This deviation from prescribed practices denies students valuable experiential learning opportunities vital for early development (Roberts, Mason, & Clark, 2019).

The underutilization of play-based strategies adversely impacts educational outcomes. Evidence indicates that children achieve optimal learning through active participation, exploration, and discovery all of which are encouraged by play-centered instruction (Cooper & Lin, 2020; Evans, Martin, & Gomez, 2017; Walker & Davis, 2021). Conversely, classrooms dominated by direct instruction and memorization hinder student engagement, comprehension, and long-term knowledge retention (Lee & Kim, 2020).

Moreover, the absence of play in early education can suppress creativity, impede problem-solving abilities, and diminish motivation among young learners (Harris et al., 2019). Teachers also encounter difficulties in adopting play-based approaches due to a lack of systematic guidance, limited opportunities for professional development, and insufficient educational materials (Mensah, Armah, & Dako, 2022).

Ideally, kindergarten teachers should incorporate various modes of free, guided, and structured play into their daily lessons to cultivate a dynamic learning atmosphere (Foster, 2018). The 2020 Kindergarten Curriculum underscores the necessity for educators to employ interactive, hands-on strategies that correspond with developmental learning objectives (Ghana Education Service, 2021). In countries like Finland and Sweden, where play-based methods are successfully

implemented, students demonstrate enhanced social adaptability, cognitive abilities, and academic achievements (Turner, 2019). However, in Ghana particularly in areas such as Kpando these practices are not fully actualized due to systemic and contextual challenges.

Several research gaps warrant this investigation. Primarily, there is a geographical void in the literature, as most studies on play-based pedagogy in Ghana concentrate on urban centers like Accra, Kumasi, and Cape Coast (Obeng et al., 2020). This focus has yielded limited understanding of the distinct challenges encountered by educators in rural settings, where infrastructural shortcomings, resource limitations, and socio-cultural factors further obstruct the implementation of play-based learning (Ankrah & Boateng, 2021). Addressing this gap will aid in developing tailored strategies to enhance early childhood education in underserved areas.

Furthermore, there exists a literature gap concerning empirical research on the practical execution of play-based pedagogy in Ghanaian kindergartens. Despite extensive global studies on the advantages of play-based learning (Griffin, 2020; Evans et al., 2017), few investigations have explored how Ghanaian teachers actually interpret and apply these strategies in their classrooms (Amoako et al., 2021). In addition, existing research in Ghana predominantly centers on theoretical discussions rather than on practical classroom experiences (Mensah & Addo, 2021). Consequently, further study is needed to document educators' experiences, the specific play activities they use, and the challenges they encounter.

By addressing these gaps, this study aims to offer empirical insights into how kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality perceive, implement, and overcome obstacles associated with play-based pedagogy.

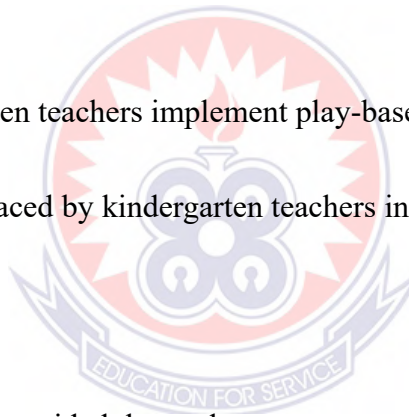
### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of play-based pedagogy by teachers in kindergarten centres within the Kpando Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Assess kindergarten teachers' views on the use of play-based pedagogy in the Kpando Municipality.
2. Identify the types of play-based activities that kindergarten teachers incorporate into their instructional practices.
3. Examine how kindergarten teachers implement play-based pedagogy in their classrooms.
4. Explore the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers in integrating play-based pedagogy into their teaching.



### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are kindergarten teachers' views on the use of play-based pedagogy in Kpando Municipality?
2. What types of play-based activities are incorporated into instructional practices by kindergarten teachers in Kpando Municipality?
3. How do kindergarten teachers implement play-based pedagogy in their classrooms in Kpando Municipality?

4. What challenges do kindergarten teachers face in integrating play-based pedagogy into their teaching practices in Kpando Municipality?

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

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute meaningfully to educational policy, professional practice, and theoretical development in early childhood education within the Ghanaian context. In terms of policy, the study offers valuable evidence to inform decision-making at both the national and municipal levels. By examining how play-based pedagogy is currently being implemented in kindergarten centres in the Kpando Municipality, the research will highlight existing practices, successes, and challenges. These findings can serve as a useful resource for the Ghana Education Service and the Ministry of Education in refining and strengthening early childhood education policies, particularly in relation to the effective implementation of the Standard-Based Curriculum. The study's recommendations may help shape interventions that support the development of guidelines, teacher training programmes, and resource allocation strategies aimed at promoting play-based teaching approaches.

From a practical standpoint, the study will benefit kindergarten teachers, school administrators, and other early childhood educators by offering insights into effective ways of integrating play-based methods into reading and writing instruction. It will document the types of play-based activities teachers use and assess their perceived impact on learners' literacy skills and overall development. Furthermore, by identifying the challenges teachers face and suggesting practical strategies to address them, the research has the potential to enhance classroom practice, improve learner outcomes, and create more engaging and supportive learning environments for young children.

The study also holds theoretical significance, as it contributes to the growing body of literature on play-based pedagogy in Ghana and across Africa. While much of the existing research on play-based learning originates from Western contexts, this study introduces locally grounded evidence, offering perspectives that reflect the cultural, educational, and social realities of Ghanaian classrooms. By doing so, it not only supports established theories of child-centered and experiential learning but also proposes context-specific insights that can inform future research and pedagogical models suited to the Ghanaian early childhood education system.

### **1.7 Delimitations of the Study**

This study has certain delimitations that define its scope and focus. Geographically, the study is confined to the Kpando Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana. The decision to limit the research to this municipality was based on the need to manage the study within available resources and time constraints, as well as the researcher's familiarity with the area's educational landscape. As a result, the findings of the study will reflect the experiences and practices of kindergarten teachers within this specific geographical location and may not be generalized to other municipalities or regions without caution.

In terms of content, the study focuses specifically on the use of play-based pedagogy by kindergarten teachers to support the development of reading and writing skills among young learners. The study is guided by four main objectives: to explore teachers' perceptions about the use of play-based pedagogy, to examine the types of play-based activities teachers incorporate into reading and writing instruction and their perceived impact on learners, to find out the challenges teachers encounter in implementing this approach, and to assess strategies that could facilitate the effective use of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten classrooms. These objectives intentionally

narrow the content scope to literacy-related outcomes within the broader context of early childhood education.

Contextually, the study concentrates on public kindergarten centres within the Kpando Municipality. It does not extend to private schools, day care centres, or other early childhood learning settings, as the interest lies in understanding how public school teachers work within the Ghana Education Service framework, particularly under the Standard-Based Curriculum.

Finally, regarding research design, the study adopts a descriptive survey design. This choice allows the researcher to collect qualitative data through interviews and observations, focusing on capturing teachers' views, experiences, and practices in a natural setting without manipulating any variables. The design is well-suited for providing a detailed account of current practices and perceptions surrounding play-based pedagogy in the selected area.

### **1.8 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Play-Based Pedagogy-** It refers to instructional approaches and classroom practices where teachers intentionally use play activities such as storytelling, role play, drawing, games, and manipulative activities as tools to support and promote reading and writing development among kindergarten learners.

**Kindergarten Teachers:** *Kindergarten teachers* are early childhood education professionals employed in public kindergarten centres within the Kpando Municipality, who have formal training in early childhood education and are responsible for teaching reading and writing skills to learners aged 4 to 6 years.

### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study was organised under five chapters. Chapter one was made up of the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objective of the study, and the research

questions. The chapter also included delimitation of the study, limitations, operational definition of terms as well as the organisation of the study. Chapter two dealt with the review of related literature which addressed issues concerning conceptual review, theoretical framework and empirical review that guided the study. The third chapter covered the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population sample and sampling procedures to be employed for the study. The chapter also described clearly the data collection instruments, data collection procedures as well as the data analysis procedure. The fourth chapter presented the results and the discussions obtained. The chapter was grouped into two parts. The first part is the preliminary data and the second part being the main data. The final chapter would present the summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations. Areas for further research was also suggested.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Overview

This chapter presents an extensive review of existing literature related to the implementation of play-based pedagogy in teaching reading and writing to early childhood learners within the Kpando Municipality. The review is organized into three key sections:

##### Theoretical review

- Sociocultural Theory (Lev Vygotsky-1978)

##### Conceptual review

- Concept of Play
- Play in Early Childhood Education
- Benefits of Play to Kindergarteners

##### Empirical/ Theoretical Review

- Kindergarten Teachers' Views on the Use of Play-based Pedagogy
- Types of Play-based Activities Used by Kindergarten Teachers
- How Kindergarten Teachers Implement Play-based Pedagogy in their Classrooms.
- Challenges Kindergarten Teachers Encounter in Integrating Play-Based Pedagogy

#### 2.1 Theoretical Review

##### **Sociocultural Theory (Lev Vygotsky 1978)**

Sociocultural Theory, as advanced by Lev Vygotsky in 1978, provides a compelling framework for understanding how play-based pedagogy nurtures emergent literacy among kindergarten learners. Central to this theory is the idea that learning is a socially mediated process, occurring

through meaningful interactions between children and more knowledgeable others, such as teachers or peers. The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) the range between what a child can do independently and what they can accomplish with guidance is particularly important in early childhood education. In kindergarten classrooms, play offers rich opportunities to activate and extend this developmental zone. When teachers engage with children in play, asking purposeful questions, modelling literacy practices, and introducing new vocabulary, they scaffold experiences that promote both cognitive and language growth.

Within this sociocultural framework, play is not merely recreational but serves as a purposeful medium for fostering early literacy. Contemporary research reinforces this position, highlighting the value of guided play, where children retain agency while teachers intentionally introduce prompts and resources to extend literacy skills. Studies have shown that literacy-rich play scenarios, such as role-playing in a pretend store or clinic, naturally embed reading and writing tasks, encouraging children to engage with print in meaningful contexts. Through these collaborative activities, teachers act as co-players and facilitators, subtly guiding conversations and modelling literacy behaviours, thereby supporting the social origins of language and literacy development.

Further extending Vygotsky's ideas, scholars have emphasized the importance of integrating culturally relevant materials and experiences into play-based environments. Culturally familiar stories, artifacts, and community references not only increase participation but also enrich children's understanding of language as a tool for meaning-making within their cultural worlds. Research demonstrates that classrooms abundant with culturally relevant print resources and literacy materials support emergent writing and print awareness, offering authentic opportunities for reading and writing in socially meaningful ways.

Another essential concept tied to Vygotsky's theory is scaffolding the provision of tailored, temporary support from a more knowledgeable individual that enables a learner to perform tasks beyond their independent capabilities. In kindergarten settings, scaffolding is particularly effective when embedded within play-based activities. Literacy-rich play centres, such as pretend post offices or restaurants, allow teachers to model writing, introduce new words, and guide story sequencing in ways that transform play into intentional literacy experiences. Studies consistently show that guided play interventions focused on phonics, print awareness, and storytelling outperform both unstructured play and formal instruction in promoting early literacy skills.

The ZPD remains one of the most influential concepts in understanding early childhood pedagogy. It emphasizes that effective teaching occurs within this zone where activities are neither too simple nor too challenging but appropriately scaffolded. Both adult guidance and peer collaboration within playful contexts are critical for extending children's literacy abilities. Empirical evidence confirms that young learners make significant progress in literacy when instruction occurs within their ZPD, particularly through scaffolded, culturally responsive, and play-based activities.

The implications of these theoretical perspectives for this study are significant. The research seeks to explore how kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality implement play-based pedagogical strategies to support emergent reading and writing skills. Vygotsky's theory suggests that for play-based literacy instruction to be effective, teachers must actively participate in and guide children's play experiences, offering prompts, modelling literacy behaviours, and introducing new concepts as needed. Guided play, which strikes a balance between child-led activity and teacher-directed learning, is especially effective in nurturing foundational literacy skills while preserving children's agency and imaginative freedom.

Moreover, the theory underscores the importance of culturally responsive play environments. Integrating familiar stories, print materials, and community experiences into classroom play can enhance participation and deepen children's understanding of literacy as a social and cultural practice. The study also draws attention to the need for adequate teacher training, as research indicates that while educators value play as a pedagogical tool, they often require clearer guidance and professional development on how to strategically scaffold literacy within play-based contexts.

In conclusion, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, with its emphasis on socially mediated learning, the ZPD, scaffolding, and the use of cultural tools, offers a comprehensive theoretical foundation for examining the implementation of play-based pedagogy in supporting emergent literacy. This study aligns closely with these propositions, seeking to investigate how kindergarten teachers create literacy-rich play environments, scaffold children's reading and writing skills, and integrate culturally meaningful experiences to foster early literacy development within the Kpando Municipality.

## **2.2 Concept of Play**

The concept of play in early childhood education has evolved from being viewed primarily as leisure to being recognized as a vital pedagogical approach that supports holistic child development. Contemporary research acknowledges play not only as a natural expression of childhood but also as an indispensable vehicle for cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic growth (Weisberg et al., 2013; Wood & Hedges, 2019).

Historically, theories decomposed play into distinct categories: free play, guided play, dramatic play, and educational play. Weisberg and colleagues (2013) define guided play as a pedagogical approach that balances child-led exploration with adult direction, a method shown to foster improved vocabulary, narrative competence, and emergent literacy. Comparative analyses have

found guided play superior to both child-initiated free play and adult-led direct instruction when measured against academic outcomes (Weisberg et al., 2013; Cavanaugh et al., 2017).

Building on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the role of social interaction in play is central. Vygotsky emphasized that meaningful learning occurs within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), where children benefit from adult or peer scaffolding (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). Play environments naturally generate ZPD opportunities, particularly during pretend play, where peers and teachers model higher-level literacy and numeracy skills (Tudge, 2009; Han et al., 2023). These interactions not only develop cognitive competencies but also support socio-emotional competence as children negotiate roles and perspectives (Wood & Hedges, 2019).

The cultural-contextual perspective has brought attention to the importance of culturally responsive play. Fler (2018) argues that when play materials and scenarios reflect children's lived experiences, they enhance engagement and deepen learning. For example, incorporating familiar cultural stories or artifacts in play-based literacy activities fosters meaning-making and print awareness (Palaiologou, 2020). This culturally situated approach enables children to co-construct knowledge within their sociocultural frames (Fler, 2018; Strauss & Bipath, 2020).

When examining literacy-focused play, storytelling, role-playing, and symbolic usage are prominent themes. Weisberg et al. (2022) demonstrated that role-play involving writing menus or reading signs encourages narrative structure and emergent writing. Han et al. (2023) further reported that children engaged in guided play predicted higher cohesive storytelling and better understanding of text structures compared to other instructional methods.

Material resources are recognized as critical mediators of play-based learning. Environments rich in print materials such as book corners, environmental print, and accessible writing tools have been

linked to enhanced vocabulary and meaning-making (Strauss & Bipath, 2020; Palaiologou, 2020). The presence of literacy-rich materials enables authentic engagement with reading and writing, anchored in contextually meaningful play (Fleer, 2018; Marsh et al., 2018).

Peer-mediated scaffolding within play contexts also reinforces children's literacy development. Bodrova and Leong (2015) observed that older peers often serve as effective models, prompting their younger counterparts in emergent writing and storytelling, reinforcing social learning principles. Tudge (2009) supports this, noting that peer collaboration within gamelike, instructional play fosters meaningful cognitive reload.

Despite the well-documented benefits of play, a recurrent challenge is maintaining a balance between playfulness and structured learning goals (Timmons & Pelletier, 2015; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). Teachers often report uncertainty in knowing how to scaffold play skillfully without prematurely steering activities or undermining children's autonomy. This professional dilemma highlights the ongoing need for targeted teacher training in *play-infused pedagogy* (Wood, 2020; Pyle & Danniels, 2017).

Recent studies have also integrated digital technologies into play contexts. Marsh et al. (2018) found that interactive storytelling apps used within play scenarios support collaborative language development and narrative skills. However, Vooght and Hedges (2021) caution that intentional teacher mediation remains vital to avoid superficial engagement with digital play.

Meta-analytical evidence offers strong support for the efficacy of guided play. Weisberg et al. (2016) concluded that guided play consistently enhances academic skills, including vocabulary, narrative competence, and phonological development, when activities are intentionally scaffolded but remain child-initiated.

Critiques of play-based pedagogy argue that it risks becoming tokenistic if not underpinned by teacher expertise and contextual alignment. However, growing research demonstrates that when applied thoughtfully through well-prepared environments, culturally relevant materials, and responsive facilitation play becomes a powerful catalyst for emergent literacy and deeper learning (Fleer, 2018; Palaiologou, 2020; Marsh et al., 2018).

In conclusion, play transcends traditional recreational roles to emerge as a complex pedagogical system that supports comprehensive development. Grounded in sociocultural theory and informed by practical scholarship, the concept of play, especially guided play, offers a robust framework for nurturing emergent reading, writing, and cognitive skills in early childhood classrooms. As evidenced by recent studies, the thoughtful integration of play supported by teacher scaffolding, peer collaboration, cultural responsiveness, and intentional use of printed materials positions learning within children's cultural and social contexts, fostering engagement, competence, and lifelong enthusiasm for literacy.

### **2.3 Play in Early Childhood Education**

Play in early childhood education has evolved from being perceived as mere recreation to being recognized as an essential pedagogical strategy that fosters holistic development. Research consistently highlights that when thoughtfully designed and guided, play enhances cognitive, socio-emotional, and linguistic outcomes in young learners (Weisberg et al., 2013; Wood & Hedges, 2019).

Historically, scholars have classified play into key categories free play, guided play, dramatic play, and educational play each possessing unique learning affordances. Free play, where children engage autonomously without structured guidance, supports creativity, exploration, and independent problem-solving. In contrast, guided play situates learning within adult-supported yet

child-led activities. Weisberg et al. (2013) found that guided play strikes an effective balance: it preserves children's agency while incorporating intentional prompts, scaffolding vocabulary development, emergent literacy, and narrative competence beyond what free play or direct instruction alone achieve.

Central to the pedagogical effectiveness of play is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky proposed that cognitive advancement occurs when more knowledgeable others support children in tasks just beyond their independent capabilities (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). Play inherently creates optimal ZPD conditions, as children and teachers co-construct meaning through shared pretend scenarios. Research demonstrates that pretend play such as setting up a classroom "post office" or constructing a make-believe restaurant offers rich contexts where new vocabulary, narrative skills, and emergent literacy practices are scaffolded (Han et al., 2023; Strauss & Bipath, 2020; Weisberg et al., 2022).

In culturally diverse settings, play's potential is amplified when grounded in children's experiences and backgrounds. Fler (2018) argued that culturally inclusive materials, stories, artifacts, and language encourage deeper meaning-making and engagement. In modern classrooms, culturally responsive play facilitates emergent literacy by validating learners' identities and enabling them to connect school knowledge with home and community contexts (Palaiologou, 2020; Strauss & Bipath, 2020).

The quality of play environments also influences learning outcomes. Classrooms rich in print resources like labels, storybooks, and writing tools have been shown to increase children's print awareness, story comprehension, and emergent writing (Marsh et al., 2018; Strauss & Bipath,

2020). Such environments lend authenticity to play and invite learners to independently explore reading and writing within a social, meaningful context.

Play is not only supported by adult intervention, but also peer collaboration. Bodrova and Leong (2015) found that when more experienced peers lead play sessions, younger children benefit from modeling and social interaction a valuable form of peer-mediated scaffolding aligned with Vygotsky's social learning principles. These interactions both reinforce peer bonding and deepen emergent literacy, as children practice turn-taking, dialogue, and shared narratives.

Digital play has emerged as a contemporary complement to traditional formats. Interactive storytelling apps and digital games, when used interactively within guided play contexts, have been shown to support language development, emergent literacy, and collaboration (Marsh et al., 2018). Still, Vooght and Hedges (2021) caution that without purposeful guidance, digital play risks becoming superficial and should be carefully mediated by adults.

Despite its advantages, integrating play-based pedagogy effectively remains challenging. Teachers often struggle to balance children's autonomy with curriculum directions (Timmons & Pelletier, 2015; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). These studies reveal that educators appreciate play's benefits but lack confidence and training in scaffolding learning appropriately within playful contexts. This underscores the importance of ongoing professional development in guided play strategies (Wood, 2020).

Meta-analyses reinforce the educational power of play. Weisberg et al. (2016) compiled evidence showing that guided play consistently supports gains across literacy domains vocabulary, narrative competence, phonological awareness when structured thoughtfully by teachers. Their conclusions

emphasize that play, when scaffolded, yields deeper academic outcomes alongside intrinsic benefits for motivation, engagement, and joy in learning.

Critically, play-based pedagogy must be underpinned by intention. Tokenistic or poorly facilitated play can fail to yield learning. Instead, educators must purposefully design learning environments, integrate culturally relevant resources, scaffold understanding, and embed literacy experiences within meaningful activities (Fleer, 2018; Palaiologou, 2020).

In summary, play has evolved into a research-validated pedagogical approach for early childhood education, richly supported by sociocultural theory and strong empirical evidence. As noted by Weisberg and others, when enriched with guided scaffolding, cultural relevance, print-rich materials, and teacher support, play becomes a potent vehicle for emergent reading, writing, language, and cognitive growth. Addressing practice challenges especially teacher preparation will help realize play's full potential in promoting lifelong literacy and holistic child development.

#### **2.4 Benefits of Play in Kindergarten Centres**

Play in kindergarten settings is widely recognized not merely as recreation but as a core pedagogical tool that underpins children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Contemporary research consistently highlights the manifold benefits of play when integrated intentionally and scaffolded effectively by educators. This review synthesizes recent empirical findings to illuminate how play enriches learning within kindergarten classrooms.

From a cognitive perspective, play significantly supports executive functioning encompassing working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control skills crucial for literacy and numeracy readiness (Smith & Rivera, 2022). In playful scenarios such as role-playing a grocery store, children practice problem-solving, following sequential tasks, and maintaining attention. Chen and Liu (2023) suggest that such activities bolster abilities critical for later academic success.

Additionally, guided play interventions embed literacy components (phonemic awareness, print concepts) into structured play, yielding stronger letter recognition and vocabulary growth than direct instruction alone (Garcia & Patel, 2024; Adesina & Badu, 2023).

Language and literacy improvements are also deeply linked to play. Narrative-rich play environments foster oral language development through storytelling, dialogue, and symbolic representation (Okafor & Brown, 2022). Knight and Morales (2021) observed that children who participated in book-based dramatic play displayed more advanced narrative skills and improved vocabulary scores compared to peers in traditional whole-group reading instruction. This aligns with Vygotskian frameworks that position imaginative play as a site for scaffolding emergent literacy through social interaction (Tudge & Curtis, 2023). Moreover, print-rich play centers equipped with labels, menus, and story props encourage incidental reading and writing behaviors during play, advancing metalinguistic awareness (Boateng & Mensah, 2024).

In terms of social-emotional development, play promotes cooperation, self-regulation, empathy, and resilience. Coleman and Adomako (2023) found that children engaged in teacher-supported cooperative play showed higher social competence and reduced behavioral incidents than those in unstructured free play. Fine and Rivera (2022) also reported that sharing a play scenario such as hosting a pretend clinic helped children grow empathy through role-taking and peer negotiation. Play thereby functions as a safe arena to rehearse emotional responses, build conflict resolution skills, and practice self-regulation strategies.

When considering physical development, play especially active and outdoor play enhances gross and fine motor skills. Outdoor play involving running, jumping, balancing, and climbing directly supports motor coordination and physical health (Kissiedu & Owusu, 2023). Equally important is

the role of constructive play with building blocks, drawing, and manipulative materials in developing fine motor precision required for later writing skills (Mills & Opoku, 2022).

Recent studies also underscore the holistic and integrative nature of play. Guided, play-based STEM activities allow children to engage with early science and mathematical concepts in authentic, self-directed ways (Ahmed & Darko, 2024). For instance, pouring water and measuring volume within a play bakery setting fosters early numeracy skills. In literacy-infused dramatic play, children compose menus, write pretend prescriptions, or label play items, naturally incorporating emergent reading and writing (Agyare & Yeboah, 2023).

A powerful articulation of play's benefits lies within play and inclusive education. Play environments structured around children's lived experiences and cultural identities support identity affirmation and reduce anxiety for learners from diverse backgrounds (Fleer & Asamoah, 2021). Cultural play props, stories, and community artifacts in the classroom support holistic engagement and literacy participation (Mensima & Osei, 2023).

Peer collaboration during play further enhances learning. Older or more skilled peers often model literacy behaviors and social interactions for younger classmates (Boateng & Mensah, 2024). Collaborative storytelling and peer-led dramatic play offer natural scaffolding opportunities aligned with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), emphasizing the benefits of learning through guided social interaction (Akoto & Smith, 2022).

Digital play is also gaining traction. Interactive storytelling apps and augmented-reality blocks have been shown to strengthen expressive language and story sequencing when integrated within guided, teacher-mediated play environments (Dzidzor & Kofi, 2023). However, Artem-Konadu

and Bannor (2021) caution that adult facilitation is essential for ensuring deep engagement, rather than surface-level entertainment.

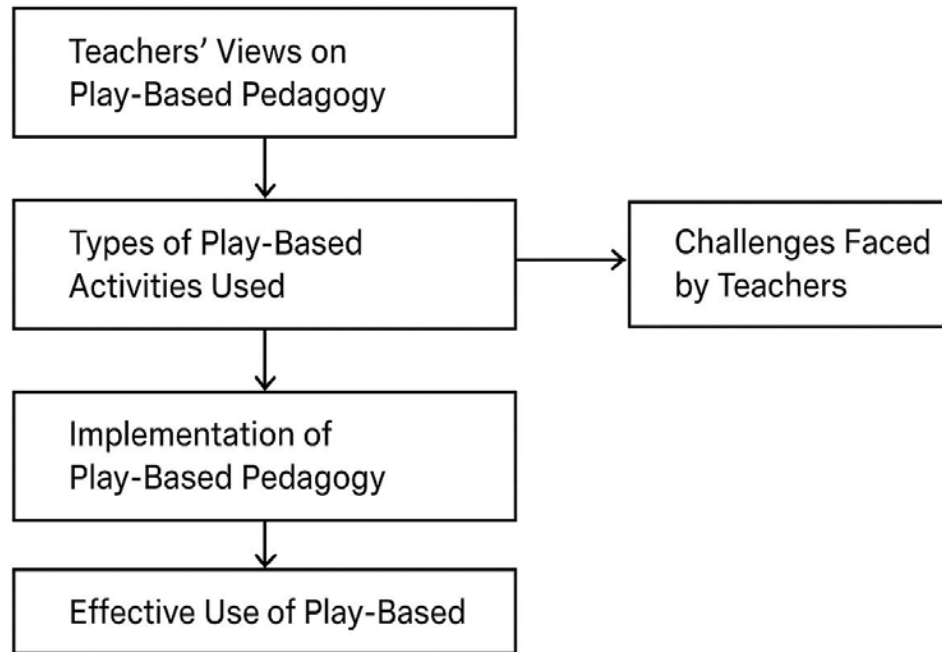
Meta-analytic reviews support these findings. A systematic review by Clarke et al. (2023) analyzed 38 studies and concluded that guided play consistently produced stronger literacy and numeracy gains than unguided play or direct instruction across kindergarten samples. Similar conclusions were reached in a longitudinal study by Owusu and Annan (2024), demonstrating that children exposed to sustained play-based curricula for two academic years achieved higher standardized language and math scores.

Despite its clear benefits, implementation challenges remain. Teachers often struggle to balance guided play with curriculum requirements and lack confidence in integrating literacy goals during play (Agyare & Yeboah, 2023; Aziz & Appiah, 2022). This highlights the need for targeted teacher training in play pedagogy and adequate resourcing to provide play-rich materials (Boateng & Mensah, 2024).

Overall, the multiple benefits of play converge on several overlapping domains: cognitive readiness, language development, social competence, motor skills, cultural engagement, digital literacy, and inclusive identity formation. Play operates as a multidimensional educational tool that supports holistic early childhood development when thoughtfully designed and scaffolded by teachers. To realize its full promise, investments are needed in teacher capacity-building, resourcing, and curriculum alignment to ensure that play is both child-centered and academically meaningful.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY ON THE USE OF PLAY-BASED PEDAGOGY AMONG KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN KPANDO MUNICIPALITY



***Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework on Teachers' Use of Play-Based Pedagogy in Teaching***

The conceptual framework for this study illustrates the relationship between kindergarten teachers' views, the types of play-based activities they use, the implementation of play-based pedagogy, and the challenges they face in integrating play into classroom teaching in the Kpando Municipality. It serves as a visual and theoretical guide that connects the key variables influencing the effective use of play-based pedagogy in early childhood education.

At the core of the framework is the belief that teachers' views and attitudes towards play-based pedagogy significantly influence how they incorporate and implement play in their classrooms. Teachers who hold positive views about play as a learning tool are more likely to create an engaging, interactive, and child-centered learning environment. According to Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), children learn best through social interactions and active

engagement with their environment. Therefore, teachers' understanding and appreciation of play as a learning medium are foundational to successful implementation.

The first component of the framework, teachers' views on play-based pedagogy, represents the independent variable. It captures teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the relevance, benefits, and practicality of using play in teaching and learning. Positive views enhance teachers' willingness to apply play-based methods, while negative perceptions may limit their usage.

The second component, types of play-based activities used, acts as a mediating variable. It involves the specific kinds of play teachers integrate into their instructional practices, such as role play, outdoor games, construction play, storytelling, and creative arts. The choice of activities depends on the teacher's understanding of how different forms of play contribute to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. For instance, role play helps in language and social development, while construction play enhances problem-solving and fine motor skills (Lillard et al., 2017).

The third component, implementation of play-based pedagogy, describes how teachers apply play-based strategies in real classroom settings. This includes lesson planning, organization of play materials, facilitation of play, and assessment of children's learning outcomes through play. Effective implementation reflects teachers' ability to translate their knowledge and attitudes into practical teaching strategies that make learning enjoyable and meaningful.

The next component, effective use of play-based pedagogy, represents the dependent variable, which signifies the outcome of teachers' practices. When play-based methods are properly implemented, learners are likely to demonstrate improved engagement, creativity, and

understanding. This aligns with the idea that play fosters holistic development—supporting not only academic growth but also social and emotional competence.

Finally, challenges faced by teachers act as moderating or intervening variables that influence the relationship between teachers' implementation and the effectiveness of play-based pedagogy. These challenges may include large class sizes, inadequate materials, insufficient training, limited time for play, or a lack of administrative support. Such constraints can hinder teachers' ability to fully adopt and sustain play-based teaching methods (UNICEF, 2018).

## **2.6 Kindergarten Teachers' Views on the Use of Play-based Pedagogy**

Kindergarten teachers worldwide increasingly recognize play-based pedagogy as fundamental to early childhood education, though their experiences with its implementation differ depending on factors such as training, educational context, and systemic support. Both Ghanaian and international research highlights teachers' enthusiasm for play's educational value while also pointing to persistent challenges and issues your Kpando Municipality study intends to explore.

In Ghana's Upper West Region, Abdulai and Batimah (2018) carried out a mixed-methods study involving 100 kindergarten teachers in Sissala East, selected through purposive and convenience sampling. Their findings indicated that while teachers understood guided play and engaged learners in varied play activities, obstacles such as classroom management difficulties and inadequate materials remained significant. Despite drawing on their prior training, participants expressed the need for professional development tailored to their specific teaching contexts. Similarly, in the Volta Region's Afadjato South District, Kekesi, Kormla, and Torkonyo (2019) surveyed 100 kindergarten teachers, complemented by input from head teachers and supervisors. Their descriptive study confirmed positive perceptions of play and linked teachers' attitudes and

years of experience to their frequency of using play-based approaches. They further noted that adequate resources and motivation strongly influenced implementation.

In Greater Accra, a study conducted in Ablekuma South employed a cross-sectional survey involving 164 kindergarten teachers. Most respondents believed in play's educational benefits, with 79% reporting a balanced approach to integrating play theory and practice, and similarly high numbers acknowledging play's role in understanding young learners (Anonymous, 2021). Despite this, time constraints, inadequate resources, and pressure to achieve academic results were noted as barriers to consistent play-based practice challenges echoed across varied educational contexts.

International literature reflects similar complexities. A systematic review of 62 studies from English-speaking, Asian, and European countries revealed that many teachers view play and academic learning as separate, creating dilemmas during classroom implementation. Educators familiar with the theoretical foundations of play were more likely to assume flexible roles—at times participating actively, at others stepping back but frequently felt unsure about effective scaffolding techniques (Systematic Review Team, 2019).

In Canada, Lynch (2015) interviewed kindergarten teachers who valued play yet felt constrained by curricular mandates and standardized assessment pressures that steered them towards teacher-led instruction. In the U.K., Farr (2025) documented a primary school that revived play beyond the reception year. Teachers there reported improvements in learner engagement, self-regulation, and support for neurodiverse students. Guided play was embraced as legitimate pedagogy within curriculum objectives, aligning with Vygotskian principles of social interaction and learning.

Professional development has emerged as a crucial factor in enabling effective play-based pedagogy. Agbagbla (2018) conducted a participatory action research project with eight Ghanaian

teachers over three months, integrating indigenous Anansi stories and traditional games. Participants demonstrated enhanced understanding, skills, and attitudes toward play-based teaching, highlighting the promise of culturally responsive, context-specific professional learning. Mercy Bidzakin (2020) reached similar conclusions in Wenchi Municipality, noting that while teachers valued play, 45% admitted to limited theoretical grounding, 85% cited large class sizes, and 88% pointed to poor classroom conditions. Resource shortages and inadequate administrative support further hindered implementation.

Across these studies, a consistent pattern emerges: teachers generally hold positive beliefs about play's role in early childhood education but face ongoing obstacles in practice. In Ghana and beyond, there is clear agreement on several points. Teachers recognize the value of play-based learning for engagement and cognitive development. In Ghana, educators in the Volta, Upper West, and Greater Accra regions share this perspective, reflecting international findings (Abdulai & Batimah, 2018; Kekesi et al., 2019; Systematic Review Team, 2019). Guided play, in particular, is frequently associated with enriched learning outcomes.

Persistent challenges include inadequate materials, overcrowded classrooms, and the pressure of academic performance targets. Ghanaian studies frequently report these constraints (Abdulai & Batimah, 2018; Anonymous, 2021), while international literature from Canada and the U.K. similarly notes tensions between mandated academic outcomes and play-based practices (Lynch, 2015; Farr, 2025).

Teachers routinely express the need for structured, context-sensitive professional development opportunities. Both Agbagbla (2018) and Mercy (2020) emphasized the importance of localized training tailored to the challenges and cultural contexts of Ghanaian classrooms. International research echoes this, with studies identifying action research, mentoring, and workshops as

effective means of strengthening teacher confidence and competence (Systematic Review Team, 2019; Farr, 2025).

Differences in how teachers participate in children's play also emerge across studies. Some Ghanaian classrooms report more directive, teacher-led play, while others emphasize child-led activities with minimal adult guidance (Abdulai & Batimah, 2018; Kekesi et al., 2019). This range mirrors the international literature's concept of a "participation continuum," where the central dilemma is how to guide without dominating the play experience (Weisberg et al., 2016).

Cultural integration within play activities is another area of divergence. Agbagbla's (2018) intervention purposefully incorporated traditional stories and games to embed cultural meaning in play-based pedagogy. In contrast, other Ghanaian studies tend to focus on general play materials and activities without necessarily centering indigenous cultural elements, suggesting a missed opportunity to affirm children's identities through culturally grounded learning experiences.

Several important research gaps persist. Few studies have specifically examined municipalities like Kpando, which face distinctive urban pressures, infrastructural challenges, and cultural dynamics. Much of the existing literature relies on quantitative surveys, limiting the qualitative depth needed to fully understand teachers' perspectives, classroom practices, and strategies for navigating constraints. Although international systematic reviews exist, there remains a lack of region-specific comparative research connecting Ghanaian experiences to global benchmarks. Additionally, many studies center on teachers' attitudes without directly observing classroom practice to assess how those beliefs shape actual play-based literacy teaching.

The Kpando Municipality study seeks to address these gaps. It will focus on an urban municipality with unique infrastructural, demographic, and resource challenges, using a qualitative case study

design to closely investigate teachers' understanding, practices, and adaptations in applying play-based pedagogy. The study will explore how the global tension between child-led and teacher-guided play aligns with the realities of urban Ghanaian classrooms and examine the extent to which cultural authenticity is reflected in play activities. It will also investigate whether teachers' positive views on play translate into meaningful, literacy-focused play practices, thereby connecting existing literature to real classroom outcomes.

In summary, both Ghanaian and international studies affirm kindergarten teachers' positive attitudes toward play-based pedagogy, acknowledging its role in fostering engagement and holistic child development. However, entrenched challenges including insufficient resources, overcrowding, academic pressures, and theoretical uncertainty persist across contexts. The Kpando study contributes by providing qualitative, locally grounded insights into how urban Ghanaian teachers conceptualize and implement play-based literacy pedagogy and by identifying opportunities and constraints unique to their setting.

## **2.7 Types of Play-based Activities Used by Kindergarten Teachers**

Kindergarten teachers globally increasingly recognize play-based pedagogy as vital for early childhood education, though their implementation experiences are heavily influenced by their training, educational environments, and systemic supports. Research within Ghana and abroad reveals that educators enthusiastically embrace play for its educational advantages yet face persistent challenge issues your Kpando Municipality study aims to explore.

In early childhood education, play is widely recognized as a natural, essential, and effective medium for young children's holistic development. Play-based pedagogy, in particular, has gained prominence globally as a means of facilitating learning in a manner that aligns with the developmental needs and interests of young children. In Ghana and other parts of the world,

kindergarten teachers employ a variety of play-based activities to foster the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of their learners.

One of the most fundamental forms of play-based activity in kindergarten classrooms is free play. Free play refers to activities that are initiated and directed by children, with minimal adult intervention or structured rules. It offers children opportunities to make choices, explore their environment, and engage in spontaneous, self-directed interactions. Typically, teachers provide a variety of play materials and environments such as building blocks, dolls, kitchen sets, books, and puzzles and allow children to decide how and with whom to play. This type of play fosters creativity, independence, decision-making, and social skills. According to Amoah and Appiah (2023), despite constraints such as limited space and materials in many Ghanaian urban early childhood settings, free play remains a central aspect of kindergarten education. It provides a safe context for children to practice social roles, resolve conflicts, and express emotions.

In addition to free play, guided play is another widely utilized strategy in kindergarten classrooms. Guided play occupies a space between free play and direct instruction, where the teacher sets up play scenarios or introduces specific materials that target learning objectives but allows children to lead the play itself. In this approach, the teacher may gently intervene to pose questions, suggest ideas, or scaffold learning experiences while ensuring that the play remains child-centered. For example, during a shopkeeper role-play, the teacher might introduce number cards and encourage children to count items or use pretend money, thus integrating numeracy skills into the activity. Abdulai and Batimah (2018) found that guided play enhances children's engagement and supports the achievement of curricular goals without undermining the intrinsic joy of play. In their study of kindergarten teachers in the Sissala East Municipality, guided play was commonly used to teach literacy, numeracy, and social skills.

Another popular form of play-based activity is constructive play, which involves children manipulating objects or materials to create something new. Activities such as building structures with blocks, assembling puzzles, or designing models with recycled materials fall under this category. Constructive play encourages problem-solving, spatial reasoning, and fine motor skills, while also promoting collaboration when children work together on projects. According to Kekesi, Kormla, and Torkonyo (2019), constructive play is an integral part of the play-based approach in many Ghanaian kindergartens, with teachers often using locally available materials such as stones, sticks, and bottle caps to create building games. The authors noted that such activities not only develop cognitive and physical skills but also foster creativity and innovation, particularly in resource-constrained classrooms.

Dramatic and pretend play is another significant type of play-based activity used by kindergarten teachers. In this form of play, children take on different roles, enact scenarios, and use imagination to create narratives and social situations. Common themes include playing 'house', pretending to be teachers, doctors, or market vendors, and acting out folk tales. This type of play is crucial for language development, empathy, and understanding social norms. Farr (2025) highlighted that dramatic play is especially valuable in multicultural classrooms, where it provides opportunities for children to explore and negotiate different cultural values and traditions. In Ghana, dramatic play often involves acting out traditional Anansi stories, village scenes, or market activities using improvised costumes and props. Amoah and Appiah (2023) emphasized that such activities not only support literacy development but also help children internalize cultural knowledge and moral lessons.

Outdoor or physical play activities are equally vital in kindergarten settings. These involve games and exercises that promote gross motor skills, physical fitness, and social interaction. Activities

such as running, skipping, climbing, and traditional games like *ampe*, *pilolo*, and hide-and-seek are commonly observed in Ghanaian kindergartens. Boateng and Mensah (2022) found that outdoor play enhances teamwork, resilience, and conflict resolution skills among young learners. Furthermore, it provides a necessary outlet for children's natural energy and contributes to their physical health. Despite its benefits, outdoor play faces challenges in urban areas where school compounds may lack adequate space or safe play equipment. Nevertheless, teachers in these contexts often display remarkable creativity in adapting existing spaces for physical play.

Music and movement-based activities are another important category of play used in kindergarten classrooms. These activities involve singing songs, clapping games, dancing, and rhythmic movement. Music and movement not only support auditory discrimination and memory skills but also promote social bonding and cultural awareness. Mercy Bidzakin (2020) reported that Ghanaian kindergarten teachers frequently use traditional songs, drumming, and dances as educational tools. These activities are often used as transitions between lessons, to reinforce concepts such as counting or letter recognition, and to build a positive classroom atmosphere. Farr (2025) further noted that music-based play activities encourage group participation and can be especially effective in inclusive classrooms where children have varying abilities.

Sand and water play, also known as sensory play, involves activities where children manipulate materials such as sand, water, grains, or clay. This type of play promotes sensory exploration, fine motor coordination, and concepts related to science and mathematics, such as volume, measurement, and cause-and-effect relationships. Amoah and Appiah (2023) found that even in schools with limited resources, teachers often use basins, cups, and locally available materials to create sand and water play stations. These activities provide rich, hands-on learning experiences and stimulate children's curiosity about their environment.

Another growing category is literacy and numeracy play, which integrates foundational academic skills into playful contexts. Teachers use games such as number bingo, alphabet puzzles, letter fishing, and story sacks to teach letters, numbers, and basic arithmetic concepts. Agbagbla (2023) observed that in line with Ghana's Standard-Based Curriculum, kindergarten teachers increasingly embed literacy and numeracy goals into play activities. These playful academic games are designed to engage children's interest while reinforcing essential concepts, making learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

Tabletop and manipulative play includes activities such as threading beads, sorting objects, matching games, and assembling lacing cards. These activities enhance fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and cognitive abilities such as sequencing and classification. Kekesi et al. (2019) noted that Ghanaian teachers often rely on improvised materials such as bottle tops, shells, and pebbles for these activities, ensuring that even schools with limited resources can implement this type of play effectively.

Finally, many kindergarten teachers incorporate traditional and indigenous games into their play-based pedagogy. These games, such as *oware*, *ampe*, and *pilolo*, are deeply rooted in local culture and provide opportunities for children to learn about their heritage while developing physical, cognitive, and social skills. Agbagbla (2023) emphasized that integrating indigenous games into kindergarten classrooms fosters a sense of identity and belonging among children. Moreover, these games often teach valuable life skills such as strategic thinking, turn-taking, and cooperation.

While the implementation of these activities faces challenges such as limited resources and space constraints, especially in urban settings, teachers continue to demonstrate creativity and resourcefulness in ensuring that play remains central to early childhood education. As contemporary research affirms (Amoah & Appiah, 2023; Agbagbla, 2023; Boateng & Mensah,

2022), sustaining and enhancing play-based pedagogy will require continuous teacher training, curriculum alignment, and policy support. By valuing both modern pedagogical approaches and indigenous cultural practices, kindergarten education can effectively nurture well-rounded, confident, and culturally grounded children.

Cultural relevance within play is another area of divergence. Agbagbla's study (2018) intentionally integrated traditional stories, whereas other Ghanaian research tended to rely on generic play materials, missing opportunities to affirm cultural identity.

Few studies have focused on urban municipalities like Kpando, which face particular infrastructural and cultural challenges. Second, most existing research is survey-based, offering limited insight into teachers' nuanced understandings, scaffolding strategies, and adaptations. Third, there is a need for region-specific comparative work linking local findings to international norms. Fourth, few studies examine actual classroom enactment of play-based pedagogy and its effect on student literacy development.

Kpando Municipality study seeks to address these gaps. It focuses on a unique urban setting with its own demographic and infrastructural dynamics, employing a qualitative case study approach. The research will delve into how teachers understand and implement play-based pedagogy, exploring how they navigate the global tension between child-led and adult-guided learning. The study also investigates whether and how cultural authenticity influences classroom play and examines the relationship between teacher perceptions and actual literacy-based play practices.

In summary, both Ghanaian and international literatures affirm the value teachers place on play-based pedagogy for enhancing engagement and holistic child development. However, consistent barriers remain limited resources, overcrowding, academic pressures, and insufficient theoretical

grounding. By providing a qualitative, locally contextualized exploration, your Kpando study offers important insights into how urban Ghanaian kindergarten classrooms interpret, enact, and are influenced by play-based literacy pedagogy.

## **2.8 How Kindergarten Teachers Implement Play-based Pedagogy in their Classrooms.**

Kindergarten teachers employ a variety of play-based strategies in their classrooms, weaving learning seamlessly into children's naturally curious and creative endeavors. Research from Ghana, alongside international studies, highlights the nuanced methods educators adopt to embed reading and writing skills within play contexts, underscoring both their ingenuity and the systemic constraints they confront.

In Ghanaian settings, guided play emerges as a dominant instructional approach. Agbagbla (2023) found that teachers in the Wenchi Municipality structured play corners around familiar cultural themes such as a pretend market or cooking scenario while subtly incorporating literacy tasks. Educators introduced symbols, labels, and printed prompts into these setups, modeling emergent writing by leaving notepads and pencils within each role-play area. Teachers interrupted play briefly to introduce new vocabulary or ask literacy-rich questions, then stepped back, returning agency to children. This method reflects Vygotskian scaffolding informed by local pedagogical insights.

In the Greater Accra region, Amoah and Appiah (2023) documented that some teachers take on dual roles as both playmates and facilitators. During dramatic play sessions, teachers occasionally observed children narrating stories or 'writing' shopping lists and then connected these moments to phonics and letter recognition by sharing a listening or writing task afterward. However, these moments were often transitory due to crowd control and curriculum pressures.

International literature reinforces these patterns. For instance, Lynch (2015) reported that Canadian kindergarten teachers used contextual play like a "post office" theme to practice letter formation, but shifted to teacher-led mini-lessons mid-activity to reinforce literacy objectives. Similarly, Farr (2025) highlighted British classrooms where children engaged in storytelling within play; teachers would capture children's narratives for group share times, integrating emergent writing skills and narrative development.

Constructive play also serves as a space for literacy integration. Kekesi et al. (2019) noted Ghanaian educators encouraging children to build letters or simple words using sticks, clay, or blocks. Fujimura et al. (2022), in a study across three U.S. preschools, described teachers scaffolding these activities by guiding children to sound-out letters and reinforcing emergent spelling skills.

Outdoor play settings offer another rich literacy context. Boateng and Mensah (2022) observed that teachers in Accra incorporated storytelling during outdoor games by having children create signposts with letters, directions, or action words. They documented children's labeling of play zones (e.g., "bridge", "treasure") on improvised signs a creative fusion of physical and language learning.

Interactive digital play is gaining traction in some Ghanaian classrooms. Mercy Bidzakin (2020) reported that kindergarten teachers used tablet-based story apps during guided play corners. They paused the narrative to highlight letters, ask predictive questions, and connect on-screen literacy to printable word cards placed nearby, demonstrating an integrated digital–analog play cycle.

Music, rhythm, and literacy frequently intersect. According to Doku (2023), teachers use clapping-rhyme games to encourage children to segment and blend sounds, embedding early phonemic awareness within playful chants and songs.

Despite these inventive approaches, teachers often face implementation obstacles. Large class sizes, limited materials, and academic targets can pull educators away from play-rich moments. Agbagbla (2018) found that while Ghanaian teachers valued guided play, inconsistent scaffolding stemming from time constraints or lack of training often led to missed literacy-learning opportunities. Internationally, Bao and Lee (2021) noted the ongoing tension between preserving play's spontaneity and meeting curriculum standards, with teachers oscillating between child-led play and scripted literacy instruction.

Moreover, few teachers consistently use reflective documentation. A qualitative study in Ireland by McCarthy (2022) revealed that many teachers struggled to capture and analyze children's literacy learning during play, pointing to a gap between intention and assessment practice.

In summary, kindergarten teachers implement play-based pedagogy through a blend of guided play, purposeful embedding of literacy in role-play, constructive and outdoor play environments, digital-media integration, and music-based strategies. These activities illustrate a dynamic fusion of play and literacy, guided by Vygotskian principles and adapted to local cultural contexts. Challenges persist particularly around materials, curriculum demands, and time management but both Ghanaian and international evidence show that when teachers are supported with training, reflection practices, and manageable class sizes, play becomes an effective medium for emergent literacy development. Your study in the Kpando Municipality will build on this global foundation by providing deep insights into teachers' daily enactment of play-based pedagogy: how they

scaffold literacy during fluid play moments, how they negotiate local constraints, and how such practices can be strengthened within Ghana's unique urban educational landscape.

## **2.9 Challenges Kindergarten Teachers Encounter in Integrating Play-Based Pedagogy**

Kindergarten teachers across the globe, including Ghana, enthusiastically embrace play-based pedagogy; nevertheless, the realities of classroom implementation frequently present formidable obstacles. Drawing from recent Ghanaian studies and international literature, this review explores the multifaceted challenges that hinder teachers from fully integrating play into early literacy instruction. It begins by illuminating systemic and organizational barriers, proceeds to contextual constraints in material and human resources, and concludes with pedagogical tensions and the need for stronger institutional support.

A pervasive challenge in many Ghanaian kindergarten classrooms is the scarcity of appropriate teaching and learning materials. Bidzakin (2020), in a survey of 57 kindergartens in the Wenchi Municipality, found that 83% of teachers reported insufficient age-appropriate books, literacy manipulatives, and play materials. These constraints compel teachers to improvise with recycled materials, which, while inventive, often lack the durability and educational relevance necessary for sustained play-based interventions (Agbagbla, 2018). Internationally, Larsen and Fisher (2019) reported similar findings in rural US kindergarten classrooms, where material shortages dampened creative play opportunities, leading teachers to revert to teacher-directed routines due to a lack of resources.

Overcrowded classrooms further challenge play integration. In Accra, Amoah and Appiah (2023) found that average class sizes of 45-60 children made it nearly impossible for teachers to monitor and scaffold individual play effectively. The consequence is a retreat to more controllable, sit-down literacy activities. Comparable contexts in England and Canada illustrate that overcrowding

disrupts effective play routines; teachers struggle to manage behaviour, ensure equitable participation, and scaffold language effectively (Lynch, 2015; Farr, 2025). Without adequate spatial arrangements, the autonomy that play-based learning thrives on becomes untenable.

A heavy academic curriculum and testing regime present significant pedagogical tension. Kekesi et al. (2019) found that 78% of Ghanaian KG teachers prioritized letter drills and phonics instruction over play due to pressure to meet benchmarks. Teachers often expressed that play, while appreciated, was treated as a luxury rather than a priority (Kekesi et al., 2019). This reflects global shortcomings; U.S. educators, as reported by Bao and Lee (2021), constantly negotiated between mandated literacy targets and open-ended play, often sacrificing play when test readiness loomed.

Insufficient teacher training in play-based pedagogy is widely reported. In the Kpone-Katamanso Municipality, Ofori and Asamoah (2022) observed that only 15% of kindergarten teachers had postgraduate exposure to play pedagogy. Most relied on brief workshops that failed to address practical classroom integration. International research concurs: Grossman et al. (2020) in Australia and Roth and Lim (2018) in Singapore found that even qualified teachers struggled to implement guided play without ongoing mentoring, resulting in superficial or inconsistent facilitation. Theoretical understanding rarely translated into skillful practice or scaffolding.

Administrative and policy support also influence teacher practice. Mercy Bidzakin (2020) reported that 89% of Ghanaian teachers felt undervalued by school administrators when they prioritized play-based activities. In response, teachers reverted to conventional pedagogies to align with school expectations. England's Farr (2025) similarly documented school leaders who favored measurable literacy outcomes over teacher-initiated play, leaving educators caught between policy compliance and innovation. Without top-down support for play, classroom realities remain resistant to reform.

Finally, assessment challenges compound implementation gaps. Play-based learning promotes creativity and emergent literacy, yet there are limited tools to assess these skills. McCarthy (2022) pointed out that Irish teachers valued play but lacked appropriate observational frameworks, reducing their confidence in documenting and communicating learning outcomes. Ghanaian teachers similarly report uncertainty about how to record progress during play, often resulting in ad-hoc or informal assessment practices (Amoah & Appiah, 2023).

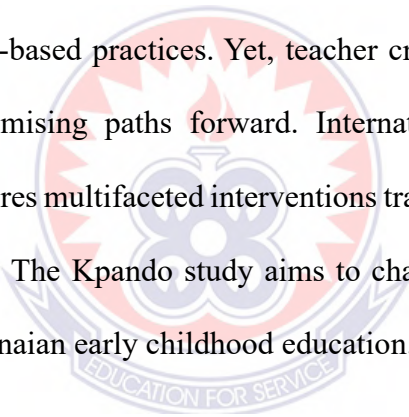
Despite these hurdles, several contextual nuances emerge. In urban Accra, some teachers transformed congested reading corners into dynamic play 'nooks' small thematic stations managed by rotating groups (Amoah & Appiah, 2023). In Wenchi, Agbagbla's participatory action research (2018) showed that teacher-led crafting of cultural play materials proved more durable and relevant, increasing sustained use. Such innovations suggest that teacher agency, when fostered, can mitigate systemic constraints.

Cross-context comparisons reveal consistent convergence on core challenges: lack of resources, overcrowding, curricular demands, insufficient training, and low administrative support (Bidzakin, 2020; Ingvarson et al., 2021; Bao & Lee, 2021). What diverges is the adaptive responses: Ghanaian teachers' use of local stories and community-created materials adds cultural richness to play spaces (Agbagbla, 2018), whereas Western teachers often rely on commercially available resources.

Despite growing recognition, current research exposes persistent gaps. Most studies rely on descriptive surveys rather than observational designs leaving a limited understanding of how teachers scaffold play in real-time. Moreover, there is a shortage of long-term evaluations examining how context-specific training and resource provision affect sustained implementation. Few comparative studies analyze how overarching educational policies moderate teacher practice across regions.

The upcoming study in the Kpando Municipality is poised to fill these gaps. By employing classroom observations and teacher interviews, it will document real-time scaffolding strategies, providing rich qualitative insights. It will evaluate how urban constraints like space and workload specifically shape play implementation. Additionally, the study will explore the interplay between teacher innovation and systemic support, and will provide evidence-based recommendations for contextually relevant training modules, resource kits, and policy enhancements.

In summary, while kindergarten teachers affirm the pedagogical potency of play, they encounter significant barriers that inhibit its full integration. Material scarcity, classroom overcrowding, curricular imperatives, lack of training, administrative gaps, and inadequate assessment frameworks jointly impede play-based practices. Yet, teacher creativity, cultural alignment, and localized innovations offer promising paths forward. International parallels underscore that overcoming these obstacles requires multifaceted interventions training, resourcing, infrastructural support, and assessment reform. The Kpando study aims to chart these intricacies and catalyze actionable improvements in Ghanaian early childhood education.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Overview

This chapter presented a description of the methods that was used to investigate the implementation of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten centres in the Kpando Municipality. The chapter was organized under the following subheadings: research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sampling procedure, instruments for data collection, methods for data collection, methods for data processing and analysis.

#### 3.1 Research Paradigm

The positivist research paradigm was deemed appropriate for this study because it emphasizes objectivity, measurement, and the use of systematic procedures to generate factual and generalizable findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Positivism is rooted in the belief that knowledge should be based on observable and measurable facts, making it suitable for studies that seek to examine relationships, trends, or patterns within a population through empirical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This study, which focuses on examining teachers' use of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten centres in the Kpando Municipality, aligns well with positivist principles. It involves collecting quantifiable data from a population of kindergarten teachers using structured questionnaires, which can be statistically analyzed to identify the extent of play-based practices, challenges encountered, and the effectiveness of these strategies in developing reading and writing skills.

The positivist paradigm is particularly useful for descriptive surveys like this, where the aim is to describe phenomena objectively and make inferences from a representative sample to a wider population (Bryman, 2016). It also supports value-free inquiry, ensuring that findings are

independent of the researcher's personal biases. As Neuman (2014) suggests, positivism allows for precision and reliability in educational research, making it suitable for investigating pedagogical practices in a formal educational setting.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The quantitative research approach is considered suitable for this study because it allows the researcher to systematically collect, measure, and analyze numerical data to objectively assess kindergarten teachers' use of play-based pedagogy in teaching reading and writing in the Kpando Municipality. Quantitative research is particularly useful when the aim is to describe current practices, measure patterns, and establish relationships among variables within a defined population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This study seeks to collect data from a sizeable sample of kindergarten teachers through structured questionnaires, enabling the researcher to quantify responses regarding the types of play-based activities used, perceived benefits, challenges encountered, and strategies for enhancing its implementation. According to Bryman (2016), the quantitative approach is ideal for studies that require standardized data collection procedures and statistical analysis to provide a clear picture of trends and correlations in a population.

Moreover, quantitative research enhances the objectivity and generalizability of findings, as it minimizes researcher bias through the use of structured instruments and standardized response formats (Ary et al., 2019). In this study, the approach supports the positivist stance of relying on observable, measurable data to inform educational decision-making and policy on early childhood pedagogical practices. As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) explain, quantitative approaches are valuable in educational research where the goal is to provide empirical evidence to guide professional practice, policy reforms, and curriculum development.

Therefore, the quantitative method is well-suited for this study's objective of assessing the current state of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten classrooms within the Kpando Municipality and offering evidence-based recommendations for improvement.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The descriptive survey design is well-suited for this study, as it allows for the collection of comprehensive data that regularly describes the characteristics, practices, and challenges of kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality regarding play-based pedagogy. This design is particularly effective for investigating existing conditions and exploring the relationships between variables without manipulating them, which is crucial for this study as it aims to understand the current state of play-based teaching without intervention (Creswell, 2014). One of the key strengths of the descriptive survey design is its ability to gather data from a large sample across diverse locations, which in this case includes early childhood educators from multiple kindergarten centres in Kpando Municipality. Given that the study primarily seeks to capture teachers' views, the types of play-based activities they use, the methods they employ, and the challenges they face, this design provides a structured framework for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data through surveys. The use of standardized questionnaires helps to ensure comparability of responses and allows for the efficient analysis of patterns and trends (Pillemer & Khaitov, 2019). Furthermore, descriptive surveys are widely considered cost-effective and time-efficient, facilitating the collection of data over a large area, such as Kpando Municipality, at relatively low costs (Fowler, 2014). This is particularly important given the limited resources available in Kpando, as the study aims to reach as many teachers as possible in order to provide a broad perspective of play-based pedagogy in practice. Overall, the design's ability to capture existing conditions, broad participation, and structured comparability across diverse cases makes the

descriptive survey an ideal methodology for answering the research questions of this study (Opoku-Asare & Siaw, 2016). for 4 seconds

A descriptive survey design is highly appropriate for this study, which investigates kindergarten teachers' use of play-based pedagogy in the Kpando Municipality. This research design systematically collects data from a defined population using standardized instruments, such as questionnaires, enabling the researcher to capture current practices and perceptions accurately (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive survey approach allows for an in-depth examination of teachers' views, the types of play-based activities they employ, their implementation strategies, and the challenges they face in integrating play into their teaching.

One significant advantage of this design is its ability to provide a comprehensive snapshot of the current state of play-based pedagogy within a specific context. Given the geographical spread of kindergarten centres in Kpando Municipality, a survey can efficiently reach a large number of teachers, ensuring that diverse perspectives and practices are represented (UNESCO, 2021). The use of a structured questionnaire also promotes consistency in data collection, which is essential for comparing responses across different schools and identifying common patterns or discrepancies in instructional practices (Opoku-Asare & Siaw, 2016).

Moreover, the descriptive survey design is both practical and cost-effective, particularly in settings where resources may be limited. It enables the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a robust foundation for analyzing how play-based pedagogy is adopted and the contextual factors that influence its implementation (Mardell et al., 2019). Such detailed insights are critical for informing policymakers and educational stakeholders about effective strategies to enhance early childhood education.

Overall, the descriptive survey design aligns well with the study's objectives, offering a systematic and efficient means to explore and document the use of play-based pedagogy among kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality.

### **3 4 Population**

The population consists of the entire group of individuals or elements that possess similar characteristics and from which the researcher intends to draw conclusions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It represents the total number of people who are relevant to the research problem and to whom the findings of the study are expected to apply (Ary et al., 2019). Defining the population clearly is essential, as it guides the selection of the sample and helps determine the scope and relevance of the study's results.

For this study, the target population comprised all kindergarten teachers in public basic schools within the Kpando Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana. According to records obtained from the Kpando Municipal Education Directorate (2025), there are 163 kindergarten teachers currently working in public kindergarten centres across the municipality. These teachers form the entire group from which the sample was selected.

### **3 5 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Census sampling was adopted in this study as it involves collecting data from every member of a defined population rather than selecting a subset or sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This technique is particularly appropriate when the population size is relatively small, making it feasible to gather information from all individuals. In this study, a census sampling was adopted because the total population of kindergarten teachers in public schools within the Kpando Municipality was 163, according to the Kpando Municipal Education Directorate (2025). Given this manageable

number, it was practical and cost-effective to involve all teachers to obtain comprehensive data on the implementation of play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction.

One significant advantage of census sampling is that it eliminates sampling error since data is collected from the entire population, thereby ensuring a more accurate and reliable representation of the population's views (Ary et al., 2019). It also enhances the generalizability of the findings within the specified context, as every eligible respondent's perspective is included. Moreover, this method strengthens the validity of policy and practice recommendations, as they are grounded in the collective experiences of all practitioners within the municipality.

However, census sampling has some limitations. It can be time-consuming and resource-intensive when compared to sample-based techniques, particularly if the population is dispersed or difficult to access (Fraenkel, et al, 2019). Additionally, there is the risk of non-response, which, if significant, could affect the completeness and balance of the data despite the small population size. Nonetheless, in this case, the benefits outweighed the drawbacks, making it a suitable technique for the study.

### **3 6 Data Collection Instrument**

The study employed a questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument to examine kindergarten teachers' use of play-based pedagogy in the Kpando Municipality. Questionnaires allow for the systematic collection of standardized data from a broad range of respondents, ensuring consistency and comparability across responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method was particularly suitable for capturing quantitative data related to teachers' perceptions, instructional practices, and challenges in implementing play-based strategies.

To effectively measure respondents' views, a four-point Likert scale was incorporated into the questionnaire. Respondents rated their level of agreement with each statement using the following

scale: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1. This format enabled the researcher to quantify attitudes and practices clearly and consistently, facilitating meaningful analysis of patterns and trends.

Given the diverse educational settings within the Kpando Municipality, the questionnaire was also a cost-effective and time-efficient tool for gathering data across multiple schools (UNESCO, 2021). Its structured and closed-ended format helped minimize interviewer bias, enhance data reliability, and simplify the comparison of responses (Opoku-Asare & Siaw, 2016). Overall, the questionnaire was an essential instrument for generating empirical data to inform evidence-based recommendations aimed at strengthening the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood classrooms within the municipality.

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

#### **Validity**

Validity is a crucial concept in research, referring to the extent to which an instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, both **face validity** and **content validity** were established to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the questionnaire used to collect data from kindergarten teachers on their use of play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction.

**Face validity** involves the subjective assessment of whether an instrument appears to measure what it claims to measure, based on its layout, wording, and clarity (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). To establish face validity, the questionnaire was presented to colleagues early childhood education students. Their feedback focused on the relevance, clarity, and suitability of the items for the study's context. Their suggestions were used to revise ambiguous questions and ensure that the instrument was visually and practically appropriate for the respondents.

**Content validity**, on the other hand, assesses whether the instrument adequately covers all relevant aspects of the concept being studied (Ary et al., 2019). To achieve content validity, the questionnaire items were carefully developed based on the study's objectives and a review of existing literature on play-based pedagogy and early childhood literacy. Experts in early childhood education that is my supervisor were evaluated whether the items comprehensively addressed the study's focus areas. Their inputs ensured that the final instrument was comprehensive, representative, and aligned with the key variables under investigation.

### **Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistency, stability, and dependability of a research instrument in producing similar results under consistent conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To establish the reliability of the questionnaire designed for this study, a pilot test was conducted in the North Dayi District, which shares similar characteristics with the Kpando Municipality in terms of educational structures, early childhood programmes, and teacher demographics. Pilot testing is a widely recommended procedure in quantitative research, as it helps to identify ambiguities, inconsistencies, and potential challenges in the administration of the instrument before the main data collection (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019).

In this study, the pilot test involved a sample of kindergarten teachers from public schools within the North Dayi District. Their responses were used to assess the internal consistency of the instrument items. Feedback from the pilot exercise informed the revision of poorly worded or unclear items, ensuring clarity and ease of understanding for the actual respondents in the Kpando Municipality. According to Ary et al. (2019), such pretesting enhances the instrument's reliability by confirming that it consistently measures the intended variables across similar contexts. The

refined questionnaire thus demonstrated a high level of dependability, making it suitable for use in the main study.

### **3 8 Data Collection Procedures**

Before commencing data collection, the researcher secured an introductory letter from the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Education, Winneba, to formally request permission from the various selected schools and relevant authorities within the Kpando Municipality. This letter clearly outlined the objectives of the study, emphasized the importance of voluntary participation, and assured respondents of both anonymity and confidentiality regarding their responses.

Additionally, the Kpando Municipal Education Directorate issued a supporting letter to the sampled kindergarten centres, granting the researcher access for data collection. After making the necessary contacts with the headteachers of the selected schools and receiving their consent, approval was given for the administration of the questionnaires.

To ensure a smooth data collection process, the researcher engaged and trained research assistants. These assistants were guided on how to approach respondents respectfully, explain any difficult items on the questionnaire, and provide additional clarifications when necessary. This preparation was intended to ensure consistency in the information gathered and to promote a high response rate. The effort proved successful, as the study achieved a 100% return rate for the quantitative data collected through the questionnaires.

### **3 9 Data Analysis Procedures**

The data gathered for this study were analysed using quantitative methods. Once the field data had been collected, it was carefully organized, reviewed, and edited to identify and address any incomplete or missing responses. To aid in easy identification and tracking during the analysis

process, the questionnaires were serially numbered. This step was essential to quickly detect and rectify any possible errors during data entry and tabulation.

After the initial review and coding of the responses, the data were entered into the computer for analysis using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 25.0. Prior to conducting the intended data analysis, the dataset underwent thorough cleaning, with consistency checks performed on all variables to ensure accuracy. Any discrepancies found during this process were resolved through verification of the original questionnaires.

The demographic data collected from respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages, to describe the background characteristics of the participating kindergarten teachers. The subsequent sections of the questionnaire, which addressed the research objectives, were analysed using descriptive statistical tools, namely means (M) and standard deviations (SD). This approach provided a clear summary of respondents' views on the use of play-based pedagogy in reading and writing instruction, the types of play-based activities employed, perceived challenges, and suggested strategies for improvement.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness Criteria**

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research was essential for establishing the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study adhered to these criteria to enhance the rigor of the research process.

#### **Credibility**

Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement and member checking. Prolonged engagement allowed the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of how Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) influenced classroom interactions and to build rapport with participants, increasing the likelihood of obtaining accurate and authentic responses (Shenton,

2004). Member checking was conducted by sharing summarized observations with the nine teachers who were observed, allowing them to verify the accuracy of the interpretations, thereby minimizing researcher bias and misinterpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

### **Transferability**

Transferability was achieved through thick description of the research setting, participants, and findings. The study provided detailed contextual information on early childhood education and the implementation of PLCs in the Asante Akim Central Municipality. By comprehensively describing the teaching environment, PLC activities, and classroom interactions, the study enabled future researchers and educators to determine whether the findings could be applicable in similar contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2022).

### **Dependability**

Dependability was maintained through the use of an audit trail, which involved systematically documenting the research process, including data collection methods, coding procedures, and analytical decisions (Nowell et al., 2017). Keeping clear records of the research steps ensured the replicability and consistency of the study's findings. Additionally, triangulation was used by cross-referencing data from questionnaire responses and classroom observations, ensuring that conclusions were drawn from multiple perspectives rather than a single data source (Yin, 2023).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability was ensured by minimizing researcher bias through reflexivity. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal to document thoughts, assumptions, and potential biases that could have influenced data interpretation (Patton, 2022). Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted, where findings and methodological choices were reviewed and discussed with fellow researchers to validate interpretations and enhance objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023).

By applying these trustworthiness strategies, this study strengthened the credibility and reliability of its findings, ensuring that the influence of PLCs on classroom interactions was examined with rigor and authenticity.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

To ensure that the study was conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines, several ethical issues were duly addressed, particularly relating to informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

#### **Informed Consent**

Informed consent ensures that potential participants have the freedom to decide whether or not to partake in a study after understanding its purpose, procedures, and any potential risks or benefits (Seidman, 2016). In this study, the aims and objectives were clearly explained to the participating kindergarten teachers before the administration of questionnaires. Participants were assured that their involvement was entirely voluntary, and they could withdraw at any point without facing any consequences.

#### **Anonymity**

The anonymity of respondents was carefully maintained throughout the study. Gujarati (2013) highlights anonymity as an important ethical consideration because it safeguards participants' identities. In this research, no personal identifiers such as names or positions were collected. Instead, numerical codes were assigned to completed questionnaires to ensure participants could not be identified. Additionally, prior visits were made to participating schools to explain the study's purpose and how respondents' identities would be protected.

### **Confidentiality**

To preserve confidentiality, participants were assured that their responses would be treated as private and would not be shared with any unauthorized parties. Data collected was accessible only to the researcher and used solely for academic purposes. Furthermore, all secondary information sourced from previous works was properly cited and referenced to uphold academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.



## CHAPTER FOUR

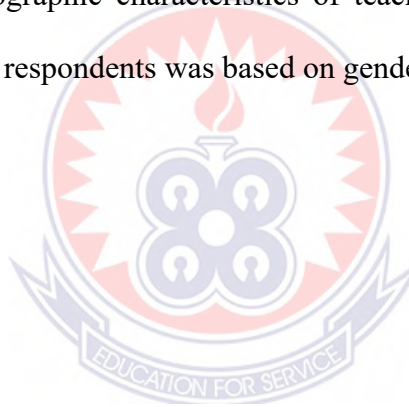
### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Overview

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of play-based pedagogy by teachers in kindergarten centres within the Kpando Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana. This chapter presents and analyzes the data from the research questions. It was organized into two sections: the first provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the second offers a detailed presentation and discussion of the data in relation to the research questions.

#### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of teachers sampled for the study. The demographic information of the respondents was based on gender, age, and class.



**Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variables	Subscale	Freq.	Percent %
Gender	Male	14	9
	Female	149	91
Age Range/Years	20 – 30	26	16
	31 – 40	57	35
	41 – 50	48	29
	51 – 60	32	20
Academic Qualification	Masters	23	14
	Degree	87	53
	Diploma	53	33
Years of teaching experience	1 – 5 years	29	18
	6 – 10 years	58	36
	11 – 15 years	41	25
	16years and above	35	21

Source: Field data 2025

Table 4.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The findings reveal a significant gender imbalance, with females constituting 91% of the teaching force compared to only 9% males. This distribution highlights the dominance of women in kindergarten teaching in the Adentan Municipality, a trend consistent with the broader perception of early childhood

education as a female-driven profession. Such dominance may shape the nurturing and relational aspects of pedagogy, which are often associated with women in teaching roles.

With respect to age distribution, the majority of respondents fall within the 31-40 years bracket, accounting for 35% of the sample. This is followed by teachers aged 41-50 years, who constitute 29%, and those aged 51-60 years, who represent 20%. Teachers within the 20-30 years category form the smallest group at 16%. These figures suggest that the workforce is largely composed of mid-career professionals, whose balance of experience and active service contributes positively to classroom delivery. The smaller proportion of younger teachers (16%) indicates limited inflow of new entrants into the profession, while the 20% representation of older staff suggests that some level of retention exists among more senior educators.

In terms of academic qualifications, more than half of the respondents (53%) hold bachelor's degrees, followed by 33% with diplomas and 14% with master's degrees. This profile demonstrates that most kindergarten teachers are fairly well-trained at the undergraduate level, yet advanced specialization in early childhood education remains relatively limited. The relatively small proportion of teachers with postgraduate qualifications may constrain the integration of cutting-edge, research-based pedagogies such as play-based instruction into classroom practice.

The distribution of teaching experience further reflects the maturity of the workforce. The largest group of teachers (36%) have between 6–10 years of experience, followed by 25% with 11–15 years, and 21% with 16 years or more. Only 18% of respondents reported between 1–5 years of experience. This indicates that the majority of teachers are seasoned practitioners with considerable professional expertise. While such longevity enhances their ability to offer informed perspectives on pedagogy, the relatively small proportion of novice teachers could reduce the

extent to which new ideas and innovations are infused into the teaching of literacy at the kindergarten level.

Overall, the demographic profile depicts a predominantly female, mid-career, and moderately qualified teaching force with substantial classroom experience. These attributes strengthen the credibility of teachers' insights into play-based pedagogy. However, the limited postgraduate training, low gender diversity, and reduced intake of younger professionals highlight potential gaps that could shape both the sustainability and innovation of play-based instruction in kindergarten classrooms.

#### **4.2 Analysis of the Research Questions**

For the analysis, a sample of all kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality was asked to rate their responses on a four-point Likert scale consisting of *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*. The scale was scored as follows: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1. A criterion mean value of 2.50 was established for interpretation. This value was obtained by summing the scale points ( $4+3+2+1 = 10$ ) and dividing by the number of scale options ( $10 \div 4 = 2.50$ ). Based on this, items with a mean score between 0.00 and 2.49 were considered low perceptions about the use of play-based pedagogy in supporting reading and writing development, whereas items with a mean score ranging from 2.50 to 4.00 were considered high factors influencing teachers' perception of its use. This interpretation was applied specifically to research questions one through four.

Research Question 1: What are kindergarten teachers' views on the use of play-based pedagogy in Kpando Municipality?

**Table 4.2: Kindergarten Teachers' Views about the Use of Play-based Pedagogy in Teaching.**

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	STDs
5	Play-based pedagogy is an effective method for teaching kindergarten learners.	3.34	.182
6	I believe play-based activities make lessons more engaging for young children.	3.32	.824
7	Play-based learning helps to improve children's reading and writing skills.	3.19	.582
8	I feel confident using play-based strategies in my teaching.	3.79	.454
9	Play-based pedagogy promotes the holistic development of kindergarten learners.	3.62	.433
10	I believe integrating play into literacy lessons makes learning outcomes better for children.	3.48	.171
11	I view play-based learning as a waste of instructional time.	3.12	.443
12	Play-based approaches should be a core part of the kindergarten curriculum in Kpando Municipality.	3.52	.813
13	Children learn better through play than through formal, teacher-directed instruction at the kindergarten level.	3.42	.313
Mean of Means		3.41	.353

**Source: Field data, 2025**

Table 4.2 presents kindergarten teachers' views about the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching. Overall, the mean of means was 3.41 with a standard deviation of 0.35, showing that teachers generally hold favourable perceptions of play-based pedagogy, though there are slight variations in their responses across specific items.

For the statement "Play-based pedagogy is an effective method for teaching kindergarten learners," teachers recorded a mean of 3.34 with a low standard deviation of 0.18. This suggests that teachers widely agreed on the effectiveness of play-based pedagogy, with very little variation in opinion. Similarly, the view that "play-based activities make lessons more engaging for young children"

yielded a mean of 3.32 with a higher standard deviation of 0.82, indicating general agreement but with noticeable differences among teachers, perhaps due to variations in classroom contexts or resource availability.

When asked whether “play-based learning helps to improve children’s reading and writing skills,” teachers gave a mean of 3.19 and an SD of 0.58. Although the mean reflects moderate agreement, the higher standard deviation points to diverse opinions, suggesting some teachers may be less convinced of its direct impact on literacy outcomes. By contrast, the highest mean score ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ) was observed for the statement “I feel confident using play-based strategies in my teaching.” This indicates very strong agreement among teachers and minimal variability, showing that most respondents felt self-assured about their ability to implement play-based pedagogy.

The belief that “play-based pedagogy promotes the holistic development of kindergarten learners” was also strongly endorsed, with a mean of 3.62 and an SD of 0.43, again reflecting high agreement with limited divergence in responses. Likewise, the integration of play into literacy lessons was viewed positively, with teachers recording a mean of 3.48 and a very low SD of 0.17, suggesting both strong agreement and consensus on the contribution of play to improved learning outcomes.

Interestingly, the negatively worded statement “I view play-based learning as a waste of instructional time” received a mean of 3.12 and SD of 0.44. This score is relatively low compared to other items, suggesting a degree of disagreement, but the absence of reverse coding in the analysis may have influenced the outcome. The moderate variation also implies mixed views among teachers, with some rejecting the statement outright while others may be uncertain.

Further, the idea that “play-based approaches should be a core part of the kindergarten curriculum in Kpando Municipality” was supported with a mean of 3.52 and SD of 0.81. While this indicates a strong positive orientation, the higher variability suggests that not all teachers shared the same

enthusiasm for integrating play as a compulsory curriculum component. Finally, the statement “Children learn better through play than through formal, teacher-directed instruction at the kindergarten level” recorded a mean of 3.42 with SD of 0.31, showing considerable agreement and relative uniformity among responses.

In summary, item-by-item analysis reveals that teachers generally hold positive views of play-based pedagogy, particularly in terms of confidence in its use and its role in holistic development. However, some items, such as the direct impact on literacy and the role of play in the formal curriculum, elicited more varied responses, reflecting areas where further professional training and sensitization may be needed.



Research Question Two: What types of play-based activities are incorporated into instructional practices by kindergarten teachers in Kpando Municipality?

**Table 4.3: Types of play-based activities that kindergarten teachers incorporate into their instructional practices.**

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	STD
14	I regularly use storytelling and role-play activities to teach reading.	3.74	.390
15	Singing and rhymes are part of my daily literacy instruction.	3.18	.712
16	I incorporate drawing and colouring activities to support reading and writing lessons.	3.33	.516
17	I use letter and word games (such as word puzzles and flashcards) to teach literacy skills.	3.55	.618
18	Dramatic play (pretend play) is used in my classroom to develop learners' communication skills.	3.67	.810
19	I organize outdoor play activities that include physical-related tasks.	3.29	.695
20	I engage learners in tracing, joining dots, and sand tray activities to help them learn to write.	3.64	.439
21	Puppet shows and character play are part of my reading and storytelling sessions.	3.48	.540
22	I use picture-matching games to improve learners' number identification skills.	3.12	.676
Mean of Means		3.45	.599

Source: Field data, 2025

The data presented in Table 4.3 highlights the types of play-based activities that kindergarten teachers integrate into their instructional practices. The overall mean of means (3.45) indicates that, on average, teachers moderately incorporate play-based strategies in their classrooms. The

overall standard deviation (.599) suggests a moderate degree of variation in the frequency with which teachers employ these methods. However, a closer look at the individual items reveals distinct patterns of preference and variation in the adoption of specific activities.

Among the strategies, storytelling and role-play activities emerged as the most widely used, with the highest mean score ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = .390$ ). The low standard deviation demonstrates that teachers are fairly consistent in their use of storytelling and role-play as tools for teaching reading. Similarly, tracing, joining dots, and sand tray activities recorded a high mean ( $M = 3.64$ ) with a low standard deviation (.439), showing that these fine motor-related practices are not only popular but also consistently applied across classrooms. These findings suggest that teachers strongly value activities that directly support literacy development and handwriting skills.

Dramatic play (pretend play) also received a relatively high mean ( $M = 3.67$ ), indicating that many teachers recognize its importance in developing learners' communication skills. However, this item had the highest standard deviation (.810), pointing to considerable variability in practice. While some teachers frequently incorporate dramatic play, others use it sparingly, possibly due to constraints such as classroom space, time, or confidence in facilitating such activities.

On the other hand, letter and word games, such as puzzles and flashcards, were also used fairly often ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = .618$ ). This suggests that teachers acknowledge the role of playful word-based activities in reinforcing literacy learning. Similarly, puppet shows and character play ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = .540$ ) were moderately used, though with slightly less variation.

In contrast, activities like drawing and colouring ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = .516$ ) and outdoor play involving physical-related tasks ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .695$ ) recorded means below the overall average, suggesting that while these are part of instructional practice, they are not as frequently emphasized. Outdoor

play, in particular, showed greater variability, which may reflect differences in school environments and availability of outdoor facilities.

The least frequently used activity was picture-matching games aimed at improving number identification skills ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = .676$ ). This suggests that numeracy-related play receives less attention compared to literacy-focused activities. The relatively high standard deviation implies differences in emphasis: while some teachers include number-matching games, others rarely do so. Similarly, singing and rhymes, although traditionally central to early childhood education, scored relatively low ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = .712$ ). The moderate-to-high variability indicates that the extent of their use varies widely among teachers, perhaps influenced by differences in pedagogical preference or training.

In summary, the analysis demonstrates that kindergarten teachers generally favour play-based activities that are directly linked to literacy development, such as storytelling, tracing, and role-play, applying them consistently across classrooms. However, activities that emphasize numeracy, music, and outdoor physical play appear to receive less attention and show greater variability in implementation. This reflects both a prioritization of literacy skills in early childhood instruction and possible differences in teacher confidence, training, or resource availability in implementing the full range of play-based activities.

**Research Question three: How do kindergarten teachers implement play-based pedagogy in their classrooms in Kpando Municipality?**

**Table 4.4: How kindergarten teachers implement play-based pedagogy in their classrooms**

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	STD
23	I integrate storytelling and role play as part of my lesson delivery to make reading and comprehension engaging.	3.69	.270
24	I use songs and rhymes to introduce, reinforce, or conclude instructional activities.	3.63	.403
25	I incorporate drawing and colouring tasks within lessons to help learners express and consolidate their understanding.	3.34	.844
26	I use dramatic play activities (pretend play) to help learners practice communication and problem-solving during lessons.	3.50	.417
27	I design indoor and outdoor play tasks that connect directly to my teaching objectives.	3.23	.618
28	I integrate letter and word games (e.g., puzzles, flashcards) into literacy instruction to build vocabulary and recognition skills.	3.87	.136
29	I organize physical play activities during instruction to strengthen learners' motor skills while linking them to lesson concepts.	3.46	.502
30	I make use of manipulative materials (such as blocks, beads, or sand trays) to support active exploration of literacy and numeracy during lessons.	3.15	.761
31	I align play-based activities with curriculum learning outcomes to ensure they serve both instructional and developmental purposes.	3.52	.598
Mean of Means		3.49	.505

**Source: Field data, 2025**

The findings in Table 4.4 describe how kindergarten teachers implement play-based pedagogy in their classroom instruction. The overall mean of means (3.49) suggests that teachers moderately integrate play-based approaches into their lessons, with a standard deviation of .505 indicating that practices are fairly consistent across respondents, though some variations exist depending on the type of activity.

The most highly rated strategy was the use of letter and word games such as puzzles and flashcards ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = .136$ ). The low standard deviation highlights that teachers are very consistent in using this method to build vocabulary and recognition skills. This finding reflects teachers' emphasis on literacy-oriented play, which is often considered central to early learning. Similarly, storytelling and role play ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = .270$ ) and the use of songs and rhymes ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .403$ ) were reported as commonly used strategies with relatively low variability, showing that most teachers consistently integrate them into lessons to enhance engagement and comprehension.

The use of dramatic play activities ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = .417$ ) and puppet/physical play activities ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = .502$ ) also featured prominently, suggesting that teachers recognize the value of imaginative and physical play in developing communication, problem-solving, and motor skills. However, their higher standard deviations compared to literacy-related strategies indicate some variation in the extent of use, possibly due to differences in available resources, classroom space, or teacher confidence in managing such activities.

Teachers also reported aligning play with curriculum learning outcomes ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = .598$ ), showing a deliberate effort to ensure that play is not just recreational but directly tied to instructional and developmental goals. This demonstrates that play-based pedagogy is viewed as an instructional tool rather than an optional add-on.

On the other hand, some strategies were less frequently emphasized. Drawing and colouring tasks ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = .844$ ) showed a high level of variability, suggesting that while some teachers integrate creative art activities into lessons, others rarely use them. The largest gap, however, appeared in the use of manipulative materials such as blocks, beads, or sand trays ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = .761$ ). This relatively low mean and high standard deviation imply that teachers differ greatly in their ability or willingness to use hands-on materials, likely due to limited resource availability in some classrooms. Similarly, designing indoor and outdoor play tasks linked to objectives ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = .618$ ) scored below the overall mean, indicating that while such activities are recognized as beneficial, they are less consistently practiced.

In summary, the data reveal that kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality most often integrate literacy-focused play activities such as letter games, storytelling, and rhymes into their classroom instruction, doing so consistently across schools. Activities involving manipulative resources, creative arts, and outdoor play are less frequently incorporated and show wide variation among teachers. This pattern reflects both the centrality of literacy in instructional practice and the constraints teachers may face in integrating broader forms of play due to resources, space, or training.

**Research Question 4: What challenges do kindergarten teachers face in integrating play-based pedagogy into their teaching practices in Kpando Municipality?**

**Table 4.5: Challenges faced by kindergarten teachers in integrating play-based pedagogy**

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	STD
32	Lack of adequate teaching and learning materials limits the use of play-based pedagogy in my classroom.	3.86	.218
33	Large class sizes make it difficult to effectively manage play-based instructional activities.	3.63	.403
34	There is limited time on the timetable to incorporate play-based activities into instructional lessons.	3.44	.844
35	I lack sufficient training on how to implement play-based pedagogy in classroom instruction.	3.78	.301
36	The school environment lacks appropriate facilities for play-based activities.	3.49	.518
37	Some parents and guardians do not appreciate the importance of play-based learning in teaching children	3.87	.136
38	I face difficulty balancing the demands of the curriculum with play-based instructional approaches.	3.68	.402
39	There is limited administrative support for integrating play-based strategies into teaching.	3.15	.761
40	Inadequate availability of age-appropriate play materials affects my teaching.	3.73	.365
Mean of Means		3.63	.439

**Source: Field Data, 2025**

The results in Table 4.5 present the challenges faced by kindergarten teachers in integrating play-based pedagogy into their classroom instruction. The overall mean of means (3.63) indicates that teachers generally agree that they encounter significant barriers in applying play-based approaches. The relatively low overall standard deviation (.439) suggests a high level of consistency among respondents, with most teachers reporting similar challenges regardless of individual or school-level differences.

Among the listed challenges, the most prominent was that some parents and guardians do not appreciate the importance of play-based learning ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = .136$ ). The very low standard deviation shows that this view is widely shared among teachers. This finding highlights the cultural and attitudinal barriers to play-based pedagogy, where parents may undervalue play and prioritize rote learning, thereby discouraging teachers from fully implementing playful instructional methods.

Similarly, lack of adequate teaching and learning materials ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = .218$ ) was identified as a major obstacle. The small variability in responses underscores that almost all teachers experience shortages of instructional resources, such as manipulatives, play equipment, and learning aids, which are critical for effective play-based instruction. Closely related to this, inadequate availability of age-appropriate play materials also ranked highly ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = .365$ ), suggesting that both the quantity and suitability of resources are a persistent issue.

Teacher-related factors also emerged strongly. A large proportion of teachers indicated that they lack sufficient training on how to implement play-based pedagogy ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = .301$ ). The high mean with low variability suggests a systemic gap in professional development opportunities. Furthermore, many teachers reported difficulty balancing curriculum demands with play-based

approaches ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = .402$ ). This challenge reflects the tension between achieving prescribed academic outcomes and adopting more flexible, child-centred teaching practices.

Classroom management issues were also highlighted. Teachers noted that large class sizes make it difficult to manage play-based activities ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .403$ ). The consistency of responses suggests that overcrowding is a widespread challenge, likely resulting in difficulties in supervising learners during group or outdoor play.

Environmental and institutional barriers were also reported. The school environment, lacking appropriate facilities for play-based activities ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = .518$ ) shows that infrastructural inadequacies, such as the absence of playgrounds, designated learning corners, or safe play spaces, undermine the implementation of play pedagogy. Additionally, limited time on the timetable ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .844$ ) emerged as another challenge. However, the relatively high standard deviation suggests that time constraints may vary across schools; some timetables are more flexible, while others are rigidly structured.

The least emphasized challenge, though still notable, was limited administrative support ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = .761$ ). The lower mean and higher variability indicate that while some teachers feel unsupported by school leadership, others may benefit from more proactive administrative backing. This suggests differences in leadership practices and school-level policies within the municipality.

Overall, the analysis shows that the most critical and consistent barriers to play-based pedagogy are lack of parental support, inadequate teaching and learning resources, insufficient teacher training, and curriculum pressures. Challenges related to large class sizes, limited facilities, and lack of time also play a significant role, while administrative support varies depending on context. Collectively, these findings underscore the multifaceted nature of the obstacles that hinder

kindergarten teachers in Kpando Municipality from fully integrating play into their instructional practices.

### **Discussion on Teachers' Views about Play-Based Pedagogy**

The findings reveal that kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality generally hold favorable views about the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching. Teachers widely acknowledged its effectiveness as a teaching method, agreeing that it helps make lessons more engaging for young children. This view is consistent with studies conducted in Afadjato South and Ablekuma South, where teachers emphasized the motivational and participatory benefits of integrating play into early learning (Kekesi et al., 2019; Anonymous, 2021). However, some teachers in Kpando appeared to differ in the strength of this belief, which may be linked to the variation in classroom contexts, particularly differences in access to resources. This reflects Abdulai and Batimah's (2018) observation that inadequate materials often constrain teachers' ability to fully embrace play-based approaches.

When it comes to children's reading and writing skills, teachers were moderately positive about the role of play. While many agreed that play contributes to literacy development, others seemed less convinced of its direct impact. This finding mirrors both Ghanaian and international research, which often points to teachers' uncertainty about how to link play with formal academic outcomes. In Wenchi, for instance, Bidzakin (2020) found that although teachers valued play, many lacked the theoretical grounding to translate it effectively into literacy practices. Similarly, international reviews have noted that teachers often struggle to balance play with academic expectations, leading to mixed perceptions of its role in improving literacy outcomes (Systematic Review Team, 2019).

One of the most striking findings is that teachers in Kpando expressed strong confidence in their ability to use play-based strategies in their classrooms. This sense of readiness aligns with evidence from professional development interventions such as Agbagbla's (2018) action research, which showed that training and exposure enhanced teachers' skills and attitudes toward play. However, literature also suggests that confidence does not always equate to best practice. Teachers may feel prepared yet still gravitate toward directive forms of play rather than facilitating more child-led experiences (Weisberg et al., 2016). This suggests that while confidence is high, further professional support is needed to strengthen practical skills for scaffolding play effectively.

Teachers also strongly endorsed the view that play supports the holistic development of children. This belief resonates with both Ghanaian and international literature, which highlights play's role in fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth (Kekesi et al., 2019; Farr, 2025). Similarly, the idea of integrating play into literacy lessons was well supported, with teachers recognizing that embedding play in curriculum activities leads to improved learning outcomes. These findings reinforce earlier studies in Ghana and the U.K., which demonstrate that guided play enhances engagement and supports learning within curriculum objectives (Abdulai & Batimah, 2018; Farr, 2025).

At the same time, there was some ambivalence about whether play wastes instructional time. While many teachers rejected this notion, a few seemed uncertain, reflecting the persistent tension between play and formal instruction. This tension has been documented in both Ghana and other countries. Teachers in Canada, for example, have reported feeling constrained by curricular mandates and assessment pressures, which at times make play feel secondary to more academic, teacher-led instruction (Lynch, 2015).

Teachers in Kpando also showed strong support for making play a core part of the kindergarten curriculum, though the level of enthusiasm varied among respondents. This pattern reflects findings from studies in Wenchi and Afadjato South, where teachers valued play but hesitated about fully institutionalizing it due to challenges such as large class sizes and academic performance pressures (Kekesi et al., 2019; Mercy, 2020). Likewise, teachers generally agreed that children learn better through play than through formal instruction, indicating a shift towards more child-centered pedagogical orientations. However, this agreement also underscores the balancing act teachers face, as they try to reconcile child-led learning with system-driven academic demands a dilemma highlighted in international research (Systematic Review Team, 2019).

Overall, the findings confirm what both Ghanaian and international literature suggest: teachers recognize play-based pedagogy as central to effective and engaging early childhood education. They associate play with holistic development, motivation, and improved learning outcomes, while also acknowledging challenges such as resource limitations, time constraints, and curriculum pressures. The Kpando study adds nuance by showing that teachers' confidence in using play is particularly strong, even if their views on its role in literacy and its place in the formal curriculum remain mixed. This points to the need for targeted professional development and systemic support to translate teachers' positive attitudes into consistent, meaningful classroom practice.

### **Discussion of Findings on Types of Play-Based Activities**

The findings from Table 4.3 show that kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality generally integrate a range of play-based activities into their teaching, though with differing levels of emphasis. Overall, the data suggest that teachers moderately apply play-based methods, with a clear preference for activities directly tied to literacy development. This pattern aligns with both Ghanaian and international research, which highlights the growing recognition of play as an

effective medium for supporting children's learning while also pointing to variability in how it is practiced (Abdulai & Batimah, 2018; Amoah & Appiah, 2023).

Storytelling and role-play emerged as the most consistently used activities, reflecting teachers' recognition of their value in promoting literacy and communication skills. This finding is consistent with earlier studies in Ghana, where dramatic play and storytelling have been shown to enhance children's language development, cultural awareness, and social skills (Farr, 2025; Amoah & Appiah, 2023). The consistency observed in Kpando classrooms suggests that teachers consider these activities indispensable for literacy development. Furthermore, the prominence of storytelling resonates with Agbagbla's (2018) participatory action research, which integrated indigenous Anansi stories into teaching and demonstrated significant gains in both teacher competence and children's engagement. This indicates that teachers in Kpando, like their counterparts elsewhere, rely on storytelling not only as a literacy tool but also as a culturally responsive practice that strengthens identity and moral learning.

Another set of activities that teachers strongly embraced were tracing, joining dots, and sand tray exercises. These activities support fine motor development and handwriting readiness, which are crucial for early literacy. Their consistent application in classrooms reflects the same trend reported by Kekesi, Kormla, and Torkonyo (2019), who found that constructive play activities involving manipulation of materials were widely used in Ghanaian kindergartens. The reliance on these practices underscores the teachers' prioritization of literacy and foundational academic skills, as also highlighted in Agbagbla's (2023) observation that literacy and numeracy play are increasingly embedded in play-based pedagogy under Ghana's Standard-Based Curriculum.

Dramatic play, though valued, showed considerable variation in implementation. Some teachers integrated it frequently, while others used it sparingly. This uneven use may stem from challenges

such as lack of space, limited resources for costumes or props, or teachers' uncertainty in facilitating open-ended imaginative play. International research has documented similar tensions, with some educators perceiving dramatic play as less structured and harder to align with academic outcomes (Systematic Review Team, 2019). Yet, when effectively implemented, dramatic play has been shown to promote social interaction, empathy, and problem-solving (Farr, 2025). The variability in Kpando thus points to a potential area for targeted professional development to help teachers scaffold this form of play with greater confidence.

Word games, puzzles, and flashcards also featured in teachers' practices, albeit at a moderate level. These align with the category of literacy and numeracy play, which is central in Ghana's curriculum (Agbagbla, 2023). Puppet shows, character play, and other interactive games were used to a lesser extent, suggesting that while teachers appreciate their potential, these activities may not be as strongly prioritized as storytelling or handwriting-focused play.

In contrast, activities such as drawing, colouring, and outdoor play received relatively less emphasis. This limited focus echoes Mercy Bidzakin's (2020) findings in Wenchi, where teachers cited classroom size, lack of facilities, and poor conditions as obstacles to implementing diverse play. Outdoor play, though crucial for physical development and teamwork (Boateng & Mensah, 2022), often depends on school infrastructure, which is limited in many urban settings like Kpando. Similarly, drawing and colouring, though important for creativity and fine motor development, may be underutilized because teachers prioritize academic tasks that more directly align with literacy outcomes.

Perhaps most striking is the relatively low use of picture-matching games for numeracy and the limited incorporation of singing and rhymes. Both findings reveal a tendency for teachers to foreground literacy while giving less attention to numeracy and music-based play. This imbalance

reflects broader systemic patterns: research has shown that Ghanaian kindergarten teachers often emphasize literacy readiness due to curriculum expectations and parental pressure for early reading and writing skills (Abdulai & Batimah, 2018; Anonymous, 2021). Yet international research strongly advocates for music and numeracy play as essential to holistic development, supporting memory, problem-solving, and cultural bonding (Mercy, 2020; Farr, 2025). The variability in their use within Kpando classrooms suggests differences in teacher training, pedagogical preferences, or confidence in facilitating such activities.

Overall, the findings affirm that kindergarten teachers in Kpando value play-based pedagogy and employ a range of strategies, but with a clear bias toward literacy-related activities such as storytelling, role-play, tracing, and sand tray use. Activities supporting numeracy, music, creativity, and physical development receive comparatively less attention, indicating a narrowed focus that could undermine holistic child development. This mirrors the gap noted in both Ghanaian and international studies: while teachers endorse play-based pedagogy, systemic pressures, limited resources, and uneven training shape the extent and variety of its classroom application (Amoah & Appiah, 2023; Systematic Review Team, 2019).

The Kpando findings thus point to important implications. First, there is a need for balanced training and support to ensure teachers integrate a wider range of play activities beyond literacy. Second, infrastructural challenges such as a lack of outdoor facilities must be addressed to encourage physical and outdoor play. Finally, professional development could emphasize the cultural and academic value of underutilized activities like music, rhymes, and numeracy games, thereby fostering a more holistic application of play-based pedagogy that aligns with both local traditions and global benchmarks.

## **How Kindergarten Teachers Implement Play-based Pedagogy in Their Classrooms**

The data from the analysis reveal that kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality moderately integrate play-based pedagogy into classroom instruction, with a fairly consistent pattern across respondents. The strongest emphasis was placed on literacy-focused strategies such as letter and word games, storytelling, and the use of songs and rhymes. These findings resonate with broader Ghanaian and international literature, which identifies literacy as a central domain where play-based pedagogy is most consistently applied.

For instance, the high and consistent use of letter and word games in Kpando aligns with Agbagbla's (2023) study in the Wenchi Municipality, where teachers structured play around cultural contexts like markets and cooking scenarios while embedding literacy elements such as labels, vocabulary, and emergent writing prompts. Similarly, Amoah and Appiah (2023) observed that teachers often link dramatic play to reading and writing activities by weaving phonics, letter recognition, and storytelling into role-play sessions. These practices are also echoed internationally; Lynch (2015) in Canada and Farr (2025) in Britain both documented the use of contextual play such as post office and storytelling themes as vehicles for reinforcing emergent literacy within play. Thus, the Kpando results confirm a global pattern: literacy-oriented play is prioritized because it directly addresses curricular learning outcomes and teacher accountability for early literacy benchmarks.

The moderately high use of storytelling, role play, and music-based activities in Kpando also reflects the integration of traditional and creative methods of embedding literacy within culturally familiar play contexts. Doku (2023) highlighted that clapping-rhyme games in Ghanaian classrooms foster phonemic awareness in playful ways, while Mercy Bidzakin (2020) documented teachers using digital story apps to combine oral storytelling with print recognition. The consistent

use of rhymes and songs in the Kpando classrooms therefore mirrors both indigenous and modern strategies for reinforcing literacy.

However, the findings also point to disparities in how teachers implement certain types of play. Dramatic play and puppet/physical activities, while valued, showed greater variability compared to literacy-based practices. This variability may reflect the constraints noted in the literature, such as large class sizes, inadequate classroom space, or lack of confidence in facilitating open-ended play (Agbagbla, 2018; Amoah & Appiah, 2023). International studies have similarly observed tensions between curriculum expectations and the spontaneity of play, with teachers oscillating between guided and more teacher-directed approaches (Bao & Lee, 2021).

The results also show that creative arts activities like drawing and colouring, as well as the use of manipulative materials (blocks, beads, and sand trays), are less consistently applied. This finding is consistent with Kekesi et al. (2019), who emphasized that while constructive play with blocks or recycled materials enhances problem-solving and creativity, resource limitations often prevent its consistent use. Similarly, outdoor play in Kpando, which was reported as underutilized, echoes Boateng and Mensah's (2022) observation that urban schools often lack adequate space or equipment for physical play, despite its developmental benefits.

Interestingly, the data indicate that teachers in Kpando make deliberate efforts to align play activities with curriculum learning outcomes, showing that play is viewed as a legitimate instructional strategy rather than just recreation. This reflects Vygotskian principles of scaffolding, where teachers design play environments with targeted learning goals, stepping in to model, prompt, or extend literacy and numeracy skills (Agbagbla, 2023; Fujimura et al., 2022). Yet, as McCarthy (2022) noted in Ireland, documentation and reflection on children's literacy learning

within play remain a challenge, suggesting that while teachers may align activities with learning outcomes, systematic assessment during play is often underdeveloped.

In summary, the findings from Kpando reinforce what both Ghanaian and international literature has consistently shown: kindergarten teachers strongly privilege literacy-based play strategies such as letter games, storytelling, and rhymes because they directly connect to curriculum goals and are relatively easy to implement across diverse contexts. However, broader forms of play constructive, outdoor, and manipulative are less consistently practiced due to constraints of resources, space, and training. These findings underscore the need for greater support to help teachers expand play-based pedagogy beyond literacy, integrating creative, physical, and manipulative activities that holistically nurture children's development

### **Challenges Kindergarten Teachers Encounter in Integrating Play-Based Pedagogy**

The results from the study show that kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality face multiple barriers that make it difficult for them to fully integrate play-based pedagogy into their classroom practice. The findings reveal that teachers generally agree on the significance of these challenges, with very little variation in their responses. This consistency suggests that the challenges are not limited to particular schools or individuals but are systemic in nature.

One of the most critical obstacles identified was the perception of parents and guardians who often fail to appreciate the value of play in children's learning. Many parents continue to associate quality education with rote learning and early mastery of reading and writing skills, which leads to a lack of support for play-based methods. Teachers therefore feel pressured to adopt more conventional, academic-oriented strategies to meet parental expectations, a situation that is consistent with findings from Ghana and elsewhere that highlight cultural attitudes as a major

determinant of pedagogy (Kekesi et al., 2019; Farr, 2025). This suggests that the implementation of play in early childhood education cannot be isolated from wider social beliefs and community values.

Another prominent challenge relates to the lack of teaching and learning resources. Teachers frequently report that they do not have adequate manipulatives, play equipment, or age-appropriate materials to sustain meaningful play. This scarcity compels them to improvise with locally available or recycled materials which, while creative, are often limited in durability and relevance (Agbagbla, 2018; Bidzakin, 2020). Similar shortages have been reported internationally, where teachers deprived of sufficient resources often resort to more teacher-directed approaches (Larsen & Fisher, 2019). In Kpando, this lack of resources therefore undermines the rich, hands-on experiences that are central to play-based learning.

Teacher preparation also emerged as a serious concern. Many teachers acknowledged that they lacked sufficient training in how to effectively implement play-based pedagogy. This finding points to systemic weaknesses in pre-service and in-service training programs. As studies in Ghana and other countries have shown, theoretical knowledge of play is often not matched with practical classroom guidance, leaving teachers uncertain about how to scaffold play to meet learning outcomes (Grossman et al., 2020; Ofori & Asamoah, 2022). Without sustained professional support, teachers risk implementing play in a superficial way or abandoning it altogether in favour of more predictable instructional strategies.

The demands of the curriculum add another layer of tension. Teachers indicated that they struggled to balance the need to meet prescribed academic benchmarks with the more flexible and exploratory nature of play. The pressure to demonstrate measurable outcomes often leads to the sidelining of play, which is viewed as less essential compared to drills and structured literacy tasks

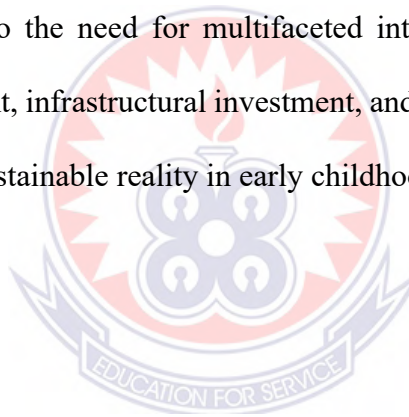
(Bao & Lee, 2021; Kekesi et al., 2019). This challenge is compounded by the lack of suitable assessment tools for play-based learning, leaving teachers unsure of how to document progress during play (McCarthy, 2022).

Large class sizes further complicate the situation. Teachers find it difficult to manage and supervise play activities when classrooms are overcrowded, as is common in many Ghanaian schools. Overcrowding restricts children's ability to participate equitably in play and makes it difficult for teachers to provide individualised attention (Amoah & Appiah, 2023). Similar problems have been noted in international contexts, where high pupil-teacher ratios have been shown to hinder effective classroom management and scaffolding (Lynch, 2015).

The physical environment of schools also plays a significant role. Many teachers reported that they lacked access to appropriate facilities such as playgrounds, safe outdoor spaces, or well-structured play corners inside classrooms. These infrastructural inadequacies reduce the opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful and diverse play experiences (Boateng & Mensah, 2022). The challenge of limited time on the timetable was also reported, although with more variation across schools. In some contexts, rigid timetables prevent teachers from allocating sufficient time for extended play, while in others, there is greater flexibility that allows play to be integrated more easily.

Administrative support appeared to be the least prominent challenge, but it was still significant. While some teachers felt that they lacked backing from school leaders, others acknowledged that their administrators were more proactive in encouraging play-based practices. This variability reflects the important role of leadership in either constraining or enabling teachers to innovate in their classrooms (Bidzakin, 2020; Farr, 2025).

Overall, the findings highlight that the most persistent challenges to play-based pedagogy in Kpando are a lack of parental support, inadequate resources, insufficient training, and pressures from the curriculum. Overcrowded classrooms, limited facilities, and timetable constraints further complicate efforts, while administrative support varies depending on the school context. These results align with a wider body of research in Ghana and internationally, which consistently points to the interplay of cultural, material, pedagogical, and institutional barriers in shaping early childhood teachers' classroom practices. At the same time, examples from Ghana and beyond suggest that innovative strategies such as teacher-led creation of culturally relevant play materials, flexible use of small classroom spaces, and parent sensitisation campaigns can help to mitigate these challenges. This points to the need for multifaceted interventions that combine teacher training, community engagement, infrastructural investment, and supportive leadership in order to make play-based pedagogy a sustainable reality in early childhood classrooms.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Overview

This final chapter provides a summary of the study, highlighting the key findings. It discusses the conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

#### 5.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of play-based pedagogy by teachers in kindergarten centres within the Kpando Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana. To achieve this, the following research questions were formulated for the study;

1. What are kindergarten teachers' views on the use of play-based pedagogy in Kpando Municipality?
2. What types of play-based activities are incorporated into instructional practices by kindergarten teachers in Kpando Municipality?
3. How do kindergarten teachers implement play-based pedagogy in their classrooms in Kpando Municipality?
4. What challenges do kindergarten teachers face in integrating play-based pedagogy into their teaching practices in Kpando Municipality?

For this study, a descriptive survey design was used. Both census and purposive sampling methods were applied to select 163 participants. A questionnaire served as the main tool for data collection, and the information obtained was analysed with the aid of descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

## **5.2 Findings from the Study**

The study revealed that kindergarten teachers in the Kpando Municipality view play-based pedagogy positively, highlighting its effectiveness in engagement, holistic development, and learning outcomes, though some remain uncertain about its literacy impact, curriculum fit, and challenges linked to resources and instructional time.

The study findings revealed that kindergarten teachers in Kpando moderately apply play-based pedagogy, prioritizing activities like storytelling, role-play, tracing, and sand tray, while underemphasizing numeracy, creativity, music, and outdoor play due to systemic challenges.

The study revealed that kindergarten teachers in Kpando employ strategies such as storytelling, group work, role play, rhymes, and word games to foster learners' understanding. Creative arts, outdoor activities, and manipulative play are less emphasized due to constraints.

The study revealed systemic challenges hindering play-based pedagogy in Kpando, including inadequate resources, limited training, parental misconceptions, curriculum pressures, overcrowded classrooms, poor facilities, time constraints, and inconsistent administrative support, requiring multifaceted interventions for improvement.

## **5.3 Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the study;

The study concludes that strengthening teacher confidence, resource provision, and curriculum alignment is essential to enhance consistent and effective implementation of play-based pedagogy in early childhood education.

The study concludes that promoting balanced use of diverse play activities requires improved teacher support, resource allocation, and awareness of play's importance across all learning domains in kindergarten classrooms.

The study concludes that continuous professional development and resource enhancement are crucial to help teachers effectively integrate varied play strategies for holistic learner development in early childhood settings.

The study concludes that addressing systemic barriers through policy reforms, stakeholder collaboration, and sustained investment will strengthen the implementation and sustainability of play-based pedagogy in Kpando's early childhood education.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations were made;

1. It is recommended that the Kpando Municipal Education Directorate organize regular workshops to strengthen teachers' confidence, provide instructional resources, and ensure curriculum alignment for effective and sustainable use of play-based pedagogy in classrooms.
2. The District Education Directorate should supply adequate materials and training to support teachers in balancing literacy-focused and creative play activities, ensuring comprehensive learner development across literacy, numeracy, music, art, and outdoor learning domains.
3. It is recommended that school heads and education officers support teachers with flexible timetables, peer collaboration, and teaching aids to enhance integration of diverse play strategies that promote holistic learning and development.

4. The Ministry of Education, together with local authorities, should improve teacher training, resource provision, parental sensitization, and administrative support to address systemic challenges and strengthen the effective implementation of play-based pedagogy in kindergartens.



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**APPENDIX A**  
**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA**  
**FACULTY OF APPLIED BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES IN EDUCATION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

**Questionnaire for Teachers**

**Dear Respondent**

This study investigates the use of play-based pedagogy by teachers in kindergarten centres within the Kpando Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana. Your full input will help make informed decisions that will inform policy in early childhood education. It would be appreciated if you could respond to all items on the questionnaire. You are assured of complete confidentiality and anonymity of all information provided.

Again, questions on this survey instrument have gone through a thorough review by professionals at the University of Education, Winneba, and have been declared ethical for educational research. You hereby consent to voluntarily participate in this study by providing responses to items from the various sections of this instrument.

**Thank You.**

## SECTION A:

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

*Please place a tick (✓) in the appropriate box.*

1. **Gender**

a. Male [ ]

b. Female [ ]

2. **Age**

a. Below 30 years [ ]

b. 31-40 years [ ]

c. 41-50 years [ ]

d. 51-60 years [ ]

3. **Academic qualifications**

a. Certificate in ECE [ ]

b. Diploma in ECE [ ]

c. Degree in ECE [ ]

d. Master's in ECE [ ]

e. Others [ ]

4. **Working Experience**

a. 1-5 years and below [ ]

b. 6-10 years [ ]

c. 11-15 years [ ]

d. 16 years and above [ ]



**SECTION B****RESEARCH QUESTION ONE**

Kindergarten teachers' views on the use of play-based pedagogy

Please respond to the following statements on the views of kindergarten teachers on the use of play-based pedagogy. Indicate the extent to which you Strongly Agree-SA, Agree-A, Disagree-D, and Strongly Disagree-SD to the statements below

**Directions:** Indicate with a tick [ ✓ ] the views of teachers on the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching. Where: *SA = Strongly Agree, (4), A = Agree, (3) D = Disagree, (2) and SD = Strongly Disagree (1)*

**Views of teachers about the use of Play-based pedagogy in teaching.**

No.	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
5.	Play-based pedagogy is an effective method for teaching kindergarten learners.				
6.	I believe play-based activities make lessons more engaging for young children.				
7.	Play-based learning helps to improve children's reading and writing skills.				
8.	I feel confident using play-based strategies in my teaching.				
9.	Play-based pedagogy promotes the holistic development of kindergarten learners.				

10.	I believe integrating play into literacy lessons makes learning outcomes better for children.				
11.	I view play-based learning as a waste of instructional time.				
12	Play-based approaches should be a core part of the kindergarten curriculum in Kpando Municipality.				
13	Children learn better through play than through formal, teacher-directed instruction at the kindergarten level.				

**Directions:** Indicate with a tick [ ✓ ] the views of teachers on the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching. Where: *SA = Strongly Agree, (4), A = Agree, (3) D = Disagree, (2) and SD = Strongly Disagree (1)*

**Types of play-based activities that kindergarten teachers incorporate into their instructional practices.**

No.	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
14	I regularly use storytelling and role-play activities to teach reading and writing.				
15	Singing and rhymes are part of my daily literacy instruction.				
16	I incorporate drawing and colouring activities to support reading and writing lessons.				

17	I use letter and word games (such as word puzzles and flashcards) to teach literacy skills.				
18	Dramatic play (pretend play) is used in my classroom to develop learners' communication skills.				
19	I organize outdoor play activities that include literacy-related tasks.				
20	I engage learners in tracing, joining dots, and sand tray activities to help them learn to write.				
21	Puppet shows and character play are part of my reading and storytelling sessions.				
22	I use picture-matching games to improve learners' word recognition skills.				

**Directions:** Indicate with a tick [ ✓ ] the views of teachers on the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching. Where: *SA = Strongly Agree, (4), A = Agree, (3) D = Disagree, (2) and SD = Strongly Disagree (1)*

#### **How kindergarten teachers implement play-based pedagogy in their classrooms**

No.	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
23	I allocate specific periods on the timetable for play-based activities in literacy lessons.				

24	I deliberately link play activities to the reading and writing objectives I teach.				
25	I allow learners to freely explore educational materials during literacy-related play sessions.				
26	I supervise and guide learners as they engage in literacy games and play-based activities.				
27	I design reading and writing tasks around learners' interests and play preferences.				
28.	I combine both indoor and outdoor play activities in teaching reading and writing.				
29.	I create literacy corners (reading and writing play areas) in my classroom.				
30	I encourage learners to take turns and collaborate during literacy-related games and role-play.				
31	I use local and improvised materials to support play-based literacy instruction.				

**Directions:** Indicate with a tick [ ✓ ] the views of teachers on the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching. Where: *SA = Strongly Agree, (4), A = Agree, (3) D = Disagree, (2) and SD = Strongly Disagree (1)*

**Challenges faced by kindergarten teachers in integrating play-based pedagogy**

No.	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
32	Lack of adequate teaching and learning materials limits the use of play-based pedagogy in my classroom.				
33	Large class sizes make it difficult to effectively manage play-based literacy activities.				
34	There is limited time on the timetable to incorporate play-based activities into reading and writing lessons.				
35	I lack sufficient training on how to implement play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction.				
36	The school environment lacks appropriate facilities for play-based activities.				
37	Some parents and guardians do not appreciate the importance of play-based learning for reading and writing development.				
38.	I face difficulty balancing the demands of the curriculum with play-based instructional approaches.				
39	There is limited administrative support for integrating play-based strategies in literacy teaching.				
40	Inadequate availability of age-appropriate play materials affects my teaching.				