

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS

FOLK GAMES AND LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG CHILDREN IN
PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA



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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Aaron, Gyadu hereby 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.

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my children Emelia Ahinakwah, Bridget Anima Gyadubea, Arnold Ntir Gyadu and my dear Sister, Joana Affran.



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ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial values of folk games, how these games can develop life skills in school children and its integration in teaching and learning. The study focused on three selected districts from the central region of Ghana. Of each selected district, two basic schools were chosen for the study with teachers, parents and pupils being the target population. The convenience sampling technique under non-probability sampling was used to select the accessible subjects. However, the lottery method of the simple random sampling technique was used to select the three districts. The study followed the qualitative model by using case study and questionnaire to gather data. Moreover interviews, photographic evidence and non-participant observations were also used. Evidence from the study revealed that both teachers and parents shared positive concerns about the benefits of folk games to the development of the child's cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial development. However, the positive impact of electronic children's games on the child's development was upheld by some respondents though some identified negative effects on the child's behaviour and performance at school. Again, the study showed that children use substantial aspects of their play emulating adult roles which are essential for developing life skills. It was also found that lessons integrated with folk games in the study however yielded positive results in that pupils' interest were sustained and also were able to answer questions posed to them with little or no difficulty. It is recommended that further study should be conducted into the game culture of communities where basic schools are situated. Teachers could also factor folk games in the methodology of their teaching as well as motivate pupils to play more folk games at school. Developing manuals on educational folk games by teachers could be helpful in teaching various subjects in the Ghanaian public Basic Schools.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Since September 1987, the government of Ghana has embarked upon a new educational programme geared strategically at making education more accessible to all children of school-going age, improving equity and the quality of education as a whole and making education more relevant to the socio-economic needs of the country. This is to equip the child to live a productive and meaningful life. Since the reforms began, a number of special programmes have been introduced to deal with specific issues to enhance the teaching and learning process. The overall objectives of the education system are to play a dynamic role in the development of the nation (UNESCO, 2005).

Agyeman (1986) throws more light on the importance of basic education and writes that the ultimate goal of basic education is to transmit to the educans the patterns of behaviour; the techniques of life, the values, the beliefs, the ideas and the knowledge which that particular society has accumulated and used. As a result all children in Ghana are expected to have a congenial creative learning environment. To this end, the government has put in place clear conditions to be followed towards establishing pre-schools in Ghana. These measures spelt out the acquisition of safe and sound environment where children can access equipment that would help them to develop their psychomotor skills to keep them fit. Hence “education quality should be concerned with processes of teaching, learning, testing, managing and resourcing through in-depth qualitative investigation of such processes” (Jansen,1995.p.33).

This means that investigating into how teachers and children engage each other in the classroom learning environment in Ghanaian schools is very important to better understand how to improve the quality of education. As Jansen (1995) observed, there is an emerging paradigm of quality at the school and classroom level processes. Since there is a dedication by the government of Ghana to the improvement in the quality of education especially in public schools, the need to study quality of education as delivered at the classroom level in Ghana basic schools is of paramount importance.

Moursund (2007) states that, many people see games-in-education as an opportunity to help improve our educational system. Others see the difficulties and downsides of using or increasing the use of games in education. This clearly fits into Winston Churchill's quote that 'A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty'. He again contends that, for many people games are intrinsically motivating. However educational research suggests that intrinsic motivation contributes substantially to learning. From an educational point of view, the issues are what does one learn through playing games, how does this learning relate to helping students achieve agreed upon goals of education, and what roles should teachers and other mentors play?

Children's traditional games are an important part of the Ghanaian tradition. These games which were mostly created by children throughout centuries correspond to the needs of their development and pass from one generation to another as part of children folklore. Some of them have lost their importance in the course of time and have fallen into oblivion. Others have been modified and supplemented with new ones, either

original or adopted creation. Those games which have been preserved until today are updated in different ways and they form part of the present children's set of game.

Before the advent of computer games every society had a way of entertaining the young ones through a lot of traditional games. Apart from the entertaining aspect, it prepares them holistically towards fruitful life in future. Staempflim (2009) states that not only play is important for brain development but play also helps children develop flexible and divergent thinking which then provide children with the ability to solve real world problems. Since time immemorial, children's games have been passed from generation to generation. The daily activities of the parents and other grown-ups are what make up the major part of their play. Children will play cooking, washing mother and father, hide and seek, or house cleaning in imitation and in expectation of the life ahead of them.

The basic life skills that the child needs for healthy and independent living largely depends on how he or she is embraced in any form of traditional game found around him or her. World Health Organization (2004) defines life skills as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

Through games children learn about keeping within the limit of rules and regulations. All these elements bring to the fore components of team work. They learn to act and think faster both individually and in groups.

On realizing the benefits of traditional games to the development of the child, the researcher sought to develop a clear and detailed document on children's games to be

used in our basic schools for teaching and learning. The aim is to support all learning aspects in the school curriculum.

1.2 Statement of problem

In his speech, the African Genius, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the lustrous son of Ghana posed the question, “In what way can Ghana make its own specific contribution to the advancement of knowledge about the peoples and cultures of Africa through past history and through contemporary problem?” (Institute of African studies, 1963) For decades, education in Ghana has been based mainly on western values. This has contributed to the fact that many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds cannot see the connection between the education they received at school and their everyday experiences. This may well have contributed to the high failure rate amongst learners in the basic schools as well as the perceived difficulties they encounter in learning the subjects.

With every passing year, computer and video games are becoming increasingly popular among children in basic schools in Ghana. This has made parents and teachers wondering about the consequence of these games on their wards future lifestyle. Indulging in games that have a lot of shooting and killing is said to increase the emotion of anger in children, leading to aggressive behaviour in real life. Again, as the act of violence is rewarded in the world of gaming, the child may be motivated to repeat it in real life.

Anderson and Bushman (2001) state that, children who play more violent video games are more likely to have increased aggressive thoughts, feelings and behaviours and decreased prosocially helping. Too much video games playing makes the child socially isolated; hence the child may spend less time in other activities such as doing homework, reading, sports and interacting with the family and friends.

Modern toys on the market such as the airplanes, guns, cars, wind-up robots and the battery powered trains are all fascinating; but as the child uses for some time the novelty wears off, the child therefore becomes bored again and certainly halts development of creativity in the child. Although educational toys and games sets are coming out in today's toy market with more of the child's development process in the mind, there is nothing healthier or more inspirational than those fashioned directly from the local immediate environment. Being close to nature by exploring what is in ones immediate environment guarantees the child of a healthy development and good attitude as well.

In spite of all these, there are inadequate supportive tools to promote such skills among children in the basic schools. In the view of the researcher there is the need to develop a comprehensive behaviour change approach that concentrates on the development of skills needed for life in our school children. The researcher therefore sought to carry out this project which aimed at creating a document on traditional games to be used in the basic schools to promote the development of life skills in the children. This is going to help them to develop positive behaviours for independent living in their communities and also would foster good interpersonal relationships among them in school.

1.3 Objectives

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the following specific objectives were implemented:

1. To examine the cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial values of traditional children games.
- 2 To investigate how traditional games can develop life skills in school children.
- 3 To identify and document traditional games for school children.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to document traditional games for life skills development in the basic schools. Equally, it is to shed light on the cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial values of traditional games. Investigating how traditional games will develop life skills in school children and documentation of these games will not be left out. Based on the findings the study is positioned to make recommendations on changes in the teaching and learning in our basic schools.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What ways will traditional games help develop cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial values in children?

2. To what extent can traditional games develop life skills in children?
3. How will documentation of traditional games assist children in teaching and learning?

1.6 Significance of the study

The findings of this study are important in that they have the potential to help policy makers in the educational sector plan a curriculum that may seek the holistic development of the child. The study has open door for further research into our culture to dig out those elements that can be used to promote the development of education in Ghana.

Teachers and students in the basic schools will also find it beneficial and easy to use since the content are based on exciting traditional games found in different communities in the central region of Ghana.

1.7 Delimitation

According to Okai (2006) a study can be delimited properly if the research problem was delimited. This means that, the researcher must clearly specify the boundaries and scope of the research problem during the problem statement so that it will guide the researcher to define his or her population and the boundaries of the geographical location of the society.

The study therefore was confined to three districts in the central region of Ghana. These include, Gomoa East District, Agona West Municipal and Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam District respectively. Two Basic schools were selected from each of the selected District. The study again limited itself to traditional children's games played in the central region of Ghana and their tendency to foster cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial development in basic school children. Nonetheless, theories of play formed the basis on which the literature was reviewed. Preparation of data collection instruments and actual data collection also lasted for a period of six (6) months, which was from January to June, 2012.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This report is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is an introduction, providing background information about how traditional children's games can be used to develop cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial competencies in learners. Again how these competencies can enhance life skills development in them.

The second chapter addresses related literature based on the scope of the study confined by the research problem and research questions. The third chapter discusses information on participants and sampling techniques, sampling procedure, data collection, analysis, research design, description and distribution of instruments. The fourth chapter shows the results and findings of the research. The fifth chapter shows the integration of folk games in teaching and learning and the results. The sixth chapter discusses the findings of the research, conclusions and makes recommendations

1.9 Definition of Terms

Traditional games/ folk games: Games played by children at moonlight nights in the rural parts of Ghana.

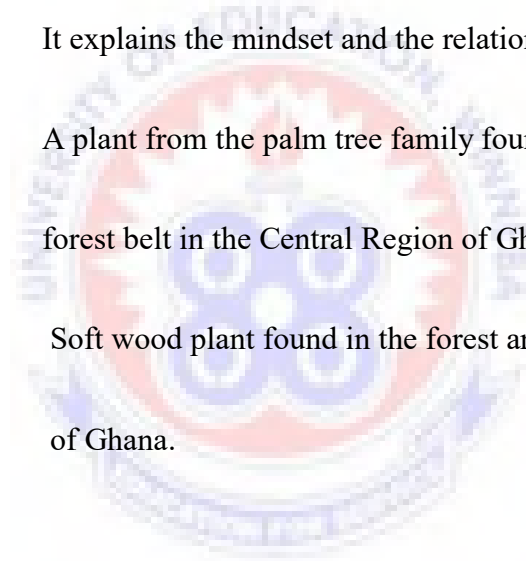
Electronic games: Any kind of digital game played using the console.

Life skills: The skills knowledge and attitudes that the individual needs to face the ups and downs in life.

Psychosocial: It explains the mindset and the relationship with others.

Adobe: A plant from the palm tree family found in marshy areas of the forest belt in the Central Region of Ghana.

Onyina: Soft wood plant found in the forest areas of the Central Region of Ghana.



1.10 Abbreviations

WHO: World Health Organization.

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

TACADE: Teachers' Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drug Education.

J.H.S: Junior High School.

TLM: Teaching and Learning Materials.

RPK: Relevant Previous Knowledge.

TV: Television.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter addresses the related literature regarding the scope of the study bounded by the research problem and research questions articulated in the previous chapter. More specifically, it is an attempt to reveal the concepts and types of games as viewed by researchers and writers based on both theoretical and empirical evidences. The former provided the background that supported the investigations and also offers the reader the justification for the study. The latter helped demonstrate thorough understanding of the field or topic understudied. The following sub-headings were discussed under the literature review.

Theoretical

- Theories of Play
- Play
- Types of play
- Cognitive development
- Psychosocial development
- Psychomotor development
- Social development

Empirical

- Concept of games
- Games and classroom learning
- Traditional children's games
- Electronic games
- The concept of life skills
- Problem solving skills
- Creative thinking

In order to ensure that the content of education is made more relevant to the realities of Ghanaian society, the cultural policy of Ghana emphasizes that, the curriculum for all subject area must contain cultural element that will enhance the learners' knowledge and appreciation of their culture and traditional values (Cultural Policy of Ghana, 2004).

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Theories of Play

Researchers place value on play from a range of disciplines including psychology, education, philosophy, and anthropology. Childhood theorists have come up with so many views as far as child's play is concerned "according to the earliest classical theory, 'surplus energy' theory, humans play when they have excess energy. Schiller, a German philosopher, defined play as 'the aimless expenditure of exuberant energy'"

(Dockett & Fler 1999, p.24). Surplus energy theory contends that humans have a finite amount of energy that is used mainly for work and survival.

Children tend to play more than adults, as children are not so involved in work and survival activity, and therefore have greater amounts of energy to expend. Discharging excess energy in play is believed to keep the body fit. While surplus energy theory acknowledges the importance of play as a human activity, its focus rests with physical play. However, children's play takes many forms, including sedentary play. In Ghana some sedentary games played include *ɔware* and *kwesida frankaah*. Indeed, some play theoreticians (Dockett and Fler 1999) have argued that play is used to restore energy—this theory of play is known as Recreation or Relaxation play theory. Like surplus energy theory, this theory relates energy levels to work, which is seen to be essentially distinct from play. From a Recreation perspective, however, play serves to restore energy that we expend in work, and engages our interest in the meantime. The two theories, surplus energy theory and recreation or relaxation play theory have only narrowed the greatest benefits of play to be only for physical development which makes both theories one sided. The benefits of play go beyond physical development. Groos (1901) argued that play develops children's physical and mental capacities that takes them to adulthood. Groos (1901) focused on play types other than physical play. For example, he considered children's enactment of adult roles and activities in what we now call pretend play, make-believe play or imaginative play. The importance of his theory (Practice for Adulthood) lies in its consideration of intellectual or cognitive benefits of play for children. Groos (1901) therefore sees play as a mechanism children use to

emulate adult responsibilities which are essential elements of developing life skills in them. However he also failed to touch on the social and emotional benefits of play.

A significant departure from these two energy-related theories of play came in the Recapitulation theory, espoused by Hall (1906). He asserted that in play, we relive our evolutionary past. For example, children enact the 'animal stage' of evolution by climbing and swinging. This may be true but play in itself takes many forms which makes it difficult to reconcile with this theory. The theory also draws on the notion of instinct, claiming that play provides the means for children to express their instincts. The expression of these instincts the theory admitted weakens them. For example, children's engagement in fight play weakens the drive to fight as an adult and so this behaviour will fade out as the child matures. The question therefore is does positive behaviours also fade out when the child becomes an adult?

Contemporary theorists Erikson, Freud, Ellis and Piaget emphasized the importance of play in the social, cognitive and emotional development of children. They considered play as a necessary and integral part of childhood. The psychoanalytic theorist, Sigmund Freud suggested the major function of play as the reduction of anxiety. According to him, the source of the child's feelings, such as anger, unreasonable fears, and sexual curiosity, were created by adult society. On the contrary, with play, the child also explores disapproved feelings without confronting adult obstruction (Hughes, 1995).

Vygotsky (1978) in his sociocultural theory opines that, play promotes abstract thought by separating meaning from objects and actions and using actions and objects in symbolic ways; play allows children to reach beyond their actual development in their

cognition and self-regulation; in play children achieve a mental representation of social roles and rules of the society.

2.1.2 Play

According to Whang (2000) play has often been described as the “the occupation of the child” and regarded as an essential part of development. In observing the daily lives of young children, it is seen that their behaviour largely consists of play in the form of free acting, in other words pleasant movement of the body. He adds that they grow through continuous movement which is a method of communication within their world, and they discover their world by the way in which it relates to their inner life and the outside world through movement. They develop their basic imagination through their bodies and the space around them. Through movement they develop postural control and various movement skills.

Play is the child’s way of learning. Through play, children receive information from the surrounding environment in order to use it in their physical and mental development. By means of play, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community. With the view of showing the direct link between play and learning, the Canadian Child Care Federation (2003) identified some possible benefits the child could acquire from playing games. These include development of the brains, learning essential social skills and to learn self respect and how to treat others with respect. Developmental benefits of play also include creativity and imagination, learning to solve problems, discovery and reasoning, symbolic thought and ability to cooperate.

Play therefore is personally directed and intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child (Mussen, 1983).

For a child, being outdoors is the only chance for exploring the world that surrounds him or her. It is the outdoors where children can freely experience their motor skills like running, jumping, climbing etc. It is also the most appropriate area for performing manipulative skills such as swinging, lifting, and balancing. In most cases, outdoors have something more than physical benefits. As children play outdoors, they are more likely to invent games and learn about the world in their own way. Vygotsky (1978) opines that learning awakens in children a variety of internal developmental processes that can operate only when they interact with more competent people in their environment and in cooperation with their peers. This simply means that as children, they learn from each other through imitation and ideas sharing.

Play is the vehicle that would help children reach their potential level from their actual level of development because through interaction with a more competent peer or adult “the child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102). Coming out with the importance of play, Brown and Vaughan (2009) state, when we stop playing, we stop developing, and when that happens, the laws of entropy take over—things fall apart.

As we strive to create the optimal development milieu for children, it remains imperative that play be included along with academic and social enrichment opportunities

and that safe environment be made available to all children. In Ghana, stake holders in education especially the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service can research into our numerous traditional games so that they can integrate them into the school curriculum to ensure the sustainability of our beautiful culture and to make learning more attractive to all children.

2.1.3 Types of Play

Contemporary studies recognize both the cognitive and social aspects of play. Some of the most widely studied children's play forms are given below:

1. Functional play (Sensorimotor play)

In functional play, the child deals with simple repetitive movements with or without objects such as rolling a ball or pulling a toy (Papalia & Olds, 1993). Sheridan (1999) identifies functional play in terms of physical development as it involves gaining strength, agility, and co-ordination. Functional play is seen in babies as soon as they begin to control their head and limbs. The repetitive nature of this play helps the child learn about properties of physical objects and about cause and effect. Information that we take for granted such as how things look like and behave are all new to children. As they play, they learn how the world works and how they can make things happen. This prepares them for learning more complex play skills and gives them the base knowledge they will need to learn academic skills later on.

Piaget (1962) saw functional play as an important mode in which a child constructs new knowledge within him or herself through active exploration with the environment and the association with one's own past experience. He also valued the role of social play in the child's social and emotional development. According to Piaget (1962) play pushes children out of egocentric thought patterns through interacting with other children in play situations by forcing them to consider the viewpoints of their playmates.

Experts believed that the goal of this kind of play is to expose curiosity and motivate children to learn more. They will achieve this if they have an interesting and challenging environment filled with materials and objects that attract them and inspire their explorations.

2. Social play

Play has a social dimension, and is seen as an important element in the development of children's social skills. This type of play involves social interaction in a group with a sense of group identity and organized activity. Corsaro and Rizzo (1988) stressed that children's interactions outside of their family, namely with their playmates, affect their development. When children create peer cultures, they transform their knowledge and practices into the knowledge and skills necessary to exist in society.

Social play provides unique child development opportunities to develop cooperation and leadership skills. During social play children develop a variety of skills, attitudes, and social relationships. Vygotsky (1978) argued that every function for a child

occurs first on a social level and then on an individual level (Corsaro & Rizzo, 1988). Their bodies, minds, and emotions become integrated through play. They are able to explore their potential without the risk of failure or ridicule sometimes present in real-life situations. In Ghana, traditional games such as *anhweakyir*, *mepamedaha*, *duaoodua* and *pilolo* which are played in groups foster unity and respect among the children. As the child develops he explores his environment, establishes relationships and acquires knowledge and skills which enable him to successfully adapt to his world. They can imagine that they are someone else, try something new, fall down and get up without fear of the consequences (Papalia & Olds, 1993). Through social play children get together, communicate, and learn social and cultural rules. One of the most influential studies on children's social play was conducted by Parten. Mildred Parten (1932) differentiated the social development of children into three levels. The first is non-social activity – unoccupied, onlooker behaviour and solitary play. The second is parallel play, which is a limited form of social participation. Children play side-by-side with similar materials, but do not talk about the play activity. The third is true social interaction including two forms of play: associative play and cooperative play. The difference between associative and cooperative play is that in associative play children engage in separate activities but interact with each other about the activity; whereas in cooperative play children act together towards a common goal such as a project or a make-believe theme. A clear example of cooperative play among Ghanaian children especially in the central region is *nkrobɔ* (play house). With this play children emulate the daily duties of their parents.

3. Constructive play

Constructive play can be defined as the manipulation of objects to construct or “create” something (Papalia & Olds, 1993). Wardle (2000) emphasizes the importance of constructive play in child development. While children engaged with different materials, they also have a chance to develop specific skills that enable them to create a sense of control and to develop positive self-esteem.

In constructive play, children can also continually change the way while they use materials: making them more complex, challenging and different. By continually rearranging their materials, they create an environment to match their level of learning. This continual manipulation of the environment means that children who have plenty of constructive materials and know how to engage in constructive play rarely get bored (Wardle, 2000). Creating cones out of snail shells for spinning is a popular constructive play among children of the greater Accra Region of Ghana. This they called *alikoto*. In the Central Region is the use of the *adobe* plant and the young *onyina* plant to make toy cars. It is through our own curiosity that we begin to manipulate the objects around us, object play is how we set about interacting with the world that we set in motion through body and movement play. Brown states, playing with objects create a brain that is better suited for understanding and solving problems of all sorts (Brown, 2009). Explorative and manipulative play is essential for sensory development, fine movements and hand-eye coordination of children. This type of play help children to explore their environment through senses such as sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste (Sheridan, 1999).

In general, this type of play with symbolic themes is popular in middle childhood (6 -12). In this play, group of children also perform physical activities together like running, jumping and struggling.

4. Pretend Play

Pretend play happens when the child starts to transform the physical environment into a symbol. Pretending to be a cat or pretending that a lid of saucepan is a steer or that a piece of stick is a gun is examples of the simplest kind of fantasy (symbolic) play. Understanding the feelings of others, learning new words, communicating new thoughts and separating real from unreal can be described as the benefits of imaginative play. Brown (2009) contends that, the imagination is by far is the most powerful ability of the human mind. Our ability to imagine knows no boundaries and allows our minds to create and explore simulated realities in which to discovery unlimited possibilities. Brown states that close examination of adult stream of consciousness demonstrates that the pretend-real process is a lifelong aspect of human thought. For instance, at school teachers sometimes use pretend play to explain concepts and also to demonstrate how an activity is done. Pretending to paddle a canoe is a form of pretend play. We at all times make up story lines in our heads to keep the past, present, and future in context.

One of the most important forms of play is playing with ideas. When a child fantasizes, he is playing. By taking images, ideas, and concepts from inside their own minds and reorganizing, sorting, and reconnecting in new ways, children create. They

create play worlds, hopes, desires and wishes. Pretend play encourages creativity and divergent thinking. In their review of literature, Susa and Benedict suggested that divergent thinking is a cognitive ability that involves being able to produce a large number of relatively unique or unusual ideas in response to a given task constrain (Susa & Benedict, 1994). This means that pretend play with peers is not only significant in children's cognitive development but it is also important for their social and emotional maturation. Through this type of play, children comprehend more about different social roles and relationships.

5. Games with Rules

During middle childhood (6-12), games with rules are the most prominent form of play. In comparison to sociodramatic play, game play is more organized and meets the social and intellectual needs of children. Game rules dictate what the players can or cannot do within their defined roles (Mussen, 1983). In this kind of play, rules are definite that directly guide children's group behaviour. Children learn to share activities and goals while determining to inquire strategies and skills. Children like to compete as they like the possibility of winning. In the Ghanaian basic schools, teaching Physical Education employ games with rules to allow children practice the skill taught. It also ensures that the objectives of the lesson are fully achieved and to end the lesson on a good note. According to Piaget (1957) the final stage in the development of play is the emergence of "games with rules" during the early school years. Here, play is governed by formal, relatively, inflexible rules, involves some competition, and may produce some

anxiety. Games with rules help children concentrate, understand limits, and control their behaviour to conform to the rules. From the above it is worth concluding that playing competitive traditional games such as *ɔware*, *pilolo*, *asosɔwamba*, *ampe*, and *nanawɔ* *hɔ* can be helpful at teaching children how to abide by rules and regulations of their respective societies.

2.1.4 Cognitive Development

Instructional management focuses on three stages. These are planning, execution and evaluation of learning experiences. For teachers in the basic schools to plan, execute and evaluate learning experiences effectively, they need to have good understanding of the process of cognitive development in children.

Some teachers and parents do ask the question about the need for the child to play. Some parents not aware of the benefits of play tend to punish their children when they sneak out to play. Piaget (1962) felt that play and imitation were core and innate human strategies for cognitive development. With play, a child could rehearse a newly formed concept to make it fit within what they already knew and understood (assimilation). As a child experiences or encounter new event, activities, ideas, or rituals, imitation is used to build entirely new mental model (accommodation). The child continues in this way to achieve an orderly balanced world while constantly confronting a changing, shifting environment. Just as the mental processes of assimilation and accommodation continue through life, so too do play and imitation remain important cognitive tools for people from childhood through adulthood (Piaget, 1957). Piaget

(1957) in his quest for developing comprehensive theoretical framework for studying the intellectual development of the child breaks down the stages of development by ages. Birth to 24 months is the sensorimotor period where development is observed from simple reflex motions to more repetitive and coordinated responses. The Preoperational period (ages 2-7) starts with increased verbal skills that become more social as the child ages. The child also begins to develop intuitive logical thinking in some areas. The Period of Concrete Operations (ages 7-12) shows evidence of organized, logical thought and concrete problem solving. The Period of Formal Operations, where thought becomes more abstract incorporating formal logical thought, happens from 12 years and up.

Play is an important element in Piaget's theory. It is a vehicle for the child to understand the world around him as well as an indicator of the child's cognitive development. Piaget determined that play is described in three stages: functional play (sensorimotor) such as an infant grasping a rattle; symbolic play (experience) which adds constructive concepts as well as pretend activities; and games with rules which build social skills Piaget (1957).

Papalia and Olds (1993) also defined cognitive development as the change in mental abilities like learning, language memory, reasoning and thinking. In cognitive play, children improve their role playing, problem solving, constructing and fantasizing abilities. From Erikson's point of view providing opportunities for cognitive development will help children to develop creative thinking and also the ability to employ problem solving skills in life (Erikson et al 1986).

It is said that when children begin to play with a purpose, they develop ability to create symbols, to pretend, and to imitate. Cognitive development is identified as a major explicit objective of all education systems (UNESCO, 2005). This means that play is essential in the school system. Children in the basic schools should be given the opportunity to play to increase their reasoning and thinking skills. Hence from the cognitive development perspective, quality exists when students demonstrate knowledge.

2.1.5 Psychosocial Development

Children need care, loving and protected environment. Their physical needs must be met but at the same time the emotional and psychosocial needs also have to be fulfilled. This helps them to become stable and sociable human beings.

The word “psychosocial” is Erikson’s term effectively from the words psychological (mind) and social (relationship). He believed that his psychosocial principle is genetically inevitable in shaping human development and that it occurs in all people. According to Erikson (1968) individual development is the result of genetic and social influences across life cycle of birth to old age and death. Erikson advocated an epigenetic principle whereby all development occurs in a sequential progression of eight stages, predetermined by a genetic ground plan and the demands set on the individual at each life stage by society. Each stage has its own “time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole” (Erikson, 1968 p. 92).

Each psychosocial stage is characterized by a prevailing developmental crisis. These crises are described as critical turning points in life when the individual must

choose between the two opposing developmental opportunities to either resolve the conflict or fail to master the developmental task (Erikson, 1968). A favourable synthetic balance of the complementary developmental opposite results in an ego strength that allows the individual to advance to a higher level of development. If the successful resolution of a particular stage does not occur, all subsequent stages reflect the failure in the form of physical, cognitive, social or emotional maladjustment. Erikson et al. (1986) described these as specific maladaptations or malignancies that endanger development. A maladaptive tendency reflects an excess of the positive, whilst a malignancy represents too much of the negative. For example, a maladaptive tendency in the seventh stage is overextension, where individuals act with such generosity that they cannot adequately maintain all their commitments. In the eighth stage, the malignancy is disdain, which is characterized by contempt of life- the individual's own and other's. Erikson's eight stages or critical periods of life are shown in table 1.

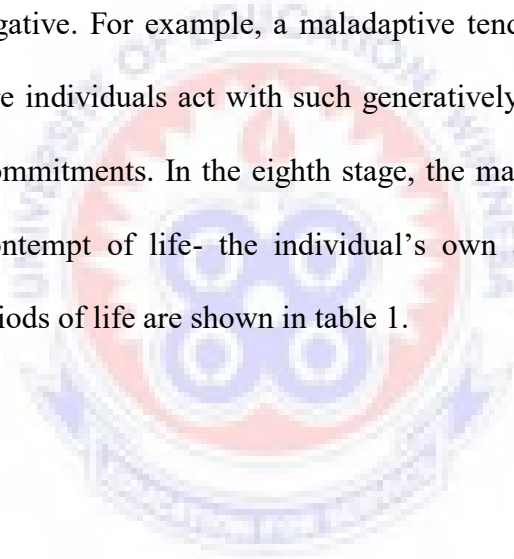


Table 1: Stages in Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Stages	Ages	Description
Stage 1 Trust versus Mistrust	Birth to one year	A child have to develop a sense of trust in others
Stage 2 Autonomy versus shame and Doubt	One to three years	The children want to do things autonomously
Stages 3 Initiative versus Guilt	Four to Five years	The children develop a sense of initiative explore and investigate
Stage 4 Industry versus inferiority	Six to Eleven years	The children go to school, learn reading, writing and counting eager to produce good work.
Stage 5 Identity versus Role Confusion	Twelve to eighteen years	Adolescent have to develop self identity. Look up for role model.
Stage 6 Intimacy versus Isolation	Eighteen to thirty five years	Adolescent try develop true and intimate relationship with opposite sex friends
Stage 7 Generativity versus Stagnation	Thirty five to sixty five years	Married couple taking good care and well being of next generation

Stage 8	Over sixty five years	Old couple reviews their life
Integrity versus Despair		with a sense of satisfaction and acceptance. Their lives have been fruitful, achieve a sense of integrity

Source: Erikson (1968)

Erikson (1968) assumes the personality develops in accordance to one's ability to interact with the environment and to resolve the crisis experienced. Following the stages carefully, it is worthy to note that the fifth stage is very critical to the development of the child's social life. The child needs enough room to explore the environment and also interact with peers to be able to gain self confidence which is essential for getting involved in all activities of the society. Engaging children in a lot of play activities both at school and at home is the best way to achieve the demands of this stage. The manner in which the crises are resolved will have a lasting effect on the person's view of him/herself and the surrounding world. The study focused on the fifth stage since most of the J.H.S students fall under this age category.

2.1.6 Psychomotor Development

Lack of playing experience can slow down the regular process of the child's development. Therefore well organized programmes for physical activities are useful in several respects. Through the development of motor activities, children's cognitive, social and emotional skills will be developed. Lancelot (1944) proposed that

manipulative skill development requires the blending of the mind and muscle. He claimed that manipulative acts are guided by thought, and that a direct relationship exists between the quality of thought and the quality of manipulative performance. Watson (1980) agreed that psychomotor skill development involves both muscle and thinking skills. According to Watson, psychomotor skills are acquired through a three stages:(1) early cognitive stage which usually takes short duration and includes attention, observation, and thought about how and why the skill is performed, (2) lengthy practice or fixation which aimed at shaping correct performance practice and (3) final autonomous stage where correct performance becomes automatic, with increases in speed, accuracy, dexterity, timing, and greater understanding of application settings. Watson was not far from the right. In learning any physical activity there is the need to observe how the activity is done first before practicing it. Through adequate practice one develops the skill in performing that activity. Teaching Basic Design and Technology and Physical Education in the Ghanaian basic schools is always guided by the same principle.

Physical development of children can be analyzed in two parts; sensory and motor. Sensory stimulation describes the feelings which are perceived through the senses such as touching, seeing and hearing. Motor stimulation is equally important as sensory stimulation. It supports eye-hand-foot coordination and is beneficial to children's development of balance and locomotor skills (Frost, 1992).

Children reinforce and practice their motor skills while playing and manipulating materials. They learn to control their bodies and give their bodies directions to achieve the tasks as they explore. As children master new motor abilities, they coordinate simple ones to create more complex ones. Providing outdoor play activities

that involve movement will help children to explore their own physical skills. Allowing children the best opportunities to exercise and to extend their own physical skills will help to maintain their interest throughout their stages of physical development.

2.1.7 Social Development

Exploring the environment provides many social skills, such as sharing, cooperating, turn taking, and understanding the rules of play. In Ghana, during moonlight nights at the rural areas children in the neighbourhood gather at an open area to play countless folk games to entertain themselves. Some of the games played among children in the central region include *duaoodua*, *mepa me da ha* and others. The place the children gather serves as an avenue of encounters and communication. Children therefore take the opportunity to develop and practice social skills, to experience acceptance and rejection, to develop friendships, and to learn about cooperation. Nevertheless, this is the opposite in the industrialized world. Play space had diminished in the large cities and so traditional games children use to play are given way to play with modern technological instruments (Pan, 1994). Pan (1994) however did not explain what he meant by technological instruments.

Children especially need opportunities for emotional development and social skills development. Through social play, children usually use verbal and physical interactions that helps increase their ability to identify and empathize with each other's feelings. Being a part of a group or team, gaining group goals, learning to trust and respect for peers also constitutes an important aspect of social development (Erikson, 1986). Because play is a necessary part of development, children will always have the

drive to engage in playful activity. However, play is most beneficial when other participants are involved. A child's development can be affected significantly by the number and quality of interactions with other children. The significance of social stimulation in child development requires relating and to interacting with others. Teachers can create these interactions at school when they infuse folk games in their lessons. According to Parten cited in Frost (1992), recent findings claim that children today are not as skilled in the more advanced forms of play. The reason may be that children of this day are not given the opportunity to engage in adequate play both at school and in the home. Also sedentary play such as computer games is another causative factor.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Concept of Games

Many believed that word 'game' is usually associated with competition and many other similar and related notions. Ascher (1991) explains game as "an activity that has clearly defined goals towards which the players move while following agreed upon rules"

In Michael and Chen (2006) games are described as

...a voluntary activity, obviously separate from real life, creating an imaginary world that may or may not have any relation to real life and that absorbs the players full attention. Games are played out within a

specific time and place, are played according to established rules, and create social groups out of their players (p.19)

Some people will take exceptions to this description since it contains no reference to 'fun'. However not all consider 'fun' an important factor, however, when it comes to games or computer based application, especially not so when considering their role in learning, and even their use as an educational means is questioned. Still others consider fun the prime factor in games and education and according to Prensky (2001) games should be fun first and then should encourage learning. Fun has also been described a side effect of learning something new.

Regarding games and their possible impact on gamers, Mitchell and Savill-Smith (2004) discuss a number of such issues. Possible negative impacts identified include health issues such as headaches, fatigue, mood swing, and repetitive strain injuries. Psychosocial issues involve depression, social isolation, less positive behaviour towards society in general and increased gambling substitute for social relationships. The possible dangers identified here clearly go against those who engage in excessive play of video and computer games. In Ghana for instance children made their own toys out of found objects and discarded things for them to use. Girls made their dolls out of corn husks and sometimes plantain suckers. The boys used lids of big containers and sticks as imaginary cars. Others also fashioned out their own cars out of empty milk and milo tins.

With positive impacts, games can support the development of a number of different skills, as mentioned by Mitchell and Savill-Smith (2004). They identified analytical and special skills, strategic skills and insight, learning and recollection capabilities, psychomotor skills, and visual selective attentions. They admitted that even

violent games can be beneficial in that they provide an outlet to alleviate frustration. This sounds controversial but it also explains the fact that exposing the child to both folk games and electronic games can be beneficial to the child's development.

Touching again on the positive impact of games, Moursund (2007) reveals that games provide an environment in which game players can learn about themselves. Games provide an environment in which one can interact with other people and develop certain types of social skills. He added that games provide an environment in which one can develop a variety of thinking and problem-solving skills that are useful in both non-games and game environment. Games therefore provide an environment in which one can gain in mental maturity. According to Rieber (1996), further potential benefits of games include improved self-monitoring, problem recognition and problem solving, decision making, better short-term and long-term memory, and increase social skills such as collaboration, negotiation, and shared decision-making. These views expressed by the authors fully supports the idea that the child needs to explore its immediate environment and also interact with friends which is key at developing problem solving and social skills among them.

Squire and Jenkins (2003, p.8), referring to Card's 1985 science fiction novel 'Ender's Game' argue that games should be like the places where kids hang out because that is where much learning takes place. Educational games should be like school corridors, where kids experiment, interact, create, and share what they create with others outside the rigid structures that contemporary games impose. This means that folk games with its flexibility have the potential of developing good interpersonal skills among children.

In Ghana for instance, it was clearly stated in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes compiled by UNESCO (2006), that the main objective for pre-primary level is the promotion of healthy mind and body. For the realization of this objective, all children are expected to be fully immunized against the six killer diseases and mothers follow courses in nutrition, family planning, and life education. Efforts have been made to ensure that schools are safe and equipped with toys for psychomotor development; also teachers are expected to organize activities such as role plays, sports and games that strengthen both children's health and the process of socialization. The use of local language is also promoted at this level.

According to Baffour-Awuah (2011), one widely held aim of education is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, attitude and competencies that enable them to render useful services to themselves and to the society at large. Todaro (1992) as cited in Baffour-Awuah notes that the formal education system of a nation is the principal institutional mechanism used for developing human skills and knowledge. Education is therefore viewed as an indispensable catalyst that strongly influences the development and economic fortunes of a nation and the quality of life of its people.

In this context, the ministry of Education, youth and sports and the Ghana Education service have been making concerted efforts to ensure that teachers, who are key inputs to education delivery are optimally utilized.

2.2.2 Games and Classroom Learning

In recent years, a number of educators and educational researchers have come to realize that games can be an important component of both informal and formal education. This has become a legitimate area of study and research.

Student motivation and engagement are an ongoing challenge for classroom instructors, and the basis of various research endeavours. Kumari and Lightner (2007) claim a substantial body of literature indicates that the use of non-traditional interventions, such as games, simulations, multimedia instruction and interactive activities are valuable teaching methods. The fact still remains that teachers need to be resourced and be opened to varied teaching methods that can help sustain the interest of children in the teaching and learning process. However they must ensure that what they teach is relevant to the child and also meet the aspirations of the entire society. Gaining unfamiliar knowledge and skills from western education will sink the children we teach into alienation and ignorance of their own culture (Nsamenang, 2004).

For instance, reporting on a study on student motivation and learning, Nemerow (1996) concludes that although playing games in the classroom, does not solve the entire problem with education, it can be useful tool, one of many different methods and techniques used to involve students with their learning. The arguments for adopting active learning in the classroom are clear. The child who sits in the classroom, with no state or interest in the learning process does not reach the level of stimulation required to promote learning effort. Therefore using games in class encourages active learning as well as collaboration and interactivity.

Games provide structure for interactions, reward students for collaborating and problem solving (Schwartzman, 1978). In Ghanaian society most of the traditional games played are accompanied by songs. *Anhweakyir*, *duaoodua*, *Esikakraba kotow awiem* and others are few examples. As they play these games they sharpen their communicative skills. Teachers can learn how children play and use the learning outcomes of play in planning classroom activities. Through observation, teachers can get more information about children's play and themes that interest them. Play observations also provide important understanding about children's social worlds. "Observation reveals what help, if any, children need to develop and extend their play" (Johnson, et al 1999, p. 208). On the contrary most teachers have ignored observing their pupils play. It has never occurred to them the need to do so. They may see it as waste of time and unnecessary. Admittedly, learning to observe children play can reduce the burden teachers go through at coming out with which method to use for a particular lesson at a particular time. Students often have particular difficulty to transfer tasks where they have to use information in a context very different from the learning environment.

Computational thinking is also another basic skill the child needs to acquire. Wing (2006) holds that computational thinking is a fundamental skill for everybody, not just for computer scientist. Games provide an excellent environment to explore ideas of computational thinking. Most of the games played by children in the traditional Ghanaian setting involve computation. One fine example is the *oware* game which employs all the basic arithmetic skills. The fact that many games are available both in a non-computerized form and in a computerized form helps to create this excellent learning environment. A modern education prepares students to be productive and responsible

adult citizens in a world in which brain and computer working together is a common approach to solving problems and accomplishing tasks (Moursund (2007).

Prensky (2001) expresses some game characteristics which he believed can be transferred to the educational game environment as far as teaching and learning is concerned. He claimed that games give enjoyment, games give motivation, games give doing, games spark creativity and it gives social groups. This suggests that games play a more profound role than just being recreational or past time activities which tends to be the focus most of the time when games are used. As children engage in any game, life skills activities such as psychosocial competencies interpersonal skills, how to make informed decisions, problem solving and thinking critically are generated. Although some of these aspects may be very basic, they serve as important components in the development of the basic life skills that the child needs for healthy and independent living.

2.2.3 Traditional Children's Games

“Folks games” or traditional children’s games” are those games that children play which are handed over from children of one generation to the other , and they generally include characteristics such as physical skill, strategy, chance, repetition of patterns, creativity and vertigo (Sierra and Kaminski, 1995). Some writers believed victors rarely emerge from traditional games, as one rather leaves the game when he is bored or when his peers demand that he leave, and a game terminates when a better one is suggested or when everyone must go home. This is far from the truth because most of the games

played by children in the Ghanaian traditional settings demand that a winner emerge. This is done to spice up the game and also heighten the level of fun among the players. The game of *ɔware*, *ampe*, *asosɔwamba* and *atetar* are typical examples. The *ɔɔ hanketse* (Appendix E) game which stands exception involves only singing and dancing. It is played by both boys and girls during moonlight nights to express love for each other. Another interesting aspect of traditional children's games can be attributed to the fact that they are played without adult supervision or intervention and have no formally written rules. Rules of traditional games are made, changed and enforced in order to promote having the maximum amount of fun.

Many researchers have determined that the ideal age for children to experience nature is in early-middle childhood (6-12 years). During this developmental time-frame there is a moment or a series of moments which creates a lasting impression on the child's environmental identity. It is the ability to explore the natural world alone that leads children to creating understandings about their relationship to the natural world (Staemplim, 2009). In the typical Ghanaian society children are given the opportunity to explore the environment through a lot of activities. Children play *esumaesuma* (hide and seek), the males construct their own cars from empty cans or sometimes from the *adobe* plant. The girls also create their own dolls from plantain suckers and corn husks. All these interactions with the environment prepare them for life. In her thesis, Layne mentioned Forte (1938) as the first scholar to understand that children were not blindly imitating adults, but that they were consciously interacting with the dominant culture and that they were experimenting and testing the boundaries of that culture (Layne 2008).

Some cultures in this regard structure the pastimes of children through games, songs and other play activities transmitted from one generation to another (Rogers, 2010).

These statements show an interest in the use of play to teach children the necessary skills for adult roles. In the Ghanaian society games are also be used to impart moral lessons to children. For instance the game *mbobagor* (stone passing) which is mistakenly called *sansakroma* teaches children to be hard working and not to be lazy. This moral lesson is clearly embedded in the song. This shows that our forefathers held at least a rudimentary understanding of the processes involved in enculturation. However it is believed by some researchers that the preservation of traditional play modes is becoming increasingly challenging and that a few are at risk disappearing in some cultures (Olivia & Bernard, 1998). Simahara (1970) cited in Layne (2008) stated that actions, such as deciding which models of behaviour to imitate, are part of a reflective process in which the child chooses with part of the dominant culture he/she wishes to acquire. Over time, if enough children choose not to acquire certain aspects of the culture, those traits will be weeded out of the culture (Layne, 2008). This envisages the fact that children must be given the opportunity and the needed attention to understand and practice their rich culture.

In Ghana for instance children's folk games have clearly been put under three main categories. These include games played by boys and girls, those solely for girls and that of boys only.

2.2.3.1 Games for boys and girls

‘**ɔware**’- formally this game was played in dug out holes on the ground but these days it has being modernized. Currently it is played in carved wood which makes it more hygienic and also convenient to carry around.

‘**Mbobagor**’ (**Stone passing**)-children squat in circular formation and exchange handy stones in an anticlockwise direction. The tempo of the stone passing increases rapidly so that those who are not able to pass their stone on time are eliminated. This teaches children to be fast and accurate with their limbs at the same time concentrating on the activity they are engaged in. The activity is accompanied by the song sansakorɔma.

‘**Anhwɛakyir**’ (**Do not look back**)-children squat in a circle formation while one with a rag moves round the circle till the rag is dropped behind a member without his or her consent. They sing as the activity goes on.

‘**Mepa me da ha**’ (**I want to relax here**)-children stand holding each other’s hand tightly. One of them is seized in the middle who tries to escape by breaking the chain of hands with two hands put together at the weakest point (Appendix E). It is also accompanied by a call and response song.

2.2.3.2 Games solely for girls

‘**Ampe**’-Two or more children are permitted to play this game. Children jump and clap at the same time to outwit ones opponent depending on the leg that was pushed forward to deceive the opponent on landing.

‘Asosɔwamba’ (throwing and catching of marbles)-children normally play this game in twos. In order to emerge the winner, one should be able to throw a stone into the air, catch it skillfully together with a group of stones on the ground without dropping any of them.

2.2.3.3 Boys only game

‘Atetar’ (Wrestling)-two people clench to each other with the aim of outwitting the other by touching the back to the ground. It is a form of learning self- defense skills should there be an aggression at a point in time.

These games in the traditional Ghanaian setting are played for various reasons. These include entertainment, exercising the body, building friendship, communicating skills, leadership skills and learning to adhere to rules and regulations.

It is therefore clear that in traditional African societies and the traditional Ghanaian society in particular, games are used to pass onto the young, its accumulated knowledge to enable them play adult roles and to live successful life for the sustainable of their societies.

2.2.4 Electronic Games

It should be noted that in this thesis however, “videogame’ ’computer games’’ are the chosen terms settled on to refer to any kind of digital game played on either personal computer or on television.

Computer and videogames are considered natural teachers since children usually find these games highly motivating, they can be actively engaged with them for long periods, and the games provide repeated practice and rewards for skillful play. Among the most positive skills computer games can teach are computer literacy and positive attitudes toward information technology. Unfortunately, most schools in the Ghanaian communities lack access to computers due to high cost of computers and also not connected to the national grid. In addition, the positive results of video games include various cognitive abilities, including problem-solving skills, pattern recognition, hypothesis testing, estimation and inductive skills, memory, and reasoned judgment (Sheff, 1993).

On the other hand, a number of studies have shown a negative correlation between the amount of computer and videogame play and children's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Computer games are traditionally controlled with keyboards, mice, joysticks and or game pads. Unfortunately, these input mechanisms seriously limit the movement of the players and cause them to sit passively in front of the computer or the game console. Several studies suggest that extended gaming can causes various physiological problems including obesity and hand and spinal injuries (Cordes & Miller, 2000).

Most western countries are facing an obesity crisis, with an increasing number of children and adolescent becoming overweight. Other risks to physical health that are posed by excessive gaming include repetitive stress injuries, eyestrain, and dry eyes; sleep disturbances, neglect of personal hygiene or regular eating habits; and postural, muscular, and skeletal disorders (Cordes & Miller, 2000). Hauge and Gentile (2003)

echoed that, addicted players get into fights and arguments with friends and peers more often, have higher, hostility attribution scores, and show lower school grades. Most parents in Ghana especially those at the rural areas feel aggrieved when their wards patronize video game centres. Their reason was that it affects their academic performance as noted by Hauge and Gentile (2003). However the physical health dangers mentioned above do not bother them much.

In view of the above, the positive effects of computer games usually involves learning and practicing cognitive or fine motor skills, and the negative ones are typically physiological, emotional , or social in nature. There is the need to educate parents about both the positive and negative effects of video games and its effect on the development of the child. The researcher therefore seeks to adopt traditional children's games as the ultimate tool to bridge this identified gap.

2.2.5 The Concept of Life Skills

While many experts discuss the importance of life skills many still question what exactly represent such skill. There is no single answer, but there are a variety of overlapping definitions, which highlight the most significant forms of life skills.

Owens (2009) proves that life skills encompass a range of knowledge, attitudes and personal traits that enable us to cooperate and communicate effectively with others, make decisions, deals with new (and sometimes difficult) situations and care for ourselves independently. As such, life skills incorporate competencies that include self-

help, problem solving and social skill, as well as a personal sense of self-worth and confidence (cited in WHO, 2004). In real situations, life skills is also used in several other ways, such as how to establish good relationship, self-care skills such as how to plan and prepare healthy meals or problem solving skills, and also to refer to skills used to deal with specific risk situations, such as saying no in the face of peer pressure.

The concept life skills involve personally responsible choices. These skills enable people to maximize their own choices, to enhance their personal well-being and to improve their quality of life. When people are being personally responsible they are in the process of making choices that maximize their happiness and fulfillment. Personal responsibility is a positive concept wherein people are responsible for their well-being and for making their own choices within the givens of their existence. Life skills therefore, are the component skills through which people assume- rather than avoid- personal responsibility for their lives. These skills enable people to make positive contribution which can lead to improvement of their lives (Anderson & Okoro, 2000). WHO (2004) notes that life skills are skills to carry out effective interpersonal relationships and to make choices and resolve conflict without resorting to actions that will harm oneself or others. WHO (2004) again defines life skills as skills that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. These generic types of skills include decision-making, problem-solving, self-awareness and communication skills. TACADE (1990) viewed life skills as personal and social skills required by young people to function confidently and competently with themselves, with other people and with the wider community. Considering the various explanations, it can

be deduced that life skills basically describes all the positive actions the child needs to exhibit for better coexistence in the community.

According to Francis (2007) developing life skill helps the adolescents to translate knowledge, attitude and their health behaviour such as acquiring the ability to reduce specific risk behaviour and adopt healthy behaviour that improve their lives in general. Therefore increased pro-social behaviour and decreased negative self-destructive behaviour; increased the ability to plan ahead and choose effective solutions to problems, improved self-image, self-awareness, emotional adjustment, increased acquisition of knowledge, improved classroom behaviour, self-control and sociability; better handling of interpersonal problems and coping with anxiety; and improved constructive conflict resolution with peers are all some benefits for developing life skills.

Peck and Hong (1988) state that life skills enable people to care for themselves in a supportive environment, and are concerned with independence in self-care, understanding the environment and living with others. Life skills also enable people to make decisions concerning life situations. They were able to expand their explanation of life skills to cover a wider area as far as living a good life is concerned. From a practical point of view they mentioned developing friendship, communication skills and self reliance which deal with how to organize, maintain and utilize ones own resources.

The effective acquisition and application of life skills influence the way people feel about themselves and others, and equally influence the way people are perceived by others. WHO (2004) claims, life skills contribute to people's perceptions of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem. Life skills therefore, play an important role in the

promotion of individuals' mental well-being. The promotion of mental well-being contributes to people motivation to look after themselves and others, the prevention of mental, disorders, and the prevention of health behavior problems. Life skills therefore open doors and enable people to help themselves. Brack and Hill (2000) contend that, skills that can be said to be life skills are innumerable and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings.

However, analysis of the life skills field suggests that there is a core set of skills that are at the heart to skills-based initiatives for the promotion of the health and well-being of children and adolescents. For a broad based foundation in life skills the following were suggested as complementary life skills for the enhancement of psychosocial competence. They include: decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, communication, interpersonal relationship self awareness and empathy (WHO, 1997). However it was suggested that 6-16 years was an important age range for life skills learning. Giving the role of life skills in the promotion of positive health behaviour, it is worthwhile ensuring that life skills programmes are available in the pre-adolescent or early adolescent years, since young people of this age group seem to be most vulnerable to behaviour-related health problems (WHO, 1997).

It is obvious that the school is a good place to introduce life skills programmes, as the school years, during which children acquire a major part of their formal education, are important developmental years in an individual's life. In school, besides academics children also learn social skills and encounter authority other than their parents. Students often look to adults in the school community for guidance, support and direction (Brooks, 2004). Furthermore, schools have a high credibility with parents and community

members (WHO, 1997) and thus have a great influence on children and their families. For these reasons I think the school is a formidable institution for a life skills intervention. Teachers in this regard need to create the room for children to have adequate interaction. Fostering group work and playing folk games are best options to make this a reality.

School education should emphasize not only academics but also the mental well-being of children to make it a positive place of learning. Moreover, schools are crucial in building or undermining self-esteem and sense of competence as teachers and peers play an important role in the development of self-esteem of school going children. Some therefore believe a comprehensive teacher-training programme in life skills education would facilitate not only better teachers but also would support children's educational and mental health requirements (Cohen, 1999). In this manner schools can act as a safety net, protecting children from hazards, which affect their education, developmental and psychosocial well-being.

Life skills are essential for equipping individuals with the capacity to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of their everyday lives. These skills continue to develop and expand throughout a person's life. Teachers must play the leading role in facilitating the development of these skills through nurturing environment and interactions. For the purpose of this study, the life skills intended to be developed using traditional children's games include problem solving, divergent thinking, decision making, keeping the body fit through exercise and good interpersonal relationship.

2.2.6 Problem Solving Skills

Education aims at preparing students for adult life. It must develop such abilities and capabilities which make a child competent enough to deal with various challenges of life. Problem solving is one such capacity which is a process of overcoming difficulties that appear to interfere with the attainment of a goal. Children in their play often solve problems that arise. Through their interaction with people and materials they set their own goals and test out solutions (Booth, 1993). Levin (1986) have argued that problem solving is a methodology which involves a higher order cognitive process which requires the modulation and control of more routine or fundamental skills.

It is recommended that problem solving ability is very vital especially for children. Children can improve their learning ability if teachers teach them with the implementation of problem solving. However learning problem-solving skills are a good contributor to children's emotional wellbeing. Children begin to feel independent and build their self-esteem. Nevertheless they see themselves competent and capable people who can impact their world in positive ways (Booth, 1993).

Many teachers talk about the benefits of giving children an early start to develop problem-solving skills. Knowing how to identify the root of a problem, and solving the problem are life skills that build in the child self-esteem and self efficacy. Problem solving skills will empower children to think about themselves and others, and encourage them to develop an understanding of self in the bigger picture of society. We need to create a culture where problem solving is a natural part of our day (Pearson 2006). The school environment therefore needs to be well developed and also make what

they learn easier by introducing some elements of their culture into it to enable the children to explore their skill of problem solving. Some cultures in this way have benefited ultimately from the play – engendered creativity which had prepared the citizens for innovative problem solving and new contributions to their societies. Puppet plays, games, role plays and children’s literature can be used to explore problem scenarios and give children experience generating solutions to social issues and conflicts (Pearson, 2006).

2.2.7 Creative thinking

Creative thinking is the ability to let your mind create thoughts that are often different and unusual. Creative thinking evolves around the idea of thinking beyond the scope of the normal. Hence the ability to see a different way of doing something, create new ideas, and the use of materials in new ways (Booth, 1993). Creativity is a fundamental feature of human intelligence in general. However it is grounded in everyday capacities such as the association of ideas, reminding, perception, analogical thinking, searching a structured problem-space, and reflecting self-criticism. It involves not only a cognitive dimension (the generation of new ideas) but also motivation and emotion, and is closely linked to cultural context and personality factors (Boden, 1998). Yaqoob (2007) regarded creative thinking as a whole brain process and a combination of convergent thinking. The process of creative thinking involves generating multiple ideas and then making selection of more useful, effective, or appropriate ideas in order to have a workable solution to the problem. From the two opinions, one can say that every child

is born with creative potential and since it involves mental processes there is the need to help the child to nurture it through adequate play. Naturally, before the child enters school he or she has some learning skills. Through the use of folk games the teacher can gradually link up what they already know with the school work. This will create a sound atmosphere for them to sharpen their creative skills. Children need opportunities for a closer look since they need time for the creative encounter.

Play can help us to be able to handle problems, provides us with the ability to see our unlimited potential, and is essential to the creative process. Play therefore will loose the barriers that children construct between concepts and constructs of reality to open their minds to a realm of limitless potential (Brown and Vaughan 2009).

Michalko (1998) argues that creativity and intelligence should be seen as different entities all together. In his opinion creativity is often defined as a parallel construct to intelligence, but it differs from intelligence in that it is not restricted to cognitive or intellectual functioning or behaviour. Instead, it is concerned with a complex mix of motivational conditions, personality factors, environmental conditions, chance factors, and even products. This explains the fact that with a well structured and conducive environment, every child, no matter the intelligence level can aspire to create something new since creative thinking is the heart of problem solving (Booth, 1993).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter discusses among other things, the research method and technique used in the dissertation. It also throws light on the research design, population, sample, sampling technique, research instrument, pilot testing of instrument, data collecting procedure, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Methodology

The study followed a qualitative research model however it integrated both the qualitative and the quantitative models at the data collection stage. This were intended to capture the reality and the wide perceptions of pupils, teachers and parents on the benefits of traditional children's games and its application in the public basic schools in the central region of Ghana. Education however, has always been a core field for this type of research method (Creswell & Garrett, 2008).

McMillan and Schumacher (1993, p. 479) defined qualitative research as, “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories.” This definition implies that data and meaning emerge “organically” from the research context. On the other hand it is a systematic, subjective approach to describe life experiences and give them meaning (Burns & Grove 2009). Qualitative studies allow researchers to explore behaviours, perspectives, feelings, and

experiences in depth, quality and complexity of a situation through a holistic framework (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). In the same vein qualitative research study deals with exploring and probing the quality of relations, activities, situations or materials in their natural settings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996).

Qualitative research, as a strategy, is predicated on underlying assumptions and perspectives. Wiersma (1995, p. 211-212) summarized these as: a. Phenomena are viewed in its entirety or holistically. It is not possible to reduce complex phenomena into a few interdependent or independent factors. b. Investigators research in “nature.” Researchers do not impose their assumptions, limitations, and delimitations or definitions, or research designs upon emerging data. The researcher’s role is to record what he or she observes and/or collects from subjects’ in their natural environment. c. “Reality” exists as the subjects see it. The researcher is to record fully, accurately and impartially, that reality as seen through the eyes of subjects. d. Post hoc conclusions emerge from the data. A priori conclusions are avoided.

One of the strengths of qualitative research is that, participants’ behaviour is recorded in natural settings, with all the intricacies of the environment operating. Qualitative research is also particularly useful for in-depth study of a small group of people. Despite the strengths attributed to qualitative research approaches, the reliability of qualitative research is weakened by that fact that the process is under-standardized and relies on the insights and the abilities of the observer, thus making an assessment of reliability difficult (Duffy, 1985). However the limitations associated with this method can be minimized if measures are put in place to that effect. Adopting the qualitative method therefore helped the researcher to record accurately pupil’s views and

experiences at playing folk games and the perception teachers and parents had at documenting and using these games in the teaching and learning process for life skills development.

There are six common approaches within qualitative research. These are case study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, focus groups, and historiography. However the case study design was used in this investigation since the study involved individual schools.

A case study is a story about something unique, special, or interesting — stories can be about individuals, organizations, processes, programmes, neighbourhoods, institutions, and even events (Yin, 2003). Case studies are constructed to richly describe, explain, or assess and evaluate a phenomenon such as event, person, program, etc. (Gall et al, 1996, p. 549). The case study design was adopted because it was well suited to this study since it answered the research questions appropriately. Moreover, this helped the researcher to observe the natural occurrence of pupils' play in the selected schools and was able to describe in detail how these affected their learning experiences. The case study period took barely six months of which all the necessary data needed were gathered for the analysis and writing of this report.

3.2 Population

Polit and Beck (2004) looked at population as the entire aggregation of cases that meet designated set criteria. The target population is the aggregate of cases about which the researcher would like to make generalization.

The target population of this study was made up of all Basic Schools in the Central Region. However the accessible population was based on two (2) selected districts and one municipal in the Central Region of Ghana. These are Gomoa East District, Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam, Agona West Municipal Assembly respectively.

3.3 Sample

Sarantakos (1998) indicates that the complete coverage may not offer substantial advantage over a sample survey. Sampling provides a better option since it addresses the survey population in a short period of time and produces comparable and equally valid results. Samples are thought to offer more detailed information and a high degree of accuracy because they deal with relatively small number of units. A sample is therefore a subset of the population selected to be participants in for the study.

A sample size of three districts in the Central Region was used for the study. Out of each selected district, two basic schools took part of the study. The actual sample size for the study was therefore made up of six basic schools, two from each selected district, namely Ekwamkrom Methodist J.H.S and Brofoyedur D/A J.H.S in the Gomoa East District, Ocheso Catholic J.H.S and Amia-Baah D/A/ J.H.S in the Ajumako-Eyan - Essiam District and finally, Urban 'B' J.H.S and M.A.E Zion J.H.S Agona Swedru in the Agona West Municipal. In all, two hundred and eighty-four respondents formed the accessible population for the study. These include thirty-five (35) teachers, two hundred and forty (240) pupils and nine parents.

3.3.1 Sampling Technique

The sample was arrived at using the simple random sampling and the convenience sampling techniques. The former was used because it gives all the schools an equal chance of being selected for the study. Lists of all the basic schools in each of the selected districts (Gomoa East, Agona West and Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam) were compiled to form the sampling frame. The various schools which were numbered were listed in the sample frame, and assigned numbers on slips of paper and put into a container. They were then thoroughly mixed; one paper was removed at a time from the container. Selected slips were recorded accordingly.

The process continued until the required number of six basic schools, two from each district, was recorded for the study. Again, the convenience sampling technique was also used to recruit the pupils in the schools selected. This technique was used because the researcher had a deadline to meet and also the data needed were readily available in the schools involved in the study. This means that all the children in the schools were chosen for the study especially during their play outside. However, not all of them were made to answer the questionnaire. The second and third year pupils answered the questionnaire. The reason was that, they had stayed in the school for about two to three years and have developed adequate vocabulary to answer the questionnaire independently and accurately. Forty pupils were selected from each school using the simple random sampling method. The researcher assigned the inscription 'YES' and 'NO' to cut out papers and carefully folded them and put into a container. After mixing them up, each pupil was asked to pick until the eighty papers were exhausted in the container. The

‘YES’ were admitted for the study. However because permission was not sought to use the names of the schools selected they were coded as school ‘A- F’.

3.5 Research Instruments

While many studies successfully utilise one method, combining methods, an approach defined as triangulation (Denzin, 2006), can be a useful research option. The aim of triangulation is “to corroborate one source and method with another and to enhance the quality of the data” (Mason, 2002, p. 33). Within the broad idea, Easterby-Smith et al. (2004) points out that there are four different forms of triangulation: data triangulation (data collected from different sources or at different times); methodological triangulation (combining different methods); theoretical triangulation (the application of a theory from a different discipline); and triangulation by investigators (the use of multiple independent investigators). This thesis uses data triangulation as a strategy whereby multiple perspectives of the same phenomena are considered through analysis of different data sources (Denzin, 2006). In view of this, an interview guide, observation and questionnaire were used to collect baseline information. It was felt that richness and depth was gained with the analysis of the multiple sources of data available to the researcher within each of the six (6) schools from the three (3) selected districts.

3.5.1 Interview

According to Kvale (1996, p.1), the qualitative research interview attempts “to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world”. Further, qualitative research interviews enable a researcher to “see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee” (King, 2004, p. 11). Significantly, interviewing is a particularly efficient means of collecting data when the research design involves an analysis of people’s motivations and opinions (Keats, 2000).

There are many reasons to use interviews for collecting data and using it as a research instrument. Gray (2004, p. 214) echoes that it helps to attain highly personalized data and opportunities for probing. Again it gives a good return rate and also good for respondents who are not fluent in the native language or having difficulties with written language.

The researcher therefore adopted the interview method of gathering data for this research because majority of the parents in the selected districts are illiterates, hence using any other method may not be the true representation of their opinions which can affect the validity of the results. Again, the pupils involved in the study need flexible and conducive environment to express themselves without any inhibitions. There are many types of interviews, which include:

Structured interviews: A structured interview is sometimes called a standardized interview. Corbetta (2003, p.269) states that, structured interviews are “interviews in which all respondents are asked the same questions with the same wording and in the

same sequence. Gray contends that, it would be ideal if questions can be read out in the same tone of voice so that the respondents would not be influenced by the tone of the interviewer (Gray, 2004, p. 215).

Semi-structured interviews: Semi-structured interviews are non-standardized and are frequently used in qualitative analysis. This type of interview gives the researcher opportunities to probe for views and opinions of the interviewee. Probing is a way for the interview to explore new paths which were not initially considered (Gray, 2004, p. 217).

Unstructured interviews: In an unstructured interview the researcher has to be a good listener and note new or interesting data the interviewee gives. It requires good communication and facilitation skills (WHO, 2004).

Non-directive interview: The interviewer has the objectives of the research in mind and what issues to cover during the interview. The interviewee is allowed to talk freely about the subject. The interviewer's role is to check on unclear points and to rephrase the answer to check for accuracy and understanding (Gray, 2004 p.217).

For the purpose of this study the semi- structured interview was used. The reason was that, the researcher can explain or rephrase the questions if respondents are unclear about the questions. There was also the expectation that the views of the interviewee will be more freely expressed when the format of the interview is more flexible and open-ended than where the interview style is regulated and confined to a standard set of questions or a survey (Flick, 2002).

3.5.2 Observation

This method implies the collection of information by way of investigator's own observation, without interviewing the respondents. According to Nworgu (1991), there are two major types of observation: Participant observation and Non-participant observation. In participant observation, the observer is a member of the setting in which observation is taking place. In the non-participant observation, the observer is not a member of the setting in which the observation is taking place. He observes the behaviour of others and he is not involved in the behaviour being observed. According to Morrison (1993, p.80) observation enables the researcher to gather data on the physical setting, the human setting, the interactional setting and the programme setting.

Observation otherwise helps to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations and to move beyond perception-based data are some of the advantages of observation (Cohen et al, 1995). In this study the, the researcher assumed the role of non-participant observer by means of gaining insight into folk games pupils play in the selected schools and how these can impact positively in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the bias which the interviewer or the phrasing of questions may have on respondents is either eliminated or reduced. However data collection by observation, therefore, is more objective and usually more accurate (Asamoah-Gyimah, 2007).

3.5.3 Questionnaire

Polit and Hungler (1997, p.466) define a questionnaire as “a method of gathering information from respondents about attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and feelings”. Brink and Wood (1998, p.293-298) state that the following aspects characterize a questionnaire:

1. Each participant enters his/her responses on the questionnaire, saving the researcher’s time, compared to the time required to conduct personal interviews.
2. It is less expensive than conducting personal interviews.
3. Respondents feel that they remain anonymous and can express themselves in their own words without fear of identification.
4. Data on a broad range of topics may be collected within a limited period.
5. The format is standard for all subjects and is independent of the interviewer’s mood

Enumerating some of the disadvantages of questionnaire administration, Asamoah-Gyimah (2007) claims that a questionnaire does not permit the investigator to note apparent reluctance or evasiveness of the respondent, a matter which is better handled through the interview. Similarly, the questionnaire does not permit the investigator to follow through on misunderstood questions or evasive answers.

There are basically two types of questions in a questionnaire, namely open ended and closed ended questions (Babbie, 1991). In an open question the respondent is given freedom to decide the aspect, detail and length of the answer. Closed questions, on the other hand, help keep the questionnaire to a reasonable length and thus encourage response and validity in terms of the representativeness of returns (Asamoah-Gyimah,

2007).The researcher used these two forms of questioning to make up any inbuilt weaknesses of each form. The questionnaire was designed to elicit data on the cognitive, psychomotor, and psychosocial values of traditional children's games, how traditional games can develop life skills in school children.

The researcher opted for questionnaire administration because they permit respondents time to consider their responses carefully without interference from, for example, an interviewer.

3.6 Pilot-Testing of Instrument

The instruments were subjected to criticisms by peers and the supervisor. The need to determine the appropriateness of the instrument was occasion a pilot study that took place in Agona East District. The questionnaires were given to the respondents after which the researcher went for them three days later. The purpose for the pre-test is to ascertain the suitability of the item on the questionnaire and also to aid in refining it if found unsuitably. Borg (1963) asserts that the needed alteration also can be made in the data collection methods so that data in the main study may be analyzed more effectively.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is “a systemic way of gathering information, which is relevant to the research purpose or questions” (Burns & Grove 1997, p.383).In accord with the research questions, in-depth interviews were conducted with a minimum of three parents from each of the three (3) case study districts. The interviews consisted of six (6) open

ended questions, uniquely developed by the researcher for the purpose of gathering adequate opinions from parents and teachers about the need to document and use folk games in the teaching and learning process. Most of the parents in the case study districts were peasant farmers and so the researcher established contacts through initial visits to decide on a meeting place, time and date for the convenience of the researcher and participants.

For instance at Gomoa Brofoyedur the interview was scheduled on Tuesdays and Fridays as these days serve as resting days for farmers in the community. The one-on-one interview lasted for forty-five (45) minutes to one (1) hour and was conducted in the participants' homes and in the Fante language which they felt more comfortable with. An interview guide (Appendix C) was used to ensure that same questions were posed to all the respondents to ensure consistency of the data. However, other probes were used to gather more data. The interviews were audio-taped with permission from each participant to ascertain an accurate account of the interview. In the process it was replayed to ensure anonymity during the course of the recording. The researcher reviewed the purpose of the study orally to the participants and these motivated them to freely express their views which yielded successful result among all the parents the researcher interviewed. In all three (3) parents were interviewed in each of the studied districts.

A number of two (2) teachers were also interviewed in each of the six (6) selected schools. Each interview lasted for about thirty (30) minutes and was conducted in a language of their preference. This was done to create a relaxed atmosphere for them to express their opinions better. However majority of them opted for the English language to be interviewed in. During the interview the researcher took notes and also audio recorded

it. The researcher took three days to round-up the six (6) schools. Almost all the teachers showed interest in the study and also the researcher being a colleague teacher, was accorded the maximum cooperation which resulted in a fruitful interview. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) write that interviews give the researcher the opportunity to check the accuracy of, verify or repudiate the impression he or she has gained through observation. Patton (1990) claims that we cannot observe everything, it is therefore expedient that we interview people to find out from them those things we could not directly observe.

Field visits of the six (6) schools were supported by comprehensive notes taking and photographs which documented pertinent elements such as pupils' behaviour and experience outside and inside the classroom. The researcher with the help of other colleague teachers prepared six lesson plans. Four of these were the studied core subjects such as Mathematics, English Language, Integrated Science and Social Studies. The other two were Physical Education and Music and Dance. Each topic selected from a subject area was infused with a folk game such as *kwesida frankaah*, stone passing, *anhweakyir* and *ɔware* respectively. The researcher usually sat at the rear of each class, observed pupils and took notes and photographs about pupils' activities and their interactions with others. Each lesson took duration of seventy minutes after which the teachers' perceptions were solicited for. Though some teachers refused to teach for me to observe, majority of them did. At least a lesson was observed in each of the selected schools and this took about a week. Some games were also observed outside the classroom and documented. During break time the researcher moved round or sat quietly at a secluded place to observe and take notes about pupils' behaviour, attitude and how they also

interact with each other. This normally took place during the first break and lasted for about fifteen (15) minutes.

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher to all the teachers (Appendix A) and second and third year pupils of the six (6) simple randomly selected basic schools in the Central Region. With the aid of an introductory letter, permission was sought from the selected basic schools and respondents for prior approval, after which the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the six (6) sampled basic schools. The respondents were made to understand that all information they provide would be treated with confidentiality and for the purpose of research only. The questionnaire was personally delivered to the respondents to complete. The process consisted of assisting the children to complete the questionnaires at their own pace (Appendix B). The questionnaire was administered from the 6th to 10th of February 2012. Out of the thirty-five (35) questionnaires administered to teachers, thirty-four (34) were collected. Also all the 240 questionnaires administered to pupils were collected.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

The purpose of data analysis is to organize, provide structure to, and elicit meaning from research data (Polit & Beck 2008). According to Burns and Grove (1999) qualitative data analysis occurs in three phases: description, analysis and interpretation.

The volumes of data gathered throughout the data collection process were categorized to identify similar themes. This process allowed the researcher to interpret the findings more easily.

The field notes gathered from pupils' observation, the interviews and the questionnaire were transcribed (Appendix G) into written forms to portray the opinions of pupils, teachers and parents on how documentation and use of folk games in the teaching and learning process can help develop life skills in the pupils of the selected public J.H.S in the Central Region. The researcher immersed himself in the data through repeated reading to identify patterns of meanings and issues of potential interest in the data. The data were manually coded using coloured pens and were also collated under each relevant code.

The researcher in the process gave full and equal attention to each data item to identify interesting aspects in the data items that formed the basis of the repeated patterns (themes) across the data set. The researcher in this instance came up with a clear thematic map under which all related items were put under the appropriate theme. The researcher again read all the collated extracts for each theme and checked whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern. However, problematic themes were rechecked and worked on. For each theme, the researcher wrote a detailed analysis to identify the story it tells and how this was related to the research questions. After the themes had fully been worked out, the final analytic narrative was done in relation to the research questions and the reviewed literature. The researcher also used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze preliminary data from the questionnaire. This was presented in tables, diagrams and percentages. The thematic analytic procedure used followed the principles of Braun et al (2006). This is summarized in the table below.

Table 2: Thematic Analysis

Process	Description of the process
1. Familiarising with the data	Transcribing data, reading and re- reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a ‘thematic map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

Source: Bruan et al (2006).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

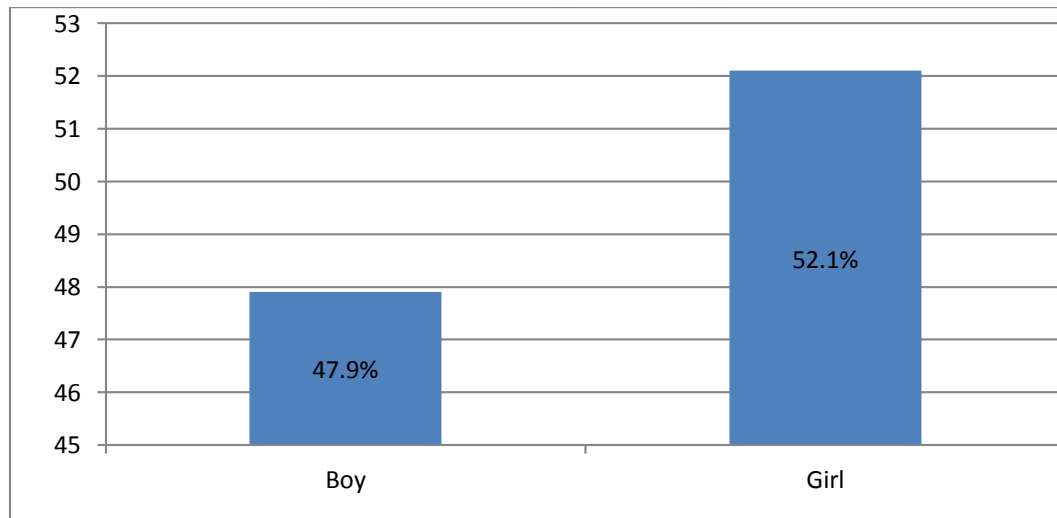
4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study. Data in the form of field notes through observation, questionnaires and interviews have been transcribed in narrative and descriptive forms as well as tables, are analyzed and interpreted to paint a picture of how folk games can help develop life skills in pupils at the selected public J.H.S.

4.1 Preliminary Data (Pupils)

Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Pupils

The researcher sought to find out the gender distribution of respondents. Graph 1 presents the results.



From the graph above 115 representing 47.9% of the total respondents were boys and 125 representing 52.1% were girls. It can be deduced that majority of the respondents were girls. This explains the fact why the researcher had more games played by girls only and the mixed type than games played only by boys.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Pupils

The table below shows the age distribution of the respondents (pupils) who answered the questionnaire.

Category	Number	Percentage
10-13yrs	21	8.8
14-17yrs	196	81.7
18-21yrs	22	9.2
22+	1	4
Total	240	100

From the table, it can be observed that majority of the pupils are within the ages of 14-17 because it recorded the highest percentage (81.7%). One can also deduced that majority of pupils at the Junior High School level are in the adolescent period .According to WHO (1997), this is an important age range for life skills development.

4.2 Preliminary Data of Respondents (Teachers)

Table 4: Gender Distribution of Teachers

One of the items sought to find out the gender distribution of the respondents.

Category	Number	Percentage
Male	26	74.29
Female	9	25.71
Total	35	100

From the table, out of 35 teachers 26 were males representing 74.29% and 9 were females representing 25.71%. The researcher observed that teachers in the three selected districts are predominantly males. No wonder female teachers have been asked to accept postings to schools in the rural areas so that they could serve as role model to girls (Adu-Gyamfi, 2011).

Figure 2: Age Distribution of Teachers

The researcher was interested in finding out the age distribution of the respondents. The chart shows the results.

Out of a total of 35 questionnaire received from teachers, 26 representing 74.28% were in the category of 18 -39 years and 9 representing 25.72% were above 40 years as shown in the chart. This clearly shows that the highest in the category was 30-39 years representing 45.71% and the least is 50 years and above representing 11.43%. The researcher observed that the teaching profession has now become attractive to the youth as a source of livelihood. This youthful age group helped the researcher to feel at home since he also fell within the same category.

Table 5: Academic qualification of Teachers

The researcher seeks to find out the academic qualification of the respondents.

Category	Number	Percentage
Diploma / Cert. A	17	48.57
First Degree	13	37.14
Post- graduate	0	0
Other Professional Institution	2	5.71
WASSCE/ ' O' Level	3	8.57
Total	35	100

The information presented in the table above indicates that out of the 35 respondents, 17 teachers representing 48.57% have Diploma /Cert. A. 13 teachers representing 37.14% have First Degree while none of them has attained a Post-Graduate Degree. 2 teachers representing 5.71% have qualifications from other institutions and finally, 3 teachers representing 8.57% have WASSCE/'O' Level. The researcher observed that though none of the teachers has a Post-Graduate Degree, majority of them have the requisite qualification to teach at the Junior High School level. Further investigations revealed that after teachers at this level had obtained their Post-Graduate Degree, they then leave unceremoniously into other profession with the view of getting better remuneration.

Table 6: Length of service

The researcher sought to find out how long the respondents have been in the teaching field.

Category	Number	Percentage
Below 5years	12	34.29
6-10years	13	37.14
11-15years	3	8.57
16-20years	2	5.71
21years and above	5	14.29
Total	35	100

From the table above, 12 teachers representing 34.29% of the respondents have spent less than 5 years on the job. 13 teachers representing 37.14% have been on the job between 6-10 years. 3 teachers representing 8.57% have been on the job between 11-15 years. 2 teachers representing 5.71% and 5 teachers representing 14.29% have spent between 16-20 years and 21 years and above respectively. This reveals that there are a good number of experienced teachers in the three districts selected for the project.

4.3 Main Discussion

4.3.1 Pupils' responses on playing folk games

Pupils were first asked to list their play activities during their free time. What stands out from the pupils' responses were *ɔware*, *ampe*, football, *pilolo*, *asosɔwamba*, *anhweakyir*, *mbobagor* (stone passing) and volley ball. This shows that though they play some traditional games they also have developed the taste for other foreign games. Playing net ball, basket ball, video game and phone game were not popular. The researcher analyzed the trend and found out that, facilities for playing such games are hardly found in the rural parts of the Central Region and so pupils show less interest in some of them.

4.3.2 How often pupils play folk games?

In finding out from pupils how often they play folk games, majority responded that they play it everyday and with other children in the neighbourhood. This implies that pupils like the kinds of activities that involve good degree of interaction with their playmates. Adding to this, majority of them also noted that they play the games more at

home than in school. This gives the impression that pupils see traditional games as games played only at home and not meant for the formal educational setting. It also showed that, pupils do not have specific time for playing folk games as compared to years gone by when children waited till the moon is up the sky. Probably it was because most communities of the central region are now connected to the national grid. Though there are many other folk games played in the Central Region of Ghana, most of the pupils identified *ɔware*, *ampe* and *pilolo* as the games they often play. The researcher therefore observed that majority of them mentioned these games because these games are commonly played in their respective communities. The researcher mentioned games like *atetar* (wrestling), *chalie* (the strongest) and *ɔdo hanketse* (my lover's handkerchief) to pupils but majority of them claimed that was their first time of hearing these names. This creates the impression that most of the traditional children's games in the central region are falling into oblivion.

4.3.3 What pupils learn in their play?

For pupils to describe what they learn in their play, they were asked to complete the sentence 'Which of the game(s) listed above do you like best and why?' The researcher listed some common games for pupils to identify their favourite game and state why they like the game or games selected. Majority of them ascribed to developing friendships because when they play they interact with each other. This means that given children the opportunity to play outdoors is the best platform to teach children the importance of socialization. Others also mentioned that the game leads them to exercise their bodies. In support of this, a boy said 'playing *pilolo* keeps me fit'. Games therefore

allow children the best opportunities to exercise and to improve their own physical skills. This helps maintain their interest throughout their stages of physical development. A good number of them also admitted they learn about their culture through the games they play. It is worth noticing that folk games with its accompanied songs help children to learn about their culture. Layne (2008) mentioned that children do not blindly imitate adults, but rather they consciously interact with that dominant culture to experiment and test the boundaries of that culture.

However, some valued a sense of fun and enjoyment because they interact with friends. It is therefore important that children develop satisfaction in their relationships with others so that together they will learn and at the same time have fun. This will raise their confidence level and capability as a person. A good number of the pupils really did not know why they play folk games. They were not able to offer any particular reason to that effect. This could mean that this crop of pupils did not understand the question or did not have enough time to think about it. In the event, some admitted folk games open their minds. One of the pupils said ‘when I play *duaoodua* it teaches me which animals have tail and those that do not’. This means that children’s games with its repetitive and exploratory characteristics, presents important feature of their cognitive development. Some also pointed out that most of the games they play have rules and so adhering to the rules teaches them how to obey rules. They gave examples as *pilolo*, *ɔware*, *anhweakyir* and *duaoodua*. In the Ghanaian traditional setting it is recommended that every body followed the norms and beliefs of the society not to incur the wrath of the gods. Hughes (1995) agrees that games with rules help children to concentrate, understand limits and

control their behaviour to conform to the rules. Some admitted that folk game helps them to solve mathematical problems.

The common game mentioned here was the *ɔware* game. This shows that children learn basic computational skills at home even before they start school. It is also clear that games provide an avenue for the child to explore ideas of computational thinking (Wing, 2006). A pupil argued that through playing folk games he saves himself from thinking about bad things that will bring disgrace to himself and his family. It can be deduced that playing folk games has the potential to instill positive thinking in the child.

4.3.4 Folk games played in respondents' vicinity (teachers)

The researcher sought to find out from the respondents which folk games they observe children play in their vicinity. Out of the games mentioned, *ɔware* was identified by the respondents as the commonest game played in their vicinity. *Ampe* and *pilolo* followed. This means that teachers do observe children play folk games. In support of this, Griffin (1982) points out that, play observation helps teachers to understand and have in-depth knowledge about children's play activities and how these can be developed. This will also reveal what help, if any, children may need to develop and extend their play (Christie and Yawkey, 1999). According to Whang (2000), in observing the daily lives of young children, it is seen that their behaviour largely consists of play in the form of free acting, in other words pleasant movement of the body. Most traditional games played by children in Ghana are characterized with sumptuous movements especially those that are accompanied by songs. *ɔdɔ hanketse* which is one of the oldest

folk games is no exception. The song which dictates the skillful movements of those involved and their facial expressions create a relaxing atmosphere for on lookers. The continuous movements and the delightful song is a way of communicating to each other love and affection.

4.3.5 Games played in respondents' School (teachers)

The researcher recorded that *ampe* was the highest folk game played in most schools in the Central Region. This was followed by *asosowamba*. The researcher therefore noticed that, the games identified are normally played by girls. It was therefore deduced that girls play more folk games at school than boys. Though boys do not play much of the folk games at school, they do play some in the home with their female counterparts. This was clear from the survey that out of the 240 pupils, 199 representing 82.9% admitted they play games which involves both boys and girls. It also came to light that majority of the pupils play folk games at home while few play folk games at school. There is the need for teachers to design their own creative means by which these pupils would be attracted at playing these games in the school. Since games are intrinsically motivating, it can be done without difficulty (Moursund, 2007). However educational research tells us that intrinsic motivation contributes substantially to learning. There is the need to know what children learn through playing games, how these learning experiences help them achieve their goals of education, and the roles parents and teachers have to play.

4.4 Research Question One (What ways will traditional games help develop cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial values in children?).

Responses on ways that Traditional Games help in Developing Cognitive, Psychomotor and Psychosocial values in Children.

4.4.1 Cognitive Development in Pupils

Through the questionnaire and interviews, the teachers were able to express their concerns about how folk games help develop pupils' cognitive abilities. Majority of the teachers mentioned that folk games have the potential to assist pupils to think imaginatively. In that as they continually play the game they develop the instinct to come up with their own game. On the same line of thought, Brown and Vaughan (2009) contend that, the imagination is by far the most powerful ability of the human mind. Our ability therefore to imagine knows no boundaries and allows our minds to create and explore simulated realities in which to discover unlimited possibilities. Again, Vygotsky (1978) in his socio cultural theory opines that, play promotes abstract thought by separating meaning from objects and actions and objects in symbolic ways. Play in this regard allows children to achieve a mental representation of social roles and other experiences around them.

Others shared the view that divergent thinking is one of the benefits that the pupil can acquire if embraced in any kind of folk game play. In a *pilolo* game, children are made to guess and search all possible areas to find the hidden pieces of sticks. They however depend on their own reasoning skills to make their search successful. Actually this helps

them to think in a divergent manner. The board game is no exception. A player needs a lot of considerations to make one positive move. As the child plays this game he/she learns to acquire different ways to outwit his/her opponent and this increases the child's thinking ability. In response, Susa and Benedict (1994) suggested that divergent thinking is a cognitive ability that involves being able to produce a large number of relatively unique or unusual ideas in response to a given task constraint. Ability to imitate during play is one of the key issues the respondents raised linking to the child's cognitive development. As pupils play they monitor each other closely with the view of emulating each other's special skills. This gesture gives them the insight at identifying their role models in the community. Play and imitation are therefore core and innate human strategies for cognitive development (Piaget, 1957). Piaget (1957) puts his explanation under two categories. These include:

1. Assimilation – This is where a child could rehearse a newly formed concept to make it fit within what they already knew and understood.
2. Accommodation – As a child experiences or encounters a new event, activities, ideas, or rituals, imitation is used to build an entirely new mental model.

Most of the teachers pointed out that, playing folk games assist children in problem solving. Trying to win in any game is one way to solve a problem. It creates the necessary room for the child to devise different strategies to be on top. In the light of these, Brown and Vaughan (2009) stress that play can help us to be able to handle problems, provides us with the ability to see our unlimited potential, and is essential to the creative process. Through traditional games we can create a culture where problem

solving will be a natural part of our day (Pearson, 2006). This means that games with its inherent problem solving can spark children's creativity (Prensky, 2000). Reasoning skills was envisaged by some respondents as a way folk games can contribute to the cognitive development of the child. They believed that through good reasoning skills the pupil can articulate his or her thoughts well in school and at home. One of the fascinating games called *nana wɔhɔ?* (Is chief around?) is one obvious game which has the potential to develop the reasoning skills in children. The respondent not looking on the diagram drawn on the ground is made to respond correctly to identify marbles left, those eliminated and obstacles left to cross. In agreement, Papalia and Olds (1993) clearly state that at the adolescence period one of the characteristics exhibited is the ability to think abstractly and use of scientific reasoning develops.

4.4.2 Psychomotor development in pupils

The researcher sought to find out from the respondents how folk games contribute to the development of the child's psychomotor development. Majority of the teachers believed that children grow and develop well through intensive and adequate motor activities. Therefore not getting involved in any physical activities can affect their regular process of development. As a result of this most children in the rural parts of Ghana are normally given the chance to play different types of folk games during moonlight nights. Amidst the running, singing and dancing, they exercise their bodies for healthy living.

Looking at this direction, Spencer (1873) in his “surplus energy theory” claims play is necessary to allow children to discharge excess energy. Opposite of Spencer’s view, Patrick (1916) discloses the purpose of play as renewal of energy (Hughes, 1995). These two theories, though may have different meaning still addresses the child’s physical needs. In the Ghanaian rural settings most of the games children play involves lot of movements and manipulation of objects. This helps them to develop strength and speed in performing an activity. Creating toy cars from the *adobe* plant and from the young *onyina* plant are typical examples. However playing games such *asampe*, *pilolo*, *asosowamba* and *anhweakyir* entertain children and at the same time build in them healthy living. Majority of the respondents specifically mentioned *ampe* which is characterized by clapping and jumping as one of the games that seek to develop postural control and good coordination in children. Whang (2000) postulates that, through movement children develop postural control and various movement skills.

4.4.3 Psychosocial development in pupils

The researcher was interested in finding out from teachers how folk games can contribute to psychosocial development in the children they teach. Most of the teachers were not familiar with the word ‘psychosocial’ and so the researcher had to explain it vividly to their understanding. Due to the difficulty encountered, the researcher had to conduct a lot of interviews in addition to responses received from the questionnaire. Most of the respondents indicated that folk games help in emotional maturation of children in that they build their confidence and a sense of compassion which leads to caring for others and also been cared for. According to the survey, out of the 240 pupils, 200

representing 83% claimed that they do empathize with their friends when playing games. This shows children learn to treat others with care in their play (CCCF, 2003).

Relieving boredom and reducing uncertainty were some instances established by some of the respondents. These were also popular among the total responses received. They identified *anhweakyir* as one of the games that can help reduce uncertainty among pupils should they play more of this game. This is clearly stated under the theories of play found in Hughes (1995), where play is seen as a mechanism to relieve boredom and to reduce uncertainty in children. They concluded that the possible benefits are both emotional and physical. Majority of the teachers express the view that folk games help in building good interpersonal skills, sharing and cooperation among pupils. When children play folk games they interact and learn from each other. No wonder children like playing these games during moonlight nights in the rural areas in Ghana. Moursund (2007) states that games provide an environment in which game players can learn about themselves and this also increase social skills such as collaboration, negotiation, and shared decision-making among them (Rieber (1996). Some of the respondents focused on the skill of self control and positive self esteem.

They expressed the opinion that during play children learn how to control themselves in the group in order not to incur the displeasure of other playmates. Wardle (2000) in this direction echoes that, while children engage with different materials, they develop specific skills that enable them create a sense of control and to develop positive self-esteem. Some teachers acknowledged the development of trust and self identity

among children. The *nana wɔhwɔ?* game was an example cited here. As children play this game they master the trend and are able to challenge any manipulations along the line. When this happens it brings mistrust which sometimes can end the game midway. They are able to do this through adequate practice. This is backed by the first and fifth stages of Erikson's eight stages or critical periods of life. The first stage, he called 'Trust versus Mistrust', and this is where the child has to develop a sense of trust in others. 'Identity versus Role Confusion' is where the adolescent have to develop self identity to look up for role model (Erickson, 1968). Overcoming risk of failure or ridicule came up in the survey. According to one of the teachers 'losing in a game of *ɔware* is even fun'. They admitted that during, play children explore their potential without thinking about any risk factors or what others may say which sometimes is found in real-life situations. It is necessary that children gain satisfaction in their relationships with others to accept what ever comes their way. However, they will have the confidence in their own strength and capability as a person.

4.5 Research question two (To what extent can traditional games develop life skills in children?).

4.5.1 Folk games and life skills development

One of the main questions for this research was to find out the extent to which traditional games develop life skills in children. For the purpose of this research, the researcher explained life skills to the respondents as the knowledge, attitudes and personal traits that equip the child to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of his or her everyday life. Brack and Hill (2000) contend that, skills that can be said to be life skills

are innumerable and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings. Respondents did not hesitate to suggest some life skills benefits that the child can derive from playing folk games. Some of the respondents believed that as children play they interact with each other in so many ways. Through this they develop some social skills that assist them to function confidently and competently with themselves, with other people and with the entire community. In agreement to this, Peck and Hong (1988) states that life skills enable people to care for themselves in a supportive environment, and are concerned with independence in self-care, understanding the environment and living with others. Adding to his voice, a parent explained that one of the benefits children derive from playing folk games is showing of love and togetherness in the community. Most games played in the Ghanaian rural settings call for all the children in the neighbourhood to gather at one place to interact, share ideas and have fun. They communicate through singing and dancing to show love for each other. For instance the *ɔɔ hanketse* game is a game that brings both boys and girls together. Boys and girls in two separate lines sing and dance. By taking turns, each playmate from the opposite sex dances to pick a loved one and vice versa. They used this to express love for one another hence learn how to live harmoniously together in the community.

A great number of the respondents indicated good interpersonal relationship, good communication skills and problem solving skills as potential benefits that pupils can develop from playing folk games. For instance, the child deciding on which marbles to pick and distribute over the other marbles in the *ɔware* game need careful planning and calculations to do in order to win. Through this the child learns to solve immediate

problems. As they play, they interact with each other to establish relationship. They also share ideas in their play and as a result improve their communicative skills.

WHO in their 1994 report, noted that life skills help to carry out effective interpersonal relationships and to make choices and resolve conflict without resorting to actions that will harm oneself or others. The organization again touched on some generic skills which include decision-making, problem solving, self-awareness and communication skills. These however were in line with the opinions expressed by the respondents. Another opinion expressed by the respondents was that as children play folk games they exercise their bodies and as a result develops in them the skill and knowledge of healthy living. The running, jumping, clapping, throwing and catching, and hopping which are characterized with folk games help children to exercise their bodies. In doing so, they grow to develop the love for exercise for healthy living. This clearly reflects the view of Francis (2007), who declares that, developing life skills helps the adolescents to translate knowledge, attitude and their health behaviour such as acquiring the ability to reduce specific risk behaviour and adopt healthy behaviour that improve their lives in general. Buttressing most of the views raised by the respondents above, Peck and Hong (1988) put life skills under three basic headings. Firstly, they mentioned personal skills which include developing friendship, leisure interests and communication skills. Secondly, home management skills which involve skills such as budgeting, nutrition and hygiene. Thirdly, self-reliance skills, which include those skills, which are necessary for the individual to be able to organize his or her own life and to maintain and utilize the resources he or she may need. The survey therefore suggests that the potential benefits of

traditional games for life skills development are very enormous in that it caters for the holistic improvement of the individual's life.

4.6 Research question three (How will documentation of traditional games assist children in teaching and learning?).

Responses on how documentation of folk games assist in teaching and learning.

4.6.1 Documentation of folk games

Here, I present responses from teachers to open ended question; how documentation of folk games help pupils in the teaching and learning. There were thirty-five (35) teachers who responded to this item. Some of the respondents were of the view that when folk games are documented and used in the teaching and learning process it would instill in the pupils the skill of problem solving. They provided answers such as 'it will help children to think and come out with solutions to their problems', 'it will promote real learning and will help pupils in problem solving', 'help to solve difficult problems in life' and 'understanding and solving problems'. Based on these responses, it can be argued that majority of teachers for this study are of the strong view that traditional children's games have the potential to develop the ability to solve problems.

Some also shared the view that playing traditional games promote team work. They gave responses such as development of team spirit, acceptance of others in a team, respecting each other's views and becoming supportive to friends. At the Ghanaian public basic schools, teachers need to strengthen pupils' relationships in other to enhance group work in class. The ultimate solution to realize this they believe is by using play.

Others claimed that documenting and using games in teaching and learning will make learning effective. One teacher admittedly came out that children learn effectively when they 'do, see and touch'. In the same vein, another stated that it would motivate children to learn, hence would make lessons lively and may call for full participation. It can therefore be argued that when games are used in lessons it will make the lesson child centered which most professionals suggested was the best. A teacher also expressed the view that folk games may serve as RPK which can arouse pupils' entry behaviour in the lesson being taught. However it will reduce shyness among pupils.

Few of them also agreed it would guide teachers to develop the skill of selecting appropriate teaching and learning materials for the lesson. This means that making teaching and learning materials out of local materials of which children are familiar will make them comfortable learning concepts easy. This is what some of the respondents called real learning. A teacher concluded by saying that game play develops children holistically through life skills. Though the respondents expressed different views, it could be deduced that they all shared positive sentiments about the documentation and use of traditional games in teaching and learning at the public basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana. However they were not able to give concrete evidence as to how a particular game could be used to support the views they gave.

4.7 Further Findings and Discussion

4.7.1 Views of parents and teachers on folk games

The researcher presented the results from the interviews conducted to both teachers and parents. In all, twelve (12) teachers and nine (9) parents were interviewed. The interview questions were semi-structured and sought to investigate their experience and the benefits of playing folk games to the child. When asked to describe how their children spent their leisure time, some parents mentioned playing football (boys) and *ampe* (girls). Others named roaming about with friends. Majority of the parents mentioned watching TV and playing computer games. This means that in Ghana children cannot be predicted on how they spent their leisure time. When asked to compare their own childhood experiences to those of their children, one parent replied, 'Things have changed'

Most parents said that they used to spend far more time outdoors than their children do today. They claimed that during moonlight nights they played variety of games and sometimes were told stories by an elderly person in the community. They added that during their time most of the communities did not have lights and so did not get access to sophisticated machines such as the computer and video games. As a result they only waited for the moon to surface before they get the opportunity to entertain themselves. In this regard it was deduced from their concerns that they still appreciate how times have changed. One parent admitted his children could not get enough children to play with because they stayed at the outskirts of the village and so watching TV is the best option for the children. Commenting on the lack of interest of children of today at

playing traditional games, one parent lamented 'it's all about computer now'. Most parents expressed a preference for their children to be playing folk games in that it will help them to exercise their bodies and create good interpersonal relationships among them. A parent indicated that folk games help children to be fast in putting their thoughts together to solve problems. He used the game *duaoodua* to buttress his point. He added that the child being able to group animals under categories of those that have tail and those that do not have is a very good way of exercising the mind. One of the main concerns that came up was that parents felt if their children are not allowed to play folk games, they may in no time forget about their rich culture which will in turn affect posterity. However some parents pointed out that some of their wards seem to do better though they play less traditional games.

The interviews revealed that teachers have good perception about using folk games in the teaching and learning process. Majority of the teachers interviewed were very much in support of the importance of documenting folk games. The teachers admitted that, the impact of folk games in promoting the understanding and learning of concepts cannot be underestimated. They believed that as pupils play the game, it gives them the opportunity to start from the known to the unknown which forms the basis for learning concepts as proposed by researchers in education. Some also indicated that if pupils are effectively taken through adequate play in their lessons, the potential to develop their reasoning skills will be very enormous. The child will therefore develop the courage to think logically and to solve problems independently. Play therefore loosens the barriers that we construct between concepts and constructs of reality and opens our

minds to a realm of limitless potential (Brown and Vaughan, 2009). It was also advanced by some of the teachers that determining the type of folk games to be used in a particular teaching and learning process will eventually assist the teacher to select the appropriate teaching and learning materials to be used. The teacher through this gathers the needed confidence and courage to face the task ahead. Folk games were also identified as one of the key elements that can enhance effective interpersonal relationship among pupils at school. Hence good rapport established among pupils creates a congenial atmosphere for learning. It was noticed that when folk games are used in the teaching and learning process, it will inject some fun into the lesson to sustain pupil'. Some teachers revealed that, having fun in the play has its reciprocal advantage at keeping the body fit for healthy living. A teacher pointed out that 'when pupils play folk games they are able to develop the skill of communicating effectively with each other'. This he believed is exhibited through verbal and non verbal actions. Pupils therefore understand each other and so coexist peacefully with each other in the school.

Some expressed the view that modernization has changed the mentality of children and this has affected their play. However in the urban centres of the central region, some pupils indulge in the playing of video and television games. However, some teachers referred to traditional games as not being played any more and as one put it 'technology had overshadowed traditional children's games'. There was the fear by others that children will turn to technology for entertainment rather than to being imaginative. Some teachers shared the opinion that, though technology had come to stay,

we still need to regulate the behaviour of children as it can have negative impact on their learning.

4.7.2 Play Behaviour of Pupils

The researcher under this part sought to observe some of the plays of pupils to find out the nature of their interaction and the behaviour they exhibited during play. On the same line of survey lessons integrated with some traditional games gathered by the researcher were also observed in the classroom.

From pupils' outdoor observations, the researcher was able to put their behaviour under four main headings. These are:

- a. **Relationship building** – This involves an atmosphere created for pupils to interact and have fun with each other. It also includes sharing and cooperating with each other. In most cases the researcher found out that the children came together, interacting with one another, because they have agreed to come together to entertain themselves after being occupied in the classroom for some time. The researcher observed some pertinent interactions among majority of the pupils. Some of the pupils gave helping hand to each other during their play. For instance, a girl lends a helping hand in an *asosɔwamba* game when she saw the friend was performing poorly. This is embedded in the Ghanaian culture that we extend helping hand to one another in times of trouble. This satisfies the saying that '*nifa guare benkum na benkum aguare nifa*'. This literary means that the right hand assists the left hand and the left hand in reciprocation. I was also able

to see moments of peer teaching throughout the interaction as a whole. During their play they shared idea as to how certain things must be done. This implies that children in Ghana use folk games to response to correctional measures from their friends hence the adage '*obi nnima obi kyere*'. Meaning one must learn from the one who knows. They used either verbal and non-verbal communication or both in this regard. Piaget cited in Brewer (1998) states that, play pushes children out of egocentric thought patterns through interacting with other children in play situations by forcing them to consider the view points of their playmates. This was seen in most of the games observed especially in *ampe* and *kwesida frankaah*. After observing these events, I reflected on pupils' communication potentials and how it impacted on their learning. I observed that pupils were sharing not only play activity; they also were sharing ideas and emotions. Body language such as eye contacts and face expressions such as smiling and applauding were positive signs to sustain their interest the play activity.

- b. Showing passion** – This determine actions portrayed by pupils which were deemed positive and for beneficial purposes to make their play devoid of danger. This includes maintaining order and reducing conflict. The researcher observed some social interactions that were negative in tone. Some pupils displayed aggression in response to stimulus provided by their peers. These aggressions were coupled with angry or hostile verbalization. Example, two pupils in a *pilolo* game argued and one of them kicked the other. As the victim charged to retaliate, the other playmates intervened to save the situation. They used their own communicative skills as a means to solve the problem. The researcher at this point

observed that children in their play learn to resolve conflicts that emanate among them. According to Erikson (1986), through social play, children usually involve verbal and physical interactions that increase their ability to identify and empathize with others feeling. Learning to trust and respect for peers also constitutes an important aspect of their social development.

- c. Psychomotor activity** – This involves any bodily movements triggered by any play context. Games such as *anhweakyir* and *pilolo* which were observed involved some high degree of running. Squatting and the intermittent running which characterized the *anhweakyir* game made pupils to sweat profusely as this suggested some form of exercising their bodies. Play as claimed by Spencer (1873) is necessary to allow children discharge excess energy. Again pupils showed commitment in many of the games observed. In one of the *pilolo* games, the search for the hidden sticks by pupils showed a lot of fascinating movements and aggressive eye movements. It was as if something precious needs to be retrieved for ones survival. Motor stimulation therefore supports eye-hand-foot coordination which is beneficial to children’s development of balance and locomotor skills (Frost, 1992).
- d. Cognitive activity** – This involves the mental process of knowing, perception, reasoning and judgment. In most of the games observed pupils showed a lot of prowess at expressing their thoughts in the play activities. A good number of them exhibited their computational abilities especially in the *oware* game. The experienced ones could tell which marbles and the number of steps a player could make to determine a win. According to Wing (2006), computational thinking is a

fundamental skill for everybody, and not just for computer scientist. In the process the inexperienced playmates were assisted by their experienced counterparts. For instance, a game which was almost lost by a novice player was coached by friends to bring the game to a draw which they termed as '*apae*' which means no win for any of the players. Vygotsky states that learning awakens in children a variety of internal developmental processes that can operate only when they interact with more competent people in their environment and in cooperation with their peers (Vygotsky, 1978). This means that when children collaborate on an activity, they form an equal relationship towards a common goal. *Nana wɔhɔ?* was also among the few games that pupils were observed playing outside the classroom. Pupils who played this game were able to exercise their recall skills. In one case a boy was able to identify stones that were picked and those that were not and the many obstacles without looking on the diagram on the ground. This means children as they continue to play such game they develop the ability to picture things in their minds which enhances their creative thinking.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTEGRATING FOLK GAMES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.0 Overview

This chapter seeks to present the lessons observed by the researcher at the various schools and the reactions of pupils during and after the presentations. It was also to find out how best the integration of folk games in lessons taught at the public basic schools in the central region of Ghana ignite pupils' ability to understand concepts taught in the various subjects. From the basic school syllabus, topics were selected from the following subject areas: Mathematics, Social Studies, Integrated Science, English Language, Physical Education and Music and Dance.

5.1 Lesson 1 Mathematics

Topic: Rigid Motion

Sub-Topic: Symmetry and Shapes

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, the pupil will be able to:

- a. explain the term 'line of symmetry'
- b. identify the lines of symmetry of a square

RPK: Pupils do fold papers at school.

TLM: *Kwesida frankaah* drawn on cut out cardboards.

5.1.1 Teaching Learning Activities

Introduction: Teacher asks pupils to fold papers into equal halves to revise their previous knowledge.

Step 1- Teacher assists students to explain the meaning of the term 'line of symmetry'.

Step 2- Teacher guides students to play the game of *kwesida frankaah* in groups to identify the lines of symmetry of the square through the number of wins recorded at different directions.

Step 3- teacher summarizes the main points of the topic to end the lesson.

5.1.2 Pupils' participation

Pupils took active part in the lessons. Through interactions and shearing of ideas, they helped each other to identify all the symmetries of the square. About 85% of the pupils were able to answer questions posed to them by their teachers. Figure 3 shows some pupils playing the *kwesida frankaah* game.



Figure 3: Pupils playing *kwesida frankaah* game.

5.2 Lesson 2: Mathematics

Topic: Number Bases

Sub- Topic: Base Four

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, the pupil will be able to use the oware game (Tufuu- yaasa method) to add numerals in base four.

RPK: Pupils do count in tens.

TLM: oware (Appendix D) and chart.

5.2.1 Teaching Learning Activities

Introduction: Teacher asks pupils to count in tens to revise their previous knowledge.

Step 1- Teacher discusses addition of base four with students using a chart.

Step 2- Teacher assists pupils to use the oware game (Tufuu-yaasa method) to add numerals in base four.

Step 3- Teacher guides pupils to record their answers on a given table in their books.

Teacher gives individual assignment to end the lesson.

5.2.2 Pupils' participation

Pupils were able to understand and solved problems on addition of base four numerals in that majority of them got it easy using the oware game to arrive at answers.

5.3 Lesson 3: Social Studies

Topic: Our Culture

Sub-Topic: Ways by which Ghanaians express their culture.

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, the pupil will be able to:

- a. identify at least three games Ghanaians play to express their culture.
- b. describe how any one of the games identified is played.

RPK: Pupils play games to entertain themselves at school.

TLM: Pictures and sketches of children playing the '*ampe*' (Appendix D) game.

5.3.1 Teaching Learning Activities

Introduction: Teacher asks pupils questions based on their previous knowledge.

Step1- Teacher guides pupils to identify some games Ghanaians play to express their culture. Teacher shows sketches and pictures to pupils to talk about them.

Step 2- Teacher assists pupils to describe how the games identified are played.

Step 3 – Teacher puts pupils in groups to play *ɔware*.

Step 4- Teacher summarizes the main points and gives exercise to pupils to end the lesson.

5.3.2 Pupil's participation

Pupils took active part in the lesson in that it was interesting. Pupils were not restricted to any particular game but rather they were urged to come out with their favourite game and how it was played. The constant cooperation and sharing of ideas among pupils injected a lot of fun into the lesson which sustained the interest of pupils to the latter. *Anhwɛakyir*, *mbobaagor* (stone passing), *ɔware*, and *ampe* were games identified by the majority of the pupils at the various schools. About 87% of the pupils

answered questions posed to them by their teachers without difficulty. Figure 4 shows pupils playing *ɔware*.



Figure 4: Pupils playing *ɔware*.

5.4 Lesson 4 Integrated Science

Topic: Hygiene and Health 1

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, the pupil will be able to:

- a. state at least three ways of keeping the body fit.
- b. explain the importance of using folk games as recreation for healthy living.

RPK: Pupils eat to keep themselves healthy.

TLM: Pictures and sketches of children playing folk games.

5.4.1 Teaching Learning Activities

Introduction: Teacher asks pupils to mention some foods they eat to keep them healthy.

Step 1- Teacher discusses with pupils some of the ways of keeping the body fit. Teacher shows sketches and pictures to pupils to talk about them.

Step 2- Teacher guides pupils to come out with the importance of using folk games as recreation for healthy living.

Step 3- Teacher takes pupils out to play *anhwekyir* to exercise their bodies. Teacher asks pupils of their experience after the game.

Step 4- Teacher gives exercise to conclude the lesson.

5.4.2 Pupils' Participation

In all the schools it was observed that pupils' participation in the lessons was encouraging in that they took active part in all the activities in the teaching and learning process. Children played the games in groups and this created in them the sense of belongingness. Figure 5 show pupils playing *anhweakyir*.

Figure 5: Pupils playing *anhweakyir*.

5.5 Lesson 5: English language

Topic: Reading and Comprehension

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, the pupils will be able to:

- a. Identify the TLMs.
- b. Identify new words from the passage.
- c. Read the passage and answer at least 3 questions on it.

RPK: Children do play folk games at home.

TLM: Picture of children playing games.

5.5.1 Teaching Learning Activities

Introduction/Pre-reading stage

Teacher asks pupils to mention the folk games they play and when they play them.

Teacher shows the TLM to pupils to identify them.

Teacher drills new items with pupils and asks them to use any one in forming a sentence.

Reading stage

- I. Teacher distributes the passage to pupils and does model reading as pupils look on attentively.
- II. Teacher guides pupils to read silently for information.

Post Reading Stage

- I. Teacher guides pupils to play the *mbobagor* game in the passage in groups.
- II. Teacher gives exercise (Appendix F), supervises and marks pupils work.

5.5.2 Pupils' participation

Pupils took active part in the lesson in that about 90% of the pupils found it interesting and played it with confidence. The fun that emanated from the game sustained pupils' interest throughout the lesson. They carried themselves well in the game and this resulted in effective inter personal relationship among the pupils. It was observed that oral questions asked by the teachers at the end of the lessons were correctly answered by pupils. Figure 6 show pupils playing the *mbobagor*.



Figure 6: Pupils playing the *mbobagor*.

5.6 Lesson 6 Physical Education

Topic: Football

Aspect: Trapping with in-step of foot.

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, the pupil will be able to trap the ball to a specific direction with in-step of foot both in the air and on the ground.

R.P.K: pupils use their legs to kick objects.

T.L.M: Football.

5.6.1 Teaching Learning Activities

Introduction: teacher arranges pupils in two lines and guides them to jog round the field twice as a general warm-up.

Specific warm-up: in a circle, teacher guides pupils to fold their arms on the chest and hop on one leg to play the folk game called *charlie*.

Skill: In a horse shoe formation, teacher throws the ball to pupils to trap it with their in-step on the ground and also guides them to use the in-step to trap the ball in the air.

Games: in two teams pupils play 15 minutes game to end the lesson

5.6.2 Pupils' participation

Pupils expressed interest in the lesson because the game was not familiar to them. All of them tried to have a taste to how the game was played. They felt good about themselves in that each of them tried to win at least one of the encounters. The lesson therefore was successful. (See Figure 7)

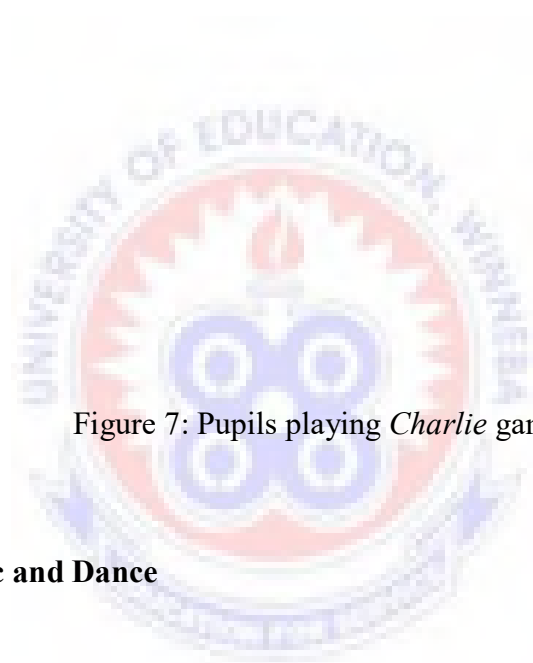


Figure 7: Pupils playing *Charlie* game.

5.7 Lesson 7 Music and Dance

Topic: Rhythm.

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, the pupil will be able to read and understand simple rhythms.

R.P.K: Pupils sing and clap during worship.

TLM: Clappers and rattles.

5.7.1 Teaching learning Activities

Introduction: teacher begins the lesson with a folk game called *2, 4, 6, 1, 1* to maintain a steady rhythm.

Step 1 – teacher guides pupils to identify some basic musical duration such as “long”, “short”, “long,” “short” (eighth note, quarter note etc).

Step 2 – teacher assists pupils to explore how humans create and respond to rhythm.

Teacher ends the lesson with pupils experimenting with creating their own rhythms using their hands, clappers and rattles.

5.7.2 Pupils’ participation

With this game, pupils sheared fun and also were able to create their own rhythms. The smiles that emanated from their faces suggested they were intrinsically motivated. However they collaborated with each other to make the lesson successful.

(See plate 6)



Figure 8: Children playing *2, 4, 6, 1, 1* game.

After observing pupils play the games, the researcher asked them of their own experience. Though majority expressed it was fun, others came out with specific answers such as ‘I learnt about my culture’, ‘it gives me energy’ and also ‘it helps me to make friends’. From these and other responses, the researcher realized that, if folk games are used in the classroom it would make pupils to understand that the home complement the school as far as teaching and learning is concerned but are not separate entities. Again, since the content of the games reflected their true culture it will serve as motivation to sustain pupils’ interest in lessons. Kumari and Lightner on the other hand believed that adding multimedia instruction to games and simulations are also valuable teaching methods (Kumari and Lightner, 2007). As a teacher puts ‘everyone dreams in a language he or she understands best but not in a foreign language’. This perfectly explains the fact that we need to hold on to a method of teaching that is best suited to the children we teach.

5.8 Discussion of Major Findings

In terms of pupils’ views on folk games some universal trends emerged. Pupils tend to like folk games but lack adequate knowledge about several other folk games played in the Central Region of Ghana. *Pilolo*, *ɔware* and *ampe* emerged the most popular game among pupils. It has become increasingly challenging preserving some traditional play modes and that there is the risk to lose some of them (Schartzman, 1979). The logical conclusion is that pupils for this study would not be able to appreciate most of their own rich folk games if adequate measures are not taken to document the relevant few to be used in the schools. However when enough children choose not to acquire

certain aspects of their culture, those traits will be weeded out of the culture (Simahara, 1970 as cited in Layne, 2008). The researcher at this stage observed that one of the text books on Ghanaian language and culture in Fante (J.H.S 1, p. 29-32) only highlighted on some few traditional games but did not touch on how these games were played. This calls for a document that can fully explain how these games are played and identify the potential life skills that can be developed from playing such games. Though a few of the children mentioned that they do play games like football, volley ball, net ball, basket ball and tennis at their leisure time, majority liked *ɔware*, *ampe* and *pilolo*. A pupil said ‘I play *ɔware* because it opens my mind’, others also mentioned exercising of the body and being able to appreciate their culture. A pupil unaware of the researcher’s presence told a friend that playing folk games assist him to learn how to obey rules. This means that one important reason for playing folk game is to inculcate in the child how to adhere to rules and regulations. This therefore shows that not only do games prepare the minds and foster relationships in children; it also does prepare the individual to conform to the norms of the society.

These proved the fact that some of the pupils play folk games with preconceived idea and this can be good for both their academic and social life. Majority of the pupils admitted that playing folk games assist them to build good relationship with their friends. They indicated that interacting with friends is one important aspect of their play. This means that children like spending time with their friends than to be alone. Some children stated that when they play folk games it helps them to develop trust in each other. This means that children use games to understand each other’s behaviour and how to live

harmoniously together. If children in the public basic school are led into playing folk games at school it would inculcate in them the sense of seeing themselves as one big family which has the potential of preventing conflict among them both at school and in the home. From this study, majority of the pupils claimed that they play traditional games mostly at home. It was also observed that girls play more folk games at school than boys. The findings therefore suggested that most of the pupils saw traditional games as games to be played at home and not in school. This is a clear example of how colonization has made our culture in attractive to our own children. The question then is how do we reverse the situation? In all the schools, about 52% of the pupils who participated in the study expressed enjoyment in the folk games they like best. This means that when folk games are used in the teaching and learning process, it would arouse pupils' interest to assimilate fully what the teacher intended to give them. It was clear from the findings that some of the pupils of this study did not know why they play folk games. To eradicate this problem the researcher believed documentation and factoring folk games in the teaching and learning process would help pupils to put value on their play. From observation the researcher realized that the topic under study was of much interest to the pupils. Those who were initially feeling shy participated with joy. Pupils who were not selected for the study tried to sneak their way through but were prevented. The researcher promised to involve them next time.

5.8.1 Folk games and cognitive development

Almost all the teachers said something positive under this study. Majority of the teachers agreed that when pupils play folk games they develop the ability to think

imaginatively. This skill is much needed in the public basic schools in Ghana since most teachers teach in abstract and so for the child to feel comfortable in class must engage in adequate game play. Another appreciable response from teachers of this study also went for ability of the pupils to imitate. They believed that learning to imitate helps the child to look for role model for betterment of future living in the community. Children model substantial aspects of their play on adult activities and in so doing learn not only the social roles and cultural values and norms typical in the culture but also the skills and competencies necessary for survival and productive community membership (Kamp, 2001).

Some teachers are of the view that playing traditional games develop in children problem solving skills. Most people believed that life itself is full of problem solving. However the child being able to solve problems is an ideal way of improving his/her life and that of the community as whole. Play therefore engenders creativity that prepares fewer generations of citizens for innovative problem solving and new contributions to society (Rogers, 2010). This agrees to the findings that Ghanaian traditional games have problem solving possibilities which can be preserved and hand down to generations to come. Other teachers in this study also saw divergent thinking benefit the child can acquire from playing traditional games. Democracy in Ghana is taking roots and so getting children who can think divergently to arrive at different opinions will better strengthen our democratic dispensation. However it must also call for respecting each other's views. Abiding by the rules of the game they tend to accept their individual faults and through that they learn how to respect each others views.

5.8.2 Folk games and psychomotor development

In the field of education every teacher is expected to incorporate into every lesson the three main domains of which psychomotor skill is one of them. In this part of the survey, the researcher sought views from the respondents to know how folk games help in developing the child's psychomotor skills. Majority of the teachers stated that folk games help children to acquire the skill of good coordination especially when they play *ampe*. Frost (1992) in this direction agreed that motor stimulation supports eye-hand-foot coordination and is beneficial to children's development of balance and locomotor skill. On the contrary not all the games coordinate the three (eye, hand and foot) as mentioned by Frost. In the central region of Ghana, the *asosɔamba* game played by girls involves throwing and catching of marbles and this develops only eye – hand coordination. A group of teachers were of the opinion that through movement children exercises their bodies which in turn keeps them fit. It is said that 'a sound mind lives in a healthy body'. This means games must be part of children's learning in other to complement their cognitive development. A lady teacher pointed out clearly that when children play *ampe* they develop good postural control. This even generated argument among her fellow staff members. In the traditional Ghanaian society children are expected to assume the proper posture for a particular activity. For instance, eating with one hand supporting the body sideways on the ground is abhorred.

5.8.3 Folk games and psychosocial development

Erikson (1968) came up with the word psychosocial as a term coined from the words psychological (mind) and social (relationship). In short, it is to identify the mindset of the individual and how he / she will relate to other people in the society. Out of the views collected, majority of the teachers said through traditional children's games pupils would develop the skill of sharing and cooperating with each other. One common characteristic of Ghanaian rural communities is communal living. Through this, many are able to foster development in their various communities. Teachers can therefore observe children's collaborations through games and use the information they gain to better understand the process of children's learning as well as the cues necessary to foster it to the highest level. They can then use this information to promote a higher level of success in their teaching experiences in collaboration with the children. Some of the teachers pointed out that, children develop good attitude from playing folk games. Examples they gave include gaining self confidence, feeling good about one self, good interpersonal skill, self control and overcoming fear of failure. These are all necessary ingredient for group work at school.

5.8.4 Folk games and life skills development

As indicated earlier on, the researcher explained life skills, as the knowledge, attitude and personal traits that equip the child to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of his or her everyday life. However almost the findings gathered here are similar to the views given under the cognitive, psychomotor and the psychosocial benefits of traditional games to the child. Majority of the respondents came out that when pupils play folk

games they are able to develop friendships and also good interpersonal relationships. Life skills help in carrying out effective interpersonal relationships and to make choices and resolve conflict without resorting to actions that will harm oneself/others (WHO, 2004). This implies that having good relationship with one another may prevent conflict in the society. Others also accepted the fact that, decision making skill is important element embedded in playing folk games. However Peck and Hong (1988) maintain that life skills enable people to make decisions concerning life situations. These teachers believed that life is full of choices and that the child needs support that can help him or her make an informed choice without much difficulty. Developing problem solving skills also came out from majority of the respondents. They expressed the opinion that, the child needs this skill to function well in the society and so adequate play of folk games is the key to develop this potential in the child. As indicated by Pearson (2006), we need to create a culture where problem solving is a natural part of our day. The researcher also saw critical thinking as one of the common views expressed by the respondents. One of the teachers emphasized that, if the child is trained to think critically he/she would be able to solve problems without difficulty. In the light of this, the researcher is of the view documenting some relevant folk games to be used in schools can be of help to all children in the central region of Ghana.

5.8.5 Documentation of folk games

One of the key elements that the respondents of this study identified was problem solving. They shared the view that using traditional games in the teaching and learning process would help pupils develop the skill at solving their own problems in life. Some

also claimed that it would enhance good interpersonal relationship among pupils through their interactions. In their play they will develop the skill to carry out effective interpersonal relationships and to make choices and resolve conflict without resorting to actions that will harm oneself or others (WHO, 1994). Others also believed that traditional games in teaching would bring pupils close to interact with their environment since teachers would be forced to prepare teaching aids using local materials of which pupils may be familiar with. This would make concept learning easier. With this they called 'real learning'. Nsamenang (2004) therefore cautioned that pupils gaining unfamiliar knowledge and skills from western education will sink them into alienation and ignorance of their cultural circumstances. Others shared the opinion that the games would help pupils to synchronize the activities performed at home with that of the school. Hence they will see the school as complementing the home and not different entities. This will make education locally relevant to transmit their values to generations to come (Rogers, 2010). The final group admitted that games in learning would be effective in that pupils would be engaged with all their senses.

5.8.6 Classroom and outdoor observations

In the classroom the integration of the traditional games into the lessons yielded positive results. The pupils' interest were sustained hence all of them got involved and were able to answer questions without difficulties. The variations introduced into the lessons also informed the researcher about ways of introducing traditional games into a lesson. In some, it was used at the introduction stage, others as part of the lesson and others to conclude the lesson. These saw positive reactions on the part of the students.

Outside the classroom revealed the use of games to create cordial relationships among pupils. During their play they also share ideas and through that learn from each other. Pupils in their play were able to resolve conflicts without any adult intervention. No wonder pupils on the questionnaire shared the view that they do empathize with their friends during play. The series of movements characterized in their play created the impression that they use games to exercise their bodies. Spencer in his 'surplus energy theory' claims play is necessary to allow children to discharge excess energy (Hughes, 1995).

5.9 Some Akan Children's Games and Their Values

The following were games gathered by the researcher for life skills development in the basic school children of the Central Region of Ghana. The document was designed to identify a particular folk game and the possible skills that the child can develop from playing the game and its subsequent application of these skills in real life situations (life skills). This was made possible through the literature reviewed, observations, interviews granted and also finding out from pupils who played these games their own experience.

1. Mbobagor. (Stone passing)

The lyrics in this game seek to advise children not to be lazy and rather be hardworking in life. The hawk in Akan is known as *osansa* or *akroma*. It is believed that because of its laziness it has decided to feed on chicks. The game is played by both boys and girls in a squatting circular formation. They systematically pass on stones to each other in an anticlockwise direction as they sing the song.

Sansankrɔma, nenaewu, okyekyer nkokɔmba

Ose onnkeyeedwuma, ne naewu o okyekyer nkokɔmba(2x)

Woekyinkyin, ekyinkyin, ekyinkyin

Ose onnkɔyedwuma, ne naewuo, ne eɔya ewuo

Sansankrɔma ne na ewu o okyerkyer nkokɔmba

ose onnkɔyedwuma, ne naewu o okyekyer nkokɔmba.

Equipment

- Stones

Number of players

- Five or more

Rule(s)

- No two or more stones should be piled up in front of a player as the game goes on.

How to play

Children squat in a circular formation with stones that are handy in front of them. They sing and rhythmically pass on the stone to the next person at the right. One is evicted from the game when two or more stones are piled up in front of him or her.

Cognitive skills developed

1. The child develops ability to imitate.
2. They develop the skill of understanding and solving problems.

Psychomotor skills developed

1. The child develops good coordination, agility and dexterity.

Psychosocial skills developed

1. The child develops how to share and cooperate.
2. They also develop good interpersonal skills.
3. They develop self confidence.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

Good interpersonal relationship is one of the key elements that enhance healthy living in society. Interpersonal relationship skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to the child's mental and social well-being. As they pass the stones on to one another they also develop the skill of sharing. As a group they also learn the sense of belongingness. Together they learn to make decisions to solve their own problems. (See Figure 9)

Figure 9: Children playing *mbobagor*.

2. *Anhweakyir*

Anhweakyir is one of the popular folk games played among children in the Central Region. *Anhweakyir* means ‘do not look back’. This game is played by both boys and girls and it is characterized with call and responds song and involves a lot of running.

Song:

Anhweakyire yee! yee!

Obi ne ba o yee! yee!

Obewu o! yee! yee!

Se wohwew’akyir a yee! yee!

Kuturuku bembembebebem

Se wohwew’akyir a, odasoyee! yee!

Kuturuku, bembembembem.

Equipment

- A piece of rag

Number of players

- Five or more

Rules

One is not expected to look back when the game starts. This is to avoid knowing whose back the rag has been placed.

How to play

Children squat in a circle formation. One of them takes a rag and run round the circle till the rag is dropped behind one of the playmates. The playmate also picks the rag and continues with the running and singing till the rag is dropped again behind another member's back. Any member who fails to notice the rag behind him or her receives a knock at the back after the one who drops it came back to meet it.

Cognitive skills developed

1. It develops reasoning skills in the child.
2. It develops in the child how to imitate others.

Psychomotor skills developed

1. It develops balance and movement skills in the child.
2. It develops postural control in the child.
3. It develops agility and dexterity in the child.

Psychosocial skills developed

1. It develops in the child how to share and cooperate.
2. It develops good interpersonal skills in children.
3. It develops self confidence in the child.
4. It develops in the child how to reduce uncertainty.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

It helps children to live harmoniously with each other in the home, at school and in the community as a whole. It may mean keeping good relationship with everybody, an important source of social support and happiness. It also helps children to make informed decision to solve real life problems which are uncertain. Moving round the circle teaches children how to protect one another in the community. (See Figure 10)

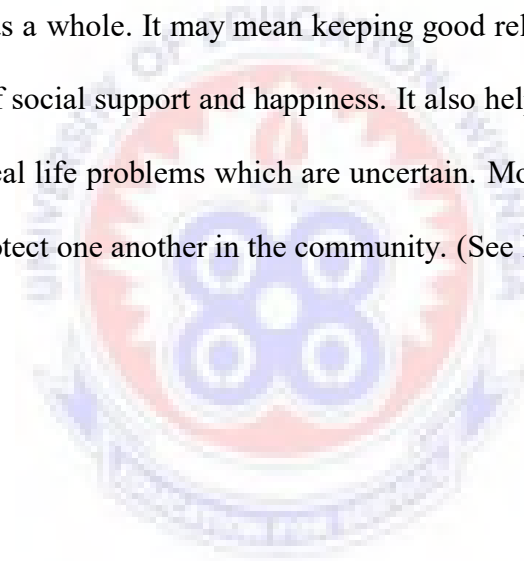


Figure 10: Children playing *anhweakyir*.

3. Duaoodua

This mind exercising game is also played among children in the Central Region. *Dua* in Akan means tail hence children are made to categories animals into those which have tail and those that do not. This game is played by both boys and girls and it is also accompanied by a song.

Song:

Duaoodua Dua!

DuaokramanduaDua!

Duakɔɔdua!

(Silence should be observed since *kɔɔ* the crab has no tail)

Equipment

- A piece of cloth with knot tied at one end

Number of players

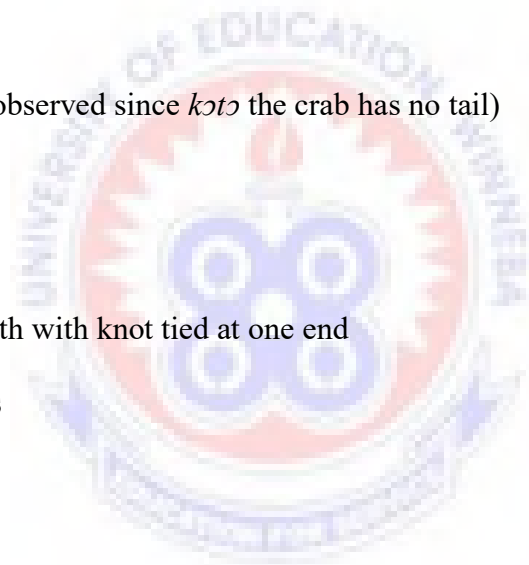
- Two or more

Rule(s)

Where the animal mentioned has no tail, one should not respond *dua*.

How to play

Children with their knotted cloths stand sparsely in an open area. The leader mention names of some animals for playmates to respond *dua*, if that particular animal truly has tail. Anyone who responds *dua* to a tailless animal is given a beaten by the other playmates until he or she escapes the ordeal.



Cognitive skills developed

1. It develops reasoning skills in the child.
2. It develops imaginative skills in the child.
3. It develops the ability to imitate.

Psychomotor skills developed

1. It develops balance and movement skills.
2. It helps the child to discharge excess energy.

Psychosocial skills developed

1. It develops self control in children.
2. It develops good interpersonal skills.
3. It develops self confidence.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

The child in the first place builds good interpersonal relationship with people he or she finds around. At school for instance, through good interpersonal relationship, the child is able to fit rightly into group work given. Being able to respond to the right answer quickly involves critical thinking. Children need this skill to be able to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. The child is also able to deal with difficult tasks both at school and in the home with confidence. (See Figure 11)

Figure 11: Children playing *duaoodua*.

4. Kwesida Frankaah

Kwesida frankaah which means ‘Sunday flag’ is among the games played by children in the central region of Ghana. It involves a lot of mental work to carry the day in this game. It is played by both sexes.

Equipment

- Chalk or charcoal, pebbles or pieces of crumpled papers

Number of players

- Two

Rule(s)

A winner emerges when one gains three marbles in succession in a straight line either in vertical, horizontal or diagonal form.

How to play

Children draw the flag diagram on a suitable surface. This takes the form of indicating all the symmetrical lines of a square. The end of the lines that touches the edges and vertices of the square and their intersections are used in playing this game. Children place the marbles on the diagram one after the other making sure they form a straight line either in vertical, horizontal or diagonal form to win the game.

Cognitive skill developed

1. The child develops imaginative skills.
2. Ability to understand and solve problems
3. Expression of inner creative impulse.
4. The child is able to think divergently.

Psychomotor skill developed

1. The child develops postural control.
2. Developing eye and hand coordination.

Psychosocial skill developed

1. The child develops self confidence.
2. Developing of good interpersonal skills in children.
3. Overcoming risk of failure or ridicule in children.
4. The child develops sense of trust in others.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

This game gives the player the opportunity to make moves that can bring about success or failure. However to succeed, the child needs to explore all alternatives and assess the different options and identify what effect these may bring. Life is full of choices and to make a good choice needs the skill of decision making. Through good decisions one is able to solve problems without difficulty; hence the child must acquire problem solving skills. Also developing good interpersonal relationship helps in peaceful co-existence in the community. Thinking creatively helps the child to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of his or her everyday life. (See Figure 12)



Figure 12: Children playing *Kwesida Frankaah*.

5. *ɔware*

This exclusive and interesting game is most common among the folks in the central region. The uniqueness of this game is that, it is played by both the young and the old. Though the game involves a lot of mental work (calculations), many still believed it is easy to play after a very short period of coaching. It is played by both sexes and also between two playmates at a time.

Equipment

- *ɔware* (special wood carved with twelve round holes created in it for playing the game). Sometimes children make holes in the ground to play.

Number of players

- Two

Rule(s)

One wins a set of marbles when they number up to four in a hole.

How to play

Players sit comfortably facing each other with the *ɔware* placed between them. They fill up each hole with four of the marbles. Each set of marbles is picked by a player and spread over the rest one after the other till all are exhausted. In the process, every four marbles found in front of a player determines a win of that set at that particular moment. The overall winner becomes the one who is able to collect more groups of four marbles till the remaining cannot be grouped into four.

Cognitive skill developed

1. It develops the child's imaginative skills.
2. It helps the child to understand and solve problems.
3. The child develops the skill of reasoning.

Psychomotor skill developed

1. The child develops postural control.
2. The child develops agility and dexterity skills.
3. It develops eye and hand coordination in the child.

Psychosocial skill developed

1. It develops in the child good interpersonal skills.
2. It develops self confidence in the child.
3. Develops self control.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

The child at school needs to think critically for him or her to understand concepts taught in the various subjects. Before one can select the right set of marbles for distribution, he needs an in-depth thinking. The child also needs the skill to solve problems both at school and at home. The *oware* game therefore through adequate calculation enables the child to develop the ability to deal constructively with problems in life since it creates the room for the child to look beyond direct experiences in life. The child also needs to make decisions towards future career. A bad decision made can ruin

one's future. Good interpersonal relationship also brings peace and harmony among the people in the community. (See Figure 13)

Figure 13: Children playing *ɔware*.

6. Pilolo

Pilolo is another fascinating game played among boys and girls. It is characterized by lots of running and ability to discover hidden things within one's immediate environment. The search begins when the score master shouts the term *pilolo*.

Equipment

- Pieces of sticks

Number of players

- Two or more

Rules

No one should try to steal a glimpse of the hidden sticks and also should not pick more than one stick.

How to play

Children are escorted to hide at a place away from where the sticks can possibly be hidden. *Pilolo* is said by the score master to allow the search to begin. Anyone among the group who finds the hidden sticks picks one, run to a designated point and back for the maximum point. The rest follow in that order.

Cognitive skill developed

1. It develops imaginative skills in children.
2. It develops divergent thinking in children.
3. It develops reasoning skills in children.

Psychomotor skill developed

1. Discharging of excess energy in the child.
2. Developing balance and movement skills in the child.
3. It develops agility and dexterity in the child.

Psychosocial skill developed

1. It develops self control.
2. It develops good interpersonal skills in children.
3. It develops self confidence in the child.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

Establishing good relationship opens doors for the individual to achieve success in life. At school, through good relationship among pupils help foster successful group work and also help each one of them to do the right thing. Children put together to hide at one place foster unity amongst them. After fulfilling all rules of the game children line up for their marks. In doing so, they learn to conform to rules and regulations at school and in their respective communities. The search for the sticks also instills in children the concern about things that goes around them. Through good decision making the child is able to discover his or her potentials and that of others in the group. (See Figure 14)



Figure 14: Children playing *Pilolo*

7. Asosowamba

Asosowamba means 'catching of marbles'. This marvelous game seeks to develop hand and eye coordination of the child. It is played by girls only and in twos.

Equipment

- Marbles

Number of players

- Two or more

Rule(s)

One should be able to throw a marble into the air and catch it together with a group of marbles on the ground.

How to play

Two children squat facing each other and spread the marbles on the ground between them. Children take turns by throwing and catching the marbles together with those on the ground. One marble is thrown to pick together with one on the ground. Another is thrown to pick together with two. It follows in that order till all are exhausted on the ground. A winner must be able to go through the process without dropping a marble.

Cognitive skill develop

1. Ability of the child to imitate.
2. The thinking divergently.

3. Expression of inner creative impulse.

Psychomotor skill developed

1. Develops good eye and hand coordination in the child.
2. Develops agility and dexterity in the child.
3. Develops postural control among children.

Psychosocial skill developed

1. Develops good interpersonal skills among children.
2. Develops self confidence in the child.
3. Feeling good about one self.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

This game enables children to think creatively to be able to solve multiple problems with ease in their communities for a better future. The child needs to win this game by devising his or her own mean to be able to throw and catch all the marbles. Traditional games therefore maintain loose structure; they afford children a tremendous amount of creativity in their play process Lankford (1992). Girls also begin to see their uniqueness when playing this game. It creates a sense of solidarity among them and the confidence to identify themselves as contributors to the development of the society. (See Figure 15)

Figure 15: Children playing *asosowamba*

8. Atetar

The Fante name for wrestling is *atetar*. It is a special game for only boys and it is basically to display one's strength and agility. Children clench into each other with the view of out-witting ones opponent by touching the back to the ground. It is all fun and needs strength and creativity to win this game.

Equipment

- Open space

Number of players

- Two

Rule(s)

Knocking in any form is disallowed

How to play

Children stand facing each other at about an arm's length. With focus and determination, they bend a little at the waist to assume positions devoid of easy falling. Through clenching, each child exhibits movements and tactics which allows him to outwit his opponent by touching the back to the ground .There is always a referee who determines foul play and announcement of the winner.

Cognitive skill developed

1. Expression of inner creative impulse in the child.
2. Understanding and solving problems among children.
3. Thinking divergently at a time.
4. Ability of the child to imitate.

Psychomotor skill developed

1. Develops postural control.
2. Develops good coordination of the eyes, hands and feet.
3. Develops agility and dexterity.
4. Develops balance and movement skill.

Psychosocial skill developed

1. Develops self confidence in the child.
2. Develops good interpersonal skill among children.
3. Feeling good about one self.

Life skills developed

The ability to solve problems also develops in the child self confidence which is very vital to live independent life. Also, this game helps the child to think creatively and also secure techniques to accomplish difficult tasks both at school and in the home. However, the child playing this game learns self defense which is vital in ones life. Testing ones muscular strength is a very good way of measuring ones physical fitness. The child also makes decisions which make him feel good about choices made in life. (See Figure 16)



Figure 16: Children playing *atetar*

9. Esikakraba Kotow ewiam

Esikakraba kotow ewiam means ‘little Esi is squatting under the scorching sun’. This game is normally played by both boys and girls. It is to express compassion to our loved ones and also to establish good relationship among children. As children play the game they sing the song:

Esikakraba kotow ewiam, daadaa na oresu

Esi sor, Esi sor

Esi proprow w'atar muɛɛ

Esi twawo ho, twawo ho, twawo ho

Esi kɔfam wo dɔfoɛ

Equipment

- Open space

Number

- Five or more

Rule(s)

Anyone who *Esi* touches goes to squat in the middle of the circle

How to play

Children form a circle with one child squatting in the middle. It is believed that this child is squatting under the scorching sun and that needs comfort from one of the playmates. Through the singing, the squatting child heeds to the instructional content of the song and moves to touch one of the playmates. That person becomes the next to squat in the middle of the circle.

Cognitive skill developed

1. Develops reasoning skills.
2. Develops communicative skills.

Psychomotor skill developed

1. Develops balance and movement skills in children.
2. Develops postural control among children.

Psychosocial skill developed

1. Develops sense of compassion in the child.
2. Develops good interpersonal relationship among children.
3. Develops sense of trust in others.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

Good interpersonal relationship also means that children need to be caring for each other. They therefore need support from each other when there is problem. According to Corsaro and Rizzo (1988) by interacting with in organized play groups and schools, children produce the first in a series of peer cultures in which childhood knowledge and practices are gradually transformed into the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the adult world (See Figure 17)

Figure 17: Children playing *Esi Kakraba kotow ewiam*

10. *Nana wɔ hɔ?*

Nana wɔ hɔ is a game which simply means ‘is chief around?’ This game is believed to have originated from the Ashanti region of Ghana. It is now being played in most parts of the country including the central region of Ghana. This game is played by both sexes. It aims specifically at assisting children to be able to identify the ups and downs of life. It is also to sharpen the child’s recall abilities. Children recite the following as the game is being played:

Nana wɔ hɔ?

Nana wɔ ho a anka mepɛ neba baako asoma no

Wei? Daabi wei?, daabi

Wei?ensuo, wei? bepɔ, wei? manu

Wei? aane. (This is to tell it is the right marble)

Equipment

- Diagram drawn on a suitable surface
- Twelve stones or small sticks

Number of players

- Two
- **Rule(s)**

The child should be able to respond correctly to a particular stone touched by the playmate without watching.

How to play

A square is drawn with three diagonal lines crossing each other at the middle. The four triangular portions created are filled with three stones or sticks each representing a subject of the chief. These lines depict obstacles to cross to the various subjects. These obstacles namely; *nsu*, *bepɔw* and *manu* suggest river, mountain and the fearful one respectfully. The playmate is either made to close the eyes or face the opposite direction where the back is turned against the diagram.

The one with the closed eyes enquires whether the chief is around. The response is always positive. He or she goes on to ask the chief to give out one of the subjects to embark on an errand for him or her. The stones are picked sequentially following the accuracy of the playmate being able to respond correctly to both the eliminated stones and the ones left. The one who is able to identify all the twelve stones and the obstacles on the way correctly carries the day.

Cognitive skill developed

1. Develops imaginative skills in the child.
2. Develops understanding and problem solving in children.
3. Develops communicative skills in children.

Psychomotor skill developed

1. Hand and eye coordination.

Psychosocial skill developed

1. Good interpersonal skill.
2. Self confidence.
3. Develops sense of trust in others.
4. Develops self control.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

This game teaches children not to see life as so smooth, one is bound to meet some obstacles which need adequate preparation to overcome them. The child therefore needs to be equipped with adequate skills to face such problems. Living in a community also requires that we serve and help each other through errands. Granting request for each other is also an effective way of ensuring communal living. Thinking critically is pertinent to the development the society and this can be acquired from this game. (See Figure 18).



Figure 18: Children playing nana wo ho?

11. Charlie

In this Fante game, *charlie* means the brave and strong one. This same term is used by the Gas of Accra to identify a friend. This is true about language in the sense that a word in one language may mean something else in another. This marvelous game aims at developing muscular strength and endurance in the child. It can be played by both boys and girls. The Charlie song is used to spice up the game.

Song:

Charlieee , charlieee, Charlie waa! waa!

Wohonyedzen a, nkɔpem Charlie

Charlieee, Charlie waa! Waa!

Equipment

- Open space

Number of players

- Two or more

Rule(s)

- One should always be on one leg with arms folded on the chest.

How to play

A circle that can contain two children is drawn on the ground. Two children enter the circle hopping on one foot with their hands folded on the chest. As they sing the song they try to knock each other out face to face using their folded arms. The one who gets out of the circle or puts the other foot down loses the game.

Cognitive skill developed

1. Develops imaginative skills in the child.
2. Creates vigilance and alertness in children.
3. Develops understanding and solving problems among children.

Psychomotor skill developed

1. Creates postural control in the child.
2. Balance and movement skill.
3. Develops muscular endurance in children.

Psychosocial skill developed

1. Builds good interpersonal relationship among children.
2. Self confidence is developed in the child.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

Among the Akans and other tribes in Ghana, there is the saying that the duck seen standing on one leg is practicing to face an ordeal to come. It does not know when a law would be passed asking all animals to stand on one foot for a particular duration. This philosophy is true about life. It is better for one to practice enduring hardships to be able to go through life successfully. However the child needs to be taken through some form of rudiments in life to prepare him / her for independent living. Ability to stand and hop on one leg is a way of preparing the child to endure hardship. (See Figure 19)

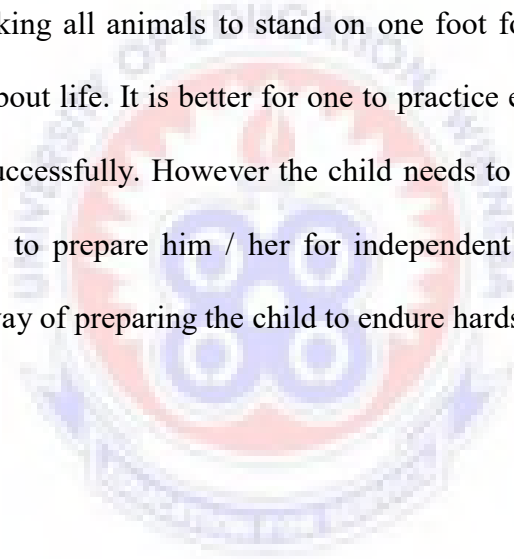


Figure 19: Pupils playing *Charlie* game.

12. 2, 4,6,1,1

This number game is normally played by girls in the Central Region of Ghana. It is characterized by the skillful use of the hands to create rhythm based on counting as the name suggests. The synchronization of the melodic sound which is linked with the swift movement of the hands makes this game very delightful to watch.

Equipment

- Open space

Number of players

Two or more

Rule(s)

No one should disorganize the rhythm played or go contrary to the numbering.

How to play

Pupils form a circle. The leader announces the numbering to start the game. Pupils tap and clap hands following the count of the figures 2, 4, 6, 1, 1 without verbalizing it. Pupils therefore use the rhythm to determine who does the right thing and who makes a mistake. Eliminations are made till the last person carries the day.

Cognitive skill developed

1. The child develops the ability to imitate.
2. The child thinks imaginatively.
3. The child is able to recall facts.

Psychomotor skill developed

1. Agility and dexterity is created in the child.
2. The child becomes vigilant and alert.
3. The child gains good coordinating skills.

Psychosocial skill developed

1. Good interpersonal relationship is created in the child.
2. Self confidence is built in the child.
3. Sharing and cooperating among peers.

Life skills developed (Real life application)

As pupils play this game, they begin to develop the skill of sharing and cooperating which is an important element for healthy communal living. It also fosters in pupils the sense of working together both at home and in school. They also develop their imaginative skills towards solving problems independently. (See plate 18)



Figure 20: Pupils playing 2, 4,6,1,1

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Overview

The basic life skills that the child needs for healthy and independent living largely depends on how he or she is embraced in any form of traditional game found around him or her. It is therefore good to identify and preserve some of these relevant games to be used in teaching and learning in the Basic schools in the country.

Since using of games is intrinsically motivating, it will contribute substantially to the child's learning which will lead to high pupils' performance in the schools in the Central Region. This chapter deals with summary, conclusion and recommendation of the main findings of this study.

6.1 Summary

The researcher adopted the mixed method research model, hence the use of both case study and questionnaire to gather quantitative data. This allowed the researcher the flexibility to collect adequate data for the study. The population for the study was all the public basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana. However the accessible population remained three selected districts namely Gomoa East District, Agona west municipal and Ajumako- Enyan- Essiam district respectively. Participants were made up of pupils, teachers and parents. Questionnaire, interviews and observations were the main instruments used to gather data for the study. Visits were made to the selected schools to observe lessons infused with traditional games and also pupils' outdoor play. In the

process some of the teachers were interviewed. Parents' views were also solicited for in the various communities. Data collected were analyzed using both the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and thematic analytic procedure. The findings that emerged from the study are discussed under the following research questions:

What ways will traditional games help develop cognitive psychomotor and psychosocial values in children?

From this study, both teachers and some parents shared the view that traditional games played by pupils help them to develop the skill of problem solving. However some of the parents saw nothing bad about their children not playing much traditional game since they still performed better at school. In support of the former, Rogers (2010), claim traditional games prepare children for innovative problem solving skills which enables them to add new contributions to the society. Knowing play as cognitive enriching, mothers in Taiwan and United States of America arrange constructive play activities for their children (Pan, 1994). On the contrary the high level of illiteracy on the part of parents in this study does not permit them to have this positive thinking. Perhaps this is why most parents hardly showed concern about what their children do at their leisure times. The latter therefore need education about the need to allow their children play enough folk games. Evidence from the study also pointed out that, children play traditional games to enhance their computational skills. The *ɔware* was one of the games mentioned by majority of the respondents. Games however provide an excellent environment to explore ideas of computational thinking (Wing 2006). This means that

learning to compute is not the sole duty of the classroom teacher. It can also be acquired through play.

The study also revealed that children use traditional games to improve their imaginative thinking. For instance Tallensi children of Northern Ghana studied in their imaginative play, creatively used materials in their environment to construct make-believe worlds (Schwartzman 1978). This suggests that the child in the home begins to prepare the mind through play before formal education. This unconscious preparation of the mind assists children in their academic work. However, they are able to come out with unusual ideas in response to a given task constraint (Susa & Benedict, 1994). This also satisfies the evidence that, children playing traditional games will develop the skill of divergent thinking.

The study also showed that traditional games played by pupils help them to exercise their bodies. This followed the surplus energy theory which acknowledged play as necessary to allow children to discharge excess energy (Hughes, 1995). It is believed that children have excess energy to spend and through play they are able to do that to restore balance to their bodies. This perhaps explains why majority of the respondents place value on physical play of the child. Among the teachers, majority of them believed that traditional games especially *ampe* develops children's eye-hand-foot coordination and is beneficial to their development of balance and movement skills (Frost, 1992). The child developing postural control through movement (Whang, 2000) is also evidence in

the study. This explains the fact that, traditional games with its inherent movements improve the physical development of the child.

From the survey, it came out that majority of the teachers identified self confidence, feeling good about one self, good interpersonal skill, self control and overcoming fear of failure as some psychosocial benefits of playing traditional games. However every individual's development is the development of genetic and social influences from birth to death (Erikson, 1968). This suggests that children's development in the society also depend largely on how they are able to socialize with the people in the society. Children therefore must be given the opportunity to interact with peers to avoid endangering their cognitive, social and emotional development. Children's interactions outside of their family, namely with their playmates, affect their development. Evidence from observation of pupil's outdoor play revealed positive interactions such as sharing ideas and emotions. Applauding each other, smiling and other facial-expressions enhanced their play activities. They also used the same moments to resolve conflicts among them.

To what extent can traditional games develop life skills in children?

It was found out from this study that, as children interact with each other in traditional games play, they learn social skills that assist them to function confidently and competently with themselves and others in their communities. However majority of the pupils mentioned that they play folk games mainly to make friends. The study also revealed that through play, children develop love and passion for each other and also feel

a sense of belongingness among their peers. The solidarity created helped them to collectively solve their own problems together. For instance, the *ɔɔ hanketse* game remained one of the traditional games that initiate collaboration among children. This collectiveness is one characteristic of the people in the Ghanaian rural settings. Through unity they are able to initiate projects to develop their communities. In support, Rieber (1996) emphasizes that increase social skills such as collaboration, negotiation and shared decision-making are benefits children get from playing traditional games. This shows that as children interact with each other it creates the platform for them to take decisions together. Life demand choices and that the child needs a supportive environment that can nurture him/ her to make informed choices for independent living. The respondents therefore were of the belief that playing adequate folk games have the potential to establish decision-making skills in children. Peck and Hong in agreement observed life skills as a way of assisting people to make decision concerning life situations (Peck & Hong, 1988). It came up from the study that children in their play learn to look up for their role model (Erikson, 1968). In this case, they model substantial aspects of their play on adult activities which foster in them competencies necessary for survival and to become productive community membership (Kamp, 2001). Groos (1901) identified imaginative play as one of the play types children use to emulate adult responsibilities and essential to developing life skills in them. Evidence from the study also showed that playing traditional games enhances critical thinking in children. Children in their interactions get the privilege to learn from each other. This assists them to see different ways of doing things and this guides them to achieve their set goals. This therefore suggests that creative thinking is the heart of problem solving (Booth, 1993).

How will documentation of traditional games assist children in teaching and learning?

The study revealed that, when traditional games are documented and used in the teaching and learning process it will equip children with problem solving skills. However, Moursund (2007) in his view believed that solving problem involves both the brain and the computer. Perhaps, this is why policy makers in education have compulsorily made I.C.T part of the Basic School Curriculum in Ghana. Nevertheless, Sheff (1993) pointed out that, by playing video games, the child also develops cognitive abilities such as problem solving skills, memory skills and reasoned judgment. However the need to tap the positive sides of games and technology was recommended by respondents. This will motivate pupils to excel in their academic work and also will improve our educational system. It also came up that, using traditional games will make teaching and learning lively and interesting to pupils as it will call for full participation in lessons taught. Though it is believed that using games in the classroom does not solve the entire problem in education, it can still motivate pupils to learn (Nemerow, 1996). The respondents also claim that, the games can also link the activities of the school to the home and not to create the impression among pupils that they are separate entities. Some teachers also believed that traditional games in teaching will also compel teachers to use TLM found in the local environment. In so doing pupils will be intrinsically motivated (Moursund 2007) to understand and learn concepts taught easily. The study however confirmed positive participation of pupils in the lessons observed. Games therefore must be fun first, before encouraging learning (Prensky, 2000). This implies that, if teachers in the public basic schools introduce traditional games in their lessons, it will motivate pupils to fully participate in the lesson to the latter.

This study's findings also envisaged a number of problems which are likely to negatively affect the positive values embedded in traditional games. Parents showed less concern about what their children do at their leisure times. It was also an issue from the study that majority of the pupils knew less about traditional games played in the Central Region of Ghana. The children of this study are at risk of not being able to appreciate much of the traditional games played in the Central Region. Its ripple effect will be on posterity. The blame therefore cannot be put on them because the games were not documented and used. Also parents of the study do not share their past play experiences with their children. Another problem was that, majority of the children in this study according to their parents spent much time playing TV games and watching TV at the expense of playing outdoors. Too much video games playing makes the child socially isolated (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). Researches have proven that excessive play of video and computer games can result in spinal injuries, obesity, eye strains, sleep disturbances, postural, muscular and skeletal disorders (Cordes & Miller, 2000). There is also the perception that folk games are meant for the home and so few children especially the girls play some at school during break.

Finally, there were inadequate text books on Ghanaian Language and culture which touch on traditional games. For instance only one book was identified with few of the common games highlighted in it. However, how they were played was not described.

6.2 Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions based on the findings on respondents' views on cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial values of traditional games, how traditional games develop life skills in children and how documentation of traditional games assist children in teaching and learning.

Both parents and teachers strongly believed that playing traditional games have the potential at inculcating in children the skill of problem solving. They believed that through interactions they share ideas which lead them to solve their own problems. It was also however acknowledged that traditional games play provides an excellent environment for children to explore their computational thinking. The *oware* game emerged one of the preferred games to this effect. Thinking imaginatively and divergently was also raised by the respondents as benefits that the child can develop from playing traditional games. Especially, this they believed can be developed from pretend play and constructive plays (where children use local materials to construct make believe worlds).

It also came up that, playing traditional games help children to improve their physical development. However, teachers, parents and pupils believed that playing traditional games is a form of exercise which helps in the development of good coordination, movements and postural control.

Psychosocially, the respondents expressed the view of good interpersonal relationship which creates in children positive attitudes such as self confidence, feeling good about one self, self control and overcoming fear of failure. They also share emotions and in so doing, resolve conflicts among them. Children also interact with one another in traditional game play. Through their interactions, they develop skills such as problem solving, good interpersonal skills and shared decision-making. All these assist the child to fit into the community without any difficulty. They solve conflicts that emanate among the group since this is where they share their emotions. However, some parents did not see these benefits and so were adamant at making their children play traditional game. They still believed their children do well at school. Teachers also expressed positive views at documenting and use of traditional games in the teaching and learning process. They believed that when games are used in teaching it will make lessons interesting to pupils. They also believed that learning of concepts will be made easier to pupils since teachers will be made to use local materials in the teaching and learning process.

Though some of the teachers' favoured the use of traditional games at school, others also admitted playing video games and TV games are also needed in the child's learning but should be regulated in that technology has come to stay and not a passing fashion. Since the aim of the nation is to strengthen its educational sector to produce holistic scholars who can think critically, make good decisions solve problems and above all coexist peacefully with others in their respective communities, then there is the need to add some measure of our culture to support the adopted western type of education to

make it complete. Based on this study teachers are now going to know the relevance of traditional games in teaching and learning at the public basic schools in the country.

From the findings it is worth noticing that the study has attempted to add significant contribution to teaching and learning as far as education in Ghana is concerned. It has however proven that integrating traditional games into the teaching and learning at the public basic schools in Ghana will enhance effective teaching and learning which will intend improves pupils' performance. Not only will children also appreciate their rich culture, they will understand the need to preserve it for generations to come. Children are also going to realize the correlation that exists between the formal school system and the community at large. They will see it as complementing each other and not separate entities. Through traditional games, pupils will acquire life skills such as problem solving, sheared decision- making, self control, good interpersonal skills, communicative skills, becoming conformists and also the ability to express love and passion to people in their respective communities. Finally the games through its key attributes towards imitations of adult life will serve as preparatory grounds for pupils to look up for role models in their communities.

6.3 Areas for further research

The researcher only researched on some folk games played in the Central Region of Ghana. However further research can be carried out on the other regions of the country to find out the differences and similarities of traditional children's games played across the country. Again the researcher did not delve into how imitating adult roles in

traditional games impact on the child's choice of future career. This calls for further research.

6.4 Recommendations

Evidence from the study points out that pupils and teachers in the Basic schools and parents do appreciate the need to factor into the teaching learning an innovative way that will make learning interesting and at the same time protect our rich cultural heritage. In the light of these, all educational stakeholders must come on board to make this dream a reality. It is therefore recommended that:

1. Further research should be conducted into the game culture of communities where basic schools are situated.
2. Teachers should factor folk games in the methodology of their teaching.
3. Pupils should be guided by teachers to play more folk games at school.
4. Teachers must be encouraged to develop manuals on folk games to be used as teaching materials in the basic schools in Ghana.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS

Department of Art Education

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Topic:

FOLK GAMES AND LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG CHILDREN IN
SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

This questionnaire is designed purposely to gather data on children's games for life skills development. It is purely an academic exercise and the information you provide, on this would be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for your time and co-operation.

SECTION A

Personal Information

Instruction: Please tick [] the appropriate box

- | | | |
|---------|---------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Age: | 18 – 29 years | [<input type="checkbox"/>] |
| | 30 – 39 years | [<input type="checkbox"/>] |
| | 40 – 49 years | [<input type="checkbox"/>] |

50 and above []

2. Gender: Male []

Female []

3. Academic qualification:

(a) Diploma/Cert. 'A' []

(b) First degree []

(c) Post-graduate []

(d) Other Professional Institutions []

(e) WASSCE / '0' Levels []

4. Length of service as a teacher:

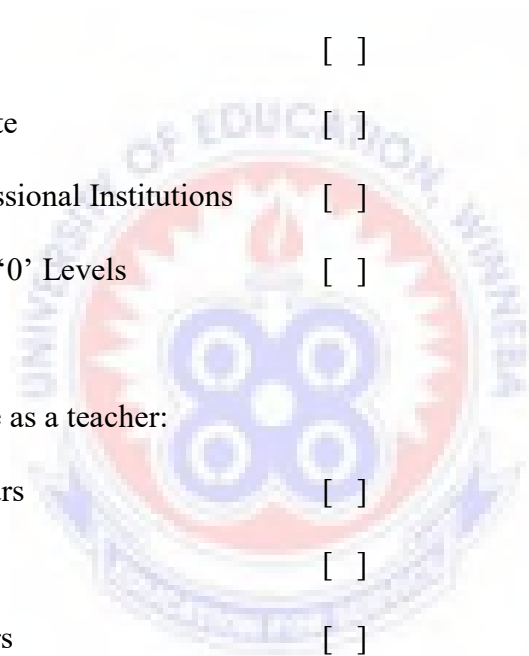
(a) Below 5 years []

(b) 6 – 10 years []

(c) 11 – 15 years []

(d) 16 – 20 years []

(e) 21 years and above []



SECTION B

Respondents views on how folk games develop cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial skills.

5. Which of these games are played in your vicinity? (Tick all that applied)

Pilolo Anhwekyir Ampe

Tomato Atsetar Asosowamba

Mepa me da ha Oware Esumaesuma (Hide and Seek)

ntetow

Other (Specify) _____

6. Which of the games are played in your school? (Tick all that applicable)

Pilolo Anhwekyir Ampe

Tomato Atsetar Asosowamba

Mepamedaha Oware Esumaesuma (Hide and Seek)

ntetow

Other (Specify) _____

7. Do you observe children playing these games?

Yes No

8. If *yes*, how do these games contribute to the development of the child in cognitive development?

(Tick all that are applicable)

1. Imaginative skills (symbolic thinking)
2. Understanding and solving problems
3. Communicating new thoughts
4. Divergent thinking
5. Reasoning skills
6. Ability to imitate
7. Expression of inner creative impulse
8. Other (specify) _____

9. How do these games contribute to the development of the child in psychomotor development? ***(Tick all that are applicable)***

1. Postural control
2. Good coordination
3. Gaining strength
4. Agility
5. Balance and locomotor skills
6. Restoration of natural energy
7. Discharging of excess energy
8. Dexterity
9. Keeping the body at optimal state of arousal
10. Other (specify) _____

10. How do these games contribute to the development of the child in psychosocial development? *(Tick all that are applicable)*

1. Self control
2. Feel good about one self
3. To share and cooperate
4. Sense of compassion
5. Good interpersonal skills
6. Good attitude
7. Overcoming risk of failure or ridicule
8. Self confidence
9. Positive self esteem
10. To reduce uncertainty
11. Emotional maturation
12. Sense of trust in others
13. To relief boredom
14. Self identity

Other (specify) _____

11. If *No*, why?

SECTION C

Respondents views on folk games in life skills development

12. Do you agree with the assertion that folk games can develop life skills in children?

If Yes(skip to question 13) No

If *No*

why?.....

..

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

13. What are the benefits of folk games to life skills development? (Tick all that are applicable)

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Respect | <input type="checkbox"/> | critical thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self-confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> | obeying rules in society | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| decision making skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | developing friendship | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| expressing empathy | <input type="checkbox"/> | healthy living | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| problem solving skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | home management skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| good interpersonal relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> | promotion mental well-being | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| self-awareness | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| good communication skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| cope with anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

SECTION D

Respondents' views on the role of folk games in teaching and learning of children

14. In what way will the documentation of folk games assist in the teaching and learning among children?.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION. WINNEBA

SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS

TOPIC:

FOLK GAMES AND LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG CHILDREN IN
SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUPILS

In this questionnaire, there are no right and wrong answers – this is not a test. Answer all questions as honestly and accurately as you can.

Section A: Family Background

1. Are you a boy or a girl? Boy Girl
2. How old are you? Age 1) 10 – 13 2) 14- 17 3) 18-21
4) 22+

Section B: Games

3. What game(s) do you play during your free time?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
4. Do you normally play these game(s) with friends? Yes No

5. Does the game(s) involve both boys and girls? Yes No

6. Which of the folk games have you played before

a) Oware b) Ampe c) Anhwɛkyir

d) Asosowamba e) Sansankroma f) Atetar

g) Mepamedaha h) Ntɛ tow

7. Which of the games listed above do you like best ?

8. Why?

9. How often do you play this game?

10. Where do you normally play this game? School Home

11. Has the games helped you improve your relationship with your friends?

Yes No

12. Do you care about the feelings of friends when playing this game?

Yes No

13. What do you learn from playing this game?



APPENDIX C

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS**

**FOLK GAMES AND LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG CHILDREN IN
SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA**

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

1. What is your own experience about children's folk games?
2. Throw light on how children's folk games can help develop the child's psychomotor skills.
3. In what way can these games improve the child's cognitive ability?
4. What are some of the psychosocial benefits of these games to the child?
5. Highlight on some life skills that the child can develop from playing these games.
6. In your own view, explain why you think documentation of these games assist in the child's learning at school?

Thank you.

APPENDIX D



TLM showing pupils playing “Ampe”



TLM showing pupils playing “ɔware”

APPENDIX E



Children playing 'odo hanketse'



Children playing 'Mepamedha ha'

APPENDIX F

(Lesson 5)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Comprehension

Moonlight nights are special moments for children in the rural parts of the West African sub region. Children come together to have fun through the play of numerous folk games. This has been the norm from generation to generation. Some of these games vary from one traditional area to the other.

In the Central Region of Ghana where I come from, during these times children play folk games such as ‘atetar’, ‘oware’, ‘mepa me da ha’, ‘anhweakyir’, ‘mbobagor’ and other interesting games.

Mbobagor which is my favourite is played by both boys and girls. It involves squatting in a circle of five or more with each player securing a stone which is handy. The ‘sansakroma’ song is sung while the children rhythmically move the stones to exchange hands in an anticlockwise direction. A pile of stones found gathered in front of a play mate evicts him or her from the game.

It is believed that folk games have a store of benefits for the child’s development and healthy living. Exercising the body, building good interpersonal relationship and ability to solve problems are some of the potential benefits the child can acquire from playing folk games. Taking good decisions and developing self-confidence cannot be overemphasized.

Questions

1. What is special about moonlight nights at the rural parts of Ghana?
2. Mention three folk games played in the Central Region of Ghana.
3. In your own words describe how the writer's best game is played.
4. State any two advantages of folk games to the child.

APPENDIX G

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS

Interviewer Transcript

Interviewer:

I want you to share with me your experience about traditional games play.

Interviewee :

In the olden days during moon light nights boys and girls between the ages of nine and eighteen come together to play games. Some of these games include 'ɔɔɔ hanketse' 'anhweakyir', and 'asumaesuma'. All these games were played to entertain themselves and was devoid of any bad intentions.

Interviewer :

Can you also share with me how this games helped in the physical development of these children?

- Interviewee : When children play these games it helps them to exercise their bodies towards good healthy living
- Interviewer : How does these traditional games play assist these children in their cognitive development?
- Interviewee : For instance in the games ‘anhweakyir’ and ‘dua oo dua’, children learn to think very fast and also solve problems using the minds eye.
- Interviewer : What mindset do children develop when they play traditional games?
- Interviewee : They develop the sense of love for each other which has ripple effect on the neighbourhood.
- Interviewer : How does these games help children in their everyday life activities?
- Interviewee : These games helps the children in many ways. The children are able to think fast in performing any activity. They are also able to get involved in communal activities without fear. The children learn to give good testimony based on ones’ character.
- Interviewer : In your own view, would it be helpful if these games are documented and used in teaching and learning in our basic schools?

Interviewee : Yes , it would help in preserving our culture and also the pupils would have the chance to transmute it to generation unborn. It is therefore very good to be used in our schools.

Thank you very much sir for your time spent with me, I shall call on you again when the need arises.

