UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN MFANTSEMAN MUNICIPALITY IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

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

Signature: ………………….….…………………….
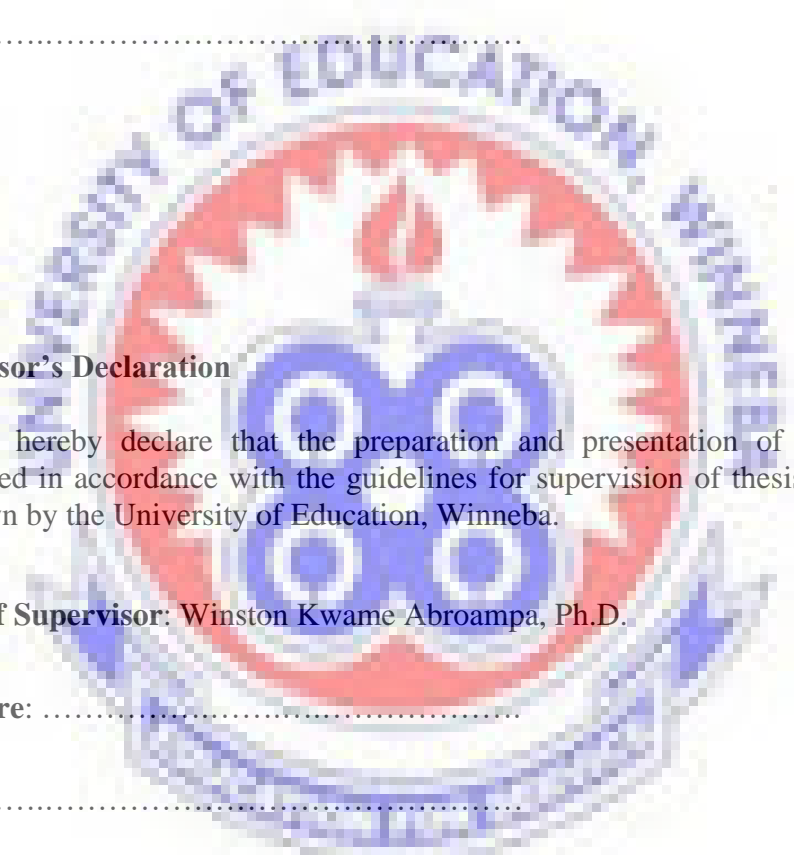
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Supervisor's Declaration

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

Name of Supervisor: Winston Kwame Abroampa, Ph.D.

Signature: ………….…...………………………….

Date: ……..…………….…………………….……

iii

DEDICATION

To my dear and cherished wife Monica Yenbaree and daughter Ayinebotima for their

support and prayers, and to the entire Akanzire family

iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure   **Page**

ACRONYMS

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
GESPSQKEG	Ghana Education School Programme to Scale-up Quality Kindergarten Education in Ghana
LNLL	Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life'
NCATE	National Council for the Accreditation of Institutions of Teacher Education
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
PICCPS	Professional Identity of Child Care Practitioners: Self-authorship
RNCS	Revised Nation Curriculum Statements
ROI	Republic of Ireland
SIP	student internship programme
SSA	Sub-Sahara Africa
WDP	Workforce Development Plan

xii

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central region of Ghana. The study adopted concurrent mixed method design using identical samples for both quantitative and qualitative data. The target population for this study comprised all Kindergarten teachers in the Mfantseman municipality. The census sampling procedure was employed to sample 182 early childhood teachers for the study. Questionnaire with some open-ended questions were used to gather data. The quantitative data were analysed through the computation of descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, independent samples t-test, and ANOVA, using the SPSS. Qualitative data were analysed thematically using Atlas. ti 7.5.17. The study revealed that the level of teacher professional identity was high. It emerged from the study that contextual factors influencing early childhood teachers' professional identity were related to school environment, lack of recognition, social regard, nature of the school administrators, and nature of working environment. The study revealed that early childhood services face challenges related to the un-prestigious nature of the occupation; low remuneration, lack of infrastructure, teaching learning materials, and attitude of parents. The data also suggested that professional development like higher education; experience and professional exposure influenced their professional identity. It was concluded that early childhood teachers' identity levels were high and were also influenced by contextual factors stemming from school environment, societal perception, individual preferences, remuneration and lack of logistics. The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study: The study concluded that generally, early childhood teachers' identity levels were high on all the four indictors: professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice. The study recommended that the Mfantseman educational directorate in collaboration with the sampled school authorities should organise comprehensive in-service training programmes on professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice to establish it influence in their teacher professional identity to equip teachers to develop positive professional identity.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an insight into the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the objectives of the study and the research questions, which served as a guide to the study. It also deals with the significance of the study, delimitation, limitations of the study and definition of terms.

1.1   Background to the Study

In recent years the issue of quality education in Early Childhood Education (ECE) has become a matter of significant concern and debate in many countries (Organization for Economic and Co-operation Development [OECD], 2001, 2006, 2012). The field of Early Childhood Education is undergoing rapid development, as evidenced by international recognition of the importance of early childhood education, the implementation of policy frameworks, and substantial funding to improve provision of schools in developed and developing countries (Organization for Economic and Co-operation Development [OECD], 2001, 2006, 2012).

Ghana as a country has come up with strategies and policies on Early Childhood Education to help improve the quality of education, the latest of which being the Ghana Education School Programme to Scale-up Quality Kindergarten Education in Ghana since 2012. The programme recognised the role of the teacher in quality education as it explicitly states that 'regardless of limited resources and inadequate infrastructure, the right teacher can transform the kindergarten class and learning outcomes of the children in his/her care. The right teacher is one who understands the specific needs of early childhood learners, who is confident in child centred pedagogies and child-initiated learning, as well as the learning objectives to be achieved. Teacher quality is therefore crucial and has been globally accepted to be significantly associated with the quality of

14

education in general and students' learning outcomes in particular (Goyal & Pandey, 2011). These indicate that for any educational system to thrive and realize its goals, the role of teachers has to be supreme and if so the identity of the teacher is crucial.

Theoretically "teacher identity" has been explored as a concept, a connection of inter-locking variables, through which the teacher can be understood and appreciated as a professional as well as a social and cultural being. Teacher identity is not a fixed or coherent set of traits but something that is complex, often contradictory and subject to change across time and space (Morgan, 2004). The development of a teachers' identity is therefore a continuing and dynamic process (Cooper & Olson, 1996).

The initial preparation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) workforce represents a diverse category that differs significantly in their qualifications, employment situations and status. A typical of these includes a mix of certificate, diploma, graduate and postgraduate qualified teachers who may or may not have specialist training in working with young children (OECD 2001, 2006; Bennett and Neuman 2004). Osgood and Stone (2002) argue that such diversity in provision encourages staff to behave in isolated and defensive ways. As a result, they lack a unified identity or a shared belief in themselves as a professional group. According to Moloney (2010), qualifications are critical in shaping professional identity, including self-esteem, self-belief, job satisfaction, and belongingness. Early childhood teachers Ireland believe they are often viewed as babysitters rather than educators (Moloney, 2010). This metaphor threatens and challenges their professional identity resulting in feelings of vulnerability and insecurity.

The ECCE sector is primarily associated with women who love and care for children far from the towers of academia (Lobman & Ryan, 2007; Carter & Doyle, 2006). Such perspectives are rooted within the discourse that is associated with a

15

traditional view of women that see childcare as the specific remit of women in the home predominantly characterised by limited training. Contrarily, quality ECCE therefore, is dependent upon 'strong staff training that equips practitioners with the requisite competences, skills, values and attitude that would enable them clearly define their identity.

Forde, McMahon, McPhee, and Patrick. (2006) refer to affective components of professional identity such as self-esteem, self-belief, professional self-confidence, job satisfaction and motivation. They posit that professional identity is a highly personalised construct that rests in part on feelings and attitudes about the job people do. Yidana and Lawal (2015) after reviewing literature on teacher professional identity point to the fact that, an ideal professional teacher, irrespective of the subject he or she handles should demonstrate and practice all aspects of professional knowledge, values, skills and reflection. These are the broad indicators of teachers' professional identity and capacity.

Professional identity has emerged as an area in which researchers conceptualize professional identity differently, investigate varying topics within the framework of teachers' professional identity and pursue a diversity of goals (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Yidana & Lawal 2015). Edwards (2014) conducted a research to explore the Professional Identity of Child Care Practitioners: using Self-authorship as a Theoretical Framework, her findings showed three patterns of professional identity development. First, a tentative professional identity involved a heavy reliance on the unquestioned direction of experts with beliefs about practice collected from these experts rather than internally constructed through a sophisticated critically reflective personal epistemology. This implies an individual professional identity is based on expects ideas and not personally constructed. Second, participants described as having

an emergent professional identity, reflected on practice but did not go beyond practical strategies to include theory. These participants also looked to their teachers and more experienced and knowledgeable practitioners to validate their beliefs about practice. Finally, the self-authored professional identity was characterised by practitioners' sophisticated personal epistemology and the capacity to engage in critical reflection. This critical reflection assisted them in their independent negotiation of many viewpoints, including research and theory, as well as their ability to clearly articulate intrapersonal understandings about their practice with young children

Mansaray (2011) pointed out that government policies in Africa on educational reforms do not position the teacher as the locus of change and that little evidence of empirical studies is directed at teacher identity and professionalism as core determinants of how teachers perform their roles. He indicates that the approach to pre-school and in-school teacher preparation seems heavily focused on equipping teachers with the so- called 'knowledge base' in their subjects, and the appropriate methods and techniques for communicating this knowledge to pupils. Consequently, there are indications that teachers in Africa have either lost, or have not developed, the distinctive identity that is improving to their professional work as well as their social standing.

Anamuah-Mensah (2011) underscored this by observing that teacher education programmes in Ghana like most other countries in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) incorporate the following five elements: subject knowledge, knowledge of students (child psychology), foundation courses, methods of teaching and immersion in field-based experience or practicum, which fall within three dimensions' knowledge and skills, social and personal. He explained that a missing area of focus in teacher education programmes is helping the individual to know him/herself and his/her role as a teacher (personal dimension). Questions such as 'Who am I?' 'How do I see myself?' and 'How

do others see me?' are not raised; rather group-identity questions such as 'What do I have to do as a teacher?', 'How do I act as a teacher?', 'What qualities do teachers have?' and 'How do I achieve these?' take centre stage and drown out the question of self or teacher identity. He noted that the development of a teachers' professional identity therefore comes as a by-product of teacher education programmes rather than a targeted outcome (Anamuah-Mensah, 2011). The foregoing suggests that in the ladders of our educational institutions responsible for teacher education, there is no primary focus on developing the identity of the teacher. However, he noted that some attempts have been put in place in Ghana to give some attention to teachers' personal and professional identities. The Student Internship Programme (SIP) in the University of Education, Winneba, the University of Cape Coast and other teacher education institutions in Ghana could have aspects that may address teacher identity issues, however this might have been fraught with challenges. For instance, the teaching practice model designed for colleges of education some time ago that required periodic conferences between link tutors from the colleges, interns and their mentors seemed quite useful in this regard since many students in teacher education universities and colleges did not have a genuine desire to teach. However, it looks as if it has disappeared with time. It is on this score that the study sought to examine Early Childhood Teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the central region of Ghana.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Every teacher irrespective of his or her area of specialisation should have a professional identity that distinguishes him or her from other subject teachers or teachers in other disciplines by virtue of their training. This also goes for early childhood teachers or kindergarten teachers who are found to be teaching children at the most critical period of their lives. However, Moloney (2010) conducted a study to

18

explore pre-school and infant teachers' perceptions of professional identity in the early childhood care and education sector in the Republic of Ireland and reported that professional identity is contentious and problematic as the sector is predominantly associated with practitioners who lack mandatory training requirements. There is therefore compelling evidence that highly trained ECCE professionals are being lost to the sector. While teachers per se who teach in the upper class enjoy relatively some social status, their professional identity as infant teachers is compromised within individual school settings. Teachers believe that this is related to a perception that the infant class is akin to 'playschool' and that teachers in the early childhood settings are low academic achievers. As a result, they do not get the same respect as teachers working in classes higher up the school.

There seems to be less value placed on early childhood education and teachers also, and teachers not wanting to be looked down upon as poor academic achievers or teachers who are not intelligent refuse postings to early childhood centers and easily accept postings to higher classes. These issues give rise to fundamental questions about the value of early childhood education as well as the value placed on those working with four- to six-year-old children in pre-schools and primary schools. Besides, it appears most early childhood teachers may not be able to define their identity and distinguishing features that make them different from other teachers. Most of those teachers define their identity based on public opinion as a result of which they accept teaching other subjects at higher levels. Eghan (2016) conducted a study on the role and professional identity of district directors of education (DDES) in Ghana. This research adopted narrative and case study approaches. Yidana and Lawal, (2015) also conducted a study on senior high school economics teacher's professional identity in Ghana using

descriptive survey approach. It is clear that both studies did not adopt a mixed method approach to examining the teacher's identity in Ghana.

It seems most of the studies on teachers' professional identity in Ghana focuses most on subject teachers. More so, extant literature on teacher identity is that most of the lists of identities were developed with teachers of students in grades beyond the primary years in mind. Indeed, the most common focus is on teachers in higher education; none of the lists of desired teacher identity apply exclusively to early childhood teachers in Ghana. However, such a list would certainly benefit the field. Because early childhood teachers need unique knowledge and skills, it is also likely that they need to have identities that are unique to them as a group.

Again, It appears little has been done in the area of the Early childhood teachers' professional identity in Ghana. Another distinctive characteristic is that, Early Childhood education is relatively a new area, an emerging shoot in the educational corridor in Ghana, and studies in this field of study is limited. A research gap has therefore been created, part of which this study seeks to fill by exploring the perceptions of early childhood teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the central region of Ghana on their professional identity.

1.3   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perception of early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

1.4   Objectives of the Study

The following research objectives guided the study:

1. To ascertain the level of early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

2. To examine contextual factors affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

3. To assess the challenges affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

4. To examine the role of professional development in early childhood teacher's identity formation in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

1.5 Research Question

The study sought to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the levels of early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

2. What contextual factors affect early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

3. What are the challenges affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

4. What is the role of professional development in early childhood teachers' identity formation in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

1.6 Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested:

1. **H₁:** There is no significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity among male and female teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

H₀: There is a significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity among male and female teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

2. **H₁:** There is no significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity on the basis of years of experience as Early Childhood teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

H₀: There is significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity on the basis of years of experience as Early Childhood teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Research on teachers' professional identity formation is seen as significant to teacher educators and mentors in schools in order to better understand and conceptualize the support student teachers need. The study will expose early childhood teachers to indicators that help to define their professional identity. This will help them better conceptualize and appraise their thinking to professional identity and consciously work towards developing it.

This study on Early Childhood teacher professional identity will contribute to understanding and acknowledgment of what an Early Childhood teacher feels like. This study is significant in drawing attention to the challenges that Early Childhood teachers might experience on both the personal and professional level. It provide an insight into an early childhood teachers struggles he/she encountered in work.

It will also make early childhood teachers aware of existing contextual issues that affect the development of their professional identity. This will help them create an environment or explore opportunities that would promote the development of their identity. Through the study, early childhood teachers will become aware of the professional development opportunities that may affect the development of their identity to enable them take advantage of them.

The study findings will have important educational and research implications. Teacher education programmes should be designed to take into considerations identity development of pre-service teachers. Understanding of teacher identity may have important implications for effective teacher education. This study will contribute to existing literature and serve as a reference material for future research in the area.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to the early childhood teachers' perceptions of their level of professional identity, contextual factors affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity, challenges affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity and professional development in early childhood teachers' identity formation. Geographically, the study was restricted to the selected Kindergarten schools in the Mfantseman Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana. The study was limited in term of its coverage and the use of open-ended questions generally did not result in a rigorous qualitative data set. The study covered only public kindergarten schools and teachers and excluded private kindergarten schools and teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality. Findings can thus only be generalized to cover respondents and a study area that share similar characteristics.

23

1.9   Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was that, the researcher did not get the total number of respondents as only 160 teachers out of 182 teachers targeted for the study were available during data collection. Though this did not affect the analysis and findings, the researcher would have wished to have 100% coverage of respondents.

1.10   Operational Definition of Terms

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): It describes the inseparable nature of care and education in the provision of programs for young children.

Kindergarten: Kindergarten is used to represent a segment of early childhood education catering for children between four and six years old (4-6yrs).

Pedagogy: The term pedagogy refers to professional practice and emphasises the active role that early childhood educators' play in achieving educational goals that facilitate children's learning outcomes

Personal Identity: An individual's personal identity is a result of negotiation between the self and their environment. The individual defines his or her own identity according to pre-defined values and ideals defined by social constructs.

Professional Identity: an interaction between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis.

1.11   Organisation of the Study

The study was organized into six (6) chapters. The first chapter dealt with the introduction, which gave an insight into the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the objectives of the study and the research questions,

which served as a guide to the study. It also dealt with the significance of the study, the delimitation, limitations and definition of terms.

Chapter two focused on the review of related literature on the topic. It comprised the definition of concepts, the theoretical framework, the conceptual framework and the empirical framework/review of related literature. Chapter three further comprised the methodology for the study. It highlighted the population, sample and sampling techniques used in the study. It again described the research design as well as the instruments. The analysis of the data that was collected for the study opens chapter four. It   also contained the analysis of the questionnaires in relation to the research questions and the discussion of the findings. The chapter five dealt with the discussion of findings from research questions. The chapter six dealt with summary of the study, findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study, ending with the future suggested areas for research.
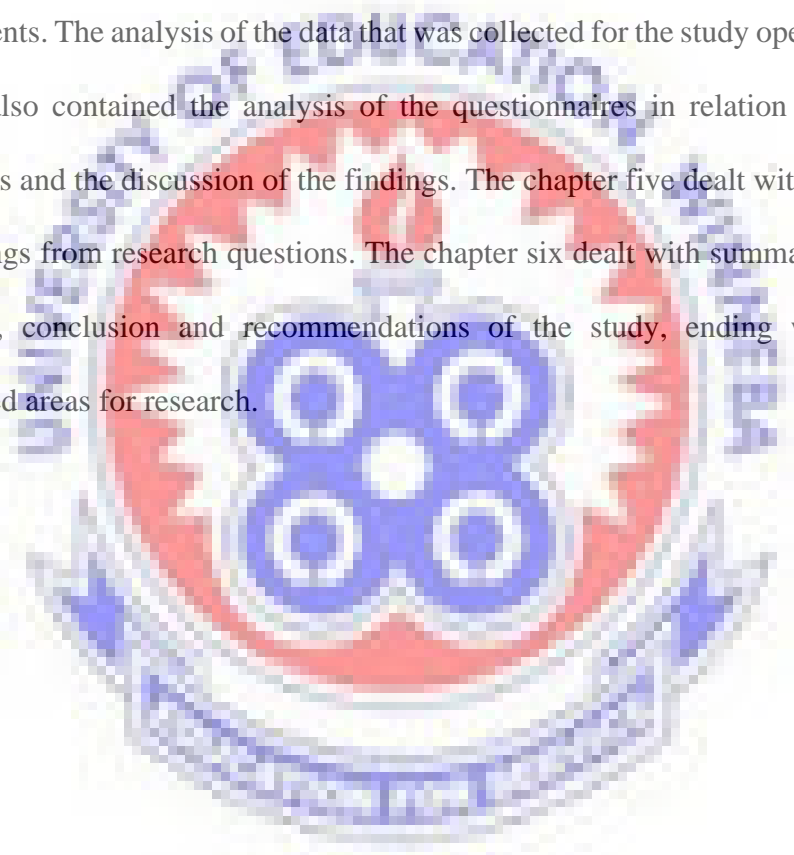
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Overview

This chapter focused on the review of related literature for the study. The literature review was structured under the following sub headings, definition of concepts; theoretical framework, conceptual framework, the empirical framework and the summary of the literature. All the themes guiding the review were derived from the research questions and hypotheses used in the preceding chapter.

The following themes guided the review of literature.

1. Theoretical framework

2. The concept of professional teacher identity

3. Professional teacher identity formation

4. Professional identity indicators

   ➢ Professional knowledge

   ➢ Professional values

   ➢ Professional skills

   ➢ Professional reflective practice

5. Contextual issues

6. Challenges of early childhood teachers' identity development

7. Professional development

8. Conceptual framework

9. Summary of literature review

Concepts

This section of the literature reviews related literature on some of the predominant concepts of the study. These concepts were related to professional teacher identity, the determinants of professional teacher identity, curriculum change, relation and experiences. These concepts explain the perspective of the study.

2.1   Professional Teacher Identity

Professional teacher identity is about how teachers identify themselves as teachers. This study gave preference to the term "professional teacher identity" over "teacher identity" to align itself with such usage in contemporary research on teachers' work identity (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Teaching young children in the Kindergarten has a history of being denounced as less important, and has suffered from lack of recognition as a profession (Woodrow, 2007). Professional teacher identity is emerging as a fully established autonomous theoretical construct from literature (Tateo, 2012) which draws from educational, psychological and sociological paradigms of teaching (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Samuel & Stephens, 2000).

A literature review by Beijaard et al. (2004) revealed that professional teacher identity is conceptualized in many different ways within teaching and teacher education. Some researchers use the concept of teacher identity relating it to teachers' concepts and images of self, while others emphasize the teachers' roles (Beijarrd, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). However, Clarke (2008, p.98) proposes that "teachers' professional identity implies both a cognitive psychological and a sociological perspective". In this regard, people develop their identity in interaction with other people (sociological perspective), but express their professional identity in their perceptions of "who they are" and "who they want to become" (Beijaard, 2006) indicating a cognitive psychological perspective. Professional teacher identity is

27

therefore described as the perceptions that teachers have of themselves as teachers (Cattley, 2007).

The concept of identity proposed by Gee (2000) is an informed understanding of early childhood teachers' professional identity. According to Gee, the term referred to an ongoing, dynamic process situated in an unending continuum. Gee (2000) argued that all people have multiple identities connected not only to the kind of person they are, but also by how society perceives them. From this perspective, professional identity can be defined by how a teacher identifies him or herself in the field of teaching. Beijaard et al. (2004) suggested four features critical for teachers' professional identity: "professional identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation; professional identity implies both person and context; A teachers' professional identity consists of sub-identities that more or less harmonize, and agency is an important element of professional identity meaning that teachers have to be active in the process of professional identity." (p. 122). These four factors aid teachers at all levels of experience.

Professional teacher identity for early childhood teachers is considered as perceptions of themselves as teachers. This conception of professional teacher identity as informed by Tickle (2000) who suggested that perceptions of self as a teacher emerged from conceptions and expectations of society on what a teacher should know and does as well as what teachers themselves find important in their professional work. Therefore, how early childhood teachers perceive themselves as teachers emanating from what they are expected of as teachers, and what they find important in their professional work, constitutes professional teacher identity. In this regard, professional teacher identity is assumed to emerge from the interaction between the person and profession (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). The

28

interactions between the person and professional coincide with what the society expects and what the teachers themselves find important.

2.2 Determinants of Professional Teacher Identity

From the nature of teachers' professional identity, it is clear that teachers' professional identity is not stable but constantly in a state of flux. As such there are certain factors which determine when it should change and what direction it should take. Some of these factors are; curriculum change, relation and experiences.

2.2.1 Curriculum change

Curriculum change is one of the major determinants of teachers' professional identity (Seetal, 2006). Once the curriculum changes in any educational environment, the way in which teachers see themselves also changes. For example, Cross and Teruvinga (2012) posited the notion of the "disappearing" teacher as learners emerged as the initiators and creators of learning. The teacher ceased from being the all-knowing teacher as in the days of apartheid and became a facilitator in the teaching and learning process. The frequent change of the curriculum and the curriculum policy document has led to a constant change in the professional identity of teachers, what they represent in the classroom. This has caused diverse problems in terms of lesson delivery and professional development for teachers (Cross &Teruvinga, 2012).

Furthermore, within the context of curriculum change, teachers more often than not are constantly in a frustrating position of being simultaneously both the subject and the agent of change (Seetal, 2006). They are often obliged to change themselves, their practice and take the necessary steps to meet specific objectives or laid down directions and principles outlined by policymakers who themselves know neither how to meet such objectives or the contexts in which the objectives are supposed to be met. At

29

certain points in time teachers are required to make changes which they believe on the basis of their professional experience, to be unreasonable, inappropriate or impossible and this inevitably changes the way they see themselves and the very fact that they are required or expected to implement these imposed changes means that their professional identity fluctuates and their freedom and autonomy are further curtailed (Seetal, 2006). Teachers are continually required to alter their administrative and organization systems, their pedagogy, curriculum content, the resources and technology they use and their assessment procedures to meet new standards set up by the changing curriculum.

Cross and Teruvinga (2012) postulated that a new curriculum brings with it an almost new professional identity for teachers and an educational discourse with a range of new demands in terms of teaching and learning, with which most teachers are unfamiliar. They add that the rearrangement of school subjects into learning areas and the introduction of the new forms of assessment have hampered the implementation of the curriculum and the way teachers see themselves. Sometimes the merging of knowledge into learning areas means a recreation of identity for teachers and also the collapsing of the traditional boundaries and subject disciplines. This suggests that teachers who are used to teaching single subjects have to change their thinking, approach and what they know so as to meet the demands of the new curriculum.

Seetal (2006) adds that during the apartheid era, in South Africa the educational system had school subjects which enjoyed hallowed status. But in the new educational system teachers are expected to work together in teams, cooperating with one another to promote a collaborative culture of learning amongst pupils, and encourage a problem-solving mentality and a project approach to the curriculum. As such teachers' professional identity is determined by curriculum change since it dictates what direction the teaching and learning process should take. Before the introduction of curriculum in

2005, teachers were loners within the educational system. Once the curriculum change was introduced, not only did what was to be taught change, but also how it was to be taught and the person of the teacher was redefined. Due to this, it was noticed that the training required to support teachers perform their duty was inadequate (Seetal, 2006) and their performance drastically dropped leading to a failure of the curriculum change and consequently the introduction of a new curriculum with a new professional identity for the teacher.

Teachers' professional identity therefore has and always will be determined principally by curriculum change. The dictates of curriculum change in all academic systems, whether partial or complete change, has an impact on what teachers are to do in class and their professional identity. Much has been said on how curriculum change affects teachers' professional identity but there is a gap as to how student teachers experience teachers' professional identity and the changes that accompany it.

2.2.2 Relation

Relation is another major determinant of teachers' professional identity. Stenberg (2010) defines relation as the constant interactions with other teachers, the school governing body, government and the society around them. This is due to the fact that teachers make sense of themselves as a result of their relations to the world around them. Stenberg (2010) continues that the teacher relates to his or her learners or students (the pedagogical relation), his or her content, to students' studying and learning (the didactical relation) and to the teachers' personal work theory. The teachers' relation with his content includes the actual content of teaching or what actually transpires in the classroom. Relating to the content therefore embodies subject matter, instructions and classroom management amongst other things (Kemp, Blake, Shaw & Preston, 2009). To a larger extent it also involves the bigger content of the curriculum, the

31

manifold settings in which teachers work and the school environment (Stenberg, 2010), as such his relation to these multiple settings aids in determining who he or she is or who he or she eventually turns out to be. The didactical relation refers to the teachers' relation to the students' relating to content or how teachers aid and support students' learning. This cannot be done by following a specific set of rules. Instead, each teacher determines his or her approach or theory to use depending on the circumstances around him, because students learn in diverse ways and at various paces. The pedagogical relation shifts the focus from teaching and learning to the communication between the teacher and learners or students and to how the teacher aids and supports the learner or students' personal growth. The teacher also relates to his or her personal working theory which more often than not is derived from the teachers' professional and personal experiences, involving his inner values, understandings and beliefs that ultimately guide and determine his professional identity (Levin, 2008; Kansanen, 2009). Therefore, as MacLeod and Cowieson (2001) postulate, it is most likely impossible to split the twin elements of the professional and the personal aspect of the teacher.

According to Rodgers and Scott (2008) the relations in the classroom between the teachers and the students involve more than just participants in the teaching and learning process and it is a complex process of meaning making for both the teacher and the learners or students. As such what transpires in the classroom is more than an exchange of knowledge but the reproduction of self by both parties and a rub off of this self. The issue of emotions nurtured by the complex relation between teachers, learners, coworkers, mentors, school, community and state is more and more being scrutinized as a critical aspect of teachers' professional identity (Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010). This relation inadvertently impacts how the teacher treats or reacts to the students in his/her class and also the quality of his or her teaching. The relation with the professional

community of teachers also influences their understanding of complex practices, and the understanding of self. Since other teachers also go through this process, it is therefore an exchange of who they are rather than an impartation, making relations a critical determinant of teachers' professional identity.

Therefore, the teachers' relation with his/her learners, content, colleagues and environment at large determines his/her professional identity. The teaching and learning process is a very complicated one in which the teacher has to relate with the curriculum, its designers and the stake holders to support the smooth functioning of the school. The exchange between the teacher and the rest of the contributors or partakers in the teaching and learning process therefore has a great impact in the meaning making process for the teacher about himself. Relation is therefore a significant determinant of teachers' professional identity.

2.2.3 Experiences

Since teacher professional identity is not static but rather involves the creation and recreation of meaning through experiences or stories over time (Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010), experience is another major determinant of teacher professional identity. The teacher uses his experiences to construct and reconstruct his professional identity over time, owing to the fact that meaningful learning only builds upon previous knowledge and knowing who we are is the first step of knowing or determining who we want to be. Timostsuk and Ugaste (2010) consider teachers' professional identity to be a product of experience by seeing it as a process of practical knowledge building characterized by an on-going integration of what is individually and collectively seen or experienced as relevant to the teaching field. Geijsel and Meijers (2005) attempt to model this integration, by treating the formation of teacher professional identity as an on-going learning process, in which each professional experience is re-thought against

33

a backdrop of mutual interactions of emotions and knowledge and where experiences can be both individualistic and one experienced with other colleagues. Thus, teachers' professional identity is determined by experience and this experience is a continuous learning process in which behaviour amongst other things, like the creation of related meaning (Rodgers & Scott, 2008) and social context in a broader perspective, is the focus.

As Feistritzer argues, not only do the educational experiences shape the teachers' professional identity but also political, social and cultural experiences (Feistritzer, 2007). Seetal (2006) maintains that the relation between curriculum change discourses and teachers' professional identity provides insights to curriculum developers and theorists into how teachers' experiences determine or shape teachers' professional identity, teachers' practices and the meaning they make of it. Teachers therefore actively interpret and re-interpret their life experiences, creating their professional identity as teachers. It is therefore clear that teachers' professional identity cannot be complete or fully shaped without the teachers' experiences. With this understanding therefore, for student teachers to fully develop into practicing teachers, their experiences of what it means to be a teacher should be investigated and the results used in teacher education.

2.3   Theoretical Framework

This section comprised the theoretical framework underpinning the study; the formation of identity was discussed followed by the personal construct theory which explains the formation of teacher identity in the face of personal perception, beliefs, values, experiences and environmental and social forces. The Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory was also adopted to explain the critical ecology of the early childhood profession.

2.3.1   The formation of teacher identity

The formation of teacher professional identity is a complex process, entailing not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also the development of new ways to define the self as professional (Sutherland & Markausaite, 2012). Although most rapid changes in the development of a professional identify occur when early childhood teachers graduate and begin their work in schools and classrooms, the development of teachers' professional identity begins with their early childhood education (Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite, 2010). During the early childhood period, a preaching identity arises from images of teachers held by the students, their initial beliefs about what constitutes a good teacher, and their implicit theories of teaching (Sutherland et al., 2010) and continues to evolve. In making the transition from student to a full member of the professional community of teachers, early childhood teachers need to refine their understanding of pedagogical practices and develop their professional knowledge and create and recreate their image of themselves as members of a community (Sutherland et al., 2010).

Timostsuk and Ugaste (2010) who carried out a qualitative study of the professional identity of 45 student teachers in Estonia, emphasized the importance of supporting teacher identity formation during initial training to develop the social

35

aspects of learning to teach. Using the case-study design, Fletcher (2012) also reported that an early childhood teacher education program helped teachers to develop their professional identities by challenging their prior assumptions of what teaching entailed and meant to them. In another study of professional development among student teachers, Anspal, Anspal, Eisenschmidt, & Lofstrom, (2012) found that the practice periods appeared to be highly relevant to identity development. The findings indicated that students focus shifted from the self to teaching methods and skills and pupil learning. In another study of the development of early childhood teachers' professional identity at entry and exit points in a 4-year undergraduate teacher preparation program, Chong, Ling, and Chuan (2011) reported significant changes in their participants' sense of identity.

According to Gee's (2000) understanding of conceptualization and interpretation of teacher identity, teachers, like other human beings, have storied life-trajectories, past experiences, and personal backgrounds that they stand on to interpret and make sense of what happens to them in the classrooms and schools. Such sense of one's being is at the core of the construction of teacher identity I, or the self as a teacher yet what is important about Gee's conceptualization is his explanation that what matters is not one's sense of self but instead the "kind of 'person' one is recognized as 'being' at a given time and place" (p. 99) in a classroom, with children or with beginning teachers. Thus, identity is not related to internal states of teachers but to their performances in society. As a result, identity formation is not "a passive but a dynamic affair, that involves a giving and a withholding which simultaneously alters oneself and one's context, with the result that alternative identities may form" (Bullough, 2005).

Gee (2000) also described four ways of viewing identity, explaining that they are connected with one another in very complex and important ways. They raise

36

questions about how identity works for teachers and people (children and adults) in different contexts. In the first view, the nature perspective (N-Identities), people are who and what they are by nature (genes), which they do not control; identity unfolds outside control by them or society. This is similar to Plato's argument that people are born with different qualities fixed by nature. So it is possible that most early childhood teachers, their natural love and care for children will shape their identity as teachers.

In Gee's (2000) second perspective, the institutional perspective (I-Identities), identity connects to the life of individuals and what they do in it and the way in which they position themselves. It is not something that people have achieved or were given by nature; it is about who people are in relation to the position they occupy in society. It is thus worthy to note that the various early childhood settings and environment or milieu in which teachers operate and how they interact with the environment will contribute to shaping their identity. The third perspective on identity is the discursive perspective (or D-Identities), which concerns how others view and see the individual; it entails the idea of an individual trait or a matter of one's individuality and is not merely something that someone is born with or creates and upholds (Gee, 2000). Discursive identity requires an individual trait that one cannot achieve but is determined by the power related to the discourse or dialogue of others. People "are what [they] are primarily because of individual accomplishments as they are interactionally recognized by others" (Gee, 2000, p. 101). The kind of perceptions or views people have about early childhood education and early childhood teachers may affect teacher's perception and identity created.

Finally, the fourth perspective on identity is affinity identity (A-Identities), in which people "are what [they] are because of the experiences [they] have had within certain sorts of 'affinity groups'" (Gee, 2000, p. 101). The term identity has taken on

37

so many different meanings in the literature, yet a person cannot have an identity of any kind without an interpretive system to support it (Taylor, 1989). This system could comprise every individual's views of nature or sociocultural powers, norms, rules, and institutions that influence who they are being and becoming; thus, identity can be understood differently on different occasions, depending on different interpretive systems.

2.3.2   Personal construct theory

One of the major theoretical foundations underlying this study is George Kelly's (1963) Personal Construct Theory. It presents a systematic and detailed description of the ways individuals create their reality based on their interconnected construct systems. The basic theory is summed up as one fundamental postulate that is further elaborated by means of eleven corollaries. In Kelly's view of the universe, one of the related concepts is composed of three important propositions: (i) the universe is real; (ii) everything is interlocked in it; and (iii) it is measured along the dimension of time. The above propositions can be helpful in exploring and understanding smaller units of the universe, such as "individual universes" that also reveal these traits. Concepts can be transferable and, in this sense, a "universe" can refer to an individual's world and in this case the early childhood teacher's world that is real, interconnected, measured in time and it is created based on one's lived experiences. By the same token, an individual's beliefs, perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations of one's lived experiences are interlocked. In other words, everything is connected to everything exerting a mutual effect on one another. The analogy is also pertinent to the time factor. An individual's life can make (more) sense if it is put in a bigger perspective of time (i.e., one's life span) so that we can gain a holistic view of it. Hence, sequencing one's life events chronologically allows us to seek relationships and connections among them

and in turn, it facilitates reflection and interpretation. In this light, time is an important factor when we talk about the various ways of re-constructing one's life and one's identity.

The notion of "man-the-scientist" is another essential concept relevant to the study, by which Kelly (1955, 1963) referred to all of mankind in an abstract sense, rather than only to a particular group of men who have become scientists in a concrete sense. This notion highlights the "scientist-like" characteristics of individuals, e.g. inquisitiveness, curiosity, open- mindedness, search for the truth and self-growth rather than the biological features of being human. The theory also proposes that individuals are actively engaged in making sense of and extending their experience. Kelly (1963) states that "man creates his own ways of seeing the world in which he lives; the world does not create them for him. However, man can enslave himself with his own ideas and then win his freedom again by reconstructing his life" (pp. 12, 21). Put differently, what an individual perceives may not exist, but his perception does, and for an individual his perception is real. He adds that people's fictitious perception will often turn out to be a grossly distorted construction of something which actually does exist (Kelly, 1963).

The term "personal construct" needs to be defined prior to presenting the theory and its corollaries in detail. In Kelly's (1955, 1963) theory the concept of "personal construct" refers to a set of mental models or mental representations that each individual has made about their world. The notion is described in the following way:

> Man looks at the world through transparent patterns or templates which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed. This fit is not always very good. Yet without such patterns the world appears to be such an undifferentiated homogeneity that man is unable to make any sense out of it. Even a poor fit is more helpful to him than nothing at all. (Kelly, 1963, p, 9).

The term "construct" is particularly well-chosen because it carries two meanings of equal importance. One meaning is retrospective: a construct represents how the person classifies (i.e., has constructed) his or her experience. The other meaning is forward-looking: a construct represents the person's predisposition to perceive (or construe) in the future. Thus, "man as a scientist" ultimately creates his own constructs through which he views the world of events and seeks to predict and control the course of events in his world. It follows then that the constructs are intended to help him in his efforts to predict things.

The fundamental postulate is the following: "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events" (Kelly, 1963, p. 46). To make sense of the above postulate, we can dissect the terms used in it following Kelly's own method to interpret each word in a statement. It is clear that the postulate refers to an individual and it deals with processes rather than a static substance. These processes are conceptualized in a psychological manner. The term "channelized" refers to a person's processes that occur through a network of psychological pathways, which is flexible and often alterable. The term "ways" refers to a person's processes that can both facilitate but also restrict a person's range of actions. The emphasis is on how an individual person chooses to operate. Each person may have a different way of operating in order to realize his or her objectives. This network of psychological pathways, called "constructs", can also influence the way an individual anticipates future events.

Kelly explained that different constructs may lead to incompatible predictions. This happens when an individual experience a personal conflict that is painful to face. Kelly claims that each individual finds different ways to transcend contradictions. People are not only different in how they construe events; they are also different in how

40

they organize their constructions of events. In other words, each person deals differently with solving contradicting constructs. Sometimes, we may need to revamp our construct system and we need to make a decision what to do, e.g., to replace some aspects of the old system or preserve the integrity of the old system altogether. The theory emphasizes the importance of self-consistency. Therefore, some people may decide to preserve the old system altogether when they anticipate events this happens when they resist changes. Personal growth happens when they are able to replace some conflicting and dysfunctional aspects of their construct system and can thereby rise above the contradiction.

In summary, Kelly's (1955, 1963) Personal Construct Theory maintains that our construct systems make our world more predictable since they reflect our constant efforts to make sense of the world. Construct systems can grow and change; in other words, they are not static but they are constantly confirmed or challenged in every moment we are conscious. Consequently, construct systems influence our expectations and perceptions. Kelly (1955) further explained that some constructs, or some aspects of our construct system, are more important than others. This means that some constructs are easy to change while others are more resistant to change. A person's construct system represents the truth as they understand and experience it, therefore construct systems are idiosyncratic. According to Kelly (1955), the extent to which one person can understand another or oneself is an indicator of that person's empathy. In my view, the extent of our understanding of the early childhood teacher depends on our ability to infer empathically how they interpret and make sense of their experiences. The early childhood teacher perception of him/herself or how other people view him or her will best be understood on the premise of putting oneself in their place. This theory has shaped the conceptual understandings and interpretations about the workings of

41

construct systems and their influence on the early childhood teacher's perceptions and interpretations that are fundamental pillars to the formation of teacher identity.

2.3.3   Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

The present study draws on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1981), and a critical ecology of the early childhood profession as extended by Miller, Dalli and Urban (2012). Although the ecological systems theory founded by Bronfenbrenner was initially created as a perspective on child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1981), it has been used in other fields as it is effective to explain the complexity of individual's experiences in society. The recently extended perspective by Miller et al. (2012) is used in this study considering that it provides a better understanding of environmental factors in society and their influence on the individuals (early childhood teachers). This perspective contemplates early childhood teachers' contexts and complex realities and propose Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to better understand the concept of professionalism in the early years.

The ecological model presents five interrelated systems (micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono) that have been adapted to understand how early years' practitioners experience the complex realities of the profession, and how such realities are related to the wider social, political, economic and cultural contexts. Particularly for this study, these five are understood for early childhood teachers as follows: microsystem to refer to the settings in which the early childhood teachers exist (e.g. workplace, neighborhood) and is active in interactions with other social agents (e.g. children, co-workers, parents); mesosystem to represent the interactions between microsystems or with early childhood teacher (e.g. relationship of family experiences to workplace experiences); exosystem involving relationships between a setting in which early childhood teachers are not active participants and their immediate context (e.g.

42

educational authorities, municipalities); macrosystem which includes the general societal culture in which early childhood teachers are (e.g. values, beliefs, socioeconomic status, national laws and rules); and chronosystem that refers to changes of the ecological system over time since early childhood teachers and the environment change over time and these changes are important to comprehend how the different system influence the individual.

It is mainly significant for this study as the influence of the macrosystem level where policies and societal ideologies are founded. Such level is associated to the research questions that aim to reflect firstly on ideologies of childhood, children and learning, beliefs that shape the goals of early childhood and early childhood teachers' practices. It is at the macrosystem level where the expectations that different stakeholders have for early childhood children and for early childhood teachers operate; and it is at the microsystem level that becomes visible how early childhood teachers respond to such expectations. As Sheridan et al. (2011) argue, early childhood teachers deal with changing goals and expectations that make them develop ideas about how they reason and talk about early childhood pedagogy as well as how they translate such goals into practice, this thinking is the focus of the last research question. Besides, it is important to consider the chronosystem level that relates to the changing expectations over time, changes that are significant to understand how this system affects early childhood teachers' identity.

As argued at the beginning, early childhood teachers can be seen as more than part of social structures, they can be seen as active agents, able to transform their profession. As Garbarino (2009) suggests, Bronfenbrenner's model argues for an active role of individuals in creating and recreating their environment. Based on interactionist perspectives, Sheridan et al. (2011) also argue that through interaction, early childhood

43

teachers and the environment influence and are influenced by one another. Thus early childhood teachers' initiative and ability can influence their specific environment and not only the organizational, societal and global.

The notion of agency appears as crucial in having a comprehensive understanding of professional identity. It has been argued that having a sense of agency comes as a consequence of teachers being aware of their identity within their context (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Being active agents empowers teachers to critic and transform their realities. Teachers can determine the changing aspects of their context and shape their individual activities (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Such agency is connected to the ways in which teachers interact with their contexts and are influenced by them (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Miller et al., (2012) researchers describe the idea of "a critical ecology" of the profession, which aims for early childhood teachers to be alert of their environment, their context and their experiences, so that they can, not only own their reality, but can also transform it by being critical and self-reflective. Critical early childhood teachers imply being alert to differences in contexts (history; policies; values; qualifications), experiences (individual/collective) and perspectives about what it means to be/act professionally, and to be part of a profession. Researchers invite early childhood teachers to be critical because the ecology in which one acts is decisive to the type of professionalism that is possible.

Moreover, within the concept of "a critical ecology", members of the profession must be reflective, self- critical, and open to the local context. Professionals in this sense will not only own their reality but will transform it through action-reflection. Sheridan et al. (2011) have agreed that early childhood teaching is a profession in change, part of a complex ecological system with global dimensions, but teachers are not passive

44

recipients but rather agents of change. It is true that the early years' profession is uncertain, but this is an opportunity for early years' practitioners to define themselves.

2.4   Empirical Framework

This section of the literature review focused on the review of related empirical literature to the four objectives stated to be achieved by the study, the review was structured around the following sub-headings; nature of early childhood teachers' professional identity; contextual factors influence early childhood teachers' professional identity; challenges influencing early childhood teachers' professional identity and the role of professional development in early childhood teachers' identity formation.

2.5   The Concept of Teachers' Professional Identity

The concept of "teacher identity" has recently garnered the attention of many teacher educators and researchers in education discourses (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001; Liu & Xu, 2011; Miller Marsh, 2002 a, 2000b; Moore, Edwards, Halpin, & George, 2002; Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Zembylas, 2005). Teacher identity has been addressed and examined in light of social and cultural changes (e.g., globalization, post structuralism, and deconstruction). Teacher identity has been examined primarily by poststructuralists (Cornell, 2000; Nicholson & Seidman, 1995; Thomas, 2012) who have played a major part in the deconstruction of some assumptions related to the construction of teacher identity.

According to poststructuralists teacher identity is not a fixed set of attributes; it is not a certain something. Instead, it is contingent (changeable and conditional), meaning that somehow it can be reformed and open for reconstruction (Liu & Xu, 2011; Pavlenko, 2003; Watson, 2006). From the poststructuralists' point of view, this

45

dynamic, ongoing process of reconstructing teacher identity and the self is all about emotions, formed and controlled by "social conventions, community scrutiny, legal norms, familial obligations, and religious injunctions" (Rose, 1998, p. 1). Thus, examination of teacher identity should occur in light of the role of emotions, power, agency, and resistance in teaching, all of which influence the construction of a teachers' identity.

With reference to Foucault's work, Zembylas (2005) argued that for teacher educators to have a deep understanding of teacher identity, they must understand it in terms of the social and historical contexts in which meaning intersects with experiences, where teachers are subjects of and subjected to these experiences. In a sense, an understanding of the constitution of a teacher as a self and her or his experiences should focus on the discourse of experiences, not the experiences themselves. In other words, experiences do not constitute the self. Identities are influenced by and subjected to the social and historical contexts of practices and discourses in which these discourses do not simply reflect or describe reality, knowledge, experience, self, social relations, social institutions, and practices; instead, they play an integral role in constituting (and being constituted by) them. In and through these discourses [people] ascribe to [their] bodily feelings, emotions, intentions, and all the other psychological attributes that have for so long been attributed to a unified self. In this sense, subjects of their emotions; emotions do not just happen to them (Zembylas, 2005, p. 938).

This means teacher self-identity, which Foucault referred to as subjectivity, is continually reconstructed, depending on the meaning conveyed and given to experiences. Thus, teacher identity is open to new forms of meanings constantly given to the self. Another way of putting it with reference to Foucault's work is that self-identity is not unified but "multiple, contradictory, contextual, and regulated by social

norms. Subjectivity is produced, negotiated, and reshaped through discursive practices. As such, the self is continuously constituted, never completed, never fully coherent, never completely centered securely in experience" (Zembylas, 2005, p. 938). Defining identity is a challenging task. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) wrote:

> A major hurdle to gaining an understanding of identity is resolving a definition of it, as a variety of issues surface in any attempt to reach a definition. One must struggle to comprehend the close connection between identity and the self, the role of emotion in shaping identity, the power of stories and discourse in understanding identity, the role of reflection in shaping identity, the link between identity and agency, the contextual factors that promote or hinder the construction of identity, and ultimately the responsibility of teacher education programs to create opportunities for the exploration of new and developing teacher identities (p. 176).

Thus, research on teacher identity is complex. According to Ritchie (2009) "what makes this research even more complex is the use of diverse theoretical perspectives and subconstructs of identity across studies" (p. 596). The concept of identity has been defined in various ways in the literature on teaching and teacher education. Professional identity has been related to teachers' images of self in some studies, and the emphasis was placed on teachers' role identity in other studies (Beijaard et al., 2004). Images of self "strongly determine the way teachers teach, the way they develop as teachers, and their attitudes toward educational changes" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108); furthermore, "teacher role identity includes teacher beliefs, values, and emotions about many aspects of teaching and being a teacher" (Farrell, 2011, p. 55).

Professional identity development was perceived as a static entity in early studies (Hong, 2010). In recent research, however, it has been viewed as an ongoing process of change influenced by both personal and social factors and consisting of multiple identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Meijer, 2011; Watson, 2006). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) observed that identity is "both product (a result of influences on the teacher) and process (a form of ongoing

47

interaction within teacher development)" (p. 177). Been (2012) added that identity is multifaceted and socially and culturally constructed by lived experiences throughout teachers' lives. Volkmann and Anderson (1998) asserted that "professional identity is constituted by every aspect of teaching" (p. 307). It is also connected to teachers' histories, the expectations of the school, their content knowledge, and their own vision of what it means to be a teacher.

Teachers' sense of identity may be influenced by historical, sociological, psychological, and cultural factors (Chong & Low, 2009). In addition, professional identity entails the influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people as well as what teachers perceive as important in their professional work and lives (Beijaard et al., 2004). In their study of the identity of teachers, Beijaard et al. (2004) highlighted four common characteristics of professional identity: (a) it is not a fixed entity but an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences; (b) it implies both person and context (i.e., the interaction between the person and the context is important in forming a person's identity); (c) it consists of a set of subidentities that later form a somewhat harmonious whole; and (d) agency is an important element of professional identity (i.e., teachers have to be active in the process of professional development).

Orr and Simmons (2010) concluded that "the identity of the teacher implies more than taking classes; it entails status and related salary" (p. 85). Because teachers do not live in vacuum but instead communicate with others and perform actions and realize their value within a certain social environment, their professional identities are determined by the objective world (Qu, 2008). Some researchers of teacher identity claim that teachers' professional identity cannot be separated from their social identities. In this line of research, "it is argued that conflicts arising from gender or racial inequality and from cultural stereotypes constitute the realities of teachers' lives

48

both inside and outside the classroom and will, in turn, greatly influence how they perceive themselves as professionals" (Liu & Xu, 2011, p. 508). Other studies focus on teachers' experience with educational reform. The findings of these studies indicate that teachers need to reconstruct their identity to cope with new challenges in the workplace and that the process is very complex (Liu & Xu, 2011, p. 508).

Lasky (2005) argued that the manner in which teacher identity impacts teachers' sense of professional roles and understanding of reform mandates is not clear, especially when these policies accompany new curriculum tools and expectations for teaching. At the same time, she suggested that political, social, and economical forces affect the formation of teacher identity. "Teacher professional identity is how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others. It is a construct of professional self that evolves over career stages and can be shaped by school, reform, and political contexts" (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). Teacher professional identity is an aspect of teacher capacity that refers to "what an individual brings with him or her to the school setting and instruction" (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). It includes teachers' beliefs, identity, past experiences, emotional well- being, personal commitment, and view of learning, and substantive knowledge about reform ideas.

In the same manner, Chappell (2001) argued that when teachers are asked to acquire new knowledge and skills to perform their professional practices in alignment with the new demands of current social political norms, they actually construct new professional identities. In other words, because teachers have become the focus of policy discourses that have to do with quality and accountability in education, they are required to occupy themselves with new knowledge and new techniques to meet the new standards of quality education and teaching that is assumed important. As a result, these political discourses have changed, and teachers have been forced to change their

understanding of their professional roles and practices. Teachers have been asked to work in new ways and to undertake new professional roles; thus, as teachers are asked to do new things, to have new understandings of their roles, and to change their professional practices, they become new and different teachers (Chappell, 2001; Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2005). This marks a change in teachers' identities.

Various scholars have also argued that an understanding of teacher professional identity must correspond with an understanding of the concepts of self and identity. For Erickson (as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004) identity is something one develops through his or her life; whereas for Mead (as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004) the concept of identity should be understood in relationship to the self, the self that develops only in a social setting where individuals learn about themselves and their practices. According to Beijaard et al. (2004), the self is a representation of individuals thinking, attitudes, and beliefs about themselves; yet although many meanings exist for the concept of the self in the literature, they all have a common shared idea that identity is not a fixed attribute of a person, but a relational phenomenon. Identity development occurs in an intersubjective field and can be best characterized as an ongoing process, a process of interpreting oneself as a certain kind of person and being recognized as such in a given context. (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108). In this sense, self-identity is about how people identify themselves in different situations and at different times.

Researchers have also suggested that the concept of professional identity is used in many ways to refer to different entities in teaching and teacher education. In some studies, researchers use professional identity in relation to teachers' images and concepts of themselves (e.g., Knowles as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004; Nias as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004). Such images of the self-influence and determine the way teachers develop as teachers and their reactions to educational changes; however, in other

50

studies, professional identity is understood in light of teachers' roles (e.g., Goodson & Cole, 1994; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Nevertheless, concepts such as reflection and or self-understanding and self-evaluation are all very important for the development and construction of professional identity (e.g., Cooper & Olson, 1996; Kerby, 1991). In addition, professional identity refers not only to concepts or images about individuals as teachers in light of how the society and others see them as teachers and our roles.

Instead, the term professional identity also refers to what teachers themselves find and believe to be important in their professional work and lives based on their practical and personal experiences and backgrounds (Tickle, 2000). According to Adams, Hean, Sturgis, and Clark (2006), professional identity is a form of social identity that develops over time at the workplace and through group interactions where a teacher differentiates and compares his or her self to that of others. These authors have suggested that professional identity involves gaining insight into professional practices and development of talents and mastery of skills in group interactions. They also wrote that professional identity is gained in relation to the professional role undertaken by the individual; therefore, professional identity is a matter of the subjective self-conceptualization in association with one's role. Most importantly, the authors expressed the need for a deeper understanding of professional identity and its influences on teachers.

Some have asserted that conceptions of identity are also related to notions of gender, class, race, and commitment to equality and sameness (Butler, 1993; Hooks, 1990; Pateman as cited in Chappell, 2001); others have argued that identity is subject to ongoing cultural and historical reformation (Hall & du Gay as cited in Chappell, 2001). However, the meaning that one develops to understand things is what constitutes the formation of identity, which is a process of self-construction. In this process, one

51

interprets and understands particular events, incidents, and social situations in relation to the self; therefore, in this context an exploration and study of the construction of teachers' identities necessitates a look at both the social historical and contemporary discourses that shape and create teachers' identities and the kinds of teachers they become.

Bullough (2005) argued that teacher identity and character have been always a concern in teacher education. He explained that as students come to teacher education programs expecting worthwhile knowledge and instruction, they also expect to be treated and seen as whole persons, individuals who know who and what they are, what they need, know, and what they stand for. According to Bullough this is also true for teacher educators. When they teach, they tend to teach according to their beliefs, values, understandings, and feelings about what they teach.

Palmer (1998) stated: Teaching like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. (p. 8). In a sense, Bullough (2005) argued that teachers teach what they stand for and think is good. Thus, teacher identity is defined "by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose" (Taylor, 1989, p. 27).

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) argued that teachers' professional identities are made from those teachers' personal lives and experiences and that teachers' identities are "an amalgam of children, curriculum, beliefs, values, and personal identities; but so too are these identities made up of parents, community, board of education,

52

administration, and administrators" (p. 171). What is significant about this way of thinking about teacher identity is that it reshapes the professional story of the teacher, "a story that leads everywhere to imagined, often actual, splits between teacher aims, wants, and working conditions and the aims, wants, and working conditions of others on the landscape of teaching" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 172).

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) explained that teachers' stories allow understanding of how teachers make sense of the changing world around them, how they feel when what they do no longer makes sense for them, and how they try to adjust to the school system where they work while trying to define who they are, what they do, and how to retain their professional identity. They suggested that teachers' identities should be studied against the backdrop of professional knowledge or in the context of the educational landscape where they work. The current researcher has followed their suggestion.

The notion of teacher identity in teacher education has been of growing interest to many teacher educators and researchers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Bullough, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Korthagen, 2004). Even though determining what constitutes good teaching and good teachers may be difficult, teacher identity entails exploring, understanding, and finding one's own style in teaching. Reflections about what makes good teaching are very important to teacher professional development and identity formation; therefore, the current study aimed at exploring issues related to the construction of teacher identity (i.e., major life events, critical incidents, and experiences) and emphasizing the importance of studying teacher identity as a way of understanding a teachers' beliefs about teaching and professional practices. Understanding and studying teachers' professional identities are difficult because the way teachers think of themselves determines the way they do things and

53

what they do. Because professional identity and professional performance and development are related (Watson, 2006, p. 510), researchers like Connelly and Clandinin (1999) argued that teachers must continually strive to understand themselves and who they are as well as what they are doing and can do in different situations instead of thinking about what they know in specific situations.

In teacher education programs, professional identity is crucial for the preparation of student teachers. It provides teacher educators and school mentors with a framework for understanding and supporting students and their work (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Chiefly, a student teachers' life history and biography are a major part of the formation of the professional identity, which "is of vital concern to teacher education; it is the basis for meaning making and decision making. Teacher education must begin, then, by exploring the teaching self" (Bullough, 1997, p. 21). Available literature also suggests that knowledge of the teacher as self provides a good understanding of professional identity, teaching practices, and feelings about teaching. In other words, the teacher as self and teachers' attitudes and beliefs are all related and part of professional identity.

Teacher identity is, then, the way one understands himself or herself in relation to others. It is a teachers' framework of actions and practices. Teacher identity poses a persistent challenge to one's sense of self. Self-knowledge is thus central to being and becoming a teacher and teacher educator and the issue is much greater than the challenges associated with induction, of assuming a teachers' or teacher educator's professional identity, but also of determining how one will be for and with others. (Bullough, 2005, p. 144). Because issues like teacher identity have moral aspects, a careful attention and investigation of how teachers are made, understand, and identify themselves within their social contexts and in relation to others is warranted. For these

54

reasons studying teacher identity and identity formation are significant; doing so is the ultimate goal of this study.

2.6 Indicators of Professional Teacher Identity

2.6.1 Professional knowledge and teacher identity

Teaching any subject is a highly complex cognitive activity in which the teacher must apply knowledge from multiple domains (Resnick, 1987; Leinhardt& Greeno, 1986; Wilson, Shulman, & Richert, 1987). According to Clandinin & Connelly (1995) the body of literature on 'professional knowledge' is large and diverse with a range of strands that are not bound together or integrated in any particular way. The strand most relevant to this work is the professional knowledge base of teachers (Shulman & Sykes 1986). According to Connell (1985) 'knowledge of how to teach is intricate and intuitive, therefore difficult to explain or defend' this is because our knowledge of our practice is silent, it is often misunderstood - despite the fact that it is fundamental to quality classroom teaching and learning. Craft and Paige-Smith (2011) pointed out that early years professionals are increasingly expected to be involved with the body of knowledge about their practice and that this 'involves a level of theoretical understanding about children's learning and participation in early years settings, and being able to reflect on how the literature, policy, and theory relate to practice'

Bigge and Shermis (1999) posit that part of a teacher's professional knowledge is developed by teachers adopting learning theories and achieving 'an eclectic compromise formed by selecting aspects of opposing theories and taking position somewhere among them so as to form a mosaic pattern' Early childhood educators' instructional knowledge includes curriculum, content, and pedagogical knowledge. Curriculum knowledge directs an educator to utilize appropriate contents and structure of teaching young children. In addition to a subject to be taught, content knowledge

55

contains the competence of knowing how to teach young children. Pedagogical knowledge contains the choices made in the teaching situation as well as practical action. According to Shulman, pedagogical thought and action go through the following stages: a) understanding / perception; b) modification / transformation; c) teaching; d) evaluation; e) feedback; f) reflection. For a teacher to cope with the above, "professional studies" are required, that is: a) pedagogical content knowledge and b) curriculum studies (Shulman 1987).Turner-Bisset (2001) suggests a course that would instill the necessary qualifications and focus on the following fields ("substantive knowledge", "syntactic knowledge", beliefs about the subject, knowledge of curriculum, knowledge of contexts, knowledge of self, didactic training, knowledge of learners, knowledge of objectives and learning outcomes, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical-didactic amalgam and learning subject. This body of knowledge, that can guarantee a teacher's expertise, is determined by existing conditions and contexts, as well as the personal experiences, beliefs and needs of each teacher. A teacher's knowledge in other subject areas enriches his or her professional competence. There are numerous important problems, phenomena and concepts that defy understanding or resolution when approached from single disciplines, climate change and world poverty are some few examples (Goldring, 2009).

2.6.2 Professional values and teacher identity

Literature about the principles and values promoted by the teaching profession has expanded the knowledge available for learning to teach. Professional organisations have drawn on research and conceptual writing on teacher identity, moral literacy and teacher ethics to establish codes, vision statements, principles, standards and curricula that has communicated values for teachers to uphold. These values have been found to have come under the broad categories of service, social justice, perspective taking,

56

curiosity, humility, perseverance, sensitivity, empathy, adaptation, innovation, inquiry, tolerance of uncertainty, respect and integrity, and the more recent values of reciprocity and collaboration within communities of practice (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Bishop, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Husu & Tirri, 2007; Leadbeater, 2011; Leonard, 2007; Loughran & Russell, 2007; Loughran, 2006; Malm, 2009; Sachs, 2012;) Campbell (2003) concurred that emerging and experienced teachers' agency remained rooted in their personal principles, values and approaches to life rather than an unconscious intention to enact ethical behaviour outlined explicitly in school mission statements, codes and standards. Halstead and Xiao (2010) on the impact of the hidden curriculum on values education, underlines the students' constant learning of values that may not be those that are explicitly taught.

2.6.3 Professional skills and teacher identity

Every profession requires specific skills to operate and function and it is based on these skills that a professional is known. Teaching skill is the basic skill needed for teacher as an educator. Teaching skills are whatever strategies teachers use to enable children to learn (Wragg, 2005). Kyriacou (2007) define teaching skill as strategies that educator used which enable students to learn and get something worthwhile and which are acknowledged by those competent to judge as being skill. Jasim (2009) sees teaching skill as a set of related teaching behaviors which is specified types of classroom interaction situations tend to facilitate the achievement of specified types of educational objectives. Based on that definition, it can be concluded that teaching skill as a strategy used by teacher to support children's learning in order to develop children's potential.

Professional skills refer to teachers' demonstration of expert instructional practices and behaviour that are consistent with acceptable professional standards. As

Lawal puts it teachers' professional skills as a domain of their identity is made up of the skills of instructional planning, skills of instructional implementation and skills of assessment (Lawal, 2011). Teaching skill is a combination of cognitive aspect, social skills, art and talent that can be improved through experiences. The early childhood teacher teaching skills can be divided into several domains or content of pedagogical knowledge, such as the knowledge of teaching and learning, which are also part of professional foundations (e.g. philosophical, historical, and psychological foundations); relationships with the home, school, and community; development and implementation of the curriculum that includes health, nutrition, and safety; assessment methods; and professional ethics (McCarthy, 1990). The other pedagogical content of knowledge or how teachers can comprehend children's subject matter and transfer it into their learning activity are the necessary component within the knowledge base that embraces the 'wisdom of practice'(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, (1999) A pedagogically skillful teacher has exquisite interaction skills. He/She understands of what makes learning easy or difficult and can choose developmentally appropriate practices flexibly during a teaching situation (Guskey, 1986; Saracho & Spodekin, 2003). Generally, Rho, Park and Kwon (2014) divided the teacher skills as education planning and organization skill, performance of teaching and learning strategy, communication, interaction, facilitation of motivation, facilitation of learning, feedback offering, consultation, creating the learning environment, managing career, presentation, application of technology.

2.6.4   Professional reflective practice and teacher identity

The purpose of teachers' reflection is to identify problems during the process of teaching which are important for teachers to gauge students' understanding of lessons and how teaching might relate to that understanding (Yidana & Lawal 2015). Reflective

practice is a process that facilitates teaching, learning and understanding, and it plays a central role in teachers' professional development. Ghaye (2000) suggests that reflective practice can potentially help practitioners make sense in the doubt in their workplaces and offer them 'courage to work competently and ethically at the edge of order and chaos'. Reflective practices are interactive, ethical, value-driven, open-ended processes where policy and practice are being explored and critically and actively re-interpreted from multiple perspectives. Reflection is an evolving process oscillating between theory and practice, involving emotions and collaborative interactions between a range of professionals each operating in their own unique contexts.

Moss (2007) cautioned in contradiction of a narrow definition of reflective practice. He suggested that early childhood settings may be seen primarily as places for 'technical practice: places where society can use powerful human technologies to children to produce pre-determined outcomes' and that institutions should instead be seen as a place of 'democratic political practice. Developing an identity as a reflective practitioner involves aspiring to be more than a 'worker as technician' (Moss 2008). This implies that early childhood teachers should aspire to become what Moss describes as 'democratic and reflective' professionals, capable of thinking critically and 'co-constructing meaning, identity, and values' (2008 p.125). The identity of a reflective professional is related to a desire to make meanings of their experiences.

Professional teachers ideally are expected to reflect on all the dimensions of their cognitive (knowledge), affective (values) and psychomotor aspects of their professional practices (Lawal, 2011). In specific terms, professional teachers as in the case of early childhood teachers are expected to periodically reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the content knowledge of the themes they teach (Yidana & Lawal 2015).Teachers need to see how ideas connect across fields and to everyday life.

This kind of understanding provides a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge that enables teachers to make ideas accessible to others (Shulman, 1987). This includes reviewing, reconstructing, reenacting and critically analyzing one's own teaching abilities and then grouping these reflected explanations into evidence of changes that need to be made to become a better teacher. Walkington (2005) posits that the formation of teacher identity is assisted by the process of 'reflection on action'. Reflective teaching demands that teachers are subject - conscious as well as standard - conscious because it promotes the individual as responsible for identifying subject content deficiencies and, through the act of reflection and being autonomous, take steps to address such deficiencies (Minott, 2006). Teachers who reflect on their strengths and weaknesses become aware of and control their teaching by actively assessing what they already know, what they need to know and how to bridge that gap (Yidana & Lawal 2015).

Adams, Nestle, &Wolf, (2006) concluded that reflection, or the ability to step back from an experience and consider it critically, in an analytical, non-subjective manner, is an essential aspect of problem solving and decision making, and also of effective communication with clients and colleagues. The insight to teachers' reflection could suggest the need to reexamine the choice of words, actions, phrases and expressions used in class, assessment methods, appropriate activities and learning materials use in class, and achievement of learners. The ability of a teacher to critically reflect on these aspects will enable him/her to know how best to use them appropriately.

2.7 Contextual Factors Affecting Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity

Recent research has indicated that contextual factors may influence the shaping of teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Smagorinsky, Moore, Cook, Jackson

60

& Fry, 2004). According to Kelchtermans (2009), a teachers' professional identity is perceived and shaped by interaction between person and context. Contextual factors include the school environment, the nature of the learner population, the impact of colleagues and of school administrators, and teachers' own experiences as learners in schools; furthermore, "the emotion brought to the context and that generated by the context will affect this identity" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). It is important to emphasize the contextual factors that are influencing the formation of teachers' professional identity. Being aware of the context and the effects it has in the dynamic process of shaping one's identity seems crucial for teachers to develop their potential identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Even though teachers usually have no control over these factors, they may be able to negotiate their identities when being exposed to these contexts as far as they can recognize the possible situations they can encounter as teachers and the potential identities they can develop.

Factors such as the working environment, the influence of colleagues and impact of school administrators can all be influential in shaping teachers' identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Based on the Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS) data, it is estimated that between 5,350 and 29,230 new classrooms will be required by Ghana from 2012 to 2017. The short fall of infrastructure in the Kindergarten sector influence in shaping teachers' identity. Most of these early childhood center operate under sheds, trees and in old church buildings. In the urban centers most proprietors of pre-school use their garages as classrooms; a very bad practice. Some centers are overcrowded and lack many facilities such as play grounds, kitchen and toilet. Those who have kitchen facilities do not have qualified people to cook meals for children (Education International, 2010). Furthermore, with changes in the educational system, the recent emphasis on accountability, standards and

61

assessment, among other shifts in policies, surrounding the profession, teachers find themselves having to reconstruct their identities in stressing situations (Whitty, 2008).

As mentioned before, in Sweden there have been some changes in the educational system, such as the New Education Act, the introduction of the National Curriculum for early childhood, the reform in the teachers' education program and requiring professional certification to all teachers. Together with these reforms, the relatively high level of immigration and other changes in Swedish society set shifting expectations on early childhood teachers.

Jónsdóttir (2012) suggests that, in order to meet various, and even opposing demands, teachers may create multiple identities that could cause them conflict. Therefore, as it is pertinent to know the contextual factors, it is also important to be conscious of one's own experiences and emotions brought to the context and the generated by the context that may affect the formation of one's identity (Flores & Day, 2006). Researchers suggest that this has great implications for professional development and teacher education as it can provide students and teachers opportunities to reflect on the internal and external factors shaping their identity and the tensions that may arise between them.

Much research has shown that teachers' personal histories and professional experiences, including workplace contextual factors, have an effect on the formation of their professional identities. Flores and Day (2006) noted that teachers who work in collaborative school cultures develop and express positive attitudes towards teaching. Thus, personal biographies are very significant to how teachers make sense of their practices and their beliefs about themselves as teachers and also their teacher identity.

Teachers' images about themselves and their perceptions of their identities can also be influenced by the way they are perceived or stereotyped in professional contexts,

especially when they are members of minority cultural groups (Milner & Hoy, 2003). When a group of people are stereotyped, they may have to bear or tolerate extra emotional and cognitive burdens that could undermine their work and impact their self-images. African American teachers may bear such burdens when they are compared to other teachers, particularly those from the dominant cultural group.

Samuel and Stephens (2000) argued that questions as Who are we? and What do I want to become? are important questions for individuals, particularly Black Americans who consider a career in teaching. They explained that the importance of such questions lies in their relationship to making sense of self and to developing professional identity. Samuel and Stephens also argued that teachers should engage in critical dialogue with themselves to attempt self-definition in relation to other competing selves, who may not share similar experiences and beliefs. And thus, a teachers' professional identity and role are constructed through a "percolated understanding and acceptance of a series of competing and sometimes contradictory values, behaviors, and attitudes, all of which are grounded in the life experiences of the self in formation" (Samuel & Stephens, 2000, p. 477).

The argument here is that questions of identity are located or embedded not only within one's self but also within one's culture; hence, identity is influenced by external factors because it is influenced by one's inner sense of the self (Erikson as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004). The professional identity of a teacher cannot be well comprehended without understanding or considering the cultural contexts from which she or he comes and in which professional educational environments she or he teaches.

In a case study Agee (2004) explored the struggles of Tina, a Black teacher, to construct a teaching identity and a multicultural literature curriculum. She had faced many problems in her early years of teaching because of all the educational changes

63

taking place in the school where she worked. In particular, Tina struggled with the impact of mandated student and teachers' assessments. Agee (2004) proposed that in addition to personal history, a teacher also brings a desire to construct "a unique identity as a teacher and that in the various contexts of her work; she negotiates and renegotiates that identity" (p. 749). As for Tina's struggle to develop a teaching identity in a "White" school community, Agee (2004) cited DuBois, who said, "African Americans possess a dual consciousness: as Americans and as Blacks. [This duality produced] a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment" (p. 221). Tina had to struggle with many ideological and ethical conflicts in developing her identity.

Chong and Low (2009) stated that teachers' professional identity is "negotiated through a rich and complex set of relations of practice" (p. 70). Assaf (2008) concluded that educational settings "can compromise a teachers' professional identity and can influence teachers' responsibility and ethical sense of what they should do for their students and who they need to be as teachers" (p. 239). Liu and Xu (2011), who used narrative inquiry to investigate how a teacher negotiated her identity in the context of a reform, concluded that teachers must shift their identities to adapt to different situations based on the meanings that they derive from a variety of narrative resources. The main finding in this study was that "teachers shift their identities to adapt to different situations based on the meanings that they derive from a variety of narrative resources which include teachers' professional knowledge, personal experience, the 'micro-politics' of the setting and wider socio-cultural contexts" (Liu & Xu, 2011, p. 594).

In a narrative qualitative study, Hsieh (2006) showed how international student teachers negotiate their identities, explaining that "direct interaction with a second language and its culture can trample one's original identity and worldview" (p. 871). Because using an unfamiliar language may cause vulnerability and distress, using a

64

second language may become a "deeply uprooting, self-transforming experience" (Roth & Harama, 2000, p. 763). Hsieh cited research revealing that Asian international students express the greatest difficulty in the use of the English language among international students. She attributed that to cultural traditions that differ widely from those of the dominant American culture, noting that "the more different international students' cultural background is from American culture, the harder their adaptation can be and the more likely they can have emotional problems" (p. 872). Thus, they are forced to match the norms and expectations of the dominant American culture, and as a result they negotiate their identities.

The problem, however, is that "students who are not from the dominant culture may be victims of unspoken yet powerful stereotypes and messages about their development and personal identity" (Yeh & Drost, 2002, p. 2). Hence, "they must learn to negotiate and bridge multiple, and often competing, identities in the schools" (Hsieh, 2006, p. 872). In such a context, students and student teachers who are not from the dominant culture may be more vulnerable in negotiating identities desirable to them in order to fulfill the expectations of the dominant society and develop a no confrontational relationship with members of the host society.

Hallman (2007) discussed the negotiating process that early childhood teachers undertake when constructing an electronic teaching portfolio. She explained how the use of e-portfolios in teacher education programs supports the process of becoming a teacher, yet she questioned why these teachers tried to present coherent and competent identities as beginning professionals while also undertaking the notion of identity building as a fluid, ongoing process. She found that for student teachers, presenting an identity as a beginning teacher in the space of the e-portfolio means making important choices about how to write for multiple audiences. Hallman (2007) argued that teacher

educators should support beginning teachers' use of e-portfolio as a tool to negotiate their teacher identity:

> A starting point for teacher educators may be to engage their students in conversations about e-portfolios as tools rather than simply as sites in which to showcase good work, to encourage thinking about teaching practice and teacher identity. In an effort to engage in teaching for transformation and social change, teacher educators must recognize the difficulty many early childhood teachers have in striving for a balance between being a knowledgeable teacher and an inquisitive student (p. 485).

It has been said that frequently professional development seems to fail in having an impact in practice as they are regularly not responding to teachers' current concerns (Sadovnik, 2007), and thus it does not have a meaningful change. Considering the importance of professional identity of teachers in their practice, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argue that teacher education programs seem to be the perfect starting point for encouraging awareness of the need to develop an identity, as well as to recognize the shifts that will occur in that identity. Furthermore, Oberhuemer (2005) argues that initial and continuing professional development of teachers ought to focus on the social, historical, economic and political context of early childhood settings. Bearing in mind the notion of teachers capable of reshaping their own professional identity, teacher education programs should integrate, not only what is known about the contexts, but also their influence on forming teachers' professional identity so that they can face the challenges of forming a strong identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

2.8   Challenges Affecting Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity

Notwithstanding the myriad of progressive initiatives discussed thus far, work within the Early Childhood Education sector continues to be undervalued and underestimated (Moloney, 2010, 2011, Moloney & Pope, 2012, OECD, 2006). It does not carry the social status that accompanies other occupations; teaching and medicine (OECD, 2006), law and academia for example (Hanlon, 1998, Hoi Choi-Wa Dora, 2006). The low status of Early Childhood Education has long been associated with untrained women who love and care for children (Lobman & Ryan, 2007, OECD, 2006). Dalli (2002) argues that the traditional alignment of childcare with the role of mothering, and the attendant discourses of love and care, disempower early childhood practitioners from claiming professional status. In the same way, Siraj-Blatchford declares that practitioner disillusionment is justified, when their role is seen as synonymous with "care" in general, and when they perceive themselves to be treated merely as unskilled child-minders (1993:396).

Similarly, Moloney (2010) found that practitioners described themselves as little more than babysitters. However, both Moloney (2011) and Dalli (2003a, 2006b), claim that the discourses of love and care persistently arise in practitioner's own descriptions of their work with young children. Indeed, while Moyles urges practitioners to be passionate about their work, she warns that a ''culture of passion can be perceived as anti-intellectual, idealistic, objective, indecisive and feminine'' (2001:86). Passion can therefore become the antithesis of professional identity. However, Dalli (2006b) claims that passion for one's work may be used positively, suggesting that the time has come to revise notions of love and care so that they may be transformed into pedagogical and political tools.

While agreeing with the connotations associated with the caring and nurturing nature of Early Childhood Education, other researchers (Cameron, Moss, and Owen, 1999, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999, Osgood, 2010) claim that the issue is compounded by the highly gendered nature of the sector which according to Osgood (2010) is hyper–feminine. Accordingly, gendering reinforces the notion that child rearing is essentially ''women's work'' (OECD, 2006, Moloney, 2010, 2011, Moss, 2007). Therefore, as mentioned, those working within Early Childhood Education have traditionally been paid less than other professions and their work is considered less important (Government of Ireland, 1999b, OECD, 2006). Moyles highlights practitioner concerns regarding criticisms directed towards their female caring roles which incline them towards ''non-professional'' and ''woolly'' thinking (2001:86). These perceptions lie in stark contrast to calls for these women to take on, the perceived ills of society (e.g. low income families), high level assessments of children's current and potential capabilities and work with a wide range of other people, for low salaries (Moyles, 2006). All of these demands occur within a context which practitioners view as antithetical to their role in caring for and educating young children (ibid). Notwithstanding calls by Bennett (2003) and the OECD for instance, that governments develop strategies to ''recruit and retain a qualified and diverse, mixed-gender workforce and to ensure that a career in ECEC is satisfying, respected and financially viable'' (2006:25), little progress has been made in any of these areas in Ireland to date (Moloney, 2011, Moloney & Pope, 2012).

More recently, the Department for Education and Skills (2010) undertook widespread consultation on the development of a Workforce Development Plan (WDP). This consultation process identified the type of workforce needed to support the development of quality Early Childhood Education schools in Ireland and the

68

challenges associated with it. It highlighted the need to support the Early Childhood Education workforce to "achieve the qualifications that equip them with the skills, knowledge, competencies, values and attitudes" (DES, 2010:2) to deliver quality enriching experiences for children aged birth to six years; work effectively with parents and guardians and engage in interdisciplinary professional work practices. As such, the WDP identifies measures to up-skill the existing workforce while simultaneously advocating that future Early Childhood Education workers are appropriately prepared for their roles (DES, 2010). While training and up-skilling should positively impact the quality of practice within the Early Childhood Education sector, professionalism is also about the public status of the job (Evans, 2008). In this context, the WDP does not address the status of the sector or the terms and conditions of employment.

Moloney and Pope (2012) and Moloney (2012) are also critical of the approach to practitioner qualifications within 'Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life' (DES, 2011). They stress that this strategy simply commits to encouraging and supporting the "up- skilling" of those working within the Early Childhood Education sector. Further concerns relate to its failure to specify a minimum qualification. Commenting upon the contrast between the approach to the Early Childhood Education sector and the primary school sector within the strategy, Moloney and Pope (2012) argue that... These diverse commitments blur the construct of professional identity within Early Childhood Education. The message is clear. Teaching is a profession that is dependent upon graduate level pre-school training. By contrast those working within Early Childhood Education do not require academic qualifications.

Hence, as noted by Moloney (2011), although the practitioner's role is complex and multi- faceted, their professional standing is weak (Moloney, 2010, 2011, OECD,

2006, Duignan, 2007). Clearly, training, working conditions and opportunities for early childhood Education staff often contradicts public rhetoric about the value placed on young children and the importance of their early development and learning. This is particularly true of Early Childhood Education traditionally viewed as one of the least powerful in society (Siraj-Blatchford, 1993) where salaries remain well below those of teachers, at times being pegged at minimum wage (Moloney, 2011, OECD, 2006)

The professional identity of the sector is also impeded by the diverse descriptors applied to those working within the sector. For instance, Adams (2005) identified 11 such terms in a Scottish study, while Moloney (2010b) identified 20 terms associated with the workforce in Ireland. Moloney claims that professional demarcation in Early Childhood Education remains ambiguous and cites a multitude of terms associated with the sector including "childcare assistant", ''crèche worker'', ''pre-school teacher'' and "practitioner". Referring to the wide range of vague and ambiguous titles, McGillivray (2008:244) states that no other profession has experienced such great uncertainty and that the multiplicity of titles may have contributed to confusion about identity, creating uncertainty as to what the various titles, roles and responsibilities actually mean. Likewise, in questioning the rationale for the diversity of terms, Adams (2008:20) claims that the real danger of such multiplicity is that it disperses the focus of professionalism.

The development of a profession that is committed to working with young children requires an inclusive and coherent, versus a fragmented, occupational identity (Adams, 2008). Equally, the profession must be clear about what workers are doing with young children. Thus in Adams' words, ''the adult working with the child is practicing care and education''. Regrettably, in relation to Early Childhood Education, ''a clear statement of the educative role within the job is missing and this could well be

central to the struggle for professionalism in the sector''.

Who and what constitutes an early childhood professional has been contested ground internationally (Woodrow, 2007). It results from an eclectic mix of policy and practice, informed by a diverse knowledge base, which in turn has contributed to the ambiguity in professional identity (Ibid). However, others (OECD, 2006, Moloney, 2010a, Moloney and Pope, 2012, Woodrow, 2007) associate weak professional identity with training structures, poor working conditions and low salaries. Conversely, Miller and Cable claim that the professionalization of those working within Early Childhood Education has been "on an upward trajectory for at least the last decade" (2010: 2). Likewise, and notwithstanding the many difficulties outlined, Duignan (2007) maintains that an agreed vision of professionalism in practice does exist and can be revealed through analysis of key national policy documents. While agreeing that an agreed vision has been articulated within policy, Moloney (2011) is critical of implementation suggesting that successive governments have failed to consolidate the identity of the sector through lack of resources and supports.

Abdulai (2014) conducted a research to explore the challenges facing Early Childhood Education in the Effutu municipality of Ghana. Findings revealed that challenges associated with early childhood education in the Effutu municipality include: public prejudice about the relevance of Early Childhood Educational programs to the child's education and development, Such prejudices according to the early childhood educator manifest in persistent societal stereotype about the essence, relevance, status and levels of intelligence of teachers involved in early childhood education; lack of parental involvement and commitment to early childhood education, lack of teaching staff and infrastructure, and institutional barriers.

71

Similarly, the Operational plan to scale up quality kindergarten education in Ghana identify infrastructure shortfalls, poor standards of early childhood classrooms, learning materials and resources, the low value placed on Early Childhood teachers and education even by Ghana Education Service as some challenges affecting Early Childhood Education in Ghana.

2.9   The Role of Professional Development in Early Childhood Teachers' Identity Formation

While conceptions of teacher identity vary depending on theoretical views and perspectives, researchers agree that identity formation and teacher development are associated in important ways.

> Bullough (1997) expressed this sentiment as follows: Teacher identity, what beginning teachers believe about teaching and learning and self-as-a-teacher is of vital concern to teacher education; it is the basis for meaning making and decision making… Teacher education must begin, then, by exploring the teaching self. (p.21).

Teacher identity formation is important in influencing teachers' decision-making, professional lives, motivation, satisfaction, commitment, and career decisions. When considering the increasing teacher attrition rates in the Unites States (an estimated 30-50% of new teachers leave the field within their first five years, Ingersoll, 2003; Quality Counts, 2000), it is easy to understand the critical role teacher identity plays in recruitment, preparation, and retention of the teaching workforce, as well as the need to study teacher identity and the factors that contribute to its successful and less successful development.

An examination of the research literature about teacher identity indicates that teacher' perceptions of their own identities as professional educators have been shown to influence their development as well as their ability to deal with situations in and

72

outside of their classroom and school environments (Beijaard et al., 2000). "Teachers' talk about and experience of professional identity are central to the beliefs, values, and practices that guide their engagement, commitment, and actions in and out of the classroom" (Cohen, 2010, pp.473). Indeed, knowledge of teachers' professional identity perceptions may help them cope with educational challenges and changes (Beijaard, et. al, 2000). Recognizing and addressing these perceptions may also help teacher education professionals, classroom teachers, and school administrators accommodate and attend to career-related tensions. Moore and Hoffman (1988) found that a teachers' self-perception of their professional identity, if seen in a positive light, can override dissatisfaction with poor working conditions. Flores and Day (2006) cited research that implies tension in the first few years of teaching as professionals work to make a place for themselves in the education world.

Experiences vary, but some pre-school teacher candidates feel isolated, a disconnect between what they were doing in college and classroom expectations, and lack of support to name a few of the traits (Flores, 2001; Huberman, 1989). In this study, Flores and Day (2006) followed 14 new teachers, mostly situated in an elementary setting for two years as their professional identities were shaped and reshaped. Their findings indicated that personally situated identities were strongly integrated at the beginning of their careers, but seemed to destabilize as they progressed through the study. The climate of each school structure caused the teachers to be less creative and more routine as time passed. Flores and Day ascertained that workplace influence (positive or negative–perceptions of school culture and leadership) played a key role in (re)shaping teachers' understanding of teaching, in facilitating or hindering their professional learning and development, and in (re)constructing their professional identities.

73

Societal perceptions about teacher identity have also been shown to have a negative impact on decisions to enter the teaching profession. DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) examined the attitudes and perceptions of male teachers choosing to enter elementary education even though the social attitudes relate this occupation to mostly female teachers. Their argument was that if more men entered the field of teaching, especially in elementary education, schools could provide a more well-rounded education for many children. They discovered that the decision to enter a predominantly female-driven field corresponded with the amount of direct contact with, and nurturing children. Foster and Newman (2005) studied a group of male pre-school teachers for four years. They uncovered widespread stereotypes surrounding men in education. Men are often perceived as doing certain kinds of jobs such as handyman or sportsman, and are sometimes associated with certain negative social roles such as sexual predators, precocious careerists, potential child abusers, staff room sex symbols, discipline men, father figures, and the like. Foster and Newman followed four male teachers who had expressed interest in exploring these perceptions in more depth. They found these men had "bruised identities" in large part due to preconceived notions about male teachers often held by the public and often found in print and visual media. These pre-conceptions perceptions have a damaging effect on teacher identity and reinforce the prevailing view that teaching is a woman's occupation. More importantly, they are likely to shape male teachers' identity formation even before entering the teaching profession.

In one study, Hong (2010) identified six psychological factors that impact teacher career paths. These factors include self-efficacy, commitment, emotions, value, knowledge and beliefs, and micro politics. Hong maintained that pre-school teachers have a naïve and idealistic perspective on teaching and that emotional burnout is the

74

leading factor for dropout. Allowing pre-school teachers to leave their professional training with their idealistic perspectives does not help prepare them for their future classrooms. She suggested that teacher preparation programs must challenge pre-school teachers pre-existing beliefs about teaching by providing activities that help teachers reflect on beliefs that cause tension in their professional lives.

In a related study, Van Veen, Sleegers and van de Ven (2005) examined teacher emotions and their connection to identity and how that, in turn impacts teacher decisions to embrace or reject educational reform. The emotions analysed ranged from happiness/enthusiasm to guilt/shame and anxiety/anger. The social-psychological approach used to analyse emotions allowed them to look in-depth at the concern's teachers have when faced with the context of reforms and how their personal and professional identities are affected. They found that emotions play a key role in understanding commitment to change, quality of teaching, as well as identity.

McDougall (2010) focused her research on not only literacy and identity, but how teachers cope with changing views of identity and their professional growth. Adapting to change in education reform has been linked to professional identity in numerous studies (Day, 2002; van Veen & Sleegers, 2005). By using Gee's discursive notion of identity, McDougall analyzed primary teachers' comfort with the changing views of literacy. Her findings categorized teachers in three different categories: traditionalism, survival, and futures. Traditionalism-oriented teachers felt their responsibility was to teach basic numeracy and literacy and were reluctant to accept any new curriculum alterations.

Survival-oriented teachers' acknowledged that literacy is changing and while it is important to embrace, they vocalize insecurities with this new, advanced idea. Future-oriented teachers embraced change and were enthusiastic about learning a new way of

75

thinking. While none of these categories specifically referred to changes in literacy, future-oriented teachers implied their willingness and acceptance to change. This study highlights the changing responsibilities of primary teachers and the ease or discomfort they feel approaching these changes. The teachers who appeared to be more adaptable had already begun altering their identities to accommodate new, rapidly approaching literacies.

In addition to exploring the role of teacher identity in teacher learning and development, researchers have also explored best times for, as well as approaches for, fostering identity development among beginning teachers. For instance, Bullough (2005) suggested that teacher identify can and should be analysed prior to, and during the student teaching experience. Bullough proposed using trained teacher mentors to help pre-school teachers grapple with identity formation and recognition issues. The role of teacher mentors is prescribed by organizations like the National Council for the Accreditation of Institutions of Teacher Education (NCATE). Teacher mentors are practicing teachers who allow a student-teacher to enter their classroom for a designated period. The mentor teacher has several responsibilities they must fulfill to successfully carry out this role.

Alternatively, Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson and Fry (2004) proposed a "sink- or-swim" approach by placing students in situations that provoke tension and challenge their identities. They argue this allows for self-exploration, growth and a shifting of their own identities. Others in the field have argued that we should allow pre-school teacher candidates to discover their "teaching selves" (Freese, 2006; p. 100) through reflective practice. An example of such a study, conducted by Gaudelli & Ousley (2009), targeted the student teaching semester and identity exploration of ten pre-school teacher candidates. The study was conducted in a large state school where

76

the faculty had no regular contact with their pre-school teacher candidates. When they did have contact, faculty members stated they were often displeased with what they observed. Many of the teaching philosophies they presented in coursework had altered to more teacher-centered lessons taken from teaching kits as well as heavy-handed classroom management. The researchers' goal, at a minimum, was to have contact with their pre-school teacher candidates. To accomplish this, they began a seminar class that allowed pre-school teacher candidates to meet weekly as a group during their student teaching semester. The categories reflected in their study focused on conflicts and perceptions/realities that pre-school teacher candidates encountered. Their findings indicated that pre-school teacher candidates needed the seminar to reflect and compare notes with other teachers, that beginning teachers navigate their identity differently due in large part to personality differences, and that the pre-school teacher candidates appreciated the opportunity to hear about others' experiences.

2.10   Summary of the Literature Review

The review of related literature focused on some of the predominant concepts of the study. These concepts were related to profession, professional teacher identity, the determinants of professional teacher identity, curriculum change, relation and experiences. These concepts explain the perspective of the study. The theoretical framework of the study was introduced with the discussion of the formation of identity, followed by the personal construct theory and the socio-cultural theory which explains the formation of teacher identity in the face of personal perception, beliefs, values, experiences and environmental and social forces. The Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory was also adopted to explain the critical ecology of the early childhood profession.

77

The conceptual framework of the study showed a description of the nature of early childhood teachers' professional identity and the various variables that may influence the state of the Early Childhood Teachers professional identity. Variables like contextual factors influence early childhood teachers' professional identity. Socially, psychological and personal challenges of the teacher may also influence the early childhood teachers' professional identity. It was envisaged that the role of professional development in early childhood teachers' identity formation could also influence the teachers' professional identity. These three variables were expected to have some significant influence on the self-identity of the Early Childhood Teachers' professional Identity.

The review ended with an empirical review based on four objectives stated to be achieved by the study, the review was structured around the following sub-headings; nature of early childhood teachers' professional identity; contextual factors that influence early childhood teachers' professional identity; challenges influencing early childhood teachers' professional identity and the role of professional development in early childhood teachers' identity formation.

78

2.11   Conceptual Framework
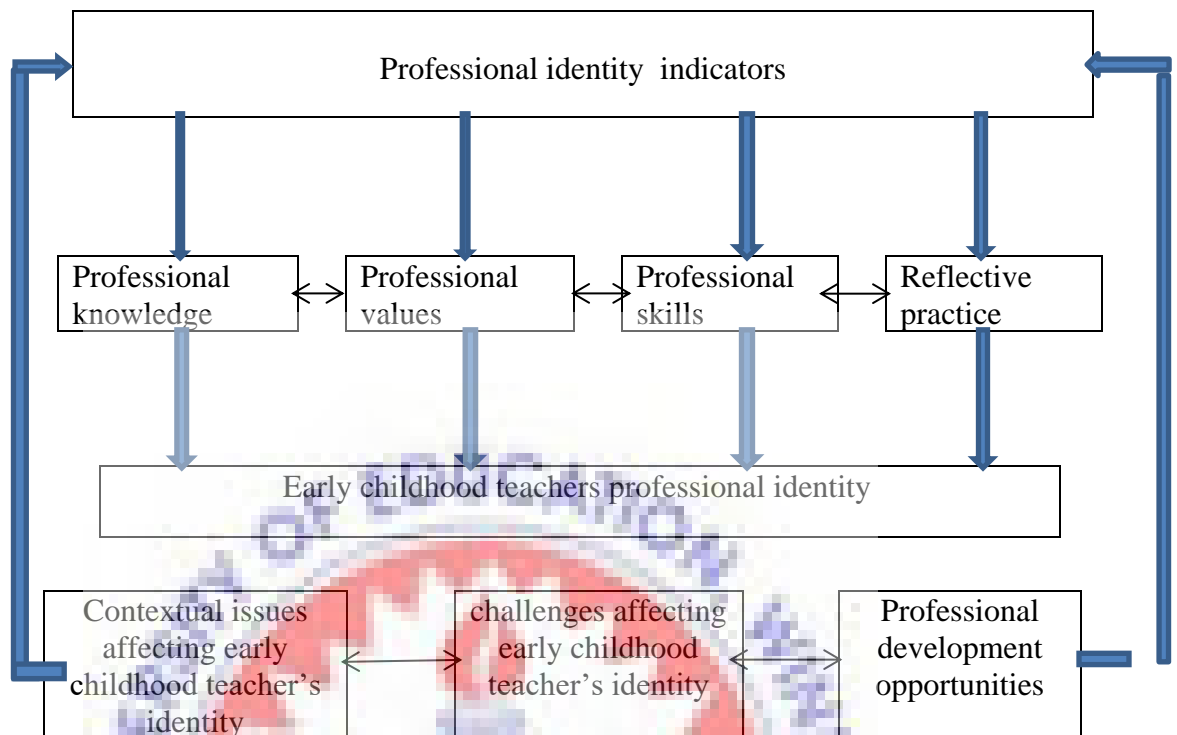
Figure 1: Early childhood Teachers Professional Identity

Figure 1 shows a diagrammatic description of the nature of early childhood teachers' professional identity and the various variables that may influence their professional identity. Teacher professional identity improves by their level of Professional knowledge, Professional values, Professional skills and Reflective practice which are the indicators of teachers' professional identity and have a relation to Early Childhood teachers professional identity. A weakness in some of the indicators will have an adverse impact on early childhood teachers' professional identity formation. Variables like contextual factors influence early childhood teachers' professional identity. Socially, psychological and personal challenges of the teacher may also influence the early childhood teachers' professional identity. It is envisaged that the role of professional development in early childhood teachers' identity formation could

79

also influence the teachers' professional identity. These three variables thus, Contextual issues, challenges affecting, and professional development are expected to have some significant influence on the self-identity of the Early Childhood Teachers' professional Identity. All are interrelated and have an effect on the professional identity indicators and therefore have an effect on the professional identity development of Early Childhood teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0   Overview

This chapter covers the methodology used in the study. The chapter was structured around the research design, study area, population of the study, sample and sampling strategy, instrumentation, pilot study, validation and trust worthiness of the qualitative instrument, validity of the quantitative instrument, reliability of the quantitative instrument, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1   Research Design

The study was underpinned by the pragmatist paradigm of knowledge acquisition. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) point out that the mixed method research allows the researcher to be flexible. Pragmatism is a deconstructive paradigm that advocates the use of mixed methods in research (Feilzer, 2010). The fundamental premise for the combination of qualitative and quantitative is that, it helps the researcher to better understand the research problems (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). For Bergman (2008, p1) it requires the "combination of at least one qualitative and one quantitative component in a single research project or programme…", and in this study, a questionnaire containing both closed and open ended questions were used for data collection for both quantitative and qualitative respectively.

The study adopted the concurrent mixed method design using identical samples for both qualitative and quantitative components for the study. An identical relationship indicates that exactly the same sample members participate in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. The researcher used the validating quantitative data model to validate and expand on the quantitative findings from the survey by including

81

some open-ended qualitative questions. To Fraenkel & Wallen (2009), Researchers use the validating quantitative data model when they want to validate and expand on the quantitative findings from a survey by including a few open-ended qualitative questions. In this model, the researcher collects both types of data within one survey instrument.

Because the qualitative items are an add-on to a quantitative survey, the items generally do not result in a rigorous qualitative data set. However, they provide the researcher with interesting quotes that can be used to validate and embellish the quantitative survey findings. For instance, Webb, Sweet, and Pretty (2002) included qualitative questions in addition to their quantitative survey measures in their study of the emotional and psychological impact of mass casualty incidents on forensic odontologists. Webb et al. used the qualitative data to validate the quantitative results from the survey items. Similarly, Daley and Onwuegbuzie (2004) conducted a study involving juvenile delinquents' causal attributions for others' violent behavior, using similar instrument.This model allows the researcher to collect both types of data within one survey instrument (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

A concurrent triangulation mixed method design (also called a one-phase design; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) in which the researcher implements the quantitative and qualitative methods during the same timeframe and with equal weight in that priority is not on quantitative or qualitative data. The rationale for this design was to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic to best understand the research problem. It helped in bringing together the different strengths and non-overlapping weakness of quantitative and qualitative methods.

With this design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed

at the same time. Equal priority was given to both forms of data. Data analysis was separate, and integration occurs at the data interpretation stage. The interpretation typically involved discussing the extent to which the data triangulated or converged. These designs was useful since it helped to confirm, cross-validate, and corroborate study findings. Concurrently gathering both forms of data at the same time, helped to compare both forms of data to search for congruent findings how the themes identified in the qualitative data collection compare with the statistical results in the quantitative analysis, (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

3.2   Population of the Study

The population includes all elements that meet certain criteria for inclusion in a study (Burns & Grove, 2003). Polit and Hungler, (2004), refer to the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications, in this case, the target population for this study comprised all Kindergarten teachers in the Mfantseman municipality. The Mfantseman municipality has eight circuits with 78 kindergarten schools. The table below provides the distributions of teacher population by circuits.

Table 1: Distribution of Teacher Population by Circuits

Circuits	No. of KGs	No. of teachers
Anomabo circuit A	9 KGs	27
Anomabo circuit B	10 KGs	15
Yamoransa circuit	9 KGs	22
Saltpong circuit A	13 KGs	39
Saltpong circuit B	10 KGs	26
Dominase circuit	13 KGs	16
Mankessim circuit A	7 KGs	21
Mankessim circuit B	7 KGs	16
Total	**78**	**182**

The target and accessible population for the study were all the 182 trained public kindergarten teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality. However, the accessible population for the study was made up of 160 trained kindergarten teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana.

The Mfantseman Municipality has 78 public kindergarten schools with a teacher population of 182. Out of the 182 teachers, 160 were used for the study. They 160 teachers were used because the rest of the twenty-two were indisposed at the time of data collection for reasons the researcher was not privy to.

3.3   Sample and Sampling Procedure

The purposive and census sampling technique were used for this study. The purposive sampling technique was used to purposely select only kindergarten schools found in the Mfantseman Municipality. The census sampling allowed the selection of all KG teachers since the number was moderate and selecting a sample from it would have resulted in using a smaller number of respondents. As Kothari, (2004) puts it, when a complete enumeration of all items in the 'population' is used. It is assumed that in such an inquiry, when all items are covered, no element of chance is left and highest accuracy is obtained. The researcher for the reasons stated above used all the kindergarten one and two teachers in the accessible population which comprised 160 kindergarten teachers sampled from the 78 schools in the Mfantseman Municipality.

3.4   Instrumentation

The main instrument for this study was a questionnaire with both closed and open-ended items which were used to collect data for the quantitative and qualitative phase of the study. The questionnaire was adopted from Lawal and Yidana (2015). The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information,

providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The questionnaire consisted of five sections. Section A focused on the demographic data of respondents. Section 'B' had a list of items which sought responses to the level of early childhood teachers' professional identity. Section C had a set of statements which elicited responses on the contextual factors affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity. Section D dealt with respondents' views on the challenges affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity. The Section E focused on the role of professional development in early childhood teachers' identity formation. Questionnaires are easier to arrange and supply standardized answers, to the extent that all respondents are posed with exactly the same questions with no scope for variation to slip in via face-to-face contact with the researcher (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The data collected, then, are very unlikely to be contaminated through variations in the wording of the questions or the manner in which the question is asked. There is little scope for the data to be affected by 'interpersonal factors' (Denscombe, 2007).

This questionnaire was a Likert scale questionnaire with options presented in four-point scale ranging from: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) Disagreed and strongly Disagree (SA) respectively. Correspondingly, each of those options rated as follows: SA (4), A (3), D (2) and SD (1), and an open-ended questions for each section for respondents. The researcher chose questionnaire because all the participants were literate, and therefore could read and respond to the items. The use of the questionnaire as a method of collecting data helps the researcher to collect the view of a large number of respondents in a short period of time (Bryman, 2012). The purpose

85

of the questionnaire was to secure data from many people at a time and for its natural characteristics that allow informants express their ideas and opinions freely.

3.5   Validity of the Questionnaire

3.5.1   Face validity

Face Validity can be described with a sense that the questionnaire measures what it was intended to measure (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The face validity of the instruments for this study were established by giving the prepared instruments to the researcher's colleague students, friends and supervisor to scrutinise and make constructive criticisms. From which necessary adjustments were made to the instrument to achieve the face validity.

3.5.2   Content validity

Content validity is the extent to which the questions on the instrument and the scores from these questions are representative of all the possible questions that could be asked about the content or skills (Creswell, 2012). The content validity of the items were determined by experts in measurement and evaluation and the supervisor of the researcher in the Department of Early Childhood Education and the Department of Psychology and Education in the University of Education, Winneba.

3.6   Validation of the Qualitative Instrument

The open-ended questions were scrutinized by colleagues of the researcher before it was given to the supervisor for consideration. The instrument was further pilot tested to identify potential deficiencies before using it for the actual study. Bell points out the usefulness of a pilot exercise; to him the purpose of a pilot exercise is to get the bugs out of the instrument so that respondents in the main study will have no difficulties in completing. (Bell, 2008). Fifteen teachers from the Effutu Municipality were

conveniently sampled for the pilot test since they exhibited similar characteristics with the actual population of the study. Arthur and Nazroo (2003) affirm that, when assessing the scope of the guide, it is important to review whether it allows participants to give a full and coherent account of the central issues and incorporate issues they think are important. Corrections were made to some items whiles some items were dropped based on the pilot results.

3.7   Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability means that individual scores from an instrument should be nearly the same or stable on repeated administrations of the instrument and that they should be free from sources of measurement error and consistent (Creswell, 2012). Reliability is concerned with consistency, dependability or stability of a test (Cohen, et al., 2011). To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was pilot tested. Fifteen kindergarten teachers from seven kindergarten schools in the Effutu Municipality were conveniently sample for the pilot test. The data generated from the pilot test were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20) to compute the reliability co-efficient using Cronbach Alpha co-efficient to determine internal consistency. The Alpha level of the questionnaire was .82 which was considered to be acceptable since according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), reliability should be at least .70 and preferably higher.

Table 2 Reliability index of questionnaires by sections

Sections	Number of Items	Index
B indicators		
i. Professional knowledge	7	.80
ii. Professional values	9	.76
iii. Professional skills	13	.78
iv. Reflective practice	11	.81
C. contextual factors	8	.80
D. challenges	10	.85
E. professional development	8	.82
Total		**.82**

Source: Filed data, from pilot study 2018.

3.8   Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Early Childhood Education which was used to obtain permission from the Mfantseman Municipal Directorate of Education of the selected Basic schools to enable him to conduct the study. The researcher administered questionnaires personally with the help of two trained assistants to sample Kindergarten one and two teachers for their responses.

The purpose of the study was first explained to the respondents. The consent of the respondents was sought after which respondents were given three days to answer the questionnaires to the best of their knowledge. Distribution and collection of questionnaires took five weeks this was so due to the distance between sampled schools, the distance the researcher had to cover to get to the researched schools and follow ups for questionnaires that were not ready for collection. On the first day of distributions of questionnaires nine (9) schools were covered and 20 questionnaires distributed. 19 schools covered on the second day with 35 questionnaires distributed; 30 and 20 schools covered respectively on the 3rd and 4th day; 60 and 45 questionnaires distributed; totalling 78 schools, and 160 respondents. All questionnaires were retrieved although

there were some delays due to some teachers initially unwilling to respond to questionnaires.

3.9 Data Analysis Procedure

Questionnaires retrieved were first serially coded, edited and responses loaded into the SPSS software. Data was cleaned before running any analysis. Cleaning the data helped the researcher to get rid of errors that could result from coding, recording, missing information, influential cases or outliers. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, i.e. frequencies and percentages. The data was subjected to analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20) were weighted mean and standard deviations were derived. Hypothesis one was analysed using the independent sample t – test since it was meant to ascertain the mean differences between male and female early childhood teachers' level of professional identity. Mean ranges were created to aid in the interpretation and determination of the level of early childhood teachers' professional identity. The decision making rule is that a mean of 2.60 and above is interpreted as agreed and a mean of 2.59 and below is considered disagreement with the questionnaire items.

Hypothesis two sought to explore significant differences in professional identity level of early childhood teachers on the basis of their years of experience. As a result ANOVA was used. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant levels.

The researcher used thematic analysis to establish meaning from the qualitative data collected. A qualitative research data analysis software Atlas. ti 7.5.17 version, was used to aid the analysis of the qualitative data thematically. Morse and Field (1996) explain that, thematic analysis involves the search for and identification of common trends that extend throughout an entire interview or set of interviews. The researcher group inscribe write-ups from respondent under their appropriate themes to answer the

89

research questions using pseudo names to represent respondents to conceal their identity.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to the ethical procedures, practice by researchers in conducting research in UEW. They include the following:

Avoided plagiarism: Works of people which were used to buttress analysis and, in my literature review, were duly acknowledged both in-text and in reference.

Informed consent: In order, not to violate the principle of informed consent in the social research, letters of introduction were sent to the school authorities to seek permission before the conduct. In these letters, the purpose of the study was clearly stated to both the respondents and the schools' authorities. Kindergarten teachers involved in this survey were verbally informed about the study and each participant was given an explanation for the reason for the study to facilitate their cooperation and support.

Assured confidentiality and anonymity: The respondents were assured that their identities would be concealed. In achieving this purpose, respondent's names weren't taken and pseudo were used during data analysis making it difficult for people to identify the respondents. Individual respondents were assured of voluntary withdrawal from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0   Overview

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perception of early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The study explored the level of early childhood teachers' professional identity, contextual factors affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity, challenges affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity, and role of professional development in early childhood teachers' identity formation. The study also sought to determine the difference between the level of teacher professional identity among male and female teachers and to determine the difference between the level of teacher professional identity and their years of experience in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. This was a mixed methods study underpinned by the pragmatic paradigm. This chapter presents the findings from quantitative and qualitative data. The findings were presented in three main sections. Section 'A' focused on the demographic data of the participants. Section 'B' concentrated on the quantitative findings whilst the Section 'C' dealt with the data presentation of the open-ended questions.

4.1   Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the early childhood teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The demographic information of the participants was based on gender, age, educational level and job description.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	38	23.7
Female	122	76.3
Total	**160**	**100**
Age		
21- 25 years	21	13.1
26-30 years	12	7.5
31-35 years	30	18.7
36-40 years	23	14.4
41-45 years	20	12.5
46-50 years	12	7.5
51-55 years	20	12.5
56-60 years	22	13.8
Total	**160**	**100**
Educational Level		
Certificate in Early childhood	6	3.8
Diploma in Early childhood	55	34.4
Diploma in Basic Education	17	10.6
Bachelor Degree in E. C.E	44	27.5
Bachelor Degree in B. Edu.	30	18.7
Master's Degree in Education	8	5.0
Total	**160**	**100**
Years of Experience		
Less than a year	24	15.0
1-5 years	38	23.7
6-10 years	26	16.3
11-20 years	30	18.7
20 years and above	42	26.3
Total	**160**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2018.

Table 3 shows a description of the demographic characteristics of the respondents of the study. Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents 122(76.3%) were females whilst the minority of the respondents 38(23.7%) were males. This is consistent with both global and national statistics which indicate that the sector is dominated by females.

Concerning the age of the respondents, Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents 30(18.7%) were between the ages of 31-35 years whilst a minority of the respondents 12(7.5%) were between the ages of 26-30 years and 46-50 years

respectfully. It may therefore be inferred that majority of the teachers are 50 years and below. About 85 are between 31 and 50 years who may be considered as matured and with the level of energy required to manage and teach children in their early years.

With regards to the educational level of the respondents, table 4.1 shows that 55 of the respondents representing 34.4% were Diploma holders in Early Childhood Education, 44 respondents representing 27.5% were Bachelor degree holders in Early Childhood Education, whilst the minority of the respondents 6 (3.8%) were certificate holders in certificate in Early Childhood. Thirty respondents representing 18.7% were holders of Bachelor degree in Basic Education and 17 respondents representing 10.5% were holders of Diploma in Basic Education whiles 8 respondents representing (5.0%) were holders of Master's degree in education. It may infer that though all the teachers were trained, majority were professional early childhood teachers whiles the rest were para-professionals with degrees in Basic Education. This phenomenal also reflects the current situation on the ground.

Table 2 shows the description of the years of experiences of the respondents sampled for the study. The majority of the respondents 38(23.8%) had 1-5 years of experiences whiles a minority of the respondents 24 (15%) had less than a year experience. It may be deduced from the data that whereas 62 of the teachers maybe considered novice teachers(1-5yrs); 26 are experienced (6-10yrs) whiles 72 forming the majority are more experienced (11yrs and above) about 61% have been teaching for more than five years and thus may have the requisite experience.

4.2   Section B: Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the levels of early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

This research question sought to ascertain the various levels of early childhood teachers' professional identity considering the four main components of general teacher identity.

Indicators of the Levels of Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity

Table 4: Professional Knowledge

Items	SA		A		SD		D		Mean	SD.
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge in the subject matter / themes	93	58.1	50	31.3	12	7.5	5	3.1	3.44	.767
Knowledge of the weaknesses, strengths, and interests of children under him/her	88	55.0	53	33.1	12	7.5	7	4.4	3.39	.809
Knowledge of psychology of learning as it relates to the teaching of Early Childhood learners	96	60.0	36	22.5	13	8.1	15	9.4	3.33	.976
Knowledge of current trends and developments in the teaching of Early Childhood learners	80	50.0	65	40.6	6	3.8	9	5.6	3.35	.803
Knowledge of the roles of Early Childhood education to society in general	62	38.8	43	26.9	17	10.6	38	23.8	2.81	1.190
Knowledge of suitable curriculum materials for Early Childhood Education	85	53.1	55	34.4	2	1.3	18	11.3	3.29	.956
Method of inquiring in Early Childhood Education	106	66.3	21	13.1	18	11.3	15	9.4	3.36	1.012

N= 160   Mean Ranges: 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree; 1.60-2.50 Disagree; 2.60-3.50 Agree; 3.604.00 Strongly Agree. A mean of means of 2.74 indicates teachers' perception as favourable

Table 4 shows the description of the responses of the sample respondents in relation to their level of professional identity. Table 4.2 shows that majority of the respondents (145, 89.3%, M=3.44) agree to the statement that their strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge in the subject matter/theme improve their level of professional identity. Majority of the respondents also agreed that their knowledge of the weaknesses, strengths, and interest of children under their care boost their level of professional identity as (141, 88.1%, M=3.39) agreed. When early childhood teachers where asked whether their knowledge of psychology of learning as it relates to the teaching of early childhood learners could improve the professional identity level (132, 82.5%, M = 3.33) agreed to the statement.

Concerning respondents knowledge of current trends and developments in the teaching of early childhood learners, majority of early childhood teachers (145, 90.6%, M=3.35) agreed that their knowledge of current trends and developments in early childhood education improve their level of professional identity. Most respondents (102, 65.7%, M=2.81) agreed to the statement that their knowledge of the role of early childhood education to society in general also improve the level of their professional identity. The results for early childhood teacher knowledge of suitable curriculum materials for early childhood education indicate that (140, 87.5%, M=3.29) agreed that it improve their level of professional identity. One hundred and twenty seven early childhood teachers (127, 79.49, M=3.36) agreed that their knowledge in the methods of inquiring in early childhood elevates their level of professional identity.

95

Table 5: Professional Values

Items	SA		A		SD		D		Mean	SD.
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
A positive attitude towards the discipline always.	106	66.3	32	20.0	3	1.9	19	11.9	3.41	.999
Belief in his/her ability to influence children's achievement at the Early Childhood level	75	46.9	34	21.3	24	15.0	27	16.9	2.98	1.141
Maintaining a collaborative working relationship with his/her colleagues at work	19	11.9	88	55.0	19	11.9	33	20.6	3.03	1.236
Demonstrating passion and commitments in teaching children	59	36.9	36	22.5	35	21.9	30	18.8	2.78	1.138
Respecting children's views and learner diversities	83	51.9	33	20.6	19	11.9	25	15.6	3.09	1.124
Be able to inspire children's learning	78	48.8	37	23.1	25	15.6	20	12.5	3.08	1.070
Emotional stability during instructional sessions.	34	21.3	114	71.3	8	5.0	4	2.5	3.11	.593
Being enthusiastic towards his/her students.	17	10.6	122	76.3	31	19.4	7	4.4	3.48	.682
Demonstrating the desire for lifelong learning and commitment to professional development	94	58.8	49	30.6	-	-	17	10.6	3.68	.696

N= 160 Mean Ranges: 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree; 1.60-2.50 Disagree; 2.60-3.50 Agree; 3.604.00 Strongly Agree. A mean of means of 2.74 indicates teachers' perception as favourable

Table 5 shows the description of the responses of the sample respondents in relation to their level of professional identity in terms of their professional values. Table 4.3 shows that with regard to a positive attitude towards the discipline always by early

childhood teachers, the results indicate that (138, 86.3%, M=3.41) agreed that their positive attitude towards the discipline always improve their professional identity. One hundred and nine early childhood teachers agreed to the statement that their beliefs in their ability to influence children's achievement at the early childhood level affect their level of professional identity as showed in table 4.2 (109, 68.2%, M=2.98). Maintaining a collaborative working relationship with colleagues at work (107, 66.9%, M=3.03) respondents agreed that it improves their level of professional identity. Ninety-five respondents agreed to the notion that demonstrating passion and commitments in teaching children also improve their level of professional identity (95, 59.4%, M=2.78). Respondents (Early childhood teachers) (116, 72.5%, M=3.09) agreed that respecting children's views and learner diversities indicates their level of professional identity.

One hundred and fifteen respondents representing 71.9% with a mean of 3.11 (148, 92.6%, M=3.11) of early childhood teachers agreed that their emotional stability during instructional session also shows their level of professional identity. Respondents also see being enthusiastic towards their students as improving their level of professional identity as one hundred and thirty-nine early childhood teachers representing 86.9% with a mean value of 3.48 (139, 86.9%, M=3.48) noted in agreement. Almost all respondents strongly agreed that demonstrating the desire for lifelong learning and commitment improves their level of professional identity. One hundred and forty-three representing 89.4% with a mean value of 3.68 (143, 89.4%, M=3.68) strongly agreed with only 10.6% disagreeing to the statement.

Table 6: Professional Skills

Items	SA		A		SD		D		Mean	SD.
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Assessing children's needs to help identify learning goals	122	76.3	-	-	31	19.4	7	4.4	3.32	.886
Selecting and using developmentally appropriate activities that will make learning more interactive and engaging for children	85	53.1	52	32.5	12	7.5	11	6.9	3.37	.859
Developing and using learning resources that are suitable for the attainment of children's learning outcomes	84	52.5	60	37.5	3	1.9	12	7.5	3.44	.937
Preparing comprehensive learning plans	109	68.1	25	15.6	14	8.8	12	7.5	3.83	.544
Harmonizing instructional objectives with Early Childhood curriculum goals	140	87.5	16	10.0			4	2.5	2.75	1.144
conducting a review of children's entry behaviour	55	34.4	44	27.5	27	16.9	34	21.3	2.91	1.101
logical delivery of themes	64	40.0	44	27.5	26	16.3	26	16.3	2.86	1.115
using instructional techniques that ensure the active involvement of learners	66	41.3	28	17.5	43	26.9	23	14.4	3.03	1.226
illustrating themes concepts with appropriate examples	88	55.0	23	14.4	15	9.4	34	21.3	3.41	.647
effective class management	77	48.1	73	45.6	8	5.0	2	1.3	3.34	.990
harmonizing evaluation questions with instructional objectives	97	60.6	37	23.1	9	5.6	17	10.6	3.28	1.127
Varying assessment procedures that caters for different needs of children	102	63.7	27	16.9	4	2.5	27	16.9	3.23	1.041
Using appropriate communication	87	54.4	45	28.1	6	3.8	22	13.8	3.15	1.083

N= 160 Mean Ranges: 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree; 1.60-2.50 Disagree; 2.60-3.50 Agree; 3.604.00 Strongly Agree. A mean of means of 2.74 indicates teachers' perception as favourable

Concerning early childhood teachers assessing children's needs to help identify learning goals, one hundred and twenty-two of them representing 76.3% with a mean value of 3.32, (122, 76.3%, M=3.32) agreed. Majority of the respondents agreed to the notion that been able to select and use developmentally appropriate activities that will make learning more interactive and engaging for children also show their level of professional identity. One hundred and thirty-seven representing 85.6% with a mean value of 3.37 (137, 85.6%, M=3.37) agreed as shown in table 4.4. One hundred and forty-four respondents agreed to the notion that developing and using learning resources that are suitable for the attainment of children's learning outcomes improve their level of identity as (144, 90.0%, M=3.44) agreed. Most respondents (134, 83.7%, M=3.83) strongly agreed that preparing comprehensive learning plans improved their professional identity. Result from the table also shows that (156, 97.5%, M=2.75) agreed that their ability to harmonize instructional objectives with early childhood curriculum goals improve their identity. Early childhood teachers agreed that conducting a review of children's entry behaviour improve their professional identity as showed in table 4.2 (99, 61.9%, M=2.91).

One hundred and eight respondents representing 67.5% with a mean value of 2.86 (108, 67.5%, M=2.86) agreed that, their ability to logically deliver themes using instructional techniques that ensure the active involvement of learners also advance their level of professional identity. Many respondents (94, 58.8%, M=3.03) also agreed that using instructional techniques that ensure the active involvement of learners improve their level of identity. With regard to illustrating themes concepts with appropriate examples, most respondents (111, 69.4%, M=3.41) agreed that it contribute to their level of professional identity. From the table it could be deducted that (150,

93.76%, M=3.34) agreed that effective class management improves their level professional identity. The ability to harmonized evaluation questions with instructional objectives, respondents also agreed that it increase their level of professional identity as (134, 83.7%, M=3.28) agreed. One hundred and twenty-nine respondents representing 80.6% with a mean value of 3.23 (129, 80.6%, M=3.23) agreed that knowing varying assessment procedures that caters for different needs of children improve their level of professional identity. Majority of early childhood teachers used for this study, (132, 82.5%, M=3.15) agreed to the assertion that using appropriate communication improve their level of professional identity.

Table 7: Professional Reflective Practice

Items	SA		A		SD		D		Mean	SD.
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Achievements of early childhood learners	83	51.9	36	22.5	19	11.9	21	13.1	3.01	1.130
Strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge in the themes	73	45.6	44	27.5	14	8.8	29	18.1	2.78	1.211
Activities he/she engages children in	67	41.9	27	16.9	30	18.8	36	22.5	2.61	1.239
Learning materials used	56	35.0	32	20.0	25	15.6	47	29.4	3.46	.838
Knowledge of the weaknesses, strengths, and interests of children under him/her	98	61.3	50	31.3	-	-	12	7.5	3.66	.572
Teaching and learning techniques use in class	113	70.6	-	-	39	24.4	8	5.0	2.97	1.141
Relationship with children and the involvement of their parents in their studies	80	50.0	20	12.5	45	28.1	14	8.8	3.53	.904
Knowledge of current trends and developments in the teaching of Early Childhood	105	65.6	19	11.9	21	13.1	15	9.4	3.06	1.077
Assessment methods/ procedures used	103	64.4	54	33.8	2	1.3	1	.6	3.34	1.027

| Knowledge of the roles of Early Child hood education to society in general | 64 | 40.0 | 26 | 16.3 | 28 | 17.5 | 42 | 26.3 | 3.62 | .548 |

N= 160 Mean Ranges: 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree; 1.60-2.50 Disagree; 2.60-3.50 Agree; 3.604.00 Strongly Agree. A mean of means of 2.74 indicates teachers' perception as favourable

Table 7 shows that one hundred and nineteen representing 74.4% with a mean value of 3.01 agreed that their ability to reflect on the achievement of early childhood learners improve their level of professional identity. (119, 74.4%, M=3.01). Majority of the early childhood teachers responding to this study agreed that their ability to reflect on the strength and weakness in terms of knowledge in the themes improve their level of professional identity as shown in table 4.5 (117, 73.1%, M=2.78). Respondents agreed that their ability to reflect on the activities they engaged children in, improve their level of professional identity as ninety-four representing 58.8% with a mean value of 2.61 (94, 58.8%, M=2.61) agreed to the statement. Early childhood teachers respondents also agree that their ability to reflect on learning materials used, improve their level of identity as (88, 55%, M=3.46) agreed. Majority of early childhood teachers responding to this study strongly agreed that reflecting on knowledge of the weaknesses, strengths, and interest of children under them improve their level of professional identity as one hundred and forty-eight of them representing 92.6% with a mean value of 3.66 agreed as indicated in Table 4.2 (148, 92.6%, M=3.66).

Concerning reflecting on teaching and learning techniques used in class, one hundred and thirteen respondents (113, 70.6%, M=2.97) agreed that it help in improving their level of their professional identity. One hundred respondents (100, 62.5%, M=3.53) agreed that their relationship with children and the involvement of their parents in their studies improve their reflection on their level of professional identity. It has been seen from the table that majority of the respondents agreed that their knowledge of current trends and development in the teaching of early childhood

101

improve their level of professional identity (124, 77.5%, M=3.06). With regard to assessment methods/procedures used, respondents (157, 98.2%, M=3.34) agreed that it improves their professional level. Majority of early childhood teachers strongly agreed that knowledge of the roles of early childhood education to society in general improve their level of professional identity as (90, 56.3%, M=3.62) strongly agreed.

The data presented reveals that the predominant variables that indicate early childhood professional identity were strengths and weaknesses in terms of pedagogical skills; ability to influence students' achievement in early childhood; maintaining a collaborative working relationship with colleagues; being enthusiastic towards students; appropriate scheme of work; preparing comprehensive lesson plans; strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge in the subject matter; knowledge of the weaknesses, strengths and interests of students; knowledge of psychology of learning and knowledge of the roles of early childhood education to society in general.

Table 8: *Mean of Means of the Indicators of Early Childhood teachers' Professional Identity*   *N = 160*

Professional Identity	Mean	SD	Level
Professional Knowledge	3.28	0.43	High
Professional Values	3.18	0.35	High
Professional Skills	3.22	0.25	High
Reflective Practices	3.16	0.30	High
Overall Professional Identity	3.21	0.16	High

Mean Ranges: 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree; 1.60-2.50 Disagree; 2.60-3.50 Agree; 3.604.00 Strongly Agree.

Early childhood teachers' professional identity was categorized into four. The categorizations were professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice. To answer research question one, the mean values were calculated to determine the professional identity of early childhood teachers' professional identity. As reported in Table 4.6, professional knowledge had the highest

mean value ($mean = 3.28, SD = 0.43$) indicating a high professional identity level of early childhood teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality. This was followed closely by professional skills ($mean = 3.22, SD = 0.25$), professional values (mean =3.18, SD =0.35) and reflective practice ($mean = 3.16, SD = 0.30$). Generally, early childhood teachers' professional identity was high ($mean = 3.21, SD = 0.16$).

4.3   Teacher Professional Identity

According to the qualitative data, teacher professional identity indicators were mainly based on their professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice. The data suggested that teachers had concrete knowledge in early childhood practices, had the desire to teach infants had the zeal to professionally assist the children and felt more competent with their profession. The data suggested that a section of the teachers was quite content with the nature of their work despite the numerous challenges they faced. They had positive professional identity and were enthused to be early childhood teachers.

On professional **knowledge,** one of the respondents articulated:

> *An Early childhood teacher should also demonstrate knowledge on the best strategies or methods of teaching at the KG level and knowledge on the best methods of assessment.* (KGT 1)

Another respondent also expressed:

> *I think having knowledge of appropriate and engaging learning environments for children of different ages and also having knowledge of criteria for evaluating learning goals and objectives for young children as an early childhood professional is a must .* (KGT 2)

A respondent stated:

> *It is also good as an early childhood teacher to have knowledge in planning and implementing learning experiences that advance the cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of children and also knowledge on behaviour management strategies that fit for early childhood settings.* (KGT 3)

Responses on professional **values:**

A respondent (KGT 4) stated:

> *I think other important values an early childhood teacher must have is love, enthusiasm and passion for children.Teaching these little children is demanding but at the same time fun and if you don't have the love for it, it will be very challenging to appreciate the job.*

Another respondent (KGT 5) articulated:

> *An Early childhood teacher should also acknowledge his/her responsibility to provide the best possible care and education for children and to conduct him/herself with honesty, integrity and sense of responsibility.*

A respondent (KGT 6) expressed:

> *I believe that apart from the above stated, early childhood teachers should also establish and maintain a relationship of trust, respect, confidentiality, coloration and cooperation with children and co-workers.*

KGT 7 articulated:

> *Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines.*

On professional **skills:**

KGT 8 expressed:

> *Having skills in systematic observations and proper documentations of children's work, activities as well as their behaviours as an early childhood teacher is important.*

Another respondent (KKGT 9) stated:

> *I think an early childhood teacher should also have various or different assessment skills or effective assessment strategies to cater for the needs and abilities of individual child.*

KGT 10 on professional skills stated:

> *Having skills in children's behaviour management and skill to evaluate children and then make decisions based on their needs.*

KGT 11 articulated:

> *Interpersonal skill that enables him or her to connect and bond with children to establish trust.*

On professional **reflective** practice:

 KGT 12 articulated:

> *Early childhood teachers should also reflect on the resources, (i.e. materials and equipment use during teaching and learning) whether they are developmental appropriate and meet the needs of all children.*

KGT 13 also stated:

> *Teachers should also reflect on their teaching methodology and whether their classroom environment encourage students to take risks during activities*

On professional reflective practice (KGT 14) also expressed:

> *Reflect on the extent to which your assessment techniques is fair and appropriate for evaluating progress and for making instructional decisions.*

The data presented suggest that teacher professional identity levels were mainly based on their individual teachers' content level in professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice.

Research Question 2: What contextual factors affect early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

This research question sought to examine the contextual factors affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity. These factors were predominantly related to the school.

Table 9: *Contextual Factors influencing early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity*

Items	SA		A		SD		D		Mean	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
How my colleagues relate with me and the experiences we share influences my professional identity as an early childhood practitioner	70	43.8	35	21.9	15	9.4	40	25.0	2.843	1.231
The nature of the learner population (class size) influences my professional identity as an early childhood teacher.	63	39.4	39	24.4	12	7.5	46	28.7	2.743	1.250
My head or administrator's style and perceptions about early childhood education influences my professional identity as a teacher.	116	72.5	41	25.6	2	1.3	1	.6	3.700	.523
My own experiences as a teacher influence my professional identity as a teacher.	109	68.1	43	26.9	6	3.8	2	1.3	3.618	.623
The nature of my working environment as a teacher affects my professional identity as a teacher	96	60.0	24	15.0	29	18.1	11	6.9	3.281	.991
The provision and availability of resources needed for teaching and learning influences my professional identity as a teacher.	93	58.1	37	23.1	4	2.5	26	16.3	3.231	1.100
My engagement in in-service and workshops influences my professional identity as a teacher.	132	82.5	11	6.9	3	1.9	14	8.8	3.631	.894
Parents and society's perceptions about me affects my	129	80.6	29	18.1	1	.6	1	.6	3.787	.466

professional identity as an early childhood practitioner	

N=160   Source: field data, 2018

Table 9 shows a description of the contextual factors affecting early childhood teachers' professional identity. Table 9 shows that majority of respondents (105, 65.7%, M=2.843) agreed that how their colleagues relate with them and the experiences they share influences their professional identity as early childhood practitioners. One hundred and two respondents representing 63.8% with a mean value of 2.743 (102, 63.8%, M=2.743) agreed that the nature of the learner population (class size) affect their professional identity as an early childhood teacher. Majority of early childhood teachers strongly agreed that their head or administrator's styles and perceptions about Early Childhood Education is a contextual factor influences their professional identity as an early childhood practitioner as shown in table 4.7 (157, 98.1%, M =3.700). Concerning their own experiences as teacher influencing their professional identity (152, 95%, M=3.618) of respondents strongly agree.

Table 9 suggests that (120, 75%, M=3.281) agreed that the nature of their working environment as early childhood teacher is a contextual factor affects their professional identity. One hundred and thirty respondents representing 81.2% with a mean value of 3.181 (130, 81.2%, M=3.281) agreed that the provision and availably of resources needed for teaching and learning is a contextual factor affecting their professional identity as teacher in early childhood centers.

Many of the respondents (142, 89.4%, M=3.631) strongly agreed that their engagement in in-service and workshops influences their professional identity. With regard to parents and society's perceptions about them (158, 98.7%, M=3.787) strongly suggested that it affect their professional identity as an early childhood teacher. From the data presented, it could be inferred that contextual factors influencing early

107

childhood teachers' professional identity were related to school environment, nature of the school administrators, engagement in in-service and workshops, experiences as a teacher, emotional state, nature of working environment as a teacher, parents and society's perceptions and periodical shifts in policies.

The result (158, 98.7%, M=3.787) indicates that parents and society's perceptions about the early childhood teacher seems to be the strongest contextual predictor of professional identity next to that is administrator's style and perceptions. Engagement in in-service and workshops and teacher experiences where also revealed as strong factors affecting early childhood identity. Thus, even though administrator's style and perceptions, engagement in in-service training and teacher experiences are all contextual predictors of professional identity, the results of the current study showed that the impact of parents and society's perceptions about the early childhood teacher is more conspicuous with professional identity. This is an indication that parents and society's perceptions about the early childhood teacher if positive played a very significant role in helping early childhood teachers and consequently impacting on their professional identity.

4.4   Contextual Factors

According to the qualitative data gathered, there were other contextual factors like nature of salary, lack of recognition, social regard and learner hygiene possess a challenge to professional identity. The data revealed that the respondents emphasized on the low nature of their remunerations and complained about the challenges they face in catering for the learners as not equivalent to the salary paid them. The data suggest that early childhood teachers expect to be paid higher than they are currently receiving to boost their morale to actively assist the children learn and develop. The data also revealed that teachers had a significant problem with the social regard of their role as

teachers in the early childhood sector, this, they claimed affects their professional identity the most. The data shows that teachers claimed that because of the low remunerations and the social stigma associated with been an early childhood teacher it affects their professional identity. The data further suggested that teachers' perception of children's hygiene practices was also considered as factor influencing teacher identity. The respondents highlighted that the negative general perception or societal perception of teachers working with children and the social regard for people who work in such environments is not encouraging.

KGT 15 shared his experience:

> *It is very shameful especially for us the male teachers to introduce one's self as a teacher in the Kindergarten. It feels like you are a big failure, though I love the children, there is a general social perception about us which is based on gender discrimination and disrespect.*

KGT 16 stated:

> *The salary too is not the best at all looking at the nature and demands of the work.*

Another respondent KGT 17 articulated:

> *What even kills my spirit for the work is the hygiene practices of the parents of these children. Sometimes we go through a lot to ensure that children are well clean and ready to learn and play with their colleagues. How can I feel good about my job? or form a positive attitude and identity about myself?*

KGT 18 also commented:

> *Though as a mother, I cope with all the needs of the children in the school, sometimes it becomes unbearable. The most annoying aspect of the whole thing is the paid. The salary is so scanty compared to the time we leave school; we cannot even sell or do some other business to complement the work we do.*

KGT 19 also expressed:

> *It is very difficult for us to form a positive identity especially with the kind of negative social perception and regard we receive.*

A respondent KGT 20 stated:

> It difficult for even us the females to willingly accept in public that we are KG teachers, how much more the men. I believe without any proper restructuring by government, there will be less men in the job.

KGT 21 also said:

> I believe that because most women are now working, their inability to care for their infants has created the early childhood.5 department. Though some of us are working so hard to make sure that these children are well cared for, it quite difficult. The children are not well kept in the house and sometimes it poses a challenge to our work. The salary and the social regard are some of the significant deterrence to a positive professional identity.

The data presented suggest that other contextual factors like low remuneration, lack of recognition, social regard and learner hygiene possess a challenge to professional identity.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges influencing early childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana? This research question sought to identify the various challenges that influence the professional identity of Early Childhood teachers' identity.
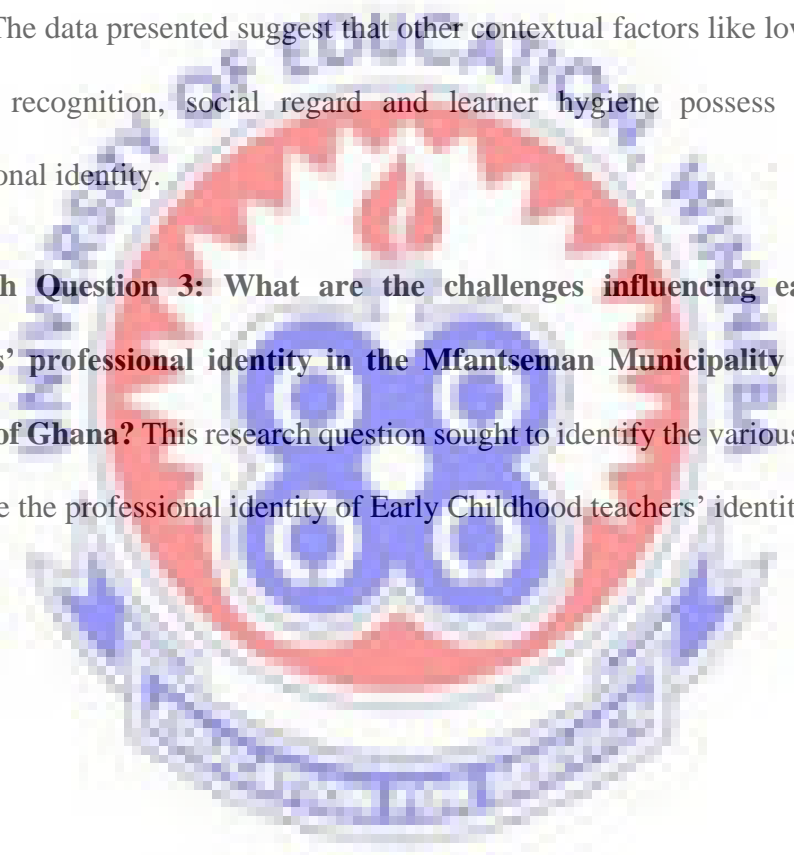
Table 10: Challenges Affecting Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity

Items	SA		A		SD		D		Mean	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
The continues undervaluing of early childhood Teachers affects me.	82	51.2	28	17.5	31	19.4	19	11.9	3.081	1.087
The underestimation of the early childhood teachers' services possesses a challenge to me	62	38.8	42	26.3	44	27.5	12	7.5	2.962	.983
Early childhood services do not carry the social status that accompanies other occupations and this possess a challenge to my identity as a teacher	114	71.3	24	15.0	6	3.8	16	10.0	3.475	.964
The low status of early childhood education has long been associated with untrained women who love and care for children and his affects me	109	68.1	44	27.5	-	-	7	4.4	3.593	.711
Traditional alignment of childcare with the role of mothering hinders me	70	43.8	54	33.8	8	5.0	25	15.6	3.112	1.087
The view that early childhood education is for low academic achievers possess a challenge to me	104	65.0	36	22.5	19	11.9	1	.6	3.5188	.72660
My personal description of myself as little more than babysitters affects me.	-	-	150	93.8	9	5.6	1	.6	3.925	.327
The poor facilities and infrastructure possess a challenge to me.	22	13.8	59	36.9	6	3.8	72	45.0	2.212	1.178
Challenges influencing my identity is compounded by the highly gendered nature of the sector which is hyper-feminine.	59	36.9	71	44.4	29	18.1	1	.6	3.175	.740
The inadequate supply of teaching learning materials to supports teaching and learning possess a challenge to me.	115	71.9	32	20.0	12	7.5	1	.6	3.631	.650

N=160

Table 10 shows a description of the various challenges influencing early childhood teachers' professional identity. Table 4.4 shows that (120, 68.7%, M=3.081) agreed to the notion that, the continues under valuing of Early Childhood Teachers is a challenge that affect their professional identity. One hundred and four respondents presenting 51.1% with a mean value of 2.962 (104, 51.1%, M=2.962) suggested that the underestimation of the early childhood teachers' services possesses a challenge to their professional identity. Majority of the respondents (135, 86.3%, M= 3.475) agreed that Early Childhood services do not carry the social status that accompanies other occupation and that possess a challenge to their professional identity as Early Childhood teachers.

Concerning the low status of early childhood education that has long been associated with untrained women who love and care for children one hundred and fifty – three representing 95.6% with a mean value of 3. (153, 95.6%, M= 3.593) agreed it is a challenge influencing their professional identity. Majority of respondents (124, 77.6%, M= 3.112) agreed that the traditional alignment of childcare with the role of mothering hinders their professional development. One hundred and forty respondents representing 87.5 with a mean value of 3.5188 agreed that the view that early childhood education is for low academic achievers possess a challenge to their professional identity.

Majority of respondents (150, 93.8%, M=3.925) strongly agreed that their personal description of themselves as little more than babysitters affects their identity as early childhood teacher. Concerning the poor facilities and infrastructure possessing challenge to respondents professional identity, (81, 50.7%, M=2.212) disagreed. Majority of respondents (130, 81.3%, M=3.175) agreed that challenges influencing their identity was compounded by the highly gendered nature of the sector which is

hyper-feminine. Table 10 further shows that one hundred and fifteen respondents representing 71.9% with a mean value of 3.631 (115, 71.9%, M=3.631) strongly agreed that inadequate supply of teaching learning materials to supports teaching and learning possess a challenge to them.

It could be deduced from the data that Early Childhood services not carrying the social status that accompanies other occupations. The low status of Early Childhood education has long been associated with untrained women. Traditional alignment of childcare with the role of mothering, the view that Early Childhood education is for low academic achievers. The culture of passion perceived as anti-intellectual, idealistic, objective, indecisive and feminine. Inadequate supply of teaching learning materials to supports teaching and learning possess challenges affecting Early Childhood Teachers professional identity.

The findings of the study enumerate the perceived challenges affecting Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The data revealed that the describing of oneself as a babysitter is perceived most challenging to Early Childhood teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality. The data also showed that inadequate supply of teaching learning materials to supports teaching and learning prove to be a real challenge affecting the Early Childhood profession in the Mfantseman Municipality. The low status of Early Childhood education has long been associated with untrained women who love and care for children was also a strong factor affecting Early Childhood teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality. Personal description of self as little more than babysitters was the most prevalent challenge affecting Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the central Region of Ghana. The reality of describing oneself as a babysitter is not motivating to enhance instructional delivery.

113

4.5   Challenges

Conferring to the qualitative data, it was revealed that low social regard for Early Childhood teachers, social perception of people involved in child care, lack of infrastructure, facilities and teacher learning materials, and attitude of parents were some of the various enlisted challenges of the respondents. The data revealed that majority of the members of society perceived Early Childhood education as work for less intelligent teachers who do not have the requisite skills and capabilities to teacher in higher grades. The data revealed that there was a general acceptance of Early Childhood classroom as designated to women in their late years. The data also highlighted that most public schools lack proper infrastructure and teacher learner materials to complement the work of the teaching staff. These challenges coupled with the negative attitude of some parents of wards in the school influences the identity formation of the respondents in the various sampled schools of the study. The data showed that they perceive their job as sub- standard with some respondents wanting to opt out if they are offered better positions.

KGT 22 commented:

> *There are many challenges influencing our self-esteem as Early Childhood teachers. The chief amongst it is the lack of infrastructure and teacher learner materials. Without these facilities, we are classified as baby sitters and that is very difficult to refuse.*

KGT 23 also said:

> *These are the formative ages of the child and they need care. There is also the social regard and gender preference of the parents of these wards. How can I develop a positive regard for myself as a teacher, it's a matter of time, we will all leave the job?*

114

KGT 24 accounted:

A major problem we face here is infrastructure and furniture and these are also very important to aid teaching and learning. Another problem has to do with parents; because the government says free education, parents do not want to supply their children with anything and this is a major challenge.

Another KGT 25 accounted:

Some of the parents make our work difficult, they regard us as untrained and they make comments to that effect. Sometimes they refuse to provide the necessary hygiene products to keep the children clean. There is no respect for us, they sometimes come to insult us when children misbehave and we discipline. That shows the level of social regard for the job. How do I form a positive identity out of such a situation?

KGT 26 expressed herself:

Though working with children is fun and the job is emotional rewarding, it difficult when there are no appropriate facilities, materials and tools to execute the work.

KGT 27 commented that:

Some of the parents' attitude is also challenge. They feel that we are not doing our best to assist the children learn.

KGT 28 also expressed that:

Basically, the predominant negative regard of society for Early Childhood is what makes it more difficult for us to develop a positive personal identity.

KGT 29 stated:

It is perceived as a field for the less intelligent. Even in university, we were regarded as one of the cheapest departments, and thus the social perception. What can I do to change it? And yes, it affects my identity development.

The data presented reveal that low social regard for Early Childhood teachers, social perception of people involved in child care, inadequate/lack of infrastructure, facilities and teacher learning materials, and attitude of parents were amongst the various challenges faced by Early Childhood teachers in the metropolis.

115

Research Question 4: What is the role of professional development in Early Childhood teachers' identity formation in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana? This research question sought to look at the role of professional development in Early Childhood teacher identity formation.

Table 11: Role of Professional Development in Early Childhood teachers' Identity Formation

Items	SA		A		SD		D		Mean	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
My professional development as a teacher is important in influencing my decision-making process about me	109	68.1	9	5.6	19	11.9	23	14.4	3.28	1.143
My perceptions as a teacher about my own identity as professional educator influences my professional development	86	53.8	32	20.0	13	8.1	29	18.1	3.09	1.159
Professional development enables me to deal with situations in and outside of their classroom and school environments	71	44.4	36	22.5	14	8.8	34	21.3	2.99	1.231
Knowledge of my identity perceptions helps me to cope with educational challenges and changes.	55	34.4	37	23.1	43	26.9	25	15.6	2.76	1.090
Self-perception of their professional development, if seen in a positive light, can override dissatisfaction with poor working conditions	98	61.3	20	12.5	18	11.3	24	15.0	3.20	1.137
Through in-service training, my professional identity as a teacher is significantly improved.	37	23.1	43	26.9	19	11.9	61	38.1	2.35	2.99
As a result of higher education, my professional identity as a teacher is significantly improved.	72	45.0	42	26.3	18	11.3	28	17.5	3.19	1.231
My years of experience and exposure improves my professional identity as a teacher.	6	3.8	108	67.5	31	19.4	15	9.4	3.12	1.211

N=160 Source: Field data, 2018

Table 11 shows a description of the role of professional development in Early Childhood teachers' identity formation. Able 11 reveals that one hundred and eighteen respondents representing 73.7% with a mean value of 3.28 (118, 73.7%, M=3.28) agreed that their professional development as a teacher is important in influencing their decision-making process. One hundred and eighteen of the respondents (118, 73.8%, M= 3.09) stated that their perceptions as teachers about their own identity as professional educators affect their professional development. Many of the respondents (107, 66.9%, M=2.99) suggested that professional development enables them to deal with situations in and outside of their classroom and school environments. Concerning Knowledge of teachers' identity perceptions helping them to cope with educational challenges and changes, (92, 57.5%, M=2.76) of the respondents agree with the statement.

Table 11 shows that (118, 73.8%, M=3.20) of the respondents agreed that self-perception of their professional development, if seen in a positive light, can override dissatisfaction with poor working conditions. Eighty of the respondents representing 50.0% with a mean value of 2.35 disagreed that through in-service training, their professional identity as teachers has significantly improved. One hundred and fourteen of the respondents representing 71.3% with a mean value of 3.19 (114, 71.3%, M=3.19) stated that as a result of higher education, their professional identity as teacher is significantly improved. With regard to years of experience and exposure improving professional identity as a teacher, (114, 71.3%, M=3.12) agreed that years of experience and exposure improves professional identity as Early Childhood teachers.

It could be inferred from the data that the role of professional development in Early Childhood teachers' identity formation were related to professional development

117

as a teacher was important in influencing personal decision-making process. Professional development enables teachers to deal with situations in and outside of their classroom and school environments. Knowledge of teacher identity perceptions helps them to cope with educational challenges and changes. Self-perception of teacher professional development, if seen in a positive light, can override dissatisfaction with poor working conditions.

4.6   Role of Professional Development

The qualitative data gathered showed that higher education relating to professional development was seen as a positive means to educate teachers in improving their personal professional identity. The data revealed that respondents have absolute confidence in professional development as a significant factor in their identity formation. The data highlighted that periodic in-service training, workshops, seminars, conferences and outreach programmes on Early Childhood improved methodologies of Early Childhood programmes are a significant means of improving on the identity formation of the teachers. The data further suggested that higher education and better remuneration was perceived as a sure means of developing a positive professional identity. It was evident that through these programmes, teachers are given ample education on the need for positive re-evaluation of the Early Childhood department and the establishment of proper teacher identity is achieved.

KGT 30 articulated:

> *There is always the need for improvement especially in our kind of job.*
> *There is always the introduction of new technologies and pedagogies to*

improve teaching and learning. These technologies bring some sanity and respect to our job. Again, through periodic in-service training, workshops, seminars, conferences and outreach programmes, we get the chance to improve. But I believe that professional experience also influences professional identity a lot.

KGT 31 stated:

It quite excellent to participate in periodic in-service training, outreach programmes, conferences and workshops, and seminars. It helps to be updated on pertaining issues on Early Childhood.

KGT 32 expressed:

It also improves the professional identity in the sense that, after a second degree, no matter how bad you feel about your profession, you would be regarded as a senior in all circles of life. I have had that experience and I believe higher education is the way forward.

KGT 33 commented:

It is also good to read current researched work or journals on Early Childhood education.

The data revealed that periodic in-service training, workshops, seminars, conferences and outreach programmes were considered as possible factors for improving teacher identity formation. Higher education was also regarded as a greater contributor to teacher professional identity formation.

119

4.7   Testing Hypothesis

The following hypothesis were tested:

1. **H₀:** There is no statistically significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity among male and female teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

    H₁: There is a significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity among male and female teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

T-test

Group Statistics

Table 12: T-Test of Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity in Terms of Gender

	Gender of the Respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional Id.	Male	38	127.9737	4.76750
	Female	122	128.3115	5.50594

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	T	Df
Professional Id	Equal variances assumed	.495	.483	-.340	158
	Equal variances not assumed			-.367	70.412

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Professional Id	Equal variances assumed	.734	-.33779	.99245
	Equal variances not assumed	.715	-.33779	.92012

*Significant (p < 0.05); **Highly Significant (p < 0.001)
Source: Field Data (2018)

120

To determine if Early Childhood teachers professional identity differs in terms of gender, a t-test analysis was carried out on Early Childhood teachers professional identity to test hypothesis one. The data show that the male teachers had a mean score of (*M=127.97; SD=4.77*) while the female teachers had a mean score of *(M=128.31; SD=5.51*). It could be observed from the results that even though the relationship is negative, it did not reach statistical significance; hence the null hypothesis that "there would be no significant positive. Table 4.10 shows that there was no statistically significant mean difference between the level of teacher professional identity among male and female teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

2. **H₁:** There is a statistically significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity and their years of experience in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

H₀: There is no statistically significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity and their years of experience in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

Table 13: ANOVA to determine if Early Childhood teachers' level of Professional Identity differs in Terms of Years of experience

Professional Identity	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Less than a year	24	123.5417	4.93417	1.00718
1-5 years	38	128.6842	3.76402	.61060
6-10 years	26	129.9231	3.47474	.68145
11-20 years	30	130.9000	6.78919	1.23953
20 years and above	42	127.5476	4.80448	.74135
Total	**160**	**128.2313**	**5.32730**	**.42116**

ANOVA

Professional Identity					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	843.324	4	210.831	8.906	.000
Within Groups	3669.120	155	23.672		
Total	4512.444	159			

Means Plots
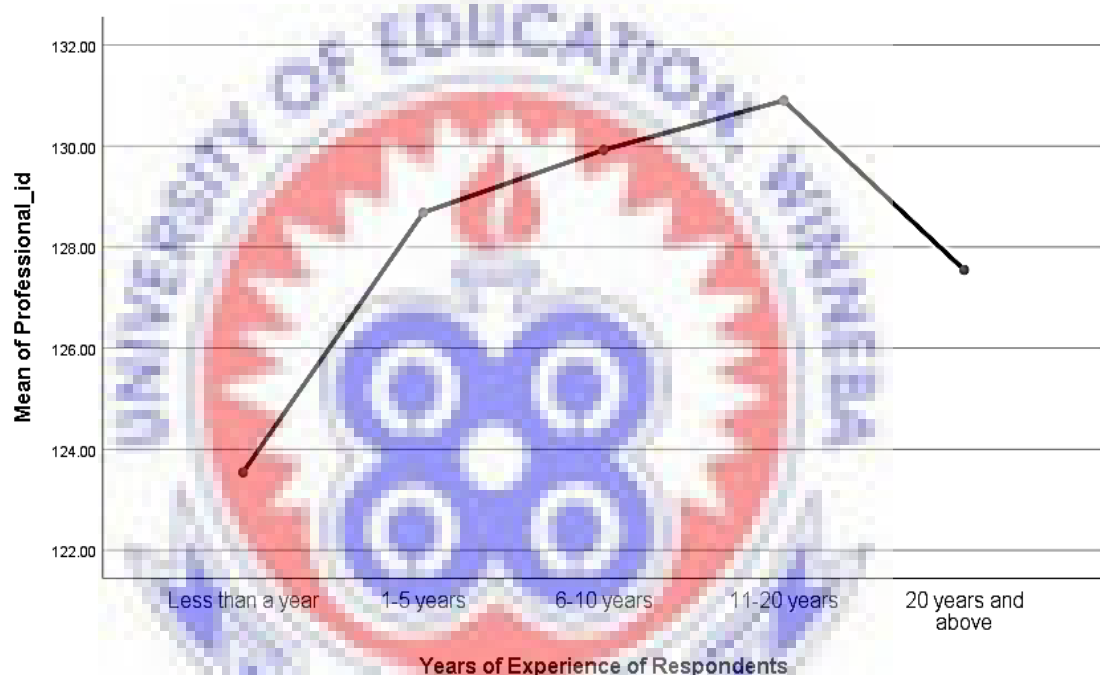
To determine if Early Childhood teachers' level of professional identity differs in terms of years of experience, a one-way ANOVA was carried out on Early Childhood teachers' level of professional development to test hypothesis two. The ANOVA is used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of three or more independent groups. With regards to this study, there were six independent groups regarding years of teaching experience such as less than 1 year, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-20 years, 20 years and above. Therefore, the means of these independent groups were compared in order to find out whether any differences existed

122

between these independent groups on the years of teaching experience of the kindergarten teachers and their professional identity.

The results as shown in Table 12 shows that there was a statistically significant difference between Early Childhood teachers' professional identity and years of teaching experience in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

The following findings emerged from the study:

1. The study revealed that Early Childhood teachers professional identity level was high and predominant variables that indicate Early Childhood professional identity were knowledge of pedagogical skills; ability to influence students' achievement; collaborative working relationship with colleagues; enthusiastic towards students; appropriate scheme of work; comprehensive lesson plans; knowledge in the subject matter; knowledge of interests of students; knowledge of psychology and knowledge of the role of Early Childhood education to society in general. The data also revealed that individual teachers' content level in professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice influenced their professional identity.

2. It emerged from the study that contextual factors influencing Early Childhood teachers' professional identity were related to school environment, nature of the school administrators, experiences as a teacher, nature of working environment and periodical shifts in policies. The data also suggested contextual factors like low remuneration, lack of recognition, parents and societal regard and learner hygiene possess a challenge to professional identity.

3. The study revealed that Early Childhood services face challenges related to not considered prestigious like other occupations; been associated with untrained women. traditional alignment of childcare with the role of mothering, the

123

attendant discourses of love and care; passion perceived as anti-intellectual, idealistic, objective, indecisive and feminine; lack of government supports and the limited knowledge, competencies, values and attitudes. low social regard for Early Childhood teachers, social perception of people involved in child care, lack of infrastructure, facilities and teacher learning materials, and attitude of parents.

4. It emerged from the study that the role of professional development in Early Childhood teachers' identity formation were related to professional development been significant in personal decision-making process; it enables teachers deal with situations in and outside of their classroom and school environments; assist in cope with educational challenges and changes; override dissatisfaction with poor working conditions and significantly improves teachers' self-worth. The data further suggested that periodic in-service training, workshops, seminars, conferences, outreach programmes and higher education were regarded as a greater contributor to teacher professional identity formation.

5. The data shows that there was no statistically significant mean difference between the level of teacher professional identity among male and female teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

6. The data also shows that there was a statistically significant difference between Early Childhood teachers' professional identity and years of teaching experience in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0   Overview

This current chapter discusses the data critically with reference to relevant literature in an attempt to explore the deeper meanings of the responses, and understand the phenomenon. In this chapter, the findings of the questionnaire were grouped to answer the relevant research questions. These research questions were:

1. What are the levels of Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

2. What contextual factors influence Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

3. What are the challenges influencing Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

4. What is the role of professional development in Early Childhood teachers' identity formation in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

The following hypotheses were also tested based on the data gathered:

5. H_O: There is no significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity among male and female kindergarten teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

H_1: There is a significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity among male and female kindergarten teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

125

6. **H₀:** There is no significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity on the basis of years of experience as Early Childhood teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

H₁: There is significant difference between the level of teacher professional identity on the basis of years of experience as Early Childhood teachers in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

5.1 Part 1: What are the Levels of Early Childhood Teachers' professional Identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

The findings for research question one indicates the following:

Generally, Early Childhood teachers' professional identity was high with their professional knowledge

According to poststructuralists, teacher identity is not a fixed set of attributes; it is not a certain something. Instead, it is contingent (changeable and conditional), meaning that somehow it can be reformed and open for reconstruction (Liu & Xu, 2011; Pavlenko, 2003; Watson, 2006). From the poststructuralists' point of view, this dynamic, ongoing process of reconstructing teacher identity and the self is all about emotions, formed and controlled by "social conventions, community scrutiny, legal norms, familial obligations, and religious injunctions" (Rose, 1998, p. 1). Thus, examination of teacher identity should occur in light of the role of emotions, power, agency, and resistance in teaching, all of which influence the construction of a teachers' identity. The study reveals that the predominant variables that indicate Early Childhood professional identity were strengths and weaknesses in terms of pedagogical skills; ability to influence students' achievement in Early Childhood; maintaining a collaborative working relationship with colleagues; being enthusiastic towards

126

students; appropriate scheme of work; preparing comprehensive lesson plans; strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge in the subject matter; knowledge of the weaknesses, strengths and interests of students; knowledge of psychology of learning and knowledge of the roles of Early Childhood education to society in general. The data also revealed that teacher professional identity levels were mainly based on their individual teachers' content level in professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice. This is consistent with literature Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) observed that identity is "both product (a result of influences on the teacher) and process (a form of ongoing interaction within teacher development)" (p. 177). Been (2012) added that identity is multifaceted and socially and culturally constructed by lived experiences throughout teachers' lives. Volkmann and Anderson (1998) asserted that "professional identity is constituted by every aspect of teaching" (p. 307). It is also connected to teachers' histories, the expectations of the school, their content knowledge, and their own vision of what it means to be a teacher.

Teachers' sense of identity may be influenced by historical, sociological, psychological, and cultural factors (Chong & Low, 2009). In addition, professional identity entails the influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people as well as what teachers perceive as important in their professional work and lives (Beijaard et al., 2004). In their study of the identity of teachers, Beijaard et al. (2004) highlighted four common characteristics of professional identity: (a) it is not a fixed entity but an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences; (b) it implies both person and context (i.e., the interaction between the person and the context is important in forming a person's identity); (c) it consists of a set of sub identities that later form a somewhat harmonious whole; and (d) agency is an important element of professional identity (i.e., teachers have to be active in the process of professional development).

127

5.2 Part 2: What Contextual Factors affect Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana?

Recent research has indicated that contextual factors may affect the shaping of teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Smagorinsky, Moore, Cook, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). According to Kelchtermans (2009), a teachers' professional identity is perceived and shaped by interaction between person and context. The study showed that contextual factors influencing Early Childhood teachers' professional identity were related to school environment, nature of the school administrators, experiences as a teacher, emotional state, nature of working environment as a teacher affects and periodical shifts in policies. The data also suggested that contextual factors like low remuneration, lack of recognition, social regard and learner hygiene possess a challenge to professional identity. This is consistent with literature contextual factors include the school environment, the nature of the learner population, the impact of colleagues and of school administrators, and teachers' own experiences as learners in schools; furthermore, "the emotion brought to the context and that generated by the context will affect this identity" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). It is important to emphasize the contextual factors that are influencing the formation of teachers' professional identity. Being aware of the context and the effects it has in the dynamic process of shaping one's identity seems crucial for teachers to develop their potential identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Even though teachers usually have no control over these factors, they may be able to negotiate their identities when being exposed to these contexts as far as they can recognize the possible situations they can encounter as teachers and the potential identities they can develop.

128

Factors such as the working environment, the influence of colleagues and impact of school administrators can all be influential in shaping teachers' identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Furthermore, with changes in the educational system, the recent emphasis on accountability, standards and assessment, among other shifts in policies, surrounding the profession, teachers find themselves having to reconstruct their identities in stressing situations (Whitty, 2008). Flores and Day (2006) noted that teachers who work in collaborative school cultures develop and express positive attitudes towards teaching. Thus, personal biographies are very significant to how teachers make sense of their practices and their beliefs about themselves as teachers and also their teacher identity. Teachers' images about themselves and their perceptions of their identities can also be influenced by the way they are perceived or stereotyped in professional contexts, especially when they are members of minority cultural groups (Milner & Hoy, 2003).

5.3 Part 3: What are the Challenges affecting Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

The professional identity of the sector is also impeded by the diverse descriptors applied to those working within the sector. For instance, Adams (2005) identified 11 such terms in a Scottish study, while Moloney (2010b) identified 20 terms associated with the workforce in Ireland. Moloney claims that professional demarcation in Early Childhood Education remains ambiguous and cites a multitude of terms associated with the sector including "childcare assistant", ''crèche worker", ''pre-school teacher" and "practitioner". The study suggested that Early Childhood services do not carrying the social status that accompanies other occupations. The low status of Early Childhood Education as long been associated with untrained women. Traditional alignment of

129

childcare with the role of mothering, the attendant discourses of love and care. The culture of passion perceived as anti-intellectual, idealistic, objective, indecisive and feminine.

The lack of government supports to achieve the qualifications that equip teachers and the knowledge, competencies, values and attitudes were some of the challenges influencing Early Childhood Teachers professional identity. The data also showed that low social regard for Early Childhood teachers, social perception of people involved in child care, lack of infrastructure, facilities and teacher learning materials, attitude of parents and low patronage of public Early Childhood centers were amongst the various challenges faced by Early Childhood teachers in the metropolis. This is consistent with literature notwithstanding the myriad of progressive initiatives discussed thus far, work within the Early Childhood Education sector continues to be undervalued and underestimated (Moloney, 2010, 2011, Moloney and Pope, 2012, OECD, 2006). It does not carry the social status that accompanies other occupations; teaching and medicine (OECD, 2006), law and academia for example (Hanlon, 1998, Hoi Choi-Wa Dora, 2006). The low status of Early Childhood Education has long been associated with untrained women who love and care for children (Lobman & Ryan, 2007, OECD, 2006). Dalli (2002) argues that the traditional alignment of childcare with the role of mothering, and the attendant discourses of love and care, disempower Early Childhood practitioners from claiming professional status.

Similarly, Siraj-Blatchford declares that practitioner disillusionment is justified, when their role is seen as synonymous with "care" in general, and when they perceive themselves to be treated merely as unskilled child-minders 1993:396). Similarly,

Moloney (2010) found that practitioners described themselves as little more than babysitters.

However, both Moloney (2011) and Dalli (2006b), claim that the discourses of love and care persistently arise in practitioner's own descriptions of their work with young children. Indeed, while Moyles urges practitioners to be passionate about their work, she warns that a ''culture of passion can be perceived as anti-intellectual, idealistic, objective, indecisive and feminine'' (2001:86). Passion can therefore become the antithesis of professional identity. However, Dalli (2006b) claims that passion for one's work may be used positively, suggesting that the time has come to revise notions of love and care so that they may be transformed into pedagogical and political tools.

5.4   Part 4: What is the role of Professional Development in Early Childhood Teachers' Identity Formation in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana?

Teacher identity formation is important in influencing teachers' decision-making, professional lives, motivation, satisfaction, commitment, and career decisions. When considering the increasing teacher attrition rates in the Unites States (an estimated 30-50% of new teachers leave the field within their first five years, Ingersoll, 2003; Quality Counts, 2000), it is easy to understand the critical role teacher identity plays in recruitment, preparation, and retention of the teaching workforce, as well as the need to study teacher identity and the factors that contribute to its successful and less successful development. The study revealed that the role of professional development in Early Childhood teachers' identity formation were related to professional development as a teacher was important in influencing personal decision-making process. Professional development enables teachers to deal with situations in and outside of their classroom and school environments. Knowledge of teacher identity

131

perceptions helps them to cope with educational challenges and changes. Self-perception of teacher professional development, if seen in a positive light, can override dissatisfaction with poor working conditions. And Through in-service training, professional identity as a teacher could be significantly improved. The data suggested that revealed that periodic in-service training, workshops, seminars, conferences and outreach programmes were considered as possible factors for improving teacher identity formation. Higher education was also regarded as a greater contributor to teacher professional identity formation. this is consistent with literature An examination of the research literature about teacher identity indicates that teachers' perceptions of their own identities as professional educators have been shown to influence their development as well as their ability to deal with situations in and outside of their classroom and school environments (Beijaard et al., 2000). "Teachers' talk about and experience of professional identity are central to the beliefs, values, and practices that guide their engagement, commitment, and actions in and out of the classroom" (Cohen, 2010, pp.473). Indeed, knowledge of teachers' professional identity perceptions may help them cope with educational challenges and changes (Beijaard, et. al, 2000). Recognizing and addressing these perceptions may also help teacher education professionals, classroom teachers, and school administrators accommodate and attend to career-related tensions. Moore and Hoffman (1988) found that a teachers' self-perception of their professional identity, if seen in a positive light, can override dissatisfaction with poor working conditions. Flores and Day (2006) cited research that implies tension in the first few years of teaching as professionals work to make a place for themselves in the education world.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0   Overview

This is the final chapter, which comprises an ephemeral overview of the study, emphasising on the major findings to draw conclusions. This chapter also dealt with the recommendations of the study and suggested areas for future research.

6.1   Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine the perception of Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. To achieve this purpose, the following objectives were formulated:

1. To ascertain the levels of Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

2. To identify contextual factors influencing Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

3. To determine the challenges influencing Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

4. To examine the role of professional development in Early Childhood teachers' identity formation in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

To achieve these objectives, the study the study was underpinned by the pragmatist paradigm of knowledge acquisition. The study adopted concurrent triangulation mixed method design purposive sampling technique was employed to sample 160 respondents for the study; a structured with some open-ended questionnaire

133

was used to gathered data. Data was analysed descriptively and thematically. The following emerged from the study.

6.2   Key Findings of the Study

The following findings emerged from the study:

1. The study revealed that Early Childhood teachers' professional identity levels were high on all the four indictors: professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice. Predominant variables that indicate Early Childhood professional identity were knowledge of pedagogical skills; ability to influence students' achievement; collaborative working relationship with colleagues; enthusiastic towards students; appropriate scheme of work; comprehensive lesson plans; knowledge in the subject matter; knowledge of interests of students; knowledge of psychology and knowledge of the role of Early Childhood education to society in general. The data also revealed that individual teacher's content level in professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice influenced their professional identity.

2. It emerged from the study that contextual factors influencing Early Childhood teachers' professional identity were related to school environment, nature of the school administrators, experiences as a teacher, emotional state, nature of working environment and periodical shifts in policies. The data also suggested contextual factors like low remuneration, lack of recognition, social regard and learner hygiene possess a challenge to professional identity.

3. The study revealed that Early Childhood services face challenges related to not considered prestigious like other occupations; been associated with untrained women. traditional alignment of childcare with the role of mothering, the

134

attendant discourses of love and care; passion perceived as anti-intellectual, idealistic, objective, indecisive and feminine; lack of government supports and the limited knowledge, competencies, values and attitudes. low social regard for Early Childhood teachers, social perception of people involved in child care, lack of infrastructure, facilities and teacher learning materials, attitude of parents and low patronage of public Early Childhood centers.

4. It emerged from the study that the role of professional development in Early Childhood teachers' identity formation were related to professional development being significant in personal decision-making process; it enables teachers deal with situations in and outside of their classroom and school environments; assist in coping with educational challenges and changes; override dissatisfaction with poor working conditions and significantly improves teachers' self-worth. The data further suggested that periodic in-service training, workshops, seminars, conferences, outreach programmes and higher education were regarded as a greater contributor to teacher professional identity formation.

6.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study:

1. It could be concluded that, generally Early Childhood teachers' identity levels were high on all the four indictors: professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice and that individual teacher's content level in professional knowledge, professional values, professional skills and reflective practice influenced their professional identity.

2. It could also be concluded that teachers were influenced by contextual factors stemming from school environment, societal perception, individual preferences,

135

renumeration and lack of logistics. If these factors are significantly improved, there would be improvement in teachers' professional identity.

3. The study further concluded that challenges faced by Early Childhood teachers were mainly, infrastructure, social perception and regard, stake holder attitude and neglect. These pertinent issues if abated could significantly reduce the challenges faced by the teachers in their identity formation.

4. The study concluded that professional development through higher education and refresher programmes were concluded as significant contributors to proper professional identity formation. The introduction of these programmes could improve the teacher identity formation of the Early Childhood professional.

6.4 Recommendations of the Study

The following recommendations were drawn based on the findings of the study:

1. The Mfantseman municipality in collaboration with the educational directorate and sampled schools authorities should organize comprehensive in-service training programmes on the professional identity indicators to enable teachers continue to keep their professional identity high. Teachers should be exposed to the new National Teachers' Standards which indicated various competencies that need to be developed in each of these areas.

2. The Mfantseman municipality in collaboration with the educational directorate and sampled schools authorities with help from Parent Teacher Association to effectively deal with the contextual factors that affect Early Childhood centers which in then affect the development of teachers' professional identity as identity is not static. Teachers should also be educated on the various personal contextual factors and their effect on their professional identity.

3. The Mfantseman municipality in collaboration with the educational directorate and the sampled schools authorities should come to an agreement with help from parents, the community and other relevant authorities (NGOs) to effectively organise fund raising to support the various schools to put up infrastructure and acquire the needed teacher-learner materials to improve the status of the schools which would help improve their professional identity. The parent teacher association should also assist the school and change the perception of their members of the community towards Early Childhood teachers.

4. The Mfantseman municipality in collaboration with the educational directorate through their training units should help kindergarten teachers upgrade themselves through periodic in-service training, workshops, seminars, conferences, outreach programmes to enhance and update their skills in Early Childhood education theory and practice.

6.5   Suggestions for Future Research

This present study sought to investigate the perceptions of Early Childhood teachers' professional identity in the Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. Future studies should consider employing mixed method designs with the use of inferential statistics to establish the statically significance of the professional identity in relation to social perception, individual competence and love for the profession. Future studies should consider the general perception of male teachers in the Early Childhood sector. Professional development should also be assessed to reveal its contribution to professional identity formation.

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149

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151

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
P. O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana   ece-@uew.edu.gh
+233 (020) 2041072
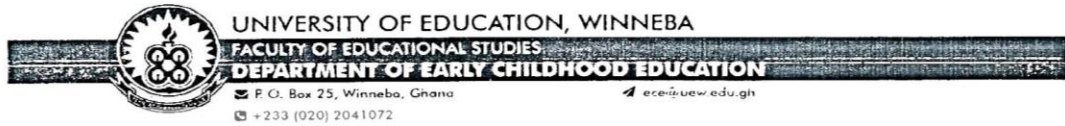
FES/DECE/S.6

Dear Sir/Madam,

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

The bearer of this letter, Ms./Mr./Mrs./Rev./Sis./.Bismark N. Akanzire... with index number.8160190010... is a Second Year M.Phil student in the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Education, Winneba.

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

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

SAMUEL OPPONG FRIMPONG (PH.D)
AG. HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

DEPT. OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATIO
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION
P. O. BOX 25
WINNEBA

www.uew.edu.gh

155

APPENDIX B

Introductory Letter from GES

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

In/case of reply the
Number and date of this
Letter should be quoted

Ref. No.: GES/SP.173/SF.I/VOL.II/174
Your Ref.:
TEL: 042 94351 / 028 9670606
Email: mfdges@yahoo.com

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Mfantseman Municipal Directorate,
Post Office Box 83,
SALTPOND.

14th September , 2018

Dear sir/madam

ATTN: SALTPOND AND DOMINASE SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

This is to introduce you to Mr. Bismark N. Akanzire who is a second year MPhil student in the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Education, Winneba.

He is to collect data as part of the requirement for him to complete his course at the university.

I would be very grateful if you would give him the necessary assistance to facilitate his work.

Counting on your usual co-operation

(MRS MARTHA ACQUAH)
MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
MFANTSEMAN

156

APPENDIX C

Teacher Professional Identity Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

This questionnaire is meant to gather data for a study being conducted by Bismark Nyaaba Akanzire a student from the university named above in connection with an MPhil thesis titled: *Early Childhood teachers perception of their professional identity: The Case Of Selected District in Central Region '* The information you provide will help researchers and policy makers understand the extent to which the level to which your perception influence your professional identity development in all other respect, however, the data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Should the data be published, your identity will not be disclosed. Taking part in this study is voluntary. However, if you decide to be part, you are kindly requested to read through the items and respond to them as frankly and objectively as possible. Thanks for being part of this study.

SECTION A: Demographic Information
Please place a tick (√) in the appropriate box

1. **Gender**
a) Male   [   ]
b) Female   [   ]

2. **Age**
a) 21- 25   [   ]
b) 26 – 30   [   ]
c) 31 – 35   [   ]
d) 36 – 40   [   ]
e) 41 – 45   [   ]
f) 46 – 50   [   ]
g) 51 – 55   [   ]

h) 56 – 60   [   ]
   Professional qualification
a) Cert 'A' 3-years   [   ]
b) Cert. in Pre-school Education   [   ]
c) Diploma in Basic Education   [   ]
d) Diploma in Early Childhood Education   [   ]
e) Degree in Basic Education   [   ]
f) Degree in Early Childhood Education   [   ]
g) Post Graduate Diploma in Education   [   ]
h) Master Degree in Education   [   ]

157

i) Any other   [   ] ………………………..
3. Years of experience
Less than a year   [   ]
1-5years   [   ]
6-10 years   [   ]
11-20 years   [   ]
20 years and above   [   ]

SECTION B: Levels of Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity

*Please these items are related to levels of Early Childhood teachers' beliefs about themselves as Early Childhood practitioner (**professional identity**). By use of a tick, please indicate whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) or (SD) strongly disagree with the following statements.*

No	Indicates	SD	D	SA	A
	The ideal Early Childhood teacher should demonstrate the following professional knowledge				
1	Strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge in the subject matter / themes				
2	Knowledge of the weaknesses, strengths and interests of children under him/her				
3	Knowledge of psychology of learning as it relates to the teaching of Early Childhood learners				
4	Knowledge of current trends and developments in the teaching of Early Childhood learners				
5	Knowledge of the roles of Early Childhood education to society in general				
6	Knowledge of suitable curriculum materials for Early Childhood Education				
7	Method of inquiring in Early Childhood Education				
	The ideal Early Childhood teacher should demonstrate the following professional values				
7	A positive attitude towards the discipline at all times.				
8	Belief in his/her ability to influence children's achievement at the Early Childhood level.				
9	Maintaining a collaborative working relationship with his/her colleagues at work.				
10	Demonstrating passion and commitments in teaching children				
11	Respecting children's views and learner diversities				
12	Be able to inspire children's learning				
13	Emotional stability during instructional sessions.				
14	Being enthusiastic towards his/her students.				
15	Demonstrating the desire for lifelong learning and commitment to professional development				

158

	The ideal Early Childhood teacher should demonstrate the following professional Skills			
16	Assessing children's needs to help identify learning goals			
17	Selecting and using developmental appropriate activities that will make learning more interactive and engaging for children			
18	Developing and using learning resources that are suitable for the attainment of children's learning outcomes			
19	Preparing comprehensive learning plans			
20	Harmonizing instructional objectives with Early Childhood curriculum goals.			
21	conducting a review of children's entry behaviour			
22	logical delivery of themes			
23	Using instructional techniques that ensure the active involvement of learners			
24	illustrating themes concepts with appropriate examples			
25	effective class management			
26	harmonizing evaluation questions with instructional objectives			
27	Varying assessment procedures that caters for different needs of children			
28	Using appropriate communication			
	The ideal Early Childhood teacher should demonstrate the following professional Reflective Practice			
30	Achievements of Early Childhood learners			
31	Strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge in the themes			
32	Activities he/she engages children in			
33	Learning materials used			
34	Knowledge of the weaknesses, strengths and interests of children under him/her			
35	Teaching and learning techniques use in class			
36	Knowledge of psychology of learning as it relates to the teaching of Early Childhood			
37	Relationship with children and the involvement of their parents in their			
39	Knowledge of current trends and developments in the teaching of Early Childhood			
40	Assessment methods/ procedures used			
41	Knowledge of the roles of Early Childhood education to society in general			

Apart from the above stated on **professional knowledge.** What other **professional** knowledge should an ideal Early Childhood teacher demonstrate?

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Apart from the above stated on **professional values.** What other **professional values** should an ideal Early Childhood teacher demonstrate?

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Apart from the above stated on **professional skills.** What other **professional skills** should an ideal Early Childhood teacher demonstrate?

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Apart from the above stated on **reflective practice.** What other **reflective practice** should an ideal Early Childhood teacher demonstrate?

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Section C: Influence of Contextual Factors on Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity

*Please these items are related to the contextual factors that influence Early Childhood teachers' beliefs about themselves as Early Childhood practitioner (**professional identity**). By use of a tick, please indicate whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) or (SD) strongly disagree with the following statements*

No	Contextual issues	SD	D	SA	A
1	How my colleagues relate with me and the experiences we share influences my professional identity as an Early Childhood practitioner				
2	The nature of the learner population (class size) influences my professional identity as an Early Childhood teacher.				
3	My head or administrator's style and perceptions about Early Childhood education influences my professional identity as a teacher.				
4	My own experiences as a teacher influence my professional identity as a teacher.				

160

5	The nature of my working environment as a teacher affects my professional identity as a teacher				
6	The provision and availability of resources needed for teaching and learning influences my professional identity as a teacher.				
7	My engagement in in-service and workshops influences my professional identity as a teacher.				
8	Parents and society's perceptions about me affects my professional identity as an Early Childhood practitioner				

Apart from the above stated, what other **Contextual Factors** influence your professional identity as an Early Childhood teacher?

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Section D: Challenges Influencing Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identity

*Please these items are related to the challenges influencing Early Childhood teachers' beliefs about themselves as Early Childhood practitioner (**professional identity**). By use of a tick, please indicate whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) or (SD) strongly disagree with the following statements.*

No	Challenges	SD	D	SA	A
1	The continues undervaluing of Early Childhood Teachers affects me.				
2	The underestimation of the Early Childhood teachers services possess a challenge to me				
3	Early Childhood services does not carry the social status that accompanies other occupations and this possess a challenge to my feelings as a teacher				
4	The low status of Early Childhood education has long been associated with untrained women who love and care for children and his affects me				
5	Traditional alignment of childcare with the role of mothering hinders my beliefs as an Early Childhood practitioner				
6	The view that Early Childhood education is for low academic achievers possess a challenge to me				
7	My personal description of myself as little more than babysitters affects me.				
8	The poor facilities and infrastructure possess a challenge to me				
9	Challenges influencing my identity is compounded by the highly gendered nature of the sector which is hyper female dominated				
10	The inadequate supply of teaching learning materials to supports teaching and learning possess a challenge to me.				

Apart from the above stated, what other **Challenges** influence your beliefs as an Early Childhood teacher?

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Section E: The Role of Professional Development in Early Childhood Teachers' Identity Formation

Please these items are related to the role of professional development in Early Childhood teachers' identity formation. By use of a tick, please indicate whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) or (SD) strongly disagree with the following statements.

No	Role of Professional Development	SD	D	SA	A
1	My development as a teacher in Early Childhood is important in influencing my decision-making process about me				
2	My perceptions as a teacher about my own self as professional educator influences my professional development				
3	Attending seminars and workshops trainings influence my beliefs about myself as an Early Childhood practitioner				
4	Taking shot on-line courses and conferences in Early Childhood education improve my feelings towards Early Childhood education				
5	Through in-service training, my beliefs as a teacher are significantly improved.				
6	As a result of higher education, my professional identity as a teacher is significantly improved.				
7	My years of experience and exposure improve my professional identity as a teacher.				

Apart from the above stated, what other **role of Professional Development** influence your professional beliefs as an Early Childhood teacher?

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163