

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**ATTITUDE OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS TOWARDS THE USE OF
PLAY AS A TEACHING TECHNIQUE IN SAGNERIGU MUNICIPAL IN
THE NORTHERN REGION**



MASTER OF EDUCATION

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THE NORTHERN REGION**



**A dissertation in the Department of Early Childhood Education,
Faculty of Educational Studies, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Education
(Early Childhood Education)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

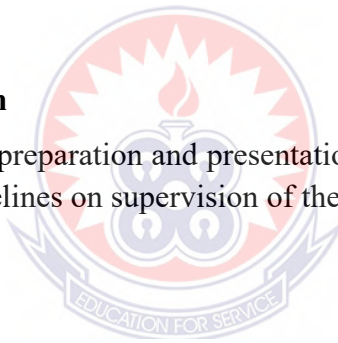
I, **Victoria Oyebisi**, hereby declare that this thesis with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledge, the entire thesis is my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or in whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature.....

Date.....

Supervisor's Declaration

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



Dr. Michael Subbey (Supervisor)

Signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

To the Almighty God and to my mother who has been an inspiration to my life.



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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine pre-school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy in Sagnerigu Municipality, in the northern part of Ghana. The purpose of the study was to find out the influence of identified factors on use of play as a teaching strategy. A case study design was employed with independent variables. The instruments used in the study included questionnaire and interview. The simple random sampling technique was used to select schools with all the teachers in the sampled schools forming the study sample. The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics computed included frequencies and percentages. The main findings were majority of the teachers used play as a teaching strategy whereas others did not use play as a teaching strategy indicating that about half of the respondents did not use play as a teaching strategy. The study found out that teachers' level of motivation and availability of play materials emerged as factors which influenced teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. The recommendations were that when teachers are motivated and provided with a wide range of play materials, they are more likely to use play as a teaching strategy. To improve the use of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary schools, capacity building and sensitization seminars for school managers, pre-primary school teachers and other stakeholders should be encouraged.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The early years of a person's life offer a unique opportunity for social and cognitive investment, but they are also the most vulnerable age for all types of developmental retardation if holistic development is not fostered. Froebel (1987) writing on children's play contends that, play is not only the children's natural occupation before constraints and formal schooling takes over but it also serves as a major means which children use to communicate to themselves and to the world around. Children's play and teachers' involvement in play activities have received recognition and attention by philosophers and educationist for centuries (Arce, 2006).

The Convention on The Rights of The Child Article number 31, together with The African Charter on The Rights and Welfare of The Child, Article XIII, clearly stipulate and require state parties to recognize and promote the right of children to engage in play (UNICEF, 2007). According to studies, a child's brain growth and development begins at 40 percent at birth and rapidly increases to 80 percent by the age of three (UNICEF, 2007). This means that in order for a child to survive and realize his full potential, instructors and caregivers must have the necessary knowledge and abilities to harness children's play behavior in order to increase both stimulation and seamless adaptability in teaching and learning activities. Ghana is among African countries that gave Early Childhood Development (ECD) program a minimum attention in the past three decades. During this period the children's early learning and stimulation was informal and unstructured. The absence of the formal Early Childhood Education (ECE) program made children below seven years invisible in the two country's education program, a situation that denied children the

opportunity to thrive both academically and socially. This state of affair led to abolition of pre-primary school education program in the country in 1977, with the exception of some town/urban-based Indian's schools. However, in 2001, the Government of Tanzania adopted an inter sectoral ECD service Delivery Initiative resulting in the inclusion of ECD in the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), commonly referred to as MKUKUTA which gave room for re-establishing the ECE program in the country. In 2005, pre-primary school education became compulsory after more than 25 years without a pre-primary school education program. Through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Social welfare, the government ensured that pre-primary teachers/caregivers acquired necessary skills, information and knowledge on how pre-primary school children should actively learn. Since then emphasis has been put on use of Child-Centered Teaching Methods (CCTMs) like the use of play as a teaching approach in both indoor and outdoor teaching and learning activities in schools (URT, 2008). Despite the stated effort by the government, early childhood educators are facing curricula and pedagogical challenges. There is discrepancy between what the program purport to offer to children and what is actually offered at the pre-primary schools and day care centers. The stated irregularity will necessitate this study.

Quality challenges are greatest in low-resource countries where ECE programmed risk being viewed as an unattainable luxury, rather than a basic and essential intervention. The actualization of ECE in Ghana has been very low if not unrealistic. For example, practically no effective measure is in place to ensure that colleges training ECE training are adhering to ECD guidelines or whether pedagogical issues pertaining ECE program are tackled effectively. Further, the development of human resources especially ECE teachers is ambiguous and minimal. This has a direct

implication on the quality of teaching and children's learning in pre-primary schools. A UNICEF report on ECD (2007) documented that, more than 95% of young children in the country lack access to early childhood stimulation, social protection programs and care facilities. In addition, non-fee-paying preprimary schools are not accessible to many. The report also revealed that systems supporting ECE programs like management, training, human resources, monitoring and evaluation were lacking. This implied that ECE services were minimal and awareness for specific needs for young children especially those aged below seven years were few and inadequately addressed (URT, 2008). Another study (BEST, 2009) on ECE training and development of human resource revealed that out of 16,595 pre-primary teachers in the country, only a mere 8.6% of them were certified.

Furthermore, the majority of newly constructed pre-primary schools are overcrowded, a scenario that may force teachers to utilize child-centered teaching methods. The teaching/learning techniques are the most convenient way to determine whether ECE teaching is child-friendly and relevant. Teaching and learning techniques/methods utilized by both teachers and students are critical in promoting self-mastery of skills and concepts, especially at this young age. Experts in the workshop discussed the relevance of play for children's psychosocial stimulation and effective cognitive development (URT, 2008). According to this viewpoint, successful early childhood stimulation necessitates the use of play as a teaching approach by pre-primary school teachers and caregivers. Play helps children in understanding various concepts quicker and in more permanent ways. The nature of play may be physical, social, intellectual or emotional. It may be real or symbolic representing a variety of situations, events or relations (URT, 2008). Play increases in variety and complexity as children grow older and caregivers need to know which types of. Play assists

children in grasping numerous topics more quickly and permanently. Play can be athletic, social, intellectual, or emotional in character. It might be genuine or symbolic, and it can symbolize a wide range of situations, events, or relationships (URT, 2008). Play activities, materials, or environment promote holistic development of children. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that play is an avenue for learning through which teaching/learning in young children is facilitated with minimum effort especially when caregivers/teachers participate, manipulate and create play opportunities. A critical mass of organized people engaging in a range of participatory educational procedures and behaviors is required to achieve cumulative results in a child's social development. Children require cerebral stimulation as well as numerous opportunities to exercise and develop their abilities for holistic development and learning. Adults who encourage children to do things on their own through play at home, school, and children's centers develop a sense of initiative, according to family experience (Kitundu, 2001).

As a result, the use of play as a teaching and learning approach should be highly regarded by educators in order to enhance cognitive development and prepare children for school by developing early reading and numeracy skills. Teachers who are educated on topics relating to children's general development are better able to provide a stimulating school environment and maintain a consistent and pleasant teacher-child contact. Play is a fundamental social activity for children and an important part of the ECE program's quality. The circle of poverty can be broken and instead promote equity in society through high-quality ECE programs. In pre-primary schools, using play as a teaching approach allows children to learn numerous skills and responsibilities in society, such as gender roles and modeling directions, at their own pace. Children can memorize, repeat different sounds, and precisely recite poems

through play, giving them many opportunities to practice what they've learned. A survey by Mbise (2002) conducted in the coastal and rural areas of Cape coast, central regions in Ghana found a variety of opinions on the need to allow children to participate in play as well as provision of play materials which are local and naturally found for the optimal cognitive development and effective child stimulation. There is evidence that children's use of songs and a wide range of playing materials in pre-primary settings builds and develops remarkable abilities in perceiving various concepts about different objects, situations, relationships and environment. Since play dominates any interactive teaching, the purpose of this study will help to examine the attitude of kindergarten teachers towards the use of play as a teaching technique in Sagnerigu Municipal in the Northern region.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Play has been described as a vehicle for learning especially in early childhood. This implies that for effective learning, play must be incorporated in ECE programmes. Since teachers are key determinants of the experiences that children are exposed to, it is necessary to ascertain that they embrace use of play as a teaching strategy in pre-school.

After the establishment of pre-primary school education program in 2005, the Ministry of Education has continued to put emphasis on the use of child-centered teaching methods that includes use of play as a teaching approach in both indoor and outdoor learning activities. However, URT reports that the early childhood educators still face curricula and pedagogical challenges and there is a discrepancy between the emphasis and the teaching strategies at the pre-primary level. Thus, it was necessary to establish whether pre-primary teachers were using play as a teaching strategy.

Majority of the teachers in public pre-primary schools in the country are simply adopted from higher primary school classes clearly revealing that their competence towards teaching pre-primary classes is questionable. Furthermore, these teachers are more likely to use traditional teaching strategies at the expense of child-centered methods such as the use of play.

A study by Lyabwene (2010) in Ghana indicated that issues of pre-primary school teachers' professional qualifications affected the quality of classroom interaction hence impacting on teaching and learning approaches significantly. The complaints raised by different ECE stakeholders on the unaddressed pedagogical challenges, especially teachers' tendency of using compulsive, direct and unfriendly teachers-centered teaching strategies necessitated this study (URT, 2008). It was therefore necessary to ascertain the extent to which teachers in pre-primary institutions in the country conformed or deviated from the conventional ECE teaching principles and specifically the use of play as a teaching strategy. In cases where play was used as a teaching strategy, the study sought to establish the attitude of pre-school teachers towards the use of play as a teaching strategy.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the attitude of Kindergarten teachers towards the use of play as a teaching technique in Sagnerigu Municipal in the Northern region of Ghana.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study sought to find out about the following:

1. the views of teachers regarding the use of play as a teaching technique in teaching Kindergarten pupils.

2. To examine the challenges facing Kindergarten teachers on the use of play as a teaching technique.
3. To examine the strategies that can be put in place to improve the use of play as a teaching technique in teaching Kindergarten pupils.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study.

1. What are the views of teachers about the use of play as a teaching technique in teaching Kindergarten pupils?
2. What challenges face Kindergarten teachers regarding the use of play in teaching Kindergarten pupils?
3. What strategies can be put in place to improve teacher use of play among Kindergarten pupils?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is justified on the grounds that the findings and recommendations would serve as a guide for the Education Directorate on ways of improving teacher competences in educating Kindergarten children. Again, the study would bring forwards the need for teachers to develop positive attitudes towards educating Kindergarten children and thus help to develop them. Furthermore, the study will serve as a reference point for other researchers in related studies as a secondary data source.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

The study was delimited to some selected pre-schools drawn from both public in Sanerigu district in the Northern Region of Ghana. In addition, there were other educational issues, problems and requirements that could affect provision of ECE in

the district but the study only confined itself to pre-school teachers in public schools. This implies that the results obtained may only be generalized to pre-schools.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The researcher faced financial challenges since the study involved a vast area. The study required traveling to remote areas where there was no public transport due to lack of passable roads. However, the researcher hired motorbikes to such destinations.

Operational Definition of Terms

Early Childhood Education: They are services for children under four years and involve elements of both physical care and education. Services provided incorporate day care, pre-school, home visits by trained professionals, health and nutrition services, and parental education.

Kindergarten: A programme or class for four to six-year-old children that serves as an introduction to formal education.

Play Practices: These are planned activities that are developmentally appropriate to assist children learn through fun.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study will be organized under five chapters. Chapter one will be the introductory part which gave the background of the study, the main purpose and the objectives. It further outlined the research questions which guided the attainment of the research objectives, significance of the study as well as the study organization. Chapter two covered the previous relevant literature reviewed to provide in-depth knowledge on the topic area. Under this chapter, a review was made on some theories which acted as the basis for this particular research and extended to various concepts discussed by other authorities. Chapter three will also discuss the methodological approach adopted

for the study. It explained the research design, population of the study, sample size, sampling procedure as well as data collection methods. The chapter further explained the data collection tools, a method of data analysis, and the ethical considerations observed to ensure the quality of work. The fourth chapter will focus on data collected and analysed the results in relation to prior empirical evidence and the study objectives. The final chapter will summarize the main findings of the study, outlined conclusions and made recommendations for use by all stakeholders.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

In this chapter, the researcher examined the attempts made by the different authors and researchers who have taken critical studies in Numeracy. This chapter would update the reader's mind about the researches that has been carried out in this direction. The chapter deals with the following areas:

1. Play as a Concept
2. Play-based pedagogy
3. views of pre-school teachers towards the use of play-bae pedagogy
4. Challenges faced by kindergarten teachers in the use of play
5. strategies to improve play-bae pedagogy in early childhood centers.

2.1 Play as a Concept

There was a time when “play was king and early childhood was its domain” (Paley, 2004, p. 4). In 1816, Fred Froebel (UNICEF, 2013) created the concept of kindergarten, which means “child’s garden.” The kindergarten and preschool teachers of today struggle with implementing play in their classrooms. Often teachers use playtime as a reward for good behavior. Due to the belief that it would help children learn more, early childhood education began moving away from play in the 1930s and moving toward teacher-directed activities. In the 1980s and 1990s, academics were added to early childhood classrooms and, as a direct result, playtime was limited (UNICEF, 2003). The American Academy of Pediatrics, along with Kenneth

Ginsburg (2007), published a document in which play was defined. The document stressed the importance of play in relation to children and their families. Ginsburg asserted that play is imperative to a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive development. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Smith, 2021) acknowledged that play is a right for every child. Play has been a concern for the last several decades. The International Play Association was formed in 1961 to ensure a child's right to play (Wenner, 2009).

According to Ginsburg (2007), the interactions and engagement that a child experiences during daily activities is play. It encourages bonding first with family members, then with friends. When a child experiences play with an adult taking the lead, the child expands his/her play skills. Child-directed play enhances the ability to develop a sense of self, explore personal interests, and develop leadership skills. Play also contributes to healthy brain development, and gives a child the opportunity for creativity and the ability to use their imaginations, and to assume social roles, all of which prepare children for their futures (Ginsburg, 2007). The literature has extensively documented that children learn and develop through play (Antonio et al, 2019; Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk, & Singer, 2009; Howard, 2010a, 2010b; Johnson & Dinger, 2012; Lillemyr, 2009; Moyles, 1989; Myck-Wayne, 2010; Oliver & Klugman, 2002; Piaget, 1962; Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008; Samuelsson & Johansson, 2006). Play helps children begin to understand their culture, self-regulation, and their place in society by giving them the opportunity to practice (Nicolopoulou, 2010). Play gives a child to opportunity to see the world through friends' eyes. They begin to understand others' perspectives and differences. Through modeling and interaction, children realize their role in society. Ultimately, play helps them become contributing members of society and part of the societal structure

(Duncan & Tarulli, 2003). Play, which is seen generally among children, has occurred for a long time. It is most probably very fun for all the people. Even if defining play might look very simply, there is not exact definition of play. For decades, pioneers, educators, psychologists and sociologists have tried to define play, which can also be seen in the literature very often (Singer & Singer, 2009; Izumi-Taylor, 2006; Wood, 2013; Wood & Attfield, 2005). Freud (1975) states that it is kind of repetition leading to become master in life situations.

Smolucha (1992) defined play as a process that provides an environment for zone of proximal development. According to him, during play, children behave older than their age, which supports their development (1980). Moreover, he believed that children could turn their thoughts and ideas into actions and real situations (1980). Else (2009) states that regarding the different definitions of play, it can be explained as doing something we choose, and we want. Moreover, according to her, play is also satisfying, challenging and empowering, which let people experience the risk and be active (2009). Eberle (2014) defines play as a way to understand the world, which they live in (as cited in Sluss, 2005). Chazan (2002) related to playing and growing, which make people aware of their existence in life and make them feel alive (as cited in Wood & Attfield, 2005). In the literature, there is a variety in definition of play; however, some features of play are common in most of them. According to (Isenberg, & Quisenberry 2002), even though some definitions made by different researchers such as Pellegrini (1991) and Rubin, Fein and Vandenberg (1983), all their definitions include some specific characteristics of human behavior that can be seen as play such as being voluntary, being instinctive, funny, and active involvement. Sluss (2005) states that play should be voluntary, symbolic, excused of external directions, and pleasurable activities which points to actions with active involvement of participants.

Wood (2013) also mentions that play is fun and chosen by children, which focuses on process and requires active participation of players. Additionally, she states that to be chosen by children is not enough to describe play; it should be also child initiated, which may be understood as doing intrinsically (Wood, 2013). As stated before, play is in human lives for ages. According to Eliassen et al (2018), play was seen in different forms in the past. While play was seen as a natural survival technique between 30.000 and 10.000 BCE, in 2000s, it was seen as spending energy, time, skill and money (Eliassen et al, 2018) Understanding of play has changed in different cultures through time. Its influence on children's development has also been concerned by many people from Dewey to Piaget (Göncü et al., 2010). Plato, who lived in 427 - 347 BCE, believed that one-hour play would give more information about someone than conversing with him or her for a year (Else, 2009). Akyüz (2007) also gave importance to the children's play and their early education. Maria Montessori also stated her thoughts about play by saying that play are children's real job, through which they can learn. One of the most important philosophers, Plato, stated in his famous writing, *The Republic*, that he agreed with Aristotle's idea that play should be addressed to children's moral, ethical and practical development (Else, 2009). In years, importance given to play has increased and it is used in education. Louca and Zacharia (2012) described play as an inseparable part of children's education. Moreover, according to Salzmann, people, who could not play with children and have fun with them, should not be teacher for children (2012).

2.1.1 Play Theories

Play has been studied for decades. From the last years of 19th century and beginning of 20th century, so many theories have been suggested by people, which were categorized in terms of early classical play theories and modern play theories.

2.1.1.1 Early classical play theories

Early classical play theories were developed at the beginning of 19th and 20th centuries based on the thoughts about the purpose and features of play. They were mostly based on philosophical views rather than scientific data or truths (Ellis, 2011). They also generally focus on the reasons of play rather than its content. However, Johnson et al. (1999) implied that due to providing an inside into the history of play and forming the basis of modern play theories, they are also important. Some of the classical play theories are explained below.

Surplus energy

It was the theory created by Schiller and Spencer, who argued that play is a way that people spend their energy aimlessly. According to this theory, people have some energy to live. However, surplus energy left from surviving activities, should be consumed (Saracho & Spodek, 2003). According to them, children's needs are met by adults so they have more energy for playing (Johnson et al., 1999).

Relaxation theory

Relaxation theory was suggested by Lazarus in 1883. According to this theory, contrary to surplus energy theory, play is an activity which lets people relax and feel better. After spending whole energy for surviving, people need to rest or play to fulfill energy again.

Pre-exercise theory

It was theorized by Karl Groos. According to him, play is instinctive and prepares children for their future lives, and occurs both human and animals (Kuschner, 2012). While animals exercise their hunting skills while they are young, children exercise their future roles like being mother or father through play –such as cooking or parenting (Johnson et al., 1999).

Recapitulation theory

Stanley Hall suggested the Recapitulation Theory, which was based on Darwin's Evolution Theory. Contrary to Groos, Hall believed that children experience what ancestors have already experienced. According to Hall, similar to process of mankind, play also develops from primitive plays to social play (Saracho & Spodek, 2006).

2.1.1.2 Modern play theories

Modern play theories imply the importance of play in early childhood education through experimental research. They generally focus on the understanding play rather than the reasons of play. Modern theories are mainly classified as psychoanalytic and cognitive theories.

Psychoanalytic theories

Psychoanalytic theory was theorized by Sigmund Freud and developed by Erikson in years. This theory supposed play is very important for children emotional development (Saracho & Spodek, 2003). Freud believed that each behavior of human has a reason. Children can overcome problems they experience and gain new skills by reflecting their feelings that they are aware of or are not aware of while they are playing. Therefore, Freud believed that play reflects children's inner world like a mirror. Children overcome the difficulties they experienced through playing. If they do not play, they might not survive the traumatic events for whole life. Therefore,

play is used as a therapy for treatment (Eliçora et al, 2005). Erikson, who is also another psychoanalytic theorist, based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory but differed at some points. He believes that personality develops lifelong. From birth to the death, each people have predetermined stages, which they must succeed. He stated that thanks to play, children can solve the conflicts they experience on each stage (Frost, 2012). He also focused on the effects of play on identity development and importance of cultural and psychosocial stages on children's development. Playing in early childhood period prepare children learn new things and skills (Roopnarine 2015).

Cognitive theories

Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Bandura and Sutton-Smith were some of the theorists who studied the relationship between cognitive development and play (Johnson et al., 1999). Details about Piaget's constructive theory, Vygotsky's socio-cultural development theory and Bandura's social learning theory are given in order. Piaget believes that children's play is related with their cognitive development and is a place where children demonstrate their knowledge and experience. According to him, intelligence develops because of the interaction between assimilation and accommodation continuously. He described play as assimilation, a place they practiced what they have already learned. For children, play provides an environment to improve their cognitive development by practicing things they have already learned because they actively involve play. Piaget focused on the two main importance of play for children. The first is strengthening knowledge that is already gained. The second is improving their self-confidence because there is no failure in children's play. While Piaget believes that through play children demonstrate their emergent symbolic development, Vygotsky states that play improves children's symbolic development. Vygotsky focused on the relationship between socio-cultural

environment and cognitive development. According to him, play is a process from where children's thoughts are restricted by the current situation to where they could free their thoughts from limitations and restrictions (Bodrova & Leong, 2005).

Vygotsky suggested that play is more than something that gives pleasure. Children reflect the society's rules in their make-believe plays. Therefore, each play has rules in itself. He also believes that play is very important for symbolic development. Moreover, children in play demonstrate behaviors above themselves, so they advance their cognitive development without anyone else (Bodrova & Leong, 2005). Albert Bandura stated that children learn through observing and imitating what they see around them. He implied that through play, children interact with their environment and communicate with others. Therefore, play provides an environment for children to be social. Thanks to social interaction, children observe and learn new behaviors from their environment. In the current study, teachers' views about play and roles they would take during free playtime were investigated. The study might be associated with the modern theories and especially with the cognitive theories.

According to the cognitive theories, adults' participation is important for children learning process. In schools, children's learning and development should be supported and encouraged by teachers. Their learning settings can be enriched through qualified interaction between children and teachers. Moreover, as it was mentioned in theories, social interaction is important. Scaffolding should be provided by teachers while children are playing, when they can learn more. Therefore, teachers' roles during free playtime are important to be examined.

2.1.3 Play in Early Childhood Education in Ghana

Early childhood education period is vitally important for children to learn new skills, form new habits and advance identity development in a healthy way. In order to develop as healthy and happy individuals, children should be given right opportunities at early ages, which provide them a healthy environment to grow up in. In the curriculum prepared by the MoNE (2013), the importance of play at early ages was emphasized. Myers (1992) mentioned that early childhood education provide an environment in which children maximize their potential (as cited in Katranci, 2017). Through playing, children have the chance to be more social. They can communicate with peers and develop their vocabulary knowledge through play. Today, due to some safety issues, children generally have difficulties in finding the opportunity to play on the streets. Therefore, schools have vitally important role for offering play environment to the children. Kandir (2001) stated that kindergartens should provide planned and systemized play opportunities which are in compliance with the children's development level. Play-based learning is supported by the Ministry of National Education (2013). They implied that early childhood education should be child-centered and play- based. Hoorn et al. (2007) mentioned that teachers have a guidance role in child centered pedagogies. Children should be supported by enriched play environment, which allows them to communicate with peers and teachers, because children learn everything, they need by playing. Children can focus on something and give their attention to something in play. In environments where children do not have chance to play, children's creative thoughts do not develop and they learn less (Morrison, 2012). In the curriculum (MoNE, 2013), there are different activities conducted in childhood education such as art, mathematics, science, movement and play. Play activities are classified as structured play, semi-structured

play and unstructured or free play. Structured and semi-structured play is directed by mainly teachers. Teachers start structured play to make children meet some objectives and have active roles with children. Semi-structured play is started by the teacher with a specified purpose and continued by the children. Structured and semi-structured plays are conducted in terms of play and movement activities, integrated with other activity types. In free play, children have opportunity to play in learning centers as they wish. Children's social, cognitive and emotional development is supported in free play time because they decide what they want, have fun on their own and control themselves (Morrison, 2012).

In Ghanaian education system, free play time are the first activities of the day. At this time, children become ready to the other activities and get used to the school environment. In early childhood classrooms, there are some learning centers like blocks, make believe play, music, books, science and art centers (MoNE, 2013). Playing at these centers is called free play or unstructured play. Children play free at these centers on their own or with their peers as a group. While children are playing in these centers spontaneously, their creativity, expressing skills, responsibility taking and problem-solving skills develop. These centers and free play time are crucial for children at early childhood period. In the current study, teachers' views about play and their roles during free playtime are studied. Thus, related studies about views on play, play practices and teachers' roles in free playtime are given.

2.2 Play-based pedagogy

The central assertion woven throughout this study is the importance of play within the scope of childhood. Vygotsky, Piaget, Montessori, Dewey, and Froebel are several of the prominent pioneers who have laid the cornerstone for early childhood education.

Individuals are influenced today by the investigations that these prominent researchers completed. Although their approaches vary, they share the belief that children learn through active participation and that meaningful learning occurs mainly during play (Bennett, Wood, & Rogers, 1997; Elkind, 1993; Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008; Wood & Attfield, 2005). Throughout the 20th century, many studies have been conducted that delve into different aspects of play in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. The studies have confirmed that play is an integral part of encouraging children to become lifelong learners (Parten, 1932; Rubin, Maioni, & Hornung, 1976; Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990). The author was curious and hopeful to find studies that have focused on play specifically in preschool and kindergarten classrooms.

The tendency of teachers to over-explain topics and dominate discussion during teaching is common. Early development of number concept is critical in developing positive attitude about counting at the early stage. Special methods and activities will assist children to develop counting skills. These methods will need to include the use of motivation and concrete materials that children can manipulate.

Play-way is a method by which children acquire skills, techniques and imitate by means of playing activities. It is the method by which the learner, using materials, objects, tools and other harmless equipment, is guided to acquire such skills as would enable him or her to develop fully as a matured member of the society. According to May, (1981), a play is a self-satisfying activity through which children learn about the world of which counting and numerals are very essential. Learning through play is a term used in education and psychology to describe how a child can learn to make sense of the world around them. Through play, children can develop social and

cognitive skills, mature emotionally and gain the self-confidence required to engage in new experiences and environments.

Key ways that children can learn include playing, being with other people, being active, exploring and new experiences, talking to themselves, communicating with others, meeting physical and mental challenges, being shown how to do new things, practicing and repeating skills and having fun.

Therefore, keeping a playful attitude toward learning mathematics is an integral part of acquiring the adaptive skills in children that are necessary to thrive and meet the up-coming challenges of the 21st century. Brewer, (2007) reviews that, children world-wide engage in activities as “Spontaneous play”. May, (2001) explain spontaneous play as “An unplanned self-selected activity in which a child freely participates”. But children’s play should be developmentally appropriate. Santrock, (2005) identified some spontaneous play as:

1. Dramatic or imaginative play
2. Symbolic play
3. Pretend play
4. Make believe play and
5. Fantasy play.

In spite of its different names, these activities play a major role in cognitive and emotional development of the child. Play according to Brewer, (2007) and other associates suggest five reasons for using play, especially to young children. Their reasons are:

1. Play is relatively free of rules except for what children will impose themselves.

2. Play is controlled and dominated by the children.
3. Play is carried out as if the activities were real-life.
4. Play focuses on the activity the child is doing rather than the end results
5. Play requires the interaction and involvement of the children.

Bottle, (2006) stated that, “effective teaching at the early stage requires that children are actively engaged in participating in shared experiences with more experienced others”. The researcher believes that basic school teachers especially those of lower primary should use their experiences in play to assist children who have less experience when it comes to teaching. Finally, a thorough analysis of the review shows that teachers teaching counting at the Lower primary level must teach the concept through a lot of activities and the use of teaching learning materials rather than merely making children recite the number names during counting lessons to enhance proper counting and writing numerals at their early stage of life.

2.3 Views of pre-school teachers towards the use of play-based pedagogy

There have been different studies focused on parents, in-service and pre-service teachers’ perspectives on play. According to some studies (Badzis, 2003; Bennett et al., 1997; Dako-Gyeke, 2008; Vu, Han, & Buell, 2015), teachers perceive play as a valuable activity for children. Moreover, Wood and Attfield (2005) stated even if play is seen as a way of real learning, parents do not give enough importance to it. A study conducted with parents and pre-school teachers demonstrated that teachers emphasized the importance of free play for the development of children. It was also concluded that teachers stated to let children have more time to play (Erden, 2001). Sandberg and Samuelsson (2005) examined teachers’ play perceptions and attitudes in terms of gender. In the study, they made observations and interviews with 10 male and 10 female teachers. According to the study results, while female teachers

preferred calm plays to improve children's social development, male teachers choose active plays to advance children's physical development. Additionally, it was also concluded that male teachers have more positive views towards play than female teachers. In addition to parents' and teachers' perspectives, there are also some studies which demonstrate children's understandings of play.

According to Wood and Attfield (2005), children see teacher-directed activities as activities in which they have to sit. Moreover, some studies conducted in different countries and in Turkey demonstrate that children define a picture as a play when they see toys in it, define a picture as a work when they see a teacher in it. Erşan (2006) conducted a research with 362 six years old preschool children in order to examine their perception about play and activity. In the study, children were continuously demonstrated some pictures involving play and activity time in classroom and asked what they see on the picture and whether it is an activity or play. At the end of the study, it was recorded that children described what they see as a play if there a toy in the picture; as an activity if they see real materials in the picture. Moreover, some pictures involving teachers were perceived as a play or activity by children. Even though there were toys on the picture, there was conflict among children when they saw a teacher in the picture, which resulted in perceiving the picture as activity. Results demonstrated that children's perception about activity and play depended on usage of real materials or toys and whether there is a teacher in the environment. Furthermore, some studies conducted to compare cultural differences in perception of play (Van der Aalsvoort, Prakke, Howard, König, & Parkkinen, 2015; Wu & Rao, 2011). In the study conducted by Van der Aalsvoort et al. (2015), trainee teachers' perspectives on play characteristics and teachers' roles were examined in four different cultures: German, Dutch, Wales and Finnish. According to them, the reason

of the differences among the participants might be a result of the teacher education systems in their country. Thus, they implied the importance of teacher education curriculum in terms of play because they stated those teachers' perceptions and practices might be shaped regarding of the education they take.

Wu and Rao (2011) investigated 10 Chinese and seven German kindergarten teachers' conceptions of play and learning. They selected six video clips from two kindergartens in China and two from German for teachers to watch. Teachers watched the videos and they talked about video clips in group discussions. The findings demonstrated that teachers from different countries have different perspectives about the teachers' intervention to play and learning function of play. According to the researchers, differences might be result of different environment and preset beliefs coming from the cultures. Thus, they indicated the importance of people's beliefs in the culture should be considered before preparing a curriculum.

In play literature, the development of the children on play is studied in various aspects. For instance, Piaget focuses on cognitive and maturation feature of children play while Parten pays attention to the social characteristics of it (Piaget, 1962; Parten, 2002). The consensus on children's behaviors on play reveals that there are certain stages that the children pass through changes based on their age. It is worthy to note that the changes in children's play behavior do not occur immediately, it requires certain time. To be clearer, while at the beginning the children play on their own, as the time passes play requires social interactions (Cole & Morgan, 2008). Piaget represents the three stages of play based on the development of mind and maturation (1962). According to Piaget, the first stage is the functional play stage (0-2 age) which corresponds to sensorimotor stage of cognitive development. The functional play

starts as the child notices new movement (Cohen, 1993). In this stage, play involves the repetition of looking, sucking and grabbing behaviors. The child repeats these behaviors as s/he knows what s/he is doing and gets pleasure from it; therefore, the child tends to repeat these functional play behaviors. The very important thing in functional play is that the child senses his/her control over his/her environment. For instance, if the child recognizes that the sound comes out whenever s/he rings the bell, s/he enjoys this play as s/he becomes aware of his/her control on it (Morrison, 2012). Therefore, Piaget insists that the presence of functional play shows the development of motor ability of the child on certain behavior (Piaget, 1962). Also, the functional plays are important tools for the development of mind. The second play stage is symbolic play. This stage coincides the ages between two and twelve years; and shows the maturation of thinking. The very characteristic of the symbolic play is the ability of the child to imitate his/her environment. Symbolic play involves three phases based on the age. The first phase corresponds to the ages between two and four. In this phase, the child imitates people around him/her, uses the things different than their usual usage by doing these the child symbolizes his/her world through play. However, the child imitates things with some distortions. This phase shows that the child has an ability to use imagination and his/her physical skills in play. For instance, the child can use an apple as a ball to throw or a bagel as a wheel. In the second phase of the symbolic play (4-7 ages), the content of play becomes more realistic. In other words, play reflects the details of child's own life. Also, this phase is characterized as social play since the child starts to play with a partner. The child has an ability to understand what other people think as well. In the third phase which corresponds to the ages between seven and twelve, there are certain rules, roles and aims that are decided before play start. These features create a background for the next play stage.

Finally, at the third stage- the formal play, the child sets ground rules for play. The difference from the previous phase is that in the formal play the child can understand that the aim of setting the rules is to minimize the conflicts. The importance of the formal rule is that the child acquires the concepts of organization, the society, partnership and being sensitive to others' thoughts. Parten has an important contribution to play literature.

According to him, the child's play behaviors changes based on social development (Parten, 2002). Parten mentions that there are four stages in play development. The first stage is the solitary play. In this stage, the child play on his/her own without getting influenced by other children until the ages of two and a half or three. In the second stage - parallel play, even the child shares the same playground with other children; s/he continues to play by himself/herself. However, in the associative play stage, the child starts to interact with other children by playing together and sharing toys. Finally, in the fourth stage which is named as cooperative stage, the child engages in the group play and has a social communication with other children. There are some rules in play; therefore, the decrease in the egocentrism is observed. Smolensk follows and develops Piaget's cognitive theory.

The main focus of Smolensk is on the socio-dramatic play and mentions the four stages of it (2008). The first stage is functional play. In this stage, the child practices the basic physical and linguistic skills. The second stage -the constructive play involves the characteristics that the child has an ability to construct things and use the tools apart from their usual usage. Also, the child starts to create an organization such as planning play and the tools in his/her mind. Another characteristic of this stage is that the child can pay more attention to play compared to the previous stage. The third

stage is the pretend/dramatic play. The child starts to imitate the things in his/her environment, those behaviors are named as dramatic play. By the help of ability of imitation, the child gets a role in play, and starts to behave according to his/her role. This stage also requires some cognitive development since the child has to recall or remember the things or people around him/her to imitate in play. The fourth stage is play with rules. In this stage, the rules of play are set before play starts. The very crucial characteristics of this stage are that the child gains control over himself/herself. The presence of rules requires that the child has to behave based on them. Besides the self-control, in play with rules stage, the child learns to take responsibility, concentrate and conceptualize the limits. Play is seen as an important tool for young children learning and development. Its benefits on children whole development involving their cognitive, physical, social, emotional and language development have been mentioned in literature (Duncan & Lockwood, 2008; Else, 2009; Göncü et al., 2010; Sluss, 2005; Wood, 2013; Wood & Attfield, 2005). Additionally, there are plenty benefits of play on the language development (Hall, 2005; Orr & Geva, 2015), the social and emotional development (Ashiabi, 2007), the cognitive development (Griffits, 2005) and the physical development (Harding, 2005; Smith, 2005). Thanks to play, children develop fine and gross motor skills, problem solving skills and interaction with other people (Howard, 2010). According to Burghardt (2005), play improves children's physical development by supporting body control and movement skills, social development by giving chance to experience social roles and emotional development by improving psychological well-being (as cited in Lester & Russell, 2010).

Yavuzer (2007) implied that in addition to the fact that plays give pleasure to children; it also advances children's cognitive development with senses, neurons and

muscles. Children also learn how to use materials differently, how to solve problems, how to classify and draw conclusions in play (Goldstein, 2013). Play and its relations with cognitive development is one of the most popular issues among play research. So many studies demonstrated the positive influence of play on children's cognitive development. Through play, children learn different strategies to solve the problem think different and create new ideas. Their creativity and curiosity are also supported by play. In the article written by Bhagat, Haque, and Jaalam (2018), it was demonstrated that age-relate play and self-play tools can be used to improve schematization in children, which advances their cognitive skills. Çankırlı (2018) implied that children learn some specific features of items like shapes, colors or weights of items by comparing in play. In play, they also plan what they are going to do in the next step, which improves their cognitive development (Ertuğrul, 2016). Through play, children learn thinking, perceiving and making cognitive plans, which advances their abstract thinking. Ramani (2005) conducted a study with 76 children to examine the relationship between children's play and the problem-solving skills. It was concluded that play improves children's problem-solving skills and working with a group. Moreover, the results also demonstrated that early childhood education is important for children's problem-solving skills. According to Levy (2004), play advances language development by promoting children to create and use different words to express their thoughts (as cited in Moyles, 2009). Sevinç (2005) stated that children's language development is supported in play, where children can try to express themselves. Moreover, play advances children's reading comprehension skills (Hoorn, Novrot, Scales, & Alvard, 2007). Moreover, taking different roles in play improves children's language development (Singer & Singer, 2008). According to the study conducted by Weir (2002), it was observed that children use different language

rules and structures while they are playing, which improves their language development (as cited in Johnson et al., 2009).

Leseman, Rollenberg, and Rispen (2001) implied that children's communication skills are developed during free playtime more than other activities. An experimental study was conducted with 12 children who were 48 – 54 months old by Ahioglu (2009) so as to understand the effects of play on language development. The researcher made observations and took audio records of some children from each group, control and experimental, for two months. According to the findings of the study, there is statistically meaningful difference between pre-test and post-test results. The study demonstrated that symbolic play is important in advancing children's language development. Physical developments including gross and fine motor skills are also supported when children play. Through play, children's physical development is supported because while children make some movements like running, jumping or giving reactions to the actions. They use their muscles repeatedly while they were playing. Play contributes to development of motor skills, so children can learn how to use their muscles and body, which results in improving self-confidence (Sevinç, 2005). As they play, children rearrange their worlds and control objects, which helps them to become either less scary or less boring (Burghardt, 2005; Sutton-Smith, 2003). Datalogic (2009) stated that children playing more are more social than children who did not play. Moreover, their creativity, vocabulary knowledge and expressive language are more advanced than other children. Some concepts in society like fair and unfair, good and bad or right and wrong are learned through playing because children experience, try and understand them while they are playing (Sevinç, 2005). In addition to whole developmental benefits of play, it also gives pleasure to children. Children get fun and pleasure when they play. Children

learn having fun by themselves in play (Arslan, 2000). According to Cohn and Frederickson (2009), experiencing pleasure and fun are beneficial for coping with negative situations (as cited in Lester & Russell, 2010).

Wohlwend (2008) stated that play is used by children in order to build peer conversations and to have social interactions because children starts playing alone but then, they play with other children helping them to socialize. Children's social skills develop in play. Children's outdoor play and physical activities are also related with children's social development skills because they provide environments where children have to be in social conversations and interactions with others (Barbour, 2009; Hinkley, Crawford, Salmon, Okely, & Hesketh, 2008). Social play let children understand other people's perspectives and develop negotiation and problem-solving skills (Coplan, Rubin, & Findlay, 2006). Moreover, according to the study conducted Hinkley, Brown, Carson, and Teychenne (2018), outdoor play time favorably influences children's social skills. Wenner (2009) emphasized that having opportunity to play help children to deal with stress and anxiety because it improves social skills. It was also stated that children and animals who are deprived of play are more stressful (Wenner, 2009). In play, children also have opportunity to set up their rules and be free from the adults' rules, which makes them more relaxed. Having opportunity to decide which rules they have to obey in play develops children's self-confidence. By this way, children's identity development is also supported in play. They can express themselves and show their emotions and inner worlds through play (Ellialtıođlu, 2011). Play supports children's whole development and provides an opportunity to create their own world with their rules. The relationship between children's play and many development areas were mentioned by (Broadhead, 2010). Children's play right is also protected with the Convention of Children Rights by

United Nations. Right to play is not seen different from the right to shelter or right to be protected. It had been highlighted by so many researchers from different countries that play is so important for children's education and healthy development and today it is accepted as a valuable activity and a right of children (Brooker, 2010). Therefore, play should be provided by governments to children from each socio-economic status or each nation. In education, play is involved in the curriculums and children have chance to play in schools.

Play has been studied extensively since the 1800s, beginning with Mildren Parten in 1929 when she wrote her dissertation about the stages of play. Parten was a pioneer with her observations of play. In 2002, Parten developed six stages of play that she observed in preschool children which are recognized and used by educators today:

1. unoccupied play in which the child is not engaged in any activity;
2. solitary play that occurs when a child plays alone;
3. onlooker play when a child observes play but does not participate;
4. parallel play when a child plays beside another but does not engage with the child;
5. associative play that occurs when there is verbal interaction but no organization of the play;
6. Cooperative play when children each take active roles during play (Rubin, et al., 2006).

When children are academically ready for school because they were given the opportunity to play, it is evident that play is essential. Spontaneous play is important, natural, and healthy in their lives. Children simply learn better through play, as it is a natural way to explore. It enhances a child's life emotionally, physically, and cognitively and develops their language and literary skills (Ginsburg, 2007; Isenberg

& Quisenberry, 2002). Play, therefore, is an important vehicle that promotes school readiness.

Ancient Romans called the teacher who was responsible for inducing elements of knowledge to young children, “a magister ludi” or game master (Lima, 2006). Shefatya (2005) describes roles and various kinds of teachers’ interventions in play as follows;

- i. Teachers as observers: Teachers must be good observers of children’s play and help them to interpret issues which emanate in play processes.
- ii. Teachers as collaborators: Teachers can extend children’s play by adding a new toy prop or by asking a question that elaborates the theme.
- iii. Teachers as planners: Teachers must also plan for children’s play. They should plan for a conducive environment, time, space and variety of materials that encourage all forms of play.
- iv. Teachers as responders: When teachers verbally describe children’s actions and words or ask questions about the role or theme, they provide feedback on what the children are doing and saying.
- v. Teachers as models: Sometimes teachers should actively join the play and model a particular behavior or role relevant to the ongoing play theme. In this way, they can teach individuals or groups of children a needed play skill or behavior.
- vi. Teachers as mediators: Teacher’s role as mediator is critical in helping children construct meaning from their play experiences. The teacher serves as a bridge between children’s initial understanding of a concept or event and their deeper understanding as a result of direct experience with that concept or event.

Work place environment affects how individuals feel about their jobs and can influence their working habits. Work environment has much of profound impact on job performance as does the salary. Similarly, the type of school environment whether public or private school, influences teachers' teaching habits and their general teaching performance. Global studies indicate that the type of school influences teachers' attitude towards teaching (Ezewu, 2003; Kinuthia, 2009). According to Good and Brophy (2000), a school's physical and social environment as well as type of school's management constitute what they referred to as teaching and learning situation. The teaching and learning situation affect a person's attitude towards task performance and task design. The pressure from school management and socio-economic context of the school, influences teachers and compel them to behave in a particular manner. Ajzen (2004) claimed that human behavior is rational and always under his/her conscious control depending on the way he perceives his environment. Similarly, Hackett (2006) analyzing Herzberg's (1959) Motivation Hygiene Theory, concurs with the theorist's major argument that, individual's behavior and his ultimately job performance is influenced by the context of environment and person's relationship to the context. Okumbe (2008) stated that educational managers should provide environments which will enhance pre-primary school teachers to use their skills autonomously for the betterment of their institutions. Given that the type of school influences teachers' performance and teaching behaviors significantly, there is need to carry out an empirical study to find out whether the type of school affects pre-primary school teachers' teaching strategy.

Motivation as a process initiates, guides and maintains goal-oriented behavior. Basically, motivation is what causes us to act. It involves social and cognitive forces that activate a particular behavior of the individual in his/her everyday life. Studies

have indicated that motivational factors such as supervisory practices and other working conditions do influence individual's morale and performance towards a particular task (Strage, 2003; Franser, 2009). Hackett (2006) and Cole (2007) while writing on motivation theories, concur with the basic argument in the Herzberg's (2009) Motivation Hygiene Theory that, a person's attitude and job performance are determined by two major factors which he referred to as motivators" and satisfiers. Motivators include such aspects as personal achievement, recognition and responsibilities, while satisfiers entailed aspects such as supervisory practices and other working conditions. The mentioned aspects tend to influence the manner and quality of the job. This study sought to establish whether recognition, supervisory practices and working conditions influence pre-primary school teachers to use play as a teaching strategy.

A trained teacher will avoid a method like the "jug" and "mug" where the teacher is the "jug" who fills the knowledge to a passive child who is the "mug". The danger of such a method is the perpetuation of a situation where the school is full of teaching and no learning. Training as an educational process enhances learning and reinforcement of the existing knowledge and most significantly it enables time to think and consider what new options can help to improve the effectiveness at work. The nursery school teachers are entrusted with massive responsibility on helping children to grow physically, emotionally and socially. Pre-primary school teachers should undergo training so that they can be occupied with the skills required to cope with the demands of the young children. Training will also ensure provision, expansion and improvement of quality and relevant education. Through the training, teachers will develop professional attitudes, skills and knowledge to adapt the learning environment.

Educational facilities and instructional material are essential because they make teaching more effective and meaningful, increases learner's motivation and concentration span and simplifies concept taught. Lack of instructional materials could negatively affect the learning process. This could be highly detrimental especially to children in pre-schools who need a variety of materials to reinforce or capture new experiences. Jones (2002) cited in Waithaka (2009), defines play resources in a pre-primary school setting as anything natural or artificial, real or imaginative, visual or invisible, big or small, structured or unstructured, props or loose parts, which a child or a teacher or groups can use for teaching, fantasy, recreation, encourage creativity or can be used to enrich their play. Ndani (2004) studying factors that influence teachers' attitudes towards teaching social science and ethics, argued that without the necessary tools even the best and most experienced teacher is handicapped. In general government and society have to support the programmes in offering appropriate materials for teaching and learning.

Different scholars have different opinions on whether the numbers of teaching years have an influence on teachers' attitude and self-efficacy (Branyon, 2002; Ndegwa, 2005). A study by Aiken (2000) on whether experience influences teachers' attitude towards arithmetic revealed that experienced teachers had more positive attitude towards the subject than the less experienced teachers. Good and Brophy's (2000) opinion on the effect of experience on behavior asserted that people confident of their abilities will seek challenge while those who lack confidence will avoid it. However, another study by Whitebook (2003) cited in Kinuthia (2009) gave contradicting conclusions. It suggested that the number of years of experience is not a good indicator of quantifying teachers' attitude or behavior in using or disusing a particular teaching approach. A person's past success or failure determines his/her future

response to the same task or activity (Sifuna, 2004). In this study, it was expected that teachers who had experienced positive results in use of play as a teaching strategy would reinforce the play use behavior in teaching and learning sessions.

2.4 Challenges faced by kindergarten teachers in the use of play

The implementation of Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) may not look consistent across kindergarten classrooms due to teachers' understandings, beliefs, and level of training. There are also inconsistencies with teachers understanding of what active engagement looks like in kindergarten classrooms. Teachers' understanding and experience with engaging children in intentionally planned play-based learning that supports high levels of engagement, impacts the ability to observe consistent levels of implementation across kindergarten classrooms. Factors such as level of training, class size, curriculum and assessment requirements, and program structure have an impact on teachers' level of DAP implementation. Throughout the literature, teachers understanding and beliefs regarding DAP impacted classroom practices. Teacher training, experience and understanding of the value of play were also a consistent theme regarding the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices among kindergarten teachers. Teachers with focused training that incorporated a practical application component had a higher level of DAP implementation in their classrooms, while the use of programmatic assessment tools provide valuable information for teachers and administrators to enhance early childhood best practices in kindergarten classrooms.

2.5 Strategies to improve play-based pedagogy in early childhood centers.

Play should not only be recognized and respected but also promoted by adults (Unicef, 2009). Therefore, it is important to examine not only the teachers' views but

also their practices of play. According to Vu et al. (2015), even though teachers believe that play is important for young children development and learning, they have difficulties in practices in terms of how to involve and expand children play. They also state that there is an important gap between the teachers' views about play and their practices observed during play time. This can be a result of the lack of preschool teachers' knowledge about what they can do during play time and how to join children play effectively (2015).

Different scholars have different opinions on whether the numbers of teaching years have an influence on teachers' attitude and self-efficacy (Branyon, 2002; Ndegwa, 2005). A study by Aiken (2000) on whether experience influences teacher's attitude towards arithmetic revealed that experienced teachers had more positive attitude towards the subject than the less experienced teachers. Good and Brophy's (2000) opinion on the effect of experience on behavior asserted that people confident of their abilities will seek challenge while those who lack confidence will avoid it. However, another study by Whitebook (2003) cited in Kinuthia (2009) gave contradicting conclusions. It suggested that the number of years of experience is not a good indicator of quantifying teachers' attitude or behavior in using or disusing a particular teaching approach. A person's past success or failure determines his/her future response to the same task or activity (Sifuna, 1974). In this study, it was expected that teachers who had experienced positive results in use of play as a teaching strategy would reinforce the play use behavior in teaching and learning sessions.

Quality teaching has been defined as "teaching that maximizes learning for all students" (Glatthorn et al., 1996). Teaching entails engaging pupils as active learners to induce positive, comprehensive change in their pre-existing skills, knowledge and

attitudes. Comprehensive changes (growth) are achieved by teachers who are able to build on learners' experiences, abilities, interest, skills and motivation. Therefore, teachers must master the basic skills of teaching and possess the ability to continuously adjust their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of the pupils. Moreover, it is intuitively obvious that teachers must possess a professional knowledge base and exhibit knowledge of the subject matter. Successful teachers have a vast instructional strategies and techniques that reflect their knowledge of the subject. According to Fang (1996), teachers are those that consciously reflect upon, conceptualize and apply understandings from one classroom to the next. Teaching of mathematics requires continuous reflection and decision making before, during and after classroom instruction (Kagan, 2002; Trauman and Raggl, 2006).

Teachers have the ability to evaluate their own instructional effectiveness and be professionally responsible for teaching by accepting responsibilities for pupils learning and behaviors (Tyree, 1996). Further, since "the essence of teaching is human interaction" (You, 2009), all teachers should continuously refine and enhance their skills of communication and collaboration. Personal and professional attributes have been identified as being representative of teachers include: the ability to show a genuine interest in teaching and enthusiasm for learning, a pride one's personal appearance, skills in adapting to change, accepting responsibility for actions both inside and outside the classroom and the desire to take a cooperative approach towards parents and school personnel, punctuality and regularity in attendance and the ability to establish a genuine rapport with pupils.

Interest in student performance and teacher qualifications has intensified among education policymakers and researchers. During this period, research has accumulated

that links student achievement to qualifications of teachers (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Mayer, Mullens & Moore, 2000). Two central measures of basic and secondary teacher qualifications are teachers' postsecondary education and their certification. To understand how many students are taught by teachers lacking specified levels of training, efforts have focused on mismatches between teacher qualifications and their teaching assignments (Ingersoll, 1999). One of the main findings concerning teacher qualifications has been the relatively high incidence of teachers teaching subjects outside their areas of subject matter training and certification (Bobbit & McMillen, 1994; Ingersoll, 1999, 2000; Neuschatz & McFarling 1999). Moreover, the incidence of out-of-field teaching has been shown to vary by subject and grade level. In addition, out-of-field teaching has been shown to occur more often in the classrooms of low-income students (Ingersoll, 1999). Goldhaber & Brewer's (1997) analysis of teachers' postsecondary degrees and student's mathematics performance found a positive relationship between these variables; with higher level of performance among with students whose teachers held a bachelor's degree or master's degree in mathematics than among students whose teachers were out-of-field. Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) examined data on the postsecondary degrees and certification status of teachers and their students' performance. They observed a positive relationship between teachers' degree and students' performance in consistent with earlier findings. These findings provide a foundation for further examinations of out-of-field teaching data. One of the most significant studies in this area was also performed by Hanushek (2000) who surveyed the results of 113 studies on the impact of teachers' qualification on their students' academic achievement. Eighty-five percent of the students found no positive correlation between the educational performance of the students and teachers educational background.

Although seven percent of the studies did find a positive correlation, five percent found a negative impact. Those that push for legislation requiring teacher qualification for homeschoolers have no research to support the necessity of such standards. The results of these 113 are certainly an indictment on proponents of certain teacher standards for homeschoolers. Higher teacher qualification does not make better students.

2.6 Theoretical framework

2.6.1 Social learning theory

Kolb's (2004) research on social learning theory is connected to constructivism. Both 30 theories hold that knowledge is created based on an individual's experience (Kolb, 1984). Social learning theory assumes that as an individual observes another person and reflects on past experiences, a learned response occurs. Because of a strong bond with the more experienced individual, the observer will imitate the modeled behavior (Kolb, 1984). Specifically, social learning theory is grounded in experience. Ideas are dynamic and reformed based on experience. Kolb argued that experiential learning contains four dimensions: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation, all of which are necessary to be an effective learner. Both theories assume that "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Mughal (2011) analyzed Kolb's theory and found that a psychoanalytic dimension was missing, which addresses the emotional struggle of learners. The psychoanalytical dimension may interfere with learning and hinder acquisition of knowledge. Ultimately, the classroom is the place where teachers learn from each other, model expert behavior, and challenge students to learn. Experiential learning is a critical element of the mentoring process. Experienced teachers model behavior, demonstrate skills, and encourage

beginning teachers to apply new knowledge and skills in their classrooms. Synergy is possible when experienced teachers partner with beginning teachers to solve problems of practice. More can be achieved with less energy exerted in a shorter amount of time. Therefore, experiential learning within the context of mentoring will likely have a positive impact on veteran teachers, beginning teachers, and students.

2.6.2 Efficacy theory

In the late 1980's, another theory emerged which influenced mentoring. Bandura found that people's beliefs about their abilities to successfully perform tasks and exhibit behaviors controlled over their lives and determined the level of motivation, effort, and actions (Bandura, 2009; Bandura, 2003). Bandura asserted that individuals with high efficacy tended to visualize success scenarios, whereas individuals with low efficacy tended to visualize failure scenarios (Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1993). Based on this theory, teachers' efficacy refers to their ability to deliver instruction and motivate students to learn. Likewise, efficacy theory plays a role in a beginning teacher's behavior. Not every teaching experience goes as planned. Setbacks and difficulties serve as teachable moments, which require beginning teachers to reflect and commit to change. Mentors coach beginning teachers through difficult situations, which may affect their efficacy. They encourage and motivate GETs and SETs to overcome adversity by developing strategies to handle tough situations with minimal stress (Bandura, 1993). Critchley and Gibbs (2012) found that teachers' level of efficacy had a positive impact on motivation, thoughts, and actions. In contrast, problems of practice had a detrimental impact on teachers' efficacy, commitment, and satisfaction. Overall, efficacy beliefs influence whether or not beginning GETs and SETs will imitate the behavior of experienced teachers (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012).


2.6.3 Affective event theory

Research on Affective Event Theory (AET) connected environmental factors with perceptions about work (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). An individual must take time to reflect on his or her level of job satisfaction. Research on mood and emotion suggested that time influences one's level of satisfaction and feelings about work (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). At the core of AET is the notion that affect levels fluctuate and become predictable over time (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Fluctuation in mood and emotion impacts an individual's attitude, behavior, and commitment to career (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). However, "affective experiences are the more central phenomena of interest with job satisfaction being one 32 consequence" (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 11). Positive work experiences predict better mood and feelings about work, which result in job satisfaction and vice versa. To the extent a beginning teacher has positive work experiences, he or she will likely experience high efficacy and commitment to career (Jones & Youngs, 2012). The opposite is also true; a beginning teacher who has negative work experiences will likely experience low efficacy and lack commitment to career (Jones & Youngs, 2012). Positive work experiences may include "listening, sharing experiences, providing encouragement, and engaging mentors and mentees in problem-solving discussions" (Griffin, 2010). In contrast, negative work experiences may be lack of emotional support from peers and school leaders. In aggregate, the aforementioned theories provide a foundation for this study and underpin mentoring of beginning teachers.

2.7 Summary of chapter

The beliefs, perceptions, and dispositions of teachers have a direct influence on the method with which play is delivered in their personal classroom. The literature has included a definite vein of proof of the many benefits of play threaded throughout.

According to the research, play is a large part of the preparation for school and benefits a child's development. A number of studies over the last several decades have examined the benefit of play in the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children. A few have begun to scrutinize the loss of play.



CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the research design which provides a brief overview of the overall methodology, the population from which a sample will be selected, the sample size and sampling techniques. Also captured will be the data collection instrument which will be used for the collection of data from respondents and data collection procedure followed, explaining how the research instrument will be administered to respondents. Finally, data collected will be analysed and the analytical instrument used, ways of ensuring reliability and validity of research instruments will also be explained in this

chapter together with ethical consideration deemed very important in academic writings.

3.1 Research Approach

Theorist Jerome Bruner (1966, 1986, 1990, 1996) asserted that in order to effectively use the constructionist point of view in an interview setting, one must provide meaning and organization to allow the interviewee to go beyond the information given (Takaya, 2008). It seemed logical to use a qualitative approach for this study and to focus on an interview process because it complemented the purpose of the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003). The author's purpose in using an interview method is to provide preschool and kindergarten instructors a platform to share their experiences. Early childhood educators must reflect on their approaches and recognize their strengths and limits when it comes to the role of play in their classrooms. Constructivism was the theory that surrounded this research. The interaction of the physical world and the mind is what constructs the philosophical perspective of constructivism (Paul, 2005). Lincoln (as cited in Paul, 2005) stated that constructivism is analytical in nature in that it focuses on meaning-making activities of thinking people. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), the researchers' role is to listen very carefully and with compassion to the participant "in order to grasp a deep understanding of the information that is being exchanged" (p. 316). This method allows people to express their opinions in a cooperative and friendly environment. Advocates of this perspective think that values pervade and pervade all aspects of research, and that the researcher must be aware of and receptive of people's ideas and values (Paul, 2005). Briggs (1998) eloquently described and stressed the socially constructive nature of qualitative inquiry and the pursuit of research to uncover how

social experiences are formed and given meaning, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2008).

To understand what a life means to the person living it, one must be able to observe the processes through which the person conceives and creates the life: its purpose and goals, dangers and desire, and fear and loves. The relevance of using a qualitative approach for this study was monumental. A key aspect of the study is understanding individual educators' interpretations of play and how the teachers encourage play in their classrooms. The diversity of social worlds of each educator influenced the meaning, interpretation, and sustainability of play in the program. The author intends to delve into the portrayal of play that was occurring in the classroom and to compare these types of play to what is expressed in policy. Through participants' definitive accounts and policy perceptions, the researcher will examine intent, meaning, and thinking in regard to play. Participants' data revealed interpretive and subjective posture on play-based learning in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Qualitative research is not based on hard numbers; it is interpretive by nature and also extends to the researcher. It will be a must that the author acknowledges this and remained very conscious of it during research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Tracy, 2013). According to Denzin and Lincoln, "Any gaze is filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observation socially situated in the world of and between the observers and the observed" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 29). Considering this, the author will to be aware of personal biases and how observations and interactions can be affected (Tracy, 2013).

The quantitative method is used in analyzing the data to ascertain the attitude of pre-school teachers on the use of play as a technique of teaching in the Sanerigu district in

the Northern Region of Ghana. This method helps the researcher to use both numeric data and non-numeric data to analyse the data that is collected on the study. In other words, it helps the researcher to use expressions and illustrations in the data analysis to find out the attitude of pre-school teachers on the use of play as a technique of teaching in the Sanerigu district in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Research Design

Mohan (2000) defines research design as the researcher's overall plan for answering the research question or testing the research hypothesis. Research design according to Creswell (2009) is the plan and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. According to Bryman (2012), a research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data and there are five of such research designs namely: Experimental, Cross-sectional, Longitudinal, Case study and Comparative designs. In this study the descriptive survey design was used to find answers to the research questions by allowing respondents within the case study setting to air their views.

This research design affords the opportunity to do an intensive analysis of the issues at stake within the setting (Bryman, 2012:66). It provides an opportunity to interrogate and understand the behaviour and experiences of people within the area under study. A careful and intensive analysis of on the attitude of pre-school teachers on the use of play as a technique of teaching in the Sanerigu district in the Northern Region will provide an insight into Ghana's pre-school teachers professional development in the country. A case study design is used in view of the fact that poor pre-school teacher use of play as a teaching technique has led to the poor performance of pupils in kindergarten schools in Ghana. It also enables the rest of the research

questions to be answered from the lenses of the respondents who participate in the study. It helps in providing a detailed account of events in the setting.

3.3 Research Instrument

A conscientious review of the literature revealed one tool, “pre-school teacher attitude towards the use of play as a teaching technique” developed by Burts et al. (as cited in Kim, 2005) that was used to scrutinize the attitude of kindergarten teachers towards the of play-based pedagogy. The survey was very focused on a variety of developmentally appropriate practices; however, questions concerning play-based pedagogy were few. This opened the discussion about play-based pedagogy at the kindergarten, yet it did not allow for a deep discussion on the topic. Therefore, the teachers were unable to express their views about play-based technique at the kindergarten level. Other studies have been conducted on types of play-based techniques in the classroom (Hanline, Milton, & Phelps, 2008; Heisner, 2005; Kaugars & Russ, 2009). As the focus of this study was about preschool and kindergarten teachers’ beliefs about play, the instrument was designed to capture their perspectives, and the educators needed to have a substantial amount of time to reflect and to think about their personal beliefs, practices, and biases concerning play in their classrooms. This could not be accomplished with a simple survey (Kim, 2005). McMullen and Alat (2002) were very clear in informing their readers that investigating and reporting teachers’ beliefs is a complicated procedure. They noted that some identifying factors influence how teachers’ beliefs are put into practice, but there is much to learn. The educational background, including coursework and the level of education, was an important factor that impacts teachers’ beliefs in their application of 31 developmentally appropriate practice, of which play is an important component (McMullen & Alat, 2002). Teachers with higher levels of education with

specific courses in early childhood education implement more developmentally appropriate practices in relation to play in their classrooms, in comparison to teachers with lower levels of education (McMullen et al., 2006). In regard to the earlier approaches used to report teacher beliefs, arguments can be made that closed question methods of capturing teacher beliefs are overly simplified and may not meticulously reflect their true beliefs about the practices that are evident in classrooms (Lee, 2006). After considering the information and realizing there is no simple answer, the researcher determined that a qualitative interview approach would be an appropriate method to collect and to assimilate the information required for effective research. The potential of a more open interview process existed during the semi-structured interviews, as well as the possibility of the formation of a relationship between the researcher and the participant (Patton, 2002).

The interview encouraged the participant to respond fully within the context of the interview (Weiss, 1994). The interview process when used as a central tool enhanced the exchange of ideas during information gathering (Cohen et al., 2003). The chosen interview process enhanced the opportunity to capture the teachers' beliefs about play. The open-ended questions allowed each participant to expound on personal beliefs about play and the way in which play was carried out in the classroom. The interview is defined as a conversation between researcher and participant that attempts to gather data through communication (Cohen et al., 2003). The interview allows the researcher a window into the viewpoint of the participants and how the participants clarify their perceptions (Weiss, 1994). The interview process for this study provided the teachers an opportunity to describe the factors that influence their beliefs and how those beliefs affect their relationships and their work with children. During the interview, the researcher's role is to mentor the participant through the process with careful attention

to the research topic. It is the researcher's responsibility to provide prompts for amplification if needed and to ensure that the responses truly belong to the participant (Weiss, 1994).

3.4 Population of the Study

Population for the study comprised the entire group of individuals, events objects having a common observable characteristics Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). Population is said to be the sum total of phenomena which are of interest to a researcher. It also refers to the entire study objects that need to be used during the research or measurement that the researcher is investigating. Population refers to any specified group of human beings or non-human entities, such as objects, time, units, educational institutions, geographical area, among others that is the large group we want to learn about. Amoani (2005) defines population as the totality of whatever objects or measurements that the researcher is investigating. It is whatever group the researcher wishes to make inferences about. The target population for the study was selected head teachers and teachers. The population of teacher and head teachers in the study area was 100.

3.5 Sample Size

The sample size entailed the accessible population in which the study is to be conducted. The researcher selected 50% of the population of the study as the sample size because according to Mohan (2000) that 10-60 per cent of the population of the study as sample is capable of representing the population in a research. The researcher used the sample size of 50 to collect the data on the problem and according to Gay and Airasian (2009) cited in Affah (2016), a sample of 10% to 50% of the target population is often used in a survey. Therefore, for the benefit of the mixed research

approach, 50% of the target population used as a sample size is used for the study. For the respondents (head teachers, students and teachers) $50/100 \times (100) = 50$.

Thus, this study employed the views of Airasian (2009) on the use of the sample size and therefore considered 50 respondents which includes 15 teachers and 35 students in Sanerigu District as the sample size for the study. The sample size included 29 males and 21 females which ensure fairness in the distribution of the sample size and the collection of respondents' views on the study. It also enabled the researcher to gather data and make proper analysis of the data without many errors because of the equal representation.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Procedures

According to Randolph (2009), the large group we wish to study about is called population whereas the smaller group we actually study is the sample. To them sampling is the selecting a given number of subjects from the defined population as a representative of the population. A simple random Sampling technique was used for the selection of teachers. Headteachers for the study were purposively selected and automatically to be part of the sampling. This approach enabled the researcher to solicit their views on the topic understudy. Random Sampling ensures that every individual in the sample has to be included in the sample selected (Kwabia 2006). When surveying a large population, it may not make sense to survey everyone in the population, as this would be very time consuming and often quite expensive. In this study purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used for selecting the participants for the study. Teachers were purposively sampled because they are in key position to answer the questions. Creswell (2002) stated that, in purposive sampling, researchers deliberately select individuals and sites to learn or understand a

phenomenon. Cohen, Manson and Morrison (2001) also assert in the sample on the basis of their judgment and typicality. A simple random sampling technique which provides respondents with equal opportunities to be randomly selected was used to select the headteachers. For the selection of teachers, teachers were selected to provide “YES” and “NO” were written on pieces of papers for the teachers, and those who picked “yes” were involved in the study. The sample size used in this study was made up of thirty-five (35) respondents, specifically pupils’ teachers and professional teachers.

3.7 Research Instrument

Questionnaire was used by the researcher as a means for collecting data from respondents. A questionnaire is a systematically prepared form or document deliberately designed through compilation of questions to elicit responses from respondents or research information for the purpose of collecting data. According to Koul (2000), it is a device consisting of series of questions dealing with some psychological, social, educational, and many other relevant issues sent or given to an individual or group of individuals with the objective of obtaining data with regard to some issues under investigation. It is also referred to as a device for securing answers to series of questions by using a form which the respondents fill. The questionnaire is a popular means of collecting all kinds of data in research. It is widely used in educational research to obtain certain information about certain conditions and practices and to inquire into opinions and attitudes.

3.8 Validity of the instrument

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (1998), validity is the accuracy, meaningfulness and the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of data actually represent

the phenomenon of the study. In determining the validity of the instruments before the interview is conducted the researcher has presented the interview guide to her colleagues for analysis and critique. For the purpose of the study, preliminary survey was carried out on a smaller size of population in a non-selected school in the Sanerigu District. The difficulties in interpreting the tool or any ambiguity are also identified.

The items that are found to be inappropriate for measuring are amicably modified to improve the quality of the instruments, while some were discarded all together and replaced with appropriate ones that could increase the validity of the instrument.

3.9 Reliability of the instrument

This is the level of internal consistency or stability over time. According to Faenkel and Wallen, (1993) referred to reliability as the consistency of an instrument to yield the same results at different times. A reliable instrument is one that consistently produces the expected results when used more than once to collect data from samples randomly drawn (Mohan, 2000). To establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted in Wawale KG School with a sample size of 25 which is half of the sample of the study which is convenient for the researcher to contact for information on the problem. After collecting the results for the pilot study, the test-retest technique was used to calculate reliability of the instruments. The responses from the instrument were analyzed and stored. After two weeks the same instrument was administered to the same sample and the responses analyzed. A comparison of the two is made using the correlation coefficient calculated through the SPSS and thus, the higher the coefficient, the higher the reliability of the instrument and vice versa.

3.10 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher gathered information from headteachers on the relevance of the study and solicit their support and cooperation by sensitizing their teachers in their schools to respond to the questionnaire. The respondents were given time to fill the questionnaire. There after follow-up visit were made to those selected schools to enhance their response rate.

3.11 Data Analysis process

The field data was checked for uniformity and organized in tables according to the themes of the research questions that were supplied and answered. Emerging issues were analyzed and presented using tables. The data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The data collected using questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency. Tables were used to present that data for analysis. According to Borg and Gall (2003) descriptive statistics are not only allow for inference on populations and directions for answering research questions. The data was collected and analyzed in two ways namely qualitative and quantitative data. Questionnaires were analyzed using percentages and frequencies. These were the main tools used to analyze and summarize the mass of data ideas to come out with some pattern. Tables were used to present the data for analysis.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent: An informed consent form was sent individually to all the people who are willing to participate in the research. The informed consent form is the participant information sheet that explains the research and the respondent's role in it.

Also, consent form is where the respondent can indicate his or her agreement. The informed consent form provided the participants with every detail of the research. This was to ensure that the participants understood the research project and the risk involves in participating in the research. The information that was provided in the consent form includes a brief background of the researcher, an introduction to the study, the purpose of the study, and the research procedures utilized in the study. Furthermore, the consent form also provided information on the voluntary nature of the research which indicates that participants have the ability to withdraw from the study at any time if they find the research inconvenient to them.

Confidentiality/ Anonymity Protection: The information that was obtained from participants for this research is kept confidential. Access to this information is restricted to only the researcher. Consent form is the participant information sheet that explains the research and the respondent's role in it. The consent forms were stored separately from the data recordings and transcripts. The researcher also locks away the consent forms in a secure file cabinet in the researcher's office. Furthermore, the audio recordings and transcripts were stored on a secure online server, which utilizes server authentication that only the researcher could access. The audio recordings of the interviews will be kept for a maximum of one year, after which they were be deleted. A pseudonym (assigned name) is used on all the transcripts and publications. This was meant to ensure that the participants cannot be traced back to their information. All the participants were informed about this procedure to assure them of their confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter entails presentation and discussion of data collected. The data was analysed and presented based on the respondents' opinion on each aspect of the study. A total of 15 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to teachers and used for data analysis. The analysis was therefore, based on the data collected from the above-mentioned number of retrieved questionnaire. The data was presented in tabular form. Each table contains serial number, item statement, category, the responses of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree were put in frequencies and percentages. Moreover, the chapter contains interpretations in a tabular form. However, the chapter includes discussion on the major findings.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender of Respondents

This looks at the gender of the various respondents, that is, teachers and this is shown in Table 1

Table 2: Gender of Teachers and Students

Sex	Teachers		Students	
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	9	60.0	20	57.1
Female	6	40.0	15	42.9
Total	15	100.0	35	100.0

Source: Field Survey, (2022).

The table depicts the sex composition of teacher. The table revealed that out of 15 teachers 9 of them representing 60% are male while the remaining 6 teachers representing 40% are female. This means that male teachers dominate in terms teacher's composition in the school compared to the female counterpart. Moreover, the male students (57.1%) were found to dominate the female counterparts (42.9%) in the school.

Age of respondents

This section looks at the age of the respondents, that is, teachers. This is shown in Table 2.

Table 3: Age of Respondents

Age	Teachers		Students	
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
15-20	0	0.0	0	94.3
21-25	0	0.0	2	5.7
26-30	2	13.3	0	0.0
31-35	5	33.3	0	0.0
36-40	33	46.7	0	0.0
41 above	1	6.7	0	0.0
Total	15	100.0	35	100.0

Source: Field Survey, (2022).

Table 2 depicts the age of the respondents of teachers. Out of 35 teachers, 0 teachers fall between ages 15-20 representing 94.3% while 2 teachers representing 5.7% fall between ages 21-25. This means that teacher's age 15 to 21 years are dominant in the school. however, out of 15 teachers, 2 teachers fall between the ages 26-30 representing 13.3%, 5 teachers fall between the ages of 31-35 which representing 33.3% and 33 teachers fall between the ages 36-40 46.7% this means that most

Kindergarten teachers fall within this age while 1 teacher falls within 41 years and above representing 6.7%.

Qualification of respondents

This section focuses on the academic qualifications of the respondents. This ranges from BECE level up to Degree level. This is shown in Table 3.

Table 4: Qualification of respondents

Highest educational qualification	Teachers		Students	
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
BECE	0	0.0	35	100.0
SSCE/WASSCE	0	0.0	0	0.0
BA	2	13.3	0	0.0
B.ED	10	66.7	0	0.0
M.ED	3	20.0	0	0.0
PH.D	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	15	100.0	35	100.0

Source: Field Survey, (2022).

The table depicts the qualification levels of the thirty-five students with BECE level representing 100%, while two teachers out of fifteen teachers representing 13.3% with BA, 10 teachers with BED which representing 66.7% and 3 teachers with MED representing 20%. This means that teachers who are professional teachers dominate non-professional teachers.

4.2 Analysis of Research Questions

4.2.1 Opinion of respondents on the research questions attitudes of teachers on the use of play as a teaching technique in teaching Kindergarten pupils?

This section covers items one to four in the questionnaire as presented to each respondent. Hence, item one and two attempted to ascertain whether the teachers use play as a technique in teaching Kindergarten pupils which enhances their academic performance at school. While, items 3 and 4 attempted to find out whether hard work on the part of teachers can influence their academic performance or not. Details of the responses of teachers are contained in Table 4.

Table 5: Opinion of respondents on the research questions attitudes of teachers on the use of play as a teaching technique in teaching Kindergarten pupils?

S/N	Item statement	Category	Response			
			SA n (%)	A n (%)	D n (%)	SD n (%)
1	The teachers use play technique as a teaching strategy which influence their academic performance	Teachers	6(40.0)	8(53.3)	1(6.7)	0(0.0)
2	The use of play as a teaching technique makes learners to be involved in the teaching and learning process	Teachers	8(53.3)	4(26.7)	3(20.0)	0(0.0)
3	Hard work by Kindergarten teachers contributed to the academic performance of pupils	Teachers	4(26.7)	11(73.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
4	The play technique has been designed in a way which facilitate easy understanding for pupils	Teachers	4(26.6)	6(40.0)	4(26.7)	1(6.7)

Source: Field Survey, (2022).

There was consensus of opinion between teachers in respect of item which investigates the opinion of respondents if use of play as a teaching technique influences their academic performance. A total of 14 teachers representing 93.3% were of the opinion that play as a technique is a good strategy which should be used, while some do not agree to such notion. This indicates that most teachers agree to the fact that play is a very good teaching strategy which should be encouraged.

Item 2 in Table 4 also revealed that there was consensus of opinion of the respondents. The item sought the opinion of the respondents if play as a teaching technique should be involved in teaching to enhance their academic performance. A total of 80% of the teachers supported this item.

However, the percentages derived indicated that the use of play assists Kindergarten teachers in teaching and learning which in turn contribute to their academic performance. Therefore, it is important for educational authorities to enlighten new teachers on the use of play as an innovative technique in teaching.

Item 3 in Table 4. Which sought the opinion of the respondents on whether dedication and hard work, persistence and perseverance, respect by Kindergarten teachers contributes to pupils' academic performance in Kindergarten. This item received the following percentages, teachers 100%. This result indicates that for pupils to have high academic performance they must possess the basic ingredients that enable them to meet the target. These ingredients are the dedication, hard work, persistence and perseverance toward academic activities as well as the respect for constitutes better academic performance by pupils.

Item 4 in the table needed to find out if play as a technique should be designed in a way that facilitate understanding by pupils. The teachers supported this point with 66.6% respectively. This result implies that there was consensus of opinion between the respondents since both curricula are planned solely to develop the academic excellence of the pupils which invariably affect their academic performance positively. It is therefore, the duty of educational authorities to provide adequate curriculum content to both teachers and pupils and also create more teaching -learning activities in their classroom, this effort will contribute significantly to the pupils' academic performance.

4.2.2 Respondents' Opinion on the Role of the teacher's relationship with pupils which enhance academic performance

In this section items 5 to 8 were covered in the questionnaire presented to each respondent. Thus, items and 6 investigated whether the teacher and pupils' relationship, transmission of basic values and storytelling by teachers in school provide pupils with study skills as well as extra classes organized by teachers influence their academic performance. Detail of the responses of teachers and students were contained in Table 5.

Table 6: Respondents' Opinion on the Role of teacher's relationship with pupils which enhance academic performance

S/N	Item statement	Category	Response			
			SA n (%)	A n (%)	D n (%)	SD n (%)
5	Does the level of play activities affect pupils learning outcomes	Teachers	4(26.7)	9(60.0)	2(13.3)	0(0.0)

6	The transmission of learning skills such as guessing, writing skills, number manipulation leads to better learning	Teachers	6(40.0)	8(53.3)	1(6.7)	0(0.0)
7	Story telling of before actual learning by the teachers contribute to their academic development	Teachers	5(33.3)	8(53.3)	2(13.3)	0(0.0)
8	The extra classes given to pupils by their teachers can influence their academic development	Teachers	6(40.0)	8(53.3)	1(6.7)	0(0.0)
9	The teacher is most important factor of the school.	Teacher	2(13.3)	12(80.0)	1(6.7)	0(0.0)

Source: Field Survey, (2022).

There was a general agreement of opinions between teachers and pupils in respect of item 5 in the above table. The item investigated the opinion of respondents if the level of play activities affects teaching and learning. A total of 13 teachers representing 86.7% and 24 students with 68.6% were of the opinion that the story telling before actual learning contribute significantly toward pupils academic performance since the pupils have some cordiality with teachers to discuss their academic problems and issues affecting their lives. Therefore in connection to this, the level of teacher/pupils interaction definitely affects pupils' academic performance as indicated by the responses of the above item.

In the Table 5 the item asked the opinion of the respondents on whether the transmission of basic learning skills such as, writing skills, manipulative skills contribute to their academic performance. A total of 93.3% of the teachers are of the opinion that transmission of basic learning skills contribute to pupils' academic performance. Therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers to inculcate the desirable

skills to the younger generations more especially the Kindergarten pupils in order to uplift their academic excellence. This indicates that teachers should increase effort in inculcating the right skills as it will help pupils in the academic performance.

Item 7 in table 5 sought the opinion of the teachers on whether telling stories before actual learning can contribute to their academic performance or not. The teachers supported this item with 86.6%. This implies that in our class set up there should be space for storytelling to arouse the interest of pupils in the Kindergarten.

Item 8 in table 5 also shows that there was consensus of opinion between the respondents. The item sought the opinion of the respondents if extra classes given to Kindergarten pupils by teachers can influence their academic performance. A total of 93.3% of the teachers agreed on this item. The percentages derived revealed that significant difference exist in the academic performance of pupils that receive extra classes from their teachers boost the academic morale of those receiving the lessons. Therefore, it is a challenge on the teachers that they should put more grease to their elbow in terms of providing extra lessons to their children as this effort enhances their academic performance.

Item 9 sought the opinion of the respondents on whether the teacher is the most important factor of the school in relation to pupils' academic performance. A total of 14 teachers with 93.3% agreed with the point. This virtually implies that the teacher is the most influential factor affecting pupils academic performance because the teaching role of the teacher embraces a lot of activities, but the success or failure of most of the teaching, learning situations has been largely dependent upon the art and skills of the teacher which serve as a basic ingredient for improving students' academic performance. This indicates that the success or otherwise of most of the

teaching/learning process depend on the art and skills demonstrated by the teacher. Therefore, it is a challenge on the part of teachers to double their effort in promoting and improving pupils' academic performance.

The study revealed that teachers as facilitators transmit basic learning skills such as writing skills, manipulative skills contribute significantly to their academic performance. However, sociologists such as Ekpiwre (2005), Ezewu (1982), Otite and Ogionwo (2006), Sheperd (2000) believed that the teacher is the most influential agent of teaching because within the school teachers teach self-concept, cultural values, norms, knowledge, skills, traditions, habits, patterns of behaviour which make us acceptable members of the society.

4.2.3 Respondents' opinion on the challenges of socialisation in school

This section covers items nine to twelve in the questionnaire as presented to each respondent. Hence, item nine and ten attempted to ascertain whether negative behaviours of students such as lateness to classes, absenteeism, and laziness can affect the effective socialization in school. Also, poor supervision, lateness to classes and absenteeism on the part of teachers can affect effective socialization in school. While, items eleven and twelve attempted to find out whether inadequate infrastructure affect socialization in the school as well as teacher and student's relationship serves as a hindrance to effective socialization. Details of the responses of teachers and students are contained in Table 6.

Table 7: Respondents' opinion on the challenges of teaching and learning in school

S/N	Item statement	Category	Response			
			SA n (%)	A n (%)	D n (%)	SD n (%)

10	Negative behaviors of pupils such as lateness to classes, absenteeism, laziness can affect the effective teaching and learning	Teachers	11(73.3)	2(13.3)	2(13.3)	0(0.0)
		Students	27(77.1)	6(17.1)	1(2.9)	1(2.9)
11	Poor supervision, lateness to classes and absenteeism on the part of teachers can affect effective teaching and learning	Teachers	9(60.0)	6(40.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
		Students	25(71.4)	7(20.0)	3(8.6)	0(0.0)
12	Inadequate teaching and learning materials affect academic work	Teachers	4(26.7)	9(60.0)	2(13.3)	0(0.0)
		Students	22(62.9)	10(28.6)	1(2.9)	2(5.7)
13	Teacher/pupils relationship serves as a hindrance to effective teaching and learning	Teachers	3(20.0)	9(60.0)	3(20.0)	0(0.0)
		Students	11(31.4)	12(34.3)	5(14.3)	7(20.0)

Source: Field Survey, (2022).

Item 10 in Table 6 revealed that there was consensus of opinion of the respondents. The item sought the opinion of the respondents if the negative behaviours of pupils such as lateness to class, absenteeism, and laziness can affect academic development of pupils. A total of 86.6% of the teachers and 94.2% of teachers supported this item.

However, the percentages derived indicated that negative attitudes can affect development of pupils in school. This should draw attention of teachers, parents and educational leaders to find workable solutions to address these problems in order to ensure effective learning in school and smooth running the affairs of the school successfully and this also enables the pupils to be highly disciplined which in turn contribute to their academic performance.

Item in table 6. Sought the opinion of the teachers on whether poor supervision, lateness to classes and absenteeism on the part of teachers can affect pupil's academic performance or not. The teachers supported this item with 100%.

There was general agreement of opinion between teachers in response to item 12 in the table 6. The item asked the opinion of the respondents on whether the inadequate teaching and learning materials affect academic performance of pupils. A total of 86.7% of the teachers were of the opinion that inadequate teaching and learning affect pupils' academic performance. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the parents, government, NGOs and other stakeholders to provide teaching and learning materials to support academic performance of students in order to uplift their academic excellence.

In light of these findings, School as a centre for learning contributes significantly toward the academic performance of pupils in the sagnerigu municipal. The school provides pupils with study skills, communication and manipulative skills which in turn influence their academic performance. Imposition of school rules and regulations by school authority contribute to pupils' discipline and high academic performance. Also, the transmission of basic learning skills such as writing skills and manipulative skills by teachers contribute to the development of pupils. Story telling by the teachers contribute to their academic development. Again, school curriculum and co-curricular activities are plan in order to train the pupils in acquiring variety of knowledge from different discipline which in turn affect the academic performance of the pupils.

Irrespective of the conscious efforts made by school to teach pupils, there are challenges that hinder the teaching and learning, negative behaviours of pupils such as lateness to classes, absenteeism, and laziness can affect the effective teaching and learning. Poor supervision, lateness to classes and absenteeism on the part of teachers can also affect effective teaching and learning. Inadequate teaching and learning materials affects proper learning in the school.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This section of the write-up captures the major findings that came out of the study and the conclusions drawn. It covers recommendations based on the findings of the study. The study focused on using play as a teaching technique in teaching Kindergarten pupils in Sagnerigu. The study was carried out in the Sagnerigu Municipality.

The study used qualitative method where descriptive and case study research designs were used for the qualitative methods. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the sample respondents who were the teachers, assistant headmasters and headmistress for data collection.

The research instrument that was employed in the data gathering was the questionnaire. The questions were predominantly the closed-ended type which helped

in avoiding irrelevant answers. However, opportunity was also given to respondents to write additional responses where necessary. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The data that were gathered were analysed using frequencies and percentage distributions. The findings of the study show that play technique has positive impacts on the academic performance of pupils in Sagnerigu Municipality.

5.2 Conclusion

Sequel to the major findings of this study, the following conclusions was drawn based on the fact that play as a technique has positive impacts on the academic performance of pupils because there is no significant difference in the opinion of teachers with regards to the role they play as indicated. this clearly revealed that play inculcates manipulative skills to pupils.

Furthermore, teachers contribute positively to pupil's academic performance by providing knowledge, skills, attitudes, moral values, guiding the pupils toward their future career, provision of adequate curricular and co-curricular activities, as indicated. The finding also revealed that school promotes intellectual development in the pupils, it also educates and enlighten the pupils about what is currently happening at their immediate and wider environments.

Also, there are challenges that negatively affect the learning process in school, negative behaviours of pupils such as lateness to classes, absenteeism, and laziness can affect the effective teaching and learning in school. Poor supervision, lateness to classes and absenteeism on the part of teachers can also affect effective learning. Inadequate teaching and learning affect proper teaching and learning in the school as indicated.

5.3 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusion of this study, it is hereby recommended that:

1. The inculcation of play and telling stories extra lessons given to pupils by the teachers should be encouraged as it contributes significantly to their academic performance.
2. Co-curricular activities should be encouraged in Kindergarten Schools as it promotes pupil's academic performance.
3. Teachers should encourage their children to develop moral standard, appreciate moral values and act in accordance with laid down rules and regulations of the school.
4. Teachers should organize educative programmes and it should be motivated by the government and educational manager as it boosts the academic excellence of pupils.
5. Teachers should discourage pupils from watching war films, wrestling or any other film displaying aggressive behaviours.
6. Parents should take measures to protect pupils from being access to irrelevant that can disrupt their studies.

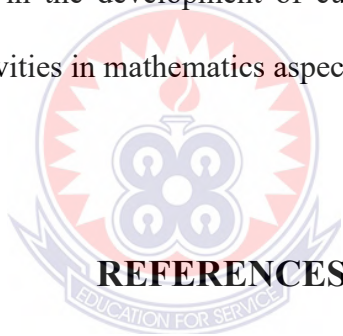
5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Looking at the time frame the researcher wish to indicate that the research is not exhaustive. The findings obtained even though indicates a success, the researcher still thinks that a lot more can be done to include more teachers in the study.

The researcher, therefore, urges the study will serve as a reference for other researchers who want to undertake similar studies to go deeper and include large number of respondents in their study.

However, the above results or achievements as indicated in chapter four (4) needs some form of recommendations. The researcher therefore, recommend to the class teachers and the readers of the research, based on the results from the research that TLMs like bottle tops, pebbles, number cards, etc. are very crucial strategies and tools for teaching.

Moreover, the researcher wishes to recommend to the MOE, GES and other stakeholders who matter in the development of curriculum materials for the Basic level to include more activities in mathematics aspect of the course content.



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APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRE-PRIMARY-SCHOOL TEACHERS

The information given will be treated confidentially

PART A- Demographic Information

Please (tick \surd) where is appropriate

1. Type of your school. Public ()

Private ()

2. Gender Male ()

Female ()

3. Your teaching experience (years).

Below 1 year ()

1 years - 2 years ()

3years – 4 years ()

5years – 10years ()

10 years and above ()

4. ECE training attained.

None ()

Certificate ()

Diploma ()

Degree ()



PART B - Use of play as a teaching strategy

Please indicate with (a tick -√) where is appropriate.

Very Often =VO, Often = O, Not Sure = NS, Rarely = R, Never = N

Statement	Responses				
	VO	O	NS	R	N
1. How frequently do you use play as a teaching strategy?					
2. How frequently do you use play for reinforcement of already taught concepts?					
3. How frequently do you use indoor play corners to help children master the newly taught concepts?					
4. How frequently do you use songs, music and drama to enhance learning and to facilitate teaching?					
5. How frequently do you extend children's free outdoor play to help them learn different themes?					
6. How frequently do you use materials available in teaching and learning activities?					

How frequent do you take the following actions when children are in play? Very

Often =VO, Often = O, Not Sure = NS, Rarely = R, Never = N

Action taken by a teacher when children are playing	Responses				
	VO	O	NS	R	N
1. Observe them					
2. Extend them					
3. Guide them					
4. Ask them questions					
5. Participate in play					
6. Leave undisturbed					

Part C- Teachers motivation Please tick the appropriate response: Strongly Agree = SA, Agree = A, Not Sure = NS, Disagree = D, Strongly Disagree = SD

Statement	Responses				
	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. The school management encourages teachers to use play as a teaching strategy					
2. The school management recognizes teachers who use play as a teaching strategy					
3. The school management rewards teachers who use play strategy					
4. The school provides play materials					
5. The school environment encourages use of play as a teaching strategy.					

Part D-Availability of Play Materials. Please tick the appropriate response.

Do you have the following play objects?	YES	NO
TOYS		
SCOOPS		
ROPES		
BOXES		
FUNNELS		
TINS		
PLAY CARDS		
BOTTLE TOPS		
SEEDS		
BLOCKS, OTHERS		

